

Tempest and Sunshine

Mary Jane Holmes

The background of the lower half of the image is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this are various geometric shapes in a vibrant purple color. These shapes include several horizontal and vertical lines of varying lengths, a large inverted triangle in the center, a diamond shape in the lower-left, and several smaller triangles and line segments scattered throughout. The overall effect is a modern, abstract geometric design.

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Tempest and Sunshine

By Mary J. Holmes

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Tempest and Sunshine

Chapter I

MR. WILMOT ARRIVES AT MR. MIDDLETON'S

It was the afternoon of a bright October day. The old town clock had just tolled the hour of four, when the Lexington and Frankfort daily stage was heard rattling over the stony pavement in the small town of V——, Kentucky. In a few moments the four panting steeds were reined up before the door of The Eagle, the principal hotel in the place. "Mine host," a middle-aged, pleasant-looking man, came hustling out to inspect the newcomers, and calculate how many would do justice to his beefsteaks, strong coffee, sweet potatoes and corn cakes, which were being prepared in the kitchen by Aunt Esther.

This good dame divided her time between squeezing the steaks, turning the corn cakes, kicking the dogs and administering various cuffs to sundry little black urchins, who were on the lookout to snatch a bit of the "hoe cake" whenever they could elude the argus eyes of Aunt Esther. When the rattling of the stage was heard, there ensued a general scrambling to ascertain which would be first to see who had come. At length, by a series of somersaults, helped on by Aunt Esther's brawny hand, the kitchen was cleared and Aunt Esther was "monarch of all she surveyed."

The passengers this afternoon were few and far between, for there was but one inside and one on the box with the driver. The one inside alighted and ordered his baggage to be carried into the hotel. The stranger was a young man, apparently about twenty-five years of age. He was tall, well-proportioned and every way prepossessing in his appearance. [pg 002]At least the set of idlers in the barroom thought so, for the moment he entered they all directed their eyes and tobacco juice toward him!

By the time he had uttered a dozen words, they had come to the conclusion that he was a stranger in the place and was from the East. One of the men, a Mr. Edson, was, to use his own words, "mighty skeary of Northern folks," and as soon as he became convinced that the stranger was from that way, he got up, thinking to himself, "Some confounded Abolitionist, I'll warrant. The sooner I go home and get my gang together, the better 'twill be." But on second thought he concluded that "his gang" was safe, for the present at least; so he'd just sit down and hear what his neighbor, Mr. Woodburn, was saying to the newcomer.

The Kentuckians are as famous as the Yankees for inquisitiveness, but if they inquire into your history, they are equally ready to give theirs to you, and you cannot feel as much annoyed by the kind, confiding manner with which a Kentuckian will draw you out, as by the cool, quizzing way with which a Yankee will "guess" out your affairs.

On the present occasion, Mr. Woodburn had conjectured the young man's business, and was anxious to know who he was, and, if possible, to render him assistance. It took but a short time for the stranger to tell that he was from the East, from New York; that his name was Wilmot, and that he was in quest of a school; and in as short a time Mr. Woodburn had welcomed young Wilmot to Kentucky, but expressed his regrets that he did not come sooner, for all the schools were engaged. "But," added he, "you had better remain around here awhile and get acquainted, and then there will be no doubt of your eventually getting a situation. Meantime, as you are a stranger here, you are welcome to make my house your home."

Such kindness from an entire stranger was unlooked for by Wilmot. He knew not what to make of it; it was so different from the cold, money-making men of the North. He tried to stammer out his thanks, when Mr. Edson interrupted him by nudging Mr. Woodburn and saying: "Don't you mind old Middleton. He's been tarin' round after a Yankee teacher these six weeks. I reckon this chap'll suit."

Mr. Woodburn hesitated. He did not like to send Mr. Wilmot to such a place as Mr. Middleton's, for though Mr. Middleton was a very kind man, he was very rough and uncouth in his manner and thought his money much better applied [pg 003]when at interest than when employed to make his house and family more comfortable.

At length Mr. Woodburn replied: "True, I did not think of Mr. Middleton, but I

hardly like to send a stranger there. However, Mr. Wilmot, you must not judge all Kentuckians by him, for though he is very hospitable to strangers, he is extremely rough."

Mr. Wilmot thanked them for their information and said he thought he would go to Mr. Middleton's that night.

"Lord knows how you'll get there," said Mr. Edson.

"Why, is it far?" asked Wilmot.

"Not very far," said Mr. Edson, "little better than four miles, but a mighty mean road at any time and a heap worse since the rains. For a spell you can get on right smart, but then, again, you'll go in co-slush!"

Mr. Wilmot smiled, but said he "thought he would try the road if Mr. Edson would give him the direction."

Then followed a host of directions, of which the most prominent to Wilmot were, that "about two miles from the house is an old hemp factory, full of niggers, singing like all fury; then comes a piece of woods, in the middle of which is a gate on the left hand; open that gate and follow the road straight till you come to the mightiest, mean-looking house you ever seen, I reckon; one chimbley tumbled down, and t'other trying to. That is Middleton's."

Here Mr. Woodburn said, "That as the road was so bad, and it was getting late, Mr. Wilmot had better stay at his house that night and the next day they would send him to Middleton's."

Before Mr. Wilmot had time to reply, Mr. Edson called out, "Halloo! Just in time, Wilmot!" Then rushing to the door he screamed, "Ho! Jim Crow, you jackanapes, what you ridin' Prince full jump down the pike for? Say, you scapegrace, come up here!"

Mr. Wilmot looked from the window and saw a fine looking black boy of about sixteen years of age riding a beautiful horse at full speed through the street. He readily divined that the boy was the property of Mr. Edson, and as he had brought from home a little abolitionism safely packed away, he expected to see a few cuffs dealt out to the young African. But when the young hopeful, at the command of his master, wheeled his horse up to the door, gave a flourish with

his rimless old hat and a loud whistle with his pouting lips, Mr. Wilmot observed that his master gave the bystanders a knowing wink, as much as to say, "Isn't he smart?" Then turning [pg 004] to the boy he said, "How now, you Jim, what are you here for, riding Prince to death?"

"I begs marster's pardon berry much," said the negro, "but you see how I done toted all the taters you told me, and missis she 'vise me to ride Prince a leetle, 'case he's gettin' oneasy like when Miss Carline rides him."

"Likely story," said Mr. Edson; "but for once you are in the way when I want you. You know where Mr. Middleton lives?"

"Yes, marster, reckon I does."

"Well, this young man wants to go there. Now jump down quick and help him on. Do you hear?"

"Yes, marster," said the negro, and in a moment he was on the ground, holding the stirrup for Mr. Wilmot to mount.

Wilmot hesitated for two causes. The first was, he was not a good horseman and did not like to attempt mounting the spirited animal before so many pairs of eyes. He looked wistfully at the horse block, but did not dare propose having the horse led up to it. The second reason was he did not know whether to accept or decline the kindness of Mr. Edson; but that man reassured him by saying:

"Come! What are you waiting for? Jump up. I'd a heap rather Jim would go with you than ride Prince to death."

Here Mr. Woodburn spoke. He knew that New York people were, comparatively speaking, inferior riders, and he conjectured why Mr. Wilmot hesitated; so he said:

"Here, Jim, lead the horse up to the block for the gentleman"; then turning to the bystanders, said, as if apologizing for Wilmot: "You know it is so thickly settled in New York that they do not ride as much as we do, and probably the young man has always been at school."

This was satisfactory to the white portion of the audience, but not to the group of blacks, who were assembled at the corner of the house. They thought it a shame

not to be a good rider and when they saw the awkward manner in which Mr. Wilmot finally mounted the horse and the ludicrous face of Jim Crow as he sprang up behind him, they were, as they afterward told Aunt Esther, "drefffully tickled and would have larfed, sartin, if they hadn't knowed marster would have slapped their jaws."

"And sarved you right," was the rejoinder of Aunt Esther.

But to return to Mr. Edson. As soon as Mr. Wilmot, Jim and Prince had disappeared, he felt a return of his fears concerning the "confounded Abolitionist." Thought he, "What a fool I was to let Prince and Jim Crow, too, go off with that [pg 005] ar' chap! Thar's Prince, worth a hundred and fifty, and Jim, at the least calculation, 'll fetch eight hundred. Well, anyway, they can't get far on that dirt road, so if Jim isn't home by nine, I'll go after 'em, that's so." Having settled the matter thus satisfactorily in his own mind, he called for his horse and started for home.

Meantime Mr. Wilmot was slowly wending his way toward Mr. Middleton's. It took but a short time for him to ascertain that the road was fully equal to the description given of it by Mr. Edson. At times he could scarcely keep his head, and he felt conscious, too, that the black machine behind him was inwardly convulsed with laughter at his awkward attempts to guide the horse in the best part of the road. At length he ventured a remark:

"Jim, is this animal ugly?"

"Ugly! Lor' bless you, marster, is you blind? As handsome a creetur as thar is in the country!"

Mr. Wilmot understood that he had used the word ugly in its wrong sense, so he said:

"I do not mean to ask if the horse is ill-looking, but is he skittish?"

"If marster means by that will he throw him off, I don't think he will as long as I'm on him, but sometimes he is a leetle contrary like. Reckon marster ain't much used to ridin'."

By this time they had reached the gate spoken of by Mr. Edson. To Mr. Wilmot's great surprise the horse walked tip to it and tried to open it with his mouth! Mr.

Wilmot was so much amused that he would not suffer Jim to get down and open the gate, as he wished to see if the horse could do it.

"Oh, yes, marster, he'll do it easy," said the negro; and sure enough, in a moment the well-trained animal lifted the latch and pushed open the gate! But it was a rickety old thing, and before Prince had got fairly through it tumbled down, hitting his heels and causing him to jump sideways, so as to leave Mr. Wilmot riding the gate and Jim Crow in quiet possession of the saddle! With a great effort Jim forced down his desire to scream and merely showed twenty-eight very large, white teeth.

Springing from the horse he offered to assist Mr. Wilmot to mount again, but he had no inclination to do so. He preferred walking the rest of the way, he said, and as he could now easily find the house, Jim could return home. This was not what Jim wanted. He had anticipated a nice time in relating his adventures to Mr. Middleton's negroes, but as Mr. Wilmot [pg 006] slipped a quarter into his hand, he felt consoled for the loss of his "yarn"; so mounting Prince again, he gave his old palm leaf three flourishes round his head, and with a loud whoop, started the horse with a tremendous speed down the road and was soon out of sight, leaving Mr. Wilmot to find his way alone through the wood. This he found no difficulty in doing, for he soon came in sight of a house, which he readily took for Mr. Middleton's.

It was a large, old-fashioned stone building, with one chimney fallen down, as Mr. Edson had said, and its companion looked likely to follow suit at the first high wind. The windows of the upper story were two-thirds of them destitute of glass, but its place was supplied by shingles, which kept the cold out if they did not let the light in. Scattered about the yard, which was very large, were corn cribs, hay racks, pig troughs, carts, wagons, old plows, horses, mules, cows, hens, chickens, turkeys, geese, negroes, and dogs, the latter of which rushed ferociously at Mr. Wilmot, who was about to beat a retreat from so uninviting quarters, when one of the negroes called out, "Ho, marster, don't be feared, 'case I'll hold Tiger." So Wilmot advanced with some misgivings toward the negro and dog.

He asked the negro if his master were at home.

"No, sar, marster's done gone away, but Miss Nancy, she's at home. Jist walk right in thar, whar you see the pile of saddles in the entry."

Accordingly, Mr. Wilmot "walked in where the pile of saddles were," and knocked at a side door. It was opened by a very handsome young girl, who politely asked the stranger to enter. He did so and found within a mild-looking, middle-aged lady, whose dark eyes and hair showed her at once to be the mother of the young lady who had opened the door for him.

Mrs. Middleton, for she it was, arose, and offering her hand to the stranger, asked him to be seated in the large stuffed chair which stood before the cheerful blazing fire. In a few moments he had introduced himself, told his business and inquired for Mr. Middleton.

"My husband is absent," said Mrs. Middleton, "but he will be at home tonight and we shall be glad to have you remain with us till tomorrow at least, and as much longer as you like, for I think Mr. Middleton will be glad to assist you in getting a school."

Mr. Wilmot accepted the invitation and then looked round the room to see if the interior of the house corresponded with [pg 007] the exterior. It did not, for the room, though large, was very comfortable. The floor was covered with a bright-colored home-made carpet. In one corner stood a bed, the counterpane of which was as white as snow, and the curtains of the windows were of the same hue. In another corner was a small bookcase, well filled with books and on a stand near a window were several house plants.

He concluded that the books and the plants were the property of the young lady, whom Mrs. Middleton introduced to him as her eldest daughter Julia. She was an intelligent-looking girl, and Mr. Wilmot instantly felt interested in her, but when he attempted to converse with her, she stole quietly out of the room, leaving her mother to entertain the visitor.

At last supper was brought in by old Aunt Judy, who courtesied so low to the "young marster," that she upset the coffee pot, the contents of which fell upon a spaniel, which lay before the fire. The outcries of the dog brought Miss Julia from the kitchen, and this time she was accompanied by her younger sister, Fanny, who together with Julia and Aunt Judy, lamented over the wounded animal.

"I didn't go to do it, sartin, Miss July," said Aunt Judy, "Lor' knows I didn't."

"Who said you did, you black thing, you?" said Julia, who in her grief for her

favorite, and her anger at Aunt Judy, forgot the stranger, and her bashfulness, too. "You were careless, I know you were," she continued, "or you never could have tipped the coffee over in this manner."

"Never mind, sister," said Fanny, "never mind; of course, Aunt Judy didn't mean to do it, for she likes Dido as well as we do."

"Lor' bless Miss Fanny's sweet face, that I do like Dido," said Aunt Judy.

"Yes, that you do," repeated Julia mockingly, "just as though you could like anything."

Here Mrs. Middleton interposed and ordered Julia and Fanny to take their seats at the table, while Judy cleared away all traces of the disaster. Julia complied with an ill-grace, muttering something about "the hateful negroes," while Fanny obeyed readily, and laughingly made some remark to Mr. Wilmot about their making so much ado over a dog, "but," said she, "we are silly girls, and of course do silly things. Probably we shall do better when we get old like you—no, like mother, I mean."

Here she stopped, blushing deeply at having called Mr. Wilmot old, when in fact she thought him quite young, and very [pg 008] handsome—in short, "just the thing." She thought to herself, "There, I've done it now! Julia and I have both introduced ourselves to him in a pretty light, but it's just like me—however, I'll not say another word tonight!"

The little incident of the coffee pot gave Mr. Wilmot something of an insight into the character and disposition of the two girls. And surely nothing could have been more unlike than their personal appearance, as they sat side by side at the supper table. Julia was about seventeen years of age and was called very handsome, for there was something peculiarly fascinating in the ever-varying expression of her large black eyes. She was a brunette, but there was on her cheek so rich and changeable a color that one forgot in looking at her, whether she were dark or light. Her disposition was something like her complexion—dark and variable. Her father was a native of South Carolina, and from him she inherited a quick, passionate temper. At times she was as gentle as a lamb, but when anything occurred to trouble her, all her Southern blood boiled up, and she was as Fanny said, "always ready to fire up at a moment's warning." Mr. Middleton called her "Tempest," while to Fanny he gave the pet name of

"Sunshine," and truly, compared with her sister, Fanny's presence in the house was like a ray of sunshine.

She was two years younger than Julia and entirely different from her, both in looks and disposition. Her face was very pale and her bright golden hair fell in soft curls around her neck and shoulders, giving her something the appearance of a fairy. Her eyes were very large and very dark blue, and ever mirrored forth the feelings of her soul.

By the servants Julia was feared and dreaded; but Fanny was a favorite with all. Not a man, woman or child on the plantation but was ready to do anything for "darling Miss Fanny." And they thought, too, every one must love her as well as they did, for they said "she showed by her face that she was an angel." This was the opinion of the blacks, and it was also the partially formed opinion of Mr. Wilmot before he finished his supper; and yet he could not help thinking there was something wondrously attractive in the glance of Julia's large, dark eyes.

After supper he tried to engage the girls in conversation in order to ascertain which had the better mind. He found Fanny most ready to converse. She had forgotten her resolution not to talk, and before the evening was half spent seemed perfectly well acquainted with him. She had discovered that his name was Richard, that he had a sister Kate, who called [pg 009] him Dick, that he was as yet possessor of his own heart, but was in danger of losing it! The compliment Fanny very generously gave to her sister Julia, because she observed that Mr. Wilmot's eyes were often directed toward the corner where the dark beauty sat, silent and immovable.

Julia had taken but little part in the conversation and Mr. Wilmot's efforts to "draw her out" had proved ineffectual. She felt piqued that Fanny should engross so much attention and resolved on revenge; so she determined to show Mr. Wilmot that she could talk but not upon such silly subjects as pleased Fanny. Accordingly, when books were mentioned, she seemed suddenly aroused into life. She was really very intelligent and a very good scholar. She had a great taste for reading, and what books she could not prevail on her father to buy, she would borrow, so she had a tolerably good knowledge of all the standard works. Mr. Wilmot was surprised and pleased to find her so well informed and in the spirited conversation which followed poor Fanny was cast entirely into the background.

Fanny, however, attributed it to her sister's superior knowledge of Latin, and inwardly "thanked her stars" that she knew nothing of that language further than the verb *Amo*, to love. The practical part of that verb she understood, even if she did not its conjugation. She sat quietly listening to Mr. Wilmot and her sister, but her cogitations were far different from what Julia's had been.

Fanny was building castles—in all of which Mr. Wilmot and Julia were the hero and heroine. She gazed admiringly at her sister, whose face grew handsomer each moment as she became more animated, and she thought, "What a nice-looking couple Julia and Mr. Wilmot would make! And they would be so happy, too—that is if sister didn't get angry, and I am sure she wouldn't with Mr. Wilmot. Then they would have a nicer house than this old shell, and perhaps they would let me live with them!"

Here her reverie was interrupted by Mr. Wilmot, who asked her if she ever studied Latin. Fanny hesitated; she did not wish to confess that she had once studied it six months, but at the end of that time she was so heartily tired of its "long-tailed verbs," as she called them, that she had thrown her grammar out of the window and afterward given it to Aunt Judy to start the oven with!

This story was told, however, by Julia, with many embellishments, for she delighted in making Fanny appear ridiculous. [pg 010] She was going on swimmingly when she received a drawback from her mother, who said:

"Julia, what do you want to talk so for? You know that while Fanny studied Latin, Mr. Miller said she learned her lessons more readily than you did and recited them better, and he said, too, that she was quite as good a French scholar as you."

Julia curled her lip scornfully and said, "she didn't know what her mother knew about Fanny's scholarship." Meantime Fanny was blushing deeply and thinking that she had appeared to great disadvantage in Mr. Wilmot's eyes; but he very kindly changed the conversation by asking who Mr. Miller was, and was told that he was a young man from Albany, New York, who taught in their neighborhood the winter before.

The appearance of some nice red apples just then turned the attention of the little company in another channel and before they were aware of it the clock struck ten. Mr. Middleton had not returned and as it was doubtful whether he came at

all that night, Julia went into the kitchen for Luce, to show Mr. Wilmot to his room. She was gone some time, and when she returned was accompanied by a bright-looking mulatto girl, who, as soon as she had conducted Mr. Wilmot into his room, commenced making excuses about "marster's old house! Things was drefful all round it, but 'twasn't Miss Julia's fault, for if she could have her way 'twould be fixed up, sartin. She was a born'd lady, anybody could see; so different from Miss Fanny, who cared nothing how things looked if she could go into the kitchen and turn hoe cakes for Aunt Judy, or tend the baby!"

By this time Luce had arranged the room all it wanted arranging, and as Mr. Wilmot had no further need of her services, she left him to think of what she had said. He did not know that the bright red ribbon, which appeared on Luce's neck next morning, was the gift of Julia, who had bribed her to say what she did to him. Julia knew that she had made a favorable impression on Mr. Wilmot by making him think meanly of Fanny.

What Luce said had its effect upon him, too. He was accustomed to the refinements of the North and he could not help respecting a young lady more who showed a taste for neatness. That night he dreamed that a bright pair of dark eyes were looking at him from each pane of shingle in the window, and that a golden-haired fairy was dancing the Polka in Aunt Judy's hoe cake batter.

Chapter II

GETTING UP A SUBSCRIPTION SCHOOL

[pg 011]Next morning before daybreak Mr. Wilmot was aroused from a sound slumber by what he thought was the worst noise he had ever heard. He instantly concluded that the house was on fire, and springing up, endeavored to find his clothes, but in the deep darkness of the room such a thing was impossible; so he waited a while and tried to find out what the noise could be.

At last it assumed something of a definite form, and he found it was the voice of a man calling out in thunder-like tones, "Ho, Jebediah! Come out with ye! Do you hear? Are you coming?"

Then followed a long catalogue of names, such as Sam, Joe, Jack, Jim, Ike, Jerry, Nehemiah, Ezariah, Judy, Tilda, Martha, Rachel, Luce and Phema, and at the end of each name was the same list of questions which had preceded that of Jebediah; and ever from the negro quarters came the same response, "Yes, marster, comin'."

By this time all the hens, geese, turkeys and dogs were wide awake and joining their voices in the chorus, made the night, or rather the morning, hideous with their outcries. At last the noise subsided. Silence settled around the house and Wilmot tried to compose himself to sleep. When he again awoke the sun was shining brightly into his room. He arose and dressed himself, but felt in no hurry to see "his host," who had come home, he was sure, and had given such tremendous demonstrations of the strength of his lungs.

Mr. Wilmot finally descended to the sitting room, where the first object which

presented itself was a man who was certainly six and a half feet high, and large in proportion. His face was dark and its natural color was increased by a beard of at least four weeks' growth! He had on his head an old slouched hat, from under which a few gray locks were visible. As soon as Wilmot appeared, the uncouth figure advanced toward [pg 012] him, and seizing his hand, gave a grip, which, if continued long, would certainly have crushed every bone! He began with—

"Well, so you are Mr. Wilmot from New York, hey? Of course a red-hot Abolitionist, but I don't care for that if you'll only keep your ideas to yourself and not try to preach your notions to me. I've heard of you before."

"Heard of me, sir?" said Mr. Wilmot in surprise.

"Yes, of you; and why not? Thar's many a man, not as good as you, judging by your looks, has had a hearing in his day; but, however, I haint heard of you by the papers. As I was coming home last night I got along to old man Edson's, and I seen him swarin' and tarin' round so says I, 'Ho, old man, what's the row?' 'Oh,' says he, 'that you, Middleton? Nuff's the row. I've done let my best horse and nigger go off with a man from the free States, who said he's going to your house, and here 'tis after nine and Jim not at home yet. Of course they've put out for the river.' 'Now,' says I, 'don't be a fool, Edson; if that ar chap said he's goin' to my house, he's goin' thar, I'll bet all my land and niggers he's honest. Likely Jim's stopped somewhar. You come along with me and we'll find him.' So we jogged along on the pike till of a sudden we met Prince coming home all alone! This looked dark, but I told Edson to say nothin' and keep on; so we came to Woodburn's fine house, and thar in the cabins we seen a bright light, and heard the niggers larfin like five hundred, and thought we could distinguish Jim Crow's voice; so we crept slyly up to the window and looked in and, sure enough, there was Jim, telling a great yarn about the way you rode and how you got flung onto the gate. It seems he didn't half hitch Prince, who got oneasy like, and started for home. Edson hollered to Jim, who came out and told how he didn't go clear here with you, cause you said you could find the way, and he might go back. Then old man Edson turned right round and said you were a likely man, and he hoped I'd do all I could for you. So that's the way I heard of you; and now welcome to old Kentuck, and welcome to my house, such as it is. It's mighty mean, though, as 'Tempest' says."

Here he turned to Julia, who had just entered the room. Then he went on: "Yes, Tempest raves and tars about the house and can hardly wait till I'm dead before

she spends my money in fool fixin's. Devil of a cent she'll get though if she rides as high a horse as she generally does! I'll give it all to 'Sunshine'; yes, I will. She's more gentle-like and comes coaxin' round me, and puttin' her soft arms round my [pg 013] old shaggy neck says, 'Please, pa, if I'll learn to make a nice pudding or pie of Aunt Judy, will you buy us a new looking-glass or rocking chair?' And then 'tisn't in my natur to refuse. Oh, yes; Sunshine is a darling," said he, laying his hand caressingly on Fanny's head, who just at that moment showed her sunny face in the room.

During breakfast Mr. Middleton inquired more particularly into Mr. Wilmot's plans and wishes, and told him there was no doubt that he could obtain a good school in that immediate neighborhood. "Your best way," said he, "will be to write a subscription paper. The people then see what for a fist you write, and half the folks in Kentuck will judge you by that. In the paper you must tell what you know and what you ask to tell it to others. I'll head the list with my two gals and give you a horse to go round with, and I'll bet Tempest, and Sunshine, too, that you'll get a full school afore night."

At the last part of this speech Julia curled her lips and tried to look indignant, while Fanny laughingly said, "Pa, what makes you always bet sister and me, just as though you could sell us like horses? It's bad enough to bet and sell the blacks, I think."

"Ho, ho! So you've got some free State notions already, have you?" said Mr. Middleton. "Well, honey, you're more'n half right, I reckon." So saying, he for the fourth time passed up his coffee cup.

Breakfast being over, he took his young friend to the stable and bade him select for his own use any horse he chose. Mr. Wilmot declined, saying he was not much accustomed to horses; he preferred that Mr. Middleton should choose any horse he pleased.

"Very well," said Mr. Middleton; "from the accounts I have heard of your horsemanship it may be improved; so I reckon I'll not give you a very skeary horse to begin with. Thar's Aleck'll just suit you. He'll not throw you on the gate, for he doesn't trot as fast as a black ant can walk!"

Accordingly Aleck was saddled and bridled and Mr. Wilmot was soon mounted and, with his subscription paper in his pocket, was riding off after subscribers.

He was very successful; and when at night he turned his face homeward, he had the names of fifteen scholars and the partial promise of five more.

"Well, my boy, what luck?" said Mr. Middleton, as Wilmot entered the sitting room that evening.

"Very good success," returned Mr. Wilmot; "I am sure of fifteen scholars and have a promise for five more."

[pg 014]"Yes, pretty good," said Mr. Middleton; "fifteen sartin, and five unsartin. Who are the unsartin ones?—old Thornton's?"

Mr. Wilmot replied that he believed it was a Mr. Thornton who had hesitated about signing.

"He'll sign," said Mr. Middleton. "It's thar after you was, and he told me you might put down five for him. I pay for two on 'em. He lives on my premises; and if he doesn't pay up for t'other three, why, he'll jog, that's all."

Mr. Wilmot said he hoped no one would send to school against their wishes.

"Lord, no," rejoined Mr. Middleton; "old Thornton wants to send bad enough, only he's stingy like. Let me see your paper, boy."

Mr. Wilmot handed him the paper, and he went on: "Thar's ten scholars at eight dollars—that makes eighty; then thar's five at eleven dollars, and fifty-five and eighty makes a hundred and thirty-five; then thar's five more at fifteen dollars; five times fifteen; five times five is twenty-five—seventy-five dollars;—seventy-five and a hundred and thirty-five;—five and five is ten, one to seven is eight, eight and three is eleven—two hundred and ten dollars! Why, quite a heap! Of course you've got clothes enough to last a spell, so you can put two hundred out at interest. I'll take it and give you ten per cent."

Mr. Wilmot smiled at seeing his money so carefully disposed of before it was earned, but he merely said, "There's my board to be deducted."

"Your what?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"My board, sir. I have no other means of paying it. I find I can get boarded for a dollar and a half a week."

"The deuce you can," said Mr. Middleton. "Who'll board you for that?"

Mr. Wilmot gave the name of the gentleman, to which Mr. Middleton replied, "I want to know if he will board you so very cheap!"

"Why, yes. Do you think I should pay more?"

"Pay more!" replied Middleton. "Don't be a fool! Why, here's this infernal old shell of a house wants filling up, and thar's heaps of horses and niggers lounging round with nothing to do; then I've plenty of potatoes, bacon and corn meal—and such fare as we have you're welcome to, without a dollar and a half, or even a cent and a half."

Mr. Wilmot remonstrated at receiving so much at Mr. Middleton's hands, but that good man put an end to all further argument by saying, "Do let me act as I like. You see, I've [pg 015] taken a liking to you, and because I see you trying to help yourself, I am willing to try and help you. They say, or Tempest says they say, I'm a rough old bear, and maybe I am; but I'm not all bad; it's a streak o' fat and a streak o' lean; and if I want to do you a kindness, pray let me."

So it was settled that Mr. Wilmot should remain in Mr. Middleton's family during the winter. To Julia this arrangement gave secret satisfaction. She had from the first liked Mr. Wilmot, and the idea of having him near her all the time was perfectly delightful. She resolved to gain his good opinion, cost what it would. To do this, she knew she must appear to be amiable, and that she determined to do—before him at least. She had also seen enough of him to know that he set a great value upon talent, and she resolved to surprise him with her superior scholarship and ability to learn. She, however, felt some misgivings lest Fanny should rival her in his esteem; but she hoped by negro bribery and various little artifices to deter him from thinking too highly of her sister.

The following Monday, Mr. Wilmot repaired to his schoolroom, where he found assembled all his pupils. It was comparatively easy to arrange them into classes and ere the close of the day the school was pretty generally organized. Weeks passed on and each day the "Yankee schoolmaster" gained in the love of his scholars, and one of them, at least, gained in the affections of the teacher. Julia had adhered to her resolution of appearing amiable and of surprising Mr. Wilmot with her wonderful powers of learning. This last she did to perfection. No lesson was so long but it was readily learned and its substance admirably told in words

of her own. She preferred reciting alone and she so far outstripped the others in the length of her lessons, it seemed necessary that she should do so. Mr. Wilmot often wondered at her marvelous capacity for learning so much in so short a space of time, for she never took home her books at night, and she said she had plenty of time for her lessons during school hours.

With Fanny it was just the reverse. She got her lessons at home and played all day at school! Sometimes a reprimand from Mr. Wilmot would bring the tears into her eyes and she would wonder why it was she could not behave and make Mr. Wilmot like her as well as he did Julia. Then she would resolve not to make any more faces at that booby, Bill Jeffrey, for the girls to laugh at, nor to draw any more pictures on her slate of the Dame Sobriety, as she called Julia, and lastly, not to pin any more chalk rags on the boys' coats. But she was a dear lover of fun and her resolutions were soon for [pg 016] gotten. Her lessons, however, were generally well-learned, and well recited; but she could not compete with Julia, neither did she wish to. She often wondered how her sister could learn so long lessons, and, secretly, she had her own suspicions on the subject, but chose to keep them to herself.

Meantime the winter was passing rapidly and, to Mr. Wilmot, very agreeably away. He liked his boarding place much and one of its inmates had almost, without his knowledge, wound herself strongly around his heart. For a time he struggled against it, for his first acquaintance with Julia had not left a very favorable impression on his mind. But since that night she had been perfectly pleasant before him and had given out but one demonstration of her passionate temper.

This was one evening at the supper table. Zuba, a mulatto girl, brought in some preserves and, in passing them, very carelessly spilled them upon Julia's new blue merino. In the anger of the moment Mr. Wilmot and his good opinion were forgotten. Springing up, she gave the girl a blow which sent her half across the room and caused her to drop the dish, which was broken in twenty pieces. At the same time she exclaimed in a loud, angry tone, "Devil take you, Zube!" The loss of the dish elicited a series of oaths from Mr. Middleton, who called his daughter such names as "lucifer match," "volcano," "powder mill," and so forth.

For her father's swearing Julia cared nothing, but it was the sorrowful, disappointed expression of Mr. Wilmot's face which cooled her down. Particularly did she wish to recall what she had done when she saw that Fanny

also had received some of the preserves on her merino; but instead of raging like a fury, she arose and quietly wiped it off, and then burst into a loud laugh, which she afterward told her mother was occasioned by the mournful look which Mr. Wilmot's face assumed when he saw that Julia's temper was not dead, but merely covered up with ashes.

From this remark of Fanny's the reader will understand that she was well aware of the part her sister was playing. And she was perfectly satisfied that it should be so, for by this means she occasionally got a pleasant word from Julia. She, however, often wished that Mr. Wilmot could be constantly with her sister, for his presence in the house did not prevent her from expending her wrath upon both Fanny and the blacks.

For some days after the affair of the preserves, Mr. Wilmot was somewhat cool in his manner toward Julia, who had discernment enough to attribute the change to the right cause. [pg 017] Earnestly did she desire to win back his esteem, and she accordingly cast about for some method by which she could undo what she had done. She could think of no way except to acknowledge her error to Mr. Wilmot and promise to do better in the future. So one evening when her father, mother and Fanny were absent, and she was alone with him, she adroitly led the conversation to the circumstance of her spoiled merino. She acknowledged that it was very unamiable and unladylike to manifest such passionate feelings, said she knew she had a quick temper, but she tried hard to govern it; and if Mr. Wilmot would, as her teacher and friend, aid her by his advice and influence, she was sure she would in time succeed. So nicely did she manage each part of her confession that Mr. Wilmot was thoroughly deceived. He believed her perfectly sincere, and greatly admired what he thought to be her frank, confiding disposition.

From that time she was dearer to him than ever and Julia, again sure of his esteem, placed a double guard upon her temper, and in his presence was the very "pink" of amiability! Affairs were gliding smoothly on, when the family received a visit from a gentleman, whom Julia would rather not have seen. This was Mr. Miller, whom we have mentioned as having taught in that neighborhood the winter before. Mr. Wilmot found him in the sitting room one night, on his return from school. When the young men were introduced they regarded each other a moment in silence, then their hands were cordially extended, and the words, "Richard Wilmot," "Joseph Miller," were simultaneously uttered.

It seems that, years before, they had been roommates and warmly attached friends in the Academy of Canandaigua, New York, and now, after the lapse of ten years, they met for the first time far off in Kentucky. A long conversation followed, relative to what had occurred to each since the bright June morning when they parted with so much regret in the old academic halls of Canandaigua.

At length Mr. Miller said: "Richard, what has become of that sister of yours, of whose marvelous beauty you used to tell us boys such big stories?"

"My sister Kate," said Mr. Wilmot, "is at present at school in New Haven."

"And is she still as beautiful as you used to try to make us think she was?" asked Mr. Miller.

"I will show you her likeness," returned Wilmot, "and you can judge for yourself."

So saying, he drew from his pocket a richly cased daguerreotype, [pg 018] and handed it to Mr. Miller. It was a face of uncommon beauty which met Mr. Miller's eye, and he gazed enraptured on the surpassing loveliness of the picture. At last he passed it to Fanny, who was eagerly waiting for it, and then turning to Wilmot, he said, "Yes, Richard, she has the handsomest face I ever saw."

"And the handsomest face I ever saw with one exception," said Mr. Wilmot, glancing admiringly toward Julia. Mr. Miller followed the direction of his eyes and as he saw the brilliant beauty of Julia, he sighed for fear his young friend might or had already become entangled in her dark meshes.

Just then Fanny exclaimed, "Oh, how handsome; look mother—Julia, isn't she perfectly beautiful!" And then she added, "But, Mr. Wilmot, is she as good as she is beautiful?"

"How absurd," said Julia hastily; "just as though one cannot be handsome and good too."

"I didn't say they couldn't, sister," said Fanny; "but I thought—yes, I'm sure she looks a little selfish!"

"Upon my word you're very polite," said Julia. "Mr. Wilmot will doubtless feel complimented by what you say of his sister."

"Never mind, Fanny," said Mr. Wilmot; "never mind; you are more of a physiognomist than I thought you were, for Kate's great fault is being too selfish; but she will overcome that in time, I think."

"Oh, I am sure so," quickly rejoined Fanny, regretting her words and anxious to do away with any unfavorable impression she might have made. So she went up to Mr. Wilmot and laying her hand on his shoulder, said, "I am sorry if I said anything bad of your sister. She is very beautiful and I think I should love her very much. Do you think she will ever come to Kentucky?"

"I hardly think she will," said Mr. Wilmot; "but I think you would like her, and I am sure she would love you. I often write to her about my two Kentucky sisters."

"Oh, do you," said Fanny, clapping her white, dimpled hands, "do you really call us both sisters? And do you tell her how much handsomer Julia is than I am, and how much more she knows?"

"And how much more does she know?" said Mr. Miller, who was always interested in whatever Fanny said.

"Oh, she knows a 'heap' more than I do," said Fanny, "I fear I haven't improved much since you left, for Mr. Wilmot is so very indulgent that he never scolds when my lessons are [pg 019] but half-learned, but consoles himself, I suppose, with Julia's great long yarns."

"And are Julia's lessons so very long?" asked Mr. Miller.

"Yes, sir," replied Fanny. "It is the wonder of all the girls how she manages to commit so much to memory in so short a time, for she never brings home her books and she spends two-thirds of her time, during school hours, in writing something on a sheet of foolscap. We girls have our own suspicions about that paper, for when her lesson is very hard we notice that she is unusually confined to her notes."

Here Julia angrily exclaimed, "Fanny, what do you mean? Do you intend to insinuate that I write my lesson down and then read it?"

"Fire and fury," said Mr. Middleton, who had been an attentive listener, "what's all this about? Tempest, do you write down your task? Good reason why you don't bring home your books. Speak, girl, quick—are you guilty of such

meanness?"

Julia burst into tears, and said: "No, father, I am not; and I think it too bad that I should be suspected of such a thing, when I am trying to do as well as I can."

"I think so too," said Mr. Wilmot, whose sympathies were all with Julia.

Mr. Miller thought otherwise, but he said nothing. Julia had never been a favorite with him. He understood her character perfectly well and he felt grieved that his friend should be so deceived in her. Perhaps Julia read something of what was passing in his mind; for she felt very uneasy for fear he might tell Mr. Wilmot something unfavorable of her. Nor was she mistaken in her conjectures, for after the young men had retired for the night, their conversation naturally enough turned upon the family and the two girls, both of whom Mr. Wilmot spoke of in the highest terms. Mr. Miller agreed with him as long as his remarks were confined to Fanny, but when he came to speak of Julia, and of her superior beauty, intellect and agreeable manners, he ventured to disagree with him.

Said he, "As to Julia's beauty, there can be but one opinion, for she is very handsome; but the interior of the casket does not correspond with the exterior; she is as false as fair. Then, as to her intellect, I never thought it greatly superior to Fanny's. To be sure, she has a way of showing off all she does know, while Fanny is more retiring."

Here Mr. Wilmot spoke of the faculty she possessed for [pg 020] learning so long lessons. "Even your favorite Fanny," said he, "admitted that."

"True," returned Mr. Miller, "but have you forgotten the notes? Do you not think there may be something in that?"

"Is it possible," said Mr. Wilmot, rather warmly, "is it possible you think the high-souled Julia capable of such meanness? You do not know her as well as I do, if you think she would stoop to such deception. You shall go to school with me tomorrow, and then you can see for yourself."

"Yes, I will do so," said Mr. Miller, and then as he saw Mr. Wilmot seemed somewhat excited, he changed the conversation, which had been heard by other ears. Adjoining the room of Mr. Wilmot was a long dark closet, the door of which opened into the apartment of Julia and Fanny. This closet was used for a kind of lumber room, in which were stored promiscuously old barrels, trunks,

hats, boots and so forth. It originally had a window, but the glass had long been broken and its place supplied by a large board, which failed to keep out the wind and rain, so that during the winter season the closet was a cold, cheerless place.

But on the night of which we were speaking, it contained a novel piece of lumber. Crouched behind an old barrel sat Julia, listening eagerly to the conversation between her teacher and Mr. Miller. When it ceased she arose from her dark hiding place and muttered to herself: "So you'll see, will you? You old torment! I wish the Old Scratch had got you before you ever came here. If I dared to I'd—but no, I wouldn't do that, bad as I am. However, I'll cheat you for once, you hateful limb! But what shall I do?"

She indeed was in a dilemma; but she had often boasted that she never yet was in so straitened a spot that she could not devise some means of extricating herself, and she relied on the Master she served to aid her in this difficulty. She never brought her books home and as the reader will ere this have surmised, she was in the daily habit of writing a sketch of her lesson on foolscap, and then reading it off. When school first commenced she had asked the privilege of sitting in her seat while reciting and by this means she could hold the paper under her desk and thus avoid Mr. Wilmot's suspicion. Her lessons for the next day were unusually long and hard, and as Mr. Miller would be present, she dared not resort to her usual artifice, particularly after what had been said about her "notes." She knew she never could learn all that long lesson in school hours, neither would she fail of having it for anything. What could she do? For some time [pg 021] she sat by the dying embers, with her dark face buried in her hands, revolving in her mind the best scheme by which to outwit Mr. Miller.

At last she rose up and a malicious smile of exultation passed over her features. She looked at the clock and saw it was already half-past ten, and then stealing softly to the bedside where Fanny lay quietly sleeping, she bent down and assured herself that her sister really was unconscious of her movements. She then hastily threw on her overshoes, cloak and hood and stealing noiselessly down the stairs, was soon in the open air alone in the darkness of the night. Just as she shut the door of the house, the watch dog, Tiger, came bounding furiously toward her with an angry growl. She silenced the fierce animal by saying, "Down, Tiger—poor Tige—don't you know me?" After quieting the dog, she proceeded on her strange errand, which was to obtain her books from the schoolhouse, which was more than half a mile distant.

The mud, which was very deep, was not more than half frozen, and at each step she sank into a mixture of mud, snow and ice. Still she kept fearlessly on, till at last she found herself in the midst of the thick woods. Here her courage somewhat failed her, for she called to mind all the stories she had ever heard of runaways, who were said to walk abroad at this dark hour of the night. Once she thought she saw the giant form of a negro standing in her path, but it proved to be a black stump, and she was about laughing at her fears, when her ear detected the sound of a light, rapid tread coming toward her. Almost paralyzed with terror, she stood perfectly still and listened for the sound to be repeated, but all was silent, and again she went on her way, and soon reached the school house.

But here a new difficulty presented itself. The house was locked and the key was in Mr. Wilmot's pocket; but the old adage, "where there's a will, there's a way," came into her mind, so she felt around on the half frozen ground till she found a long rail, which she placed against a window; then climbing up, she raised the sash, and in a moment was in the schoolroom. The atmosphere of the room was still comfortable and she stopped for a moment at the stove to warm her benumbed fingers, then groping her way to her desk, she easily found her books and made her way out of the house in the same manner that she had entered.

Just as she reached the ground a large, dark object sprang toward her and two glittering eyes looked up into her face. [pg 022] She uttered a loud shriek and was answered by a low whine, which she instantly recognized as belonging to Tiger. "Why, Tiger," she exclaimed, "how you frightened me! What did you follow me for?" It seems Tiger had thought there must be something wrong, or his mistress would not be out at this unreasonable hour, so he had followed on after her. She was noways displeased at this, for she liked not the idea of again going alone through the wood, but with Tiger for a companion she went fearlessly on and reached home just an hour after she had left it.

On entering her room she struck a light and then tried to warm her chilled limbs over a few faint coals which still glimmered on the hearth; but there was no wood in the room and she dared not go for any, so she sat down with her cloak still around her, and for four long hours studied as she had never done before in all her life. At the end of that time her lessons were very nearly learned, and sick with cold and fatigue, she threw aside her books and prepared for bed.

Her movements awoke Fanny, who, on seeing her sister up at that late hour of the night, started with surprise, and exclaimed, "What is it, Julia? What is the

matter?" Julia immediately extinguished the light, lest her sister should discover the books and then said, "Nothing, Fanny, nothing; only I have the toothache, and I got up for the camphor, but I cannot find the bottle anywhere."

"The camphor is downstairs," said Fanny, "but I will go for it if you wish me to. Does your tooth ache very much?"

"Yes, rather," said Julia, and her kind-hearted sister arose and found her way in the dark downstairs to her mother's room.

"What in thunder's come now?" called out Mr. Middleton. "'Pears like somebody's been tousing round the house all night."

"It's only I, father," said Fanny. "Julia has the toothache, and I am after the camphor bottle."

"Oh, it's you, Sunshine, is it? The camphire's on the mantlety. Be keerful and not break it, honey."

While Fanny was after the camphor, Julia arose, and seizing her books, threw them hastily into her bureau drawer. She then sprang back into bed and when Fanny came in she was making a very appropriate moaning on account of her aching tooth!

"How cold you are, sister," said Fanny; "let me warm my shawl and put it around you."

[pg 023]"You can't warm it, for their is neither fire nor wood," said Julia; "and besides, my tooth is much better now."

So Fanny lay down by her sister, and the two, purity and guilt, were soon fast asleep, side by side, and the angel of innocence spread his broad wing protectingly over the yellow locks of the one, while a serpent lay coiled in the dark tresses of the other.

Chapter III

RESULTING IN A BETROTHAL AND A TEMPEST

[pg 024]At the breakfast table next morning Julia's pale face was noticed and commented upon.

"She had a violent toothache last night, which kept her awake," said Fanny.

"Now I think of it," said Mr. Middleton, "I wonder, Tempest, how you can have the toothache, for you are always bragging about your handsome, healthy teeth, and say you hain't a rotten fang in your head."

Julia colored, for what her father said was true, neither did she remember of ever having had the toothache in her life; but quickly recovering herself, she said, "Neither have I a decayed tooth. It was more of a faceache, I suppose, than the genuine toothache."

"Probably you have taken some cold," said Mr. Wilmot.

"I think quite likely I have," retorted Julia, and so the toothache matter was dismissed for the time. Mr. Miller, however, thought he could see in it a plan of Julia's to avoid going to school that day and when he heard Mrs. Middleton say, "Julia, as it is so cold and chilly, perhaps you had better not go out," he was rather surprised to hear her reply, "Oh, no, mother; Mr. Miller is going with us and I would not miss of being there for anything."

So the party proceeded together to the schoolhouse. When school commenced Julia took her books and going up to Mr. Wilmot, said, loudly enough for Mr. Miller to hear: "Mr. Wilmot, do you know that you gave me a very hard lesson

for today?"

"Yes, Julia," said he, "I know it is hard and long, and as you do not seem well, I will excuse you from as much of it as you choose, or from the whole of it, if you like."

"No, no," said Julia; "Mr. Miller is here and I would like to show him that I have improved since last winter, when, as I fear, I was often sadly remiss in my studies. All I want to [pg 025] tell you is that if I do not recite as well as usual, you mustn't scold me a bit; will you?"

"Oh, certainly not," said Mr. Wilmot, and then he added in a tone so low that no one heard but Julia, "I could not scold you, dear Julia."

Thus flattered, the young lady took her seat and for a time seemed very intensely occupied with her lessons. At last she opened her portfolio and, taking from it a sheet of foolscap, cast an exulting glance toward Fanny and Mr. Miller, the latter of whom was watching her movements. She then took her gold pencil and commenced scribbling something on the paper. By the time her lesson was called she laid the paper on the desk, and prepared to do honor to herself and teacher. The moving of the paper attracted Mr. Wilmot's notice, and going toward her, he very gently said, "I presume you have no objection to letting me see what you have written here."

She at first put out her hand as if to prevent him from taking it, but at last she suffered him to do so, but tried to look interestingly confused. Mr. Wilmot read what was written and then smiling passed it to his friend, who looked at it and saw that it was a piece of tolerably good blank verse.

"Is this your composition, Julia?" said Mr. Miller.

"Yes, sir," she replied.

"And have your 'notes' always been of this nature?" asked Mr. Wilmot.

"That, or something similar," said Julia. "I find no difficulty in learning my lesson by once reading, and as I am very fond of poetry, I like to employ the rest of my time in trying my powers at it!"

Mr. Wilmot looked at Mr. Miller, as much as to say, "I hope you are satisfied,"

and then proceeded to hear Julia's lesson, which was well-learned and well-recited. Julia's recitation being over, Fanny's class was called. Fanny came hesitatingly, for she knew her lesson was but poorly learned. That morning she had found under her desk a love letter from Bill Jeffrey, and she and some of the other girls had spent so much time in laughing over it, and preparing an answer, that she had scarcely thought of her lesson. She got through with it, however, as well as she could, and was returning to her seat when Mr. Miller called her to him and said reprovingly, "Fanny, why did you not have a better lesson?"

"Oh, Mr. Miller," she said, almost crying, "I did intend to, but I forgot all about your being here"; and then, as a new thought struck her, she said mischievously, "and besides I [pg 026] have spent all the morning writing an answer to Bill Jeffrey's love letter!"

At this unlooked-for speech, all the scholars burst into a laugh and directed their eyes toward the crestfallen Bill, who seemed so painfully embarrassed that Fanny regretted what she had said, and as soon as school was out for the morning she went to him and told him she was sorry for so thoughtlessly exposing him to ridicule; "but," added she, "Billy, I'll tell you what, you mustn't write me any more love letters, for 'tis not right to do such things at school; neither need you bring me any more candy or raisins. I don't object to your giving me a nice big apple occasionally, but candy and raisins you had better give to the little children. And now to prove that I am really your friend, if you will get that old dogeared arithmetic of yours, I will show you how to do some of those hard sums which trouble you so."

Billy was surprised. The butt of the school, he was accustomed to the jeers of his companions, but such kindness, and from Fanny, too, was unexpected. He, however, drew from his desk his old slate and arithmetic and he and Fanny were soon deep in the mysteries of compound fractions. A half hour passed away and at the end of that time Billy's sums were done.

"Now, Billy," said Fanny, "see that you do not send me any more letters, and mind, too, and not wink at me so often; you will remember?" Bill gave the required promise and Fanny bounded away in quest of her schoolmates, who laughed at her for taking so much pains with such a dolt as Bill Jeffrey. That afternoon Fanny resolved to retrieve her character as a scholar; so she applied herself closely to her task, and before recitation hour arrived she had learned every word of her lesson. But alas for poor Fanny. She was always stumbling

into some new difficulty, and fate, this afternoon, seemed resolved to play a sorry trick upon her.

The schoolhouse stood at the foot of a long, steep hill, which would have been chosen for a capital sliding place by New York boys; but in Kentucky the winters are, comparatively speaking, so mild that the boys know but little of that rare fun, "sliding down hill." The winter of which we are speaking was, however, unusually severe, and the schoolboys had persevered until they had succeeded in making a tolerably nice sliding place, and they had also furnished themselves with a goodly number of rather rough-looking sleds, of which Bill Jeffrey owned the largest. The girls were all anxious to try a ride down the hill, and none more so than [pg 027] Fanny; but the boys would not lend their sleds, and the girls would not ride with the boys, and as the latter always hid their precious sleighs, the girls had as yet never succeeded in their wishes. But on this day, Bill Jeffrey, touched by Fanny's unlooked-for kindness, whispered to her, just as school was commencing, that she might take his big sled at recess.

This was a treat indeed, and when recess came, Fanny, with half a dozen other girls, climbed to the top of the hill, and began piling on to Bill's old sled. It was settled that Fanny should guide the craft, and numerous were the cautions of the girls that she should "mind and steer straight."

"Oh, yes, I'll do that," said Fanny; "but wouldn't it be funny," added she, "if we should make a mistake and go plump into the schoolhouse!"

At last all was ready, and the vehicle got under way. At first it moved slowly, and the loud, merry laugh of the girls rang out on the clear, cool air; but each moment it increased in swiftness, and by the time it was half-way down the hill, was moving at an astonishingly rapid rate. Fanny lost her presence of mind and, with it, her ability to guide the sled, so that they passed the point where they should have turned and made directly for the schoolhouse door, which flew open, as once did the gates for the famous John Gilpin. There was no entryway to the building, but as the sled struck the door the jolt threw off all the girls except Fanny, who manfully kept her seat; and so made her grand entrance into the schoolroom, stopping not till she reached the stove, and partially upsetting it, to the great astonishment of the teacher, visitor, and boys, the latter of whom set up a loud huzza. Poor Fanny! 'Twas her first sled ride, and she felt sure it would be her last; but she resolved to make the best of it, so she looked up from under her curls and said very demurely, "Please, Mr. Wilmot, may I stop at this station?"

I do not like being so near the engine!" meaning the stove, whose proximity made her quarters a little uncomfortable.

Mr. Wilmot gave her permission to take her seat, which she readily did, wondering why it was that she always managed to do something which made her appear ridiculous, just when she wanted to appear the best. Her mishap gave secret pleasure to Julia, who delighted to have Fanny appear as badly as possible, and she felt particularly pleased when she saw that Fanny's strange ride had scattered all the ideas from her head, for the afternoon's lessons were but little better recited than the morning, and at its close Julia gave her a look of malicious triumph, which Mr. Miller observing, said, as if [pg 028] apologising for Fanny, that he was sure that she had every word of her lesson before recess, but it was no wonder she was somewhat disconcerted at the unexpected termination of her ride. Fanny smiled gratefully upon him through her tears, which she could not restrain; but her tears were like April showers—they did not last long, and that night, at the supper table, when Mr. Miller related her adventure to her father, she joined as gayly as any one in the laugh which followed.

Julia was much displeased to think that Fanny's "ridiculous conduct," as she called it, should be told of and laughed at as if it were something amusing. She was anxious, too, that Mr. Miller should draw his visit to a close, but as he did not seem inclined to do so, she resolved to make the most of it, and give him a few new ideas. She knew that Fanny had ever been his favorite and she very naturally supposed that the reason of his preference was because he thought she possessed a very lovely, amiable disposition. She determined to make him think otherwise, and set herself at work to execute a plan, which fully showed the heartless deception which almost always characterized her actions.

Fortune seemed to favor her, for after supper her father and mother announced their intention of spending the evening at one of the neighbors', and soon after they left Mr. Wilmot, who had letters to write, retired to his room, together with Mr. Miller. As soon as they were gone Julia repaired to the negro quarters and, by dint of threats, flattery and promises of reward, finally prevailed upon Luce to join with her in her dark plot. They then went to Julia's sleeping room and carefully opened the closet door, so that every word of their conversation could be heard in the adjoining room.

Julia's voice was strangely like her sister's, and by means of imitating her she

hoped to deceive both Mr. Wilmot and Mr. Miller, who were startled by a loud, angry voice, exclaiming, "Come, you black imp, no more lies, you know you've stolen it, so just confess, and tell me where it is."

The young gentlemen looked at each other in surprise, for the voice was like Fanny's, and yet it was so unnatural for her to be in such a passion that they thought it impossible. Their fears were, however, soon confirmed by Luce, who said, "Oh, Miss Fanny, Lor' knows I never tached it. Now, sartin I knows nothin' 'bout it."

"Hold your jaw, or I'll slap your mouth for you, you lying thief!" said Julia (alias Fanny). "Of course you've got it, for no one else has been in here; so tell where you hid it."

[pg 029]"Lordy massy! How can I tell, when I dun know nothin' whar 'tis," said Luce.

"There, take, that to brighten up your ideas," said Fanny, and at the same time there was, the sound of a blow, which was followed by an outcry from Luce, who exclaimed, "Oh—oh—oh—Miss Fanny, don't go for to whip me, 'case I haint nothin' to tell; if I had I'd tell right off. I haint seed your hankercher 'tall. Mebby you've done drapped it somewhar."

Just then the door opened, and Julia, again speaking naturally, was heard to say, "Why, Fanny, what are you doing just as soon as mother is gone? Luce, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Miss Julia," replied Luce, "Miss Fanny done lost her fine hankercher, and she say how I stole it, but I haint."

"What makes you think Luce has got your handkerchief, Fanny?" asked Julia.

"Because I left it on the table, and 'tisn't there now; and no one has been in the room except Luce," replied Fanny.

"Very likely you have put it in your drawer and forgotten it; let me look," said Julia.

There was a moment's silence, and then Julia was heard to exclaim, "There it is, just as I thought. Here it is, safe in your box. I do wish, sister, you would not be

quite so hasty, but stop a little before you condemn others." So saying, the party left the room.

While this scene was taking place, Fanny was quietly seated by the fire in the sitting room, getting her lesson for the next day. At last her eye chanced to fall upon a purse which Julia was knitting for her father and which she had promised to finish that night.

"I wonder," said Fanny to herself—"I wonder where Julia is gone so long? She told father she would finish his purse this evening, and he will scold so, if it is not done, that I believe I'll knit on it till she returns."

Suiting the action to the word, she caught up the purse, and when Julia returned to the sitting room, she found her sister busily engaged in knitting for her.

"Why, Julia," said Fanny, "where have you been so long; I thought you were never coming back, so I have been knitting on your purse, for I was afraid you would not get it done, and then father would scold, you know."

As Julia looked into her sister's bright, innocent face and thought of all her kindness, her conscience smote her for the wrong she had done, but quickly hushing the faithful monitor, she thought, "Never mind; it is natural for me to be bad. I cannot help it."

[pg 030]Meantime the gentlemen above were discussing the conversation which they had overheard.

"Is it possible," said Mr. Miller, "that I have been so deceived in Fanny, and that, after all, she is as passionate as her sister?"

"As passionate as her sister," repeated Mr. Wilmot; "I think we have good proof that she is much more so. I hope you are now convinced that Fanny is not infallible, though I will confess I am surprised and disappointed, for I thought she was really of a very gentle nature."

Mr. Miller did not reply directly, but went on, as if speaking to himself, "Oh, Fanny, Fanny, how has my idol fallen! I never would have believed it, but for such convincing evidence."

He was indeed sorely disappointed. He had always thought of Fanny as the

embodiment of almost every female virtue, and although she was so young, hope had often whispered to him of a joyous future when she, whom her father designated as "Sunshine," should also shed a halo of sunlight around another fireside. But now the illusion was painfully dispelled, for sooner would he have taken the Egyptian asp to his bosom than chosen for a companion one whom he knew to possess a hasty, violent temper.

Next morning he took leave of Mr. Middleton's family. When it came Fanny's turn to bid him good-by, she noticed the absence of his accustomed cordiality, and wondered much what she had done to displease him. That night she wept herself to sleep thinking of it, while Julia, secretly exulting in her sister's uneasiness, laughed at her for her foolishness, and said, "It was probably a mere fancy, and even if it were not; what matter was it? What did she care for Mr. Miller's good or bad opinion? She mustn't expect everybody to pet and caress her just as her father did, who was an old fool anyway, and petted her and her dogs alternately." This kind of reasoning did not convince Fanny, and for many days her face wore a sad, troubled expression.

Thus the winter passed away. Spring came, and with it came an offer to Mr. Wilmot of a very lucrative situation as teacher in a school in Frankfort. At first he hesitated about accepting it, for there was, in the old rough stone house, an attraction far greater than the mere consideration of dollars and cents. Julia at last settled the matter, by requesting him to accept the offer, and then urge her father to let her go to Frankfort to school also.

[pg 031]"And why do you wish to go there, Julia?" said Mr. Wilmot, laying his hand on her dark, glossy hair.

"Because," she answered, "it will be so lonely here when you are gone."

"And why will it be lonely, dearest Julia?" continued he.

"Oh," said she, looking up very innocently in his face, "you are the only person who understands me; by all others, whatever I do or say is construed into something bad. I wish you were my brother, for then I might have been better than I am."

"Oh, I do not wish I was your brother," said Mr. Wilmot, "for then I could never have claimed a dearer title, which I hope now to do at some future time."

Then followed a declaration of love, which Julia had long waited most anxiously for. Most eloquently did Mr. Wilmot pour out the whole tide of his affection for the beautiful but sinful girl, who, in a very becoming and appropriate manner, murmured an acknowledgment of requited love. Thus the two were betrothed.

And truly it was a fitting time for such a betrothal. The air had been hot and sultry all day, and now the sky was overspread with dark clouds, while everything indicated an approaching storm. While Mr. Wilmot was yet speaking, it burst upon them with great violence. Peal after peal of thunder followed each other, in rapid succession, and just as Julia whispered a promise to be Mr. Wilmot's forever, a blinding sheet of lightning lit up for a moment her dark features, and was instantly succeeded by a crash, which shook the whole house from its foundation, and drew from Julia a cry of terror, which brought Fanny to see what was the matter, and made Mr. Middleton swear, "Thar was noise enough from the tempest outdoors, without the 'Tempest' in the house raising such a devil of a fuss!"

