

VICTOR ;
OR,
LESSONS OF LIFE.

A Tale, founded on fact.

BY

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY PETTER AND GALPIN,
'LA BELLE SAUVAGE YARD.

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CHAPTER I.

IN THE DEATH CHAMBER.

THE dark curtains of night are drawn round a portion of the earth. The angel Sleep spreads his arms over men, and folds many lovingly to his bosom; only yielding now and then a few to the care of his twin brother Death, that they may be led away to another life, and to judgment. But some there are who cannot sleep: the active brain, the fearful heart, the sinful thought or deed, banish the friend of toiling man, and bid him go to others who are more fitted to receive him. Some have bidden their friend to stay away a time, that they may watch the entrance of another soul into life, and give it the kindly welcome and the affectionate care which it needs in such a realm of sorrow and sin as this. Others forbear to sleep, that they may cheer the heart of one about to cross that stream which runs between time and eternity. For night seems chosen as the period more particularly for the opening and closing scenes of the great drama of life. And truly mysterious and multitudinous are the transactions which pass between humanity and the intelligent links in the chain of life above it! Could the veil be drawn away from the spirit world, we should doubtless see a stream of souls incessantly coming down from the creative Hand, to bear their part in the problem of human probation; and another stream of disembodied spirits constantly passing upward from all lands and nations, to render the account of their deeds in a life which is theirs no longer. That night there was one who waited the permission of the great Master of life and death to unite with the multitude thronging the pathway of eternity. And the solemn moment, which to so many brings fear, to her blood-bought spirit seemed wrapped in a garment of celestial light and blessed anticipation. Sorrow had entered the heart of every watcher by that death-bed; but happiness overflowed the soul of the departing one.

Let us reverently enter the death chamber; and we may gain wisdom for our hearts more precious than rubies, and information that will be important in its bearing on the future scenes of our narrative.

It was a dying woman and mother. The death chamber gave no signs of wealth—but rather those of respectable poverty. But even under these unfavourable circumstances each article was in its proper place; for the inmates of that humble home delighted in order, and in making the most of everything they possessed. The sick woman might be about sixty years of age, retaining even to that advanced period of life the traces of youthful beauty: but withal lines of care, and imprints of many deep sorrows, and perhaps even sins, that would certainly impress one with the idea that her past life had been a stormy and a suffering one. But over all these the internal feelings of that moment were gently laying down a covering of happiness that silvered every line of care and disease, and promised to reveal even on earth, and in the failing cerements of *humanity*, the bright shades of that garment of permanent youth in which she would soon be able to apparel herself in a better world. In past life she had never been a strong woman, or a healthy one. Having early entered into the responsibilities of a married life, and having borne several children—some of whom gave her much trouble by their singular varieties of disposition and want of true wisdom—for much of which she probably felt that herself and their father might be in part responsible—and, in addition, having had, with her husband and family, a continual struggle to obtain sometimes the bare necessities of life, it was no wonder if at an early period the system began to suffer materially. The greatest marvel was that she had been sustained so long. It could only be accounted for by the fact that God can give us strength to bear the greatest burden—even if our whole existence is an inheritance of trouble. Two years before the opening of our narrative she had lost her husband; but she had had that sorrow softened down by the reflection that his troubles had made him a better man in his latter days than he had been in the former. He had recognised the Hand that chastised, and had wisely kissed the rod; and so, in due time, passed away to that place where trouble could not follow him. Some of the children, too, were gone; and there only remained four—three being present as we enter her chamber. A few months before this, consumption—that terrible and yet merciful disease—had developed itself in the most rapid way; and so she had gradually sunk under its effects, till we find her thus.

Her eldest son stood by, holding her hand in his. She loved all her children greatly, but she loved him best, because he had loved and honoured her most, and had been the greatest comfort to her in life. The others were also near, and all sorrowfully listening to her last words on earth.

“My children,” she said, “I am now passing away. In another hour I shall be in heaven! I told you yesterday that I could not last much longer. But before I go, there are some things which I must say. I have nothing to leave you except a mother’s blessing, and the inheritance of the memory of the way in which she died. The latter may be to you as a valuable lesson, and the former must be a life-long consolation. With you I have had much anxiety; and you will forgive me if I remind you that all my children have not been so kind and so thoughtful of me as I should have liked them—for their own sakes.

Many bitter tears have I shed for them in solitude ; and great, indeed, have been the sorrows which your father and myself have endured from their unwise course of life. But these are past ; and I see already the promise of glorious things coming out of the future for each of you ! ”

She paused for a moment to take breath, and recruit her strength : then continued, “ As to you, Victor—my eldest child—for whom my first prayers were uttered, and from whom I have received more than from all else—I have but to leave your brothers and sisters to your care. From all you have already been to each of us, I fear not that you will be found to lack compassion and kindness, now that a greater responsibility is to rest on you.”

Her son pressed her hand tenderly, and replied, “ I have done but little, dear mother—not more than what I felt my duty to be ; for none know how great their duty is. Whatever in the future I can do for them, I will. At present I know not what that may be. My means, never great, seem now but little. However, I look to Heaven for help ; and as I have never yet been deserted, so I feel I never shall be——”

“ If you do what is right, and try to please Heaven,” she said, interrupting him. “ Listen, my boy. For months before your birth, I prayed earnestly that my expected child might be a good one, and grow up to be a comfort to me ! I expected it would be a son ; and I hoped he would become in the future a good and a wise man. I prayed that, if possible, he might be richly endowed with learning greater than men usually have ; that he might be great in more things than one ; that his wisdom might be of that description that should also glorify his God, because that withal he should be good, and generous, and kindly-hearted to his fellows, and liberal in his sentiments. In fine, I supplicated that he might be robed in gifts——”

“ I am not surprised to hear you say this, my dear mother,” said Victor, starting with a flush of strange pleasure, “ for I feel that I *am* endowed with gifts beyond what many have, though I have not hitherto been rich enough to display them for the benefit of others. I have often thought that I must owe much more to you than I ever had revealed to me ; and be assured that as you prayed, so has He whom I love greater than all the universe, deigned to bestow upon me such qualifications and such a mysterious kind of wisdom, that the world is not cognisant of it—perhaps it may never be. But still I think at times that those gifts, the nature of which I never revealed to you, or, at the most, only hinted at, will yet be of great benefit, both to others as well as to myself. I see so much of the beauty and the grandeur of life, of Providence, of the glory of my great Creator, of *something* (I know not yet what it is) beneath the surface of all human events and all knowledge, that I do not comprehend, but which I feel is fraught with intensely glorious revelations of the future of all our destinies, that I begin to look upon myself as specially chosen to be one of the minds in whom God will pour more of His wonder-working thoughts, and open up more of that deeper wisdom which shall be developed in the last days of the present dispensation.”

“ This may be so : I cannot say, my son. But if, as I think, you are endowed with *something* which you are unable to clothe in words

so as to express its meaning, so much greater is your responsibility."

"I am aware of it, my mother; and I feel every day that I ought to be all the more humble for this, and that the more I humble myself, the more I shall be exalted."

"Truly; but my strength goes, dear children, and I must make the best use of what is left. You know I once told you that before my birth, a brother, my mother's eldest child, went away to India, and never returned. This was at least five years before I came into existence; and my brother was about eighteen at the time of his departure. I do not now remember the reasons why he left his home and enlisted in the service of the East India Company; but I have heard say, that for a time he regularly corresponded with us—was evidently prospering in the world, and at last married. Soon after that he ceased to write home; and after a little while, all traces of him were lost. From that time to this, I know not if he have ever been heard of. I left my home when very young; and with my husband, your father, went into a foreign country—much against the wishes of my parents, whom I never again saw or communicated with. This has been a sorrow with me all my life. But God has forgiven the error, the sin of my neglect; and now I do not fear going away to another world. I tell you these things, because I have a presentiment, which speaks like a true prophetic voice, that these facts will yet exercise an influence upon you all, especially on you, my Victor."

"I think so too, dear mother," said Victor. "I can now account for much that has been mysterious in my own private experience for some years. May God guide me aright, after you are gone!"

"Amen!" said the dying woman. "Come nearer, all of you—nearer yet. I cannot see you as I would! My sight fails me. The darkness of death is coming on me. My blessing on you. May the love and the deep tender guidance of the Holy Saviour ever be with you. May His love ever be as a well of water, incessantly springing up in your hearts, and washing away all error and all the corruptions of humanity—rendering you every day more and more like Himself. In all trouble, may your hearts be able to lean upon Him. In all weakness, may you be encouraged with His strength. In all ignorance and uncertainty, may you be clothed with His wisdom. In poverty, be His wealth your possession. In all sorrow, be His joy yours. In life, in death, in time, and in eternity, may He be yours, and you be His. One of you is away. Whenever you see her—wherever you may find her—take her the same blessing from me."