Chapter IV

DR. LACEY APPEARS UPON THE SCENE

[pg 032]When Mr. Middleton was spoken to on the subject of sending Julia to Frankfort, he at first refused outright. "No," said he, "indeed she shan't go! What does she want of any more flummerdiddle notions? What she does know is a damage to her."

"But do you not wish to give your daughters every possible advantage?" said Mr. Wilmot.

"Who's said anything about my daughters?" said Mr. Middleton. "It's nobody but Tempest, and she's always kickin' up some boobery. Now if 'twas Sunshine, why, I might—but no, neither of 'em shall go. It's all stuff, the whole on't."

So saying, he turned on his heel and walked off, while Julia burst into tears and repaired to her own room, whither she was soon followed by her mother, who tried to console her. Said she, "Why, Julia, you don't take the right course with your father. Why do you not propose having your sister accompany you? For, if you go, she will, and you know she can always coax father to do as she pleases."

This was rather humiliating to Julia, but she concluded it was her only alternative, so she dried her eyes, and seeking out her sister, very soon talked her into a strong desire to try the mysteries of a school in Frankfort, and also drew from her a promise to try her powers of argument upon her father. Accordingly, that evening Fanny made an attack upon him, and as her mother had predicted, she was perfectly successful. It was settled that she and Julia should both go, and the next morning early Mr. Middleton set off for Frankfort to find "as smart a

boarding place for his gals as anybody had." There was as yet no boarding house connected with the school, and he was obliged to find a place for them in some one of the numerous boarding houses with which Frankfort abounds. He at last decided upon a very genteel establishment, kept by a Mrs. Crane, who at first hesitated about receiving into her [pg 033] family persons who possessed so rough and shabby-looking a father.

But Mr. Middleton brought her to a decision by saying, "what the deuce you waiting for? Is it because I've got on cowhide stogies and a home-made coat? Thunder and lightning! Don't you know I'm old Middleton, worth at least two hundred thousand?"

This announcement changed the current of Mrs. Crane's ideas. The daughters were not rough, if the father was, so she decided to take them, and for the very moderate sum of seven dollars per week, promised to give them all the privileges of her house. The first day of June was fixed on for them to leave home and at sunrise Mr. Middleton's carriage stood at the door, waiting for the young ladies to make their appearance. Julia had long been ready and was waiting impatiently for Fanny, who was bidding the servants an affectionate good-bye. Each one had received from her some little token of love, and now they all stood in one corner of the yard, to look at their darling as long as possible.

"Lor' bless her," said one; "Kentuck hain't many like her, nor never will have."

"No, nor Frankfort nuther," said a second. While a third added, "No, and I reckon heaven hadn't nuther!"

To which a fourth responded, "Amen."

Here old Aunt Katy, who had nursed Mr. Middieton and his children after him, hobbled up to Fanny, and laying her hard, shriveled black hand on her young mistress' bright locks, said, "The Lord who makes the wind blow easy like on the sheared lamb, take keer of my sweet child and bring her back agin to poor old Aunt Katy, who'll be all dark and lonesome, when Sunshine's done gone."

This was regarded as a wonderful speech by the negroes, and as none of them could hope to equal it, they contented themselves by lustily blowing their trombones and wiping the same on their shirt sleeves, or the corner of their aprons. At last the good-byes were all said, Julia merely noticed the blacks with a slight nod, and then sprang nimbly into the carriage, which disappeared from

view just as the negroes struck up in a loud, clear and not unmusical tone:

"Oh, it's lonesome now on the old plantation,
It's lonesome now on the old plantation,
It's lonesome now on the old plantation,
Case Sunshine's gone away."

[pg 034]"Stop your yelp, can't you?" said Mr. Middleton, but his voice indicated that he would not be very much displeased even if they did not obey, so they tuned their pipes still louder, and this time the six dogs joined in the chorus, with a long and mournful howl.

"Thar, that'll do," said Mr. Middleton, "now to your work, quick; and mind the one that works best this week shall go Saturday and carry Miss Crane some strawberries!"

The negroes needed no other incentive to work than the prospect before them of going to see Fanny. Never had Mr. Middleton had so much accomplished in one week. When Friday night came, it was hard telling which was the favored one. At last it was settled that Ike should go to Frankfort, and the rest should have a sort of holiday. Ike was a sprightly negro boy of seventeen, and almost idolized his young mistress Fanny. Long before "sun up" (a favorite expression in Kentucky for sunrise), he had filled his basket with strawberries, and just as the first rays of sunlight streaked the eastern hills, he started on his mission, laden with numerous messages of love for "sweet Miss Fanny," and a big cranberry pie from Aunt Judy, who was "sartin the baby wanted some of old Judy's jimcracks by this time."

Meantime Julia and Fanny had become tolerably well established both in school and at Mrs. Crane's. Julia was perfectly delighted with her new quarters, for she said "everything was in style, just as it should be," and she readily adopted all the "city notions." But poor Fanny was continually committing some blunder. She would forget to use her napkin, or persist in using her knife instead of her four-tined silver fork. These little things annoyed Julia excessively, and numerous were the lectures given in secret to Fanny, who would laugh merrily at her sister's distress and say she really wished her father would dine some day at Mrs. Crane's table.

"Heaven forbid that he should!" said Julia. "I should be mortified to death."

"They would not mind his oddities," said Fanny, "for I overheard Mrs. Crane telling the exquisitely fashionable Mrs. Carrington that our father was 'a quizzical old savage, but rich as a nabob, and we should undoubtedly inherit a hundred thousand dollars apiece.' And then Mrs. Carrington said, 'Oh, is it possible? One can afford to patronize them.' And then she added something else which I think I'll not tell you."

"Oh, do," said Julia. "It too bad to raise my curiosity and not gratify it."

[pg 035]"Well, then," said Fanny, "Mrs. Carrington said, 'There is a rumor that the eldest Miss Middleton is engaged to Mr. Wilmot. I wonder at it, for with her extreme beauty and great fortune, she could command a more eligible match than a poor pedagogue.'"

The next morning at breakfast Mrs. Crane informed her boarders that she expected a new arrival the next day, Friday. She said, "It is a new gentleman from New Orleans. His name is Dr. Lacey. His parents were natives of Boston, Massachusetts, but he was born in New Orleans, and will inherit from his father a large fortune; but as he wished for a profession, he chose that of medicine. He is a graduate of Yale College and usually spends his summers North, so this season he stops in Frankfort, and honors my house with his presence. He is very handsome and agreeable, and these young ladies might put a lock and key on their hearts."

The last part of this speech was directed to Julia, who blushed deeply, and secretly wondered if Dr. Lacey were as handsome as Mr. Wilmot. She frequently found herself thinking about him during the day, but Fanny never gave him a thought until evening, when, as she and her sister were together in their room, the latter suddenly exclaimed, "I wonder if Dr. Lacey will be here at breakfast tomorrow morning."

"And if he is," said Fanny, "I suppose you want me to be very careful to use my fork, and break my egg correctly."

"I think it would be well for you always to try and show as much good breeding as possible," said Julia.

"Well," returned Fanny, "I reckon this Dr. Lacing or Dr. Lacework—what's his name?—will ever be anything to us, for I am sure he'd never think of me, and you are engaged to a man who is much better than any of your New Orleans pill

bags."

Little did Fanny dream how closely the "New Orleans pill bags" were to be connected with the rest of her life. Julia said nothing but probably thought more.

When the young ladies entered the breakfast room next morning they noticed seated opposite them a tall, dark, handsome young man, whom Mrs. Carrington introduced to them as Dr. Lacey. There was something remarkably pleasing in his manner, and before breakfast was over he had completely won Fanny's good opinion by kindly breaking her egg for her, and when she had the misfortune to drop the fork, he drew the attention of the company from her by relating an anecdote on himself, which was that he was once invited to a dinner party at the Hon. Henry Clay's, and as he was trying [pg 036] to be very graceful and polite, he unfortunately upset his plate, the contents of which, together with his knife and fork, were deposited in his lap. This story raised such a laugh that all forgot Fanny, who gave Dr. Lacey such a look of gratitude that after breakfast he asked Mrs. Crane who the pale, blue-eyed girl was, and received about the same information that Mrs. Carrington had received concerning her.

That day Mr. Wilmot's eyes were not as handsome nor his teeth as white as usual in the estimation of Julia, who often found herself wondering why he did not wear whiskers. That evening he called at Mrs. Crane's and for the first time in her life Julia was not much pleased to see him. He, however, rose ten per cent in her estimation when she saw the familiar and cordial manner with which Dr. Lacey treated him. They talked as though they were old and dear friends.

After Mr. Wilmot had left, Dr. Lacey said, "Why, that Wilmot is a remarkably intelligent man and very agreeable."

Then turning to Mrs. Carrington, he added, "Let me see—is he a teacher?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Carrington, "and these young ladies are his pupils, and report says he looks after the heart of one of them as well as the head."

"Well," continued he, "whichever one is favored with his preference should feel honored, for he is a capital fellow." Just then his eye fell upon an elegant piano which stood in the room and he asked Mrs. Carrington to favor him with some music.

"Perhaps Miss Middleton will oblige you," said Mrs. Carrington, looking at

Julia.

"Thank you," said Julia, "I am just taking lessons," so Mrs. Carrington sat down to the instrument, and as Julia saw how skillfully her white, jewelled fingers touched the keys, she resolved to spare no pains to become as fine a player as Mrs. Carrington, particularly as she saw that Dr. Lacey was very fond of music and kept calling for piece after piece till the evening was somewhat advanced.

"You ought to play, golden locks," said he to Fanny, at the same time taking one of her long yellow curls in his hand.

"I am taking lessons," said Fanny, "but I make awkward work, for my fingers are all thumbs, as you might know by my dropping that four-tined pitchfork this morning!"

Dr. Lacey laughed heartily at this and called her an "original little piece," at the same time saying, "You remind me of my sister Anna."

"Where does she live?" asked Fanny.

[pg 037]Dr. Lacey sighed as he answered, "For three years she has lived in heaven; three long years to us, who loved her so dearly."

Fanny observed that he seemed agitated while speaking of his sister, so she dared not ask him more about her, although she wished very much to do so. Perhaps he read her wishes in her face, for he went on to tell her more of his sister, who, he said, drooped day by day, and they took her to Cuba, but she daily grew worse, and often spoke of dying and heaven, and then one bright summer morning she passed away from them, and they buried her under a group of dark orange trees. That night Fanny dreamed of sweet Anna Lacey, sleeping so quietly in her lone grave, far off 'neath the orange trees of Cuba. Julia had dreams, too, but of a different nature. In her fancy she beheld Dr. Lacey at her feet, with his handsome person, princely fortune, and magnificent home near New Orleans, while off in the dim distance loomed up a dark coffin, in which was the cold, pale form of one whom she knew too well. Was her dream an omen of the coming future? We shall see.

Next morning just as the town clock rang out the hour of eight, a strange-looking vehicle, to which was attached a remarkably poor-looking horse, was seen picking its way slowly through the upper part of Main street, Frankfort. The

driver of this establishment was a negro boy, whom we readily recognize as our friend Ike. He was taking it leisurely through the town, stopping before every large "smart" looking house to reconnoiter, and see if it resembled the one his master had described.

At last he was accosted by a young African, who called out, "Ho, thar, old boy! What you keepin' yer eyes peeled and yer' mouth open for? Is you catchin' flies?"

"No, sar," replied Ike. "I's tryin' to find Miss Crane's boardin' house."

"Oh, yes; wall, it's up t'other way. You jist turn that old rackerbone of your'n straight round and turn down that ar street, whar you see that steeple, and, the fust house on the corner is Miss Crane's. But say, is you and that ar quadruped jist out of the ark?"

"I dun know nothin' 'bout yer ark," said Ike, whose Scripture knowledge was rather limited, "but I 'longs to Marster Josh, and I'm goin' to see Miss Fanny—and now I think of it, won't you ride?"

"Lord, no," said the negro; "I'm in a great hurry; goin' [pg 038] arter the doctor for ole miss, who's sartin she's goin' for to die this time."

"You don't seem in much of a hurry," said Ike.

"No," returned the other; "old miss has died a heap o' times, by spells, so I reckon she'll hang on this time till I git back, jist so she can jaw me for being gone so long."

So they parted, the stranger negro to go for the doctor and Ike to go to Mrs. Crane's, with his berries, and Aunt Judy's cranberry pie. He had often wondered during his ride whether Fanny would not give him a piece of the pie. As often as this thought entered his brain, he would turn down the white napkin, and take a peep at the tempting pastry; then he would touch it with his fingers and finally take it up and smell of it just a little!

While he was making his way into Mrs. Crane's kitchen, Julia and Fanny were in their room, the windows of which were open and looked out upon a balcony, which extended entirely around the house. There was no school that day, and Fanny was just wishing she could hear from home when a servant entered the

room and said there was a boy in the kitchen, who wished to see Miss Fanny.

"A boy want to see me," said Fanny; "who can it be?"

"Reckon he's from yer home 'case he says how he belongs to Marster Middleton," said the negro girl.

"Oh, joy!" exclaimed Fanny, "somebody from home; how glad I am. Come, Julia, won't you go down, too?"

"No, indeed," said Julia, scornfully, "I am not so anxious to see a greasy nigger. I hope you will not take it into your head to ask him up here."

But Fanny did not answer, for she was already half-way down the stairs. Going to the kitchen she found Ike and seemed as delighted to see him as though his skin had been snowy white. Ike delivered all his messages and then presented Aunt Judy's pie.

"Dear Aunt Judy," said Fanny, "how kind she is." Then seizing a knife she cut a liberal piece for Ike, who received it with many thanks.

"Now, Ike," said she, "you must remain here until I go out and get a ribbon for Aunt Judy's cap, and some tobacco for old Aunt Katy." So saying she ran upstairs to her room.

When she entered it, Julia exclaimed, "In the name of the people, what have you got now?"

"Oh, a pie, which Aunt Judy sent me," said Fanny.

"How ridiculous," answered Julia; "I don't think Mrs. Crane would thank Aunt Judy for sending pies to her house."

[pg 039]"Mrs. Crane need know nothing about it, and would not care if she did," said Fanny, and then she added, "Ike is downstairs, and he says father is coming after us in two or three weeks."

"Good heavens," said Julia; "what is he coming for? Why does he not send a servant?"

"And why cannot father come?" asked Fanny.

"Because," answered Julia, "who wants that old codger here? A pretty figure he'd cut, I think. I should be ashamed of him; and so would you, if you knew anything."

"I know he is odd," said Fanny; "but he is my father, and as such I would not be ashamed of him."

"Well, I am ashamed to own that he is my father, anyway," answered Julia; "but where are you going now?" she continued, as she saw her sister putting on her bonnet.

"I am going to buy some ribbon for Aunt Judy, some tobacco for Aunt Katy, and some candy for the children," answered Fanny.

"Well, I do believe you haven't common sense," said Julia, "but where is your money to buy all these things?"

"Oh," said Fanny, "I've concluded not to go and hear Fanny Kemble tonight. I'd rather spend the money for the servants; it will do them so much good."

"You certainly are a fool," said Julia. Fanny had been told that often, so she did not reply, but hastened downstairs and was soon in the street. As she turned the corner she could see the windows of her room, and the whole length of the balcony on that side of the building. Looking in that direction she saw Dr. Lacey sitting out on the balcony and so near her window that he must have heard all the conversation between herself and her sister! She thought, "Well, he of course thinks me a silly little dunce; but I do like our blacks, and if I ever own any of them, I'll first teach them to read and then send them all to Liberia." Full of this new plan, she forgot Dr. Lacey and ere she was aware of it had reached the store. She procured the articles she wished for, and returning to Mrs. Crane's, gave them to Ike, who was soon on his way home.

At supper that evening the conversation turned upon Fanny Kemble and the expected entertainment. "I suppose you are all going," said Mrs. Crane to her boarders. They all answered in the affirmative except Fanny, who was about to reply, when Dr. Lacey interrupted her by saying, "Miss Fanny, will you allow me to accompany you to hear Mrs. Butler this evening?"

[pg 040]Fanny was amazed. Was it possible that the elegant Dr. Lacey had honored her with an invitation to accompany him to the literary treat! She was too much surprised to answer him, until he said, "Do not refuse me, Miss Fanny, for I am resolved to have you go!" She then gracefully accepted his polite invitation, and at the same time glancing toward Julia and Mrs. Carrington, she saw that the former frowned darkly, while the latter looked displeased. This dampened her happiness somewhat, and as soon as supper was over she hurried to her room.

Mrs. Carrington was a gay, fashionable woman, and was just as willing to receive attention from unmarried gentlemen now as she had been in her girlish days. Her husband was an officer in the United States army and was absent a great part of the time, but she had never cared much for him, so she managed to pass the time of his absence very happily in flirting with every handsome wealthy young gentleman who came in her way. When Dr. Lacey appeared, she immediately appropriated him to herself. 'Tis true, she somewhat feared Julia might become a rival, but of the modest, unassuming little Fanny, she had never once thought, and was greatly surprised when Dr. Lacey offered to escort her to the reading. She had resolved on having his company herself, and when she saw the frown on Julia's face, she flattered herself that she could yet prevent Fanny's going.

Accordingly, after supper, she asked Julia to go with her for a moment to her room. Julia had become perfectly charmed with the fascinating manners of Mrs. Carrington, so she cheerfully assented, and the two proceeded together to her richly furnished apartments. When there, Mrs. Carrington said, "Miss Middleton, do you not think your sister too young to accept the attentions of any gentleman, at least one who is so much of a stranger to the family?"

Julia well knew that the fact of Dr. Lacey's being a stranger was of no consequence in Mrs. Carrington's estimation, but she quickly answered, "Yes, I do; but what can be done now?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Carrington, "your sister is very gentle and if we go to her and state the case as it is, I am confident she will yield."

So they went to Fanny's room, where they found her sitting by the window, thinking how much pleasure she would enjoy that night.

Julia commenced operations by saying, "Fanny, what made you promise Dr. Lacey that you would go with him tonight?"

[pg 041]"Why," said Fanny, "was there anything wrong in it?"

Here Mrs. Carrington's soft voice chimed in, "Nothing very wrong, dear Fanny, but it is hardly proper for a young school girl to appear in public, attended by a gentleman who is not her brother or cousin."

Poor Fanny! Her heart sank, for she was afraid she would have to give up going after all; but a thought struck her, and she said, "Well, then, it is not proper for Julia to go with Mr. Wilmot, and she has promised to do so."

"That is very different," said Mrs. Carrington; "Julia is engaged to Mr. Wilmot, and unless you are engaged to Dr. Lacey," continued she, sarcastically, "it will not be proper at all for you to go with him."

"But I promised I would," said Fanny.

"That you can easily remedy," answered Mrs. Carrington. "Just write him a note and I will send it to him."

Thus beset, poor Fanny sat down and wrote, as Mrs. Carrington dictated, the following note:

"DR. LACEY:

"SIR—Upon further reflection I think it proper to decline your polite invitation for tonight.

"Yours very respectfully,

"FANNY MIDDLETON."

"That will do," said Mrs. Carrington; and ringing the bell, she dispatched a servant to carry the note to Dr. Lacey.

"You are a good girl to submit so readily," said Mrs. Carrington, laying her white

hand on Fanny's head. But Fanny's eyes were full of tears, and she did not answer; and Mrs. Carrington, sure of Dr. Lacey's attendance that evening, left the room exulting in the result of her plan. In a short time she deserted to the parlor, where she found Mr. Wilmot with Julia, but no Dr. Lacey, neither did he make his appearance at all, and after waiting impatiently for a time, she was at last obliged to accept the arm of the poor pedagogue, which was rather unwillingly offered, for Mr. Wilmot greatly preferred having Julia all to himself. She had become as dear to him as his own life and, in his opinion, her character was like her face—perfect. Deluded man! 'Twas well that he died before he had come to a knowledge of her sinfulness.

But to return to Fanny. After she was left alone by her sister, she threw herself upon the sofa, and burst into tears; but at length, wiping them away, she arose and went down to the parlor, determined to have a nice time practicing her [pg 042] music lesson. It was rather hard and with untiring patience she played it over and over, until she was suddenly startled by a voice behind her, saying, "Really, Miss Fanny, you are persevering." Looking up she saw Dr. Lacey, who had entered unperceived.

"Why, Dr. Lacey," said she, "how you frightened me! Why are you not at the reading?"

"Because," answered he, "when my lady breaks her engagement, I think I, too, can remain at home. But why did you change your mind, Miss Fanny? I thought you were anxious to go."

Fanny blushed painfully, and the tears came to her eyes, but she replied, "I was anxious to go, but they thought I had better not."

"And who is they?" asked the doctor; "and why did they think you had better not go?"

Fanny answered, "Mrs. Carrington and Julia said I was too young to go out with ___"

"With such a bad man as I am," said Dr. Lacey, laughing.

"Oh, no," said Fanny; "they do not think you bad; they said with any gentleman."

"Too young, are you?" said Dr. Lacey. "How old are you, Fanny?"

"I was sixteen last May," she replied.

"Sixteen; just as old as Anna was when she died, and just as old as my mother was when she was married; so it seems you are not too young to die, or to be married either, if you are too young to go out with me," said Dr. Lacey.

Fanny did not reply; and he continued, "Whom would you have gone with if you had not spent your money this morning for those old aunts?"

Fanny started; and giving him a searching look, was about to reply, when he anticipated her by saying, "Yes, Fanny, I overheard your conversation this morning, and I cannot sufficiently admire your generous self-denial. I have heard Fanny Kemble two or three times, so I did not care to hear her again; but I decided to go for the pleasure of having you hear her; but as you did not choose to go, I have remained here with you, and wish to have you tell me something about your parents and your home, and also wish you to ask me to go there some time."

Fanny answered, hesitatingly, "I am afraid you would not like to go there, Dr. Lacey."

"Why not?" said he. "Do you not like your home?"

"Oh, yes, very much," she replied; "but father is a little [pg 043] odd, and you might feel inclined to laugh at him; but he is very kind, and if you could forget his roughness, you would like him."

"I know I shall like him, just because he is your father," said Dr. Lacey.

He then turned the conversation upon other subjects, and Fanny found him so agreeable that she never thought of the hour until Mr. Wilmot, Mrs. Carrington and Julia suddenly entered the parlor.

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Carrington, "you have both stolen a march upon us."

"I hope you have been agreeably entertained, Dr. Lacey," said Julia, in an ironical tone.

"I assure you I have," said he, warmly "I do not remember having passed so pleasant an evening for a long, long time."

"I dare say not; Fanny is usually very interesting," was, Julia's contemptuous reply, and as Mr. Wilmot just then took his leave, she very haughtily left the room and went upstairs, muttering to herself, "Foiled for the first time in my life."

From this time nothing of particular importance occurred for two or three weeks, except that Dr. Lacey seemed each day to grow fonder of Fanny, which greatly annoyed Mrs. Carrington and Julia, both of whom spared no pains to make Fanny appear in as bad a light as possible. But Dr. Lacey understood their maneuvers, and whenever they were present seemed to take delight in being very attentive to Fanny. He ardently desired to see the father of the two girls, and ere long his wish was gratified. But of this we will speak in another chapter.

Chapter V

THE FATAL LETTER

[pg 044]Julia and Fanny had been gone from home about four weeks when Mr. Middleton suddenly determined "to go and see his gals" and bring them home. Accordingly he "fixed up right smart," as he thought, which meant that he took off his beard and put on "a bran new pair of jeans." He preferred driving his own carriage, so he set off alone for Frankfort.

It was Friday morning, and as his daughters were in school, he stalked into Mrs. Crane's parlor to wait for them. Spying the piano, he sat down to it, and commenced producing a series of unearthly sounds, not altogether unlike the fashionable music of the present day. Mrs. Carrington chanced to be crossing the hall and, hearing the noise from the parlor, looked in. As her eye fell upon the strange-looking, giant form of Mr. Middleton, she uttered a very delicate scream, and as she just then saw Dr. Lacey entering the house, she staggered back a few paces, and tried to faint very gracefully. But the doctor caught her in his arms just in time to restore her to consciousness!

Mr. Middleton now came toward them, exclaiming, "Lightning guns! What's to pay now? Skeered at me, are you, madam or miss, whichever you be? I won't hurt a har of your soft skull!"

"Ugh-u-u!" said Mrs. Carrington, shrinking from him in disgust, as he advanced toward her, and laid his large hand on her head, "just to see," as he said, "if she were made of anything besides jewelry, curls and paint."

At this allusion to her brilliant color, Mrs. Carrington relieved Dr. Lacey from

the delightful duty of supporting her, and disappeared up the stairs, saying in no very gentle tones, "What an old brute!"

"Fire away thar," called our Mr. Middleton. "I am an old brute, I suppose."

"But your right name is Mr. Middleton, I conclude," said Dr. Lacey.

[pg 045]Mr. Middleton started and answered, "How d'ye know that? Just as you'd know his satanic majesty, if he should appear to you?"

"Something upon that principle," said Dr. Lacey, laughing, "but," he continued, "I am glad to see you, Mr. Middleton. I suppose you have come to visit your daughters."

"Yes, and to take them home and let their mother and the rest of the blacks see them," answered Mr. Middleton; then after a pause he added, "They'll be right glad to see me, I reckon, or at least Sunshine will."

"Who is Sunshine?" asked Dr. Lacey.

"Well, now," said Mr. Middleton, "here you've lived with 'em four weeks and don't know that I call one Tempest and t'other Sunshine, and if you've any wit, you'll know which is Sunshine."

Just then a voice was heard to exclaim, "There, I told you father was here. I hear him now talking about Sunshine," and Fanny rushed in, and throwing her arms around her father's neck, kissed again and again his rough cheek, while he suddenly felt the need of his red and yellow cotton handkerchief, and muttered something about the "roads" being so infernal dusty that they made a fellow's eyes smart!

Then turning to Julia, who still stood in the door, he said, "Come, Tempest, none of your pranks! Come here and shake your old pap's paw. You needn't be afeared of this young spark, for he knows I'm your pap, and he hain't laughed at me neither." So Julia advanced and shook her father's hand with a tolerably good grace.

"I'm come for you to go home and see the folks," said Mr. Middleton; "so you pick up your duds—and mind not to take a cussed bandbox—and after dinner we'll start for home."

"It wants an hour of dinner time," said Julia, "and as we are not hungry, we can start in a few moments, if you like."

"Fury-ation," said Mr. Middleton, "I wonder if we can. Well, start on then afoot, if you're in such a hurry. I shan't budge an inch till I've had my dinner; besides, I want to see Mr. Wilmot."

Julia saw that she must submit to the mortification of seeing her father at Mrs. Crane's dinner table, and with a beating heart she heard the bell summon them to the dining room. Mrs. Carrington did not appear—her nerves had received too great a shock—and for that Julia was thankful. Dr. Lacey sat by her father and paid him every possible attention.

"Will you take soup, Mr. Middleton?" asked Mrs. Crane.

"What kind of soup? Beef soup, or mud turtle?"

[pg 046]"It is vermicelli," said Mrs. Crane, hardly able to keep her face straight.

"Vermifuge—vermifuge," repeated Mr. Middleton. "That's almighty queer stuff to make soup on. No. I'm 'bleeged to you; I ain't in need of that ar medicine."

Julia reddened, while Fanny burst into a laugh and said, "Father isn't much used to French soups, I think."

"Use your napkin, father," softly whispered Julia.

"What shall I use that for?" said he. "My trousers are all tobacco spit now, and grease won't hurt 'em any now. Halloo! Here waiter, bring me a decent fork, for Lord knows I can't eat with this here shovel and if I take my fingers Tempest'll raise a row de dow."

The servant looked at his mistress, who said, "Samuel, bring Mr. Middleton a steel fork."

When the dessert was brought in Mr. Middleton again exclaimed, as he took his plate of pudding, "Now what can this be?"

"It is tapioca pudding," said Mrs. Crane.

"Tap-an-oakky," returned Mr. Middleton. "Well, if you don't have the queerest things to eat! You ought to come to my house. We don't have any your chicken fixin's nor little three-cornered hankerchers laid out at each plate."

At last, to Julia's great relief, dinner was over, and she got her father started for home. Suddenly Mr. Middleton exclaimed, "That ar doctor is a mighty fine chap. Why don't you set your cap for him, Sunshine?"

"It would be of no use, father," answered Fanny.

"Wall, if I'm not mistaken, he's laid his snare for a bird, and I don't care how soon you fall into it, darling," said Mr. Middleton.

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Julia.

"Ho now, jealous, are you, Tempest?" said her father. "What in thunder do you think he'll want of you, who are engaged to Mr. Wilmot?"

This was a truth which had troubled Julia, and she greatly regretted her engagement, for she well knew Dr. Lacey never would think of her as long as he thought she belonged to another. She had watched with a jealous eye the growing intimacy between him and Fanny, and resolved to leave no means untried to prevent a union between them, and to secure the doctor for herself. To do this she knew she must break her engagement with Mr. Wilmot, and also give Dr. Lacey a bad opinion of her sister. She felt sure of success, for when did she undertake anything and fail? Sinful girl! [pg 047] She was freed from her engagement in a way she little dreamed of.

Four weeks from the time of her first visit home, word came that Mr. Wilmot was sick and would not be able to teach that day. He had been unwell for several days, and next morning it was announced that he had the typhoid fever. Fanny's first impulse was to go and see him, but Julia prevented her by saying that he would send for her when he wanted her.

That evening Dr. Lacey told Julia that Mr. Wilmot had expressed a wish to see her. She went rather unwillingly, and something in her manner must have betrayed it, for he seemed troubled, and regarded her with an anxious look. She however manifested no affection, and but very little interest for him, and inwardly resolved that when she came again her sister should accompany her. That night he grew worse, and as there was of course no school, Julia hired some

one to take herself and sister home. Earnestly did Fanny entreat her to remain and watch over Mr. Wilmot.

"I shall do no such thing," said Julia. "It would not be proper, and I should be talked about."

"Well, then," said Fanny, "I shall stay till mother sends for me. I do not care if I am talked about."

This rather pleased Julia, who said, "Well, you can stay if you like. I dare say you care more for him than I do, and you can tell him so, if you please."

"Oh, Julia," said Fanny, "what has changed you so toward Mr. Wilmot?"

"Nothing in particular," replied Julia. "I never liked him very much."

So Julia started for home, while Fanny took her station by the bedside of her beloved teacher. When Julia reached home, she found that her father had left the day before for Missouri. He owned land there, and as he had gone to make some improvements on it, he would probably be absent two months. Julia carelessly told her mother of Mr. Wilmot's illness, and that Fanny had stayed to watch him. When Mrs. Middleton heard this, her maternal fears were roused lest her daughter should take the fever, and in a few days she went herself to Frankfort to bring Fanny home.

She found Mr. Wilmot very ill, but not as yet dangerously so, and after staying a day, she announced her intention of taking Fanny home.

"Why not leave her?" said Dr. Lacey. "She seems peculiarly adapted to a sick room, and will do him more good than a dozen physicians."

[pg 048]"Yes, let her stay," said Mr. Wilmot, and drawing Mrs. Middleton closely to him, he whispered, "Tell Julia to come to me, will you?"

Mrs. Middleton promised that she would, but persisted in taking Fanny. When Mr. Wilmot's message was given to Julia, she said, "No, indeed, I'll not go. I could do him no good."

Ike was sent to Frankfort every day to inquire after Mr. Wilmot, and see if anything was wanted, and each night Fanny waited anxiously for his return. As

soon as she saw him enter the wood, she would run to him, and inquire for Mr. Wilmot. Julia, however, manifested no anxiety whatever. She would not have acknowledged that she hoped he would die, and yet each time that she heard he was better her spirits sank, for fear he would yet live. At last Ike brought to Fanny the joyful intelligence that the crisis was passed, and Mr. Wilmot was out of danger.

That night, in the solitude of her chamber, Julia communed with herself as follows: "And so he'll live after all. Well, I may as well let him know at once that I will not marry him." So saying, she opened her portfolio, and wrote the following note:

"Mr. Wilmot:

"Sir—When I became engaged to you I was very young and am still so; consequently, you will hardly be surprised when you learn that I have changed my mind and wish to have our engagement dissolved.

"Yours truly, as a friend,

"JULIA MIDDLETON."

Ike did not go to Frankfort again for two or three days, but when he did, he was the bearer of this heartless note. Mr. Wilmot was indeed better and when he heard Ike was in the house he expressed a desire to see him, as he wished to send some word to Julia. When Ike was ushered into the sick room, he immediately handed his young mistress' letter to Mr. Wilmot, who eagerly took it, for he recognized the handwriting of his idol. Hastily breaking the seal, he read twice the cruel lines before he was convinced that he read aright; then the paleness on his cheek grew paler, and was succeeded by a deep flush.

When Ike asked what he should tell the folks at home, Mr. Wilmot's voice was husky as he answered, "Nothing, Ike, tell them nothing." Ike was alarmed at the change which had come over his young master, and called for assistance.

From that time Mr. Wilmot hourly grew worse. Mrs. [pg 049] Middleton was sent for, and a telegram was forwarded to his friends in New York, bidding them come soon if they would see him alive. Mr. Miller, who was teaching in a distant

part of the country, dismissed his school to attend his dying friend. It was heartrending to hear Mr. Wilmot in his delirium, call for Julia to come to him—to let him look on her face once more before he died. Then he would fancy himself at home and would describe Julia to his sister in all the passionate fervor of a devoted lover; then he would think it was Julia who was sick, and would beg of those around him to save her, and not let his loved one die. At last Mrs. Middleton could bear his pleadings no longer. She resolved to go home and persuade her hard-hearted daughter, if possible, to go to the dying man.

Just before she was ready to leave, consciousness returned to him for a few moments, and calling her to his bedside, he asked her where she was going. On being told he replied, "Mrs. Middleton, I am dying. When you return I shall not be in this world; but I know that my Redeemer liveth, and I am not afraid to die, for I feel assured of rest beyond the grave; but there is one thing I would have. Ere I go hence I would see Julia once more. I have loved her perhaps too well, and for this I must die. Tell, oh tell her, how I missed her when the fever scorched my brow, and bid her hasten to me ere it be too late! But if she will not come, give her my blessing, and tell her my last prayer was for her, and that in Heaven she will be mine."

With many tears Mrs. Middleton promised him that every word of his message should be delivered to Julia, and that she should come to him. On reaching home her swollen eyelids attracted Fanny's attention, and excited her fear. Springing up, she exclaimed, "Mother, mother, how is Mr. Wilmot? Is he dead?"

"No," answered her mother, "he is not dead, but is dying."

Then she repeated to Julia his request, and added, "You had better go immediately, if you wish to see him alive, for he cannot live until morning. Fanny will call Ike to go with you."

Fanny arose to do her mother's bidding, but Julia stopped her by saying, "You needn't trouble yourself to call him, Fanny."

"Why not?" said Fanny, looking wonderingly in Julia's face.

"Because I am not going," said Julia coolly.

"Not going!" exclaimed Fanny.

[pg 050]"Not going!" echoed Mrs. Middleton. "Why do you say so? You are going, you must go!"

"There is no must about it," answered Julia; "I do not choose to go, and I shall not go!"

"Are you in earnest, Julia?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"As much in earnest as I ever was in my life," replied Julia.

"Well, then," returned the mother in a decided tone, "you shall go; I command you to go, and I must be obeyed!"

"I'd like to see your commands enforced, Madam," said Julia, her beautiful face dark with rage. "Yes, I'd like to see anybody make me go if I did not wish to. Mr. Wilmot is nothing to me, and I would hardly go to save his life."

"Oh, Julia, Julia!" said Mrs. Middleton bitterly, "has it come to this? I can see it all now!"

"What all can you see so distinctly?" asked Julia scornfully.

"I can understand what part you have had in causing Mr. Wilmot's death," answered Mrs. Middleton.

Julia turned ashy pale, and her mother continued—"Often in his ravings he spoke of a letter, a cruel letter he called it, and I heard it hinted that it was the receipt of that letter which brought on a relapse. Now you will tell me whether you wrote that letter, and if so, what were its contents?"

"I wonder how I'm expected to know what letter you mean," said Julia. "However, I did write to him and ask to be released from my engagement, and I had my reasons for so doing."

Mrs. Middleton sighed and said, "It is as I feared; on you, Julia, rests in a measure the cause of his death."

"Better call me a murderer at once. But I'll not stay for more abuse," said Julia, as she left the room.

When she was gone Mrs. Middleton buried her face in her hands, and sent forth sob after sob from her crushed heart—crushed by the sinfulness and mocking disobedience of her first born. While she was still weeping, Fanny stole softly from the apartment and went in quest of her sister. She found her, as she had expected, in her room, and going up to her threw her arms around her neck, and plead long and earnestly that she would go to Mr. Wilmot. But Julia's answer was ever the same, "No, I will not."

"And why will you not?" asked Fanny.

"Because," replied Julia, "Mr. Wilmot is nothing to me, and there is no reason why I should go to him, more than to any other lovesick youth who takes a fancy to send for me. You would not feel obliged to run if Bill Jeffrey should have the measles and send for you."

[pg 051]"Oh, stop, stop," said Fanny, "you shall not liken Bill Jeffrey to Mr. Wilmot, who is so good, so noble. You loved him once, and for the sake of that love go to him now; it can do you no harm."

"It would seriously affect my plans for the future; and once for all, I tell you I will not go," replied Julia.

"Then I will," said Fanny, "and show him that I, at least, have not forgotten him."

This idea pleased Julia, and she answered, "I wish you would, for your presence will do as much good as mine."

Fanny hastily ran down stairs and, going to her mother, said, "Mother, Julia will not go, but I will. I should like to very much. Will you let me?"

Mrs. Middleton was too much engrossed in her painful thoughts to give much heed to what Fanny said. She only knew that she wished her to consent to something, and she mechanically answered, "Yes, yes, go." It was then after sunset, and as the sky had all day been cloudy, darkness was fast gathering over the earth, but Fanny heeded it not. She bade Ike make haste, and in a few moments her favorite pony was saddled. Ike's horse was then got in readiness, and they were soon galloping off in the direction of Frankfort. 'Twas a long ride of twelve miles and the darkness increased every moment, while a steady, drizzling rain commenced falling. Still Fanny kept perseveringly on, occasionally speaking an encouraging word to Ike, who pulled his old cap

closely over his ears and muttered, "Lord bless young miss. Seems like 'twas her was done promised to young marster, a puttin' out this desput night to see him."

But Fanny kept her thoughts to herself, and while she is making her way to Frankfort, we will precede her and see what is taking place in the sick room. The large drops of sweat which stood upon Mr. Wilmot's high, white forehead, showed that the hour of dissolution was at hand. His mind was wandering, but still the burden of his soul was, "Julia, Julia, oh, will she not come?" Mr. Miller stood by him and endeavored as far as possible to quiet him, and once, during a lucid interval, he asked, "If Julia does not come, what shall I tell her when I see her?"

Mr. Wilmot's eyes opened wide and for a moment he looked wistfully at his friend, and then said mournfully, "I cannot see you, Joseph, my vision has departed forever, and if Julia comes, I cannot now look on her loved features, but if I die ere she arrives, ask her if she wrote that letter."

[pg 052]Just then there was a noise without, and the sound of horses' feet was heard coming up the graveled walk. Some one in the room whispered, "It must be Miss Middleton." The sound caught the dying man's ear and he wildly exclaimed, "Has she come? Oh! Has she come?" Fanny was now heard speaking in the hall. We have said that her voice was strangely like her sister's, so it was no wonder that Mr. Wilmot, in his feverish delirium, mistook it. Claspings his hands together, he exclaimed, "Thank God she has come! She has come!"

The excitement was too much for him and for a few moments he was unconscious. When at last animation was restored, Fanny was hanging over his pillow, and Fanny's tears were upon his cheek; but he thought it was Julia, and drawing her to him, he imprinted a burning kiss upon her fair brow, saying, "God bless you for coming, precious Julia, I knew you would come; and now tell me, do you not love me as well as you always have?"

Fanny was bewildered, and looked imploringly at Mr. Miller, who said, "Richard, do you think it is Julia who is standing by you now?" The sick man gave a startled look and almost shrieked out, "Julia? Yes, is it not Julia? Speak quick and tell me, isn't Julia here?" Mr. Miller's eyes filled with tears as he answered sadly, "No, Richard, Julia is not here; it is Fanny who has come." A deathly paleness passed over Mr. Wilmot's face and a paroxysm of delirium ensued more violent than any which had preceded it. At last it partially passed

off and he became comparatively calm, but still persisted in thinking it was Julia whose hand he held in his and whose breath was upon his cheek. "Heaven bless you for coming, beloved one," he would say, "I knew you would come, and still the dreadful thought has haunted me, that you might be false, for that was a cruel letter; but you did not write it, did you?"

Fanny answered through her tears, "No, Mr. Wilmot, I did not write it. It is Fanny who is speaking to you." But Mr. Wilmot understood only the first part of what she said, and continued, "I knew you did not, I am satisfied now to die; and yet 'tis hard to die when I am so young and so far from home, but it is sweet to know that I have your love to the last. When I am dead, you will tell them at home how I loved and prayed for them. My mother will weep bitterly for her son, who died so far away, but she does not love me as well as you do, does she, dearest?"

Just then Dr. Lacey entered the room. He seemed surprised [pg 053] to see Fanny there, and to hear the words of endearment addressed to her by Mr. Wilmot, but Mr. Miller softly told him of the mistake. This seemed to satisfy him, but he anxiously noted every change of Fanny's countenance. At last Mr. Wilmot said, "If you did not write that letter, who did? Was it, could it have been your sister?"

"Oh, no! No!" said Fanny, "I did not write it."

"I know you did not, dearest," said he; "you would not do such a thing, but who did? I cannot think it was Fanny, who was always so gentle, so guileless."

Poor Fanny! She felt that her beloved teacher was dying with a suspicion of her innocence, and she wept most bitterly. At last a change passed over Mr. Wilmot's face, a change which showed that the last trying moment had come. It frequently occurs with dying persons that at the last their faculties are for a moment fully restored. So it was with Mr. Wilmot. A bright smile broke over his face and looking up at Mr. Miller, he said, "I thank my Heavenly Father I can see again. Now, where is Julia? I would look on her face once more."

"I told you," said Mr. Miller, "that you were mistaken; it is not Julia."

"Not Julia!" said Mr. Wilmot, again becoming delirious. "Not Julia! It cannot be true." Then drawing Fanny toward him he looked earnestly in her face. Slowly the bitter truth broke over his mind, and he said, "Yes, I was mistaken! But I

bless you for coming; but Julia, my too dearly loved Julia—she is not here. Oh, if I can never see her in this world, shall I see her in heaven?"

They were the last words he ever uttered. Falling back on his pillow, he drew Fanny's face to his, and with his last breath kissed her quivering lips, and all was over. Sadly Mr. Miller closed the eyes of his departed friend, and smoothing the covering about him, left him to the care of the servants. A few hours later, Fanny entered the room with Dr. Lacey, again to look on the face of Mr. Wilmot. The sun was just rising, and its first red rays fell upon the marble features of the dead. There was on his face an expression so calm and heavenly that Fanny held her breath while looking at him, lest she should disturb his peaceful repose. At length she kissed his cold forehead, and silently left the room which contained the pale sleeper.

In the course of a few hours she returned home, bearing the sad tidings, which was received by her mother with a burst of tears; but Julia preserved the same indifference which had [pg 054] been manifested throughout all Mr. Wilmot's illness. Hard-hearted as she was, there came a time in after years when that proud head was bowed with grief, and those dark eyes were bedimmed by tears of penitence, which could not atone for the past; for they were of no avail to bring back the dead from their silent resting place.

Chapter VI

SUNSHINE HAS TWO GRAVES UPON WHICH TO PLANT FLOWERS

[pg 055]Mr. Wilmot's death occurred on Tuesday morning, and the following Thursday was appointed for his burial. It was the 1st of September, and a bright, beautiful day; but its sunlight fell on many aching hearts, for though he who lay in his low coffin, so cold and still, was a "stranger in a strange land," there were many whose tears fell like summer rain for one who had thus early passed away. He had during his lifetime been a member of the Episcopal church, and his funeral services were to take place at Ascension Church.

The house was filled to overflowing. Mr. Middleton, Mr. Miller, Dr. Lacey and Fanny occupied the front seat, as principal mourners for the deceased. Many searching eyes were bent on the fair young girl, whose white forehead gleamed from under the folds of her veil, and whose eyelids, wet with tears, drooped heavily upon her pale cheek. Madam Rumor had been busy with her thousand tongues, and the scene at the deathbed had been told and retold in twenty different forms, until at last it had become settled that on Fanny's part there was some secret attachment, or she never would have evinced so much interest in Mr. Wilmot. She, however, was ignorant of all this, and sat there wholly unconscious of the interest she was exciting.

Julia was not there. She had again defied her mother's commands, and resisted all Fanny's entreaties, that she would go to the funeral.

"You ought to see Mr. Wilmot," said Fanny. "He looks so calm, so peaceful and," she added in a low voice, "so forgiving."

"So forgiving!" quickly repeated Julia. "I wonder what he has to forgive. If I had continued to love him, 'twould not have saved his life."

Fanny sighed and turned away from the hard-hearted girl, [pg 056] who was left alone with her thoughts during all the long hours of that day. But to do her justice, we must say, that after her mother and sister were gone, a feeling of sadness stole over her; her stony heart somewhat softened, and in the solitude of her chamber she wept for a long time; but whether for Mr. Wilmot's death, her own conduct toward him, or the circumstances which surrounded her, none can tell.

Let us now return to Frankfort, and go back for a few moments in our story. Just as the funeral procession had left the house and was proceeding toward the church, the steamboat Diana, which plies between Cincinnati and Frankfort, appeared round a bend in the river. She was loaded with passengers, who were all on the lookout as they neared the landing place. Just at that moment the tolling bell rang out on the air. Its tones fell sadly on the ear of a tall, beautiful girl, who was impatiently pacing the deck, and looking anxiously in the direction of the city. The knell was repeated, and she murmured, "Oh, what if that should be for Richard!" The thought overpowered her, and sitting down on a seat near her she burst into tears.

"Can I do anything for you?" said the captain, who at that moment passed her.

"Nothing, except to land me in Frankfort as soon as possible," said the young lady, whom the reader will readily suppose was Kate Wilmot.

"Are you in a great hurry?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir," returned Kate. "My brother is dangerously sick and I am anxious to get to him."

"Where does your brother live?" asked the captain.

"He boards with Mrs. Williams, on Elm street," answered Kate.

"Then," said the captain, "if you will show me your baggage, I will see that it is sent there, for you probably will not wish to waste time in looking after it when we land."

Kate thanked him for his kindness; and when they reached the shore the kind-hearted man called one of his boatmen and ordered him to show Miss Wilmot the way to Mrs. Williams' residence. As Kate approached the house she noticed the air of desertion about it, and her heart sank for fear her brother might be dead. Running hastily up the steps, she rang the bell, which was answered by a female domestic, who was too old and too infirm to attend the funeral. Kate accosted her by saying, "Does Mr. Wilmot live here?"

The old lady replied by lifting up her hand and exclaiming, while the tears coursed their way down her cheeks, "Lord [pg 057] bless me if it isn't young marster's sister."

"Yes, yes," said Kate impatiently, "I am his sister. But tell me, is he dead? Am I too late?"

The woman replied, "Not too late to see him, if you're right spry. They've carried him to the church."

"Where? What church is it?" asked Kate wildly.

"Right yender; that ar brick house with the tall steeple."

Kate waited for no more, but darted off in the direction of the church. Meanwhile the services were ended, and the friends of the deceased were taking their last leave of him. Mrs. Middleton and Mr. Miller stood on one side of the coffin, while Dr. Lacey and Fanny were on the other. Fanny gazed long and earnestly upon the face of her teacher, as if she would stamp his likeness with daguerrean accuracy upon her heart.

She was turning sadly away, when a noise at the door caused all eyes to be directed that way. A pale, lovely face was seen looking anxiously in, and then a slight female figure advanced through the crowd, which gave way for her to pass. She passed up the aisle till she reached the coffin, then bursting into a flood of tears, she wrung her hands, exclaiming, "My brother, oh my brother—are you indeed dead?" She then imprinted kiss after kiss upon the cold lips of him who never before disregarded her caresses; and as the full force of her loss came over her, she uttered a piercing cry of anguish, and fell fainting into the arms of Mr. Miller, who recognized in her beautiful features the original of the picture which Mr. Wilmot had shown him a few months before.

He bore her out into the open air, where he was instantly surrounded by half a dozen ladies, each insisting that the fair stranger should be taken to her house. First among these was Mrs. Crane, who saw by a glance at Kate that her presence would not be derogatory to any house, so she determined to have her taken to her own dwelling, and urged her claim so hard that Mr. Miller at last consented, thinking that Mrs. Williams must be wearied with the recent illness of Mr. Wilmot.

Accordingly, when Kate was again restored to consciousness, she found herself in an elegantly furnished room, with a gaily dressed, handsome lady sitting by her. This was Mrs. Carrington, whose delicate nerves would not suffer her to attend a funeral. On seeing Kate move, she spoke to her and asked her if she felt better.

"Yes, much better," said Kate; "but where am I? What has happened?" And then as the recollection of what had [pg 058] occurred came over her, she burst into tears and said, "My brother—they have buried him, I suppose, and I cannot see him again."

Mrs. Carrington answered, "I think they have not gone to the cemetery yet. I will dispatch a servant and ask them to delay the burial a few moments, if you desire it."

Kate thanked her; but at that moment a messenger came from Mr. Miller. He had anticipated Kate's wishes, and sent word that a carriage was waiting to convey her to the church, where she would have another opportunity of seeing her brother. Mrs. Carrington felt constrained to offer to accompany her, and the two proceeded to the church and thence to the cemetery.

Although Mrs. Carrington had not visited Mr. Wilmot during his illness, she was by no means ignorant of Fanny's attentions. She had taken great pains to comment upon them in Dr. Lacey's presence, saying, "that she had often suspected Fanny of possessing a more than ordinary affection for Mr. Wilmot, and she had sometimes thought her affection returned. For her part, she did not blame Julia for absenting herself from him, for she had probably discovered his preference for her sister." Her object in doing this was to make Dr. Lacey think less favorably of Fanny, for with her practised eye she had discovered that for no other female did he feel such an interest as for "Little Fanny Middleton," as she always termed her.

At the grave she noticed Fanny's pale face and swollen eyes, and found occasion to say to her, loud enough for Dr. Lacey to hear, "I am astonished, Fanny, to see you show to the world how much you loved your sister's betrothed."

This remark had no effect upon Fanny, except causing her to look at Mrs. Carrington in surprise and to wonder what she meant. With Dr. Lacey it was different. Imperceptibly, "Little Fanny Middleton" had won a place in his heart which no other one had ever possessed. At first he admired her for her frank, confiding nature, and afterward he learned to love her for the many lovely traits of her character. He had thought it perfectly natural that she should feel a great interest in Mr. Wilmot, who was for so long a time a member of her father's family; but the wrong construction which was put upon her motives annoyed him, and even made him fearful that her heart might be more interested in Mr. Wilmot than he was willing to believe. As he stood by the open grave into which the cold earth was heavily falling, there rested upon his brow a deeper shade of sadness than was occasioned by the [pg 059] mere death of his friend. Mrs. Carrington observed it, and resolved to follow up the train of thought which she saw was awakened in his mind.

After the burial Kate returned to Mrs. Crane's, where she was treated with every possible attention which politeness or sympathy could dictate. A few days after the funeral she one evening casually asked, if that fair, delicate-looking girl at her brother's grave were not Miss Middleton?

"Yes," replied Mrs. Carrington. "Did you not think from her manner that she was a sincere mourner?"

Kate was about to reply, when Dr. Lacey prevented her by saying, "Pardon me, Mrs. Carrington; but I think you have given Miss Wilmot a wrong impression. She doubtless thinks it was Miss Julia Middleton."

"Yes," said Kate, "I thought it was Miss Julia."

Dr. Lacey replied that it was Fanny—Julia's younger sister; and then he told how faithfully she had watched over Mr. Wilmot during his illness. Of Julia he said nothing, and although Kate wished very much to know something concerning her, she determined not to question Dr. Lacey, but to wait and ask Mr. Miller, who, for some reason, seemed nearer to her than any other one of the strangers by whom she was surrounded. He had been solicited to take charge of the

school, which was now destitute of a teacher, and as the situation pleased him, he readily accepted the offer and accepted Mrs. Crane's as his boarding place. Perhaps one inducement which led him to do this was the presence of the beautiful Kate, in whom he daily became more interested.

Years before, when but a boy in the boarding school at Canandaigua, he had often fancied that the time would come when he should both see and know the sister whom Richard Wilmot used to describe in such glowing terms. Since then another image had filled his heart and he had dreamed of another face—not so fair, perhaps, but quite as innocent. But now the dream was sadly over, and he had never thought of the gentle Fanny for a wife since that night when, as he supposed, he saw the dark side of her character. He, however, could not conquer his old partiality, and always spoke of her in the highest terms. Consequently, from his description of her, Kate received a very favorable impression.

He said little of Julia; but told Kate that he would take her to Mr. Middleton's the first fine day. He wished to go there in order to induce Mrs. Middleton to send her daughters back to school. The next Saturday was fixed upon for the visit, [pg 060] and at an early hour Mr. Miller and Kate were on their way to Mr. Middleton's.

Kate Wilmot was not only handsome, but was also very intelligent and agreeable, and by the time their ride was half-completed, Mr. Miller was more than half in love and was building air castles just as he had done months before when Fanny was mistress of them all.

About noon they reached Mr. Middleton's, where they were received very kindly by Mrs. Middleton, very joyfully by Fanny, and very coldly by Julia, whose face always wore a darker frown whenever Mr. Miller was present; but he apparently did not notice it, and went on conversing upon different subjects. At last he asked when Mr. Middleton was expected home.

"I am expecting him every day," said Mrs. Middleton, "and," she added in a lower tone, "I almost dread to have him come, for I do not know that he has ever heard a word of Richard's illness and death."

"Why, have you never written to him?" asked Mr. Miller.

"Yes," replied she; "but it is so uncertain as to what place he is in, or how long he will remain there, that it is doubtful whether he ever received the letter. We heard

from him a few days ago. He was then in Indiana, and as he said nothing about Mr. Wilmot, I presume he has not heard of his death."

Just as she had finished speaking, the dogs set up a great barking, and the negroes uttered the joyful cry of "Marster's come! Marster's come!" The family ran to the door to meet him; but Fanny could not wait for him to enter the house, neither could she stop to unfasten the gate, but clearing it with one bound, she was soon in the arms of her father, who uttered his usual, "Ha, ha," and said, "Well done, darling; you'll do for a cirkis rider. Are you glad to see your old pap?"

The blacks then gathered round, and he shook hands with all, saying, "How d'ye, boys? How d'ye? Have you worked right smart since I've been gone? If you have, you may have a play spell the rest of the arternoon."

So saying, he entered the house, where after greeting his wife, Julia and Mr. Miller, he was introduced to "Miss Wilmot." He took her hand and looking at her for a moment, said, "Wilmot, Wilmot! Are you Dick's sister?"

Kate's eyes filled with tears as she exclaimed, "Yes, sir, Richard was my brother."

"Richard was your brother! Great Moses! What does [pg 061] this mean? And you in black and crying!" Then looking at his wife, who was also in tears, he added impatiently, "What in thun—" but instantly recollecting himself, he said more gently, "Can't anybody tell me what has happened?" And the old man's cheek paled, and his voice trembled, as the dread of what might have happened stole over him.

Fanny at last went up to him and said softly, "Father, Mr. Wilmot is dead!"

Mr. Middleton sank into the nearest chair, and covering his rough face with his hands, wept as freely as a little child. He had loved Mr. Wilmot with almost a father's love, and during his absence had not been unmindful of him. Safely stowed away in his carpet bag were several costly books, which he had purchased as a present for Richard. He had also hoped that as Julia's husband he would have a good influence over her, and improve her fractious disposition; and many were the plans which he had formed as to what he would do when Richard was really his son. But now he was gone forever. The blow was so sudden, so unexpected, that for several minutes he was stunned by its force and wept on in

silence.

At last, lifting up his head, he turned to Kate and said, "You must not think me a silly old fool, child, for Lord knows old Josh Middleton hain't shed such tears since he was a little shaver and cried when they buried up his dead mother."

Kate could not reply, but from that time she felt for Mr. Middleton a respect and esteem which nothing could ever change.

After Mr. Middleton had become calm, he proceeded to enumerate to Mr. Miller the many good qualities of Mr. Wilmot. Said he, "He was a capital feller; allus just so. Lively as a cricket; none of your stuck-up, fiddle-faddle notions. And then he was such a good boarder—not a bit particular what he eat; why, he was the greatest kind of a man—eat corn bread, turnip greens, or anything!"

At this speech Kate smiled in spite of her tears, and Mr. Middleton went on: "But he warn't as handsome as his sister, and I'll be skinned if I ever seen anybody that was. Tempest can't hold a candle to her, for all she feels so crank. Why, Kit, or Kate, what's yer name? You're as handsome as a pictur!"

Mr. Miller probably thought so too, if the admiring look which he gave her was any criterion. Mr. Middleton observed it, and forgetting for a moment the death of his friend, he slapped Mr. Miller on his shoulder, saying, "I tell you what, my boy; it's a mighty mean wind that blows nobody [pg 062] any good fortun. Miss Kate warn't sent to Kentuck for nothin', and unless you're a bigger logger-head than I think you be, you'll try to find out what she come for, and how long she's goin' to stay."

Mr. Miller smiled and said, "I hope we shall be able to keep Miss Wilmot all winter, for the people of Frankfort are wanting a music teacher, and have solicited her to remain in that capacity."

"By Jove," said Mr. Middleton, "that's just the thing! And you have taken Dick's place in school—poor, boy, to die so soon!" The tears were again moistening his immense beard, but this time he hastily brushed them away, and went on, "Yes, that's a capital idee, and you want me to patternize you by sending my two gals—hey? Well, I reckon I can't do better, if they want to go. Ho! Tempest—Sunshine—what d'ye say? D'ye want to go back to Frankfort and board at Miss Crane's, 'long of Mr. Miller, Dr. Lacey, Katy did, and that other infernal Katy didn't, what fainted spang away at the sight of old Josh! But though she was so

dreadfully skeered, the pooty color didn't leave her cheeks an atom. Lightnin' spikes! Let me catch my gals paintin' and I'll—"

But he was prevented from telling what he'd do by Fanny, who clapped her hands and said, "Oh, father, you are a dear good man; may we really go?"

"I thought Fanny would be pleased with the idea," said Mr. Miller, "and even if she had objected, I was going to send the doctor out, and I know he would bring her to terms."

Fanny blushed and her father said, "Do you think so? Well, I'm glad on't. I'd as soon she'd have him as anybody, and she's worthy of him too, for if she can love such a hideous old clown as I am, she'll stick to such a nice man as Dr. Lacey through thick and thin. But what do you say to goin', Tempest?"

Julia had at first thought that nothing could induce her to become a pupil of Mr. Miller, but his allusion to Dr. Lacey decided her otherwise. It was necessary that she should go, for she did not dare trust her sister alone with the doctor; so she swallowed her dislike to Mr. Miller, and said she should be delighted to return to school.

It was settled that they should go during the next week.

This arrangement gave great pleasure to Dr. Lacey, who found it very lonely in Frankfort without Fanny, and had several times spoken of returning to New Orleans. But when he learned that Fanny was coming back, he suddenly changed [pg 063] his mind and concluded that Frankfort would be a charming winter residence. This was laughingly told to Fanny by Kate, who had learned to love her very much. Julia she disliked, for she had at last drawn from Mr. Miller the whole history of her proceedings, and she could but look upon the false-hearted girl as accessory to her brother's death.