They drew near, and bending over, kissed the dying woman—weeping bitterly the while, and lamenting their past unkindnesses and neglects towards her. And those kisses seemed to be nearly the last links between heaven and earth that were snapped in twain: for she now had done with earthly things; and by the laboured words which she uttered, it was certain that her sight was being influenced by more momentous transactions than those of this life. She could evidently see what was to her children invisible.

"And this is the *new* life—the beginning of heaven! truly eye hath not seen, nor ear heard! It is light, and growing lighter; and they

come to take me to Him, my Saviour. And the light is growing brighter still! Oh, how beautiful that world is!—and what hosts are there!—more than I ever thought would be. And still they come to meet me, hosts of bright beings! My Saviour—into Thy hands—I commend—my spirit!”

All three were kneeling, and in prayer. And as Victor held the failing hand of his dying mother in his own, it seemed as if some mysterious influence were upon him—that he could see the chariots of heaven, with countless multitudes of bright beings coming and bearing away his mother. All round them were floods of light, certainly not of the sun; and words were spoken and music sounded in his mind, not produced by human means, but by some power—some law more perfect than that which rules the waves of the atmosphere—so that he could understand and hear the sounds as plainly as if human beings spoke, though others might not be able. The words seemed more like the utterances of his own thoughts than anything else. And he saw—as if a veil had been drawn away, and all space around him had revealed itself as being possessed with another universe—another world of intelligent existence, higher in type, greater in power, more holy and perfect in happiness. He knew then that the invisible world was all around us, and with us; that death was the means by which it became fully revealed to us, and by which we could live in it. Then it was shown to him that men are indeed compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses; while the eye of God rules all, and understands their actions best. It was a valuable lesson he had learned in that moment, ever after imprinting this truth upon the tablets of his heart, “Thou God, and the invisible witnesses, both see me!”

How long this state of mind lasted he knew not. For some minutes, the dying mother had been silent; and when they rose from their knees, and looked on her, it was to find that her spirit was no longer there. The features were now intensely calm and beautiful; but the immortal soul had forsaken its earthly tabernacle—to enter an everlasting and an incorruptible home. Till the last judgment, the body would mingle with the dust from which it was taken. The soul awaited that day, being in the more immediate presence of the God who gave it.

And thus Victor was comparatively alone in the world, with new responsibilities resting upon him.

CHAPTER II.

NECESSARY INFORMATION—A GREAT TEMPTATION.

BEFORE proceeding any further with our narrative, we must state one or two facts with respect to Victor and his family, that may be necessary to the understanding of what is to come. Two only were with him at the death of his mother—a brother and sister. One was absent—a second sister. Emily Bancroft had unfortunately, at an early age, developed into one of those apparently fated beings that may be met with in nearly all large families. It is said that there is a black sheep

in every flock; and though poor Emily could not justly be called the black sheep, yet there were certain unlovely traits in her character and disposition that promised very soon to bring misery on herself and her family, if not checked. There being a large family at that time, Mr. Bancroft, though an exceedingly proud man, became willing at last that his children should obtain some position in life, by which they might partially cease to be an incumbrance on him, especially as his means were so limited. The education of this child had been sadly neglected, as indeed may be said of all; so that she was really not fit to take such a position as she might otherwise have done. But after considerable trouble a situation was obtained, where she became a victim of that compromise between gentility and servitude—a nursery governess. In this position she remained about twelve months, and then left; but it was to take a most fatal step—one that might have been easily avoided had she been truly guided by the dictates of a sincere religious faith. She thought that in some large town of our country she might live cheaply, and unchecked by parental influence; and she went to Leeds, intending to support herself with her needle. In a very short time she was in poverty; and probably glad to resort to any means by which to obtain an existence. Money—the little that could be spared—was sent her from time to time. Even Victor helped on one occasion, to the best of his ability; but to all who had done her good, or tried to do it, she returned insults and reproaches. At length she ceased to write home at all; and two years after, it was found that she had married a low fellow—one whose delight was the public-house, and who made her what he was himself—a drunkard. He soon passed into his grave, and his widow sank lower and lower into vice and infidelity. About this time she disappeared from Leeds; and up to the period of the opening of our tale, all traces of her had been entirely lost.