Julia knew that by the fair Northern beauty she was secretly despised, but she did not care, for she had conceived a great friendship for Mrs. Carrington, whom she often amused with her remarks about New York people. Once she said, "I do wish New York would die, or stop taking emetics, and sending the contents of her bilious stomach to Kentucky in the shape of teachers!"

Mrs. Carrington smiled and said, "I think you prefer Louisiana emetics, do you not?"

Julia blushed as she answered, "Yes, but what can I do. There's Mr. Miller ready to back up whatever Fanny does, and put down whatever I do. I'd thank him to mind his own business, and stay at his own home!"

Mrs. Carrington did not reply, for she, too, was greatly annoyed by the presence of Mr. Miller and Kate. The latter she looked upon as a rival, for she was said by every one to have the most beautiful face in Frankfort. This greatly displeased Mrs. Carrington, who, before Kate's arrival, had been considered the belle of the town, so far as beauty was concerned. She also felt great contempt for Kate's occupation as a teacher, and said, "She didn't see why folks should make such an ado over a poor music teacher."

Once, in speaking on the subject to Dr. Lacey, she said, "I am glad I was not born in New York, for then I should have been obliged to pick up chips, split wood, dig potatoes, wash dishes and teach school!"

Dr. Lacey's reply to this remark was, "I think, Mrs. Carrington, you will admit that the young ladies who come here from the North almost always possess superior education. Now if they spent much time in splitting wood and digging potatoes, I am sure they could not acquire so much knowledge."

Mrs. Carrington answered, "Of course you feel interested in New Yorkers, for Fanny has taken a great fancy to them, and whatever she likes you must like, of course."

"Yes, I know Fanny likes our New York friends very much," said Dr. Lacey. "And I think you will allow that she shows good taste in the choice of her associates."

"Oh, yes, admirable," returned Mrs. Carrington, "almost as [pg 064] good taste as some of my acquaintance show in preferring her."

"What do you mean?" asked Dr. Lacey.

"Why, I mean," said Mrs. Carrington, "that I am puzzled to know what attraction such a simple-minded girl as Fanny can have for a person of your intelligence."

Dr. Lacey bit his lip, but forcing down his anger said, "She possesses the same attraction which every guileless, innocent person has."

"Guileless and innocent," repeated Mrs. Carrington; "rather call her artful and designing. Depend upon it, doctor, you have only seen the bright side of her disposition. You should see her in her room, and know how much trouble her sister has with her!"

She might have said more, but Dr. Lacey stopped her by saying rather warmly, "Mrs. Carrington, you shall not talk so about Fanny. I know you do not like her, and consequently, whatever you can say of her will have no effect upon me."

So saying, he quitted the apartment, leaving Mrs. Carrington to her own reflections. They were not very pleasant, for Dr. Lacey's manner had said as plainly as words could say that she had better mind her own business, and she began to think so herself, for she muttered, "After all, what is it to me if he does like Fanny? I am bound fast, but oh, if I were free, I'd compass heaven and earth to secure him." Her wish to be free was soon realized.

That afternoon, when the Sea Gull came up from Louisville, it brought home her husband, wearied, worn out and sick. He took his bed, and never left his room again until strong men carried him out and laid him down to sleep in the silent graveyard. The close of his life was calm and peaceful, for he had early chosen the better part, and he looked upon the grave as but a stepping stone from earth to heaven.

His life was a dreary pilgrimage, for though he possessed for his young, giddy wife, a strong, ardent affection, he had long known that it was not returned, and he felt that she would be happier if he were dead. She, however, paid him as much attention during his illness as the gay life she led would allow; but she was often away, and night after night was he left alone with his Bible and his God, while she was in the midst of some fashionable amusement. Her neglect was, however, partly made up to him by the kind care of Fanny, who gave him all the time she could possibly spare from her school duties. Mrs. Carrington found it very convenient [pg 065] to call upon her, whenever she wished to be absent, and hour after hour the fair young girl sat by the sick man's bedside, employed either with her needle, her books or drawing. Mr. Carrington was a fine scholar and gave her much assistance in her studies.

When he grew too weak to read, she would read to him from the Bible, stopping occasionally, while he explained some obscure passage, or endeavored to impress on her mind some solemn truth. Thus were the seeds of righteousness

sown, which afterward sprang up and bore fruit unto everlasting life.

At last the chilling dews came upon his head, his eye grew dim with the mists of death, and then he laid his cold, white hand on Fanny's head and prayed most earnestly that heaven's choicest blessings, both here and hereafter, might descend upon one who had so kindly smoothed his dark pathway down to the valley of death. A few words of affectionate farewell to his wife and he was gone. His crushed, aching heart had ceased to beat and in a few days the green sod was growing above his early grave.

Fanny begged so earnestly to have him buried by the side of Mr. Wilmot that Mrs. Carrington finally consented, and the two, who had never seen each other on earth, now lay peacefully side by side. When the springtime came, the same fair hands planted flowers over the graves of her brothers, as she loved to call the two men, each of whom had blessed her with his dying breath. Thither would she often go with Dr. Lacey, who was each day learning to love her more and more.

Mrs. Carrington contented herself with having a few hysterical fits, shedding a few tears, dressing herself in an expensive suit of mourning, and erecting to the memory of her husband a magnificent monument. When Mr. Middleton saw the latter, he said, "Why the plague can't Dick have as good a gravestun as that young lieutenant? He desarves it jest as much"; so out came his purse, and when Mrs. Carrington went next to visit the costly marble at her husband's grave, she was chagrined to see by its side a still more splendid one. But there was no help for it, so she had to endure it in silence, consoling herself with thinking how becomingly she would dress and how many conquests she would make, when the term of her mourning should have expired!

Chapter VII

JULIA'S PLOT TO BREAK FANNY'S ENGAGEMENT

[pg 066]Our readers will not be sorry, if after a chapter of sadness and death, we turn to a more joyous one, and tell them of the bridal of Kate Wilmot and Mr. Miller. Kate wished to defer it a few months, on account of the recent death of her brother, but her lover urged his claim so strongly that she at last yielded, and their marriage took place on Christmas eve. Mr. W——, one of the wealthiest men in Frankfort, very kindly offered to give Kate a splendid wedding party, but she politely declined his generous offer, as she did not feel like entering into such a scene of gayety as would necessarily attend a large party.

A few of her most intimate friends assembled in Mrs. Crane's parlor, and thence proceeded to the church, which was crowded with anxious spectators, many of whom almost envied Mr. Miller his beautiful bride, while others envied her the fine-looking man who stood there as the bridegroom, and all were unanimous in pronouncing it an excellent match. Kate's happiness on this occasion was not unmingled with sadness, for her thoughts went back to the time when, with a heart bursting with anguish, she had first entered that church and passed up its broad aisle until she reached the side of her darling brother, who lay shrouded in his coffin.

Now the scene was changed; she was there as the happy bride of one to whom she had given the undivided affection of her heart, and as the solemn words were uttered which made her his forever, she felt that her brother's spirit hovered near, to bless her union with one who had ever been his true friend. So she requested that Fanny should be her bridesmaid, and the young girl now stood at the altar, with her bright face beaming with happiness, for Dr. Lacey, who was by her side,

had, the night before, told her all his love, and had won from her a promise that at some future time she would be his. He told her that he would speak to her father the next evening.

[pg 067]Accordingly, after the wedding party had returned to Mrs. Crane's, he invited Mr. Middleton to go with him for a few minutes to his room. Fanny was sure of her father's consent, but she could not help feeling nervous when she saw him leave the parlor, accompanied by Dr. Lacey. A few moments after, she observed that Julia also was missing, and she trembled lest she might have suspected something and gone to listen.

Nor was she mistaken in her fears; for Mrs. Carrington and Julia both had an inkling of what was going on, and when the latter heard Dr. Lacey say something to her father in a low tone, and then saw them leave the room together, she arose and stealthily followed them upstairs. Going out on the balcony, she stole softly up to Dr. Lacey's window, and there, unobserved, listened to a conversation which confirmed her worst fears. In a firm, decided tone, Dr. Lacey told Mr. Middleton of his love for his daughter, and said she had promised to be his if her father would consent.

Mr. Middleton replied, "And so it's my darter you want. Of course it's Sunshine?"

"Certainly, sir," answered Dr. Lacey.

"Well, I'm glad on't. I've seen it all along; but I didn't know but mebbly Tempest had come it over you with her pretty face—but devil of a life you'd lead with her."

Dr. Lacey did not reply, but Julia did; and though the tones of her voice were too low to be heard, they were none the less emphatic, as she said, "And devil of a life I'll make you lead if you do not have me." And at the same time she ground her glittering teeth and shook her clenched fist at the two men, who were unconscious of the rage they were exciting.

Mr. Middleton continued, "Yes, I'll give you Sunshine, I reckon, and a hundred thousand dollars beside."

"It's Fanny I want, not her money," said Dr. Lacey.

"Oh, yes, I know," answered Mr. Middleton; "but I reckon you won't object to a few thousand, unless you are as rich as a Jew."

Dr. Lacey replied: "I am not as rich as a Jew, but I am the only child of my father, who is said to be worth half a million."

"Half a million!" repeated Mr. Middleton in astonishment. "Golly-ludy, man, what made you ever think of a poor girl like Sunshine?"

"Because I love her," answered Dr. Lacey, "and I would marry her just as soon if she were not worth one dime."

[pg 068]"Maybe you would and maybe you wouldn't," muttered Julia; "and perhaps you'll have her, and perhaps you won't. You've got me to deal with, and I'd like to see the person who can cross my path with impunity." So saying, she glided from her hiding place and went down stairs to the parlor, leaving her father and Dr. Lacey to finish their conversation.

Dr. Lacey proposed that Fanny should continue at school two years longer, and at the end of that time he would claim her as his wife.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Middleton; "I s'pose I understand; you want her to be more accomplished like, afore you take her down to New Orleans. Well, it's perfectly nateral, and old Josh'll spar no pains nor money."

And so the conference ended. When Dr. Lacey re-entered the parlor Fanny read success in his face. In a short time he managed to get near her, and bending down, whispered to her, "My own dear Fanny, forever." At these words a beautiful flush suffused Fanny's usually pale cheek. It was noticed by Julia, who was watching the doctor and her sister with a feeling of almost fiendish hatred. When she saw the bright look of joy which passed over Fanny's face as the doctor whispered to her, she pressed her small white hands together until her long transparent nails left their impress in her flesh!

Just then Mr. Miller, with his wife upon his arm, approached the spot where the doctor was standing, and said, "Why, doctor, what has happened? You look almost as happy as I feel. And little Fanny, too, is really looking quite rosy. I should not be surprised if my wedding should be a prelude to another."

Julia could hear no more, but sick with anger, she turned away, heartily wishing

Mr. Miller was in California digging gold with the water six feet deep all around him! When the company began to disperse Dr. Lacey whispered to Fanny that he wished her to remain a few moments, as he had something to say to her. Accordingly, after the parlor was deserted, he drew her to the sofa and placing his arm around her, told her of the plan which he had marked out for her improvement during the next two years. To all that he required Fanny promised a cheerful compliance, and he proceeded to tell her how he would in the meantime beautify his Southern home, and fill it up with every luxury which could please a refined, delicate female. By the time he had finished Fanny was weeping from excess of happiness.

"It seems so strange," said she, "that you should prefer me to any one else, me, who am so plain looking, so—"

[pg 069]"So pure-minded and innocent," interrupted Dr. Lacey, "and so lovely, too, for to me you are very handsome. Not as beautiful, perhaps, as Mrs. Miller, for there are few who are, and yet I like your looks quite as well."

Fanny did not reply; after a moment's silence he said, "Fanny, I shall be obliged to go to New Orleans soon."

"Go to New Orleans," said Fanny. "Oh, no, don't."

"But I must," answered he. "Business of importance calls me there."

"How soon must you go?"

"In two weeks," he replied.

"And how long will you be gone?"

"Probably three months," he answered. "But I shall write to you often; twice a week, perhaps, and you will find enough to do to answer my letters and attend to your studies, besides practicing your music lessons. By the way, Fanny, I wish you to pay particular attention to music, for you know I am very fond of it."

Fanny promised that she would, and they separated for the night. While Fanny was going to her room, she determined she would tell Julia all her future prospects; but she found her sister either asleep or pretending to be (the latter was the fact); so she said nothing, but lay down without disturbing her. She

could not sleep, however, and toward morning Julia called out, in no very gentle tones, "Do lie still, Fan, or else get up and go down in the parlor and have another tete-a-tete with Dr. Lacey."

Fanny saw that her sister was awake, and she resolved to improve the opportunity, even if Julia were not in a very gentle mood. So she said, "Sister, I want to tell you something; wake up, won't you?"

"Wake up!" answered Julia. "I should like to know who's been asleep, or who can sleep where you are? What is the great secret you wish to tell me?"

With many blushes and some stammering Fanny got through with her story. After she had finished Julia was silent a few moments and then said, "Well, what of it? What if Dr. Lacey has promised to marry you? Is that any reason why you should keep me awake all night?"

Fanny did not answer, and as her mind was relieved from the weighty matter of telling her sister, she soon fell asleep, and when she awoke the sun was high in the heavens, and Mrs. Miller was bending over her, wishing her a "Merry Christmas!" That day there was sent to Mrs. Crane's a large box, which Dr. Lacey was very particular to have [pg 070] handled carefully. When it was opened it was found to contain an elegant rosewood piano, and a note in which was written, "A Christmas Gift for Fanny." The delighted girl did not ask who was the giver, for she well knew; and resolved to apply herself closely to music, so as to do justice to the beautiful present.

The two weeks of Dr. Lacey's stay passed rapidly away, and at their close he bade Fanny an affectionate good-by, promising to write regularly twice a week, and to return, if possible, at the end of three months. After he was gone, it seemed to Fanny that one-half of her life had left her, and she felt very unhappy. There was something in her sister's manner which she could not define, and as Julia seemed anxious to avoid her, she spent much of her time with Mrs. Miller, who each day grew fonder of her little "Kentucky sister," as she often called her in imitation of her brother.

Meanwhile Julia spent all her leisure hours with Mrs. Carrington, to whom she confided her feelings and wishes. Mrs. Carrington was not displeased to find that Julia was determined to break the engagement between Dr. Lacey and Fanny, and secretly hoped she would succeed. Not that she wished to aid Julia in

securing the doctor, for such was not her intention. Neither did she look upon such an event as possible, for she felt sure that Dr. Lacey never would fancy Julia, even if there were no Fannys in the world; and supposing he did, she could easily remedy it by exposing Julia's wickedness.

In due course of time a letter arrived for Fanny from Dr. Lacey. It was a well-filled sheet and so full of affection and kind suggestions for her improvement, that Fanny felt an increased pleasure in thinking that she was the object of Dr. Lacey's love. Julia watched her with an evil eye, as she read the letter, and when she saw the look of joy which lit up every feature, she thought, "Yes, read on and enjoy it—do—for you'll not get many more such!"

That day after school she started out for the purpose of laying the foundation for the fulfillment of a part of her plans. There was in the post-office a clerk whose name was Joseph Dunn. He was an awkward, rawboned young man, about six feet two inches high. Until within a few months he had lived near Mr. Middleton. He had a yellow face, yellow hair and yellow teeth, the latter of which projected over his under lip. He also drove a very yellow horse and rode in a yellow buggy. In his own estimation he was perfectly irresistible, and imagined he had only to say the word and all the girls in the country would eagerly accept the offer of being mistress [pg 071] of his fancy colored horse and person. For Fanny he had conceived a violent passion and wondered much that she should repel all his serious advances. At last he wrote her a letter saying that on a certain afternoon he would visit her and make a formal offer of his hand. He bade her weigh the matter seriously, so that she would have no one to blame but herself, if she should ever regret answering in the affirmative.

Fanny was very much annoyed by this letter and when on the afternoon specified she saw old "sorrel" coming up to the gate, she said, "Father, there is Joe coming here to offer me the honor of becoming Mrs. Dunn. He troubles me exceedingly with his attentions, and I wish you would manage to make him keep away."

Thus enlightened, Mr. Middleton was ready for any emergency, and he answered Joe's confident knock in person. The young man greeted him with a very polite, "Good afternoon," to which Mr. Middleton returned with a significant "umph!"

"Is your daughter Fanny at home?" asked Mr. Dunn.

"Yes, she's at home," said Mr. Middleton. "What d'ye want of her?"

"I should like to have a few moments' private conference with her, if you've no objection, sir," replied Mr. Dunn.

"A few moments private fiddlestick," answered Mr. Middleton. "What the devil—whose little boy are you? Ain't you Miss Dunn's little boy? You'd better scratch gravel for home, and if I catch you here again dickerin' after Fanny, I'll pull every corn-colored hair out of your head!"

This rebuff somewhat cooled the ardor of Joseph's attachment, and as he felt sure that Fanny had told her father of his coming, he from that time disliked her as much as he had before admired her. Not long after the sad finale of his *affaire de coeur*, he left his home in the country, and going to Frankfort became a clerk in the post office. Julia well knew the old grudge which he had toward Fanny, and as he did not possess the best principles in the world, she had strong hopes of procuring his services for the accomplishment of her purpose. Accordingly, at about half past five she bent her steps in the direction of the post office, hoping to see him in the street, for she knew that he usually went to his supper at that hour. She had not gone far beyond the post office when he overtook her. She greeted him with her blandest smile, and as she seemed inclined to be very sociable, he slackened his pace for the sake of walking with her. They had not proceeded far when she said, "Mr. Dunn, if you are not in a [pg 072] particular hurry, I should like to have you walk on with me, as I have something to communicate to you."

Joseph was delighted, and yet he knew not what to think. The haughty Julia had formerly treated him with disdain; but within a week or two her conduct toward him had changed, and she seemed to seek his society, and now she had even asked him to walk with her. What could it mean? He was not long kept in ignorance, for in a few words Julia explained her wishes. "You know, Mr. Dunn," said she, "that I have money and I am willing to pay you almost any amount, and then it is such a rare opportunity for being revenged upon Fanny, who did abuse you shamefully, and even now makes all manner of fun of you. It will not be much trouble for you," she continued, "for you can watch our box, and whenever a letter arrives from Dr. Lacey, you can lay it aside until you have an opportunity of giving it to me, and you can do the same with Fanny's letters!"

Joseph did not hesitate long, for the love of money was strong in him, and he also had a desire for revenging his fancied insult. Julia's manner toward him was not without its effect, for he felt greatly flattered that she should choose him for

a confidant; so at last he promised to accede to her proposal on condition that he was well paid.

"It will be well enough," said Julia, "to let her have three or four letters, as it would not be natural for him to forget her immediately, you know."

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Mr. Dunn, "I understand how to do it. Never fear but I'll fix it right."

"Well, then, here is a part of your pay in advance," said Julia, as she slipped a ten-dollar note into his hand. At first he seemed inclined not to take it but finally did so, saying, "I suppose I ought to be paid, for it's mighty ticklish business."

After having arranged affairs to her satisfaction, Julia bade Mr. Dunn a very friendly good night, and returned home where she found Fanny employed in writing an answer to Dr. Lacey's letter. Here, for the present, we will leave them, until Julia's plot has time to ripen.

Chapter VIII

MR. MIDDLETON HAS MORE CALLERS FROM NEW YORK

[pg 073]The reader will now accompany us to Geneva, one of the most beautiful villages in Western New York. On arriving at the depot we are beset by a host of runners, who call out lustily, "Temperance House!" "Franklin House!" "Geneva Hotel!" "Carriage to any part of the village for a shilling!" But we prefer walking, and passing up Water Street, and Seneca street, we soon come to Main street, which we follow until we come to a large, elegant mansion, the property of Judge Fulton, who is that evening entertaining a fashionable party. No matter if we are not invited, we can enter unperceived and note down what is taking place.

Our attention is first directed toward the judge and his accomplished lady, who are doing the honors of the evening. As we scan their looks closely, we are struck with their features, and we feel sure that to them wealth was not given in vain, and that the beggar never left their door unfed or uncared for.

Mrs. Fulton's countenance looks very familiar to us, and we wonder much where we have seen her before, or if we never have seen her, who it is that she so strongly reminds us of. Before we can solve the mystery, we observe across the room a face which makes us start up and exclaim, "Is it possible! Can that be Dr. Lacey?" A second look at the gentleman in question convinces us that he is two inches shorter than Dr. Lacey, and also that he wears glasses; still he bears a striking resemblance to the doctor, and we inquire who he is. We are told that his name is Robert Stanton. He is a graduate of Yale and a brother of Mrs. Fulton, He is intending in a few days to start for Kentucky, in company with Frederic Raymond, who was a classmate of his.

As we watch young Stanton's movements, we observe a certain restlessness in his eye, as it wanders over the crowded room, seemingly in quest of some one who is not there. At last there is a new arrival, and Miss Warner, a very prim lady and a teacher in the seminary, is announced, together [pg 074] with three of her pupils. As the young girls enter the parlor, Mr. Stanton seems suddenly animated with new life, and we feel sure that one of those young ladies has a great attraction for him. Nor are we mistaken, for he soon crosses the room, and going up to one of them, a rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed girl, he says in a low tone, "I am glad you have come, Nellie. I had almost given you up, and concluded you were doing penance for some misdemeanor, and so could not come out." Then taking her upon his arm, he kept her near him all the evening.

There was a strange history connected with Helen Ashton, or Nellie, as she was more familiarly called, but of this we will speak hereafter. She was formerly a member of the young ladies' school in New Haven, where she had become acquainted with Robert Stanton, who was in college. An intimacy sprang up between them which at last ripened into an agreement. Stanton's home was near Geneva, and when he left college he suddenly discovered that the Geneva Seminary was superior to any other, and with but little trouble he persuaded Nellie to go there to school.

She had now been an inmate of the seminary in that place little more than a year, during which time Robert had pursued the study of law in Judge Fulton's office. He had always possessed a great desire to visit Kentucky, and had finally concluded to do so, determining if he liked it to make it his permanent residence. He was to return the next autumn for Nellie, who was to remain in school until that time.

As they stood together that evening conversing about Kentucky, Nellie said, "I have an old schoolmate in Frankfort. It is Kate Wilmot. Do you remember having seen her in New Haven?"

"Is she very beautiful?" asked Robert.

"Oh, yes, exceedingly so. She turned half the students' heads," answered Nellie.

"Yes, I remember her perfectly well," said Frederic Raymond, who was standing near, "and so does Bob, but he wants to pretend he does not. By the way, Miss Ashton," continued he, "are you not afraid that Kate's marvelous beauty will

endanger your claim upon Robert's heart, when he shall be near her constantly, and can only think of your blue eyes as 'over the hills and far away?'"

Helen blushed, but did not answer, and Stanton said, "Never fear for me, Fred, but rather keep your own heart safely locked away, for fear some of those dark-eyed Kentucky girls will, ere you are aware, rifle you of it."

"I shall do no such thing," returned Frederic. "I am going [pg 075] there for the express purpose of losing my heart, and the first Kentucky girl which pleases me shall be my wife, any way."

"Whether she likes you or not?" asked Nellie.

"Yes, whether she likes me or not," answered Frederic, "I shall marry her first, and make her like me afterward."

So saying he sauntered off to another part of the room, little thinking that what he had spoken in jest would afterward prove true. At a late hour the company began to disperse, Miss Warner keeping a watchful eye upon her pupils, lest some lawless collegiate should relieve her from the trouble of seeing them safely home. This perpendicular maiden had lived forty years on this mundane sphere without ever having had an offer, and she had come to think of gentlemen as a race of intruding bipeds which the world would be much better without. However, if there were any of the species which she could tolerate, it was Judge Fulton and Robert Stanton. The former she liked, because everybody liked him, and said he was a "nice man, and what everybody said must be true." Her partiality for the latter arose from the fact that he had several times complimented her fine figure and dignified manners; so when he that night asked the privilege of walking home with Nellie, she raised no very strong opposition, but yielded the point by merely saying something about "child's play." She, however, kept near enough to them to hear every word of their conversation; but they consoled themselves by thinking that the wide-open ears could not penetrate the recesses of their well-filled letters which they saw in the future.

In a few days Stanton and Raymond started for Kentucky. The evening before they left was spent by Stanton in Nellie's company. Mrs. Fulton had invited her to pass the night with her, as the Judge was absent from home. About ten o'clock Mrs. Fulton very considerably grew sleepy, and retired to her own room. But long after the town clock rang out the hour of midnight, a light might have been

seen gleaming from the windows of Judge Fulton's sitting room, in which sat Robert and Nellie, repeating for the hundredth time vows of eternal constancy.

The next morning when the last rumbling sound of the eastern train died away in the streets of Geneva, Nellie Ashton sat weeping in her little room at the seminary. She felt that now she was again alone in the wide, wide world. Eight years before she had in the short space of three weeks followed both father and mother to their last resting place, and upon their newly-made graves she had prayed the orphan's [pg 076] prayer, that God would protect one who was without father, mother, brother or sister in the world.

The little property of her father was sold for the payment of his debts, and Nellie, who was then but twelve years old, was obliged to labor both early and late for her daily bread. Her father had lived near the city of New York, and not long after his death she procured a situation in a wealthy family of that city. She was called "the girl to do chores," which meant that she was kept running from garret to cellar, from parlor to kitchen, first here and then there, from earliest dawn to latest evening. It was almost always eleven o'clock before she could steal away to her low bed in the dark garret, and often, in the loneliness of the night, would the desolate child pray that the God with whom her parents dwelt would look in pity upon the helpless orphan.

Ere long her prayer was answered, for there came to the house where she lived a gentleman and lady, who saw the "little kitchen girl." Something there was in her sad but intelligent face which attracted their notice, and they inquired her history of Mrs. Stanley, the lady with whom she lived.

"She is," said Mrs. Stanley, "a good enough girl, if she would only let books alone; but she seems to have a passion for study, quite unsuitable for one in her station. When she is cleaning the knives she will have a book before her; and instead of singing the baby to sleep, she will get down and read to her, or repeat something which she has learned."

"And has she no relatives?" asked the gentleman.

"None living that I know of," said Mrs. Stanley; and then she added, "Nellie says she had a brother who was several years older than herself, and that three years ago he was one morning missing, and they found on his table a letter, saying that he had gone to sea on a whaling voyage, and would be gone three years. Her

father afterward heard that the vessel in which his son sailed was supposed to be lost with all its crew. This is her story; but you can never tell how much to believe of the stories which such girls tell."

"Did you ever detect her in a falsehood?" asked the gentleman.

"Why, no, I never did; but of course she will equivocate, for all such paupers will."

"With whom did she live before she came here?" continued the gentleman.

"With a Mr. Barnard," answered Mrs. Stanley; and she continued laughingly, "You had better inquire about her of [pg 077] him, as you seem so much interested in her. He lives out a few miles in the country."

The result of the conversation was that the Mr. Barnard mentioned above received the next day a call from a stranger, who made particular inquiry about little Helen Ashton. He seemed satisfied with the result, and as he had before learned that Mr. Barnard was a very good, honest man, he handed him five hundred dollars, telling him to take Nellie home—as she called Mr. Barnard's house—and to send her for two years to the district school. At the end of that time he would furnish funds for her to be educated in New Haven.

There was great excitement in Mrs. Stanley's family when it was known that Nellie was to go away and be sent to school in New Haven. "I wonder," said Mrs. Stanley, "who pays the expenses? It can't be Judge —— (naming the gentleman who had seemed so much interested in Nellie), for I am sure he would not be stupid enough to take a street beggar, as it were, and educate her." A second thought convinced her that it must be the said gentleman, and she suddenly felt an inclination to do something herself for the hitherto neglected kitchen girl.

Accordingly, Nellie was summoned to the parlor and the state of her wardrobe inquired into. It was found to be lamentably deficient in even the necessary articles of clothing. Mrs. Stanley then turned her rag bag inside out and rummaged through several boxes in the garret which had not seen the light for several years. The result of her search was three or four cast-off garments, which the cook said "were so bad the rag man would hardly buy them." Mrs. Stanley, however, thought they were quite a gift, and gave Nellie many injunctions as to when she should wear them. Nellie thought it doubtful whether she should wear

them all; but she said nothing, and in a few days she left Mrs. Stanley's house for a more pleasant home at Mr. Barnard's.

It was a great mystery to Nellie who it could be that had befriended her; but if Mr. Barnard knew, he kept the knowledge to himself, and Nellie was obliged to remain in ignorance. She was, however, satisfied that the gentleman, whoever he was, was both able and willing to carry out his plan, for money for the payment of her school bills was regularly remitted to Mr. Barnard. At the time when she wished to leave New Haven, she had written to Mr. Barnard on the subject, and in due time had received from him a letter saying that the gentleman who was educating her was not only willing but anxious to have her sent to Geneva.

[pg 078]Soon after her arrival there she chanced to meet Judge Fulton and his wife. Something in their looks seemed familiar, and also awoke a painful reminiscence of the dark kitchen and the lone garret far off in the great city. She could not remember ever having seen them, and so dismissed the subject from her mind, merely wondering if they knew that she who was to be their brother's wife once lighted fires and cleaned potatoes as a common servant girl.

The reader will perhaps have imagined that the gentleman who befriended Nellie was none other than Judge Fulton. He was incited to this act of kindness by the same benevolent feeling which prompted all his deeds of charity. He had no daughters, and his intention was, first to see what improvement she would make of her advantages, and if he were satisfied, he would take her home as his adopted daughter. He was somewhat surprised when, two years before the time of which we are speaking, he received through Mr. Barnard a letter from Nellie addressed to, "My unknown benefactor," and desiring his consent to an engagement between herself and Robert Stanton. The same mail brought a letter from Robert, saying that he had just made an offer of his hand to a Miss Helen Ashton, who was only waiting for her guardian to sanction her choice. Judge Fulton's consent was given, and he wrote to Nellie that before she was married he would make himself known to her, and give her a wedding at his own house.

A few days before Robert left for Kentucky Judge Fulton received another letter from Nellie, saying that it was Mr. Stanton's wish to be married the ensuing autumn. To this the judge gave his approval and determined as soon as Robert was gone to enlighten Nellie as to who her guardian was. This, then, was the history of Nellie Ashton, whom we will leave for a time, and as our readers are probably anxious to return to the bland climate of Kentucky, we will follow

young Stanton and Raymond on their journey. Having arrived at Buffalo, they took passage in the steamboat Saratoga, which landed them safely in Sandusky after a trip of about twenty-four hours. At Sandusky they took the cars for Cincinnati.

As they neared the Queen City, they noticed at one of the stations a tall, intelligent, but rather reckless-looking young man, who entered the cars and took a seat directly opposite them. There was something peculiarly attractive to Raymond in the confident, self-possessed manner of the stranger, and ere long he had, to use a Yankee expression, "scraped acquaintance" with him, and learned that his name was Henry [pg 079] Ashton, and that he too was on his way to Frankfort, where he resided. As the young man told his name, Raymond turned to Stanton and said, "I should think that you'd feel acquainted with this gentleman, you are so partial to his name."

Stanton did not answer, and Raymond proceeded to question Mr. Ashton about Frankfort and its inhabitants. "By the way," said he, "are there any pretty girls there? Substantial ones, I mean, who have a purse long enough to pay a fellow for the trouble of marrying them?"

Mr. Ashton smiled and answered, "Yes, we have a good many, and rich ones too; but the belle of the city when I left was a Mrs. Carrington—"

"The plague it was!" interrupted Raymond, "and can't we get rid of her husband somehow? Won't he die of yellow fever, cholera or something? Or is he a gouty old wretch, who will live forever?"

"You prevented me from telling you," said Mr. Ashton, "that Mr. Carrington has died since I left there. But you will hardly win this fair, haughty lady, unless you can plank about a million. But there are other faces quite as pretty, I think. There is a Julia Middleton, who is attending school. She is a great beauty, but, if report speaks truly, she would keep you busily employed in curbing her high temper."

"No matter about the temper—has she got the dimes?" said Raymond.

"About one hundred thousand dollars, I think," answered Ashton; "but one would need to be paid that much for having such a fury as she is, and such a queer old rat as her father."

He then proceeded to enumerate some of Mr. Middleton's oddities, at all of

which his auditors laughed heartily, and expressed their determination to make the old man's acquaintance as soon as possible. When the young men reached Cincinnati, they concluded to take the stage route to Lexington and Versailles, and to pay Mr. Middleton a visit before they proceeded to Frankfort. Accordingly on Thursday afternoon, just as the sun was setting, they entered Mr. Middleton's yard, where they were received by the dogs, with just such a demonstration of anger as had greeted Mr. Wilmot more than a year before.

The master of the house was this time at home, and soon appearing at the door, he called out to the negroes who were in the yard, "Ho, thar, boys! Stuff your woolly heads down them tarnal dogs' throats and make them stop their yellin'! Glad to see you—walk in. Moses and Aaron! If this ain't Ashton from Frankfort. How d'ye do? How d'ye do?"

[pg 080]Mr. Ashton shook hands with him, and then introduced his companions, saying they were from New York. The word New York seemed to thrill Mr. Middleton's nerves like an electric shock. He seized both hands of the young men and exclaimed, "From New York, hey? Then thrice welcome to my old cabin and hominy; old Josh's door is allus wide open to folks from New York." Then leading the way to the sitting room, he continued, "Yes, my own noble boy was from New York, but he died (this is my old woman Nancy, gentlemen). I don't see why in the old Harry he couldn't of lived. But he died and they kivered him up while I was gone, and I never seen him no more. Ho! Here, Tilda, fetch some hot water and make a little sling for these chaps. It'll do 'em good, as it's mighty cold and raw like out o' door."

The sling was made, and Ashton and Raymond drank readily and freely; but when it was offered to Stanton, he modestly but firmly refused. "What upon airth!" said Mr. Middleton, "not drink when a friend asks you? Why, boy, just take a swaller."

Here Raymond, who was ready to adopt Mr. Middleton's language and manners, exclaimed, "I'll tell you what, old boy, Bob's left a sweetheart in New York, and I fancy she lectured him on intemperance, for you know the women are dead set against it."

Mr. Middleton looked first at Raymond, then at Stanton and said, "Well, he knows good sense by not touchin' on't, I reckon. Got a sweetheart, hey? That's better than to come here and marry some of our spitfires. Poor boy! Dick was

engaged to one of 'em, and I've hearn that she raised a tantareen and broke his heart. But I'll fix her! I'll dock off fifty thousand to pay for that caper."

Here Mr. Ashton asked if Mr. Middleton's daughters were still at Frankfort. "Yes," returned Mr. Middleton, "both thar, study in' all the flat things you can think on, and thummin' away on the pianner. You'll see 'em thar; but mind me one and all, mind I say, don't fall in love with Sunshine, for she's engaged, and I've gin my consent, and whoever meddles in that match'll find Josh after 'em!" By way of adding emphasis to his words he brought his fist back against a work-stand, on which stood his wife's work basket. The stand was upset, and all the articles of the basket rolled on the floor. "Great Peter!" said Mr. Middleton, "ho, Tilda, come pick up these 'ere things!"

Tilda came at the call of her master. While she was replacing the articles in her mistress' basket, Raymond, who [pg 081] wished to show that he was ready to adopt all the peculiarities of the State, said, "That's a valuable looking negro girl. I suppose your property mostly consists in such as she. I don't wonder that you object to give them up just to please the North. Have you many such?"

"Yes, quite a heap on 'em. Why? Want to steal 'em, hey?"

Raymond reddened. His attempts at anti-abolition had not succeeded as well as he anticipated; but he soon rallied and said, "Certainly not; I shouldn't know what to do with your slaves if I had them; besides I have no inclination to interfere with your Southern institutions. I am too much of a pro-slavery man myself."

"Likely enough," said Mr. Middleton, rather gruffly, for he did not much like the appearance of Raymond, "likely enough. But, young man, let old Josh give you a little advice. I've seen more than double your years, I reckon, and I never seen a man come from the free states that wasn't a little teched with abolitionism. It's nateral like and onnateral to change their mind so mighty soon. So I advise you to keep your opinions to yourself for a spell, any way. A heap on 'em come here, and are surprised not to find a whippin' post stuck up in a corner of every yard. I don't say you are one of 'em; but we don't think no better of a body when they jine in with us so soon."

This speech somewhat disconcerted young Raymond, who was anxious to get into Mr. Middleton's good graces; but his discomfiture was soon removed by his

saying, "Boy, don't take what I've said in high dudgeon. Folks allus see the roughest side of me first; I'm a friend to you, and allus will be as long as you do well." Then chancing to think his guests were hungry, he called out, "Saints and angels! Why don't you bring in supper, you lazy bones thar in the kitchen? Do you hear?"

"Yes, marster," said three or four negroes at once, "supper'll be ready d'rectly."

In a few moments the nicely-cooked spare-rib was smoking on the table, together with hot coffee, boiled turnips and egg bread, which Southern cooks know so well how to make. Besides this there was the golden-colored butter, white flaky honeycomb, and the Sunday pitcher overflowing with rich creamy milk. "Come, boys, set by and have some fodder!" said Mr. Middleton.

The young gentlemen took their seats at the table and Mr. Middleton continued, "Now lay into 't and help yourselves. I ain't used to perlite strains, and if I should try you'd all larf [pg 082] at me—mebby you want to now. Tempest say's I'm enough to make a dog larf."

"Who is Tempest? One of your servants?" asked Stanton.

"Christopher Columbus! One of my servants!" answered Mr. Middleton. "How Tempest would rar to hear that. Why, she's my oldest gal."

"I beg your pardon," said Stanton.

"Not a bit on't," answered Mr. Middleton. "I don't wonder you thought so, such an oudun name! Her real name is Julia, but I call her Tempest, 'case that's jist like her. She's a regular thunderstorm of lightning, hail and iron slugs. You'll see her in Frankfort. Goin' into the law thar, are you?"

Stanton answered that he thought he should.

"Well," said Mr. Middleton, "I'll give you all my suits, just because you wouldn't drink and tell a lie to that little gal at home. I despise liars. Let me catch a body telling me a lie, I tell you—"

Here he lifted up his huge foot which was encased in a cowhide boot, something smaller than a canal-boat. He gave the table a kick which set all the spoons, knives and forks to dancing, spilt the milk and upset the gravy pot.

"Why, Mr. Middleton!" interposed his wife.

"I am sorry, honey," said he, "but I'll be hanged if that ar sling ain't gettin' the better of the old man."

After supper was over and the effects of the sling had left Mr. Middleton's head, he inquired further into the intentions of his guests. On learning that Mr. Raymond would teach, if he could get the chance, Mr. Middleton said, "I reckon you can teach in Mr. Miller's school. I'll write to him about you, and I reckon he can make room for you."

It was well for Raymond that Mr. Middleton did not observe his smile of contempt at the idea of being recommended by such an "old cur," as he secretly styled him.

At a late hour Mr. Middleton conducted the young men to their room, saying as they entered it, "This was Dick's room, poor dear boy! For his sake I wish 'twas better, for it was sometimes cold like in the winter; but he's warm enough now, I reckon, poor fellow!" So saying, he left the room; but Stanton noticed upon the old tin candlestick which his host had put upon the table something which looked very much like tears, so large that he was sure no one but Mr. Middleton could have wept them.

Chapter IX

THE RESEMBLANCE OF THE COUSINS

[pg 083]Among Mr. Middleton's negroes there was a boy twelve years of age whose name was Bob. On the morning following the incidents narrated in the last chapter, Bob was sent up to make a fire for "the young marsters." He had just coaxed the coal and kindlings into a blaze, when Raymond awoke, and spying the negro, called out, "Hello, there! Tom, Dick, Harry, what may be your name?"

"My name is Bob, sar."

"Oh, Bob is it? Bob what? Have you no other name?"

"No, sar, 'cept it's Marster Josh. I 'longs to him."

"Belong to Master Josh, do you? His name isn't Josh, it is Joshua."

"Yes, marster."

"Well, then, Bob, if his name is Joshua, what must yours be?" said Raymond.

"Dun know, unless it's Bobaway," answered the negro, with a broad grin.

"Bobaway! That's rich," said Raymond, laughing heartily at the rapid advancement of his pupil.

After a moment's pause, he again called out, "I say, Bobaway, did it snow last night?"

"No, sar, it didn't snow; it done frosted," said Bob.

"Done frosted, hey?" said Raymond. "You're a smart boy, Bob. What'll you sell yourself for?"

"Dun know; hain't nothing to sell 'cept my t'other hat and a bushel of hickory-nuts," answered Bob; "but I reckon how marster ax about five hundred, 'case I's right spry when I hain't got the rheumatiz."

"Got the rheumatiz, have you, Bob? Where?"

"In my belly, sar," answered Bob. Here the young men burst into a loud laugh, and Raymond said, "Five hundred is cheap, Bob; I'll give more than that."

Bob opened his large white eyes to their utmost extent, and looking keenly at Raymond slowly quitted the room. [pg 084] On reaching the kitchen he told Aunt Judy, who was his mother, "that ef marster ever acted like he was goin' for to sell him to that ar chap, what poked fun at him, he'd run away, sartin."

"And be cotched and git shet up," said Aunt Judy.

"I'd a heap rather be shet up 'tarnally than to 'long to anybody 'sides Marster Josh," said Bob.

During breakfast Mr. Middleton suddenly exclaimed, while looking at Stanton, "I've been tryin' ever since you've been here to think who you look like, and I've jest thought. It's Dr. Lacey."

"Who, sir?" said Stanton in some surprise.

"Dr. Lacey. D'ye know him?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"Dr. Lacey of New Orleans?" asked Stanton.

"The same," returned Mr. Middleton. "You look as much like him as two peas, only you wear goggles. Connection of your'n I reckon?"

"Yes, sir," answered Stanton, "he is my cousin. I have been told that we resemble each other."

"By Jupiter!" said Mr. Middleton, "that's just the checker. No wonder I like you so well. And Dr. Lacey goin' to marry Sunshine, too. Your sweetheart ought to look like Fanny. Got her picter, hey?"

Stanton handed him Nellie's daguerreotype, and he pretended to discover a close resemblance between her and Fanny; but neither Mrs. Middleton, nor Mr. Ashton could trace any, for which Mr. Middleton called them both blockheads.

"I think," said Mrs. Middleton, "that she looks more like Mr. Ashton than she does like Fanny."

"It is similarity of name which makes her resemble him," said Raymond.

"Why, is her name Ashton?" asked Middleton.

"Yes, sir," said Stanton.

"Mebbe she's your sister, Ashton. But Lord knows she don't look no more like you than she does like old Josh."

"She cannot be my sister," said Ashton, "for I had but one, and she is dead."

After breakfast Mr. Middleton ordered out his carriage and bade Ike drive the gentlemen to Frankfort.

"I'd go myself," said he, "but I've got a fetched headache. Give my love to my gals and tell them I'm comin' to see 'em shortly. You'd better go to the Whizzakor House, till you find out whether or not Miss Crane 'll board you."

The young men thanked him for his hospitality, and bade [pg 085] him good morning. As they were leaving the yard they passed Bob, who was still limping with the "rheumatiz." Raymond bade Ike stop, while he threw "Bobaway" some pennies. Bob picked them up and looked at them with a rueful face.

"What's the matter, Bobaway?" asked Raymond. "Don't they suit?"

"No, sir," said Bob. "I like fopences; I don't want nothin' of these old iron rocks."

Each of the men threw Bob a sixpence, for which they were rewarded with a sight of his ivories and a loud "thank-ee-sar." After a ride of two hours they

reached the Weisiger House in Frankfort. Soon after arriving there, Mr. Ashton introduced Stanton into one of the best law offices in the town, and then repaired to his former lodgings.

In the course of the afternoon Raymond sought out Mr. Miller, and with a somewhat quizzical face handed him Mr. Middleton's letter of introduction. After reading it, Mr. Miller offered his hand to Raymond, and said, "I am glad, Mr. Raymond, that you happened here just at this time, for my school is large, and I am in want of a classical teacher. You are a graduate of Yale, it seems?"

"Yes, sir," returned Raymond; "and by the way, Mr. Middleton told me that you had won a New Haven girl—Miss Kate Wilmot. I knew her very well."

"Ah, is it possible?" said Mr. Miller, his face beaming. "Come with me to Mrs. Crane's," said he. "Kate will be glad to see an old friend."

"Thank you," answered Raymond; "but I have a companion with me, a Mr. Stanton, who also knew Miss Wilmot. He is going into a law office here. We both of us intend calling at Mrs. Crane's this evening, and if possible we shall procure board there."

So they parted, and Raymond returned to the Weisiger House, while Mr. Miller hastened home to make some inquiries concerning his new assistant, and to inform Mrs. Crane of her prospect for more boarders.

That evening Stanton and Raymond called. They found assembled in Mrs. Crane's parlor, Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Carrington and Julia. Kate instantly recognized the young gentlemen as old acquaintances, and presented them to her friends. When Stanton entered the room all observed the strong resemblance between him and Dr. Lacey. At last Mr. Miller spoke of it, and Stanton replied, "Yes, I've been told so before. Dr. Lacey is my cousin."

[pg 086]"Indeed!" said Mr. Miller. Then turning to his wife, he added, "Where is Fanny? She ought to be here. It might do her as much good as seeing the doctor himself."

"I should like to see Miss Fanny," said Stanton, "as I am told she is to be my cousin."

A malicious smile curled Julia's lip, as she thought, "I think it is very doubtful

whether she is ever your cousin"; but Mrs. Miller arose and said, "I think she is in her room. I will call her."

Going to Fanny's room she knocked gently at the door; there was no response, and she knocked again more loudly. But still there was no answer; and Mrs. Miller thought she could distinguish a low, stifled sob. Pushing open the door, she saw the usually gay-hearted Fanny seated on the floor, her head resting on a chair, over which her hair fell like a golden gleam of sunlight. A second glance convinced Kate that Fanny was weeping.

"Why, Fanny," said she, "what is the matter? What are you crying for?"

Fanny did not reply, but as Mrs. Miller drew her up from the floor and placed her on the sofa, she laid her head in Kate's lap and wept still more passionately. At length Mrs. Miller succeeded in soothing her, and then insisted on knowing what was the cause of her distress.

"Oh," said Fanny, "do not ask me, for I can only tell you that nobody loves me long at a time—nobody but my dear old father, mother, and the blacks."

"You should not say so, Fanny dear," said Kate. "You know we all love you very much, and you say that within a few weeks Julia has been uniformly kind and affectionate to you."

"Yes, I know she is, but—"

"But what?" said Mrs. Miller. "Anything the trouble with Dr. Lacey?"

"Yes, that's it! That's it!" said Fanny in a low voice.

"Why, what's the matter? Is he sick?" asked Kate.

"Oh, no. If he were I would go to him. But, Mrs. Miller, for four long weeks he has not written me one word. Now if he were sick or dead, somebody would write to me; but it isn't that—I am afraid he's false. Julia thinks he is, and she is sorry for me, there is some comfort in that."

"Not written in four weeks? Perhaps he has written and his letters have been miscarried," said Kate.

"Oh, no, that cannot be," answered Fanny. "His first [pg 087] four letters came in the course of two weeks, but since then I have not had a word."

"Have you written to him since his letters ceased?" asked Kate.

"Yes, once, and I am sorry I did," answered Fanny; "but I asked Julia if I had better, and she said it would do no harm."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Miller, "he is intending to return soon and wishes to surprise you, or it may be he is testing the strength of your attachment. But I would not suffer myself to be so much distressed until I was sure he was false. Come, dry your eyes and go with me to the parlor. There are some young gentlemen here from New York. One of them is Dr. Lacey's cousin. He wishes to see you."

"Oh, no, no!" said Fanny, quickly. "I cannot go down. You must excuse me to him."

So Mrs. Miller returned to the parlor, and said Fanny was not feeling very well and wished to be excused.

Stanton and Raymond passed a very pleasant evening, and ere its close they had arranged with Mrs. Crane for rooms and board. On their way to the hotel, Raymond suddenly exclaimed, "I say, Bob, I'm head over heels in love!"

"In love with whom?" was Stanton's quiet reply.

"In love with whom?" repeated Raymond. "Why, Bob, is it possible your head is so full of Nellie Ashton that you do not know that we have been in company this evening with a perfect Hebe, an angel, a divine creature?"

"Please stop," said Stanton, "and not deal in so many superlatives. Which of the fair ladies made such havoc with your heart? Was it Mrs. Crane?"

"Mrs. Crane! Witch of Endor just as soon," answered Raymond. "Why, man alive, 'twas the beautiful Mrs. Carrington. I tell you what, Bob, my destiny is upon me and she is its star. I see in her my future wife."

"Why, Fred," said Mr. Stanton, "are you crazy? Mrs. Carrington is at least nearly thirty-five, and you are not yet twenty-five."

"I don't care for that," replied Raymond. "She may be thirty, and she may be a hundred, but she looks sixteen. Such glorious eyes I never saw. And she almost annihilated me with one of her captivating smiles. Her name, too, is my favorite."

"Her name? Pray, how did you learn her name?" asked Stanton.

"Why," answered Raymond, "you know we were talking [pg 088] together a part of the evening. Our conversation turned upon names, and I remarked that Ida was my favorite. Bob, you ought to have seen her smile as she told me Ida was her own name. Perhaps I said something foolish, for I replied that Ida was a beautiful name and only fitted for such as she; but she smiled still more sweetly and said I knew how to flatter."

"Well," answered Stanton. "I hardly think you will win her, if what our friend Ashton said is true. You have no million to offer her."

"Oh, fly on your million!" said Raymond. "She's got to have me any way. If I can't get her by fair means, I'll resort to stratagem."

Thus the young man raved for nearly half an hour about Mrs. Carrington, whose handsome features, glossy curls, bright eyes, brilliant complexion and agreeable manners had nearly turned his head. Mrs. Carrington, too, had received an impression. There was something in Raymond's dashing manner, which she called "air," and she felt greatly pleased with his flattering compliments. She thought he would be a very pleasant companion to flirt with for an hour or two; but could she have known what his real intentions concerning her were she would have spurned him with contempt—as she afterward did.

The next day at dinner Stanton and Raymond took their seats at Mrs. Crane's table. To Raymond's great delight Mrs. Carrington sat opposite him. Stanton occupied Dr. Lacey's seat, which brought Fanny directly in front of him. Fanny had been prepared in a measure for the striking resemblance between Stanton and Dr. Lacey; but when she was introduced to him, his looks brought Dr. Lacey so forcibly before her that she instantly grew pale and half wished to leave the room. But a look from Mrs. Miller reassured her, and she took her accustomed place at the table.

Ere dinner was over she had forgotten for the time her lover's neglect, and was in the midst of an animated conversation with Stanton, who was much pleased with

his cousin's choice. Stanton's looks and manners were so much like Dr. Lacey's that Fanny felt herself irresistibly drawn toward him and her face assumed a brighter aspect than it had worn for many days. Julia watched her closely and felt that nothing could please her better than a flirtation between Stanton and her sister.

But such was not a part of Fanny's intentions. She liked Stanton because he was agreeable, intelligent and Dr. [pg 089] Lacey's cousin; but she would sooner have parted with her right hand than have done anything inconsistent with her engagement with Dr. Lacey. On the other hand, Stanton's heart was too strongly fortified with Nellie's charms to admit of an entrance to the gentle Fanny. But he admired her very much, and seemed to think that she had some claim upon him in the absence of his cousin.

Thus, as days went on, his polite attentions toward Fanny increased, and Julia resolved to make this fact work for the accomplishment of her designs.

Chapter X

TEMPEST FORGES A LETTER AND ITS RESULTS

[pg 090]Let us now go back for a few weeks and watch Julia's plot as it progresses. We have learned from Fanny that four letters arrived from Dr. Lacey; but the fifth she was destined never to receive. She was expecting it on Tuesday and was about going to the post office, when Julia said, "Fanny, I feel just like walking this morning; suppose you let me run round to the post office and get your expected letter."

"Very well," answered Fanny; "but don't be gone long."

"I won't," said Julia, gaily. "You sit down by the window and when I come round the corner on my return home. I will hold up your letter, and you will know you have one at least a minute before I reach home."

So saying she departed, and Fanny sat down by the window to await her return. For several days past there had been a change in Julia's deportment. She was very amiable and kind to the household in general and to Fanny in particular. This was a part of her plan, so that in the catastrophe that was about to follow, she might not be suspected of foul play.

At first Fanny was surprised at her affectionate advances, but it was so pleasant to have a sister who would love her that she did not ask the reason of so sudden a change, and when Julia very humbly asked forgiveness for all her former unkindness, the innocent-hearted Fanny burst into tears, and declared she had nothing to forgive, if her sister would only continue to love her always. Julia placed a Judas-like kiss on Fanny's pure brow, and gave a promise that she

would try to be good; but she thought to herself, "this seeming change will make a favorable impression on Dr. Lacey when he hears of it."

She knew that Fanny was expecting a letter on the Tuesday morning of which we have spoken, and fearing that by some means Mr. Dunn might fail of securing it, she determined[pg 091] to go herself for the mail. When she reached the post office the sinister smile with which Mr. Dunn greeted her assured her that he had something for her, and she readily conjectured that it was Fanny's expected letter.

"Good morning, Mr. Dunn!" said she. "Anything for me this morning?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Dunn, with a very low bow; and casting a furtive glance around to make sure that no one saw him, he drew from his pocket a letter, on which Julia instantly recognized Dr. Lacey's handwriting. She took it and placed it in the pocket of her dress.

On her way home, conscience clamored loudly in behalf of Fanny's rights. It said, "Beware what you do! Give Fanny her letter. It is a crime to withhold it." But again the monitress was stilled, and the crafty girl kept on her way, firm in her sinful purpose, until she reached the corner which brought her in sight of the window where Fanny was impatiently watching for her. The sight of that bright, joyous face, as it looked from the window, anxious for the expected sight of her letter, made Julia for a moment waver. She thought how gentle and loving Fanny had always been to her and involuntarily her hand sought the letter which lay like a crushing weight in her pocket. It was half drawn from its hiding place when the spirit of evil which seemed ever to follow Julia's footsteps whispered, "Let it alone. You have gone too far to retreat. You have Dr. Lacey to win, and it can be done in no other way."

Julia listened to the tempter, her hand was withdrawn, and Fanny looked in vain for her letter. A faint sickness stole over her for a moment but she thought, "Perhaps Julia means to tease me. I will appear very unconcerned and not ask for it." So when Julia entered the room, she found that her sister's attention was suddenly, distracted by something in the street; but Fanny was not accustomed to dissemble and the rosy flush on her cheek showed how anxious she was.

At last Julia said, "Why do you not ask for your letter, Fanny?"

Oh, how eager was the expression of the sweet, pale face which was instantly

turned toward the speaker. Springing up she exclaimed, "Oh, Julia, you have got me one, haven't you? Please give it to me."

"I will tomorrow when it arrives," said Julia. "It has probably been delayed."

[pg 092]Fanny's countenance fell and she said, "Then you haven't got me a letter? Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Never mind, sister," said Julia. "It will come tomorrow, and will seem all the better for waiting."

Tomorrow came, but with it came no letter, and days wore on, until at last it was Saturday night. Alone in her room poor Fanny was weeping bitterly. Was Dr. Lacey sick or dead? This was the question which she continually asked herself. A suspicion of his unfaithfulness had not yet entered her mind. While she was yet weeping an arm was thrown affectionately round her, and a voice whispered in the sweetest possible tones, "Dear sister, do not weep so. If he were dead, some one would inform you. And now I think of it, why do you not write to him? There would be no harm in doing so. Come, sit down, and write him a few lines before dark, and I will take them to the office."

So Fanny sat down to her writing desk, and the few lines proved to be a long letter ere she had finished. It was a most touchingly sad letter, and ought to have drawn tears from Julia, instead of forcing the malicious smile which played around her mouth while reading her sister's effusion. It is needless to say that, although Julia went to the post office, this letter never did but was placed in a little box by the side of two others, which had arrived from Dr. Lacey that week.

After Julia returned from her walk that evening she said, "Fanny, if I were you I would not tell any one that I did not hear from Dr. Lacey, for you know it's just possible that he may not be sick, and in that case your best way would be to seem quite as forgetful of him."

"Forgetful!" said Fanny. "Why, Julia, what do you mean? You cannot—Oh, no, I know you do not think Dr. Lacey untrue to me?" And Fanny's large blue eyes were fixed on her sister with as much earnestness as though her answer could decide her fate forever.

"I do not like to think so, any more than you do," said Julia. "But Dr. Lacey is now in the gay city of New Orleans, surrounded by beauty and fashion, and were

I his betrothed, I should not think it strange if he did not remain true to me."

Fanny answered slowly, as if speaking were painful to her, "Oh, no, no! He cannot be false—anything but that."

It was a new idea to her, and that night a weight of sadness, heavier than she had ever known before, filled her [pg 093] heart. She thought, "I will wait and see if he answers my letter before I believe him unfaithful."

The next day was the Sabbath. About church time Julia announced her intentions of remaining at home on the plea of a violent headache. Fanny immediately offered to stay with her, but Julia declined, saying that sooner than both should be absent from church she would go herself.

Accordingly Julia was left alone. She watched her sister until she disappeared down the street. Then she arose, and locking the door, drew from her pocket a small key, and unlocking a rosewood box, took from it one of Dr. Lacey's letters. Going to her writing desk, she sat down and commenced imitating his handwriting. She was very skillful in the art of imitation, and was delighted to find herself rapidly succeeding in her attempts at counterfeiting. So busily engaged was she that she did not heed the lapse of time, until her sister's footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. She sprang hastily up, and thrusting her writing materials into the box locked it, and had just time to throw herself upon the sofa when Fanny knocked at the door. Julia allowed her to knock twice, and then getting up she unfastened the door, at the same time yawning and rubbing her eyes as if just awakened from a sound slumber.

"Why, sister, I woke you up, didn't I?" said Fanny. "I am sorry."

"No matter," answered Julia, with another yawn, "I feel better. My nap has done my head good."

In the afternoon Fanny again went to church, and Julia resumed the occupation of the morning. She succeeded so well that before church was out she felt sure that after a few more attempts she could imitate Dr. Lacey's writing so exactly as to thoroughly deceive Fanny. "But not yet," said she to herself; "I do not wish to test my skill yet. It is hardly time."

Thus the days glided away. Nearly two weeks passed, and there came no answer to Fanny's letter. She did not know that regularly, twice a week, letters had

arrived from New Orleans, and had been handed to Julia by Mr. Dunn. In the last of these letters, Dr. Lacey complained because Fanny had neglected writing so long. We will give the following extract:

"MY PRECIOUS SUNSHINE:

"—Can it be that you are sick? I do not wish to think [pg 094] so; and yet what else can prevent your writing? I have not a thought that you are forgetful of me, for you are too pure, too innocent to play me false. And yet I am sometimes haunted by a vague fear that all is not right, for a dark shadow seems resting over me. One line from you, dearest Fanny, will fill my heart with sunshine again—"

Thus wrote the doctor, and Julia commented on it as follows: "Yes, you are haunted, and I am glad of it. The pill is working well; I'll see whether 'Sunshine,' as you and my old fool father call her, will steal away everybody's love for me. I suppose I'm the dark shadow, for father calls me a spirit of darkness, and yet, perhaps, if he had been more gentle with me, I might have been better; but now it's too late." And the letter was placed in the rosewood box by the side of its companions.

Slowly but surely the painful conviction fixed itself upon Fanny's mind that Dr. Lacey was false. It was dreadful to think so, but there seemed no other alternative, and Fanny's heart grew sadder, and her step less joyous and elastic, while her merry laugh was now seldom heard ringing out in its clear, silvery tones, making the servants stop their work to listen and exclaim, "How lonesome t'would be without Miss Fanny; she's the life of the house, Lor' bless her."

The change was noticed and spoken of by the inmates of Mrs. Crane's dwelling. Mr. Miller attributed it to a too close application to books, and recommended her to relax somewhat in her studies. Fanny had too much of woman's pride to allow anyone except Julia to know the real cause of her sadness, and was glad to have her languor ascribed to over-exertion. On the night when Kate had found her weeping she had involuntarily told her secret, but she went to Mrs. Miller the next morning and won from her a promise not to mention what she had revealed, even to her husband.

Mr. Stanton's presence seemed to divert Fanny's mind, and the two weeks following his arrival passed away more pleasantly than she had thought two

weeks could pass, uncheered by a line from Dr. Lacey. At the end of that time it pleased Julia that Fanny should have a pretended letter from New Orleans. Several days were spent in preparing it, but at last it was completed, folded, sealed and directed. Mr. Dunn pronounced the deception perfect. He stamped it with the Frankfort postmark so slightly that one would as soon have called it "New Orleans" as anything else.

Fanny was seated in the parlor in company with Stanton [pg 095] when Julia suddenly entered the room and said, "Oh, here you are, sister. I've looked everywhere for you. Here is a letter."

One glance at the superscription assured her that it was from Dr. Lacey. A bright, beautiful flush suffused Fanny's face, which became irradiated with sudden joy. Asking Mr. Stanton to excuse her, she went to her rooms, so as to be alone when she perused the precious document. After she was gone, Julia spoke of Dr. Lacey and asked Stanton if he had ever heard from him. Stanton replied, "While Dr. Lacey was in college he spent a part of his vacations at my father's; but I almost always chanced to be absent at school, and consequently we are not much acquainted. He did write to me a few times while I was in college, but our correspondence gradually ceased and I have not heard from him in a long time. I hope he will return to Frankfort, for I should like to renew our acquaintance."

This answer gave Julia great relief; she had feared Stanton might write to Dr. Lacey, and that by some means her scheme might be ruined. But all was safe, and in a few moments she arose to go to her room and witness the result of the letter. Let us go before her and see the result for ourselves.

On reaching her apartment, Fanny sat down on the sofa, while a tremulous nervousness shook her frame. She dreaded to open the letter, for a strange forboding of evil came over her. At last the seal was broken and Fanny's heart stood still, and a dizziness crept over her as she read. For the reader's benefit we will look over her shoulder and read with her the following:

"MY ONCE DEAR AND STILL MUCH ADMIRER FANNY: I hardly know how to write what I wish to tell you. If I knew exactly your opinion concerning me, I might feel differently. As it is I ardently hope that your extreme youth prevented my foolish, but then sincere, attentions from making any very lasting impression on you. But why not come to the point at once. Fanny, you must try and forget that

you ever knew one so wholly unworthy of you as I am. It gives me great pain to write it, but I am about to engage myself to another.

"Do not condemn me unheard. There is a young lady in this city, who is beautiful, wealthy and accomplished. Between her father's family and mine there has long existed an intimacy which our fathers seem anxious to strengthen by [pg 096] a union between myself and the young lady I have mentioned. For a time I resisted manfully. For, ever between me and the tempting bait came the image of a pale, bright-haired girl, whose blue eyes looked mournfully into mine and whispered, 'Do not leave me.' But at last I yielded, and now, Fanny, will you forgive me? It cost me more anguish to give you up than I hope you will ever feel. Be happy, Fanny, and some time when I am traveling through Kentucky, let me find you the cheerful, contented wife of some one more suitable for you than I am. With kind wishes for your happiness, I remain,

"Your true friend,

"GEORGE LACEY."

"P.S.—It is just possible that the young lady and myself may not become engaged, but if we do not, after what has passed, it will be best for you and me to try to forget each other. Give my compliments to your sister Julia. By the way, do you know that I always admired her very much? What a sensation she would make in the fashionable world of New Orleans. But pshaw! What nonsense I'm writing."

Alas for Fanny! She did not need to read the letter twice, for every syllable had burned into her soul, and she could have repeated each word of the cruel message. This, then, was the end of her bright dream of bliss! She did not weep, for she could not. The fountain of her tears seemed dried up. A heavy weight had suddenly fallen on all her faculties. The objects in the room chased each other in rapid circles, while Dr. Lacey stood in the distance mocking her anguish. A faint feeling gathered round her heart. She uttered a low cry and fell heavily forward.

When Julia entered the room she found her sister extended on the floor, cold and white as a piece of marble, while the blood was gushing from her nostrils and

moistening the curls of her long hair. Julia's first feeling was one of intense horror, or fear her sister might be dead, but a touch assured her that Fanny had only fainted. So she lifted her up, and bearing her to the window applied the usual restoratives. As Julia looked on the death-like face of her young sister she murmured, "Had I thought she loved him so well, never would I have done so wickedly."

But she made no promise to repair the mischief, and stifled all the better impulses of her nature by saying, "It is too late now: it is too late."

[pg 097]At last Fanny opened her eyes. Her first thought was for her letter, which was still tightly clenched in her hand. Passing it to Julia she said, faintly, "Read it, sister."

Julia took it, and pretending to read it, burst into a violent passion, abusing Dr. Lacey for his meanness, and ending by telling Fanny that she ought to consider herself fortunate in escaping from such a man. Fanny seemed disturbed to hear evil spoken of Dr. Lacey, so Julia changed her manner, and said, "I do not wonder you feel badly, Fanny. You and I can sympathize together now."

Fanny looked at her sister in some surprise, but at last answered, "Oh no, you cannot know how I feel. Mr. Wilmot loved you to the last. Dr. Lacey is not dead, but—"

Here Julia interrupted her by saying, "I do not mean to refer to Mr. Wilmot. I was flattered by his attentions, but I never knew what it was to love until I saw Dr. Lacey."

"Dr. Lacey!—You love Dr. Lacey!" said Fanny, and again she fell back cold and motionless. A second time Julia restored her to consciousness, but for an hour she did not speak or scarcely move. At the end of that time, calling her sister to her, in a low, subdued tone, she said, "Tell me all, Julia. I can bear it. I am calm now."

The traitress kissed her cheek, and taking one of the little hands in hers, told her how truly she had loved Dr. Lacey, and how she had struggled against it when she saw that he loved another. "I have," said she, "lain awake many a night, and while you slept sweetly, dreaming, perhaps, of your lover, I have wept bitter tears because I must go alone through the cold world, unloved and uncared for. And forgive me, Fanny, but sometimes I have felt angered at you, because you

seemed to steal everybody's love from me. Our old father never speaks to me with the same affection which marks his manner when addressing you."

"I know it, I know it," said Fanny. "I wish he would not do so, but Dr. Lacey—Dr. Lacey—I never thought you wanted him to love you; if I had—"

"What would you have done?" asked Julia, with noticeable eagerness.

The voice was mournfully low which replied, "I would have given him up for you. I could not have married one whom my sister loved." And then she suddenly added, "It seems doubtful whether he marries that young lady. If anything should happen to prevent it, he may yet make you his wife."

"And you, what would you do?" asked Julia.

[pg 098]"Oh, it is impossible for me to marry him now," said Fanny. "But if you were happy with him, I would try to be happy, too."

"God bless you, sweet sister," said Julia; "but it will never be."

Fanny did not reply, and after a moment's silence Julia said, "Sister, if I were you I would keep all this a secret, and even if I were unhappy, I would try to assume a forced cheerfulness, for fear people would suspect the truth, and call me lovesick."

Fanny did not reply to this either. She was trying to still the painful throbs of her aching heart. Through all the long, weary hours of that night she was awake. Sometimes she would watch the myriad host of stars, as they kept on their unwearied course through the clear, blue sky, and would wonder if there was room beyond them for one so unhappy as she was, and would muse on the past days of happiness now forever gone, and although a choking sensation was in her throat, not a tear moistened her cheek. "I shall never weep again," thought she, "and why should I? The world will not know what I suffer. I will be as gay and merry as ever." And a fearful laugh rang through the room as she said, "Yes, how gayly I'll dance at the wedding. I'll hold my heart so fast that none shall ever know in how many pieces it is broken."

Thus she talked on. Delirium was stealing over her, and when morning broke, the rapid moving of her bright eye, and the crimson spot which burned on either cheek, showed that brain fever was doing its work.

A physician was immediately called and by the means of powerful remedies the progress of the disease was checked, so that Fanny was seriously ill for only a week. She was delirious a great part of the time, but Julia was delighted to find out that not one word of Dr. Lacey ever passed her lips. At the commencement of her illness her father and mother were sent for. The old man came quickly, for Fanny was his idol, and if she should die, he would be bereaved indeed. With untiring love he watched by her bedside until the crisis was passed. He would fan her fevered brow, moisten her parched lips, chafe her hot, burning hands, smooth her tumbled pillow, and when at last he succeeded in soothing her into a troubled slumber, he would sit by her and gaze on her wan face with an earnestness which seemed to say that she was his all of earth, his more than all of heaven. Julia too was all attention. Nothing tired her, and with unwearied [pg 099] patience she came and went at her father's bidding, doing a thousand little offices pertaining to a sick chamber. For once her father's manner softened toward her and the tones of his voice were gentle and his words kind while speaking to his first born. Could he have known what part she had in causing the illness of his "darling Sunshine," all Frankfort would have shaken with the heavy artillery of oaths and execrations, which would have been disgorged from his huge lungs, like the eruption of some long pent-up volcano! But he did not suspect the truth, and in speaking of Fanny's illness, he said, "It is studyin' so close that ailed her. As soon as ever she can bar to be moved, we will carry her home, and Aunt Katy'll nuss her up quicker."

Accordingly, as soon as the physician pronounced it safe to move her, she was taken home, and by her mother's assiduous care, and Aunt Katy's skilful nursing, her physical health was soon much improved. But no medicine could reach the plague spot which preyed upon her heart and cast a dark shadow over every feeling of pleasure. As soon as her health was fully restored, she asked permission to return to school. At first Mr. Middleton refused, but not long did he ever withstand any request which "Sunshine" made. So at last he consented, on condition that she would give up the study of Latin, and promise not to apply herself too closely to anything. To this Fanny readily agreed, and in a few days she was in Frankfort, occupying her accustomed seat at Mrs. Crane's and bending over her task in the old schoolroom, which seemed suddenly illuminated by her presence.

The schoolgirls welcomed back their young companion with many demonstrations of joy, for they said, "the schoolroom seemed dark and lonely when she was absent." Dear little Fanny! There was love enough left for her in

the hearts of all who knew her, but it did not satisfy. There was still an aching void, which one love alone could fill, and that love she thought was lost to her forever. She was mistaken.

During her illness she thought much of what Julia had said relative to concealing her disappointment with an assumed gayety, and she resolved to do so, partly from wounded pride, and partly from love of her dear old father, who seemed distressed whenever anything troubled his "Sunshine." When she returned to Frankfort none but the most acute observer would have suspected that the sparkling eye and dancing footstep were the disguise of a desolate, aching heart and that the merry laugh and witty repartee were but the echoes of a knell of sadness, whose deepest tones were stifled ere they reached [pg 100] the ear of the listener. In the darkness of night however, all was changed. The Sunshine was obscured, and Julia alone knew what anguish Fanny endured. Still the cruel girl never wavered in her purpose. "The worst is over," said she. "She will not die now, even if she saw him wedded to me." So she suffered her sister's cheek to grow paler, and her delicate form thinner, at the supposed desertion of her lover. Little did Fanny think that he, whose false-heartedness she deplored, dreamed each night of his distant dear one, and that each day his warm heart beat more quickly, because no tidings came from her.

A few days after Fanny's return there came cards of invitation for a large party at the residence of a Mr. C——. The evening was propitious, and at the usual hour Mrs. C——'s parlors were filled with the beauty and fashion of the city. Among all the belles who that evening graced the brilliantly lighted drawing rooms, none was so much admired as Julia Middleton, who appeared dressed in a rich crimson velvet robe, tastefully trimmed with ermine. Magnificent bracelets, which had cost her father almost as many oaths as dollars, glittered on her white, rounded arms. Her snowy neck, which was also uncovered, was without ornament. Her glossy hair, dark as night, was arranged in the most becoming manner.

At the time Mr. Middleton had given Julia her bracelets, he had presented Fanny with a bandeau of pearls. But Julia found it an easy task to persuade her sister that pearls were not becoming to her style of beauty; so on the evening of the party they gleamed amid the heavy braids of Julia's hair. Wherever she went she was followed by a train of admirers, who had little thought that that soft smile and beautiful face concealed a heart as hard as the flinty rock.

Contrary to all the rules of propriety, the heartless Mrs. Carrington was there, dealing out her fascinating smiles and bland words. She had thrown aside her mourning for the occasion and was arrayed in a dress of black velvet. An elegant lace bertha covered her white, beautiful neck, while one of her fair arms was clasped by a diamond bracelet. To this bracelet was attached a small locket which contained the daguerreotype of him, upon whose quiet grave the suns of scarce five months had risen and set. Amid that brilliant scene she had no thought for the dead, but others wondered much that he should be so soon forgotten. She was attended by Raymond, who scarcely left her side during the whole evening, although she made several ineffectual attempts to [pg 101] shake him off, for she did not care to be too much noticed by a "poor Yankee schoolmaster."

Henry Ashton was also there, but his attention was wholly engrossed in the bright eyes and sunny face of Florence Woodburn, who had recently returned from Philadelphia, where she had been attending for the last two years. Florence was the only daughter of the Mr. Woodburn, who was mentioned in the first chapter of this narrative. Her father lived several miles from the city, but she had friends in town and spent much of her time there. She was very handsome and very agreeable, and as she would probably be quite an heiress, her appearance in the fashionable world created a great sensation.

During the evening, as she was standing by Ashton and commenting on Julia's wondrous beauty, she said, "Where is the younger Miss Middleton? Is she as handsome as her sister?"

Ashton replied, "She is not called half as beautiful, but she is much more amiable; but see there she comes," continued he, as Fanny entered the room leaning on Stanton's arm.

She was so pale that her skin seemed almost transparent, but the excitement of the evening brought a bright glow to her cheek which greatly enhanced her loveliness. She was simply attired in a plain white muslin, low at the neck, which was veiled by the soft curls of her silken hair. Her arms were encircled by a plain band of gold, and a white, half-opened rosebud was fastened to the bosom of her dress.

As she entered the room many admiring eyes were turned toward her, and Miss Woodburn exclaimed, "Oh, how lovely she is. Her sister seems more like the

flashing diamond, while Fanny's beauty is like the soft lustre of the pearl. But tell me," she continued, "is she not engaged to a Dr. Lacey of New Orleans?"

"Yes, or, that is, it was so rumored," answered Ashton, "but he has gone home, and since then I have heard nothing of it. Young Stanton seems very attentive. I should not wonder if something grows out of it."

"Always making matches, Mr. Ashton," said Mrs. Carrington, who for a moment rid herself of Raymond and now came near Ashton and Florence. She had heard them speak of Dr. Lacey and Fanny, and as she knew Florence was soon going to New Orleans, she wished to give her a little Frankfort gossip to take with her.

"Oh, Mrs. Carrington," said Mr. Ashton, bowing politely, "allow me to introduce Miss Woodburn. We were just talking [pg 102] of the probability of Miss Fanny's being engaged to Dr. Lacey. Perhaps you can enlighten us."

"Oh," said Mrs. Carrington, "I assure you I know but little about the matter. It is rather uncertain whom Miss Fanny likes or dislikes. It is currently reported that she was in love with a Mr. Wilmot, who died, and who was known to be engaged to her sister. Since then Dr. Lacey has flirted with her, whether seriously or not I cannot tell; I should rather think not, however, for Mr. Stanton now seems to be the favored one."

"Oh," said Mr. Ashton, "I never supposed Fanny was so much of a coquette."

"Neither do I think she is," said Florence, whose heart warmed toward Fanny as soon as she saw her.

"Perhaps she is not," said Mrs. Carrington. "Fanny is very young yet, but when fully matured will perhaps make a noble woman, but she has not the solidity of her sister, who tries hard to keep her from assuming the appearance of a flirt." Then turning to Florence, she said, "I believe you are soon going to New Orleans?"

"Yes, madam," answered Florence.

"You will probably meet Dr. Lacey there," continued Mrs. Carrington. "Perhaps you had better say nothing to him about Fanny's flirtation with Stanton, for he would hardly believe it."

Florence merely nodded, thinking to herself that she should do as she chose about it. From the first she had been attracted toward Fanny. There was something in her face, and in the expression of her eye, which interested Florence. It seemed to her that Fanny would gladly have left the scene of gayety, and going out by herself, would have poured out all her soul in tears. She earnestly desired an introduction, and at last it was obtained. There must have been some secret magnet which attracted these young girls toward each other, for in a few moments they were arm in arm, talking familiarly upon different topics as though they had been acquainted a lifetime.

Florence was a warm-hearted, affectionate girl, and after a time she said, "Miss Middleton, I am going to New Orleans soon. I believe you have an acquaintance there. If I see him what shall I tell him?"

Fanny's voice trembled slightly as she answered, "Tell whom?"

"Oh, Miss Middleton," said Florence, laughing gayly, "how that blush becomes you! Tell whom? Why, whom should it [pg 103] be but Dr. Lacey, who everybody, except Mrs. Carrington, says is engaged to you."

The fire shot in to Fanny's eyes, but one look at the open face at her side assured her, and she answered, "I am not answerable for what the world pleases to say of me."

"I am to consider the report true, then," persisted Florence.

A momentary struggle took place in Fanny's mind. Love and resentment strove for the mastery. The latter conquered, and the voice was calm and decided which replied, "I assure you, Miss Woodburn, that Dr. Lacey bears no relation to me except that of a common acquaintance."

"Indeed," said Florence. "I am sorry, for I was anticipating much pleasure in describing Dr. Lacey's intended lady to the New Orleans girls."

Fanny did not answer, and as Stanton just then approached, and asked her to go to the music room, she took his arm readily, glad to escape so painful a conversation.

"She is a strange girl," thought Florence, "and yet I know I should love her. I wonder what makes her so sad. Can it be that she really loved that Mr. Wilmot?"

At any rate, I am sorry for her and hope she will marry Mr. Stanton, who seems much pleased with her."

This was the impression left on Florence's mind, which was productive of much mischief. At a late hour the company dispersed. Fanny returned home, weary and sick at heart. Her conversation with Florence had awakened painful reminiscences of the past, and the gray daylight was beginning to streak the eastern horizon ere her heavy lids closed in slumber. In a few days Florence Woodburn departed for New Orleans, where her mother's brother resided. We will take passage with her and pay a visit to Dr. Lacey in his Southern home.

Chapter XI

A GLANCE AT NEW ORLEANS SOCIETY

[pg 104]The house which Dr. Lacey occupied was situated on one of the pleasantest streets of New Orleans. It was a large, airy structure, which had formerly been owned by a wealthy French gentleman who had spared neither money nor pains to adorn it with every elegance which could minister to the luxurious habits common to a Southern clime. When it passed into the hands of Dr. Lacey's father, he gratified his Northern taste, and fitted it up with every possible convenience, molding its somewhat ancient aspect into a more modern style.

When Dr. Lacey reached the age of twenty-one, his father made him the owner of the house, he himself removing to another part of the city. At the time of which we are speaking, nothing could exceed the beauty of the house and grounds.

The yard which surrounded the building was large, and laid out with all the taste of a perfect connoisseur. In its center was a fountain, whose limpid waters fell into a large marble basin, while the spray which constantly arose from the falling stream seemed to render the heat of that sultry climate less oppressive. Scattered throughout the yard were the numerous trees and flowering shrubs which grow in profusion at the "sunny South." Here the beautiful magnolia shook its white blossoms in the evening breeze, and there the dark green foliage of the orange trees formed an effectual screen from the mid-day sun.

The building was surrounded on all sides by a double piazza, the slender pillars of which were entwined by the flowering honeysuckle and luxuriant passion-

flower, which gave the house the appearance of a closely wreathed arbor. Within the piazza was filled with rare tropical plants. The beautiful oleander, magnificent rose and sweet-scented geranium, here united their fragrance, while the scarlet verbenum and brilliant heliotrope added beauty to the scene.

The interior of the building corresponded with the exterior. The rooms, large and airy, were carpeted with velvet, and [pg 105] adorned with costly marble and rosewood furniture. The windows, which were constructed in the French style, that is, reaching to the floor, were curtained with richly-embroidered lace. Let us ascend the winding staircase, and enter the dressing room of the owner of all this splendor.

Half reclining on a crimson lounge sits Dr. Lacey, dressed in a fashionable brocade morning gown. On first glancing at him we think there is no change in his countenance since we last saw him on Mrs. Crane's steps in Frankfort, but as we note the expression of his face we can perceive a shade of anxiety resting there. At last he rises and rather impatiently pulls the bell rope.

His summons is immediately answered by an exquisite dandy, who is neither African, European, French, nor Spanish, but an odd mixture of the four. He is dressed in the extreme of fashion, and on entering the room bows most gracefully, at the same time casting an admiring glance at himself in the large mirror, and passing his hand carelessly through his perfumed locks. With the utmost deference, he awaits the commands of his master.

"Well, Rondeau," said Dr. Lacey, "haven't you finished breakfast yet?"

"Yes, marster," answered Rondeau, with a very low bow. "I've got through a moment since. What can I do for you. Will you ride this morning?"

"No," answered Dr. Lacey, "I do not wish to ride, but I want you to go to the post office and back immediately; remember now, and not stop to gossip."

"Certainly not," said the negro. "When marster's in a hurry, Rondeau is never foolin' away time."

"And don't stop more than an hour in the kitchen to talk to Leffie. Do you understand?" continued the doctor.

"Oh, yes, I won't," said Rondeau, extending his mouth into a broad grin at his

master's allusion to Leffie, a bright-looking, handsome, mulatto girl, whom next to himself, Rondeau thought was the prettiest creature in the world.

At last he bowed himself out of the room, and proceeded to execute his master's commands. On passing the kitchen, he "just looked in a little," and the sight of Leffie's bright eyes and rosy lips made him forgetful of his promise. Going up to her, he announced his intention of kissing her. A violent squabble ensued, in which the large china dish which Leffie held in her hand was broken, two pickle jars thrown down, chairs upset, the baby scalded, and the dog Tasso's tail nearly crushed! At last Aunt Dilsey, the head cook and [pg 106] mother of Leffie, interposed, and seizing the soup ladle as the first thing near her, she laid about her right and left, dealing no very gentle blows at the well-oiled hair of Rondeau, who was glad to beat a retreat from the kitchen, amid the loud laughter of the blacks who had witnessed the scene.

Leaving the house he was soon on his way to the post office, and having procured his master's mail he started for home. At length, slackening his pace, he took from his pocket the letters and carefully scrutinized the inscription of each. He was in the habit of going to the post office, and after his master's return from Kentucky, he had noticed two or three letters written in what he called "a mighty fineified hand," and he had whispered to Leffie as a great secret that "'twere his private opinion marster was going to marry some Kentucky girl." Recently he had noticed the absence of those letters, and also the absence of his master's accustomed cheerfulness. Rondeau was pretty keen, and putting the two circumstances together, he again had a whispered conference with Leffie, whom he told that "most probably the Kentucky girl had flunked, for marster hadn't had a letter in ever so long, and every time he didn't get one he looked as blue as a whetstone!"

"Glad on't," said Leffie. "Hope he won't have any your foreigners. Allus did wish he'd have Miss Mortimer. Next to old marster and young marster Lacey, her father's the toppinest man in New Orleans. And it's a pity for young marster to stoop."

After examining all the letters closely, Rondeau came to the conclusion that the right one wasn't there, and he thought, "Well, Leffie'll be glad, and marster'll be sorry, and hang me if I ain't sorry too, for marster's a plaguey fine chap, and desarves anybody there is in Kentucky."

Meanwhile Dr. Lacey was anxiously awaiting Rondeau's return, and when he caught sight of him, coming at an unusually rapid pace toward the house, he thought, "Surely Rondeau would never hurry so if he had not good news for me," but the next thought was, "How should he know what it is I am so anxious to get?" Still he waited rather impatiently for Rondeau to make his appearance. In a moment he entered the room, and commenced pulling the letters from his pocket, saying, "I've got a heap this time, marster."

He then laid them one by one on the marble dressing table, counting them as he did so; "Thar's one, thar's two, thar's three, thar's four."

"Stop counting them, can't you, and give me all you have [pg 107] directly," said Dr. Lacey, as his eye ran hurriedly over the superscription of each, and found not the one he sought.

"That's jist what I've done, marster," said Rondeau, bowing. "The one you want wasn't thar."

Dr. Lacey glanced hastily at his servant, and felt assured that the quick-witted negro was in possession of his secret. "You may go," said he, "and mind, never let me hear of your commenting about my letters."

"No, marster, never; 'strue's I live," said Rondeau, who left the room and went in quest of Leffie. But he did not dare to repeat the scene of the morning, for Aunt Dilsey was present, bending over a large tub of boiling suds, and he felt sure that any misdemeanor on his part would call forth a more affectionate shower bath than he cared about receiving. So he concluded to bring about his purpose by complimenting Aunt Dilsey on her fine figure (she weighed just two hundred!).

"Aunt Dilsey," said he, "'pears to me you have an uncommon good form, for one as plump and healthy-like as you are."

Aunt Dilsey was quite sensitive whenever her size was alluded to, and she replied rather sharply: "You git along, you bar's ile skullcap. 'Twon't be healthy for you to poke fun at me."

"'Pon my word," said the mischievous Rondeau, "I ain't poking fun at you. I do really think so. I thought of it last Sunday, when you had on that new gown, that becomes you so well."

"Which one?" said Aunt Dilsey, a little mollified, "the blue and yaller one?"

"The same," answered Rondeau. "It fits you good. Your arm looks real small in it."

Leffie was nearly convulsed with laughter, for she had tried the experiment, and found that the distance round her mother's arm was just the distance round her own slender waist.

"Do tell!" said Aunt Dilsey, stopping from her work and wiping the drops of perspiration from her shining forehead. "Do tell! It feels drefful sleek on me, but my old man Claib says it's too tight."

"Not an atom too tight," answered Rondeau, at the same time getting nearer and nearer to Leffie, and laying his hand on her shoulder.

Before she was aware of his intention, he stole the kiss he was seeking for. Leffie rewarded him by spitting in his face, [pg 108] while Aunt Dilsey called out, "Ain't you 'shamed to act so, Leffie? Don't make a fool of yourself!"

Assured by this speech, Rondeau turned, and kissing Aunt Dilsey herself, was off just in time to escape a basin of hot suds which that highly-scandalized lady hurled after him.

"I'll tell marster this minute," said she, "and see if he hain't got nothin' to set the lazy lout a-doin'." So saying, the old lady waddled into the house, and going upstairs, knocked at Dr. Lacey's door.

"Come in," said the doctor, and Aunt Dilsey entered. In a very sad tone, she commenced telling how "that 'tarnal Rondeau was raising Cain in the kitchen. He's kissed Leffie, and me too!"

"Kissed you, has he?" said Dr. Lacey.

"Yes, sar, he done that ar very thing, spang on the mouth," said Dilsey.

"Well, Dilsey," said the doctor with a roguish twinkle of the eye, "don't you think he ought to be paid?"

Aunt Dilsey began to cry, and said, "I never thought that marster would laugh at

old Aunt Dilsey."

"Neither will I," said the doctor. Then tossing her a picayune, he said, "take that, Aunt Dilsey. I reckon it will pay for the kiss. I'll see that Rondeau does not repeat his offense, on you at least."

Aunt Dilsey went back to the kitchen, thinking that "Marster George was the funniest and best marster on earth."

While Rondeau was carrying on his flirtation in the kitchen, Dr. Lacey was differently employed. Hope deferred had well nigh made his heart sick. "What can be the reason," thought he, "that Fanny does not write? I have written repeatedly for the last two months and have had no answer." Then as a new idea struck him, he added, "Yes, I'll write to Mr. Miller, and ask him what has happened." Suiting the action to the word, he drew up his writing desk, and in a short time a letter was written and directed to Mr. Miller.

He arose to summon Rondeau to take it to the office; but ere he had touched the bell rope, pride whispered, "Don't send that letter; don't let Mr. Miller into your private affairs. If Fanny were sick, some one would write to you."

So the bell was not rung, and during the next half-hour Dr. Lacey amused himself by mechanically tearing it into small fragments. Ah, Dr. Lacey, 'twas a sorry moment when you listened to the whispering of that pride! Had that letter been sent, it would have saved you many sleepless nights of sorrow. But it was not to be.

[pg 109]That night there was to be a large party at the house of Mr. Mortimer, whom Leffie had mentioned as second to the Laceys in wealth. Mr. Mortimer was the uncle at whose house Florence Woodburn was visiting, and the party was given in honor of her arrival, and partly to celebrate Mabel Mortimer's birthday. Mabel was an intelligent, accomplished girl, and besides being something of a beauty, was the heiress expectant of several hundred thousand. This constituted her quite a belle, and for three or four years past she and Dr. Lacey had been given to each other by the clever gossips of New Orleans. Mr. Lacey senior was also rather anxious that his son should marry Mabel; so Julia was not far out of the way when she wrote to Fanny that Dr. Lacey's parents wished to secure a match between him and a New Orleans belle. Had Dr. Lacey never seen Fanny, he possibly might have wedded Mabel. But his was a heart

which could love but once, and although the object of his love should prove untrue, his affections could not easily be transferred to another; so that it was all in vain that Mabel Mortimer, on the evening of the party, stood before her mirror arranging and rearranging the long curls of her dark hair and the folds of her rich white satin, wondering all the while if Dr. Lacey would approve her style of dress.

Turning to Florence, she said, "Cousin, did you see Dr. Lacey while he was in Frankfort?"

"No; I did not," answered Florence; "but I do hope he will be here tonight, for I am all impatient to see this lion who has turned all your heads."

A slight shade of displeasure passed over Mabel's fine features, but quickly casting it off she said, "Why are you so anxious, Florence? Have you any designs on him? If you have, they will do you no good, for I have a prior claim, and you must not interfere."

"Dear me, how charmingly you look!" said Florence. "But, fair coz, do not be too sanguine. Suppose I should tell you that far off in old Kentuck, as the negroes say, there is a golden-haired little girl, who has—"

"Stop, stop," said Mabel. "You shall not tell me. I will not hear it."

At that instant the doorbell rang, and in a moment several young girls entered the dressing room, and in the chattering and laughing and fixing which followed, Mabel forgot what her cousin had been saying. After a time the young ladies descended to the spacious drawing rooms, which were rapidly filling with the elite of the city.

[pg 110]Mabel's eye took in at a glance all the gentlemen, and she felt chagrined to find Dr. Lacey absent. "What if he should not come?" thought she. "The party would be a dreadfully dull affair to me." Some time after, she missed Florence and two or three other girls, and thinking they were in the parlor above, she went in search of them. She found them on the balcony not far from the gentlemen's dressing room, the windows of which were open. As she approached them, they called out, "Oh, here you are, Mabel! Florence is just going to tell us about Dr. Lacey's sweetheart."

"Dr. Lacey's sweetheart!" repeated Mabel. "Who is Dr. Lacey's sweetheart,

pray?"

"Do not blush so, Mabel; we do not mean you," said Lida Gibson, a bright-eyed, witty girl, with a sprinkling of malice in her nature.

"Of course you do not mean me," said Mabel, laughingly. "But come, cousin; what of her?" And the young girls drew nearer to each other, and waited anxiously for Florence's story.

Little did they suspect that another individual, with flushed brow, compressed lip and beating heart was listening to hear tidings of her whom Florence had designated as his sweetheart. Dr. Lacey had entered the gentlemen's dressing room unobserved. He heard the sound of merry voices on the balcony, and was about to step out and surprise the girls when he caught the sound of his own name coupled with that of Fanny Middleton. His curiosity was aroused and he became a listener to the following conversation:

"Come, Florence," said Lida, "do not keep us in suspense any longer. Tell us whether she is black or white, fat or lean, rich or poor."

"But first," said Mabel, "tell us how you know she is anything to Dr. Lacey."

"That is what I don't know," said Florence. "I am only speaking of what has been."

"Well, then," said Mabel, more gayly, "go on,"

"This Fanny Middleton," said Florence, "looks just as you would imagine a bright angel to look."

How Dr. Lacey blessed her for these words.

"But," continued Florence, "there is a singularly sad expression on her marble face."

"I never observed it," thought Dr. Lacey.

"What makes her sad?" asked Lida.

"That is a mystery to me," answered Florence. "Report [pg 111] says that she

loved a Mr. Wilmot, who was engaged to her sister."

"Engaged to her sister!" repeated Mabel. "How strange! But won't it make trouble?"

"It cannot," said Florence. "Mr. Wilmot is dead, and it is whispered that Fanny's heart was buried with him. I should not be surprised if it were so, for Fanny has the saddest face I ever saw. It made me want to cry when I looked at her. I should have pitied her more, however, had she not been so well cared for by a Mr. Stanton, of New York."

Large drops of perspiration stood thickly on Dr. Lacey's forehead, and his hands, convulsively clasped, were pressed against his heart; still he did not lose a syllable as Florence continued, "I did not blame her for liking Stanton, for he would break half your hearts and turn the rest of you crazy."

"But the sister," asked all the young ladies, "how was she affected to think Fanny loved her betrothed?"

"Oh, that sister!" said Florence. "You ought to see her! She is beautiful beyond anything I can describe. She eclipsed everything and everybody."

"And she is as agreeable as handsome?" asked Mabel, whose fears were aroused that Julia might be the rival, instead of Fanny.

Florence replied, "I was told that she was formerly very passionate, so much so that her father nicknamed her Tempest. Within a few months she has entirely changed, and is now very amiable; but I like Fanny's looks the best."

"But Dr. Lacey—what had he to do with Fanny?" asked Lida.

"It was said they were engaged; but I do not think they are. In fact, I know they are not, from what Fanny said herself; for she assured me that Dr. Lacey was nothing to her more than a common acquaintance; and the sad but sweet smile which broke over her face whenever she raised, her soft blue eyes to Stanton's animated countenance confirmed what she said."

"So, Mabel, you can have the doctor after all," said Lida. "You know you used to say that it was all settled, for your parents and his had arranged it."

Dr. Lacey waited for no more. He knew of a back stairway down which he could escape into the open air unobserved. In a moment he stood alone in Mr. Mortimer's garden, but the evening breeze, although it cooled his brow, failed to calm his excited feelings. Suddenly it occurred to him that his absence [pg 112] from Mr. Mortimer's would excite attention in those who saw him enter, so he made a desperate effort to be calm, and retracing his steps, was soon in the drawing room with Mabel Mortimer on his arm, much to that young lady's satisfaction.

As they passed near a group of girls, in the center of which stood Florence Woodburn, Mabel suddenly said, "Oh, Dr. Lacey, let me introduce you to cousin Florence. She has just come from Frankfort and knows some of your acquaintances there."

So saying, she drew him toward Florence, who had all the evening been waiting for an introduction to him. Dr. Lacey rather wished to avoid making Florence's acquaintance, fearing that she might say something to him of Fanny. But there was no escape, and he greeted Florence with a smile and a bow, which, to use her own words, "nearly drove every idea from her head."

Once during the evening he found himself standing with Florence, alone, near an open window. Florence improved her opportunity, and raising her bewitching hazel eyes to the doctor's face, said, "Why do you not ask me about your Kentucky friends, Dr. Lacey?"

Had Florence observed her companion closely, she would have noticed the pallor which for an instant overspread his face. It passed away, and he replied with an assumed gayety, "How should I know that we have any acquaintances in common in Frankfort?"

Before Florence had time to reply, Mabel joined them. She was unwilling to risk a tete-a-tete between the doctor and her fascinating cousin, and as soon as she found them standing alone she went up to them. Her example was followed by several other young ladies, among whom was Lida Gibson, who began by saying, "Doctor, do you know that Miss Florence has told us all about your love affairs, and also described the Golden Fairy? Now, why didn't you fall in love with her sister? Florence says she is far more beautiful."

Dr. Lacey answered calmly, "What reason has Miss Woodburn to think I am in

love with either."

"No reason," said Mabel, quickly; "neither does she think you are in love with her either."

"Dear me," said Lida. "Of course you do not wish me to think so, and we all know why; but never mind frowning so dreadfully, Mabel; I won't tell!" and the mischievous girl glided away, laughing to think that she had succeeded so well in teasing Mabel Mortimer.

After a moment, Dr. Lacey turned to Florence and said "It [pg 113] seems you saw Julia Middleton. Do you not think her very handsome?"

"Yes, very," answered Florence; "but I liked Fanny's looks the best."

A pang shot through Dr. Lacey's heart at the mention of Fanny's name, but he continued to inquire concerning his friends in Kentucky. Before the party closed, Florence, Mabel and Lida had each managed to repeat to him all the conversation which he had overheard in the first part of the evening, never once thinking how desolate was the heart which beat beneath the calm manner and gay laugh of him who listened to their thoughtless raillery.

At length the party drew to a close. Dr. Lacey was among the first that left. He longed to be alone with his troubled thoughts. Mechanically bidding Mabel "Good night," he ran down the marble steps, and stepping into his carriage, ordered Claib, the coachman, to drive home as soon as possible. There was no particular necessity for this command, for Claib had been fretting for the last hour about "White folks settin' up all night and keepin' niggers awake. Darned if he didn't run the horses home like Satan, and sleep over next day, too."

With such a driver the horses sped swiftly over the smooth road and in a very few minutes Dr. Lacey was at home, alone in his room. Then the full tide of his sorrow burst forth. He did not weep. He would scorn to do that. But could one have seen him as he hurriedly paced the apartment, he would have said, his was a sorrow which could not vent itself in tears. Occasionally he would whisper to himself, "My Fanny false!—she whom I believed so truthful, so loving, so innocent! And she loves another—one, too, whom it were almost a sin to love. Fool, that I did not see it before, for what but love could have drawn such devotion to him on his deathbed? And yet she assured me that I was the first, the only one, she had ever loved; and I believed it, and gave her the entire affection

of my heart."

Then came a reaction. Resentment toward Fanny for thus deceiving him mingling with his grief. But he had loved her too deeply, too truly, to cherish an unkind feeling toward her long. Throwing himself upon the sofa, and burying his face in his hands, he went back in fancy through all the many happy hours he had spent in her society. While doing this sleep descended upon him and in his dreams he saw again his darling Fanny, not false and faithless as he had feared, but arrayed in a spotless bridal robe. She stood by his side as his own wedded wife. Was that dream ever realized? We shall see.

Chapter XII

THE LETTER THAT WAS NOT DELIVERED

[pg 114]The next morning, Rondeau waited for a long time for his master's usual orders that he should go to the post office, but no such commands came, and as Dr. Lacey had not been heard moving in his room yet, Rondeau concluded to go at all events.

"I know," said he, "that'll be the first thing he'll tell me to do, and I may as well go on my own hook, as to wait and be sent."

Accordingly he again started for the post office, thinking to himself, "I hope that marster'll get a letter this time, for he don't seem no more like the wide-awake chap he did when he first come from Kentuck, than nothin'. I don't want him to have Miss Mabel nohow; for their niggers say she's awful spunky."

By the time this soliloquy was ended, he had reached the office. The clerk handed him two letters, both of which Rondeau eyed sharply. On looking at the second, the cavity between the ears widened to an enormous extent, and he gave vent to his joy by uttering aloud, "Crackee, this is just the thing!"

"What's the matter, Rondeau? Can you read writing?" asked the clerk in some surprise.

"No, sir, not but a little," said Rondeau; "but I know this hand write, I reckon."

In a twinkling, he was in the street. "This is a fine morning," thought he. "I've got the right letter this time, so I won't hurry home, for marster ain't goin' to find any fault if I don't git thar till noon."

So the next hour was spent in gossiping with all the blacks which could be found lounging round the streets. Suddenly one of the negroes called out, "Ho, Rondeau! Thar's yer old marster Lace comin'. You'd better cut stick for home, or he'll be in yer har."

Rondeau instantly started for home, where he was greeted [pg 115] by Aunt Dilsey with a torrent of abuse, that good lady rating him soundly for being gone too long. "Warn't he 'shamed to be foolin' away his time? 'Twan't his time nuther, 'twas marster's time. Was that ar fulfillin' of Scriptor, which says, 'we must be all eye sarvants,' which means ye must all keep clus where yer marsters can see you?"

How long Aunt Dilsey might have gone expounding Scripture is not known, for Rondeau interrupted her by saying, "Don't scold so, old lady. Marster ain't agoin' to care for I've got him something this time better than victuals or drink."

"What is it?" said Leffie, coming forward. "Have you got him a letter from Kentuck?"

"I hain't got nothin' else, Miss Leffie Lacey, if you please," said Rondeau, snapping his fingers in her face, and giving Aunt Dilsey's elbow a slight jostle, just enough to spill the oil, with which she was filling a lamp.

"Rondeau, I 'clar' for't," said Aunt Dilsey, setting down her oil can. "If marster don't crack your head, my old man Claib shall, if he ever gits up agin. Thar he is in his bunk, snorin' like he was a steamboat; and marster's asleep upstairs, I reckon. Well, 'tain't no way to live. Things would go to rack and ruin if I didn't sweat and work to keep 'em right end up, sartin."

Aunt Dilsey was really a very valuable servant, and had some reason for thinking herself the main spoke in the wheel which kept her master's household together. She had lived in the family ever since Dr. Lacey's early recollection, and as she had nursed him when an infant, he naturally felt a great affection for her, and intrusted her with the exclusive management of the culinary department, little negroes and all. His confidence in her was not misplaced, for from morning till night she was faithful to her trust, and woe to any luckless woolly head who was found wasting "marster's" sweetmeats and pickles.

On the first hand Aunt Dilsey was very sensitive, for being naturally active and stirring herself, "She," to use her own words, "couldn't bar to see folks lazain'

round like thar was nothin' to do, but to git up and stuff themselves till they's fit to bust." She also felt annoyed whenever her young master indulged himself in a morning nap. "Ought to be up," she said, "and airin' hisself."

On the morning following the party, her patience was severely taxed in two ways. First, Claib, her husband, had adhered to his resolution of sleeping over, and long after the [pg 116] clock struck eleven he was sleeping profoundly. He had resisted all Aunt Dilsey's efforts to rouse him. Her scoldings, sprinklings with hot and cold water, punching with the carving fork, had all proved ineffectual, and as a last resort, she put the baby on his bed, thinking "that would surely fetch him up standin', for 'twasn't in natur to sleep with the baby wollop in' and mowin' over him." Her master, too, troubled her. Why he couldn't get up she couldn't see. "His breakfast was as cold as a grave stun, and she didn't keer if 'twas. She had enough to do 'tendin' to other affairs, without keepin' the niggers and dogs from porkin' thar noses in it."

At a late hour Dr. Lacey awoke from his uneasy slumber. The return of morning brought comparative calmness to his troubled spirit. Hope whispered that what he had heard might be a mistake. At least he would wait for further confirmation. He did not know how near that confirmation was. Rondeau had been waiting for his masters summons until his patience was exhausted. So, relying on the letter to counteract any apparent disrespect, he stalked upstairs and knocked at Dr. Lacey's door, just as that gentleman was about ringing for him.

As soon as he entered the room, he called out, "Here, master, I've got 'em this time!" at the same time extending a letter, the superscription of which made Dr. Lacey turn pale, for he recognized, as he supposed, Fanny's delicate handwriting.

"You may leave me alone, Rondeau," said he, "and I will ring for you when I want you." So Rondeau departed with the remaining letter in his pocket. He had forgotten to deliver it, but it was not missed.

Oh, Rondeau, Rondeau! It was very unfortunate that you forgot that letter, and suffered it to remain in your pocket unheeded for so many days. Its contents would have scattered the dark, desolating tempest which was fast gathering over your young master's pathway.

As soon as Dr. Lacey was alone, he sat down, anxious, yet fearing to know the contents of his letter. At last he resolutely broke the seal, thinking to himself, "It

cannot contain anything worse than I already know." One glance at the beginning and end of the letter confirmed his fears, and for a few moments he was unable to read a line; then summoning all his remaining courage, he calmly read the letter through, not omitting a single word, but comprehending the meaning of each sentence. It was as follows:

"Frankfort, March 25th, 18—.

"DR. LACEY:

[pg 117]"SIR—Have you, during some weeks past, ever wondered why I did not write to you? And in enumerating to yourself the many reasons which could prevent my writing, has it ever occurred to you that possibly I might be false? Can you forgive me, Dr. Lacey, when I tell you that the love I once fancied I bore for you has wholly subsided, and I now feel for you a friendship, which I trust will be more lasting than my transient girlish love?

"Do you ask how I came to change so suddenly? I can only answer by another confession still more painful and humiliating to me. When I bade you adieu, I thought I loved you as well as I ever could again. I say again, for—but how shall I tell you? How confess that my first affection was not given to you? Yes, ere I had ever seen you, I loved another, and one, too, whom some would say it were sinful to love.

"But why harrow my feelings by awakening the past? Suffice it to say that he whom I loved is dead. We both saw him die, and I received upon my lips his last breath. Truly if he were Julia's in life, he was mine in death. Did you never suspect how truly I loved Mr. Wilmot? You were blinded by your misplaced affection for me, if you did not. Julia, my noble-hearted sister Julia, knew it all. I confessed my love to her, and on my knees begged her not to go to him, but to let me take her place at his bedside. She complied with my request, and then bravely bore in silence the reproaches of the world for her seeming coldness.

"Dear Julia! She seems strangely changed recently, and you would hardly know her, she is so gentle, so obliging, so amiable. You ought to have heard her plead your cause with me. She besought me almost with tears not to prove unfaithful to you, and when I convinced her that 'twas impossible for me to love another as I had Mr. Wilmot, she insisted on my writing, and not keeping you in suspense

any longer.

"Dr. Lacey, if you could transfer your affection from me—, but no, why should I speak of such a thing! You will probably despise all my family. Yet do not, I beseech you, cast them off for your poor Fanny's sin. They respect you highly, and Julia would be angry if she knew that I am about to tell you how she admires a certain Southern friend, who probably, by this time, thinks with contempt of little

"FANNY MIDDLETON."

There was no perceptible change in Dr. Lacey's manner [pg 118] after reading the heartless forgery, but the iron had entered his soul, and for a time he seemed benumbed with its force. Then came a moment of reflection. His love had been trampled upon, and thrown back as a thing of naught by her who had fallen from the high pedestal on which he had enthroned the idol of his heart's deepest affection.

"I could have pitied, and admired her, too," thought he, "had she candidly confessed her love for Mr. Wilmot; but to be so basely deceived by one whom I thought incapable of deception is too much."

Seizing the letter, he again read it through, and this time he felt his wounded pride somewhat soothed by thinking that the beautiful Julia admired and sympathized with him. "But pshaw!" he exclaimed, "most likely Julia is as hollow-hearted as her sister, and yet many dark spots on her character seem wiped away by Fanny's confession." Throwing the letter aside he rang the bell, and ordered his breakfast to be sent up to him.

That afternoon he called on Mabel Mortimer and her cousin. He found the young ladies in the drawing room, and with them a dark, fine-looking, middle-aged gentleman, whom Mabel introduced as Mr. Middleton. Something in the looks as well as name of the stranger made Dr. Lacey involuntarily start with surprise, and he secretly wondered whether; this gentleman was in any way connected with the Middletons of Kentucky. He was not kept long in doubt, for Florence, who was very talkative, soon said, "We were just speaking of you, Dr. Lacey, and Mr. Middleton seems inclined to claim you as an acquaintance, on the ground of your having been intimate with his brother's family in Kentucky."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Lacey; then turning to Mr. Middleton, he said, "Is it possible that you are a brother of Mr. Joshua Middleton?"

"Yes, sir," returned the stranger, eyeing Dr. Lacey closely; "Joshua is my brother, but for more than twenty years I have not seen him, or scarcely heard from him."

"Ah," answered Dr. Lacey, in some astonishment, and then, as he fancied there was something in Mr. Middleton's former life which he wished to conceal, he changed the subject by asking Mr. Middleton if he had been long in the city.

"Only two weeks," he replied, and he proceeded to speak of himself, saying, "For many years past I have been in the Indies. About the time my brother Joshua married, my father died. When his will was opened, I thought it a very unjust one, for it gave, to my brother a much larger share than was [pg 119] given to me. In a fit of anger, I declared I would never touch a penny of my portion, and leaving college, where I was already in my senior year, I went to New York, and getting on board a vessel bound for the East Indies, I tried by amassing wealth in a distant land, to forget that I ever had a home this side of the Atlantic. During the first years of my absence my brother wrote to me frequently, and most of his letters I answered, for I really bore him no malice on account of the will. I had not heard from him for a long time, until I reached this city."

"Are you going to visit Kentucky?" asked Dr. Lacey.

"It is my present intention to do so," answered Mr. Middleton; "but first I wish to purchase a summer residence near the Lake, and after fitting it up tastefully, I shall invite my nieces to visit me. You are acquainted with them, I believe."

Dr. Lacey answered in the affirmative, and Mr. Middleton continued, "I am told by Miss Woodburn that they are very beautiful, especially one of them, and quite accomplished. Is it so?"

Dr. Lacey replied very calmly, "The world, I believe, unites in calling Miss Julia beautiful."

"But what of the other one?" asked Mr. Middleton. "I am prepossessed in her favor, for she bears the name of the only sister I ever had."

Dr. Lacey sighed, for he remembered the time when he was drawn toward Fanny, because he fancied she resembled the only sister he ever had. Mr.

Middleton observed it, and immediately said, "Does it make you sigh just to mention Fanny? What is the matter? Has she jilted you? If she has, she does not partake of the nature of the Middletons, for they could never stoop to deceit."

Here Florence came to Dr. Lacey's relief by saying, "Why, Dr. Lacey, Mr. Middleton wants you to repeat what I have already told him, that Julia is exceedingly beautiful and that Fanny is as lovely as a Houri, and has the saddest, sweetest face I ever saw, and the softest, mildest blue eye."

Dr. Lacey laughingly said, "Thank you, Miss Florence; Mr. Middleton will please take what you have said as my opinion concerning his fair nieces."

Mr. Middleton bowed and then said, "How does my brother appear? He used to be very rough and abrupt in his manner."

Dr. Lacey laughed. He could not help it. His risible faculties were always excited when he thought of Joshua Middleton, and he answered, that although he highly esteemed Mr. Middleton, he feared his manners were not much improved.

[pg 120]"I dare say not," said the brother. "When he was at home, he was always saying things which our mother called 'impolite,' our father 'outlandish,' and the blacks 'right down heathenish.' However, with all his roughness, I believe there never was a more truly honorable man, or a more sincere friend."

After a few moments of general conversation, Mr. Middleton said, turning to Dr. Lacey, "I feel some anxiety about this summer residence which I intend purchasing. I am told that you have fine taste both in selecting a good locality and in laying out grounds. If you have leisure, suppose you accompany me on my exploring excursion, and I will reward you by an invitation to spend as much time with me as you like after my nieces arrive."

Dr. Lacey thanked Mr. Middleton for the compliment paid to his taste, and he politely expressed his willingness to assist his friend in the selection of a country seat. "By the way," continued he, "you are stopping at the St. Charles, I believe. Suppose you exchange your rooms at the hotel for a home with me, and become my guest until you leave the city for Kentucky?"

Mr. Middleton accepted Dr. Lacey's invitation willingly, and the three weeks which he spent at his residence passed rapidly and pleasantly away. During that time Dr. Lacey met with a gentleman who owned a very handsome villa near the

lake shore. This he wished to dispose of, and Mr. Middleton and Dr. Lacey went down to inspect it. They found it every way desirable, and Mr. Middleton finally purchased it at an enormous price, and called it the "Indian Nest." "Here," said he, speaking to Dr. Lacey, "here I shall at last find that happiness which I have sought for in vain during forty years. I shall have both my nieces with me, besides Miss Mortimer and Miss Woodburn. I suppose I shall have to invite some other young gentleman besides yourself, for the girls will hardly fancy the old Indian for a beau."

Dr. Lacey did not reply. He was thinking how much pleasure such an arrangement would have given him a few months ago; but now all was changed, and the thought of again meeting Fanny afforded him more pain than pleasure.

Mr. Middleton noticed his silence, and as he was slightly tinctured with the abruptness which characterized his brother, he said, "Why, young man, what is the matter? Have you been disappointed, or what makes you manifest so much indifference to spending the summer, or a part of it, with four agreeable girls?"

[pg 121]Dr. Lacey saw the necessity of rousing himself from his melancholy mood, and assuming a gayety he did not feel, he said, "I feel very much flattered, Mr. Middleton, with the honor you confer upon me, but I have for some time past been subject to low spirits; so you must not mind it if I am not always gay. Come, let us go into the garden and see what improvements are needed there."

So saying, they turned together into the large terraced garden. While they were engaged in walking over the handsome grounds which surrounded "The Indian Nest," Rondeau, who had accompanied his master, was differently occupied. Strolling down to the lake shore, he amused himself for a time by watching the waves as they dashed against the pebbly beach, and by fancying that each of them reflected the image of Leffie's bright, round face. Then buttoning up his coat he would strut back and forth, admiring his shadow, and thinking how much more the coat became him than it did his young master. It had been given to him by Dr. Lacey, with the order "not to wear it out in two days"; so Rondeau had not worn it before since the morning when he gave his master one letter and forgot the other. He had brought it with him to the lake, and was trying the effect of his elegant appearance.

Chancing to thrust his hand in his pocket, he felt the long-forgotten letter and drew it forth, then looking at it with wide open eyes and mouth, gave vent to his

surprise as follows: "Who'd a b'leved it! Here's this letter been in my pocket two weeks. I deserve to be cracked over the head, and anybody but marster would do it. I'll run and give it to him now—but no, I won't," said he, suddenly slackening his pace, "I've heard him say he could always trust me, and if I own up this time, he'll lose his—what's the word? Conference?—Yes, conference in me. I don't believe this letter's of any account, for its a great big letter, just like a man's handwrite. Any way, I'll wait till I get home and consult Leffie."

The letter was accordingly put in his pocket, and in a few moments he rejoined his master and Mr. Middleton. The next day they returned home. Rondeau's first act was to draw Leffie aside, and after winning from her various strong promises of secrecy, he imparted to her the astounding fact that, "He had found one of marster's letters in his trousers—no, his coat pocket. It had been there two weeks, and he didn't know what in cain to do with it. If he gave it to marster now, 'twould make him lose faith in him, and so forth."

Leffie heard him through, and then fully agreed with him that 'twas best not to tell marster at this late hour. "But," [pg 122] said she, "I'd put it out of the way, so 'twouldn't be poppin' out in sight some time."

"Shall I burn it?" asked Rondeau.

"Oh, no," said Leffie; "keep it so marster can have it, if he ever hears of it. There's your cigar box, take it and bury the letter in it."

"Whew-ew," said Rondeau, with a prolonged whistle, "it takes you women to calculate anything cute!"

The cigar box was brought out, and in a few moments the poor letter was lying quietly under a foot and a half of earth.

"There," said Leffie, as Rondeau laid over the spot a piece of fresh green turf, "nobody'll ever have any idee whose grave this is."

Rondeau rolled up his eyes, and assuming a most doleful expression, said, "Couldn't you manage to bust a tear or two, just to make it seem like a real buryin'?"

Leffie answered him by a sound box on his ear, at the same time threatening to expose his wickedness at the next class meeting. Aunt Dilsey's voice was now

heard calling out, "Leffie, Leffie, is you stun deaf and blind now that fetched Rondeau's done gone home? Come here this minute!"

Rondeau and Leffie returned to the house, leaving buried a letter, the reading of which would have changed the tenor of their master's feelings.

For a knowledge of its contents as well of its author, we must go back for a time to Frankfort whence it came, promising that Mr. Middleton will follow us in a few days.

Chapter XIII

LETTERS WRITTEN BUT NEVER RECEIVED

[pg 123]In order to keep the threads of our narrative connected, it is necessary that we go back for a time, and again open the scene in Frankfort, on the 24th of March, several days after the party, at which Florence Woodburn met Fanny Middleton. Seated at her work table, in one of the upper rooms of Mrs. Crane's boarding house, is our old friend, Kate Miller. Her dazzling beauty seems enhanced by the striking contrast between the clearness of her complexion and the sable of her robe.

On a low stool, at her feet, sits Fanny. Her head is resting on Mrs. Miller's lap, and she seems to be sleeping. She has been excused from school this afternoon, on account of a sick, nervous headache, to which she has recently been frequently subject. Finding the solitude of her own chamber rather irksome, she had sought Mrs. Miller's room, where she was ever a welcome visitor. To Kate she had imparted a knowledge of the letter which she supposed Dr. Lacey had written.

Mrs. Miller's sympathy for her young friend was as deep and sincere as was her resentment against the supposed author of this letter. As yet, she had kept Fanny's secret inviolate, and not even her husband had ever suspected the cause of Fanny's failing strength. But, this afternoon, as she looked on the fair girl's sad, white face, which seemed to grow whiter and thinner each day, she felt her heart swell with indignation toward one who had wrought this fearful change. "Surely," thought she, "if Dr. Lacey could know the almost fatal consequence of his faithlessness he would relent; and he must, he shall know it. I will tell Mr. Miller and he I know will write immediately." Then came the thought that she

had promised not to betray Fanny's confidence; but she did not despair of gaining her consent, that Mr. Miller should also know the secret.

For a time Fanny slept on sweetly and quietly; then she moved uneasily in her slumber, and finally awoke.

[pg 124]"How is your head now?" asked Mrs. Miller, at the same time smoothing the disordered ringlets which lay in such profusion over her lap.

"Oh, much better," said Fanny. "I had a nice sleep, and so pleasant dreams, too."

"Did you dream of him?" asked Mrs. Miller, in a low tone.

Quick as thought the crimson tide stained Fanny's cheek and forehead, but she answered, somewhat bitterly, "Oh, no, no! I never dream of him now, and I am trying hard to forget him. I do not think I love him half as well now as I once thought I did."

Poor little Fanny! How deceived she was! After a time Mrs. Miller said, "Fanny, Mr. Miller seems very anxious about your altered and languid appearance. May I not tell him the truth? He will sympathize with you as truly as I do; for he feels for you almost the affection of a brother."

At first Fanny objected. "I know," said she, "that Mr. Miller would only think me a weak, silly girl." Mrs. Miller, however, finally gained permission to tell everything to her husband. "I know, though," persisted Fanny, "that he will laugh at me. You say he likes me; I know he did once; but since the time when he visited my father's, more than a year ago, he has not treated me with the same confidence he did before. I never knew the reason, unless it was that foolish, romping mistake which I made one afternoon by riding into the schoolhouse!"

With many tears and some laughing—for the remembrance of the exploit always excited her mirth—Fanny told a part of what we already know concerning Mr. Miller's visit at her father's the winter previous. She related the adventure of the sled ride, and said that the morning after she noticed a change in Mr. Miller's manner toward her. The unsuspecting girl little thought what was the true reason of that change.

While she was yet speaking, Mr. Miller entered the room. On seeing Fanny there, and weeping, he said: "What, Sunshine in tears? That is hardly the remedy

I would prescribe for headache. But come, Fanny, tell me what is the matter."

"Oh, I cannot, I cannot!" said Fanny, and again she buried her face in Kate's lap.

Mr. Miller looked inquiringly at his wife, who had not yet ceased laughing at Fanny's ludicrous description of her sled ride; but overcoming her merriment, she at length found voice to say, "Fanny is crying because she thinks you do not like her as well as you used to."

Kate had never dreamed that her husband had once felt [pg 125] more than a brother's love for the weeping girl before her, and she did not know what pain her words inflicted on his noble heart. Neither did she think there was the least ground for Fanny's supposition, and she desired her husband to say so.

"I cannot say so and tell the truth," said Mr. Miller, "but I can assure you that Bill Jeffrey's sled had nothing to do with it."

"What was it then?" asked Kate and Fanny, both in the same breath.

Mr. Miller drew Fanny toward him with the freedom of an elder brother, and, in a low, earnest tone, said: "Did nothing else occur during my visit, which could have changed my opinion of you?"

Fanny lifted her large blue eyes to Mr. Miller's face with so truthful, wondering a gaze that he was puzzled. "Can it be," thought he, "that I did not hear aright, that I was deceived? I will, at least, ask her how she spent that evening," so he said: "Fanny, do you remember where you were, or how you were occupied during the last evening of my stay at your father's?"