Deep, indeed, had been the sorrow of her parents; and, no doubt, this and the trouble they had with several of their other children, had preyed upon the mind of Mr. Bancroft, and nearly broken his heart. Fortunately for him, he had seen, in his latter days, that many of the sins of his own youth had brought their troubles upon him as a species of chastisement; and for himself, it was ultimately a blessing. It will now be understood to whom Mrs. Bancroft alluded when charging Victor to take her blessing to the absent one—whenever or wherever she might be found. We have mentioned that some of the children died before their father. The two sons who thus passed away had been a deep grief to him also. Edward, the first, possessed of great talent, but exceedingly idle and fond of company, had early imbibed the seeds of consumption by want of care; and, at the age of twenty-one, had passed away. The other, Francis, went away to sea, and was drowned on his first voyage, together with several of the crew, by the swamping of the boat, in which they took refuge, after the ship began to settle down in a storm.

Of Victor, be it said, that he was very nearly self-educated. To his mother he was indebted for his acquirements of the first rudiments of education. But after that an intense desire for knowledge came upon him; he borrowed books wherever he could obtain them; he read

night and day, and wrote, too. At the age of seven a profession was chosen for him. Even in this his talent was of no common order; and, as years passed on, it seemed as if he were destined to become one of the greatest in that department. But a singular difficulty had to be contended with: plenty of people would congratulate him upon the possession of his talents, and would often say that if they were he they would make their fortunes, and ride in their carriages; but such persons were the last in the world to help him. This continual cry through life, and the utter impossibility he found of living by his art, and by his great genius, brought on an entire disgust of the profession. Then he saw, continually, that others in the same position allowed the profession so to absorb their affections, that they could spare no time for the study and investigation of the glorious means of knowledge which were all around them—so that on every other point they were ignorant. And the world was so well aware of this fact, that it was considered impossible and absurd that a man should be great in anything else, or even mediocre. So that Victor had to contend with this prejudice, and to fight year after year against it, until he compelled many of those whose opinions were worth most to acknowledge that he was an exception to what they considered the general rule. But he found, often to his sorrow, that whatever his talents might be, there was still so great a lack of intellectuality that he could not obtain much means of living, even from all his talents taken together. The intense thirst for knowledge, and the love of the *wonderful* and the *beautiful*, led him more and more into the depths of science in all its departments, until he at last felt sure that the true destiny of man is to search out the works, providences, and dispensations of his Creator, and to glorify Him through them. He said that the world—the universe, and all its history—the ways of God in everything that related to man and to nature, aye, and to spirits, were fraught with incomprehensible mysteries worthy of being deeply investigated. So Victor, sometimes even against the opposition of his parents, and afterwards, while incessantly combating the prejudices of friends, and every one nearly with whom he came in contact, went from one department of learning to another, from science to science, obtaining wisdom from each, which evolved many valuable truths through the medium of his own thoughts, until there remained but few subjects of any importance that he could not converse, speak, or write upon. And all this time his great *professional* powers were continually increasing and improving, almost without effort. But during this period he was poor; passing through wonderful vicissitudes of good and bad fortune—the incidents of his life, under their most painful aspects, proving to him after, that all was intended by Providence for the best—and that, as he was different in the nature of his endowments to most men, so the way in which he was to be cared for and kept through his life from actual want, or from perishing, was to be a new manifestation of those ways of God, which are past finding out. So he sometimes knew prosperity; at others the bitter struggle of life; sometimes he rejoiced in a happiness so intense that it was unspeakable; at others, in mental anguish and chastisement, that were intended, no doubt, to bring him still nearer in humility to his God. All through life his heart had been a hopeful

one, and his spirit seldom otherwise than cheerful. No sorrow remained long; life was the time to work and combat, not to despair; and when best able to think thus, he was best able to rise superior to the trials that so often beset him. From childhood he had been generous in disposition, and ever felt it as blessed to give as to receive. In time he found that it was more blessed. He also learned often by experience that whatever we give, if with a good motive, it is ultimately returned into our own bosoms a thousandfold, even in this world. This fact gave him joy; though he sometimes felt anxious for a moment, fearing that if he received so many heavenly returns in this world, he might not be found worthy of any in that which was to come; and he desired more to receive his reward then, if he were to have a reward at all. These were strange thoughts; but they were really important ones. One other gift had been bestowed on him. From early childhood, and especially after the superstitious feelings of childhood had passed away, it was given him at times to see more than most persons—to behold, with the natural eye, spiritual beings. Why they came, or what purpose their coming served, he could not say; but, though many of his friends supposed he laboured under a delusion, *he* could not be brought to think so. His own intellectually formed mind must soon have suggested to him where his error lay, if there had been one. As time passed on he became more and more subject to these appearances. They came more frequently, and in such varied forms—sometimes as guardian angels, with beautiful bodies; and at others in alarming manifestations. Soon after, his study of mesmerism, of clairvoyance, spiritualism, odic force, and many kindred subjects, convinced him that he was perfectly sane and justified in admitting these phenomena to be real and not imaginary. There were other developments of this spiritual gift, with which he was favoured. A species of second sight—of mental prescience, by which he knew the thoughts of those about, or even at a distance from him, at times. In dreams he would visit distant countries and cities, meet and converse with great men, warriors and rulers, see battles in progress, and great catastrophes; and, days or weeks after, find that, as he had seen, so had these things happened. These gifts had so increased upon him at the time of the opening of our tale, that he felt he had been privileged to visit even distant planets and worlds, and to see such things that he could not but believe in. Once or twice some of the great problems of nature had, in such a state, been cleared up, and knowledge given him such as philosophers and astronomers have for ages been seeking for; but as suddenly would that information be taken again from him. Few great events happened in respect to his family or any friends, but he was apprised of them, either at the time or a little before. Each year these gifts increased, though he knew not for what purpose. He often felt he could hold a more close converse with spiritual and unseen beings and influences, if he sought it; but he felt this was not lawful, and therefore he dared not do other than at all times to seek the guardian care and wisdom of the holy Creator and Saviour. In fine, let it be mentioned that Victor had known the deep struggles after a holy life; had experienced the lifting up of the soul to a yearning after a pure life; and the ebbing and flowing of his

power of being a servant of God. He had known how it was to fall away; and again to be brought back, times and times over; but he never lost his *love* to his God, or his *faith* in Him. He had practically known the difficulty of being a Christian, and therefore did not feel disposed to judge others so harshly. He used to say, if God judge us as severely as we judge *each other*, not one would ever be taken to His home. Victor had read and studied religion as well as other things so much, that he felt we ought all to practise a system of *eclecticism* or selection of the best things from every system. All religious systems contain some truth. It is for us to select the *truth* and leave the error. To him it was foolish to condemn anything till it had been well examined from several stand-points. As he saw *variety* to be one of the laws of God in nature and creation, so he felt that varieties in religious sects, and differences of opinion even among the members of those sects, and differences of government among Christian churches, were intended to work out a grand purpose. When he preached the Gospel he believed in preaching "Christ and Him crucified" as the *foundation* of our faith, and *love* as the motive—uniting works and faith—leaving others to wrangle over doctrines of election and free will, and to use the continual stimulus of terror to draw men to Christ, while he tried to draw them by pointing out the love and the beauty which were contained in the messages of salvation. With respect to other subjects, say for instance, that of medicine, he had no patience with the supposition that homœopathy was superior to allopathy; or that either were better than hydropathy, or terrapathy, or kinesipathy, or any other system of treatment. All of them were excellent—and by either of them could great blessings be conferred on suffering humanity; but the great basis of all his faith was in *this* sentiment—*Some men have but one talent; others have many; and in all of them they may be great.* It is their duty to use them all, and to develop them to the utmost of their ability—if only in gratitude to the bestower of them.

We must claim the reader's pardon for trespassing so long on his patience with these elucidations of the character and endowments of our hero; as we feel it necessary to give them *now*, in order that our tale may not in future be interrupted; and that all its events may be fully understood.

The day of the funeral came on. Victor had been compelled to remain in the town until after the interment of his mother. It was a great inconvenience to him, because he was anxious to return to his home, in order that he might be attending to such little professional engagements as Providence bestowed on him—for his stock of money was exceedingly small. But, as it happened, his brother and sister were unable to assist, because too poor—so the whole responsibility rested on him. He had spent all he dared in procuring a few things for his mother ere her decease; and now he had just enough left to pay the expenses of the funeral, and to take him back to his home. To say he was unanxious would not be in accordance with truth; but the faith in Providence buoyed him up with hope that all would be well. It was a very humble affair—everything being done as economically as possible. Victor, as chief mourner nominally, and his two relatives with him to follow. As he remarked, they could give their mother but

a very poor funeral. Her spirit had had a triumphant admission to heaven, and so what did it really matter?

"I would rather men should spend the money wasted over gorgeous funerals for purposes of earthly good, were my worthless body the subject of their intended honour," he added. "If the spirit of the departed could look down and see the mummery practised with their bodies, and the expenses lavished so uselessly on them, how they must be grieved!"

We called Victor chief mourner; but he did not mourn as one who hath no hope. He felt that his beloved mother was better away; she had known so many sorrows on earth, that it was a source of real gladness to him to reflect that she had escaped them, and was now so happy.