At first Fanny seemed trying to recall the events of that night; then she said: "Oh, yes, I remember now perfectly well. You and Mr. Wilmot had letters to write, and went to your room early, while father and mother went to one of the neighbors, leaving Julia and me alone in the sitting room."

"Did you both remain in the sitting room during the evening?" continued Mr. Miller.

"Yes," said Fanny, "or, that is, I stayed there all the time; but Julia was gone a long time, and when she returned she would not tell me where she had been."

"But were not you and Luce in your room at all that evening?" continued Mr. Miller.

"Luce!" said Fanny; "I do not remember having seen her once that night; neither was I in my room until bedtime."

There was so much frankness and apparent truth in Fanny's face and manner that Mr. Miller never for a moment doubted her. His first feeling was one of intense happiness at finding that Fanny was, indeed, all he had once fancied her to be. Back through the channels of his heart rolled, for an instant, the full tide of his once secretly nurtured affection for her. It was for an instant, however; for one look at the beautiful Kate convinced him that the love he once bore the gentle, timid girl at his side was nought, when compared with the deep, ardent affection which he now felt for his own cherished wife. "Fanny," said he, "I have wronged you in [pg 126] thought, but never in word or deed, to my knowledge. I was, however, grossly deceived, although I can see no object for the deception."

"What can you mean?" asked Kate, rather anxiously. "Do explain yourself, and not deal in mysteries any longer. What dreadful thing did you imagine Fanny had done—set the stables on fire, or abused the blacks—which?"

Mr. Miller did not immediately answer; and Fanny said: "Come, Mr. Miller, it is not fair to suspect me of evil and not tell what it is. You should be more frank."

"I will tell you," said Mr. Miller; and, in as few words as possible he repeated to Fanny the conversation which he had overheard, between Luce and herself, as he supposed.

When he finished speaking, both Kate and Fanny were silent for a moment; then Kate said: "It was Julia, I know it was. Did you ever notice how much alike their voices are? And, besides, I once heard Julia lay a wager with Mr. Raymond that she could imitate her sister's voice so exactly that one, not seeing her, would be thoroughly deceived."

"Oh, Mrs. Miller," said Fanny, "it cannot be! Why should Julia wish to do so wicked a thing? And yet I now remember that when I was sick, Luce came to me one night and asked me to forgive her for everything bad she had ever done to me. I assured her I knew of nothing to forgive; and then she cried, and said I did not know all she did about her wickedness. She must have referred to that night. I can forgive her; for she is a poor ignorant girl, and much afraid of Julia. But

how could my own sister do me so great a wrong, and what could have been her object?"

Here Fanny burst into tears, while Kate gave vent to her indignation by expressing her opinion pretty freely of Miss Julia.

"I can see," said she, "what Julia's object was. I fancy she was always fearful lest my brother should like Fanny the best; and she probably took this method to make you both think meanly of Fanny."

"Your idea is, probably, the correct one," said Mr. Miller, who would have added more, but Kate interrupted him by saying, "Yes, I think I understand it all now. Julia is, probably, at the foundation of Dr. Lacey's neglect. Most likely she's been writing him some base falsehood."

"Dr. Lacey's neglect!" repeated Mr. Miller. "What do you mean?"

Kate commenced an explanation, but Fanny started up, saying: "Please, Mrs. Miller, wait until I am gone."

[pg 127]She then quitted the apartment, and sought her own room, of which Julia had been sole occupant for more than an hour. On her return from school this hopeful young lady was pleased to find her sister absent. Seating herself near the window, with paper and pencil, she began the composition of that letter, which, as we have said, widened the breach between Dr. Lacey and Fanny. This unhallowed work cost her a world of pains. Many times were the lines crossed out and rewritten, before they quite suited her. The letter was but half completed, when Fanny was heard coming slowly through the upper hall. Springing up, Julia darted through the window out upon the balcony, and by the time Fanny reached the room she was seated at the furthest end of the veranda, busily engaged with her forgery.

When she at last returned to the room, and tried to converse with her sister, she observed that Fanny shrank from her approach and that she had been weeping. In a very ironical tone Julia said, "What now is the matter? I declare, Fan, I believe you are a perfect little simpleton. I wouldn't be such a cry baby, anyway; and make so much fuss about one good-for-nothing doctor."

Fanny replied very calmly, and without once taking her eyes from her sister's face, "If you think I have been crying about Dr. Lacey, you are mistaken."

"Pray what did you cry for?" said Julia, laughingly. "Did somebody look sideways at you, or omit to call you by some pet baby name?"

"I cried," said Fanny, "because I feared you had been acting very wickedly toward me."

In an instant Julia's assurance left her. The bright color forsook her cheek, which became perfectly white. Fanny noticed the change, and it confirmed her fears. She did not know that the circumstances to which she alluded had long since faded from Julia's memory, and that her present agitation arose from the fear that she might have been detected in her work of deception, and that, after all, she might be foiled and entangled in her own meshes. A glance of intense anger flashed from her large black eye, as she muttered between her closed teeth: "Has the wretch dared to betray me?"

Fanny supposed she referred to Luce; and her first feeling was to save the helpless servant girl from Julia's displeasure; so she said, "Do not condemn Luce; she did not tell me. I received my information from our teacher, Mr. Miller."

"Luce! Mr. Miller! What do you mean?" asked Julia, her eyes lessening to their usual size, and the color again coming [pg 128] to her cheeks and lips. This sudden change in her sister's appearance puzzled Fanny; but she proceeded to relate what she had just heard from Mr. Miller. Julia was so much relieved to find her fears unfounded, and her darling secret safe, that she burst into a loud laugh, which she continued for some time. During this fit of laughter, she was determining whether it were best to confess the whole and seem sorry for it, or to strenuously deny it. Finally, she decided on the former, but resolved not to give the right reason for her conduct; so she said, with an air of great penitence: "Yes, Fanny, I am guilty, and I am glad you know it, too. I have been on the point of acknowledging it to you many times, but shame kept me silent."

"How could you do it, and what did you do it for?" asked Fanny.

Julia replied, "Truth compels me to say that I feared your influence over Mr. Wilmot. I knew how much he admired amiability in females, and I wished to make him think you were no more amiable than other people."

"And yet you say you never cared for his love," continued Fanny.

Miss Julia was getting cornered; but her evil genius did not forsake her, and she answered, "True, I did not care much for him; but I felt flattered with his attentions and I ardently desired to have one person prefer me to you. I know it was wicked in me to do what I did, but you will forgive me, will you not? And I will promise never again to act so deceitfully toward you."

Always sincere in what she said herself, Fanny could not think her sister otherwise; so her hand was extended in token of forgiveness. Julia took it, and raising it to her lips, kept it there for an instant, in order to conceal the treacherous smile of exultation which played round her mouth. "I shall yet triumph," thought she, and, in the exuberance of her joy, she kissed again the soft hand which she held in her grasp. Could Fanny have looked into the heart of her sister, and beheld all its dark designs, she would have fled from her presence as from a poisonous serpent. But, though she was deceived, there was one, the All-seeing One, whose eye was ever upon the sinful girl; and though for a while she seemed to prosper, the same mighty Power so ordered it, that after a time, she who had sown the tempest reaped the whirlwind; and the clouds which hung so heavy and dark around the pathway of her innocent victim, afterward burst with terrific violence upon her own head.

[pg 129]We will now return to Mrs. Miller, whom we left relating to her husband the supposed neglect of Dr. Lacey. She finished her narrative by saying, "I cannot help thinking that by some means, Julia is at the foundation of all this mischief. You and Dr. Lacey were good friends; suppose you write to him, and then we shall at least know the truth of the matter."

"Yes, I will," said Mr. Miller; "tomorrow."

"But why not write tonight?" asked Kate, who was in a hurry.

"Because," answered Mr. Miller, "I shall be engaged tonight and tomorrow will do as well."

Kate could not help feeling that, possibly, "tomorrow" might not do as well; but she said no more on the subject, and waited patiently for the morrow, when, true to his promise, her husband commenced the important letter. We have said that Mr. Miller had never liked Julia. In this letter, however, he spoke as favorably of her as he could; but he told how basely she had once deceived himself and Mr. Wilmot, with regard to Fanny, and also hinted his own and his wife's suspicion,

that, in some way or other, Julia was connected with Dr. Lacey's long silence, as well as with the heartless letter which Fanny had received from New Orleans.

"Yes, this will do," said Kate, as she read what her husband had written. "But," she added, "I cannot help feeling sorry that it was not sent yesterday."

"Oh, Kate," said Mr. Miller, gayly, "your anxiety for Fanny has made you nervous, and now you are almost superstitious. One day can make no possible difference in the result of this letter."

Afterward, when it was too late, he learned how much difference the delay of one day caused. By its means, that letter which would have set all right, was sent in the same package with Julia's amiable production, and, as we have seen, was not received by its owner, but was safely stowed away in a cigar box under ground.

Soon after Mr. Miller deposited his letter in the post office, a young girl, closely veiled, entered the same building, and looked anxiously round until her eye fell upon her accomplice, Mr. Dunn. That worthy young man instantly came forward, grinning and bowing, and almost upsetting another clerk, who was also hastening to wait upon the beautiful Miss Middleton.

"Good morning, Miss Julia!" said Mr. Dunn; "glad to see you. Fine morning."

Julia did not deign to reply, for Mr. Dunn's familiarity was [pg 130] exceedingly disgusting to her. She, however, handed him her letter, which he looked at in some surprise, and said in a low tone, "Is this letter from Fanny, or you?"

"From me; send it," answered Julia, at the same time managing to slip an eagle into the hands of the honest clerk.

Leaving the office, the young lady proceeded homeward, thinking to herself, "There, that will settle him, I hope. I am getting on swimmingly."

When Mr. Miller entered his room, on his return from the office, Kate said, "In the course of two weeks, you or Fanny or both, will hear from Dr. Lacey."

"Do not be too sanguine, Katy," answered Mr. Miller: "you may be disappointed."

"Well," continued Kate, "if he pays no attention to your letter, I shall be satisfied that he really is undeserving of Fanny's esteem. I'll not tell her that you have written, for fear of the consequence."

So days came and went, week followed week, in rapid succession, until five weeks were numbered with the past since Mr. Miller's letter had been dispatched. Kate had waited and watched until even her sanguine nature had ceased to hope; for there had come no tidings from the far off Crescent City, and both she and her husband had unwillingly come to the conclusion that Dr. Lacey was really false. Kate manifested her disappointment by an increased tenderness of manner toward Fanny, whom she sincerely loved, and by a more gracious deportment toward Julia, whom she began to fear she had wronged by suspecting her of being accessory to Dr. Lacey's conduct.

Chapter XIV

FANNY AND JULIA'S UNCLE ARRIVES FROM INDIA

[pg 131]It was now the first day of May, and as it was also Fanny's seventeenth birthday, her school companions determined to celebrate it by a May party, of which Fanny was unanimously chosen queen. The fete took place in a handsome grove on a hillside which overlooked the city of Frankfort. All of Mr. Miller's pupils were present, together with most of their parents and many of their friends. Mrs. Miller had taken great pains that Fanny should be arrayed becomingly for the occasion, and many and flattering were the compliments paid to the youthful queen, who indeed looked bewitchingly beautiful.

Her dress was a white muslin, festooned with wild flowers, some of which were fastened here and there by a pearl or brilliant. The gayety of the little party was at its height, and when Fanny, gracefully kneeling, received upon her head the crown, and was proclaimed "Queen of the May," a strange voice called out in loud, musical tones, "Viva la Reine." The whole company instantly caught up the words, and "Long live the Queen" was echoed and re-echoed on all sides.

When the tumult had somewhat subsided the eyes of those present were turned toward the spot whence the words "Viva la Reine" had proceeded. Leaning against one of the tall shade trees were two gentlemen, who had joined them unobserved. The elder of the strangers was a middle-aged man, in whose piercing black eyes and dark complexion we recognize the Mr. Middleton whom we left with Dr. Lacey in New Orleans. His companion was many years younger, and there was something in his appearance which instantly interested and attracted the notice of strangers. There was a nobleness in the intellectual cast of his high, white forehead, round which his rich brown hair lay in thick masses, as

if unwilling to part with the curl which must have been natural to it in childhood.

No sooner did Kate's eyes fall on the young man than she [pg 132] darted forward with a cry of recognition and exclaimed, "Why, Frank Cameron, how came you here?"

But before he answers Kate's question, we will introduce him to our readers. Frank Cameron was a cousin of Kate Wilmot. His father, who was a lawyer by profession, had amassed a large fortune, on the interest of which he was now living in elegant style in the city of New York. Frank, who was the eldest child, had chosen the profession of his father, contrary to the wishes of his proud lady mother, who looked upon all professions as too plebeian to suit her ideas of gentility. This aristocratic lady had forgotten the time when, with blue cotton umbrella and thick India rubbers, she had plodded through the mud and water of the streets in Albany, giving music lessons for her own and widowed mother's maintenance. One of her pupils was Kate Wilmot's mother, Lucy Cameron. While giving lessons to her she first met Lucy's brother, Arthur Cameron, who afterward became her husband. He was attracted by her extreme beauty and his admiration was increased on learning her praiseworthy efforts to maintain herself and mother. They were married, and with increasing years came increasing wealth, until at length Mr. Cameron was a millionaire and retired from business.

As riches increased, so did Mrs. Cameron's proud spirit, until she came to look upon herself as somewhat above the common order of her fellow-beings. She endeavored to instil her ideas of exclusiveness into the minds of her children. With her daughter Gertrude, she succeeded admirably, and by the time that young lady had reached her eighteenth year, she fancied herself a kind of queen to whom all must pay homage. But Frank the poor mother found perfectly incorrigible. He was too much like his father to think himself better than his neighbor on account of his wealth. Poor Mrs. Cameron had long given him up, only asking as a favor that he would not disgrace his family by marrying the washerwoman's daughter. Frank promised he would not, unless perchance he should fall in love with her, "And then," said he, with a wicked twinkle of his handsome hazel eyes, "then, my dear Mrs. Cameron, I cannot be answerable for consequences."

He had always greatly admired his cousin Kate, and often horrified his mother by declaring that if Kate were not his cousin, he would surely marry her. "Thank

the Lord, then, that she is so near a relative! For now you will not stoop to marry a music teacher," said Mrs. Cameron.

The old roguish expression danced in Frank's eye, as he said, "Most noble mother Adelaide, will you tell me whether [pg 133] it wrenched father's back much when he stooped to a music teacher?"

The highly indignant lady was silent, for Frank had a way of reminding her of the past, which she did not quite relish; so she let him alone, secretly praying that he would not make a fool of himself in his choice of a wife. He bade her be easy on that point, for 'twasn't likely he would ever marry, for he probably would never find a wife who would suit him.

Such was Frank Cameron. Business for his father had taken him to Louisville, and he determined to visit his cousin Kate ere he returned home. He took passage in the Blue Wing, on board of which was Mr. Middleton, who soon made his acquaintance. As they were bound for the same place, they kept together, and on reaching Frankfort, went immediately to Mrs. Crane's, where they were entertained by Mrs. Carrington, who wondered much who the distinguished looking strangers could be. Concluding that the older one must of course be married, she turned her attention to Frank, who was much amused at her airs and coquettish manners. He had inquired for Mrs. Miller, and at length Mrs. Carrington asked if she were an acquaintance of his.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Frank with great gravity, "she is my wife's cousin."

In an instant Mrs. Carrington's coquetry vanished, and rising upon her dignity, she soon gave the gentlemen directions where to find the May party. As they were proceeding thither, Mr. Middleton said, "Why, Cameron, I understood you to say on the boat that you were not married."

"Neither am I," answered Frank. "I merely wished to get a dissolving view of that lady's maneuvers. Besides, I was actually afraid of being annihilated by her eyes and smiles. I'll manage to let her know that you are marketable, and then she'll turn her artillery toward you."

"But was it quite right," said Mr. Middleton, "to give her a wrong impression?"

"No, I suppose not," answered Frank. "But if I ever marry, Kate will be my wife's cousin."

By this time they had reached the entrance of the grove and caught sight of the fair queen. "The fates protect me!" said Frank, suddenly stopping and planting himself against a tree. "It would be suicide to advance another step. And she is your niece, you say. Pray intercede for me, or in less than a month I shall be making faces through the iron grating of some madhouse."

Mr. Middleton did not reply. His eyes were riveted on [pg 134] Fanny, whose face and figure recalled to his remembrance his only sister, who was the playmate of his childish years. Many long years had rolled away since that bright summer morning, when with a sad heart he bade adieu to that sister, who, a young happy bride, was leaving her native land for a home on a foreign shore. Weeks passed, and there came intelligence that the ill-fated vessel in which she embarked was a total wreck. Among the lost were his sister and her husband, who now slept quietly beneath the billowy surf of the Atlantic.

Fanny so strongly resembled her Aunt that it was not strange Mr. Middleton for an instant fancied he again looked on the features of his long-lost sister. But the illusion soon vanished, and when Kate bounded forward and saluted her cousin, his eye was wandering over the group of young girls in quest of his other niece. He, however, looked in vain. Julia was not there. When urged to attend the party, she had tossed her head in scorn saying that she unfortunately had no taste for child's play. She preferred remaining at home, where she could spend her time more profitably. Oh, Julia, Julia! It is a pity you did not assign your true reason for absenting yourself from the party. Of this reason we will speak hereafter. We are not quite through with the May party.

We left Kate interrogating her cousin as to how he chanced to be there, and the remainder of the company looked in wonder upon the strangers, who seemed so suddenly to have dropped in their midst. After Frank had answered his cousin's question, he introduced his companion and said, "He has two nieces here, I believe. He has recognized one of them in your charming queen. Will you please point out the other and introduce him?"

"I am sorry to say Julia is not present," answered Kate. "But come with me, Mr. Middleton," continued she, "and I will present you to Fanny." Then turning to Frank, she added, "I remember you to be a woman-hater, master Frank, so you can remain where you are."

"I'd laugh to see myself doing it," answered Frank, as he followed his gay cousin

to the spot where Fanny was standing. All eyes were upon them, while Kate introduced the tall, distinguished-looking gentleman to Fanny as her uncle.

"My uncle!" said Fanny, in some surprise. "My uncle!"

A slight shade of disappointment was visible on Mr. Middleton's face, as he took the offered hand of his niece, but he said, "Yes, your uncle. Did you never hear your father speak of his brother Bill?"

[pg 135]"Oh, yes, yes," said Fanny joyfully. "I do know you now. You are my Uncle William from the Indies. Father will be delighted to see you, for he has long feared you were dead." At the same time the affectionate girl again took her uncle's hand and raised it to her lips.

The tears started to Mr. Middleton's eyes, but hastily dashing them away, he said, "I suppose the fair Queen Fanny knows that bad bills always return?"

Fanny replied by again kissing the sunburned hand of her uncle. "King Ferdinand!" thought Frank, "I'd endure the rack for the sake of being in the old fellow's boots." Frank had been standing near Fanny, fixing upon her a gaze so intensely earnest that when she at last raised her eyes to his she blushed deeply, for there was no mistaking the look of deep admiration with which he regarded her.

Kate immediately introduced him. Fanny received him very politely, but said playfully, "I was in hopes, Mr. Cameron, that you would prove to be my cousin."

Mr. Middleton immediately answered, "No, dear Fanny, he is not your cousin, but he seems very desirous of becoming my nephew."

Fanny did not apply this to herself, but answered very demurely, "I don't know what he'll do, uncle. You'll have to talk the matter over with sister Julia, who unfortunately is not here."

"You are a modest little puss," said Mr. Middleton. "But do you give up everything so quietly to Julia?"

Fanny answered somewhat sadly, "I've nothing to give."

Here Mr. Miller joined them, and said it was time to make preparations for

returning' home. Accordingly in a short time the company were dispersing. When our party reached Mrs. Crane's, Fanny went directly to Julia, whom she found most becomingly dressed, and apparently anxiously awaiting her return.

That excellent young lady had heard from Mrs. Carrington of the strangers' visit, and she was impatient to know who they were and had dispatched a negro girl to reconnoiter and report. The girl soon came back, her eyes projecting like coffee saucers, and the little braided tags of her hair seemingly standing upright.

"Oh, Miss Julia!" said she, "that ar' tall, black man—no, I ax yer pardon, miss—that ar' tall, yaller man, done shook hands 'long of Miss Fanny, who kissed him, and called him Uncle William. She said how he done been with the Injuns."

[pg 136]"Her Uncle William!" repeated Julia, in amazement. "And who is the other man? His son?"

"Yes, reckon so," said the negro. "They done call him Mr. Camel, or Camlet, or suthin. I tell you he's han'some; and I reckon he's tuk with Miss Fanny. Jiminy hoecake! Ain't she pooty? She looked a heap han'somer than you—no, I don't mean so—I axes pardon agin." And the negro bobbed out of the door just in time to dodge a ball of soap which Julia hurled at her head.

"It's no use fretting so," said Mrs. Carrington, who was present. "The young man is married, for he spoke of his wife."

Julia did not answer, and Mrs. Carrington soon after left the room. When she was gone, Julia muttered to herself, "Uncle William, from the Indies; rich as Cræsus, of course. What a fool I was not to go to the party. Most likely Fanny has won his good graces by this time. However, I'll dress myself and surprise him with my beauty, if nothing else."

Accordingly, the next hour was spent in decorating her person, and when Fanny came for her she was ready to make an assault upon the good opinion of her rich uncle. Not a thing was out of place, from the shining braids of her dark hair to the tiny slipper on her delicate foot.

Fanny's first exclamation on entering the room was, "How beautiful you look, Julia! It is exceedingly fortunate that you are dressed so becomingly; for, will you believe it, Uncle William is down stairs!"

"Is it possible?" said Julia, affecting much surprise.

"Yes," answered Fanny. "You know father thinks him dead. But come, he is anxious to see you."

Julia arose to go with her sister, and said, "Isn't there a young man with him?"

"How did you know that?" asked Fanny, in some astonishment.

"I saw them from the window," was Julia's ready reply.

Fanny did not think of doubting her sister, and she answered, "It is a Mr. Cameron. He is cousin to Mrs. Miller."

By this time they had reached the parlor, which was open. Here Julia thought proper to be seized with a fit of modest indifference, and hesitated a moment before entering the room. Her uncle, however, immediately came forward, and relieved her from all embarrassment by saying, "And this, I suppose, is Julia. My brother is a happy man to be father of such charming girls."

Julia received him graciously, but rather haughtily offered [pg 137] him her cold white hand. "I will not kiss him," thought she; "Fanny did that. It's too childish. I'll be more dignified." Could she have known the contrast which her uncle was drawing between her own and Fanny's reception of him she would not have felt much flattered; but before her uncle had time to say anything further, Fanny introduced her to Frank, whose keen eye had read her character at a glance, and read it aright, too. His ideas and words were after the following fashion:

"Pshaw! What a bundle of pride and stuck-up-ishness! She's handsome, though, but it isn't to be named the same day with Fanny,"—"How do you do, Miss Middleton?"—"What an affected little courtesy!"—"Hope to see you well, ma'am."—"I'd laugh to see her trip and fall flat."

Such were Frank's thoughts while undergoing the ceremony of an introduction to Julia, who never for a moment doubted she was making an impression upon the handsome young stranger, his supposed wife to the contrary notwithstanding. The introduction being over, Julia seated herself on the sofa, while Fanny took a seat on a low ottoman near her uncle, but partially behind him. She had chosen this place, because she fancied it would screen her somewhat from Frank's eyes, which she felt, rather than saw, were fixed upon her constantly.

During the conversation which followed, Julia, as if by mere accident, mentioned New Orleans. She was anxious to know whether her uncle saw or heard of Dr. Lacey. Her curiosity was soon gratified, for, at the mention of New Orleans, as if suddenly recollecting himself, said, turning to Fanny, "I saw two of your acquaintances in New Orleans, and one of them gave me a most glowing description of you."

"I wonder if it were a gentleman," thought Frank.

Julia's thoughts were similar, and she bit her lip, while Fanny's cheek glowed with unwonted brilliancy as she quietly asked, "Pray, who was it uncle?"

"It was Miss Woodburn who praised you so highly," answered Mr. Middleton.

Julia immediately asked, "And who was the other acquaintance?"

"Dr. Lacey," answered her uncle. "I spent three weeks at his house."

Without knowing it, Fanny drew nearer to her uncle and laid her hand on his. He seemed dearer to her from the fact that he had spent so much time with one whose image was ever before her, and whom she vainly fancied she was trying to forget.

[pg 138]Frank noticed Fanny's manner, and interpreted it according to his fears. "There's mischief here," thought he. "I hope this doctor lives in a good locality for yellow fever."

"Is Dr. Lacey about to be married?" asked Julia.

"Married," repeated Mr. Middleton; "I should say matrimony was very far from his thoughts at present. I fancied he had met with some disappointment and I sometimes feared lest the fair, deceitful one were one of my nieces. Can any one set me right on the subject?"

Mr. Middleton had no idea how painfully his words affected her who sat by his side, and looked up so imploringly in his face, as if begging him to stop. There was an embarrassing silence, which Julia presently broke, by saying, "While Dr. Lacey was here, he and Fanny got up a flirtation; but nothing serious will result from it, I reckon."

"It's Fanny's own fault, then, I imagine," said Mr. Middleton, laying his hand on the head which had drooped lower and lower, until at last it rested heavily on his knee.

Fanny made no reply; but when she lifted up her head there was something so sad in the expression of her face that Mr. Middleton immediately surmised that there was, or had been, something between Dr. Lacey and Fanny more serious than a mere flirtation; so he very kindly changed the conversation, which now turned upon indifferent subjects, until the supper bell rang out its summons, when they all repaired to the dining room.

At the supper table Mr. Middleton and Frank were introduced to Mrs. Carrington, Mr. Stanton and Raymond. Mrs. Carrington acknowledged her introduction to Mr. Cameron merely by a haughty, disdainful bow. She had learned from Kate that he was not married; and feeling indignant at the deception he attempted to practice upon her, she resolved to treat him with contempt. Accordingly, although seated opposite him, she deigned him neither look nor word, but divided her time between laughing and coquetting with Raymond, and trying the power of her charms upon Mr. Middleton, who, she had been told, was a bachelor, and possessed of unbounded wealth. With the old Indian, however, she made but little headway; and Frank was right when he thought, "You'll get tired of that play, madam; the game is too old to be caught with chaff." With Raymond she succeeded better. He was delighted with her unusually flattering notice; and ere supper was over he had, in Frank's estimation, made a perfect fool of himself.

Frank's attention was, however, soon diverted toward Mr. [pg 139] Middleton, who said, speaking to Stanton, "Were it not for your name and glasses, I would address you as Dr. Lacey. Are you related to him?"

Stanton replied, "Yes, sir; he is my cousin. I think I must resemble him, as I have been told so frequently."

Mr. Middleton then spoke of Dr. Lacey in the highest terms of commendation, and concluded his remarks by saying, "I have recently purchased a residence, near Lake Pontchartrain, and am beating up recruits to spend the summer there with me. I am sure of Dr. Lacey, Miss Woodburn, and her cousin, Miss Mortimer. My nieces I shall take back with me, any way, and shall be happy to prevail on you, Mr. Stanton, to accompany me also."

Stanton thanked him for his kind invitation, but at the same time declined it, saying that business would call him to New York in the autumn. The deep blush which accompanied these words caused Raymond to burst into a laugh. Mr. Middleton looked inquiringly at him and he said, "Pardon me for laughing; I was thinking of the important business which calls Bob to New York."

"Nothing bad, I hope," said Mr. Middleton.

"Nothing worse than going for a wife," answered Raymond. "He is not suited with Kentucky girls, but must needs plod back to New York."

"If appearances do not deceive, you, at least, seem likely to be suited by a Kentuckian," replied Mr. Middleton, at the same time turning his black eyes on Mrs. Carrington with something of a quizzical expression.

Raymond colored. He did not know how the speech would be received by the fair lady. She soon satisfied him, however; for tossing her head proudly, she said, "As far as my experience goes, New Yorkers are more easily suited than Kentuckians; at least, I find them to be exceedingly disagreeable."

"I am afraid some of them are so easily suited that they catch a Tartar sometimes," said Frank, whose feelings were roused at hearing this rude speech.

Mrs. Carrington gave him a look which she meant should say, "I wonder who you think you are. I'd thank you to mind your own business."

But Frank thought he was minding his business; for he was looking at Fanny, who had not taken her eyes from her plate since her uncle had proposed taking herself and Julia to New Orleans. Her first feeling was one of joy. She would go, for she would then see Dr. Lacey; but the next thought was, [pg 140] "No, I will not. He has spurned me, and why should I put myself in his way?"

Julia's feelings were different. She could scarcely conceal her delight. Her artful mind took in the future at a glance. She felt sure that Fanny would not go; but she would, and could thus make Dr. Lacey believe that she, of all others, was just suited for him. Here we may as well give Julia's real reason for absenting herself from the May party. She had begun to fear that all her fine scheming might come to naught; for in all probability Dr. Lacey would not return to Kentucky in a long time. What could she do? She would write him a letter in her own name. In it she would modestly express her opinion of Fanny's conduct;

sympathize with him in his disappointment, and end by inviting him to Frankfort, saying she hoped he would not absent himself from his friends on Fanny's account; for there were many who would welcome him back to Kentucky with pleasure. It was for the sake of manufacturing this letter that Julia had remained at home. But now there was no need of sending it, for she was going to New Orleans herself. She would win him. He would yet be hers.

On returning to the parlor after supper she seated herself close to her uncle, upon whom she lavished so many caresses that he wondered much what had come over her, and began to think that he was mistaken in supposing her to be cold-hearted and indifferent to him. As he looked at her beautiful, animated face, and the sparkling brilliancy of her eyes, he felt a moment's vanity in thinking how proud he would be to introduce her as his niece among the fashionables of New Orleans.

During the evening Mr. Ashton called. He had heard of the arrival of a Mr. Middleton from the Indies, and he had his own particular reason for wishing to see him. Soon after entering the room, he addressed Mr. Middleton, saying, "Were you in Calcutta twelve years ago?"

"Yes, sir; I was there twenty years ago," answered Mr. Middleton.

"Do you remember transacting business with the captain of the English vessel 'Delphine'?"

Mr. Middleton thought a moment and then answered, "Yes, I remember that vessel and its captain well."

"And do you remember a poor cabin boy, who was sick and worn out with the ship fever?" continued Mr. Ashton.

"Oh, yes, yes; I remember him well," said Mr. Middleton. "I had him removed to my own house, and nursed him until [pg 141] he was nearly well; and then, he one night ran away from me. I have never heard from him since; but there was an American vessel anchored near the shore, and I always supposed he went on board and sailed for home. I would give much to know what became of him."

"He stands before you," said Mr. Ashton, rising and grasping Mr. Middleton's hand. "He is here to thank you for your kindness, and is both able and willing to repay you for the care you took of him who was alone and friendless in a distant

land."

"Can it be," said Mr. Middleton, with much emotion, "that you really are Henry Ashton? I should never have recognized you."

"I presume not," answered Ashton. "Twelve years have transformed the pale, emaciated youth into the tall, full-grown man. But I should have known you anywhere."

Here Raymond called out, "Why Ashton, have you been to the Indies? Why did you never tell us?"

"Because," replied Ashton, "there was so much of homesickness and suffering attending that voyage to India that I never like to speak of it." Then turning to Mr. Middleton, he said, "I have met your brother often, but never suspected him to be a relative of yours. Have you seen him yet?"

"I have not," answered Mr. Middleton. "I intend visiting him tomorrow, and shall be glad, to take as many of you with me as are willing to go. I wish to be introduced to him as a Mr. Stafford from New Orleans."

After some further conversation it was arranged that Mr. Miller, Ashton, Stanton, Raymond and Cameron should all accompany Mr. Middleton on his projected visit to his brother. Soon after Mr. Ashton departed for his boarding place, and the remainder of the company separated for the night.

Chapter XV

MR. MIDDLETON'S BROTHER

[pg 142]Julia's first exclamation, on waking the next morning, was, "I am glad I am not expected to go home with uncle today, and see father make a precious fool of himself, as he surely will."

"How can you say so, Julia?" answered Fanny. "I wish I was going, for I think I could smooth father down a little if he got to using too strong language."

"Nonsense, Fan," said Julia. "Why don't you confess that you wish to go because that handsome Cameron is going? Didn't I see how much he looked at you, and how you blushed, too? But no matter. I would get him, if I were you!"

Julia was getting very generous, now that she thought herself sure of Dr. Lacey. Further remark from her, however, was prevented by the ringing of the breakfast bell.

"What shall I tell your parents?" said Mr. Middleton to his nieces, as he stood in the hall, waiting for the driver to open the carriage door and let down the steps.

Julia made no reply, but Fanny said, "Give them my love, and tell them I am getting better every day, and shall want to come home soon," and then she added, in a lower tone, "You will not laugh at father much, will you, or make fun of him either, if he acts oddly?"

"God bless you, sweet girl," said Mr. Middleton, stooping to kiss the innocent face which looked up into his with so much earnestness. "For your sake, if for no other, your father shall not be laughed at."

As the carriage drove off, Julia turned to Fanny and said, "Won't they have fun, though, with the old man? I can fancy it all. Father's beard will probably be long enough to do up in papers, and it will be a miracle if he does not have on those horrid old bagging pants of his."

Fanny was only too fearful it would all be as Julia predicted, but she made no answer, and soon returned to her room.

We will now follow the carriage, which, with its load of [pg 143] gentlemen, was proceeding rapidly toward the house of our friend Uncle Joshua. Mr. William Middleton, or Mr. Stafford, as we will call him for a time, seemed to grow excited as he approached nearer to a brother whose face he had not looked upon for more than twenty long years.

"I say, boys," said he, speaking to his companions, "you must help me, and when I begin to ask Joshua concerning his parents and brothers, you, too, must talk, or he will suspect I have some design in questioning him."

The gentlemen all promised to do their best, except Frank, who could promise nothing, because he knew nothing concerning the man they were going to visit. His curiosity, however, was aroused, and forgetting the presence of Mr. William Middleton, "Do they keep the old fellow caged? And must we pay anything for seeing him?"

These questions were greeted by a burst of laughter, and Raymond said, "No—admittance is free, but you'll be more amused to see him and hear him talk than you would in visiting Barnum's Museum!"

By this time the carriage had entered the woods, and they came in sight of the house. Mr. Stafford leaned from the window, and said, "Is it possible that my brother, with all his wealth, lives in such a heathen place as this?"

"When you see him," said Raymond, "you'll think the nest just suited the bird."

They were now in the yard, which was so filled with farming utensils that the driver found it difficult to effect a passage up to the door. The gentlemen were about concluding to alight where they were, when Mr. Middleton was heard calling out, "Ho, thar, driver, don't run agin that ar ox-cart; turn a leetle to the right, can't ye? Now be keerful and not run afoul of the plaguey lye leech. I b'lieve the niggers would move the hut, Josh and all, into the yard, if they could

only make a raise!"

Mr. Stafford and Frank looked eagerly out at the speaker, who fully realized Frank's idea of him. His beard was as long and black as a rapid growth of three weeks could make it. As Julia had feared, he was dressed in his favorite bagging pants, which hung loosely, even around his huge proportions, and looked as if fitted to some of his outbuildings. He was very warm and he wore neither coat nor vest, while his feet, whose dimensions we have mentioned before, were minus either shoes or stockings. He appeared in the doorway buttoning one of his suspenders. The truth was he had spied the carriage in the distance, and as his linen was none the cleanest [pg 144] he hastened to change, and was now putting the finishing touch to his toilet. When he caught sight of the occupants of the carriage he thought to himself, "Thar's a heap on 'em. Nancy'll have to rout the whole gang of niggers, field hands and all, to huntin' hin's nests after eggs enough for dinner."

By this time the gentlemen had alighted, and Mr. Middleton went forward to receive them. "How d'ye do, how d'ye do?" said he; "I'm mighty glad you've come. I wish you'd brought the whole city."

"We came pretty near it, I think," said Mr. Miller, at the same time presenting Mr. Stafford and Mr. Cameron.

Mr. Middleton continued talking, as if replying to Mr. Miller's first remark. "No consequence, no consequence, Mr. Stafford, Mr. Cameron, how are you? The more the merrier. I s'pose they've told you all about Josh, so I needn't make b'lieve any—but come in—the house looks better inside than it does out." "Ho, Luce," continued he, "where the old boy is your mistress? Tell her thar's heaps of folks here, and mind tell Aunt Judy to get us up a whalin' dinner."

Here he stopped to take breath for a moment, and then proceeded. "You must excuse my rig, gentlemen, or rather, you must excuse what ain't rigged; mebbly if I'd known all you city buggers was comin', I'd a kivered my bar feet."

"You go barefoot for comfort?" said Mr. Miller.

"Why, yes, mainly for that, I suppose," answered Mr. Middleton, "for I've got such fetchin' big corns on my feet that I ain't goin' to be cramped with none of your toggery. My feet happen to be clean, for I washed them in the watering trough this mornin'. How d'ye leave my gals?"

"They are well," answered Mr. Miller, "or rather Julia is, and Fanny is improving every day."

"I've often wondered," said Mr. Middleton, "what 'twas ailed Sunshine when she was sick. She didn't seem to have no disease in particular, and I reckon nothin's on her mind, for all's straight between her and Dr. Lacey, as far as I know."

"Dr. Lacey!" repeated Frank, without knowing what he said.

"Yes, Dr. Lacey; know him?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"No, sir," answered Frank, and Ashton rejoined, "I imagine he wishes Fanny had never known him."

Mr. Middleton turned, and for a moment regarded Frank intently. Frank stood the inspection manfully, and Mr. Middleton said, "You are from New York, hey? I like New Yorkers, and if Sunshine wasn't promised to Dr. Lacey and [pg 145] never had seen him, and I liked you, I'd as soon you'd have her as anybody."

Mr. Stafford now said that he was acquainted with Dr. Lacey, and proceeded to speak of the pleasant time he had spent with him. This occupied the time until dinner was ready.

"Come, haul up," said Mr. Middleton, "haul up; we didn't expect so many to dinner, but the old table'll stretch and you must set clus; but don't none of you step on my corns, for thunder's sake!"

Frank thought if his host kept on talking he should not be able to eat for laughing, but the old man was but just getting into the merits of the case!

When his guests were seated, he said to Mr. Stafford, "Your white neck cloth looks like you might belong to the clergy. If you do, you can say a short prayer over the eggs and bacon, but Lord's sake be spry, for I'm blarsted hungry!"

But for the remembrance of his promise to Fanny, Mr. Stafford would have screamed. It is needless to say that he declined his host's invitation, and the company began their dinner.

Suddenly Mr. Stafford asked if Mr. Middleton had any brothers.

"Yes—no, or, that is, I had one once," answered Mr. Middleton, "but he's deader than a door nail afore this, I reckon."

"And what makes you think he is dead?" asked Stafford.

"Why, you see," returned Mr. Middleton, "when our old pap died, something in the will stuck crossways in Bill's swaller, and he left college and put to sea, and I hain't heard from him in fifteen years."

"Did he look like you?" said Raymond.

"He was four years younger than I," answered Mr. Middleton, "but no more like me than Sunshine's pet kitten is like our old watch dog, Tige. He was soft like in his ways and took to book larnin mightily, and I'm—but everybody knows what old Josh is. Hold on thar! Save the pieces!" said he to Frank, who, unable longer to restrain his mirth, had deluged his plate with coffee.

"Pray excuse me," said Frank, mortified beyond measure at his mishap.

His discomfiture was, however, somewhat relieved by his companions, all of whom burst into a fit of laughter, in which Mr. Stafford heartily joined, forgetful of his promise to Fanny. By this time dinner was over and the company repaired [pg 146] to the porch, where Ashton and Raymond betook themselves to their cigars, while Mr. Middleton puffed away at his old cob pipe.

Mr. Stafford at length resumed the dinner table conversation by saying, "If I were you, Mr. Middleton, I would not give up my brother yet; 'Hope on, hope ever,' is my motto."

"Hope on," repeated Mr. Middleton. "I have hoped on till I am tired on't, and by spells I have dreams in which it seems like my brother was alive and had come back, and then my old gourd shell of a heart gives a thunderin' thump, and fetches me up wide awake. I hate dreams mightily, for it takes me an all-fired while to get to sleep all over, and when I do I hate to be waked up by a dream."

"I hope you'll live to see your brother, though," said Frank.

"No, I shan't," answered Mr. Middleton, again filling his cob pipe. "Everything that I loved has always died."

"Have you lost many friends?" asked Mr. Stafford.

"Considerable many," said Mr. Middleton, "considering how few I ever had. First, thar was mother died, when Bill and I was little boys; I remember how we cried when we stood by her grave, and I was so feared Bill would bust his jacket open that I whispered to him not to take on so, for I'd be his mother now. And then that night, which was the longest and darkest I ever knew, we took turn rocking and singing to our little baby sister, just as we had seen mother do."

Here he stopped a moment, and Raymond, who was rather impatient, said, "Don't stop; go on."

The old man wiped his eyes, and said, "Heavens and arth, don't hurry a feller so; can't you let him wait till the big bumps get out of his throat, or would you have me bellerin' here like a calf?"

"Take your time, Mr. Middleton," said Mr. Stafford, who was as much affected as his brother at the remembrance of that sad night, when he first felt what it was to be motherless.

After an instant, Mr. Middleton continued, "Directly that sister got big enough, she was married and started to go to England, but the vessel went to smash and the crew went to the bottom. Poor gal, she always hated salt, but she's used to it by this time, I reckon. Then there was pap died next, but he was old and gray-headed, and sick-hearted like, and he wanted to go, but it made it jest as bad for me. Then thar was Bill."

Here Mr. Stafford moved his chair so as to hide his face from the speaker, who continued, "I did think I might have [pg 147] one left, but 'twasn't to be. He went, too, and Josh was left alone."

Mr. Middleton cleared his throat a little, refilled his cob pipe, and proceeded. "The Lord gin me two gals, and then he sent me as noble a boy as ever was, I don't care where t'other comes from. He wasn't mine, but I loved him all the same. You, Mr. Miller, knew him, but you don't know—no, nor begin to know, how old Josh loved him, and what a tremendous wrench it gin my old heart when I come home and found he was dead. But, Lord, hain't he got a fine gravestun, though! You go to the cimetry at Frankford, and you'll see it right along side of Leftenant Carrington's, whose widow's a flirtin' with everybody in creation anyway, and Frankford sartin."

"I've now told you of all that's dead," continued he, striking the ashes out of his pipe and wiping it on his bagging trousers, "but I hain't told you yit what troubles me more than all. Thar's something haunts old Josh, and makes his heart stand still with mortal fear. Thar's Sunshine, dearer to her old pap than his own life. You've all seen her, and I reckon she's made some of your hearts ache; but something's come over her. She seems delicate like, and is fadin' away."

Here two big tears, that couldn't be mistaken, rolled down Mr. Middleton's cheeks, as he added emphatically, "and by Jehu, if Sunshine goes, old Josh'll bust up and go, too!"

The winding up of Uncle Joshua's story was so odd and unexpected that all the gentlemen, Mr. Stafford included, laughed loudly.

"'Tain't no laughin' matter, boys," said Mr. Middleton, "and so you'll all think if you ever have a gal as sweet and lovin' like as Sunshine."

Here Mr. Stafford said, "Your sister's name was Fanny, I believe."

"Yes, 'twas; who told you?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"No one. I knew it myself," answered Mr. Stafford, looking his brother earnestly in the face.

Mr. Middleton seemed puzzled, and after closely scrutinizing Mr. Stafford's features, he said, "Confound it, am I in a nightmare? I thought for a minute—but no, it can't be neither, for you've got too thunderin' black a hide to be Bill."

Before Mr. Stafford replies to this remark we will take the reader to the kitchen, where a group of negroes are assembled round old Aunt Katy, and are listening with breathless interest to what she is saying. Aunt Katy was so infirm that she kept her bed for the greater part of the time, but on this [pg 148] day she was sitting-up, and from her low cabin window she caught a view of the visitors as they alighted from the carriage. When Mr. Stafford appeared, she half started from her chair and said aloud, "Who upon airth can that be, and whar have I seen him? Somewhar, sartin."

It then occurred to her that she would go to the kitchen and inquire who "that tall, darkish-looking gentleman was." Accordingly she hobbled out to make the inquiry. She was much disappointed when she heard the name. "No," said she,

"'tain't nobody I ever knowed, and yet how like he is to somebody I've seen."

Not long after the old negress again muttered to herself, "Go way now; what makes me keep a thinkin' so of Marster William this mornin'? 'Pears like he keeps hauntin' me." Then rising she went to an old cupboard, and took from it a cracked earthen teapot. From this teapot she drew a piece of brown paper, and opening it gazed fondly on a little lock of soft brown hair.

"Bless the boy," said she, "I mind jest how he looked when I cut this har from his head, the very day his mother was buried. Poor Marster William," continued she, "most likely he's gone to 'tarnity 'fore this time."

As she said this tears, which were none the less sincere because she who wept them belonged to Africa's sable race, fell upon the once bright but now faded lock of hair, which the faithful creature had for more than forty years preserved as a memento of him whom she had long since looked upon as dead, although she had never ceased to pray for him, and always ended her accustomed prayer, "Now I lay me—" with the petition that "God would take keer of Marster William and bring him home again." Who shall say that the prayer was not answered?

Going back to her seat, she took up her knitting and was soon living over the past, when she was young and dwelt with "the old folks at home." Suddenly there came from the house the sound of merry laughter. High above all the rest was a voice, whose clear, ringing tones made Katy start up so quickly that, as she afterward described it, "a sudden misery cotched her in the back, and pulled her down quicker." There was something in the sound of that laugh, which seemed to Katy like an echo of the past. "But," thought she, "I'm deaf like and mebbly didn't hear straight. I'll go to the kitchen agin and hark."

In a few minutes she was in the kitchen and dropping down [pg 149] on the meal chest as the first seat handy, she said, "Ho, Judy, is you noticed the strange gentleman's laugh?"

"I hain't noticed nothing" answered Judy, who chanced to be out of sorts, because, as she said, "the white folks had done et up every atom of egg; they didn't even leave her the yaller of one!"

"Well, suthin in his laugh kerried me back to the old plantation in Carlina, and I b'lieve, between you and me, Judy, that Marster William's here," said Katy.

"Marster William, Marster William; what on airth do you mean?" asked Judy, forgetting the eggs in her surprise.

At the mention of "Marster William," who was looked upon as a great man, but a dead one, the little negroes gathered around, and one of them, our old friend, Bobaway, said, "Oh, Laddy, I hope 'tis Marster William, for Marster Josh'll be so tickled that he won't keer if we don't do nothin' for a week; and I needn't milk the little heifer, nuther! Oh, good, good!"

"You go long, you Bob," said Aunt Judy, seizing a lock of his wool between her thumb and finger, "let me catch you not milking the heifer, and I'll crack you."

Again there was the sound of laughter, and this time Judy dropped her dishcloth, while Katy sprang up, saying, "'Tis, I know 'tis; any way, I'll walk round thar as if for a little airin', and can see for myself."

Accordingly, old Katy appeared around the corner of the house just as Mr. Middleton had spoken to his brother of his color. The moment Mr. Stafford's eye rested on his old nurse, he knew her. Twenty years had not changed her as much as it had him. Starting up he exclaimed, "Katy, dear old mammy Katy," while she uttered a wild, exultant cry of joy, and springing forward threw her thin, shriveled arms around his neck, exclaiming, "My darling boy, my sweet Marster William. I knowed 'twas you. I knowed your voice. You are alive, I've seen you, and now old Katy's ready to die."

White as ashes grew the face of Uncle Joshua. The truth had flashed upon him, and almost rendered him powerless. Pale and motionless he sat, until William, freeing himself from Aunt Katy, came forward and said, "Joshua, I am William, your brother; don't you know me?"

Then the floodgates of Uncle Joshua's heart seemed unlocked, and the long, fervent embrace which followed between the rough old man and his newly-found brother made more than one of the lookers on turn away his face lest his companion [pg 150] should detect the moisture in his eyes, which seriously threatened to assume the form of tears.

When the first joy and surprise of this unexpected meeting was over, Mr. Joshua Middleton said, as if apologizing for his emotion, "I'm dumbly afeard, Bill, that I acted mighty baby-like, but hang me if I could help it. Such a day as this I never expected to see, and yet I have lain awake o' nights thinkin' mebbly you'd come

back. But such ideas didn't last long, and I'd soon give you up as a goner."

"That's jest what I never did," said Aunt Katy, who still stood near.

In the excitement of the moment she had forgotten that she had long thought of "Marster William" as dead; she continued, "A heap of prars I said for him, and it's chiefly owin' to them prars, I reckon, that he's done fished up out of the sea."

"I've never been in the sea yet, Aunt Katy," said Mr. Middleton, desirous of removing from her mind the fancy that any special miracle had been wrought in his behalf.

"Whar in fury have you been, and what's the reason you hain't writ these dozen years? Come, give us the history of your carryin's on," said Mr. Joshua Middleton.

"Not now," answered his brother. "Let us wait until evening, and then you shall hear my adventures; now let me pay my respects to your wife."

While he was introducing himself to Mrs. Middleton, Katy went back to the kitchen, whither the news had preceded her, causing Bob in his joy to turn several somersaults. In the last of these he was very unfortunate, for his heels, in their descent, chanced to hit and overturn a churn full of buttermilk! When Aunt Katy entered she found Bob bemoaning the backache, which his mother had unsparingly given him! Aunt Judy herself, having cleared away the buttermilk, by sweeping it out of doors, was waiting eagerly to know "if Marster William done axed arter her."

"Why, no, Judy," said Katy, somewhat elated because she had been first to recognize and welcome the stranger. "Why, no, I can't say he did, and 'tain't nateral like that he should set so much store by you, as by me. Ain't I got twenty years the start on you; and didn't I nuss him, and arter his mother died didn't I larn him all his manners?"

Aunt Judy was on the point of crying, when who should walk in but "Marster William" himself. "I am told," said he, "that Judy is here, Judy, that I used to play with."

"Lor' bless you, Marster William," exclaimed Judy, at the [pg 151] same time covering his hand with tears and kisses, "It's Judy, I is, I know'd you hadn't done

forgot me."

"Oh, no, Judy," said he, "I have not forgotten one of you, but I did not know whether you were living or not, so I did not bring you presents, but I'll get you something, in a few days. Meantime take this," said he, slipping a silver dollar into the hands of Aunt Katy and Aunt Judy, each of whom showered upon him so many blessings and "thankes" that he was glad to leave the kitchen and return to his companions, who were talking to Uncle Joshua without getting any definite answer.

His brother's sudden return had operated strangely upon him, and for a time he seemed to be in a kind of trance. He would draw his chair up closely to William, and, after gazing intently at him for a time, would pass his large rough hand over his hair, muttering to himself, "Yes, it is Bill, and no mistake, but who'd a thought it?"

At last rousing himself he turned to his other guests, and said, "You mustn't think hard on me, if I ain't as peart and talkin' like for a spell; Bill's comin' home has kinder oversot the old man, and I'm thinkin' of the past when we's little boys and lived at home on pap's old plantation afore any of us was dead."

The young gentlemen readily excused the old man's silence, and when the slanting beams of the setting sun betokened the approach of night, they all, with the exception of Ashton, began to speak of returning home. Mr. Middleton urged them to stay, saying, "What's the use of goin'? Nancy's got beds enough, I reckon, and will be right glad of a chance to show her new calico kiverlids, and besides we are goin' to have some briled hen in the morning, so stay."

But as the next day was the Sabbath, the gentlemen declined the invitation, and bidding the host "good-bye," they were soon on their way homeward, each declaring that he had seldom spent a pleasanter day. As they can undoubtedly find their way to Frankfort without our assistance, we will remain at Uncle Joshua's together with Mr. William Middleton and Ashton. The latter felt as if he had suddenly found an old friend, and as nothing of importance required his presence at home, he decided to remain where he was until Monday.

That evening, after everything was "put to rights" and Mr. Middleton had yelled out his usual amount of orders, he returned to the porch, where his brother and Ashton were still seated. Lighting his old cob pipe he said, "Come, Bill, [pg 152]

Nancy'll fetch out her rockin' cheer and knittin' work, and we'll hear the story of your doin's in that heathenish land, but be kinder short, for pears like I'd lived a year today, and I feel mighty like goin' to sleep."

After a moment's silence Mr. Middleton commenced: "I shall not attempt to justify myself for running away as I did, and yet I cannot say that I have ever seriously regretted visiting those countries, which I probably shall never look upon again. I think I wrote to you, Joshua, that I took passage on the ship Santiago, which was bound for the East Indies. Never shall I forget the feeling of loneliness which crept over me, on the night when I first entered the city of Calcutta, and felt that I was indeed alone in a foreign land, and that more than an ocean's breadth rolled between me and my childhood's home. But it was worse than useless to dwell upon the past. I had my fortune to make, and I began to look about for some employment. At last I chanced to fall in with an intelligent Spaniard, Signor de Castello. He was a wealthy merchant, and for several years had resided in Calcutta. As he spoke the English language fluently, I found no trouble in making his acquaintance.

"He seemed pleased with me and offered me the situation of clerk in his counting room. I accepted his offer, and also became an inmate of his dwelling, which was adorned with every conceivable luxury. His family consisted of himself and his daughter, Inez."

At the mention of Inez, Ashton half started from his chair, but immediately reseating himself, listened while Mr. Middleton proceeded: "I will not attempt to describe Inez, for I am too old now to even feel young again, by picturing to your imagination the beauty of that fair Spaniard. I will only say that I never saw one, whose style of beauty would begin to compare with hers, until I beheld my niece, Julia."

"Lord knows, I hope she wan't like Tempest," said Uncle Joshua, at the same time relieving his mouth of its overflowing contents.

"I do not know whether she were or not," answered Mr. Middleton, "I only know that Inez seemed too beautiful, too gentle, for one to suspect that treachery lurked beneath the soft glance of her dark eyes. I know not why it was, but Castello, from the first seemed to entertain for me a strong friendship, and at last I fully believe the affection he felt for me was second only to what he felt for his daughter. But he could not remain with us, and in eighteen months after I first

knew him, he took one of the fevers common to that sultry [pg 153] climate, and in the course of a few days he was dead. I wrote to you of his death, but I did not tell you that he had left a will, in which all his immense wealth was equally divided between myself and Inez. He did not express his desire that we should marry, but I understood it so, and thenceforth looked upon Inez as belonging exclusively to myself."

"You didn't marry her, though, I take it," said Joshua, making a thrust at an enormous mosquito, which had unceremoniously alighted upon his brawny foot.

"No," answered William, "I did not marry her, but 'twas not my fault. She played me false. Six months after her father's death we were to be married. The evening previous to our wedding arrived. I was perfectly happy, but Inez seemed low-spirited, and when I inquired the cause she answered, 'Nothing, except a little nervous excitement.' I readily believed her; but when the morning came the cause of her low spirits was explained. The bird had flown, with a young Englishman, Sir Arthur Effingham, who had been a frequent guest at my house."

"That was one of Tempest's capers to a dot," said Uncle Joshua, "but go on, Bill, and tell us whether the disappointment killed you or not."

So William proceeded: "Instead of my bride, I found a note from Inez, in which she asked pardon for what she had done, saying she had long loved Sir Arthur, but did not dare tell me so. They were going to England, whither she wished me to send a part of her portion, as her husband was not wealthy. I could understand Inez's character perfectly, and could readily see that she preferred a titled but poor Englishman to a wealthy, but plain American, so I gave her up quietly."

"And was mighty glad to get shut of her so," interrupted Joshua.

"From that time," continued William, "I gave up all thoughts of marriage, and devoted myself to increasing my wealth, and spending it for my own comfort and the good of others. Twelve years ago I chanced to go on board the Delphine, and there I found Ashton."

"Look at him, for gracious sake," said Uncle Joshua, pointing toward Ashton. "Why man, you are as white as one of Judy's biscuit; what ails you?"

"Nothing," answered Ashton, who really was much affected by Mr. Middleton's narrative; but he said, "I am only thinking [pg 154] of the long, weary days I

passed in the Delphine before Mr. Middleton kindly cared for me."

This seemed quite natural, and Mr. Middleton continued: "Ashton was wasted to a mere skeleton by ship fever, and my heart yearned toward him. Perhaps I felt a stronger sympathy for him when I learned that he was an American. He, like myself, had run away. The vessel, in which he had embarked, had been wrecked, and he, with two others, were saved in a small boat. For days they floated above the broad expanse of waters until at length the Delphine picked them up, and brought them to India. I had Ashton removed to my house, but as soon as he recovered, he took French leave of me. From that time I lived alone. I wrote to you frequently, but got no answer. My letters must have been lost, but I then concluded you were dead. At last I began to have such an ardent desire to tread my native soil once more that I disposed of my property and set out for home, so here I am and have told you my history; what do you think of it?"

There was no answer save the sound of heavy breathing; Uncle Joshua had probably got to sleep "all over." The cessation of his brother's voice awoke him, and rubbing his eyes he said, "Yes, yes, Ashton had the ship fever. I hope he can't give it now, for I'm mortal feared on't."

Ashton assured him there was no danger, and then, turning to William, said, "Have you ever heard from Inez?"

"Yes," said Mr. Middleton. "About a year after her marriage I heard of the birth of a daughter, whom she called Inez Middleton. I have heard of them once or twice since, but not recently."

After a moment's silence Ashton, with some hesitation, said, "If I mistake not, I know Inez Effingham well."

"You know Inez, my Inez—where—how—tell me all," said Mr. Middleton, grasping Ashton's hand as if a new link suddenly added to the chain of friendship which already bound them together.

"You probably remember," said Ashton, "that when I left you so suddenly there was an American vessel in port. I was anxious to return home, but fancied you would oppose it, so I left without a word, and went on board the ship. During the voyage, I found that one of the crew was from my native town. I eagerly inquired after my parents and my little sister Nellie, whom you so often heard me mention. Judge of my feelings when told that they were all dead. In the

agony of the moment, I attempted to throw myself overboard, but was prevented. From that time all desire to return was gone, [pg 155] and when at last we stopped at one of the ports in England, I left the vessel to try my fortune in the mother country."

"But Inez," said Mr. Middleton, "what of Inez?"

"I will tell you," answered Ashton. "After remaining in England some years I became acquainted with her father, Sir Arthur Effingham, who lived forty miles from London. He invited me to visit his house and there I first saw Inez and her mother. To know Inez was to love her, but I could not hope to win the haughty Englishman's daughter, and besides she was so young that I did not believe I had made any impression upon her. But, encouraged by Lady Effingham, I at length ventured to ask Inez of her father. I did not wish to marry her then, as she was only fourteen, but her father spurned me with contempt, and bade me never again enter his house. I obeyed, but tried many times to procure an interview with Inez. I succeeded, and told her I was about to leave England for America, but should never forget her. I would not suffer her to bind herself to me by any promise, but expressed my belief that at some future time she would be mine. It is three years since we parted. I came immediately to America, but I could not bear to return to my old home, and see it occupied by others, so I wandered this way and at last settled in Frankfort as a merchant."

Here he stopped and Mr. Middleton said, "You have not told me of the mother. Does she still live?"

Ashton answered, "She was living when I left England, but Inez has since written me of her death."

"That will do, Ashton; that will do. I do not wish to hear any more now," said Mr. William.

While Mr. Middleton and Ashton were relating their adventures, Aunt Katy was busily engaged in superintending the arrangement of "Marster William's" sleeping room. Mrs. Middleton had bidden Judy to see that everything was put in order, but Aunt Katy seemed to think nothing could be done right unless she had an oversight of it. So she was walking back and forth, consulting with Judy a little and ordering her a good deal.

"Now, Judy," said she, "hain't you no more idees of ilegance than to push the

bedstead smack up agin the clarbuds; just pull it out a foot or two, as old Miss use to do."