While standing over the grave, and just as the priest had spoken the solemn words about "dust to dust," a strong inner conviction came upon Victor, that in a short time some strange temptation would meet with him, and he would be in danger of some great sin—he knew not what. So often before had he sustained such mysterious impressions, that he could not now but feel assured that something would soon happen to him, for which he must be prepared. It came sooner than he anticipated: they had returned to his lodgings, and in a short time had made arrangements with respect to the part each would take in disposing of the few possessions left by the dead, then Victor prepared to take his departure, so as to catch the cheap train. He had, as we said, enough to take him home; but beyond it he now found that perhaps he possessed a shilling or two. His brother was able to get on, being provided with more means; but his sister, like himself, would be but poorly provided for when she was again home, at least until the little furniture they inherited was disposed of. Victor felt this; and a suggestion came to him to give her part of the two shillings. At first he was inclined to do so; but then came the reflection, "You have not enough for yourself; she is old enough to take care of herself; she has as good a chance as you. Why should you reduce yourself perhaps to want for her sake? very likely she would not do it for you." *Self* for a moment prevailed, and Victor would have left them without doing the good action which his better angel had prompted, but there came another reflection, "Remember your promise to the dead: to take care of them as much as possible." It had a solemn influence on his mind; and Victor gave the shilling to his sister without a regret at parting with it. They had bidden each other farewell, and Victor stood at the booking-office obtaining his ticket and change; but on counting, he found that the collector had, in the hurry, given him sixpence more than he ought to have received. He counted it over again as he passed away; there could be no mistake about it, he was possessed of too much change by sixpence. "This is in reward for your generosity," said the tempter to him. "But I ought not to keep this; it is not my right," he objected. "Nonsense," said the tempter again, "why not? they would not give you back sixpence if you had paid that sum too much—besides, they charge very high for the poor accommodation they give you. Keep it, and wish for twenty such chances." Then the good angel whispered, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is much. You would not like them to charge

you sixpence more than is right. You ought to do to others as you would they should do to you." "Here, sir, you gave me more than my due—too much by sixpence," said Victor to the clerk at the office, as he turned back. "I gave you nine shillings; eight-and-twopence is the fare for ninety-eight miles at a penny a mile; you should have given me tenpence instead of one-and-fourpence." The clerk thanked him, and, taking the money, turned to a new comer. Victor soon after was on his way home. About half-way, a poor woman got into the carriage, with a couple of small children; in a little while he entered into conversation with her, and soon learned that she had lost her husband, and was now making her way to her own parish, where, she said, she hoped to obtain admission to the union. She had enough to pay her expenses to within a few miles of her destination, for the rest she must trust to circumstances, or walk. Victor exceedingly felt for her; and for a few moments another strong debate went on internally as to whether he should assist her. At length he gave her half of his remaining shilling, and with tears of joy she thanked him. A few miles further on Victor had to get out and change his train—it being the junction that he now had reached. Whilst walking about on the platform impatient for the train to come up and take him on, he observed a ticket lying before him, which some one had dropped; on examination he found that it was a first-class ticket, and for a station not far beyond the one he must ultimately alight at. Wondering if he should be able to find its owner, Victor walked about, ready to deliver it up to any one who might be likely to have lost it. He therefore placed it in his vest pocket where his own ticket had been, till he discovered the owner; then, to his horror, he found that not only was his own ticket gone, but the remaining sixpence too; and he was penniless! Here was a dilemma; what could now be done? clearly he had been robbed; but by whom? His former train was now many miles away, and therefore if he really knew who had taken his property it would be impossible to stop them, so as to recover it. Just then, in the midst of his troubled thoughts, his eye lighted on a name heading one of the advertising boards, *Hopewell*. He paid but little attention to it at the time, though he afterwards felt that a meaning had been intended to be attached to it by him. It was to show him that he should not be cast down. A gentleman now came by him, and seemed as if looking about in search of some object which he had lost. In a moment Victor thought of the first-class ticket. Was this gentleman its proprietor? He hoped the owner might not be found just then; so that he might proceed on his journey with it. The tempter said, "You can get out at your own station, and give up the ticket as if you did not care to go any farther. Providence has clearly thrown it in your way." But better thoughts came and interposed: "It is not yours; you have no right to keep it when its lawful owner may possibly be discovered." And Victor, so as to escape this new temptation, accosted the gentleman and asked him if he had lost anything.

"I have, sir," was the reply. "My ticket seems to have left me. It isn't for its value; but I am not fond of losing things."

"I believe I can supply you with it, sir," said Victor. "I found a first-class ticket for Waltonbury just now; is it yours?"

"The same ; I am greatly obliged to you."

They now entered into conversation—much against the will of Victor, who was thinking of his own losses, and how to contrive in his dilemma ; and before the train came up, his companion had become greatly interested in him—having found him to be exceedingly well informed in many matters. At length he said, "My dear sir, I am glad the loss of the ticket has been the means of giving me so pleasant a travelling companion. You will share my carriage as far as we go together ?"

"I cannot do that, sir," was the reply. "My class is the cheap one. I am not rich ; and therefore cannot pay for first-class. Added to this, I confess I am in great trouble ; for when I found your ticket, I discovered, by a singular coincidence, that my own had been probably stolen from me, with all the money I possessed. 'Tis true, the sum was ridiculously small, and would have been of little use to me, if I had retained it."

"My dear young friend—pardon my familiarity—why did you not tell me this before ? I shall insist upon you coming with me in my carriage. I will be answerable for the fare. We will get a ticket at once. You *must* really allow me !"

And so Victor had met a friend in his time of need ; and during the remainder of that journey, his new acquaintance contrived to obtain from him a knowledge of his circumstances and aspirations, and he had promised to pay Mr. Bayle Johnson, of Waltonbury House, a visit the ensuing week. And then they parted. Victor was now at home again, wondering over the singular series of adventures he had passed through, and reflecting upon his prospects for the ensuing days before his anticipated visit. To his great joy, his anxiety was not allowed to continue long, for a note awaited him on his arrival at his lodgings, asking him to do something professionally, that would bring him a few shillings for temporary purposes. And how thankfully he could retire that night !—for that passage came to his mind, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor : the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble ;" and "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." And he could earnestly and joyfully say, "My Father ! how wondrously Thou hast helped me : continue, Lord, as Thou hast begun !" And so he fell asleep.

When he arose next morning, he found a letter waiting on his breakfast-table. It was from Waltonbury, and ran thus :—

"Waltonbury House : Friday.

"My dear young Friend,

"I must beg to remind you of your promise to spend a week with us at our house. Mrs. Bayle Johnson unites with me in the hope that we shall see you on Monday morning, as early as possible. You will pardon the liberty I have taken ; but I thought I should be glad if you would favour me by the acceptance of the enclosed, and an entire forgetfulness of the same when with us. Till we see you, believe me, yours faithfully,

"BAYLE JOHNSON."

The enclosure was a bank-note for five pounds, which Victor very wisely accepted, and part of which he sent off immediately to his brother and sister—rejoicing that he had an opportunity to help them so soon.

CHAPTER III.

AWAY TO THE TROPICS.

SIX months have now passed away. And we must request the reader to follow us across the mighty Atlantic—to regions of the earth that have for centuries been famed for their beautiful scenes, and the grand luxuriance of their natural productions. The good brig *Lochinvar* had made the voyage to the Isthmus of Panama several times. Her captain, a worthy Scotsman, with an intensely good heart, and a thorough knowledge of his profession, had made a considerable fortune by these voyages, and obtained for himself a good name for benevolence amongst the people of the coast villages of New Granada, and for general probity and trustworthiness amongst his owners. It was a treat to journey with him, as he was good company, and exceedingly attentive to the general comfort of those who placed themselves in his care. Victor and his wife were on board the *Lochinvar*—their destination being the Tropics; their intention, to study and collect some of the glorious objects of natural history which New Granada could offer to them. People said it was a dangerous undertaking, and they would soon die of fever; but Victor thought that as they were under the protection of Providence, they certainly had as good a chance of prospering in that distant part of the world as in their own country. He had no fear for the future; and the brave young wife by his side was hopeful as himself in the matter. They had already reached and passed by some of the West Indian Islands—Martinique and Dominique, with their lofty cliffs and fantastic-shaped mountains; and the gorgeous sunsets and sunrises of those bright latitudes were become to our hero a constant source of wonder and admiration. For hours he felt he could stand and contemplate these scenes; and had he been a painter, or clever at his pencil, his canvas and portfolio would have been richly filled with delineations of them. On the evening when we again meet with him, the heavens were painted with a more than ordinary beauty. A perfect mirage was visible. The sun was about to set. As this orb sank below the horizon, the heavens began to assume a strange appearance. On one side of the vessel, it seemed as if a magnificent coast-line were extended behind and before him. Victor could see mountains and valleys alternating in the most singularly natural manner. As far as the eye could reach in every direction, these mountains appeared to be covered with dense and luxuriant forests to their very summits; while through the valleys ran streams or rivers, flowing out to the sea. But in one spot was a beautiful tomb—much like those splendid architectural piles one sees in the Parisian or Oriental cemeteries. A broken column rested on the top of this tomb, and wreaths