Judy complied with her request and she continued: "Lordy sakes—don't Miss Nancy know better than to put Marster William to sleep in such coarse sheets," at the same time casting a rueful glance at the linens which Judy had put upon [pg 156] the bed. "You set down, Judy," said Aunt Katy, "and I'll tend to the bed myself."

So saying she hobbled off to her cabin and opening her "old red chist," drew from it a pair of half-worn, but very fine linen sheets. These she shook most lustily in order to free them from the rose leaves, lavender sprigs and tobacco, which she had placed between their folds. With the former she thought to perfume them, while the latter was put there for the purpose of keeping out moths. The old creature had heard that tobacco was good to keep moths from woolens, and she knew of no reason why it would not answer every purpose for linen.

"Thar," said she, on returning to the house, "these begins to look a little like Marster William. They was gin to me by old marster, jest afore he died. They 'longed to old Miss, and if any one on us could read, I reckon we should find her name on 'em somewhar writ in brawdery."

When the bed and room were adjusted to her satisfaction, she went down to the kitchen and took a seat there. Here Aunt Judy found her about ten o'clock that night.

"What on airth you sittin' here for?" said she.

"Oh, I's only waitin' till Marster William gets a little used to his room afore I axes him how he likes it and does he want anything."

Accordingly, not long after, Aunt Katy stole upstairs and opening the door called out, "Ho, Marster William, does you want anything, and is you got enough kiver?"

But "Marster William's" senses were too soundly locked in sleep to heed the faithful creature, and after standing still a moment, she said to herself, "I'm mighty feared he'll cotch cold."

So back she went to her cabin and from the same "red chist" took a many-colored patchwork quilt. This she carried to the house and spread carefully over Mr. Middleton, saying, "He won't be none too comfortable, and in the mornin' he'll see it, and I'll tell him I done pieced and quilted it my own self."

The consequence of this extra covering was that Mr. Middleton awoke in the night with the impression that he was being suffocated in the hot climate of Calcutta! He did not know that she, to whom he was indebted for his warm berth, was now sleeping quietly and dreaming "how tickled Marster William would be when he knew she had lent him her spare sheets and bedquilt!"

Chapter XVI

FANNY REFUSES TO GO TO NEW ORLEANS

[pg 157]The next day was the Sabbath. Contrary to their usual custom on such mornings, Mr. Middleton and his negroes were astir at an early hour. The female portion of the latter were occupied in preparing a great breakfast in honor of "Marster William's" arrival, while Mr. Middleton busied himself in removing a part of his dark, heavy beard.

When William made his appearance in the sitting room, he was greeted by his brother with, "How are you, Bill? Hope you slept better than I did, for 'pears like I couldn't get asleep nohow, till toward mornin' and then I was mighty skeary about wakin' up, for fear I should find it all moonshine, and no Bill here after all." After a moment's pause, he added, "Whar's t'other chap? If he don't come down directly, the hen'll spile, for Judy's had it ready better than half an hour."

Ashton soon appeared, and the party did ample justice to Aunt Judy's well-cooked breakfast. That meal being over, Mr. Middleton said, "Now, boys, what do you say to goin' to meetin'? The Baptists have preachin', and I've a mind to go. How the folk'll stare though to see Bill. Say, will you go?"

The gentlemen signified their assent, and at the usual hour they proceeded to the church, which was situated about two miles from Mr. Middleton's. We are sorry for it, but truth compels us to say that on this day Uncle Joshua was not quite as devotional as usual. He was looking over the congregation to see what effect his brother's presence was producing. When he saw that no one exclaimed or turned pale, and that even the minister kept on the even tenor of his discourse, he inwardly accused them all of being "doughheads," and wondered he had never

before discovered how little they knew. However, when meeting was over, the neighbors crowded around the old man, congratulating him on the unexpected return of his brother, whom they welcomed so warmly that Uncle Joshua began to think he had been too hasty in condemning them, for "after all, they knew a heap."

[pg 158]That night, after supper, Mr. Middleton was again seated in the little porch with his guests. They had been speaking of the sermon they had heard, when Mr. Middleton said, "That's the right kind of meetin' to my notion. A feller can sleep a bit if he feels like it; but whar my gals go, in Frankford, they have the queerest doin's—keep a gittin' up and sittin' down; 'pears like you don't moren't git fairly sot afore you have to hist up again, and you can't sleep to save you. Then they have streaked yaller and black prar books and keep a-readin' all meetin' time."

"Do your daughters prefer that church?" asked William.

"Why, yes," returned his brother; "or, that is, Dick, poor boy Dick, belonged thar; so did the young Leftenant Carrington; so does Dr. Lacey; and that's reason enough why Sunshine should prefer it. Tempest goes thar, I reckon, because its fashionable, and she can have a nice prar-book to show. You ought to see the one I bought for Sunshine. It's all velvety, and has gold clasps, with jest the word 'Sunshine' writ on it. Tempest has got a more common one. It didn't cost half as much."

"I notice that you make quite a distinction between your daughters," said William. "May I ask why you do it?"

Mr. Middleton stopped smoking and said, "If you please, Bill, I'd rather say nothin' about that now. I make it a rule never to swar Sundays, and if I got to goin' it about Tempest and the way she used poor Dick, I should have to swar and no mistake. Mebby you think I'd better not swar any time."

"Yes," answered William; "I should be glad if you would not. It is a bad habit, and I wish you would discontinue it."

"Well now, Bill," said Mr. Middleton, "Lord knows—no, I mean I know I've tried a heap of times to break off, and now I'll try again. I'll not cuss a word till I forget. Dick used to want me to stop, and when he died I promised myself I would; but the pigs and horses got into the corn, and fust I knew I was swarin'

wus than ever. I wish you had seen Dick; it can't be; he's gone forever."

"Have you no daguerreotype of him?" asked William.

"No, I hain't, but his folks have; and Mr. Miller and Kate are going home this summer, and they'll fetch me one. That makes me think Sunshine is so puny and sick like, that I'm goin' to let her go North with them. It'll do her good; and I'm going to buy her four silk gowns to go with, but for Lord's—no, for land's sake don't tell Tempest."

"I hope you are not very anxious to have Fanny go North," [pg 159] said William; "for it will seriously affect a plan which I have formed."

"Well, what is it?" asked Mr. Middleton.

William then told of the house he had purchased, and of his intention to take both his nieces back with him. "I know," said he, "that it seems strange to take them there in hot weather; but down by the lake it will be pleasant and cool, and I must have them with me."

"Have you said anything to them about it?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"Yes," answered his brother. "I have mentioned it to them."

"What did they say?"

"Fanny said nothing, but Julia seemed much pleased with the idea," said William.

"I'll warrant that," returned Mr. Middleton. "She's tickled enough, and in her own mind she's run up a bill agin me for at least five hundred. Sunshine is so modest, I s'pose, because Dr. Lacey will be there, that she does not want to seem very glad; but she'll go. I'll have them come home tomorrow, and will talk the matter over. I'd as soon have her go to New Orleans as to New York."

Here the conversation was interrupted by Mrs. Middleton, who came to tell her husband that it was past nine. Mr. Middleton had a great horror of being up after that hour, so he hastily bade his brother and Ashton good night, saying to the former, "Now I've got kind of used to your being alive, Bill, I hope I shan't have such pesky work goin' to sleep."

Next morning Ashton returned to Frankfort in the carriage which Mr. Middleton had sent for the purpose of bringing his daughters home. For once in her life, Julia was delighted with the idea of visiting her parents. She had learned from a note which her mother had written that the reason of their being sent for was to talk over the matter of going to New Orleans. Fanny felt differently. She wished, yet dreaded, to go home. She too knew why they were sent for; and as she was determined not to go to New Orleans, it would be necessary at last to tell her father the true reason. She was certain he would be unsparing in his wrath against Dr. Lacey, and she almost trembled for the consequences.

When at last she was ready she descended to the parlor, and sitting down to her piano ran her fingers lightly over the keys. At that moment Frank Cameron entered. He had learned from his cousin, Kate, enough of Fanny's history to make him fear that she never could be aught to him; and yet [pg 160] the knowledge that he could not, must not, hope to win her, only rendered the attraction stronger. He was intending to start for home the next day, and had now come to spend a few minutes alone with Fanny ere he bade her good-by. As he entered the room she ceased playing, and said, "I believe you leave town tomorrow, do you not?"

"I do," replied Frank, "and am come to bid you good-by now; for when you return I shall probably be looking on the dust, smoke and chimneys of the Empire City." As Fanny made no answer, Frank continued, "Miss Middleton, we shall meet again, I trust. Kate tells me that you are to accompany them to New York this summer. I shall expect you and shall watch anxiously for your coming."

Fanny replied, "I have thought of going North with Mrs. Miller, but it is possible I may be disappointed."

"Disappointed!" repeated Frank; "you must not be disappointed, or disappoint me either. I would hardly be willing to leave Frankfort if I did not hope to see you again. And yet if we never do meet, I shall know that I am a better man for having once seen and known you; and I shall look back upon the few days spent in Kentucky as upon one of the bright spots in my life."

We do not know what Fanny would have replied; for ere she had time to answer Julia appeared in the door, calling out, "Come, Fan, the carriage is ready. But, pray excuse me," continued she, as she saw Frank, "I had no idea that I was

interrupting so interesting a conversation as your looks seem to indicate."

This increased Fanny's confusion, but she endeavored to appear at ease; and rising up, she offered Frank her hand, saying, "I must bid you farewell, Mr. Cameron."

Frank took her hand, and quick as thought raised it to his lips. Fanny's cheeks reddened as she hastily withdrew her hand, saying rather indignantly, "Mr. Cameron, I am surprised!"

Frank expected as much, and he said, rather gayly, "Pardon me, Miss Middleton, I could not help it, and would not if I could. It is all I ever hope to receive from you; and years hence, when I am a lone, lorn old bachelor, I shall love to think of the morning when I bade good-by to and kissed Fanny Middleton."

A moment more and the carriage drove rapidly away. Frank watched it until it disappeared down the street; then turning away, he thought, "I have met and parted with the [pg 161] only person on earth who has power to awaken in me any deeper feeling than that of respect."

When Julia and Fanny reached home, they were greeted kindly by both their parents and uncle. The latter had resolved to watch them closely, in order to ascertain, if possible, the reason of his brother's evident preference for Fanny. During the morning nothing was said of the projected visit to New Orleans; and Julia was becoming very impatient, but she knew better than to broach the subject herself; so she was obliged to wait.

That evening the family, as usual, assembled on the little porch. Fanny occupied her accustomed seat and low stool by the side of her father, whose pipe she filled and refilled; for he said, "The tobacker tasted a heap better after Sunshine had handled it."

Julia could wait no longer, and she began the conversation by asking her uncle something about New Orleans.

"Thar, I knew 'twould be so," said Mr. Middleton; "Tempest is in a desput hurry to know whether I'm going to cash over and send her to market in New Orleans."

"Well, father," said Julia, coaxingly, "you are going to let Fanny and me go with Uncle William I know."

It was lucky for Julia that she chanced to mention her sister; for however much her father might be inclined to tease her, the word "Fanny" mollified him at once, and he answered, "Why, yes, I may as well let you go as to keep you here doing nothing, and eating up my corn bread." Then drawing Fanny nearer to him, he said, "I've talked some of letting Sunshine go to New York, but she'll jump at the chance of going to New Orleans, I reckon."

There was no answer, and as Julia was not particularly desirous of having her sister's silence questioned, she rattled on about her expected visit, and even went so far as to caress her father, because he had given his consent to her going. It was decided that Mr. William Middleton should return, as he had intended, in two weeks' time, so as to have everything in readiness for the reception of his nieces, who were to come on as soon as school closed, which would be about the tenth of June.

During all this time Fanny said not a word; and at last it occurred to her father that she had neither expressed her desire nor willingness to go; so he said, "Come, Sunshine, why don't you hold up your head and talk about it? We all know you want to go mightily, and see that little doctor."

Fanny knew it was of no use delaying longer and she answered [pg 162] gently, but decidedly, "Father, I have no desire to go to New Orleans. I cannot go."

"Fudge on being so very modest," replied Mr. Middleton. "It is nateral-like that you should want to see him, and nobody'll think less of you."

Fanny answered, "You know I have thought of going to New York with Mr. and Mrs. Miller. I am still anxious to do so; but to New Orleans I cannot, shall not go, unless you command me to do so."

"Saint Peter!" said Mr. Middleton. "What's the row now? What's happened to make little Sunshine spirt up so? Don't you want to see Dr. Lacey, child?"

"No, father; I never desire to see him again."

The old cob pipe dropped from Mr. Middleton's mouth, and springing up, he confronted Fanny, saying, "What in fury is this racket? You not wish to go to New Orleans, or see Dr. Lacey either! I half wish you was Tempest for a spell, so I could storm at you; but as it is Sunshine, I can't even feel mad."

"Oh, father, father!" cried Fanny, weeping; "if you knew all that has occurred, you would not blame me."

"What do you mean, darling?" asked Mr. Middleton, suddenly becoming cool. "What has happened?"

Then looking at Julia, whose face was crimson, a new idea struck him, and he exclaimed more wrathfully, "How now, Tempest? What makes you turn as red as a hickory fire? Have you been raising a rumpus between Dr. Lacey and Sunshine? Out with it if you have."

It was now Julia's turn to cry and appeal to her uncle, if it were not unjust in her father always to suspect her of evil, if anything were wrong. William very wisely kept silent, but Fanny said, "Do not accuse Julia, for she is not guilty. She knows it all, however, and is sorry for it."

"Knows what? Sorry for what? Why don't you tell?" said Mr. Middleton, stalking back and forth through the porch, and setting down his feet as heavily as if he would crush everything which might fall beneath his tread.

"I cannot tell you now," said Fanny; "but when we are alone, you shall know all."

In a few moments William thought proper to retire, and as his example was soon followed by Julia, Fanny was left alone with her parents. Drawing her stool nearer to her father, and laying her hot, feverish forehead on his hand, she said, "Before I give any explanation, I wish you to make me a promise."

[pg 163]"Promise of what?" asked her father and mother, simultaneously.

"It is not probable," answered Fanny, "that you will ever see Dr. Lacey again, but if you do, I wish you never to mention to him what I am about to tell you."

The promise was readily given by Mrs. Middleton, but her husband demurred, saying, "I shan't commit myself until I know what 'tis. If Dr. Lacey has been cuttin' up, why I'll cowhide him, that's all."

"Then I shall not tell you," was Fanny's firm reply.

Her father saw she was in earnest, and replied, "What's got your back up so high,

Sunshine? I never knew you had so much grit. What's the reason you don't want Dr. Lacey to hear of it?"

"Because," said Fanny, hesitatingly, "because I do not wish him to know how much I care about it; and besides, it can do no possible good. Now, father, promise you will not tell him or any one else."

Mr. Middleton was finally persuaded, and his promise given, Fanny knew it would not be broken, for her father prided himself on keeping his word. So she gave an account of Dr. Lacey's conduct, and ended her narrative by producing a letter, which she supposed came from him. Up to the moment Mr. Middleton had sat perfectly still; but meantime his wrath had waxed warmer and warmer, until at last it could no longer be restrained, but burst forth in such a storm of fury as made Fanny stop her ears.

She, however, caught the words, "And I was fool enough to promise not to say a word. Well, thank the Lord, I didn't promise not to shoot the puppy. Let me catch him within pistol shot of me, and I'll pop him over as I would a woodchuck. And if he don't come back, I'll go all the way to New Orleans for the sake of doin' on't. I'll larn him to fool with my gal; yes, I will!"

Fanny's fears for Dr. Lacey's safety were immediately roused; and again were her arms wound round the neck of her enraged father, while she begged of him to be quiet, and think reasonably of the matter. Not long could one resist the arguments of Fanny; and in less than half an hour her father grew calm, and said more gently, "I shouldn't have been so rarin' mad, if it had been anybody but you, Sunshine. I s'pose I did go on high, and swar like a pirate. I didn't mean to do that, for I promised Bill I'd try and leave off."

"Leave swearing?" said Fanny. "Oh, I'm so glad. I hope you will. Now promise that you will, dear father, and say [pg 164] again that you will not mention Dr. Lacey's conduct either to him or to any one else."

"I have promised once," said Mr. Middleton, "and one promise is as good as forty. Old Josh'll never break his word as long as he has his senses. But that paltry doctor owes his life to you, Sunshine. Half an hour ago I was as fully set to knock him over as I am now determined to let the varmint go to destruction in his own way."

Fanny shuddered at the idea of her father becoming the murderer of Dr. Lacey,

and Mrs. Middleton rejoined, "I am glad, husband, to hear you talk more sensibly. It can do no possible good for you to shoot Dr. Lacey, and then lose your own life, as you assuredly would; besides, I think the less we say of the matter, the better it will be."

"I reckon you are right, Nancy," said Mr. Middleton; "but hang it all, what excuse shall I give Bill for not lettin' the gals go to New Orleans?"

"But, father," said Fanny, "you will let Julia go, of course. Uncle knows I do not intend to go, and consequently will think nothing of that; and there is no reason why Julia should not go to New Orleans, and I to New York. Now, say we may; that's a dear father."

"I s'pose I'll have to, honey," answered Mr. Middleton; "but if I can see ahead an inch, you're bitin' your own nose off by sending Tempest to New Orleans without you."

Afterward Fanny remembered this speech, and understood it, too; but now she was prevented from giving it a thought by her father, who continued, "Doesn't that Cameron chap live some'us in New York?"

There was no reason for it, but Fanny blushed deeply as she replied, "Yes, sir; Mr. Cameron lives in New York City; but I am not going to see him."

"Mebby not," answered her father; "but my name ain't Josh if he won't be on the lookout for you. And 'twixt us, darling, now the doctor's sarved you such a scaly trick, I shouldn't pitch and drive much if I heard that you and Cameron were on good terms."

"That will never, never be," answered Fanny. "I shall always live at home with you and mother."

"You are a blessed daughter," said Mr. Middleton, "and I hope there's better fortin in store for you than to stay hived up with us two old crones; and I can't help thinkin' that you'll have Dr. Lacey yet, or somebody a heap better. Now go to bed, child, for your eyes are gettin' red like, and heavy."

Fanny obeyed and retired to her room, where she found [pg 165] Julia sitting up and waiting for her. As soon as Fanny appeared she began, "Fan, you are a real good girl. I was pleased to hear you talk. Nobody but you could have done

anything with the old heathen."

"What are you talking about?" asked Fanny.

"Why," said Julia, "I had my head out of the window, listening all the time, and overheard what you said. Once I trembled for fear father would take it into his head not to let me go any way; but you fixed it all right, and I thank you for it." As Fanny made no answer, Julia continued, "I heard, too, all about Frank Cameron. Now, Fan, I know he admires you, and I really hope you'll not be silly enough to discourage him. I shall expect you to write that you have become Mrs. Cameron."

"Will you please, Julia, say no more on that subject," said Fanny. "I do not suppose Frank Cameron has any particular regard for me; if he has it will do no good."

Thus the conversation ended for that night. The next day Mr. William Middleton was informed that Julia would spend the summer in New Orleans, but that Fanny preferred going North. He was rather disappointed. His preference, if any he had, was for Fanny. She was so quiet, so gentle, he could not help loving her; but Julia puzzled him. There was a certain bold assurance in her manner which he disliked. Besides, he could not help fearing there was some good reason why her father censured her so much. "I will watch her closely," thought he, "and if possible, discover her faults and help her correct them."

It would seem that Julia suspected her uncle's intentions, for she intended to be very correct and amiable in her deportment, whenever he was present. Thought she, "I will thus retain his good opinion; and by so doing I shall more easily win Dr. Lacey's regard."

In the course of a few days Fanny and Julia returned to school; the one, elated with the prospect of going to New Orleans, and the other, quietly anticipating a pleasant but rather sad journey to New York. Two weeks after their return to Frankfort their uncle called upon them on his way South. He again repeated his invitation that Stanton and Ashton would spend a part of the summer with him. Ashton consented, but Stanton still pleaded his important business North, and his excuse was considered a sufficient one.

Mrs. Carrington, who had become rather weary of Raymond's attentions and was longing for a change of place and scene, now tried by every possible maneuver

to induce Mr. [pg 166] Middleton to invite her also. Julia readily understood her; and as she feared Mrs. Carrington's presence would frustrate her plans, she resolutely determined that she should not be invited. Consequently, when that lady talked to Mr. Middleton of New Orleans, and the desire she had of again visiting that city, Julia would adroitly change the conversation to some other subject; and once when Mr. Middleton had actually opened his mouth and commenced giving the desired invitation, Julia, as if suddenly recollecting herself, started up, saying, "Excuse me, uncle, but I have a painting in my room which I wish you to see. Pray, come with me now, for I cannot bring it down, and as it is getting dark, there is no time to be lost."

Mr. Middleton arose and followed his niece, who congratulated herself on the success of her stratagem. After reaching her room, and exhibiting her painting, she said to her uncle, "I do hope you will not ask Mrs. Carrington to go to New Orleans this summer."

"Why not?" said Mr. Middleton. "She seems anxious that I should do so."

"I know it," answered Julia; "but I am afraid she is not a good woman. At least she had a bad influence over me, and I always feel wicked after being with her awhile."

As Julia had supposed, this had the desired effect. Mr. Middleton would not ask one to visit him whose influence over his niece was bad. Consequently, all Mrs. Carrington's hints were unnoticed or misunderstood. She, however, knew tolerably well to whom she was indebted for the slight; and when, after Mr. Middleton's departure, Julia said to her, "I wonder uncle did not invite you, too; I thought he was going to do so," she replied, rather sharply, "I fancy I should have been under no obligations to you, Miss Julia, if I had received an invitation." Then turning, she hastily entered her room, and throwing herself upon the sofa, she tried to devise some scheme by which she could undermine Julia, provided Dr. Lacey should show her any marked attention.

Mrs. Carrington was not in a very enviable mood. The night before Raymond had offered her his heart and hand, and of course had been rejected. He was in the parlor when Julia so abruptly took her uncle away. As there was no one present besides Mrs. Carrington, he seized upon that moment to declare his love. It is impossible to describe the loathing and contempt which she pretended to feel for him who sued so earnestly for her hand, even if her heart did not

accompany it. Nothing daunted by her haughty refusal, Raymond arose, [pg 167] and standing proudly before the indignant lady said, "Ida Carrington, however much dislike you may pretend to feel for me I do not believe it. I know I am not wholly disagreeable to you, and were I possessed of thousands, you would gladly seize the golden bait. I do not ask you to love me, for it is not in your nature to love anything. You are ambitious, and even now are dreaming of one whom you will never win; for just as sure as yon sun shall set again, so sure you, proud lady, shall one day be my wife."

When Mrs. Carrington had recovered a little from the surprise into which Raymond's fiery speech had thrown her, he was gone and she was alone. "Impudent puppy!" said she; "and yet he was right in saying he was not disagreeable to me. But I'll never be his wife. I'd die first!" Still, do what she would, a feeling haunted her that Raymond's prediction would prove true. Perhaps it was this which made her so determined to supplant Julia in Dr. Lacey's good opinion, should he ever presume to think favorably of her. How she succeeded we shall see hereafter.

Chapter XVII

FANNY MIDDLETON ARRIVES IN NEW YORK

[pg 168]Three weeks after Mr. Middleton's departure for New Orleans, Mr. Miller's school closed. Uncle Joshua was present at the examination, and congratulated himself much because he did not feel at all "stuck up" at seeing both Julia and Fanny acquit themselves so creditably. After the exercises were concluded, he returned with Mr. Miller to Mrs. Crane's. Just before he started for home he drew from his sheepskin pocketbook five hundred dollars, which he divided equally between his daughters, saying, "Here, gals, I reckon this will be enough to pay for all the furbelows you've bought or will want to buy. I'll leave you here the rest of the week to see to fixin' up your rig, but Saturday I shall send for you."

Fanny was surprised at her father's unlooked-for generosity, and thanked him again and again. Julia was silent, but her face told how vexed and disappointed she was. As soon as her father was gone, her rage burst forth. "Stingy old thing," said she, "and yet he thinks he's done something wonderful. Why, my bill at C ——'s already amounts to two hundred, and I want as much more. What I am to do, I don't know."

She would have said more, but Fanny quieted her by saying, "Don't talk so about father, Julia. It was very liberal, and really I do not know what to do with all mine."

But we will not continue this conversation. Suffice it to say that when Julia retired that night, her own money was safe in her purse, and by the side of it lay the hundred dollars she had coaxed from Fanny. As they were preparing to return

home on Saturday, Julia said to her sister, "Fan, don't let father know that you gave me a hundred dollars, for I fear all your powers of persuasion would be of no avail to stay the storm he would consider it his bounden duty to raise."

There was no need of this caution, for Fanny was not one to do a generous act, and then boast of it, neither did her father ask her how she had disposed of her money. He was [pg 169] satisfied to know that the "four silk gowns" were purchased, as, in his estimation they constituted the essential part of a young lady's wardrobe.

Since Fanny had disclosed the heartless desertion of Dr. Lacey, she seemed to be doubly dear to her father; for pity now mingled with the intense love he always had for his youngest and best-loved daughter. Often during the last three days she passed at home prior to her departure for New York, he would sit and gaze fondly upon her until the tears would blind his vision, then springing up, he would pace the floor, impetuously muttering, "The scamp—the vagabond—but he'll get his pay fast enough—and I'd pay him, too, if I hadn't promised not to. But 'tain't worth a while, for I reckon 'twould only make her face grow whiter and thinner if I did anything."

At length the morning came on which Julia and Fanny were to leave for the first time their native state. Side by side near the landing at Frankfort lay the two boats, Blue Wing and Diana. The one was to bear Fanny on her Northern tour, and the other would convey Julia as far as Louisville on her way South. Mr. Woodburn, who had business in New Orleans, was to take Julia under his protection.

And now but a short time remained ere the Diana would loose her moorings and be under way. These few moments were moments of sorrow to Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, who had accompanied their daughters to Frankfort. Uncle Joshua particularly was much depressed, and scarce took his eyes from his treasure, who might be leaving him forever. In his estimation the far-off North was a barren, chilly region, and although he did not quite believe his Fanny would be frozen to death, he could not rid himself of the fear that something would befall her.

"You'll take good keer of her, won't you, Miller?" said he, "and bring her safely back to us?"

Mr. Miller gave the promise, and then observing that there was something else

on Mr. Middleton's mind, he said, "What is it, Mr. Middleton? What more do you wish to say?"

Mr. Middleton struggled hard with his feelings, and his voice sank to a whisper as he answered, "I wanted to tell you that if—if she should die, bring her home—bring her back; don't leave her there all alone."

The old man could say no more, for the bell rang out its last warning. The parting between Fanny and her parents was a sad one, and even Julia wept as she kissed her sister, and thought it might be for the last time.

[pg 170]Soon after the Diana, with its precious freight disappeared from view, Mr. Middleton was called upon to bid another farewell to his eldest daughter. "Reckon the old fellow likes one girl better than the other," said a bystander, who had witnessed both partings. And yet Mr. Middleton did well, and his look and manner was very affectionate as he bade Julia good-bye, and charged her "not to be giddy and act like a fool, nor try to come it over Dr. Lacey." "Though," thought he, "it'll be sarvin the rascal right if he should have to live with Tempest all his life."

It is not our intention at present to follow Julia in her passage to New Orleans. In another chapter we will take up the subject, and narrate her adventures. Now we prefer going North with the other party, which consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Fanny and Raymond. The latter had, in a fit of desperation, determined to quit Frankfort, and go no one knew whither. He accompanied his friends as far as Cincinnati, and there bade them adieu, saying that they would hear of him again in a way they little dreamed of.

Mr. Miller was sorry to part with one who had proved so valuable an assistant in his school, but all his arguments had failed and he was obliged to give him up, saying, "I hope, Raymond, that all your laudable enterprises may be successful."

"I shall succeed," were Raymond's emphatic words; "and she, the haughty woman, who tried to smile so scornfully when I bade her farewell, will yet be proud to say she has had a smile from me, a poor school master."

"Well, Raymond," said Mr. Miller, "you have my good wishes, and if you ever run for President, I'll vote for you. So now good-by."

Raymond rung his friend's hand, and then stepped from the cars, which soon

rolled heavily from the depot. Faster and faster sped the train on its pathway over streamlet and valley, meadow and woodland, until at last the Queen City, with its numerous spires, was left far behind. From the car windows Fanny watched the long blue line of hills, which marks the Kentucky shore, until they, too, disappeared from view.

For a time now we will leave her to the tender mercies of the Ohio railroad, and a Lake Erie steamer, and hurrying on in advance, we will introduce the reader to the home where once had sported Richard Wilmot and his sister Kate. It stood about a half a mile from the pleasant rural village of C——, in the eastern part of New York. The house was large and handsome, and had about it an air of thrift and [pg 171] neatness, which showed its owner to be a farmer, who not only understood his business, but also attended to it himself. Between the house and the road was a large grassy lawn, on which was growing many a tall, stately maple and elm, under whose wide-spreading branches Kate and her brother had often played during the gladsome days of their childhood. A long piazza ran around two sides of the building. Upon this piazza the family sitting room opened.

Could we have entered that sitting room the day on which our travelers arrived, we should have seen a fine-looking, middle-aged lady, whose form and features would instantly have convinced us that we looked upon the mother of Kate. Yes, what Kate Miller is now, her mother was once; but time and sorrow have made inroads upon her dazzling beauty, and here and there the once bright locks of auburn are now silvered over, and across the high white brow are drawn many deep-cut lines. Since Kate last saw her mother, these lines have increased, for the bursting heart has swelled with anguish, and the dark eye has wept bitter tears for the son who died far away from his childhood's home. Even now the remembrance of the noble youth, who scarce two years ago, left her full of life and health, makes the tear drop start as she says aloud, "How can I welcome back my darling Kate, and know that he will never come again!"

The sound of her voice aroused old Hector, the watchdog, who had been lying in the sun upon the piazza. Stretching his huge limbs and shaking his shaggy sides, he stalked into the sitting room, and going up to his mistress laid his head caressingly in her lap. The sight of Hector made Mrs. Wilmot's tears flow afresh, for during many years he had been the faithful companion of Richard, whose long absence he seemed seriously to mourn. For days and weeks he had watched by the gate, through which he had seen his young master pass, and when at last

the darkness of night forbade a longer watch, he would lay his head on the ground and give vent to his evident disappointment in a low, mournful howl.

Mrs. Wilmot was not superstitious; but when, day after day, the same sad cry was repeated, it became to her an omen of coming evil; and thus the shock of her son's death, though none the less painful, was not quite as great as it would otherwise have been. For Kate, too, old Hector had wept, but not so long or so mournfully; still he remembered her, and always evinced his joy whenever her name was spoken.

On the morning of the day on which she was expected home, a boy who had lived in the family when she went away, [pg 172] called Hector to him, and endeavored, by showing him some garment which Kate had worn and by repeating her name, to make him understand that she was coming home. We will not say that Hector understood him, but we know that during the day he never for a moment left the house or yard, but lay upon the piazza, looking eagerly toward the road which led from the village. Whenever he saw a carriage coming, he would start up and gaze wistfully at it until it had passed, then he would again lie down and resume his watch. Mrs. Wilmot noticed this, and when Hector, as we have seen, walked up to her and looked so sympathizingly in her face, she patted his head, saying, "Poor Hector; you will see Kate at least today."

Nor was she mistaken, for about three that afternoon, an omnibus drew up before the gate. Kate immediately sprang out, and was followed by Mr. Miller and Fanny. Their arrival was first made known to Mrs. Wilmot by the cry of joy which Hector sent forth at sight of Kate. With lightning speed he bounded over the lawn to meet the travelers. Fanny, who was accustomed to the savage watchdogs of Kentucky, sprang back in terror and clung to Mr. Miller for protection; but Kate cried out, "Do not fear; it is only Hector, and he wouldn't harm you for the world." Then she ran forward to meet him, and embraced him as fondly as though he had really been a human being, and understood and appreciated it all. And he did seem to, for after caressing Kate, he looked about as if in quest of the missing one. Gradually he seemed to become convinced that Richard was not there; again was heard the old wailing howl; but this time it was more prolonged, more despairing. Faithful creature! Know you not that summer's gentle gale and winter's howling storm have swept over the grave of him whom you so piteously bemoan.

Fanny stopped her ears to shut out the bitter cry, but if Kate heard it, she heeded

it not, and bounded on over the graveled walk toward her mother, who was eagerly waiting for her. In an instant parent and child were weeping in each other's arms.

"My Kate, my darling Kate, are you indeed here?" said Mrs. Wilmot.

Kate's only answer was a still more passionate embrace. Then recollecting herself, she took her husband's hand and presented him to her mother, saying, "Mother, I could not bring you Richard, but I have brought you another son. Will you not give him room in your heart?"

Mrs. Wilmot had never seen Mr. Miller before, but she was [pg 173] prepared to like him, not only because he was her daughter's choice, but because he had been the devoted friend of her son; consequently she greeted him with a most kind and affectionate welcome.

During all this time Fanny was leaning against one of the pillars of the piazza, but her thoughts were far away. She was thinking of her distant Kentucky home, and a half feeling of homesickness crept over her, as she thought how joyfully she would be greeted there, should she ever return. Her reverie was of short duration, for Kate approached, and leading her to her mother, simply said, "Mother, this is Fanny."

'Twas enough. The word Fanny had a power to open the fountains of that mother's heart. She had heard the story of the young girl, who had watched so unweariedly by the bedside of Richard—she had heard, too, of the generous old man, whose noble heart had cared for and cherished the stranger, and she knew that she, who advanced toward her so timidly, was the same young girl, the same old man's daughter; and could Mr. Middleton have witnessed her reception of his Sunshine, he would have been satisfied.

A messenger was dispatched for Mr. Wilmot, who was superintending some workmen in a field not far from the house. Mr. Wilmot was a tall, noble-looking man, whose fine figure was slightly bowed by the frosts of sixty winters. As he advanced with breathless haste toward the house, Kate ran to meet him, and the tears which the strong man wept, told how dear to him was this, his beautiful daughter, and how forcibly her presence reminded him of his first-born, only son, who went away to die among strangers.

When he was presented to Mr. Miller and Fanny, a scene similar to the one we

have already described took place. As he blessed Fanny for Richard's sake, she felt that though in a strange land, she was not alone or unloved. Her homesickness soon vanished; for how could she be lonely and sad, where all were so kind, and where each seemed to vie with the other in trying to make everything agreeable to her. It was strange how soon even Hector learned to love the fair Kentuckian. He would follow her footsteps wherever she went, and affectionately kiss her hands. But then, as Kate said, "Hector had more common sense than half the people in the world," and he seemed to know by instinct that she whom he so fondly caressed had once watched over his young master, who was now sleeping in his silent grave, unmindful that in his home he was still sincerely mourned even by old Hector.

Not many days after Fanny's arrival at Mr. Wilmot's she [pg 174] was told that a gentleman wished to see her in the parlor. On entering the room how surprised she was at beholding Frank Cameron. He had learned by letter from Kate that Fanny was in C——, and he immediately started for his uncle's.

Since his return from Kentucky he had thoughts of little else save Fanny Middleton. Waking or sleeping, she was constantly in his mind, and still with a happy thought of her there ever came a sadder feeling, a fear that his love for her would be in vain. But since the morning when he bade her adieu, her name had never once passed his lips.

When his sister Gertrude questioned him concerning the Kentucky girls, he had described to her in glowing terms the extreme beauty of Julia, and the handsome eyes of "the widder," as he called Mrs. Carrington, but of Fanny he had never spoken. He could not bear that even his own sister should mention Fanny in connection with any one else. How ever, when Kate's letter arrived, he passed it over to Gertrude, whose curiosity was instantly roused, and she poured forth a torrent of questions as to who that Fanny Middleton was.

"I suppose she must be old Mr. Middleton's daughter," was Frank's teasing reply.

"Of course I know that," said Gertrude, "but what of her? who is she?"

"Why, I've told you once, she is Fanny Middleton," said Frank.

These and similar answers were all Gertrude could draw from him, and she fell into a fit of pouting; but Frank was accustomed to that, and consequently did not mind it. Next he announced his intention to visit his Uncle Wilmot. Gertrude

instantly exclaimed, "Now, Frank, you are too bad. Just as soon as you hear Fanny Middleton is in New York, you start off to see her, without even telling me who she is, or what she is. In my opinion you are in love with her, and do not wish us to know it."

This started up Mrs. Cameron's ideas, and she said, "Frank, I am inclined to believe Gertrude is right; but you surely will be respectful enough to me to answer my questions civilly."

"Certainly," said Frank. "Ask anything you please; only be quick, for it is almost car time."

"Well then, do you intend to make this Miss Middleton your wife?"

"I do, if she will have me," said Frank.

[pg 175]The distressed lady groaned audibly, but continued, "One more question, Frank. Is she rich and well connected?"

Frank passed his hand through the thick curls of his brown hair, and seemed to be trying hard to think of something. Finally he answered, "Why, really, mother, I never once thought to ask that question."

"But," persisted Mrs. Cameron, "you can judge by her appearance, and that of her parents. Did you not see them?"

Frank laughed loudly as the image of Uncle Joshua as he first saw him in the door, buttoning his suspender, presented itself to his remembrance; but he answered, "Yes, mother, I did see her father, and 'twas the richest sight I ever saw."

He then proceeded to give a description of Mr. Middleton to his astonished sister and mother, the latter of whom exhibited such distress that Frank very compassionately asked, "if she had the toothache."

Before she had time to answer, Frank was gone, leaving his mother to lament over the strange infatuation which always led Frank in pursuit of somebody beneath him.

"I know," said she to Gertrude, "that this Fanny Middleton is from a horrid low

family, and is as poor as a church mouse."

So while Frank was hurrying toward the village of C——, his mother and sister were brooding over the disgrace which they feared threatened them. They could have spared all their painful feelings, for she of the "low family" was destined to be another's.

During Frank's ride to C—— he determined, ere his return, to know the worst. "She can but refuse me," thought he, "and even if she does, I shall feel better than I do now." When he met Fanny his manner was so calm and collected that she never dreamed how deep was the affection she had kindled in his heart. She received him with real pleasure, for he seemed like a friend from Kentucky. He staid with her but three days, and when he left he bore a sadder heart than he had ever felt before. Fanny had refused him; not exultingly, as if a fresh laurel had been won only to be boasted of, but so kindly, so delicately, that Frank felt almost willing to act it all over again for the sake of once more hearing Fanny's voice, as she told him how utterly impossible it was for her ever again to love as a husband should be loved.

"Then," said Frank, somewhat bitterly, "you acknowledge that you have loved another."

"Yes," answered Fanny, "but no other circumstances could have wrung the confession from me. I have loved and been [pg 176] deceived. I will not say my faith in man's honor is wholly gone, for I believe you, Mr. Cameron, to be perfectly sincere and honorable in your professions of regard. Had we met earlier all might have been different, but now it is too late. If my friendship is worth having, it is yours. I have never had a brother, but will look upon and love you as one; with that, you must be satisfied."

And he did try to be satisfied, but only because there was no other alternative. Still he felt a pleasure in being near her, in breathing the same atmosphere and gazing on the same scenes. Before he returned home he had decided upon accompanying her, together, with Mr. and Mrs. Miller, on their contemplated trip to Saratoga; thence they would go on to New York City, and visit at his father's.

"I am sorry," said he, "that it is not the season for parties, as I should love dearly to show off Fanny in opposition to our practised city belles, and now I think of it," continued he, "isn't Mr. Stanton coming North this summer after a certain

Miss Ashton?"

"I believe he is," answered Kate.

"Now then," said Frank. "I have it exactly. Judge Fulton, who is Miss Ashton's guardian, has recently removed to the city. I know him well, and have been introduced to Miss Helen. Stanton has already invited us all to his wedding, and as Miss Ashton will of course repeat the invitation, Fanny will thus have an opportunity of seeing a little of the gay world in New York."

"You seem to think any praise bestowed upon Fanny as so much credit for yourself," said Kate, mischievously.

Frank made no reply, and soon bidding good-by to his friends, he was on his way to the city. On reaching home he found his mother and sister in a state of great anxiety concerning "the odious old scarecrow's corncake daughter," as Gertrude styled Fanny. Her first question, after asking about Kate, was, "Well, Frank, tell me, did you propose to Miss Middleton?"

"Most certainly I did. That was one object in going," was Frank's quiet reply.

The horrified Mrs. Cameron, throwing up both hands in a most theatrical manner, exclaimed, "Mon Dieu!" It was the only French phrase she knew, and she used it upon all occasions. This time, however, it was accompanied by a loud call for her vineagrette and for air, at the same time declaring it was of no use trying to restore her, for her heart was broken and she was going to faint.

[pg 177]"Let me wash these red spots off from your cheek. You can't faint gracefully with so much color," said Frank gravely, at the same time literally deluging his mother's face with cologne, much against the blooming lady's inclination. This little scene determined Frank not to tell that he was rejected. At first he had intended to disclose all, but now he decided otherwise. "They may as well fret about that as anything else," thought he, "and when they see Fanny, I shall have a glorious triumph." So he kept his own secret, and commenced teasing Gertrude about going to Saratoga with himself, their cousin Kate and Fanny.

"I shall do no such thing, Master Frank," said Gertrude. "I am willing enough to see Kate, and invite her here too, for she is fine looking and appears well, even if she is a music teacher; but this Fanny Middleton—Ugh! I'll never associate with

her on terms of equality, or own her as my sister either."

"I do not think you will," said Frank; but Gertrude knew not what cause he had for so saying.

After he had quitted the apartment, Mrs. Cameron and Gertrude tried to think of some way to let Fanny know that she was not wanted in their family. "Dear me," said Gertrude, "I will not go to Saratoga, and be obliged to see Frank make a dolt of himself with this plebian Kentuckian. If she were only rich and accomplished, why, it would be different, and the fact of her being from Kentucky would increase her attractions. But now it is too bad!" And Gertrude actually cried with vexation and mortified pride. Poor creature! How mistaken she was with regard to Fanny Middleton, and so she one day learned.

But as the reader is doubtless anxious to hear of Fanny's introduction to Mrs. Cameron and Gertrude, we will give a description of it in the next chapter.

Chapter XVIII

FANNY WELCOMED BY MRS. CAMERON

[pg 178]Contrary to his first intention, Stanton concluded to come North in July. He had of course learned from Nellie that her mysterious guardian had proved to be Judge Fulton, his sister's husband. And more recently she had written to him of Judge Fulton's removal to New York City. Mr. Miller was apprised of Stanton's return by a letter, in which he was also informed that the wedding would take place in Grace Church on the morning of the 22d.

Not long after there came invitations for himself, wife and Fanny to attend the bridal party, at the residence of Judge Fulton, on the evening of July 25. Frank, who was also invited, had his own reason for not wishing his mother or sister to see Fanny until they met her at Judge Fulton's. Consequently he was not sorry when both ladies graciously informed him that Miss Middleton would not be invited by them to visit at their house. "Of course," said Mrs. Cameron, "we shall invite Kate and her husband, and shall be glad to see them. If you choose, you can in your own name invite Fanny, but if she knows anything she will not come."

Frank knew there was no possible danger of Fanny's accepting an invitation, which came simply from himself, but he did not say so, and next day he started again for his Uncle Wilmot's. To his cousin Kate he imparted a knowledge of his mother's and Gertrude's feelings and also told of his own plans. Kate readily fell in with them and when Frank returned to the city he was accompanied by Mr. Miller, Kate and Fanny, who took rooms at the Astor House. As soon as Mrs. Cameron and Gertrude learned that Kate was in the city, they called upon her. Fanny they of course did not see, neither did they mention her name. Kate

expected as much, but nevertheless felt vexed, and when they urged her to spend the remainder of her time with them, she replied, "I have a young friend from Kentucky with me, and unless you invite [pg 179] her too, I do not feel at liberty to accept your polite invitation."

In answer to this, Gertrude muttered something about "not wishing to enlarge the circle of her acquaintance," while Mrs. Cameron said nothing, and the two ladies soon swept haughtily out of the room.

"Never mind," said Frank, to whom Kate related her adventure, "they will both sing another tune ere long," and he was right too.

The 25th of July at last arrived. Frank had informed Gertrude that she must look to her father for a beau that evening, as he should be otherwise engaged; so she was not surprised when her brother, long before sunset, left the house all equipped for the party. She well knew where he was going and for whose society she was deserted. One hour later found her seated in a large armchair before the mirror in her dressing room.

Gertrude was a tall, fine-looking girl, but in the expression of her handsome features there was something wanting. She lacked soul, and no one ever looked on the cold, proud face of Gertrude Cameron, without being convinced that she was altogether heartless and selfish.

On this occasion, as she sat in the large armchair, she said to her waiting maid, "I say, Jane, you must do your best tonight to have me splendidly dressed."

"Yes, ma'am, I understand," said Jane, and she proceeded to bedeck her young mistress with all sorts of finery. Her dress consisted of a rich, white satin, over which was thrown a skirt of handsomely embroidered lace. All the ornaments of gold and diamonds for which a place could possibly be found were heaped upon her, and when her toilet was completed, she seemed one gorgeous mass of jewelry.

"There, that will do," said she, as Jane clasped the last diamond bracelet on her arm. "I presume this Fanny Middleton has never dreamed of so costly a dress as I shall appear in tonight."

Meanwhile in another part of the city, another toilet was being made, but of a different nature. Kate and Frank both were anxious that for once Fanny should

deviate from her usually simple style of dress, and adopt something more in keeping with her father's wealth. At first Fanny hesitated, but was finally persuaded, and gave Kate permission to select for her anything she chose.

As, on the evening of the party, she glanced at the image which her mirror reflected, she was pardonable for feeling a [pg 180] slight thrill of pleasure. Frank was in raptures, declaring nothing had ever been seen in New York so perfectly lovely. And truly, Fanny was beautiful as she stood there arrayed for the party.

She was dressed in a French robe of white tarlatan, embroidered in boquets of lilies of the valley in silver. A single japonica rested among the curls of her bright hair, while her neck was encircled by a necklace of pearls, and costly bracelets of the same clasped her white, slender wrists.

"Why, Fanny," said Mr. Miller, "how beautiful you look. What would your father say could he see you now?"

At the mention of her father's name the teardrops glistened for a moment in Fanny's eye, and she felt how gladly she would have foregone all the expected pleasure of that night for the pleasure of again seeing her distant father. She, however, dashed the tears away, and replied, "I fear he would think his Sunshine wholly covered up and spoiled by trumpery, as he calls fashionable dress."

Frank noticed her emotion when speaking of her father, and he thought how priceless must be the love of one who thus so truly honored her parents. A feeling of sadness was blended with his admiration of Fanny, for constantly in his heart was the knowledge that she never would be his. And here Frank showed how truly noble he was, for he could still love and cling to Fanny, although he knew that for him there was no hope.

Let us now transport our readers to the elegant residence of Judge Fulton, which was situated upon Fifth Avenue. Stanton, with his fair bride, had returned from visiting his parents near Geneva, and now in the large parlors of Judge Fulton, they were receiving the congratulations of their friends, whose numbers each moment increased, until the rooms were filled to overflowing. Frank and his party had not yet arrived. He designed to be late, for he well knew his mother and sister would not be early, and he wished to give them the full benefit of Fanny's introduction into the drawing room.

But a part of his scheme was frustrated, for his mother, who was suffering with a violent headache, was obliged to remain above stairs for a time, and Gertrude alone witnessed her brother's triumph. She was standing near Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, carelessly twirling a costly boquet, which one of her obsequious beaux had given her, when she overheard Nellie say to her husband, "I do hope she will come, for I am [pg 181] all impatience to see one whom you have praised until I am half jealous."

Gertrude wondered much whom Mrs. Stanton could mean, but her wonder soon ceased, for there was a stir at the door. The crowd around it fell back as Frank Cameron walked proudly into the room, bearing upon his arm Fanny Middleton. Her fame had preceded her, for many of those present had learned that a Kentucky belle and heiress was stopping at the Astor, and would be present at the party. As she advanced into the room, Gertrude felt, rather than heard the murmur of admiration which ran round the room, and her quick ear caught the words, "Yes, that's she; that's the heiress; that's Miss Middleton from Frankfort."

Gladly would Gertrude have escaped her brother's eye, which instantly sought her out; but she felt unable to move, and stood watching the animated face and graceful manners of Fanny, who, in being presented to Mrs. Fulton and Stanton, passed near her. Every article of Fanny's dress was noted, and an estimate made as to its probable cost. "She must be wealthy," thought she, "or she could not dress so expensively." Suddenly one of Gertrude's acquaintances touched her elbow, and said, "Come, Miss Gertrude, do gratify our curiosity and tell us about this Kentucky belle. Of course you know her, as she is attended by your brother."

Deeply mortified Gertrude was obliged to confess that she had no acquaintance with her. "That's strange," said the lady. "We all supposed she stopped at your father's with your cousin."

A new idea entered Gertrude's mind, and instead of replying to this last remark, she said, "I shall know her well, though, for Frank has proposed to her."

"Did she accept him?" asked the lady eagerly.

"Of course," was Gertrude's haughty answer. "Do you think he would offer himself unless sure of success?"

Ten minutes more and dozens of persons were gossiping about the engagement between Frank Cameron and the beautiful Kentuckian. Scores of questions were

poured in upon Gertrude relative to her future sister-in-law, but none of them could she answer. Vexed at her own ignorance, she ran upstairs to her mother, whom she told to "come down immediately and see what fools they had made of themselves."

"Why, what is the matter, child?" said Mrs. Cameron, much alarmed at Gertrude's excited looks and manners.

"All the city is ready to fall down and worship this Fanny Middleton, whom we have treated with such neglect," said [pg 182] Gertrude, and then she added what was of more consequence than all the rest, "Why, mother, she's the most elegantly dressed lady in the room!"

In a moment Mrs. Cameron was descending the broad staircase. There was the sound of the piano and someone singing. Gertrude pressed forward until she caught sight of the singer, then pulling her mother's sleeve, she whispered, "This way, mother; that is Miss Middleton playing."

Mrs. Cameron's first emotion, on beholding Fanny and the flattering attentions she everywhere received, was one of intense mortification, to think she had not been first to notice and chaperone her. "I will, however, make all possible amends now," thought she, and finding Frank she desired for herself and Gertrude an introduction to Miss Middleton; but Frank did not feel disposed to grant his mother's request immediately, and he said, "Pardon me, mother, but you see Miss Middleton is very much engaged at present with some of her friends, so you must wait awhile."

Mrs. Cameron was too proud to ask any one else to introduce her, and it seemed that she and Gertrude were not likely to make Fanny's acquaintance at all. Toward the close of the party, however, Frank thought proper to introduce them. Mrs. Cameron determined to do her best, and she overwhelmed Fanny with so much flattery, that the poor girl longed for some way of escape, thinking to herself, "Is it possible that Frank Cameron's mother is such a silly woman?" Once Mrs. Cameron went so far as to hint the probability that Miss Middleton would one day be her daughter.

"What can she possibly mean?" thought Fanny; at the same time gracefully excusing herself she ran upstairs after her shawl and veil, as Kate had signified her intention of returning home. But Mrs. Cameron was not to be thus foiled.

She started in pursuit, and reaching the bonnet room as soon as Fanny, insisted that she and Kate should stop with her during the remainder of her stay in the city. As Frank soon appeared and joined his entreaties with those of his mother, Fanny said she would do just as Mrs. Miller thought proper. Kate, who had expected a similar denouement, expressed her perfect willingness to visit at her uncle's.

Accordingly, the next morning they left their rooms at the Astor House and repaired to Mrs. Cameron's, where they were most affectionately received by Mrs. Cameron and Gertrude. And now commenced a series of toadyism which was vastly amusing to their acquaintances, many of whom had witnessed Mrs. Cameron's manner at the party and had since [pg 183] learned a part of the story. It was strange how soon Mrs. Cameron and Gertrude discovered how many fine qualities Fanny possessed. Even the "odious scarecrow of a father" was transformed into an "odd old gentleman," and in speaking of him to one of her acquaintances, Mrs. Cameron said "he was a very generous, wealthy, but eccentric old man, and was one of the first citizens in Frankfort." The good lady forgot that Uncle Joshua did not reside in Frankfort, but twelve miles from that city! Her word, however, was not questioned, for of course she would know all about the family of her son's intended wife.

Meanwhile the report of Frank's engagement was circulated freely, and the whole matter would undoubtedly have been arranged, marriage ceremony and all, had not Frank put an end to the matter by utterly denying the story. Some young gentlemen were one morning congratulating him on his future prospects, and declaring their intention of going to Kentucky, if there were any more Fannys there, when Frank asked upon whose authority they were repeating a story for which there was no foundation.

"Why," answered one of them, "my sister heard it from your sister Gertrude."

"From Gertrude!" said Frank in amazement, "from Gertrude! Well, I cannot answer for what Gertrude says, but I assure you I am not engaged to Miss Middleton, and have never been."

This was in the morning, and that evening when Frank entered the sitting room where his mother and sister were, they beset him to know why he had denied his engagement with Fanny.

"Because," said he, rather indignantly, "there is no engagement between us."

"Oh, Frank," said Gertrude, "you told us so."

"I never told you so," answered he, rather warmly. "I told you I had proposed, and I did propose, and was refused."

"But why didn't you tell us?" continued Gertrude.

"Because you didn't ask me," replied Frank. "You supposed, of course, none could refuse me, so jumped at conclusions and have got yourself into a fine spot."

There was no need of telling this, for Mrs. Cameron readily saw it and went off into a fit of hysterics, while Gertrude burst into tears.

"What a strange girl you are!" said Frank. "Once you cried because you thought I was engaged to Fanny, and now you cry because I am not." So saying he gave a low mocking [pg 184] whistle and left his mother and sister to console themselves as best they could.

We will not weary the reader by repeating the conversation between Gertrude and her mother. We will only say that Mrs. Cameron decided to go as soon as possible to Saratoga, "and when once there," said she, "I will use all my influence with Miss Middleton; nay, if necessary, I will even beg her to marry Frank, for I know she likes him."

Gertrude was delighted with this idea. She had forgotten how determined she once was not to visit Saratoga with Fanny Middleton. Next morning Mrs. Cameron proposed to her guests that as the weather was getting warm, they should start directly for the Springs. The visitors of course could make no objections, and as Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, who were to accompany them, also acquiesced in the plan, two days more found our friends at Saratoga, together with crowds more of the fashionable from the north, south, east and west.

On the first day of their arrival, Fanny noticed seated opposite her at the dinner table, a dark-eyed, sprightly looking girl, whose eyes so constantly met hers, that at last both blushed and the stranger girl half smiled. By her side sat a gentleman, whom Fanny concluded was the young lady's brother. Something in their appearance interested Fanny, and she could not help thinking that they were

from the South. That evening as she was walking alone upon the piazza, she was suddenly joined by the unknown lady, who accosted her with, "Pardon me, ma'am, but am I not speaking to Miss Middleton from Kentucky?"

Fanny was too much surprised to answer immediately, but soon recovering her self-possession, she answered, "You are, but I have not the pleasure of knowing you."

"I presume not," said the lady. "We have never met before, and yet I knew you instantly."

"Knew me! How?" asked Fanny.

"From description," replied the lady. "You have been so accurately described to me by our mutual friend Miss Woodburn, of New Orleans, that I could not mistake you."

"Florence Woodburn! New Orleans!" exclaimed Fanny. "And are you from New Orleans, and do you know Florence, and have you seen Julia?"

To all these questions the stranger answered "Yes," continuing, "and now let me introduce myself. I am Lida Gibson, but I might as well be John Smith for any idea my name will convey. However, I am from New Orleans, and know Florence and your Uncle William well. Just before I left the city, [pg 185] I made your sister's acquaintance. When she learned I was coming this way, she said I might possibly see you, and made me the bearer of many messages of love."

Fanny had never heard of Lida Gibson, but it was sufficient that she knew her uncle and Julia, so her hand was immediately offered, and the remainder of the evening the two young girls promenaded the piazza arm in arm, talking of their distant homes and absent friends.

"Where did you see Julia?" asked Fanny.

"Your uncle's house was not quite ready, consequently he and Julia were spending a few days at the residence of Dr. Lacey," answered Lida.

"Dr. Lacey!" said Fanny, in some surprise. "Julia at Dr. Lacey's?"

"Yes, why not?" said Lida, laughing merrily at Fanny's manner. "There is

nothing improper about that, for Dr. Lacey's father was then absent, and his mother, for the time, stayed with her son. I fancied it was not at all unpleasant either to Dr. Lacey or Julia, that they were thus thrown together, and I should not wonder if the doctor should one day call you sister!"

Lida Gibson, whom our readers will recollect as having met at Mabel Mortimer's party in New Orleans, was a thoughtless, but kind-hearted girl, and never felt happier than when employed in canvassing matches. On the morning when the Cameron party arrived at the Springs, she had sent her brother to learn the names of the newcomers. On his return he mentioned Fanny Middleton as being one of the new arrivals, so 'twas not surprising that Lida should so readily recognize her.

As days passed on Lida too heard of the supposed engagement between Fanny and Frank Cameron, and for once kept silent upon the subject, at least in Fanny's presence. Dearly as she loved to discuss such matters, she felt there was something in the character of her new friend which forbade an approach to anything like jesting about so personal an affair as one's own engagement. She, however, fully believed the report, for everything she saw tended to confirm it, and she was anxious to return home that she might carry the important news to Julia and Dr. Lacey. Poor Fanny! The clouds were gathering darkly about her, but she, all unconscious of the consequence, talked, laughed, rode and sang with Frank, never thinking that she was thus confirming Lida in a belief which would tend to remove Dr. Lacey farther and farther from her. Could Lida have heard a conversation which one evening took [pg 186] place between Mrs. Cameron and Fanny, different, very different would have been the report which she carried back.

One evening as Fanny, Lida and Gertrude were walking upon the piazza, a servant came, saying that Mrs. Cameron desired to see Miss Middleton in her room. Fanny immediately obeyed the summons, and as soon as she was gone, Lida laughingly congratulated Gertrude upon the project of having so pleasant a sister. Gertrude smilingly received Miss Gibson's congratulations. "For," thought she, "even if Fanny does not marry Frank, Miss Gibson will probably never know it, as she is to leave in a few days."

Let us now with Fanny repair to Mrs. Cameron's room, but not like her wondering why she was sent for. We well know why, and consequently are prepared for the look of mingled indignation and astonishment which appeared

on Fanny's face when she learned that Mrs. Cameron was pleading the cause of her son! Fanny answered, "Madam, I have always entertained the highest respect for your son, but I must confess it is lessened if it is with his knowledge you are speaking to me."

Mrs. Cameron, who had at first intimated that it was Frank's request that she should thus intercede for him, now saw her mistake, and veering about, declared what was indeed true, that Frank was wholly ignorant of the whole. Then followed a long, eloquent speech, in which Mrs. Cameron by turns tried to coax, flatter, importune, or frighten Fanny into a compliance with her wishes, but Fanny could only repeat her first answer. "I cannot, Mrs. Cameron, I cannot marry Frank. I acknowledge that I like him, but only as I would love a brother. Further remonstrance is useless, for I shall never marry him."

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Cameron. "Do you love another? Are you engaged to another?"

"I cannot answer these questions," said Fanny. "Frank knows my reason and has my permission to give it to you." Then rising, she added, "I suppose our conference is now ended, and with your leave I will retire."

Mrs. Cameron nodded her head in assent, and Fanny immediately left the room. A moment after she quitted the apartment, Gertrude entered, all impatient to know her mother's success.

"Baffled, baffled," was Mrs. Cameron's reply to her interrogatories. "I can do nothing with her. She is as stubborn as a mule, and we shall either have to conjure up for some reason why the engagement was broken off, or else run the [pg 187] risk of being well laughed at among our circle in New York."

A few days after this, Lida Gibson started for the South, promising Fanny that she would see Julia as soon as possible after her return home. Ere long Mrs. Cameron too was seized with a desire to return to the city. The remainder of the party made no objections, and accordingly Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, Mrs. Cameron, Frank and Gertrude were soon in New York.

Soon after their return, Mrs. Cameron said, in speaking of Fanny, "that 'twas quite doubtful whether Frank would marry her or not. She was so young, and had, too, so many suitors in Kentucky that she probably would soon forget him, and for her part she was pleased to have it so!"

Chapter XIX

JULIA ANNOUNCES HER ENGAGEMENT TO DR. LACEY

Summer was gone and the bright, sunny days of autumn had come.

Again in Kate Wilmot's home were tears wept and blessings breathed, as Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot bade farewell to their "children," as they affectionately called all three of the individuals who were that morning to start for their home in Kentucky.

"God bless you, Kate, my darling Kate," said Mrs. Wilmot as she fondly kissed her only child. Then turning to Fanny, she said, "And you, too, my other daughter, you have my love and earnest prayers for your happiness."

Mr. Wilmot could not speak, but his feelings were not less deep, as he embraced his child and shook the hands of Mr. Miller and Fanny. Old Hector, too, shared in the general sorrow, but for some undefinable reason he seemed to cling more closely to Fanny. He would look up in her face and howl, as if he knew she was leaving him forever. "Noble Hector!" said Fanny, "and do you indeed love me so well?" Then kneeling down by him, she drew from her neck a tiny locket, in which was a daguerreotype of herself. To this she attached a blue ribbon, which she fastened around Hector's neck, saying, "I cannot stay with you, Hector, but you shall have my likeness." Afterward when strangers visited the house and marvelled at Hector's unusual neck gear, they were shown the fair, sweet face, which looked forth from the [pg 188] golden casing, and were told the story of the young girl, whose presence had been like Sunshine in Richard Wilmot's darkened home.

Mr. Miller was not willing that Fanny should leave New York without first visiting Niagara Falls. Accordingly, they stopped at the Falls, and were there joined by Mr. and Mrs. Stanton and Frank, the latter of whom was desirous of seeing Fanny as long as possible. He accompanied them to Buffalo, and stayed upon the boat which was to bear them away until the last bell rang out its warning. As he was leaving them Kate playfully asked if they were taking anything of his with them. "Yes, everything, everything," he answered.

Soon the steamer was moving proudly over the blue waters of Lake Erie. On the upper deck our Kentucky friends were waving their handkerchiefs to Frank, who stood upon the wharf as long as one bright-haired girl could be distinguished by the light of the harvest moon, whose rays fell calmly upon the placid waters.

In a few days Mr. Middleton again folded to his bosom his Sunshine, now more precious than ever, because, as he said, "He'd lain awake a heap o' nights, worryin' about her. The dogs had howled, the death watches had ticked on the wall, and everything had carried on, t'other side up, ever since she'd been gone. But look, Nancy," he continued to his wife, "she's fattenin' up right smart. Her journey has done her a heap of good, and I'm glad I let her go."

The blacks now crowded round, delighted to welcome home their young mistress, who had a kind word and some little gift for each. Particularly were Aunt Katy and Aunt Judy pleased with the present of a tasty lace cap, whose value was greatly increased from the fact that they were bought in New York City. In these simple creatures' estimation, New York and Frankfort were the largest places in the world. "I s'pose," said Aunt Katy, "that this New York is mighty nigh three times as large as Frankfort."

"Three times as large!" repeated Fanny. "Why, yes, Katy, forty times as large."

From that time Aunt Katy looked upon Fanny as one not long for this world. "'Tain't in natur," said she, "that she should stay long. Allus was peart like and forrud, and now has been ridin' in the railroad all over the airth, and hain't got lost nuther, besides a-sailin' along in the steam engine over the salt water."

It was indeed marvelous how much Fanny had seen, and when she came to tell the wonder-stricken negroes of the [pg 189] cataract of Niagara, their amazement knew no bounds. Our friend Bobaway did not fail to ease himself by a round of somersaults, his usual manner of expressing surprise or pleasure. At

the same time he whispered to Lucy that "He's mistaken if Miss Fanny wan't tellin' 'em a stretcher this time," for which declaration Lucy rewarded him with a smart box on the ear, saying, "Is you no better manners than to 'cuse white folks of lyin'? Miss Fanny never'd got as well as she is if she's picked up a mess of lies to tell us."

Fanny's health was indeed much improved, and for a day or two after her return home, she bounded about the house and grounds as lightly and merrily as she had done in childhood. Mr. Middleton noticed the change and was delighted. "I b'lieve she's forgettin' that paltry doctor," said he, but he was wrong.

The third day after her return she was sitting with her parents, relating to them an account of her journey, when Ike entered the room. He had been sent to the post office and now came up to Fanny, saying, "Here, I done got this air," at the same time handing her a letter, which she instantly saw was from her sister. Eagerly taking it, she said, "A letter from Julia. I am delighted. It is a long time since I have heard from her." Then quickly breaking the seal, she commenced reading it.

Gradually as she read there stole over her face a strange expression. It was a look of despair—of hope utterly crushed, but she finished the letter and then mechanically passing it to her father, she said, "Read it; it concerns us all," and then rising she went to her room, leaving her father to read and swear over Julia's letter at his leisure. That he did so no one will doubt when they learn its contents.

The first page contained assurances of love; the second congratulated Fanny upon her engagement with Frank, but chided her for suffering Lida Gibson to be the bearer of the news. "Why did you not write to me yourself?" she said—"that is the way I shall do, and now to prove my words, you will see how confiding I am." Then followed the intelligence that Dr. Lacey had the night before offered his heart and hand and of course had been accepted. "You will not wonder at it," she wrote, "for you know how much I have always loved him. I was, however, greatly surprised when he told me he always preferred me to you, but was prevented from telling me so by my silly engagement with Mr. Wilmot and my supposed affection for him." The letter ended by saying that Dr. Lacey would accompany her home some time during the [pg 190] latter part of October, when their marriage would take place. There was also a "P.S.," in which Julia wrote, "Do, Fan, use your influence with the old man and make him fix up the infernal old air castle. I'd as soon be married in the horse barn as there."

This, then, was the letter which affected Fanny so, and called all of Uncle Joshua's biggest oaths into use. Mrs. Middleton tried to calm her husband and remind him of his promise not to swear. "I know it," said he, "I know I promised not to swear, and for better than two months I hain't swore, but I can't help it now. And yet I expected it. I know'd 'twould be so when I let Tempest go to New Orleans. But he'll run himself into a hornet's nest, and I ain't sure but it's just the punishment for him."

"Why, then, do you rave so?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"Because," answered her husband, "when I let Tempest go, I'd no idee Sunshine cared so much for him. If I had, I'd have slung a halter round Tempest's neck and tied her up in the hoss barn she likes so well!"

The old man was evidently piqued at Julia's thrust at the old house. "Fix up! A heap I'll fix up for her to be married," continued he.

"Then you'll give your consent?" said Mrs. Middleton.

"Consent! Who's asked any consent?" replied he, "and 'tain't likely they will nuther; and if I should refuse, Tempest wouldn't mind clamberin' out of the chimbly to run away, and the doctor has showed himself jest as mean. No; he may have her and go to the old boy for all of Josh. But what's this about Cameron? I hope 'tis so, but I'm mighty feared it ain't. Sunshine can't love two at a time."

While Mr. Middleton was thus expending his fury, Fanny was alone in her room, struggling hard to subdue the bitter feelings which were rising in her heart. Until now she had not been aware how much she loved Dr. Lacey. True, she had said it was impossible she could ever marry him; and she had believed she was trying to forget him; but ever in her heart she had, perhaps unconsciously, cherished a half formed belief that all would yet be well, and when she refused the noble, generous heart which Frank Cameron laid at her feet, it was with a vague hope that Dr. Lacey would yet be hers. But now every hope was gone. "There is nothing left for me," said Fanny, "but woe, woe!" 'Twas fearful—the tide of sorrow which swept over the young girl, but amid the wild storm of passion came the echo of a still, small voice, whispering of one who loves with more than an earthly love, who [pg 191] never proves faithless—never fails. Fanny listened to the Spirit's pleadings and resolved that henceforth she would seek to

place her affections where "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

The whirlwind of excitement passed over, leaving no trace to mark its passage, save a fixed calm expression, which a more violent demonstration of feeling would not have done.

The week following the receipt of Julia's letter Mr. Middleton had business which took him to Frankfort. Fanny accompanied him and remained several days. The morning after her arrival she and Mr. Stanton were walking upon the upper balcony at Mrs. Crane's, when they were joined by Ashton, who had returned from New Orleans a few days before. He had always been a frequent visitor there, but since his return, his visits had been more frequent and of longer duration. There was to him something very fascinating about Stanton's fair bride, and yet he always felt uneasy when with her, for her manners and appearance reminded him of the past.

This morning, however, the mystery was explained, but in what way he could not tell.

Soon after he appeared on the balcony, Nellie pointed to a gentleman who was crossing the street and inquired his name. On being told she replied: "He looks very much like a Mr. Barnard I used to know years ago in ——," mentioning the town where she was born.

"Used to know where?" asked Ashton quickly.

Nellie repeated the name and Ashton said, "Why, that's my native town, and I knew Mr. Barnard well." Then as if the light of a sudden revelation fell upon him, he added, "And your name, too, was Nellie Ashton? I once had a sister Nellie, on whose rosy cheeks I dropped a tear the night I ran away to sea. Can it be that you are that Nellie?"

A few moments more sufficed them to discover what we have long surmized, viz., that Henry Ashton and Nellie Stanton were brother and sister. The surprise and pleasure of their recognition is better imagined than described. We will only say that when Stanton, on his return from the office, stepped out upon the balcony in quest of his wife, he was greatly shocked at beholding her in Ashton's arms, and his amazement was increased when he saw that she not only suffered his caresses, but also returned them in a manner highly displeasing to the young husband. Fanny, however, soon explained all, and Stanton gladly received

Ashton as a newly found brother.

[pg 192]It is unnecessary for us to repeat what Nellie and her brother had to relate concerning themselves since the night when Ashton so unceremoniously took leave of his home. With the important points in their history the reader is already acquainted, so for the present we leave them, while we take a brief glance at Mrs. Carrington. The reader will doubtless think that for once in her life that estimable lady has done a good deed, although her motive was not the best in the world. Before Julia went to New Orleans, Mrs. Carrington so far overcame her dislike as to ask her to write. Julia did not promise to do so, but probably concluded she would, for soon after her arrival in New Orleans she wrote to her a letter, in which she hinted at the probable result of her visit. She was then a guest of Dr. Lacey, and she spoke of his attention and politeness in the most extravagant terms. This so provoked Mrs. Carrington that she determined at once to write to Dr. Lacey, and give him an insight into Julia's real character.

The letter was accordingly written. We must do Mrs. Carrington the justice to say that though her object in writing was purely selfish, she asserted nothing in her letter but what she knew to be strictly true. She was ignorant of Julia's conduct concerning Fanny, consequently she said nothing upon that head, but she spoke of her generally deceitful character, and mentioned several instances in which she had not hesitated to stoop to the basest falsehood for the accomplishment of her purpose.

As she was folding the letter it occurred to her that by some accident Julia might possibly get hold of it. "And then," thought she, "she will recognize my handwriting, and curiosity will impel her to open the letter, after which she wouldn't hesitate a moment to destroy it."

The next moment Mrs. Carrington was rapping at the door of Mrs. Miller's room. Kate opened it and was greatly surprised at beholding her visitor, who seldom came there. Mrs. Carrington, however, smilingly presented her letter to Mr. Miller, saying that she had business with Dr. Lacey, which rendered it necessary for her to write to him, and as she did not care to have the post office clerks gossip about her writing to a gentleman, she wished him to direct it for her. Mr. Miller complied with her request and the next morning the important document was on its way to New Orleans.

As our readers have twice made the voyage of the Mississippi, they will not refuse, again, to run the risk of its floating snags, sandbars and boat races; so stepping on board the [pg 193] same steamer which bears Mrs. Carrington's letter, we will once more, visit Louisiana, and stopping with Dr. Lacey, will see how much of Julia's letter to her sister was true.

Chapter XX

RONDEAU DIGS UP THE MISSING LETTER

The first three weeks of Julia's stay in New Orleans were, as we have learned, spent at the house of Dr. Lacey. His mother was present, and although she readily acknowledged the uncommon beauty of her fair visitor, yet from the first she disliked her.

The servants, too, as if adopting the opinion of their mistress, felt and expressed among themselves an aversion to the "evil-eyed lady," as they termed Julia. Aunt Dilsey, in particular, soon had her own reason for disliking her. The second day after Julia's arrival, as she was strolling through the yard, she encountered Jackson, a bright little fellow, three years of age, and Aunt Dilsey's only son. Jack, as he was usually called, was amusing himself by seeing how far he could spit! Unfortunately he spit too far, and hit Miss Julia's pink muslin. In an instant her white, slender fingers were buried in his wool. His screams soon brought Aunt Dilsey to the rescue. Upon learning the dreadful crime of which Jack had been guilty, she snatched him from Julia's grasp, and hurried him into the house without a word. From that time Dilsey was Julia's sworn enemy, and Jack was taught to make up faces at her, whenever he could do so without being discovered.

The servants, however, were too well trained to manifest any open disrespect, for they knew she was "marster's guest," and as such was entitled to every possible attention.

When first she arrived Dr. Lacey felt exceedingly uncomfortable, for her presence constantly reminded him of the past, and his reminiscences of Julia

were not particularly pleasant. Gradually this feeling wore away, for she appeared greatly changed. There was a softness, a gentleness, in her manner, which seemed to Dr. Lacey like Fanny, and then her voice, too, was so like her sister's that ere long she ceased to be disagreeable to him, and instead of avoiding her society, as at first he had done, he now sought it.

[pg 194] Julia saw her advantage, and determined to follow it up. Nothing could exceed her extreme amiability, and apparent sweetness of disposition. Even Mrs. Lacey was partially deceived, and concluded she had been too hasty in her estimation of Miss Middleton. Still she watched her son's movements narrowly, and hoped he had no intentions of making Julia his wife.

She was in New Orleans three weeks before her uncle's house was in readiness; but at the end of that time she, together with Dr. Lacey, Mabel Mortimer and Florence Woodburn were about to exchange the heat and dust of the city for a cooler residence near the lake. The day before they left was hot and sultry, and in the morning Julia sought the shade of a large vine-wreathed summer house, which stood in the garden, near by the tree under which Rondeau had buried his master's letter.

One word now about our old friend Rondeau. The buried letter had cost him a world of trouble. He was constantly fearful lest he should be detected. Particularly was he afraid that the author of the letter, failing to receive an answer, would write again, and thus he might be exposed. Twice had he dug up the epistle upon occasions when he fancied some one of his master's letters bore a similar superscription. In this way he had become tolerably familiar with Mr. Miller's handwriting, which was rather peculiar, being a large, heavy, black hand.

On the morning when Julia was snugly esconced in the summer house, Rondeau returned from the post office in great tribulation.

"What's up now?" asked Leffie, whom Rondeau drew aside, with a dolefully grave face.

"Nothing's up," answered Rondeau, "but the letter has got to come up! I ain't going to feel like I was a whipped dog any longer. I'll confess all to Marster George, for see, here's another like the buried one." So saying, he held up Mrs. Carrington's letter, on the envelope of which was Mr. Miller's writing.

Leffie offered no remonstrance, and as Aunt Dilsey just then screamed for her,

Rondeau went alone to the garden and proceeded to disinter the buried document. 'Twas but the work of a moment, and could Julia have been cooling herself in Greenland, as she ought to have been, all would have ended well. And now I suppose some indignant reader will say, "Why didn't you put her in Greenland, then, or some worse place?" But patience, patience, a little longer. You would [pg 195] have us tell things just as they were, I suppose, so we must not only suffer Miss Julia to be in the summer house, but we must also allow her to be a spectator of Rondeau's proceedings.

She was greatly surprised when she saw him take from the cigar box a much soiled, yellowish-looking letter, and she could not help feeling that in some way it concerned herself. Suddenly appearing, she startled Rondeau by saying, "What are you doing? Whose is that? Give it to me."

Rondeau was anxious to conceal from her his long-buried treasure, and he passed her the other. She took it and recognizing Mr. Miller's writing, knew also that Rondeau had given her the wrong one, so she said in a commanding tone, "What does all this mean? Give me the other one immediately."

The submissive African, ever obedient to his superiors, handed her the other letter, and then in a few words told his story, and announced his intention of confessing all to his master, at the same time extending his hand to take the letters. But Julia did not mean he should have them, and she said, coaxingly, "You have done very wrong, Rondeau, and your master will undoubtedly be very angry, but I will take them to him and intercede for you, as you are on the whole a pretty fine fellow. He'll forgive you for me. I know he will, but mind, don't you say anything to him about it until you've seen me again."

So saying, she returned to the house and, going to her room, bolted the door. After which, breaking the seal of the oldest letter, she deliberately read it through, occasionally uttering a malediction against Mr. Miller, thanking the good luck which brought it to her hands instead of Dr. Lacey's, and making remarks generally. Said she, "Mighty good opinion Mr. Quilting-frames has of me (alluding to Mr. Miller's height), glad I know his mind. A heap of good the answer to this did him, and his doll wife, too. Hadn't I better answer it myself? I'd write after this fashion: 'Mr. Miller—At first I thought I would treat your letter with silent contempt, but recently I have concluded to write and thank you to mind your own business. By order of George Lacey, Esq.—Julia Middleton, Secretary.' Yes, that would serve the meddling old Yankee Dictionary right,"

continued she, and then, as her eye fell upon the remaining letter, she added, "Yes, I'll read this one too, and see what new thing I'm guilty of!"

As soon as she broke it open and glanced at the handwriting, she knew it to be from Mrs. Carrington. "What now?" said [pg 196] she, "what has Mrs. Carrington got to say about me."

A rapid perusal of the letter showed her what Mrs. Carrington had to say, and she continued her remarks as follows: "She has described me quite accurately. I didn't suppose she knew me so well. I wonder who'll write next! It seems everybody is in league against me, but I'm enough for anybody there is in Kentucky; and," she added, in a lower tone, "I wouldn't hesitate to try my strength with Satan himself;" but even then the dark girl trembled as she thought there was a God, whom none could withstand, and who, one day, would inevitably overtake her.

Quickly as possible she drove such unpleasant thoughts from her mind, and then tried to devise the best plan for managing Mrs. Carrington. "For Mr. Miller's letter," said she, "I care nothing. It was written so long ago that he has ceased expecting an answer, but I well know Mrs. Carrington's designs, and she will continue to write until she receives some reply. I have once successfully counterfeited Dr. Lacey's handwriting, and can do it again. I'll send her something that will quiet her nerves better than assafœtida!"

This settled, she went in quest of Rondeau, whom she told that, as she had expected, his master was very much displeased. "But," said she, "after I interceded awhile for you, he said he would forgive you on condition that you were never guilty of the like again, and never mention the subject to him in any way, as it makes him angry to talk about it." To both these conditions Rondeau readily agreed, and Julia left him, thinking she was safe in that quarter.

Several days after, Mrs. Carrington received a letter which she supposed came from Dr. Lacey. In it she was coolly requested not to interfere in other people's matters, and told that any efforts on her part to engraft herself into Dr. Lacey's good graces by maligning Julia, would be useless, and only serve to confirm him in his present low opinion of her, while at the same time it would increase the high estimation in which he held Miss Middleton!

After that Mrs. Carrington troubled Dr. Lacey with no more letters, but busied

herself in anticipating the capture of a wealthy gentleman, who Ashton told her was, in the course of two or three months, coming on from Charleston, South Carolina.

The scene now changes from Dr. Lacey's to the "Indian Nest," on the lake shore. It was a charming spot, and looked as if intended only for the inhabitation of the pure and innocent. Yet even there was crafty ambition and base deceit. [pg 197] Julia was there, eagerly seeking to wind her coils securely around her long watched-for prey. To all eyes but her own she seemed not likely to succeed, for though Dr. Lacey admired her and possibly treated her with more attention than he did either Mabel or Florence, yet his heart still turned to Fanny, and for hours he would sit, talking to Julia of her sister, while she schooled herself to answer all his questions without one sign of impatience.

Occasionally she would speak to Dr. Lacey of his cousin, young Stanton, and would tell how much pleasure Fanny seemed to take in his society. But this produced no effect, for Dr. Lacey had learned from Stanton himself of his approaching marriage with Miss Ashton. Then Julia pulled another string and expatiated so largely upon Frank Cameron's sayings and doings that Dr. Lacey became really uneasy, for recently he had thought seriously of again writing to Fanny, and now he determined to do so.

Without knowing it, Julia was herself the means of causing this determination to be carried into effect. One night she and Dr. Lacey had been strolling for more than an hour through the many delightful walks in the garden, which lay upon the lake shore. To her great satisfaction, they were entirely alone, for Mr. Middleton and Florence were engaged in their favorite game of chess, while Mabel was eagerly listening to Ashton, who was relating to her some of his India adventures. Mabel had good sense enough to know that her efforts to win Dr. Lacey would be useless, and rather reluctantly she had given him up. Now her eyes grew brighter and her heart beat faster whenever Ashton approached. But, fair Mabel, your hopes are all in vain.

For Inez, the Spaniard,
Is o'er the sea,
And the heart thou wouldst win
Is not destined for thee.

As we have before said, Julia was delighted at having Dr. Lacey thus to herself,

and she resolved to increase the favorable impression she knew she had already made upon him. Most admirably was her part played. Fanny herself could not have been more gentle and agreeable than was Julia, as, together with Dr. Lacey, she traversed the broad walks of the garden. Sweet and soothing were the words she poured into his ear, occasionally administering a little well-timed flattery, and wishing, as she had once done before to another [pg 198] individual in similar circumstances, that Dr. Lacey had been her brother. He did not, like Mr. Wilmot, follow up this wish by a proposition that as he was not her brother she would accept him for a husband, but he pressed the hand, which, with seeming unconsciousness, had been placed on his, and said, "God knows how ardently I once hoped to be your brother, Julia."

"And would you then have loved me?" asked Julia, "me whom few have ever loved, because they did not know me; say, would you have loved me as a sister?"

The face of her who awaited Dr. Lacey's answer was very beautiful, while tears moistened the long eyelashes, which veiled the large, bright eyes, and the tones of her voice, now more like Fanny's than ever, thrilled his every nerve. What wonder, then, that his lips for the first time touched the polished brow of the tempter, as he said, "It would be no hard task, Julia, to love you with more than a brother's love."

"One more well-aimed blow," thought Julia, "and I shall have him at my feet"; but she was mistaken. Between herself and Dr. Lacey there arose the image of one, the remembrance of whom had a power to prevent the utterance of words which otherwise might have been spoken.

Abruptly changing the conversation, he drew her rather reluctantly toward the house, which they reached just in time to hear Florence exclaim, as she scattered the chessmen over the floor, "Why, Uncle Billy Middleton, what do you mean? Put yourself up to be played for, and then beat me; shame, shame."

"What is this all about?" asked Dr. Lacey, having some inkling of the truth.

"Why," answered Florence, "you see, Mr. Middleton has conceived a fatherly affection for me, and as he is rather rusty in such matters, he could think of no better way of proposing than to put himself up as a prize, and tell me if I beat him in playing chess, he would be mine, or in other words, make me Mrs. Billy Middleton."

"And who beat?" asked Julia.

"Why, Mr. Middleton was ill-mannered enough to win," said Florence, "but then, it was such fun to see how desperately he played, for fear I should get him! Now, Dr. Lacey, I suppose you have been proposing to Julia in the real old, orthodox way, but that is too common. You must sit down at the chessboard and let Julia play for you," and she pushed them both toward the chairs, which she and Mr. Middleton had just vacated.

[pg 199]Julia did not refuse, but Dr. Lacey, freeing himself from Florence, said, "Excuse me tonight, Miss Woodburn. Perhaps at some other time I will comply with your request," then bowing, he left the veranda and went to his own room.

When there he strove to recall the events of the evening, and the words he had involuntarily spoken to Julia. "Why is it," said he, "that I feel so uneasy whenever I am alone with her? Is it that I love her and am afraid I shall tell her so? No, that cannot be. I do not love her; and yet, next to Fanny, she is more agreeable to me than any one else."

Memories of other days came thronging about him, and he then resolved again to write and beseech Fanny at least to grant him her second love, even if her first, best affections had been given to another.

"Suppose she refuses you," seemed whispered in his ear.

It must have been some evil spirit which prompted the reply, "Then I will marry Julia, as being next and nearest to Fanny." His resolution once taken, he proceeded to carry it into effect. The letter was written and over Dr. Lacey came a sense of relief—a feeling that he had escaped from something, he knew not what. But she, who was upon his track, was more wily, more crafty than anything he had ever imagined.

This time, however, her interference was not necessary, for early next morning a carriage drew up in front of the Indian Nest. From it sprang Lida Gibson, who had recently returned from New York. She was full of talk, and within an hour after her arrival the story of Fanny's engagement with Frank Cameron had been repeated in Dr. Lacey's hearing at least three times.

"It must be true," said Lida, "for every one said so, and their actions proclaimed it, if nothing more; besides, Mr. Cameron's sister, Gertrude herself, told me it

was so."

"I am not surprised," said Julia and her uncle both.

For Julia's opinion Dr. Lacey possibly might not have cared, but when Mr. Middleton too added his testimony, the matter was settled. The letter was not sent.

During the day Lida wondered much why Dr. Lacey stayed so closely in his room. "I should think he would roast in there," said she. "I do wonder what he is about?"

"I fancy," answered Florence, "that he still loves Fanny, and now that she is engaged he is staying alone until he gets his rebellious heart tied up."

When Lida afterward learned the truth, she expressed a wish that her tongue might have been cut out ere she had been the bearer of news which caused so much trouble.

[pg 200]While Dr. Lacey was securely bolted in his room, nerving himself to bear this fresh disappointment and striving to drive each thought of Fanny from him, Julia too was alone and busily engaged. What pains she took to rub and soil those tiny sheets of paper, until they assumed a worn and crumpled look! Then dipping her finger in the silver goblet at her side, what perfect tear blots she made, and how she exulted over the probable success of her morning's work! When it was finished she placed it in her portfolio, and waited for a favorable opportunity.

It came not that day, however, for save at meal time Dr. Lacey made not his appearance. To Mr. Middleton's inquiries concerning the reason of his seclusion, he replied, "that he was busy with important matters"; but his abstracted manner led Mr. Middleton to believe what he had long suspected, viz., that Dr. Lacey's heart was wholly centered upon Fanny, and that the news of her coming marriage was the cause of his unhappiness.

Next morning's sun rose clear and bright, but it brought a day which Dr. Lacey long, long remembered, and which Julia, in the bitterness of her heart, cursed many and many a time. In the early part of the morning Dr. Lacey wandered down to a small arbor, which stood at the foot of the garden. He had not been there long before Julia, too, came tripping down the walk, with her portfolio and

drawing pencil. So absorbed was she in her own thoughts that she of course did not see Dr. Lacey until she had entered the arbor; then, with a most becoming blush and start, she said, "Pray pardon me for disturbing you. I had no idea you were here."

Dr. Lacey, of course, insisted upon her staying. She knew he would, and sitting down, she busied herself in looking over the contents of her portfolio. Suddenly she heaved a deep sigh, and Dr. Lacey looked up just in time to see her wipe something from her eyes, or pretend to, which must have been tears. At the same time she hastily thrust a paper back into her portfolio, which she immediately shut.

"What is the matter?" asked Dr. Lacey. "For whom was that sigh and those tears?"

"For poor Fan," answered Julia. "I have accidentally found a part of an old journal, which she kept while Mr. Wilmot was living."

"May I see it?" asked Dr. Lacey.

Julia seemed at first reluctant, but finally replied, "Perhaps it will be as well to let you do so, for you may then judge [pg 201] more kindly of Fanny"; and she placed in his hands the soiled sheets of paper which we saw in her room.

Leaning back she watched him while he read. As we have as much right to read Fanny's journal as Dr. Lacey, we will here give a few brief extracts:

April—"Cease your wild beatings, my heart. Mr. Wilmot is promised to Julia. He will never be mine, but nought can prevent my loving him; ay, forever and ever."

August 1st—"I do not believe I am indifferent to Mr. Wilmot, but he will be true

to his vows—he will wed Julia; and this doctor that bothers me so, what of him? Why, he is wealthy, and high, and handsome—but I do not love him; yet if he offers himself I shall say yes, for, as Mrs. Carrington says, 'he is a great catch.'"

Sept. 5—"Mr. Wilmot is dead, and with him died my poor, poor heart. Had he lived, he possibly might have turned to me, for Julia knew how much I loved him. Dear, generous Julia, how I wish Dr. Lacey would love her, for she is more worthy of him than I am."

Jan. 1—"Heigh ho, I'm engaged to Dr. Lacey! Who would think it? Now I am happy! Oh, no. Out in the graveyard lies one who could have made me happy. Ought I thus to deceive Dr. Lacey? Why, yes; if he is satisfied, it is well enough. I am ambitious, and if I can't marry for love, I will for money. And then he's given me so beautiful a piano. Oh, I hope he'll send me more presents after he gets home!"

Jan. 15—"Dr. Lacey has gone and I feel relieved. But just think of it—Julia loves him devotedly. I wish he knew it. She has always loved him and tries to make me do the same. She read me a sermon today two hours long about my duty. Fudge on my duty! As long as I can make Joshua and Dr. Lacey think I'm all sunshine, it's no matter if my love is all moonshine."

This journal was interspersed here and there with tears, and was so exact an imitation of Fanny's writing that Dr. Lacey was completely duped. He, however, wondered that Julia should show it to him. She had foreseen this, and as he was

reading the last few lines she was looking over her portfolio. Suddenly springing up, she snatched the paper from [pg 202] his hands, saying, "Oh, what have I done? I've shown you the wrong part of the journal. I did not mean you to see this. What shall I do? You'll hate Fanny and despise me."

"Why despise you?" asked Dr. Lacey.

"Because," replied Julia, "you will dislike me for the foolish thing which Fan wrote about me. I could not help her writing it."

"And is it true?" asked Dr. Lacey.

"Oh, you must not ask me that—I can't tell—I shan't tell—" and seizing her portfolio Julia started off toward the house, thinking possibly she should be pursued. But she was not.

During the reading of the journal Dr. Lacey's heart seemed to go through a benumbing process, which rendered it perfectly palsied. No emotion either of love or anger did he feel toward Fanny. She was nought to him.

And how did the knowledge that Julia loved him affect him? Answer, any man, whether your wounded pride is never soothed by woman's sympathy, and love, come in what garb it may. And in Dr. Lacey's case it was a being of wondrous beauty, who knew well what she was about and had marked each inch of ground ere she trod upon it. What marvel then that Dr. Lacey turned toward her. You would have done so; ay, perchance sooner than he did.

That evening after supper, as Dr. Lacey was walking upon the veranda, Florence approached him, saying, "Come, Dr. Lacey, now fulfill your promise of playing with Julia," at the same time leading him toward the place where her companions were seated. "Now," said she, placing the chessboard in his hands, "I am mistress of ceremonies. We will have a fair understanding. If Julia beats, you shall be hers; if you beat, Mabel and Lida shall draw cuts for you. Do you agree to it?"

"Certainly," was Dr. Lacey's reply, at the same time seating himself opposite Julia, who gave him a look of searching inquiry. He understood her and in a low tone answered, "I am in earnest. Do your best."

And she did her best. With one strong effort of the will she concentrated all her energies upon that game, which she felt would decide her fate. Dr. Lacey, too, as

if resolved to conquer, played most skillfully. The bystanders for a time looked on, and as Lida noticed the livid hue of Julia's face, she said, "Pray, Julia, don't burst a blood vessel, for maybe Dr. Lacey will have you, even if you do not beat."

But the ear she addressed was deaf save to the quiet sound of the chessmen. The contest was long and severe. Nine, [pg 203] ten, eleven, struck the little clock in the hall. One by one the spectators stole away. Florence's parting words were, "If Dr. Lacey beats, be sure and wake us, Julia, so Mabel and Lida can draw cuts."

And now they were alone. Once and only once Julia glanced at the face of her antagonist. It was white and colorless as her own hand, which wandered steadily over the chessboard. The final spell was upon him, and he seemed striving hard to shake it off. 'Twas all in vain. The little clock struck the hour of midnight. The game was ended. Julia had won. Dr. Lacey was checkmated!

With one hand he rapidly swept the board of its occupants, while the other he extended toward Julia, saying: "Take it. 'Tis all I can offer, for you well know I have no heart to give. My hand and name you have won—they are yours."

A person less intriguing or determined than Julia would have scorned to receive a hand so coldly offered. But not so with her. She did not expect any protestations of love, for she knew he felt none. Yet she was hardly satisfied, and resolved upon one movement more ere she accepted what she felt was reluctantly given.

"You are mistaken in me," said she, "if you think I will play for a husband, and then expect him to comply with the terms unless he chooses to do so."

Dr. Lacey replied, "When I consented to play, I knew what I was about, and I knew, too, that you love me. I cannot say the same to you in return, but you are far from being indifferent to me. When I first knew you I disliked you, for I believed you to be passionate, jealous and designing; nor do I think my opinion of you then was wrong; but you are changed, very much changed. Continue to be what you are now, and we may be happy, for I may learn to love you, but never as fondly, as madly, as I loved your sister; ay, as I could love her again; but enough of this. She was false; she deceived me, and now I will wed you."

And what said Julia to all this? Why, she sat bolt upright, listening attentively while Dr. Lacey expressed his former and present opinion of her. When he had

finished, she ventured to acknowledge her love for him; said she had always loved him, and that as his wife she would try to make him happy. Perhaps she was sincere in this, for she did love Dr. Lacey as well as her selfish nature would suffer her to love any one, and she had resolved, if she ever married him, to do all in her power to atone, if possible, for the past.

A half hour longer they conversed of the future, and arranged [pg 204] the plan, which Julia next day wrote to her sister. At last Dr. Lacey exclaimed, "Come, Julia, you must go now; it is getting late, for see,"—pointing to the little clock; but as if astonished at what it had heard, the clock had stopped!

Chapter XXI

STIRRING EVENTS

Great was Mr. Middleton's surprise when informed by Dr. Lacey of his engagement with Julia. Something in his countenance must have betrayed it, for Dr. Lacey said, "You seem astonished, sir. Are you displeased?"

"Certainly not; I am glad," answered Mr. Middleton. "Yet I confess I was surprised, for I had never thought of such a thing. Once I had hoped you would marry Fanny, but since Frank Cameron has rendered that impossible, you cannot do better than take Julia. She is intelligent, accomplished and handsome, and although she has some faults, your influence over her will lead her to correct them."

Unlike this was the reception which the intelligence met with from Dr. Lacey's negroes.

"What that ar you sayin'," asked Aunt Dilsey of Rondeau, who was communicating the important news to Leffie.

"You'd better ask," replied Rondeau. "Who do you suppose Marster George is goin' to fetch here to crack our heads for us?"

"Dun know—Miss Mabel, maybe," said Aunt Dilsey.

"No, sir; Miss Mabel is bad enough, but she can't hold a candle to this one," answered Rondeau.

"You don't mean Miss July," shrieked rather than asked Aunt Dilsey.

"I don't mean nobody else, mother Dilsey," said Rondeau.

Up flew Aunt Dilsey's hands in amazement, and up rolled her eyes in dismay. "I 'clar for't," said she, "if Marster George has done made such a fool of hisself, I hope she'll pull his bar a heap worse than she did Jack's."

"No danger but what she will, and yours too," was Rondeau's consoling reply.

"Lord knows," said Aunt Dilsey, "fust time she sasses me, I'll run away long of Jack and the baby. I'll tie up my new gown and cap in a handkerchief this night."

[pg 205]Leffie now proposed that her mother should defer her intended flight until the arrival of the dreaded Julia, while Rondeau added, "Besides, Dilsey, if you should run away your delicate body couldn't get further than the swamp, where you'd go in up to your neck first lunge, and all marster's horses couldn't draw you out."

This allusion to her size changed the current of Aunt Dilsey's wrath, which now turned and spent itself on Rondeau. Her impression of Julia, however, never changed, although she was not called upon to run away.

Mrs. Lacey, too, received the news of her son's engagement with evident dissatisfaction; but she thought remonstrance would be useless, and she kept silent, secretly praying that Julia might prove better than her fears. In due course of time there came from Kentucky a letter of congratulation from Fanny; but she was so unaccustomed to say or write what she did not feel that the letter, so far as congratulations were concerned, was a total failure. She, however, denied her engagement with Frank, and this, if nothing else, was sufficient reason why Julia refused to show it to Dr. Lacey. Julia knew the chain by which she held him was brittle and might at any time be broken, and it was not strange that she longed for the last days of October, when with Dr. Lacey she would return to Kentucky.

They came at last, and one bright, cloudless morning Uncle Joshua got out his carriage and proceeded to Frankfort, where, as he had expected, he met Julia and his expected son-in-law. His greeting of the former was kind and fatherly enough, but the moment he saw the latter, he felt, as he afterward said, an almost unconquerable desire to flatten his nose, gouge his eyes, knock out his teeth and so forth, which operations would doubtless have greatly astonished Dr. Lacey and given him what almost every man has, viz., a most formidable idea of his wife's relations.

He, however, restrained his wrath, and when, at a convenient time, Dr. Lacey, with a few ominous "ahems" and made-up coughs, indicated his intention of asking for Julia, Uncle Joshua cut him short by saying, "Never mind, I know what you want. You may have her and welcome. I only wish she would make as good a wife as you will husband. But mind now, when you find out what for a fury you've got, don't come whinin' round me, for I give you fa'r warnin'."

Here Dr. Lacey thought proper to say that possibly Mr. Middleton did not understand his daughter.

"Not understand her?" repeated Mr. Middleton. "What's to [pg 206] hinder? She's my own gal, and I like her well enough; but don't I know she's as fiery as a baker's oven?"

"She is greatly changed," continued Dr. Lacey. "Don't you give her credit for that?"

"Changed?" replied Mr. Middleton. "So's lightnin' changed! It's one of her tricks. Depend on it, you'll find it so." And Mr. Middleton walked off in search of his promising daughter.

Strange as it may seem, the old man's remarks had no other effect on Dr. Lacey than to cause him to pity Julia, who he fancied was misunderstood and misused. He believed her reformation to be sincere, and could not help feeling that Mr. Middleton was mistaken in his opinion of both his daughters.

After tramping all over the house, banging doors and shouting at least a dozen times, "Ho, Tempest, whar for gracious sakes are you?" Mr. Middleton at length found his daughter in Mrs. Miller's room consulting with Kate about her bridal dress. Kate, too, was wholly deceived by Julia's gentleness and apparent frankness of manner, and readily complied with her request that she should be with her the two days preceding the marriage, for the purpose of assisting in the arrangement of affairs. This being settled, Mr. Middleton and his daughter started for home, which they reached about sunset.

Julia leaped gayly from the carriage, and running into the house, embraced her mother, and received the blacks as affectionately as Fanny herself could have done; then missing her sister, she asked, "Where is Fan? Why does she not come to meet me?"

Mrs. Middleton looked inquiringly at her husband, who replied, "No, I hain't told her, jest because she didn't ask me. Sunshine is sick—sick in bed, and has had the potecary three times."

"Fanny sick," said Julia. "Where is she? In her room? I will go to her immediately."

But in going to Fanny, it was necessary to pass the parlor, and Julia could not resist the temptation to look in and see "if the old man had fixed up any."

"Oh, how neat, how pleasant!" was her first exclamation, and truly the cheerless old room had undergone a great renovation. It had been thoroughly cleaned and repainted. The walls were hung with bright, cheerful-looking paper. A handsome carpet covered the floor, while curtains of corresponding beauty shaded the windows. The furniture, tastefully arranged, was nearly all new, and in the waxen flowers, which [pg 207] filled the vases on the mantelpiece, Julia recognized the handiwork of her sister.

Yes, Fanny's love had wrought this change. At first her father had refused to do anything. "No, I won't," said he. "It's good enough, and if it don't suit Lady Tempest, she can go to the hoss barn; that's just fit for 'em."

"Then, father," said Fanny, "do it for my sake. It would please me to have a pleasanter parlor."

This was sufficient. A well-filled purse was placed in Fanny's hands, with liberty to do as she pleased. Then with untiring love, aching heart and throbbing temples, she worked on day after day, until all was completed, parlor, bridal chamber and all. The hangings and drapery of the latter were as white and pure as was she who so patiently worked on, while each fresh beauty added to the room pierced her heart with a deeper anguish, as she thought what and whom it was for. When her mother remonstrated against such unceasing toil, she would smile a sweet, sad smile and say, "Don't hinder me, dear mother, 'tis all I can do to show my love for Julia, and after I am gone they will perhaps think more kindly of me, when they know how I worked for them."

At last all was done; the finishing stroke was given, and then came a reaction. Fanny took her bed, and her father, instantly, alarmed, called the nearest physician. Dr. Gordon readily saw that Fanny's disease was in her mind, and in reply to Mrs. Middleton's inquiries, he frankly told his opinion, and said that

unless the cause of her melancholy could be removed, the consequence might be fatal.

"Don't tell my husband," said Mrs. Middleton, "his life is bound up in Fanny, and the day that sees her dead will, I fear, also make me a widow." Accordingly, Mr. Middleton was deceived into a belief that Fanny's illness was the result of over-exertion, and that she would soon recover.

In a day or two she seemed better, but was not able to come downstairs. Instead, she had no desire or intention of doing so until after the wedding, for she felt she could not, would not, see Dr. Lacey for the world. Since the receipt of her sister's letter she had been given a holier love, a firmer faith, than aught on earth can bestow, and she was now under the influence of religion; of lasting, true religion. This then was the reason why she welcomed her sister so affectionately, and felt no emotion either of resentment or anger toward those who were thus trampling on the bleeding fibers of her heart.

As Julia kissed the almost transparent brow of her sister, and clasped her thin, white fingers, tears gathered in her eyes [pg 208] and she thought, "This ruin have I wrought, and for it I must answer"; but not long did she ever suffer her conscience to trouble her, and the next hour she was chatting away to Fanny about the preparations for her wedding, which was to take place one week from that day. Fanny listened as one who heard not. She was praying for more grace, more strength to endure yet a little longer.

Slowly to Julia dragged the days of that week, while to Fanny they sped on rapid wing. And now everything within and without the house betokened the coming event. Servants scampered hither and thither, thinking they were doing it all, while in reality they were doing nothing. Mrs. Middleton scolded the blacks, and Uncle Joshua scolded Mrs. Middleton, at the same time walking mechanically from the kitchen to the parlor, from the parlor to Fanny's sick room and from Fanny's sick room back to the kitchen, occasionally kicking from his path some luckless kitten, dog or black baby, which latter set up most lusty yells, just to vary the scene.

In the midst of all this Fanny lay calmly and quietly on her low bed, counting each succeeding sun as it rose and set, bringing nearer and nearer a day she so much dreaded. True to her promise, Kate Miller came two days before the wedding. Fanny was asleep when she entered the room to see her, but on the

white, wasted face Kate's tears fell as she said, "Poor Fanny! I did not know she was so ill."

Mr. Middleton, who was present, muttered: "Yes, cursed be the one who made her so!" He knew not that he cursed his own child.

The next day Mr. William Middleton arrived, bringing the intelligence that Florence and Mabel had accompanied him, and would next evening be present at the wedding. Slowly the last rays of a bright October sun faded in the west, giving no sign of the stormy day which was to succeed. Long after midnight a lone watcher sat by the window in Fanny's room, gazing at the stars, which looked so quietly on from their distant homes, and praying, not for herself, but for Dr. Lacey, that he might be happy with her he had chosen. At last, chilled with the night air, she crept shivering to her pillow, nor woke again until aroused by the fierce moaning of the autumn wind, which shook the casement, and by the sound of the driving rain which beat against the pane. Yes, the morning which dawned on Julia's bridal day was wild and stormy, but before noon the clouds cleared away and the afternoon was dry, hot and oppressive, a precursor to the mightier and more wrathful storm which followed.

[pg 209]About five o'clock there was a noise in the yard, and Kate, who was in Fanny's room, arranging her young friend's hair, looked from the window and said, "It is Dr. Lacey. Julia has looked for him for more than three hours."

Quickly Fanny hurried to the window. She could not meet Dr. Lacey face to face, but she wished to look at him once more. She was too late, however. He had entered the house, and soon the sound of his voice reached her ear. He had not been there long ere he asked for Fanny.

On being told she was sick, he seemed rather disturbed. Possibly, however, he felt relieved to know she would not be present when he took upon him vows which should have been breathed to her. Ashton, Florence and Mabel now arrived, and soon after came Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, accompanied by Mrs. Carrington, who had been invited because it would not do to slight her, and who came because she had a mind to!

The ceremony was to take place at seven o'clock, and guests each moment arrived, until the parlor seemed almost full. Alone in her chamber sat Fanny, listening to the sounds of mirth, which grated on her ear. Night, dark and stormy,

was gathering over the earth, but a darker night lay round the heart of the young girl, as she watched from her pillow a dense, black pile of clouds, which had appeared in the west, and now increased until the whole sky was overspread, as with a pall of darkness, while distant peals of muttered thunder announced the coming storm.

And now louder roared the howling wind and brighter the glaring lightning flashed, while fiercer grew the conflict in Fanny's bosom. Her faith was weak, and well nigh blotted with tears of human weakness. But He, whose power could stay the storm without, could also still the agony within, and o'er the troubled waters of that aching heart there fell a peaceful calm.

Suddenly the door opened and a creature of wondrous, dazzling beauty appeared. It was Julia, in her bridal robe. She would fain have her sister's blessing ere she descended to the parlor. The struggle was over and the blessing which Fanny gave her sister was sincere, but when Julia asked forgiveness for all the evil she had ever done, the reply was prevented by a crash of thunder so terrific that Julia trembled with terror, and hastily left the room.

In a moment there was a light step upon the stair. Fanny knew it was Dr. Lacey, for he soon returned with Julia, and as they passed her door she heard the merry laugh of Florence, who was bridesmaid. In an instant they were in the parlor, [pg 210] throughout which a general gloom seemed to reign. Perhaps it was owing to the wildness of the storm, which each moment increased in fury. The bridal party took their places and Uncle Joshua shut his eyes, while the marriage ceremony commenced.



The reader may now accompany me to the border of yonder wood, where stands a low-roofed building, the property of Mrs. Dunn. There in a darkened room lay the widow's only son, raving in the madness of delirium. The fever flame burned in each vein, and as he tossed from side to side he would shriek out, "Quick, I tell you or you are too late. She must not wed him. Don't you know she's doubly, trebly steeped in guilt? Go quick, I tell you, and stop it."

Mrs. Dunn could only weep, for she knew not, dreamed not, what her son could mean. Soon he grew calm, and fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke Billy Jeffrey, who lived near, was sitting by him. To Mrs. Dunn's delight, Joseph was

sane, and calling her to him he said, "Isn't Julia Middleton to be married tonight?"

"She is," answered his mother.

"At what hour?"

"At seven."

"What time is it now?"

"Half-past six," replied Mrs. Dunn.

"It must not be," said Joseph, and turning to Bill he added, "listen, William, to what I have to tell, then speed along on the lightning's wing, and tear her from the altar—take her from his side, I say, and put there the other one, the pale, golden-haired one"; then, as he noticed the vacant look on Bill's face, he added, "oh, no, you can't tell it. You wouldn't understand it. Mother, bring me a pen and some paper."

The paper was brought, and as soon as possible Joseph wrote a confession of his own and Julia's guilt. "Now, Bill," said he, "run for your life, and give this to Dr. Lacey. Do it for the sake of Fanny."

Bill needed no second bidding. His obtuse intellect had gathered that in some way Fanny was in danger, and away he flew over bushes, briars, rocks and ditches. But alas! The way was long and dark, and ere he was aware of it, he was precipitated into one of the sink holes which are so common in the limestone soil of Kentucky. The fall sprained his ankle, but gathering himself up, he continued on, slowly and painfully.

Meantime delirium had again crept over Joseph Dunn, and [pg 211] he forgot that he sent Billy, but concluded he must go himself. Watching a time when his mother was from the room, he rose, and throwing on his double gown, went forth into the storm, and was soon far on his road toward Mr. Middleton.



The man of God had scarcely finished the second paragraph of the Episcopal

ceremony, beginning with, "I require and charge you both," etc., when a shriek, wild and unearthly and horrid, rent the air. It was succeeded by a thunder crash so deafening that the ladies paled with terror. The large maple tree, which stood by the front door, and which Julia had called hers, was shivered by lightning, but no one heeded it, for again was heard that fearful, maniacal shriek, and this time could be distinguished the sound as of some one struggling with the blacks, who were huddled together in the hall.

"Let me go, I tell you," said the voice. "It shall not go on!"

All eyes turned toward the door, as Joseph Dunn appeared, shouting, "Stop it! Stop it! She forged those letters. She broke her sister's heart. Stop it, I say!" Every person in the room seemed terror-stricken at the wild spectacle he presented. His face, wasted to a mere skeleton, was ghastly white, while his long yellow hair hung in matted locks about his brow, and a look of wild frenzy was in his eye, as darting toward the paralyzed Julia, he seized her as with a lion's grasp and shook her most furiously.

Bill Jeffrey was close behind. He had lost his hat and the rain had soaked his thick hair until it clung closely to his head, giving him, too, a strange appearance. Mr. William Middleton now came forward to ask an explanation of Joseph, who, chancing to see Bill, said, "He's got the letter—my confession. Read that—I am too exhausted," and he fell upon the floor.

No one noticed him, for all gazed intently at Bill, who drew from his pocket a paper and presented it to Dr. Lacey. In a calm, clear voice, Dr. Lacey read aloud the confession, in the midst of thunder, lightning, groans, cries and oaths, the latter of which were the spontaneous production of Uncle Joshua, who sat still in his chair until the confession was read through; then with one bound he reached Julia, and raising her from the floor, said, "Speak, Satan, and tell if this is true!"

Julia was overtaken, surrounded on all sides, and there was no way of escape. Mechanically, she answered, "I am guilty," while a burst of execration ran round the room. A stifled moan of agony came from Dr. Lacey's parted lips, and he [pg 212] asked in a voice which plainly told his suffering, "Oh, why was I suffered to go thus far? Why, why did no one write?"

"I did," answered Mrs. Miller.

"And I, too," repeated Mrs. Carrington, "but you spurned my letter and treated

me with contempt."

"Never, never," scarcely articulated Dr. Lacey. "I never received them; but call Rondeau; he must know something of it."

Rondeau, who had accompanied his master, was called. Explanation followed explanation, testimony crowded upon testimony, and Julia acknowledged all, until at length Dr. Lacey, frantic with the sense of wrong done him, turned to her and said, "Base woman, why have you done this? Your sin has found you out ere it was too late; for, thank God, you are not my wife, nor ever will be!"

Julia now lost all command of herself. Tearing the bridal veil from her brow, she rent it in twain; then from her arm she snatched her diamond bracelet, and trampled it under her feet, while a stream of blood issued from her mouth and stained her white satin dress. A moment more, and she too was extended on the floor by the side of her ally.

Where during this exciting scene was Fanny? The direful sounds had reached her ear, and now at the head of the stairs she listened to the Babel which reigned in the parlor. High above all other voices she distinguished her father's, who, in his uncontrollable fury, was calling to use all the oaths he had ever heard of, besides manufacturing some expressly for the occasion! Then there was a heavy fall, accompanied by a cry from Mrs. Middleton of, "Lift her up—carry her out. Don't you see she is dying?"

Fanny hesitated no longer, but quickly descending the stairs, she forced her way through the blacks into the parlor, where she stood appalled at the scene before her. On the floor lay Julia, who a few moments before stood there resplendent in beauty. Near her sat the maniac, Joseph Dunn. He had recovered from his fainting fit, and was now crouching over the prostrate form of Julia, laughing in delirious glee, as he wiped from her lips the red drops of blood! In a corner of the room a group had gathered, near an open window, through which they were bearing an inanimate object. It was Florence, who had fainted, and as it seemed impossible to effect a passage through the hall, so filled was it with terrified servants, they had sought the window as the best means of egress.

Suddenly over that excited assembly there came a deep silence. It was caused by the appearance of Fanny, who, with [pg 213] her loose white muslin wrapper, and long curls, which floated over her shoulders, seemed like some being from

another world, come to stay that storm of passion. Mabel, who was occupied with her cousin, looked back as the calm hush fell upon them, and then and there she first saw Fanny Middleton. The scene was too much for Fanny, and she, too, would have fainted had not Dr. Lacey caught her in his arms. Claspng her slight form passionately to his bosom, he exclaimed, "My own—my Fanny—my wife, for such you are, and such you will be!"

Mr. William Middleton and Mr. Miller, who were bearing Julia from the room, now passed them. Dr. Lacey glanced once at the corpse-like face over which the heavy braids of long black hair had fallen, then with a shudder he again strained Fanny to his heart, saying, "Thank God, thank God, I escaped her in time!" Then turning to the minister, who all this time had stood looking on in mute astonishment, he added, in an authoritative manner, "Go on with the ceremony, sir, and make her my wife." But a new thought entering his mind, he released Fanny, and said, "Pardon me, dear Fanny; sorrow has well nigh bereft me of my senses. In my first joy in finding you innocent, I forgot that you could not be mine, for you belong to another—to Mr. Cameron."

"Cameron go to Thunder!" exclaimed Uncle Joshua, who was still standing near. "That's another of Tempest's lies. She never was engaged to him; never loved him, or any other mortal man, save yourself."

Here, Fanny, who, it will be remembered, was all this time ignorant of the truth, asked if some one would not explain what she saw and heard. "I will," said Dr. Lacey, "it is my duty to do so," and he led her to a window, where he hurriedly told her all—everything which he himself knew, intermingling his words with so much passionate embraces that his sanity was much to be doubted. He had scarcely finished his story when Kate approached him, saying, "For humanity's sake, Dr. Lacey, if you have any skill, exert it in behalf of Julia, who seems to be dying."

Dr. Lacey arose, and winding his arm about Fanny, as if afraid he might lose sight of her, moved toward the room where Julia lay. They had borne her to the bridal chamber, which Fanny had arranged with so much care, and as Dr. Lacey appeared at the door, Uncle Joshua met him and said, "I know she sarved you mean, but I would not have her die. She is my own child, and you must save her if you can." At the same time he pointed to Julia, who lay in the same death-like [pg 214] trance, with the blood still issuing slowly from her livid lips. All that Dr. Lacey could do, he did, but when Dr. Gordon arrived, he gladly gave up his

charge to him, and turned his attention toward Fanny, who, overcome by what she had seen and heard, had fainted, and been carried to her own room, where she was surrounded by Mrs. Carrington, Florence and Mabel. These ladies ran against each other, upset the camphor bottle, dropped the lamp and spilled half the cologne, in their zealous efforts to take care of their patient!

In the midst of their confusion Dr. Lacey entered, and they immediately gave up to him the task of restoring her. This he soon did, for it would seem that his very voice had a power to recall Fanny's suspended faculties. Slowly her eyes unclosed; then, as if wearied out, she again closed them, and for a time slept sweetly, calmly, on Dr. Lacey's bosom.

The guests now began to depart, and Bill Jeffrey, who had been sent to inform Mrs. Dunn of her son, returned with some of the neighbors, and carried Joseph away. Owing to the darkness of the night, the company from Frankfort remained until morning, but no eyelid closed in sleep. With maternal solicitude, Mrs. Middleton sat by the bedside of her daughter Julia, whose eyes opened once, but on seeing Dr. Lacey standing near by, she closed them again with a shudder, and a faint wail of anguish escaped her. She had ruptured a small blood vessel, but Dr. Gordon said there was no danger if she could be kept quiet for a few days.

Uncle Joshua thus relieved from alarm concerning her, walked back and forth from her room to Fanny's swearing that he "knew the devil was let loose that night for his special benefit, and that he had come up there to see how much of a row he could get up!"

"He succeeded admirably, I think," said Florence, who, having recovered from her first fright, was now ready to extract whatever fun could be gathered from the surrounding circumstances.

In the kitchen the blacks canvassed the matter after their fashion. Aunt Judy lamented because none of the tempting supper in the dining room was touched, while Bob did not fail to turn his usual round of somersaults, thus evincing his joy that so many good things were left for him to eat, "'Cause," said he, "in course we allus has all that comes off the table."

Aunt Katy took occasion to lecture the young black girls on the awful sin of "conceit," as she called it, pointing them for an example to Julia, "who," she said, "would most likely have [pg 215] to live an old maid all her days." She

couldn't have threatened a worse punishment, for many of the negresses had already their own preferences in favor of certain mulatto boys on their master's plantation and others adjoining.

Rondeau seemed to think his sympathy was only needed by his young master, whom he looked upon as a much-abused man. From the first he had felt great contempt for the old house, its master, servants and all; and had come to the conclusion that "they were of no 'count anyhow." This opinion would doubtless have been reserved for Leffie's ear had not affairs taken so unexpected a turn. Now, however, Rondeau felt at liberty to express his mind so freely that Ike considered it his duty to resent the insult.

A regular negro fight ensued, in which Aunt Katy, who was not very active, was thrown down, and as she loudly protested, "every atom of breath was kicked out of her."

The big chicken pie was also turned over into Rondeau's new hat, greatly to the satisfaction of Tiger and the other dogs, who had mingled in the fracas! The riot was finally quelled by Mr. William Middleton and Dr. Lacey, Uncle Joshua declaring he "wouldn't interfere that night if the niggers all fit till they killed themselves."

Chapter XXII

JULIA IS FOUND DROWNED

The morning which succeeded the events narrated in the last chapter was clear and bright. Nature, beautiful as ever, looked as if laughing defiance at the fearful storm which so lately had swept over the earth. Beautifully over hill and valley fell the sun's red rays, but when they penetrated the dwelling of Mr. Middleton, they shone on the anxious, careworn faces of those who had been sleepless during the dark hours of that dreadful night. Even the merry-hearted Florence seemed sad and spiritless as she hurried from room to room, urging Ashton to accelerate their departure. By eight o'clock the last guest was gone. Around the old stone house a gloomy silence settled, broken only by the heavy tramp of Uncle Joshua, whose cowhides came down with a vengeance, as up and down the yard he strode, talking to Dr. Lacey, who walked by his side.

[pg 216]"Now," said he, "if this isn't a little the all-fireddest muss a feller ever got into, Josh ain't no judge. Of course the papers have nothing to do but flout it all over the country. For myself I don't care a copper, but 'twill be mighty mortifyin' to you, though I think you deserve some mortifyin', for how in thunder a chap of your sense ever come to be made such a precious fool of is more'n I can tell."

"If you knew all the arts she employed, you would not wonder quite so much," said Dr. Lacey. And Mr. Middleton answered, "Know all her arts? Don't I know 'em? Don't I know that she rummaged heaven and arth for ways and means?"

"I hardly think she went to the former place for assistance," said Dr. Lacey; and Mr. Middleton continued, "You are right, but I'll be bound Satan hadn't any tricks but what he told her of. 'Pears like she's been possessed ever since she first

opened her big black eyes in the very room where the row was last night. Oh, how happy I was," he continued, "when I took her in my arms a little baby, and knew she was mine and Nancy's, and thought what a comfort she'd be to me; but George, I tell you what," said he, as he placed one hand on Dr. Lacey's arm and passed the other through the grizzled locks which lay around his brow, "I tell you what, these gray hairs come a heap too soon, and all for her, for her. Oh, Julia, Julia, what trouble have you not caused me!" and in his hands Uncle Joshua buried his face, while through his large red fingers the tears trickled slowly, and fell upon the ground. For a moment he wept, and then wiping his eyes, said, "But wasn't it lucky that long-legged, salmon-colored Joe got here as he did! Another minute and you'd have been clinched, but now the tempest has blowed over, and for the rest of your life you'll have nothing but sunshine."

The overseer now approached to ask orders concerning a piece of work in which the negroes were employed. Mr. Middleton accompanied him to the field, while Dr. Lacey returned to the house in quest of Fanny. He was told that she was with Julia, and with an involuntary shudder, he approached the chamber which contained one who had well nigh been his wife! His wife! The very idea filled him with loathing when associated with her, and still he pitied the suffering girl, who, divested of her bridal attire, now lay moaning in pain. With coming day had come a burning fever, which increased so rapidly that Dr. Gordon shook his head when questioned as to the result.

The change of affairs had also wrought a change in Fanny, [pg 217] who seemed and really was better than she had been for many days. Gladly would she have stayed with Dr. Lacey, but she felt that duty called her to Julia's bedside. With unwearying devotion she hung over the pillow of her sister, who seemed more quiet when she knew Fanny was near. Once she looked wistfully in her face, and appeared as if anxious to speak, but Fanny gently laid her hand on her lips, saying, "No, no, Julia; you must not."

She did, however, and the word "forgive" met Fanny's ear. Had Fanny been less of a Christian, forgiveness might have been hard, but now she answered sincerely, truthfully, "As I hope for pardon in heaven, so do I forgive you for the great wrong you have done me."

At the mention of the word "heaven," Julia shuddered, and after a time repeated, "Heaven! You will find it, but I—never—never!"

Earnestly then did Fanny speak of a Savior's love, which receives all, pardons all, who come to him. Julia shook her head despairingly, and as the conversation seemed to annoy her, Fanny ceased talking, while a voice behind her said, "Teach me, too, the way of life, for I fear I have never walked in it."

It was Dr. Lacey, who, unobserved by either of the girls, had entered and been a listener to what Fanny said. As Julia heard the sound of voices she turned toward him a look so imploring, so full of contrition and entreaty, that he was moved, and approaching the bedside, took the vacant seat near Fanny. But he did not, like her, breathe words of forgiveness, for his heart was full of bitterness toward her. As he sat there, gazing coldly, sternly at her, she again spoke, "If you can, if you will only forgive me."

Dr. Lacey's brow grew dark and his manner excited, as he replied, "Forgive you! In time I may learn to do so, but to forget will take me my lifetime, and yet I blame myself not less than I do you for having been so duped."

A low sob was Julia's only answer as Dr. Lacey arose to leave, announcing to Fanny his intention of visiting Joseph Dunn, who was said to be dying. As he entered the house where Joseph lay, tossing in feverish agony, the sick man's eyes glared wildly upon him as he shrieked, "Why have you come to taunt me with my crime? Is it not enough that the room is full of little devils who creep over my pillow, and shout in my ear as they hold to view the letters I withheld? I did not do it alone. She bribed me with gold, and now when I am dead, who will take care of my mother? She will be [pg 218] cold when the winter winds blow, and hungry when the summer corn ripens."

Dr. Lacey drew nearer to him and stooping down, whispered, "Is your mother very poor and you all her dependence?"

"Yes, yes," answered Joseph, whose almost only virtue was the love he bore his mother.

"Fear not, then," said Dr. Lacey, "I will care for her; for though you did me a great wrong, you saved me from being today the most wretched of men."

That night as the October sun went down there was heard beneath that lonely roof the piteous cry of a widowed mother, for Joseph, her first-born, her only child, was dead. Next day they buried him, as is frequently the custom in Kentucky, beneath a large shade tree in the garden. Many words of sympathy

were spoken to the bereaved mother, but none fell so soothingly on her ear as did those of Dr. Lacey, who was present at the funeral, and led the weeping mother to the grave.

After the burial was over he whispered to her, "I will surely remember you, for, erring though your son may have been, I owe him a debt of gratitude." So saying, he walked hastily away toward Mr. Middleton's, where he was met by alarmed faces, soft footsteps, and subdued whispers. In reply to his inquiries, he was told by Aunt Judy, that "somehow or 'nother, Miss Julia had got wind of Mr. Dunn's death, and it had gone to her head, makin' her ravin' mad, and the doctor said she wouldn't get well."

Aunt Judy was right; Julia had accidentally heard of Mr. Dunn's death, and it added greatly to the nervous excitement which she was already suffering, and when Dr. Gordon came he was surprised to find the dangerous symptoms of his patient increased to an alarming extent. The fever had settled upon her brain, and for many days she lay at the very gates of death.

Incessantly she talked of Dr. Lacey, Fanny and Mr. Wilmot, the latter of whom, in her disordered imagination, was constantly pursuing her. "Go back—go back to your grave," she would say; "there are tears enough shed for you, but none will fall for me when I am dead. He will laugh and be glad, and the first moon that shines on my grave will light the marriage train to the altar." Then, as if the phantom still were near her, she would cry out, "Take him away, I tell you! What have I to do with coffins, and white faces, and broken hearts? I killed him, I know, and he loved me, too, as no one [pg 219] else ever has, but I madly loved another, and now he hates me, spurns me!" Then turning to Fanny she would say, "I broke your heart too, and still pressed on when I saw it was killing you, but you forgave me, and now you must plead with him, who loves the air you breathe, to think compassionately of me. I do not ask him to love me, for I know that is impossible; but he can, at least, forgive and forget the past."

Sometimes she would speak of her father, saying, "He will be glad when the tempest is still and ceases to trouble him, for he never loved me, never spoke to me as he did to Fanny. I know I did not deserve his love, but I should have been better if he had given me a little, yes, just a little."

"God knows she speaks the truth," said Uncle Joshua, wiping away the tears he was not ashamed to weep. "I have been mighty hard on her, but I never s'posed

she cared."

Such were the scenes which daily occurred in Julia's sick room until at last, from utter exhaustion, she became still, and for many days she lay in a dreamy kind of sleep.

"Will she live?" asked Mr. Middleton of Dr. Gordon, as he one day left the sick room.

"With proper care, I think she may," was the answer; and then Dr. Lacey again urged the request he had once before made of Mr. Middleton.

But Uncle Joshua answered, "No, George, wait a little longer. Nuthin' 'll come betwixt you again, I reckon, and I wouldn't have you marry her while t'other one is so low."

So Dr. Lacey was obliged to wait, but though he would much rather have remained near Fanny he deemed it expedient to change his abode and remove to Mrs. Crane's. He was partly induced to do this on Rondeau's account, who, being Ike's sworn enemy, was the cause of no little annoyance to Mr. Middleton, who, with his negroes, was much nettled by the air of superiority which that young gentleman thought proper to assume.

Greatly was Rondeau delighted to exchange the crazy old stone house, with its corn-bread and fried bacon, for Mrs. Crane's elegant place, with its oyster soups and ice creams, a part of which the head cook always reserved for the "colored gentleman from New Orleans," who assured her, that though when at home he didn't exactly eat at the same table with his master, he still lived on the top shelf! Not long, however, did Rondeau enjoy his new quarters, for about that time Mr. William Middleton returned to New Orleans, and Dr. Lacey sent with him his servant Rondeau, nothing [pg 220] loath to return home, for Leffie's face of late had haunted him not a little.

Dr. Lacey's return to Mrs. Crane's gave great satisfaction to Mrs. Carrington, who, though she had no hopes of winning him, still, to use her own words, "took great delight in reminding him of the snare into which he had fallen, notwithstanding his profound wisdom and boasted foresight." It required all the good breeding he was master of to answer politely when, after returning from a visit to Mr. Middleton's, she would jeeringly ask him concerning "his bride's health!"

But Mrs. Carrington's levity was brought to an end by an unforeseen circumstance. It was now six weeks since the evening of the denouement, and Julia's health was so much improved that Dr. Lacey began to speak confidently of the day when Fanny would be his own. Uncle Joshua had given his consent, and preparations for the marriage had actually commenced, when Julia, in whose room Mrs. Middleton had been in the habit of sleeping, insisted upon being left alone. "I am well now," she said, "and do not need you."

Mrs. Middleton was finally persuaded, but charged her daughter to be sure and call her if she wished for her during the night.

Over Julia's face a meaning smile flitted as she answered, "I hope to trouble no one much longer," but it was unnoticed by Mrs. Middleton, and Julia was left alone. Early next morning Luce went as usual to make a fire for her young mistress, after which she softly drew back the bed curtains to see if Julia slept. She was surprised to find no Julia there, neither were there signs of her having been there during the night. With a loud cry Luce summoned to the room both Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, the former of whom on seeing how matters stood, exclaimed, "So ho! Up to her tricks again. I thought she couldn't hold good long."

""The de'il when sick, a saint would be,
But when he got well, the de'il a saint was he.""

"Don't, husband," said Mrs. Middleton; "perhaps she will never come back alive, and then you will be sorry."

Uncle Joshua readily guessed his wife's meaning, and turning to Luce, said, "Rout out the whole gang and set 'em to huntin'."

In less than two hours scores of men on horseback were seen hunting in all directions, looking, as Bob expressed it, "for all the world like they was huntin' a runaway."

[pg 221]Ere long the news reached Frankfort, causing Mrs. Carrington to sneeringly advise Dr. Lacey "by all means to join in the hunt." He deigned her no reply, but mounting his horse took the road to Mr. Middleton's, where he was welcomed with tears by Mrs. Middleton and Fanny, whose fears he strove to allay.

Meanwhile the search went on, headed by Uncle Joshua, who, late in the afternoon, unconsciously led a part of the company to the banks of the river, not far from a point called Woodford Landing. Dismounting, he strolled along the shore for several rods, when suddenly a loud cry turned toward him the attention of the party. Near the water's edge he had discovered a shawl, which he knew belonged to Julia, and near by lay a pair of slippers, on the inside of which her name was marked. Instantly the conviction flashed upon all—Julia was drowned!

Upon a large flat rock Uncle Joshua sat down, while his long gray locks were tossed by the November wind which swept mournfully by, bearing on its wing the bitter tones with which the stricken father bewailed his loss. "Everything goes ag'in me," said he, "everything—she's dead and, worse than all, died by her own hand." Then, as if void of reason, he arose, and over the craggy hillside and down the dark, rolling river echoed the loud, shrill cry of, "Julia, Julia, oh, my child! Come back, come back! Why was you left to break your old father's heart?" And to that wail of sorrow only the moaning wind replied, and faster the waters of the Kentucky rolled on.

They took the old man home, and long weary days went by, during which the river near the landing was dragged again and again, and still no trace of the missing girl was found. Then, as hope began to whisper that possibly she was not dead, the papers far and near contained advertisements for her, and by the side of that appeared another for a lunatic girl, who had escaped from the asylum at Lexington.

Four weeks went by, and the waters of the Kentucky frowned angrily "in the gray December light," making Uncle Joshua shudder whenever he chanced to pass by, and thought perhaps his daughter lay sleeping in their cold embrace. A gloomy drizzly day was settling into a dark rainy night, when two young men, who, either for business or pleasure, had rowed across the river some miles from Woodford Landing, started to return home. They had stepped into their boat and were about pushing off when among some driftwood which lay not far from the shore, they thought they descried a [pg 222] female's garment floating on the water. The spot was soon reached, and to their horror they discovered the body of a young girl, which, from its appearance, must have been in the water some time. They had heard the story of Julia, and readily concluded that the bloated, disfigured form before them must have been she. Taking her to the nearest dwelling, they dispatched a messenger for Mr. Middleton, who, now that his

worst fears were confirmed, seemed paralyzed with the shock.

"Oh, I cannot go!" said he, "I cannot. Is there no one to do it for me?"

Dr. Lacey, who chanced to be present, said, "For your sake, sir, and for Fanny's, I will go."

"God bless you, George!" answered Mr. Middleton, and in a few moments Dr. Lacey departed.

With a thrill of horror he looked upon the swollen, discolored face, round which the long black hair clung, matted and slimy from being so long saturated with water, and thought that this was once the beautiful Julia, though now so fearfully changed that no one could possibly have recognized her. Owing to the state which the body was in, Dr. Lacey thought proper to produce a coffin before removing her home; consequently it was nearly ten o'clock the following morning ere the little procession slowly entered the yard, from which, with wonderful forethought, Mr. Middleton had ordered to be removed some half dozen carts, corn cribs, etc. Fanny was pressing forward to look at her unfortunate sister, when Dr. Lacey, gently but firmly, led her away, saying, "No, Fanny, you must not see her. The sight would haunt you for months and years." Then, as her tears fell fast, he strove in various way to divert her mind from Julia's untimely end.

About noon a middle-aged man came to the house and asked permission to see the body. His request was granted, but he almost immediately turned away from the coffin, saying, by way of explanation, "I am the father of the maniac girl who some time since escaped from Lexington, and I thought perhaps this might be my daughter; but it is not, and even if it were I could not recognize her."

On Mr. Middleton's farm, and not far from the house, was a small yard which had been enclosed as a burial place for the family. On this spot Fanny had expended much time and labor. Roses and honeysuckles ever bloomed there for a season, while the dark evergreen and weeping willow waved their branches and beckoned the passer-by to rest beneath their shadow. In one corner was a tall forest maple, where Julia and Fanny often had played, and where Fanny once, [pg 223] when dangerously ill in childhood, had asked to be laid. As yet no mound had rendered that spot dearer for the sake of the lost one who slept there, but now in the scarcely frozen ground the ringing of the spade was heard;

shovelful after shovelful of earth was thrown up, and into that cold, damp grave, as the sun was setting, they lowered the remains of Julia, who once little thought that she first of all would break the turf of the family graveyard.

That night was fast merging into the hours of morning ere the sound of Uncle Joshua's footsteps ceased, as again and again he traversed the length and breadth of his sleeping room, occasionally stopping before the window and peering out in the darkness toward the spot where he knew lay that newly-made grave. Memory was busily at work, and in the events which marked Julia's short life, oh, how much he saw for which to blame himself. Remorse mingled in the old man's cup of affliction, and while the hot tears rolled down his cheeks he exclaimed, "If she could only come back and I could do it over, I'd love her more, and maybe she'd be better. But I treated her mean. I gin her only harsh words and cross looks." Then as his wife's tears mingled with his, he took her hand, saying, "Don't take on so, Nancy, you've nothin' to cry for. You's always good to her and kind o' took up for her when I got sot ag'in her."

Mrs. Middleton could only answer by her tears to this touching attempt at sympathy, but she finally succeeded in quieting her husband, and before daybreak, he had forgotten in sleep the injustice done to Julia. All thoughts of Fanny's marriage for the present were of course given up, although Mr. Middleton promised that when the autumn came round again he would surely give his treasure to the care of another.

Two weeks after Julia's burial, all of which time was passed at Mr. Middleton's, Dr. Lacey went back to New Orleans, having first placed in Mr. Middleton's care a sum of money for the benefit of Mrs. Dunn, promising Fanny that with the spring he would come again. He bade her adieu, praying that nothing might come between them again. Heavily now dragged the days at Mr. Middleton's, until Uncle Joshua hit upon a plan which would not only give pleasure to Fanny, but would also relieve the tedium of his own life. It was nothing more nor less than the erection of a new house on a grassy lawn, which Fanny had frequently pointed out as being a good location. Long he revolved in his mind the for and against, but the remembrance of Julia's wish to have the "old shell fixed up," finally decided him. "If 'twasn't good enough [pg 224] for her to be married in, it surely wasn't good enough for Sunshine."

At the breakfast table he first announced his intention, causing Fanny in her surprise and joy not only to drop her knife, but also to upset her coffee. "All

right," said he, "I'll do it, if it breaks me. We'll have a buster," said he, "marble mantletrys, windows that come to the floor, Brussels carpets, and if you're a mind to, you may have them four-legged split things, though, Lord knows I'll never eat with them."

In a short time the necessary arrangements were completed. A large number of men were hired and matters progressed so rapidly that there was every probability of the house being completed early in June, should the winter season prove favorable.

Here we may as well relate a little circumstance which occurred to Fanny during the winter. Bill Jeffrey, who, it will be remembered, had always felt a predilection for her, emboldened by the kindness of her manner, now determined to make his wishes known. Accordingly, he sent her numerous little cakes of maple sugar, besides giving her many knowing winks, his usual method of showing his preference.

As she was one day strolling in the woods she suddenly encountered Bill, who thought this was as favorable an opportunity as he would probably have. He was rather awkward and unaccustomed to love-making, but he resolved to do his best. Planting his foot upon a log, he with one hand drew from his head his old wool cap and thrust it under his arm, while with the other he twirled a huge brass watchkey, which hung suspended from his pocket. (He had the day before traded off an old jack knife, two puppies, and a cracked fiddle, for a brass watch which would only go by shaking.)

Tiger, who had accompanied Fanny, eyed Bill's movements uneasily. He was, however, unnoticed by the young man, who had got his mouth open, and at last found courage to say, "I always liked you, Fanny, 'cause you never laughed at me, nor called me a fool, and now if you'll have me, you may carry my watch, and I'll work for your father two seasons in the hemp field." This last was wonderful, for Bill was notoriously lazy.

Involuntarily Fanny laughed, but Bill construed it into approval, and was about to sit down by her, when Tiger, with an angry growl, sprang forward and precipitated the wooing swain over the log into the dirt. Fanny called off the dog, and Bill gathered himself up, carefully brushing the dirt from his Sunday suit. Fearing he would repeat his offer, Fanny [pg 225] said, "I appreciate your kindness, Billy, but you see Tiger doesn't seem to approve of your proposal, and

as I have great confidence in his judgment, I think I, too, must follow his example, and though I shan't knock you down, I shall have to tell you 'No.'"

She might as well have knocked him down, for he instantly sat down, and covering his face with his hands, burst into such a fit of crying that Fanny, half-laughing at and half-pitying him, said, "Poor Billy, I am sorry for you, and though I cannot marry you, I will like you just as well as you fancy I always have."

This failed to quiet Bill, who kept on crying until Tiger made so many threatening demonstrations of anger, that Bill thought it was wise to leave before he got another tumble.

He had hardly disappeared when a loud voice called out, "Bravo, Tiger! You know how to fix 'em." Looking around, Fanny saw her father, who had been a silent spectator of the scene, and now came forward laughing heartily at his would-be son-in-law. "Pretty well done, Sunshine," said he. "Let's see, how many offers does this make? Thar's Joe's one, the doctor's two; Yankee Carmeron's three; and lubberin' Bill Jeffrey's four, and you not quite eighteen. That'll do; that'll do!" Afterward, when Mr. Middleton wished to entertain his visitors with anything extra, he would rehearse to them, with some exaggerations, Bill Jeffrey's proposal to Fanny.

Glancing backward a few pages, we find we have omitted to repeat what happened among Dr. Lacey's blacks during the days when they were anxiously but vainly watching for the coming of their young master and his bride. For a week Aunt Dilsey was unusually crusty, and all her attempts at cookery invariably failed, plainly showing her mind to be in a disturbed state.

"I don't keer," she would say, "if the cakes is all dough and the 'sarves all froth. They's good enough for her, any day." Then she would call out, "Get along you, Jack, pokin' your fingers into the 'lasses cup; make yourself scarce in this kitchen, or I'll crack your head mighty nigh as hard as the new Miss will." Then she would scold Leffie, who, she said, "was of no more account than a burnt stick, now she was spectin' Rondeau. Pity but the boat he come on wouldn't blow up and let 'em all into perdition together."

Leffie knew her mother didn't mean more than half what she said, but she chose to keep silent, hoping each morning that the close of the day would bring the

long absent Rondeau. Thus, between scolding and fretting, cooking and sweating, [pg 226] Aunt Dilsey passed the time until the day arrived on which, as she said, "they'd come if they ever did."

Mrs. Lacey, whose husband had not yet received his son's letter announcing the catastrophe, came out to superintend affairs and receive her new daughter. In the large, handsome dining room, the supper table was neatly spread, while Aunt Dilsey bustled about with the air of one who felt her time was short, but was determined to contest every inch of ground ere yielding it to another. She had condescended to put on her new calico gown (the one she proposed taking with her in a "handkerchief") and had even washed the grease and molasses from Jack's and the baby's face, telling the former that "he needn't mind about making up faces at the lady that night."

Claib had gone to the landing, and now Mrs. Lacey and the servants were gathered upon the upper piazza, waiting his return. Suddenly Dilsey, whose eyesight seemed wonderfully sharpened, exclaimed, "Thar, that's Claib. I could tell my old man if I should meet him at a camp meeting!"

Mrs. Lacey looked in the direction of the city and saw the carriage which Dilsey had pointed out. It proved to be Claib; and Leffie, who was rather near-sighted, strained her eyes to see if Rondeau, too, was on the box.

"Thar's nobody in that ar," said Dilsey. "Reckon the boat has run into the ground, or bust her riggin'; so, Leffie, you've put on your pink dress for nothin'."

The elder Mr. Lacey, was, however, in the carriage, and alighting, he advanced toward his wife and gave her the letter he had just received from his son. Mrs. Lacey read it, while the blacks crowded around Claib asking him scores of foolish questions, such as, "Was Marster George in the boat? And why wasn't he thar? And when would he be thar?"

When Mrs. Lacey finished reading the letter she said to Leffie, who was still standing near, "Rondeau is well, and will be home in a few days."

"When's the new miss a comin'?" asked Aunt Dilsey.

"Not at all," was Mrs. Lacey's reply.

"Glad on't," said Dilsey, "for now Jack can spit as fur and as big spits as he

wants to."

Nothing more was known by the blacks until many days after, when Rondeau returned home, and related the whole story with many embellishments. He omitted to tell of the whipping which Ike had given him, but spoke with unqualified contempt of the old house and everything belonging to it, except Miss Fanny, who, he said, "Looked just like an angel, only a heap better."

[pg 227]"You ought to have seen her," said he, "that night when every thing was t'other side up; folks a yellin' like they was crazy, and one man was stark mad. Miss Julia lay on the floor, the blood pourin' out of her eyes and mouth by pails full; Miss Florence, she fainted, and they had to throw her out the window, glass and all, because there was so many low, ill-mannered niggers crowded in the hall."

"I s'pose you's one of the niggers?" said Aunt Dilsey.

"Why, yes," returned Rondeau; "but then I was helpin' and was tryin' to push them all back so I could get to marster, who was feelin' so bad that they sent for me, because nobody else could comfort him."

Here Rondeau began to fumble in his pocket, as if in search of something. Having found it, he continued, "Marster got hold of her hand and grabbed off her wedding ring so quick that it broke her finger. Then he threw it from him and I picked it up. Here 'tis," said he, holding up a ring.

"That's a likely story," interrupted Aunt Dilsey "If they wasn't married, how came the ring on her finger?"

Rondeau saw he had stretched a trifle too much, but he answered, "Well, anyhow, he throwed it away, and I'm goin' to keep it till—till, you know when, Dilsey."

"Keep it till you're gray," said Aunt Dilsey. "Leffie ain't goin' to be married with no such flummery."

Here Leffie, anxious to change the conversation, asked, "What of Miss Fanny?"

"Why, yes," answered Rondeau, "that's what I'm going to tell. Right in the middle of the fuss I heard something moving softly down the stairs, and I saw a

thing all as white as snow. Her hair, which was about the color of Leffie's neck—real handsome—was hanging in long curls down her back. I thought it was an angel, and kinder touched her as she passed, to see if she had wings. But the niggers said, 'It's Miss Fanny,' and next I heard 'twas all as still in the room, and marster was huggin' and kissin' her and cryin' over her. Then, when I tried to get nearer and see more, they crowded me into such a little spot that I didn't breathe again for a week."

"Why didn't you get out of the crowd then?" asked Dilsey.

"How could I?" answered Rondeau. "Lord, Dilsey, I'd like to have seen you there; but then there wouldn't have been room for anybody else, for the hall wouldn't more than hold you."

Here the conversation ended, but for a long time Rondeau [pg 228] carried on his arm the marks of Aunt Dilsey's finger and thumb.

Chapter XXIII

FANNY'S ILLNESS LEADS TO HER FATHER'S REPENTANCE

From the grassy hillside and bright green plains of Kentucky the frosts of winter were gone. By the dancing brook and in the shady nooks of the quiet valleys, the warm spring sun had sought out and brought to life thousands of sweet wild blossoms, which in turn had faded away, giving place to other flowers of a brighter and gayer hue.

Each night from the upper balcony of her father's handsome dwelling Fanny watched in vain for the coming of Dr. Lacey, whose promised return had long been delayed by the dangerous illness of his father. Over the wooded hills the breath of summer was floating, hot, arid and laden with disease. Death was abroad in the land, and as each day exaggerated rumors of the havoc made by cholera in the sultry climate of Louisiana reached Fanny, fearful misgivings filled her mind lest Dr. Lacey, too, should fall a victim to the plague.

For herself she had no fears, though slowly but surely through her veins the fever flame was creeping, scorching her blood, poisoning her breath and burning her cheek, until her father, alarmed at her altered and languid appearance, inquired for the cause of the change. "Nothing but a slight headache," was the reply.

Next to the cholera, Mr. Middleton most feared the typhoid fever, several cases of which had recently occurred in the neighborhood, and fearing lest the disease might be stealing upon his darling, he proposed calling the physician. But this Fanny would not suffer, and persisted in saying that she was well, until at last she lay all day upon the sofa, and Aunt Katy, when her favorite herb teas failed

of effecting their wonted cure, shook her head, saying, "I knew 'twould be so. I always told you we couldn't keep her long."

Dr. Gordon was finally called and pronounced her disease to be typhoid in its worst form. Days went by, and so rapid was the progress of the fever that Mr. Middleton trembled lest of him it had been decreed: "He shall be childless." To [pg 229] Fanny the thought of death was familiar. For her it had no terrors, and as her outward strength decayed, her faith in the Eternal grew stronger and brighter, yet she could not die without an assurance that again in the better world she would meet the father she so much loved. For her mother she had no fears, for during many years she had been a patient, self-denying Christian.

At first Mr. Middleton listened in silence to Fanny's gentle words of entreaty, but when she spoke to him of her own death, and the love which alone could sustain him then, he clasped her tightly to his heart, as if his arm alone could keep her there forever, saying, "Oh, no, you must not tell me that; you will not die. Even now you are better." And the anxious father did try to deceive himself into the belief that Fanny was better, but when each morning's light revealed some fresh ravage the disease had made—when the flush on her cheek grew deeper and the light of her eye wilder and more startling, an agonized fear held the old man's heart in thrall. Many and many a weary night found him sleepless, as he wet his pillow with tears. Not such tears as he wept when Richard Wilmot died, nor such as fell upon the grave of his first-born, for oh, his grief then was naught compared with what he now felt for his Sunshine, his idol, his precious Fanny. "I cannot, cannot let her die," was the cry which hourly welled up from the depths of that fond father's aching heart. "Take all, take everything I own, but leave me Sunshine; she mustn't, mustn't die."

Earnestly did Fanny pray that her father might be enabled better to bear his affliction. But he turned a deaf ear alike to her and his gentle, enduring wife, who, bowed with sorrow, yet sought to soothe her grief-stricken husband. Sadly he would turn away saying, "It's no use talking. I can't be pious if they take Fanny away. I can see why t'other one died. 'Twas to bring me to my senses, and show me how bad I used her; but Fanny, my Sunshine, what has Josh done that she should leave him too? Oh, it's more than I can bar."

At Dr. Gordon's request a council of physicians in Frankfort was called. As the one who came last was about to enter her room, Mr. Middleton detained him while he said, "Save her, doctor, save her, and you shall have all I'm worth."

Impatiently he awaited the decision. It came, but alas, it brought no hope.

Mr. William Middleton, who had recently come from New Orleans, broke the news to his unhappy brother. Terrible was the anguish of Uncle Joshua, when he became convinced that [pg 230] he must lose her. Nothing could induce him to leave her room; and as if endowed with superhuman strength, he watched by her constantly, only leaving her once each day to visit the quiet grave, the bed of his other daughter, where now the long green grass was waving, and the summer flowers were blooming, flowers which Fanny's hand had planted and the father's tears had watered.

One night they were alone, the old man and his child.

For several hours Fanny had turned uneasily upon her pillow, but she at last fell into a deep sleep. For a time her father sat quietly listening to the sound of her breathing, then arising, he softly drew aside the curtains and looked long and anxiously at her as she slept.

Suddenly lifting his hands he exclaimed, "Oh, God, save her, or help me to bear it if she dies." It was the first prayer which for long, long years had passed his lips, but it had a power to bring back the olden feeling, when a happy boy, he had knelt at his mother's side, and was not ashamed to pray. Falling on his knees, he tried to recall the words of prayer his mother had taught him, but one petition alone came from his heart in that dark, midnight hour. "Oh, don't let Fanny die, don't let her die, for who will comfort old Joshua when she is gone."

"The Saviour; He who once wept at the grave of Lazarus will be more to you than I ever was, or ever can be," said Fanny.

In her sleep she dreamed that her father prayed. She awoke and found it true. "Come nearer to me, father," said she. He did so, and then among his thick gray locks she laid her thin white hand and prayed.

It was a beautiful sight, and methinks the angels hovered round as that young disciple, apparently so near the portals of heaven, sought to lead her weeping father to the same glad world. Her words were soothing, and o'er his darkened mind a ray of light seemed feebly, faintly shining. Before the morning dawned he had resolved that if there still was hope for him he would find it. Many a time during the succeeding days he prayed in secret, not that Fanny might be spared, but that he might be reconciled to God. His prayer at length was answered, and

Uncle Joshua was a changed man. He showed it in everything, in the expression of his face and in the words he uttered. For his Sunshine he still wept, but with a chastened grief, for now he knew that if she died he would see her in heaven.

Where now was Dr. Lacey? Knew he not of the threatened [pg 231] danger? At his father's bedside, where for many days his place had been, he had received from Mr. William Middleton a letter announcing Fanny's illness, which, however, was not then considered dangerous. On learning the contents of the letter, the elder Mr. Lacey said, turning to his son, "Go, George, go; I would not keep you from her a moment." The doctor needed no second bidding, and the first steamer which left New Orleans bore him upon its deck, anxious and impatient.

Fast the days rolled on, and they who watched Fanny alternately hoped and feared, as she one day seemed better and the next worst. Of those days we will not speak. We hasten to a night three weeks from the commencement of her illness, when gathered in her room were anxious friends, who feared the next day's sun would see her dead. Florence, Kate and Mrs. Miller were there, with tearful eyes and saddened faces. Frank Cameron, too, was there. Business, either real or fancied, had again taken him to Kentucky, and hearing of Fanny's illness, he had hastened to her.

She had requested to be raised up, and now, leaning against her Uncle William, she lay in a deep slumber. In a corner of the room sat Uncle Joshua, his head bowed down, his face covered by his hands, while the large tears fell upon the carpeting, as he sadly whispered, "It'll be lonesome at night; it'll be lonesome in the morning; it'll be lonesome everywhar."

Florence stood by him, and tried by gently smoothing his tangled hair to express the sympathy she could not speak. Suddenly there was the sound of fast-coming wheels, and Kate, thinking it must be Dr. Gordon, whom they were each moment expecting, ran out to meet him. Nearer and nearer came the carriage, and as Kate was peering through the darkness to see if it were the expected physician, Dr. Lacey sprang quickly to her side.

In Frankfort he had heard that Fanny could not live, and now he eagerly asked, "Tell me, Mrs. Miller, is she yet alive?"

Kate replied by leading him directly toward the sick chamber. As he entered the

room Uncle Joshua burst into a fresh flood of tears, saying as he took the doctor's offered hand, "Poor boy! Poor George. You're losing a great deal, but not as much as I, for you can find another Fanny, but for me thar's no more Sunshine, when they carry her away."

Dr. Gordon now came and after feeling her pulse and listening to the sound of her breathing, he said, "When she wakes from this sleep, I think the matter will be decided. She will be better or worse."

[pg 232]And he was right, although the old clock in the hall told the hour of midnight ere she roused from the deep slumber which had seemed so much like the long last sleep of death. Her first words were for "water, water," and as she put up her hand to take the offered glass, Dr. Gordon whispered to Dr. Lacey: "She is better, but must not see you tonight."

In a twinkling Mr. Middleton's large hand was laid on Dr. Lacey's shoulder, and hurrying him into the adjoining room, he said, "Stay here till mornin', and neither breathe nor stir!"

Dr. Lacey complied with the request as far as it was possible, though never seemed a night so long, and never dawned a morning so bright as did the succeeding one, when through the house the joyous tidings ran that the crisis was past, and Fanny would live.

In the course of the morning, Fanny asked Kate, who alone was attending her, if Dr. Lacey were not there?

"What makes you think so?" asked Kate.

"Because," answered Fanny, "I either heard him or dreamed that I did."

"And if he is here, could you bear to see him now?"

"Oh, yes, yes," was the eager answer, and the next moment Dr. Lacey was by her side.

Intuitively Kate left the room, consequently we have no means of knowing what occurred during that interview, when Dr. Lacey, as it were, received back from the arms of death his Fanny, whose recovery from that time was sure though slow. Mr. Middleton, in the exuberance of his joy at having his Sunshine

restored, seemed hardly sane, but frequently kept muttering to himself, "Yes, yes, I remember—I'll do it, only give me a little time"; at the same time his elbow moved impatiently, as if nudging off some unseen visitor. What it was that he remembered and would do, was not known for several days and then he informed his wife that when at first he feared that Fanny should not live, he had racked his brain to know why this fresh evil was brought upon him, and had concluded that it was partly to punish him for his ill-treatment of Julia when living, and partly because that now she was dead he had neglected to purchase for her any gravestones. "And I promised," said he, "that if she was spar'd, I'd buy as nice a gravestun as I would if 'twas Sunshine." Three weeks from that time there stood by the mound in the little graveyard a plain, handsome monument, on which was simply inscribed, "Julia, aged twenty."

One after another those who had been with Fanny during her illness departed to their homes. Frank Cameron lingered [pg 233] several weeks in Frankfort. Florence, too, was there with some relatives. Now, reader, if you value our friendship, you will not accuse him of being fickle. He had loved Fanny long and faithfully, but he knew the time was coming when he would see her the wife of another. What wonder was it, then, if he suffered his eye occasionally to rest admiringly upon Florence Woodburn's happy face, or that he frequently found himself trying to trace some resemblance between the dark hazel of Florence's eyes and the deep blue of Fanny's?

With woman's quick perception, Florence divined Frank's thoughts, and although she professed herself to be "terribly afraid of his Presbyterian smile and deaconish ways," she took good care not to discourage him. But she teased him unmercifully, and played him many sorry tricks. He bore it all good-humoredly, and when he started for New York he had with him a tiny casing, from which peeped the merry face of Florence, looking as if just meditating some fresh mischief.

And what of Florence? Why, safely stowed away at the bottom of her bureau drawer, under a promiscuous pile of gloves, ribbons, laces and handkerchiefs, was a big daguerreotype; but as Florence guarded that drawer most carefully, always keeping the key in her pocket, we are unable to say anything certain upon the subject. Up to this day we don't know exactly whose face it was that led Florence to the drawer so many times a day, but we are safe in saying that it looked frank enough to be Frank himself!

Here for a time we leave her, and return to Mr. Middleton's where Fanny was improving each day. Dr. Lacey watched her recovery anxiously, fearing continually lest some new calamity should happen to take his treasure from him. Owing to the protracted illness of his father, it became necessary that he should go back to New Orleans; but as soon as possible he would return, and then—Fanny could have told you what then, and so, too, could we, but we prefer keeping you in suspense.

Chapter XXIV

THE WEDDING

[pg 234]The autumn months were gone; December had come and "Christmas was coming." The negroes far and near had counted the days which must pass before their expected holidays. In Uncle Joshua's kitchen there was much talking and laughing, fixing and fussing, and some crying. Had you asked the cause of the crying, you would have been told that Miss Fanny was to be married Christmas Eve, and the week following she would leave them and start for New Orleans.

Preparations commenced on a large scale; for Uncle Joshua, a little proud, it may be, of his handsome house, had determined on a large party. The old gentleman even went so far as to order for himself a new suit of broadcloth, saying by way of apology that, "though the jeans coat and bagging pants did well enough for Josh, they wouldn't answer nohow for the father of Mrs. Dr. George Lacey."

A week before the wedding Florence, who loved dearly to be in a bustle, came laden with bandboxes and carpet bags. Hourly through the house rang her merry laugh, as she flitted hither and thither, actually doing nothing in her zeal to do everything. She had consented to be bridesmaid on condition that she should choose her own groomsman, who she said should be "Uncle Billy," as she always called Mr. William Middleton, "unless Providence sent her some one she liked better." Whether it were owing to Providence or to an invitation which went from Florence to New York we are unable to say, but two days before the 24th Uncle Joshua surprised Florence and Fanny by opening the door of the room where they were sitting, and saying, "Ho, my boy, here they be—come on."

The girls started up, and in a moment Frank stood between them, with an arm thrown around each. "Why, Mr. Cameron," said Florence, "what did you come for, and who knew you were coming?"

"I came to see you, and you knew I was coming," answered Frank.

[pg 235]"Well, then," returned Florence, "if you came to see me, do look at me, and not keep your eyes fixed so continually on Fanny. In a few days you will be breaking the commandment which says: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.'"

"Possibly I might had I never seen you," answered Frank.

At a late hour that night Florence moved with soft footsteps about her sleeping room, fearing lest she should awaken Fanny. Her precautions were useless, for Fanny was awake; looking at Florence, she said, "Oh, Flory, you naughty girl, what makes you blush so dreadfully?"

The next half hour was spent by Florence in telling Fanny what Frank had just asked her in four or five words, and which she had answered in one, viz., if she would be his wife. "But then," said Florence, pretending to pout, "he was so conscientious that he had to tell me what I already knew, which was that he once loved you better than he should ever love another."

Frank had asked Florence to share his lot through life, and she, like any other good, prompt Kentucky girl, had readily answered "yes," although she was frightened next moment for fear she had been too easily won by the "cold Yankee," as she called him, and she proposed taking back what she said just for the sake of being teased. Mr. Woodburn came next day to bring Florence some article of dress, which she would need. He was not surprised when Frank, taking him aside, modestly asked for his daughter; he said, "Yes," almost as readily as Florence had done, and then it was hard telling which seemed most happy—Frank or Dr. Lacey.

The 24th of December came at last. We at the North who, during six months of the year, blow our benumbed fingers, can scarcely imagine how bright and beautiful are some of the clear warm days of a Kentucky winter. On this occasion, as if Nature had resolved to do her best, the day was soft and sunny as in early autumn, presenting a striking contrast to the wild, angry storm which rent the sky when once more 'neath Uncle Joshua's roof a bridal party was

assembled.

As night approached, carriage after carriage rolled up the long, graveled pathway, until Ike declared, "Thar was no more room in the barns, and if any more came he'd have to drive them into the kitchen."

Up and down the broad stairway tripped light and joyous footsteps until the rooms above, which Luce had put in so exact order, presented a scene of complete confusion. Bandboxes were turned bottom-side up and their contents indiscriminately [pg 236] scattered until it was impossible to tell what was yours and what wasn't.

At length through the parlor door came Dr. Lacey and Fanny, followed by Frank Cameron and Florence. Throughout the rooms was a solemn hush as Fanny was made Dr. Lacey's wife. Firmly Dr. Lacey held her hand until the last word was spoken; then when he felt sure that she was his, he stooped down and whispered in her ear, "Thank God that you are mine at last."

Three days after the wedding Mr. Middleton's carriage again stood before the door. When all was ready, Uncle Joshua knelt down, and winding his arm around Fanny, prayed in simple, touching language that God would protect his Sunshine, and at last bring them all to the same home. "All of us; and don't let one be missing thar." There was a peculiar pathos in the tone of his voice as he said the last words, and all knew to whom he referred.

Long and wearisome at Mr. Middleton's were the days succeeding Fanny's departure, while in Dr. Lacey's home all was joy and gladness.

It was about dark when Dr. Lacey arrived. Happy as a bird, Fanny sprang up the steps. Everything about her seemed homelike and cheerful. Kind, dusky faces peered at her from every corner, while Aunt Dilsey, with a complacent smile, stood ready to receive her. Fanny was prepared to like everything, but there was something peculiarly pleasing to her in Aunt Dilsey's broad, good-humored face. Going up to her she took both her hands, and said, "I know we shall be good friends. I shall like you and you shall love me a little, won't you, just as the old aunties did I left in Kentucky?"

Aunt Dilsey hadn't expected all this, and the poor creature burst into tears, saying, "Lord bless the sweet miss! I'd die for her this minute, I would."

Rondeau, Leffie and the other blacks belonging to the establishment, now came forward, and in the crowd little Jack's bow was entirely unappreciated; but Fanny next day made amends by giving him nearly a pound of candy, which had the effect of making him sick a week, but he got well in time to be present at Leffie's wedding, which took place just a week after Dr. Lacey's return.

Leffie, who chanced to be just the size of her young mistress, was thrown into ecstasies by the gift of a thin pink and white silk dress, which Fanny presented to her for a bridal gown. Aunt Dilsey, in order to show her thanks, went down on her knees, a thing she never attempted again, as it took her such [pg 237] an unheard-of length of time to recover a standing posture. Dr. Lacey had made Leffie the present of a pair of gold earrings, so that she was really a pretty bride, and Rondeau was the happiest negro in all New Orleans.

As weddings seem to be the order of this chapter, we may here, as well as anywhere, dispose of Mrs. Carrington, whom, you will remember, Raymond said he would one day marry. When he left Frankfort, he had no definite idea as to what he should do, but after reaching Cincinnati, it occurred to him that his mother had a wealthy old bachelor uncle living in St. Louis, and thither he determined to go. This uncle, Mr. Dunlap, received the young man cordially, for he was the first relative he had met with in years. There was something, too, in the manner with which Raymond introduced himself that won for him a place in the crusty old man's good opinion.

"I am Fred Raymond," said he, "your niece Helen's son, and as poor a jack as there is this side of California. They say you are a stingy old customer, but I don't care for that. You have got to give me some business, and a home, too."

Raymond's method of approaching the old gentleman was successful, and he at once gave him a good position, which later developed into a partnership.

Feeling himself established and finding Mrs. Carrington in St. Louis, Raymond pressed his suit, and they were eventually married.

The couple were disappointed in their expectations of a fortune, for within two years after the marriage Mr. Dunlap suddenly died. He had intended to make his will and make Raymond his heir, but like many other men he put it off until it was too late, and his property, which was found to be less than supposed, went back to his brothers and sisters, and from them to their children and

grandchildren, so that Raymond got but a small share.

He, however, retained his position as a merchant, and struggled hard to keep his wife in the same circumstances to which she had been accustomed. She appreciated his kindness, and when at the end of three years she was the mother of three children, she concluded it was time to lay aside all desire for fashionable amusements, and she became a tolerably affectionate wife, and a wonderfully indulgent mother.

Chapter XXV

THE WANDERER

[pg 238]In Uncle Joshua's home there were sad, troubled faces and anxious hearts, as the husband and daughter watched by the wife and mother, whose life on earth was well-nigh ended. From her mother's family Mrs. Middleton had inherited the seeds of consumption, which had fastened upon her.

Day by day, they watched her, and when at last she left them it seemed so much like falling away to sleep that Mr. Middleton, who sat by her, knew not the exact moment which made him a lonely widower. The next afternoon sympathizing friends and neighbors assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to Mrs. Middleton, and many an eye overflowed, and more than one heart ached as the gray-haired old man bent sadly above the coffin, which contained the wife of his early love. But he mourned not as one without hope, for her end had been peace, and when upon her face his tears fell he felt assured that again beyond the dark river of death he should meet her.

The night succeeding the burial Mr. Middleton's family, overcome with fatigue and grief, retired early to their rooms, but Fanny could not sleep, and between ten and eleven she arose and throwing on her dressing gown nervously walked up and down her sleeping room. It was a little over a year after her marriage. Through the closed shutters the rays of a bright September moon were stealing, and attracted by the beauty of the night, Fanny opened the blinds and the room was filled with a flood of soft, pale light. From the window where she stood she could distinguish the little graveyard, with its cypress and willow trees, and its white monument gleaming through the silvery moonlight, and near that monument was a dark spot, the grave of her beloved mother. "If all nights were

as lovely as this," thought she, "it would not seem half so dreary to sleep in the cold dark grave," and then Fanny fell into a fit of musing of the night that would surely come when she would first be left alone in the shadowy graveyard.

In the midst of her reverie her attention was attracted by a slight female figure, which from some quarters had approached unperceived, and now upon the newly-made grave [pg 239] was bowing itself in apparent weeping. The size and form of the girl were so much like Luce that Fanny concluded it must be she, at the same time wondering how, with her superstitious ideas, she ventured alone near a grave in the night time. In a moment, however, she saw that Tiger, the watch dog, was with her, and at the same instant the sound of a suppressed sob fell on her ear. "Poor Luce," said she, "I did not think she loved my mother so well. I will go to her and mingle my tears with hers."

In a short time Fanny was in the open air, and on her way to the graveyard. As she approached her mother's grave, she said gently, "Luce, Luce, why are you out so late?"

The person addressed partially raised her head and answered hurriedly, "Oh, Fanny, Fanny, do not be frightened and leave me; I am not dead, and never was buried in that grave, as you suppose, but I am here tonight a living, repentant woman," and throwing back her bonnet, the thin, white face of Julia Middleton was in the bright moonlight perfectly distinguishable to Fanny, who at first recoiled in fear and leaned for support against the marble pillar near which she was standing.

She, however, soon recovered her self-command and glancing at the object on the grave, saw that she was caressing Tiger, who seemed trying various ways to evince his joy at finding one whom he had long missed, for he had ever been Julia's favorite. Their fiery natures accorded well! Again Julia spoke, "Fanny, dear Fanny. In an adjoining state I heard of mother's illness and hastened to see her, but I am too late. Now, do not think me a phantom, for see, Tiger recognizes me and welcomes me home, and will not you?"

An instant Fanny wavered, then with a half-fearful, half-joyful cry she went forward, and by the grave of the mother that day lowered to the dust, the sisters met in a long, fervent embrace.

Into the best chamber of their father's house Fanny led the weeping, repentant

girl, and gently removing her bonnet and shawl, bade her lie down on the nicely-cushioned lounge, while she went for her father. As she was leaving the room Julia arose and laid her small, bony hand on Fanny's shoulder. It had rested there before, for in the graveyard, with their buried mother between them, Julia's arms had encircled her sister's neck; but the first excitement was over, and now involuntarily Fanny shrank from that touch, for in spite of all her courage, she could not help associating Julia with the grass-grown grave, and the large white monument.

[pg 240]"What is it, Julia?" she said calmly. "Do you wish to see father?"

"Oh, yes, yes," answered Julia, "but not him, the other one—at least not tonight. You understand."

"I do," said Fanny, and she glided down the stairs toward her father's room. He was awake, for ere her hand touched the doorknob, his sonorous "Who's thar?" fell on her ear. This somewhat disconcerted her, for she had intended stopping near his door, to devise the best means by which to break the intelligence. But "Who's thar?" was again repeated, and entering the room she said softly, "It's I, father."

"Why, sure enough," said he, and then as the light from her lamp fell on her features, he exclaimed, "why, how white you be! What's the matter? Who's upstairs? Is George sick?"

"No, George is not sick," said Fanny, "but—," and then as well as she could she told him all she knew.

Uncle Joshua's nervous system was unstrung, and his physical health impaired by long nights of watching with his wife, and now when this fresh shock came upon him, he fell back half-fainting upon his pillow. Then rousing himself, he said, "Alive and come back! I don't deserve this. But where is she? I will go to her."

Fanny directed him where to find her, and then returned to Julia, whither her father soon followed. Uncle Joshua was not prepared for the change in his daughter. He did not even think of her as he saw her last, wasted by sickness, but in imagination he beheld her as she was in her days of health and dazzling beauty, when with diabolical cunning she had brought Dr. Lacey to her feet. Now, however, her face was thin, white and haggard, for such a life as she had

lived had never conduced to the beauty and health of any one. Her eyes, sunken in their sockets, and swollen with recent weeping, looked frightfully large and wild, and to complete the metamorphosis, her beautiful, glossy hair was now cut short on her neck, and pushed far back from a brow, across which lay more than one premature wrinkle.

The sight of her for a time unsettled the old man's reason. Taking her in his arms he alternately cried and laughed over her, saying, "I knew you'd come. I expected it. I've waited for you."

Julia's altered appearance troubled him, and drawing her head down upon his bosom, and laying his hand on her thin, white face, he said, "Poor child, what has changed you so, and whar have you been; and who did I buy that big stun for if 'twasn't for you?"

[pg 241]"Not tonight, dear father," answered Julia. "Let me rest tonight and tomorrow I will tell you all."

Chapter XXVI

JULIA AT HOME AGAIN

Overcome with fatigue and excitement, Julia immediately after her father left her on the preceding night, had fallen into a deep sleep, which was unbroken till long after dawn. Then she was aroused by her father calling up the negroes. Hastily starting up, she looked around her and, for a moment, strove to remember what had happened. Soon she remembered all, and burying her face in the pillows, she sobbed out: "Father, I thank Thee; the prodigal is at last at home."

Hastily arising she proceeded with her toilet, which was nearly completed when Fanny tapped gently at the door, and immediately entered the room, saying, "Good morning, dear Julia. I am so glad you really are here and that it is not a dream. But come, breakfast is waiting and so is father, and so is—so is—George."

"Oh, I can't see him, I can't," said Julia, and Fanny answered, "Oh, never mind him. I have told him all about it, and he is ready to receive you as a sister."

So saying, she led the reluctant girl down the long staircase, through the wide hall to the door of the breakfast room, where Mr. Middleton stood waiting for them. His tones and manner were very affectionate as he kissed the wanderer, and said, "I am so glad you're here."

Julia could have wept, but she would not. There was yet another to meet, and choking down her tears she nerved herself for the trial. Of what occurred next she knew nothing until her cold white hand was clasped by another so warm, so

life-giving in its touch that she raised her eyes and met the calm, quiet gaze of Dr. Lacey. Neither of them spoke until Julia, averting her eyes, said, "Am I forgiven?"

"You are," was the answer, and then Uncle Joshua exclaimed, "thar, that'll do. Now come to your breakfast, children, for I'm mighty hungry, and shan't wait another minute."

After breakfast Julia was greatly surprised at seeing her father take from the bookcase the old family Bible, on whose dark dusty covers she remembered having many a time written [pg 242] her name. All was now explained. Her father's gentleness of look and manner were accounted for; and as for the first time in her life she knelt by his side and heard him as he prayed, her heart swelled with emotion, and she longed to tell him, though she dared not hope she was a Christian, she was still trying to lead a different, a better life.

That afternoon in her chamber were seated Mr. Middleton and Fanny, while Julia recounted the story of her wanderings. "The idea of leaving my home," said she, "was not a sudden impulse, else had I returned sooner, but it was the result of long, bitter reflection. In the first days of my humiliation I wished that I might die, for though the thought of death and the dread hereafter made me tremble, it was preferable to the scorn and contempt I should necessarily meet if I survived. Then came a reaction, and when our angel mother glided so noiselessly around my sick room; when you, darling Fanny, nursed me with so much care, and even father's voice grew low and kind as he addressed me, my better nature, if I had any, was touched, and I thought I would like to live for the sake of retrieving the past. But the evil spirit which has haunted me from infancy whispered that as soon as I was well all would be changed. You, Fanny, would hate me, and father would treat me as he always had, only worse."

"Poor dear child! I didn't or'to do so, I know," said Uncle Joshua, and Julia continued: "Then I thought how the world would loathe, and despise and point at me, until I was almost maddened, and when Dr. Gordon said I would live, the tempter whispered suicide; but I dared not do that. About that time I heard rumors of a marriage which would take place as soon as I was well; and Fanny will you forgive me? I tried to be sick as long as possible for the sake of delaying your happiness."

A pressure of the hand was Fanny's only answer, and Julia proceeded: "I could

not see you married to him. I could not meet the world and its censure, so I determined to go away. I had thirty dollars in my purse, of which no one knew, and taking that I started, I knew not where. On reaching the schoolhouse something impelled me to enter it, and I found there a young girl about my own size. Under other circumstances I might have been frightened, but now utterly fearless, I addressed her, and found from her answers that she was crazy. A sudden idea entered my brain. I would change clothes with her, and thus avoid discovery. She willingly acceded to my proposition, and in my new attire I again started toward Lexington, which I reached about four in the morning. [pg 243] I had no definite idea as to where I wanted to go, but the sight of the Cincinnati stage drawn up before the Phoenix determined me. I had purposely kept my own bonnet and veil, as the maniac girl wore neither. Drawing the latter over my face, I kept it there while securing my place in the coach, and until we were many miles from the city. Passengers entered and left, and some looked inquisitively at me and my slightly fantastic dress.

"We reached Cincinnati about ten in the morning, and with a long glad breath I stepped from the coach, and felt that Kentucky and my notorious character were behind. I stopped at the —— Hotel, and the next two days were spent in procuring myself a decent outfit. Each night I went to a different house, for the sake of avoiding suspicion, and as my bills were promptly paid, no questions were ever asked. At the D—— House I saw in a paper an advertisement for a teacher in a school in one of the interior towns. I had formed some such plan for the future, and instantly determined personally to apply for the situation. I did so, but credentials were required, and I had none to give. Somewhat weary of my adventure I returned to Cincinnati, and in passing through one of the streets, my eye caught the sign 'Fashionable Dressmaking and Millinery.' I knew I had a taste for that, and I concluded to offer myself as an apprentice."

Then she told how she had toiled on day after day with dim eye and aching head for over a year in the unwholesome atmosphere of a crowded workshop conducted by a slave-driving, inconsiderate woman named Miss Dillon, while thoughts of home and remorse for the past preyed on her heart.

"But why did you not come back?" asked Fanny. "We would have received you most gladly."

"I felt that I could not do that," said Julia. "I knew that you thought me dead, and I fancied that father, at least, would feel relieved."

"Oh, child," groaned Uncle Joshua, "don't say so. I was mighty mean, I know, but I never got to that."

After a moment Julia told them that she had had to deliver a party dress to Florence Woodburn at Mr. Graham's house one evening and, while waiting in the hall, had heard Florence read a letter from Nellie Stanton aloud to Alice Graham. In the letter, Nellie said that Mrs. Middleton was not expected to live and that Dr. Lacey and Fanny from New Orleans were with her.

This news caused her to resign her position at Miss Dillon's and hurry home. "I reached Lexington," said she, "about nine [pg 244] o'clock in the evening, and as I thought my baggage might incommode me, I purposely left it there, but hired a boy to bring me home. When we reached the gate at the entrance of the woods I told him he could return, as I preferred going the remainder of the way alone. He seemed surprised, but complied with my request. I had never heard of the new house, and as I drew near I was puzzled, and fancied I was wrong; but Tiger bounded forward, at first angrily, then joyfully, and I knew I was right. All about the house was so dark, so still, that a dreadful foreboding filled my heart—a fear that mother might be dead. I remembered the little graveyard and instantly bent my steps thither. I saw the costly marble and the carefully kept grave, and a thrill of joy ran through my veins, for they told me I was kindly remembered in the home I had so darkened. But another object riveted my attention. It was a fresh mound, and I knew full well who rested there. Never have I shed such tears of anguish as fell upon the sod which covers my sainted mother. In the intensity of my grief I was not conscious of Fanny's approach until she stood near me. The rest you know; and now, father, will you receive to your home and affection one who has so widely strayed?"

"Willin'ly, most willin'ly," said Uncle Joshua, as he folded her to his bosom, "and if I had done as I or'to, a heap of this wouldn't have happened. Oh, I didn't or'to do so, I didn't; and I ain't goin' to any more. You shall live with me when Sunshine's gone; and we would be so happy, if your poor mother could only see us and know it all."

From that time nothing could exceed Uncle Joshua's kindness to his daughter. He seemed indeed trying to make up for the past, and frequently he would whisper to himself, "No, I didn't or'to do so. I see more and more that I didn't." Still his fondness for Fanny was undiminished, and occasionally, after looking earnestly at both his children, he would exclaim, "Hang me, if I don't b'lieve Sunshine is a

heap the handsomest"; but if these words caused Julia any emotion, 'twas never betrayed.

From Julia's story there could be no doubt that the maniac girl was laid in the grave which Uncle Joshua had thought belonged to his daughter. No tidings of her had been heard, although one gentleman thought that he once had met with a girl answering to her description in the stage coach between Lexington and Cincinnati. All search in that quarter was unavailing, and over her fate a dark mystery lay, until Julia suddenly appeared and threw light on the matter. The afflicted [pg 245] father (for she had no mother) was sent for, and when told where his child was laid, asked permission to have her disinterred and taken to his family burial place. His request was granted, the grave was opened, and then refilled and leveled with the earth. The monument Julia took care to have carefully preserved as a memento of the olden time.

As will be supposed, Julia's return furnished the neighborhood and surrounding country with a topic of conversation for many weeks. At first nearly all treated her with cool neglect, but as she kept entirely at home, curiosity to see one who had, as it were, come back from the dead triumphed over all other things; and at last all who came to see Fanny asked also for her sister.

Among the few who at once hastened to give the penitent girl the hand of friendship was Kate Miller; and as she marked her gentle manner and the subdued glance of her still somewhat haughty eyes, she wound her arm about her neck and whispered, "I shall in time learn to love you dearly for the sake of more than one."

Julia comprehended her, or thought she did, and answered, "Oh, Mrs. Miller, that one dreadful crime has troubled me more than all the rest. I killed him, your noble brother, and from the moment I deliberately determined to do so I became leagued with the tempter, who lured me madly on. But I outdid myself, and was entangled in the snare my own hands had laid."

"It is ever so," answered Kate. "Our most secret sins will in the end find us out."

The reader is perhaps anxious to know whether back across the Atlantic, Ashton brought his Spanish bride. Yes, he did. Mr. William Middleton accompanied him to the house of Sir Arthur Effingham, whom they found to be dying; his property was gone, and he feared that he must leave the youthful Inez to the cold charities

of the world and a miserly brother. When Mr. Middleton made himself known, the dying man pointed to Inez, and said, "You once loved the mother; care for the daughter when I am gone, will you?"

"I will," answered Mr. Middleton, "on condition that you consent to having a young friend of mine share the care with me." At the same time he presented Ashton.

Sir Arthur recognized him immediately and answered, "Willingly, most willingly. I was a fool to spurn you once as I did."

In a few hours Sir Arthur was dead, and Inez was an orphan. But her grief was soothed by the presence of Ashton, [pg 246] who, a few days before sailing for America, made her his wife. During the voyage Mr. Middleton informed Ashton that as soon as he reached home he intended making his will, by which he should bequeath his property to Inez. Said he, "I have spent so many years of my life in India that I find the climate of New Orleans more congenial to my feelings than a colder one would be, consequently I shall purchase a house in that city, and as I look upon you and Inez as my children, I shall insist upon your living with me if you have no objection."

During the winter Fanny wrote frequently to her father urging him to visit her; but this he declined doing, and early the following May, he stood one evening impatiently awaiting the arrival of Ike, who had gone to Frankfort with the expectation of meeting Fanny and her husband. Everything had been put in readiness. The parlors and best chamber were opened and aired. The carriage and carriage horses had been brushed up, a new saddle had been bought for Fanny's pony, and a new dress for each of the black women, and everything and everybody seemed expecting a joyful time.

As the carriage approached the house Uncle Joshua looked wistfully toward it, trying to catch a glimpse of "Sunshine," whom he had not seen for nearly a year and a half. But only the face of a little negro girl was seen looking from the window, and Uncle Joshua exclaimed, "Now, what's possessed them to fetch that yaller gal! I've got niggers enough to wait on 'em."

But the "yaller gal" knew very well why she was there, and so ere long did Uncle Joshua. The steps were let down, and there, blithesome and gay as ever, Fanny sprang from the carriage and ran into the arms of her father, who kissed her

again and again, holding her off to look at her and then again drawing her to him and saying, "You're handsomer than ever."

During this process the yellow girl, Rose, had brought from the carriage a mysterious looking bundle of flannel and white cambric, which now in Dr. Lacey's arms was crowing with delight as its little nurse bobbed up and down, making at it all sorts of grimaces.

"What the ——, no, I forgot, I didn't mean so. But what—is—that!" said Uncle Joshua, releasing Fanny and advancing toward Dr. Lacey, who proudly placed in his arms a beautiful nine-month-old baby, saying, "We have brought you a second Sunshine."

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