and bands of flowers seemed to be garlanded over and around it. Several persons were near, mourning. Underneath the little eminence of the valley in which it stood was a cavern, with grated doors, through which, as they gradually seemed to open, a refulgence of ruby and golden light swept through them, as if from the portals of paradise. But this light gradually intensified until the cavern glowed like a fearful furnace. The beautiful country was apparently but two miles to windward of the ship. But on the lee-side, another land, with aspects very different indeed, was shown—an Arctic coast, with towering mountains, capped in snow ; icebergs round them, plains interminable, but still robed in sterility most dreary. No sign of life or animation—nothing but the cold, frosty aspect of the poles. The very mountain shadows seemed cast upon a sea of ice. And this was not more than two miles away, so that the *Lochinvar* appeared for hours to sail up a river, with two climates of opposite effects—one on either side. But as the sun went down, and the moon rose, and sent its tropical light over the waters and over the cloud banks that had produced this mirage, the scene changed momentarily ; but each time into something that could scarcely fail to excite a feeling of delight and reverence. Fair, indeed, are the pictures painted in the heavens in those latitudes. And Victor said, “ Could Turner be here now, what conceptions might he obtain for future works ! ”

About eleven o'clock that night the wind got up. For the next hour it increased almost alarmingly, then lulled away ; and the heavy cloud, that stood in the heavens above the ship, passed away too. Victor had retired, and was sleeping as soundly as the great heat would permit, when a fearful explosion, that shivered the vessel from stem to stern, awoke him. The *Lochinvar* was gradually lurching over on her side, so that in a few moments more the sea would be coming in. Vivid flashes of lightning shot in ; the wind was tearing away the sails in its sudden assault—for it came on in a moment ; the captain had rushed on deck, to find his men taking the canvas in as quickly as possible. This was no easy task ; for some of it was waving in the air, like a gigantic flag, to the imminent danger of turning the ship over. Victor spoke a word to his young wife—so that she might be ready if there were danger—and, in a moment or two, was on deck, ready to lend a hand, if he could be of use. Never before had he been able to realise, even in imagination, the sublime grandeur of a tropical tempest such as he now stood in. It rained fire for hours. The thunder shook the vessel like an earthquake. The waters fell more like cataracts than ordinary rain, holding down the wind-lashed waves as with a giant force. What with wind and rain, it seemed almost impossible to stand on the deck at that awful midnight hour. But Victor enjoyed the scene ; for he began to realise the nobility and the honour of contending, as feeble man, with that great war of the elements. Then his heart, as it almost instinctively went up to God for safety, could praise Him for this revelation of His own mighty power, and feel the beautiful force of that passage, which says, “ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.”

“ Were you not afraid just now, when you thought the ship was

turning over—for we were very nearly lost then—dear Ellise?” said Victor to his wife, as he rejoined her, a short time after.

“Afraid, darling! no. I knew that all would be right. But what a tempest this has been! Was it not beautiful?”

“Exceedingly; but there was one thing I did not feel comfortable with. I almost trembled when I heard some of the crew blaspheme so much. How men can be so wicked under such circumstances, I cannot understand. It seemed to me more a time to praise God than to be angry, either with Him or the manifestations of His power. I hope they may be pardoned; for they could only have done it in thoughtlessness. It must have been exceedingly unpleasant to Captain Dunbar.”

“Dear Victor, why should such tempests occur here more than in other latitudes?” asked Ellise.

“I will tell you in a few words; and, without going into the scientific explanations of the matter,” said Victor. “Whenever you see a thunderstorm, consider that you are regarding an act of mercy and providence. Were it not for these in such regions as we are now in, it would be impossible for man to exist—the climate would be so poisonous. Malaria, which is even now most deadly often to the traveller, would be increased ten thousandfold; and man would breathe air that would quickly destroy him. Did the electricity of the atmosphere not thus find a means of discharging itself, fierce winds would almost tear the mountains up; and, perhaps, ultimately the earth would be set in a blaze. It is the atmospheric safety-valve, is the lightning, even as the volcano saves the globe from being burst into fragments. In colder climates, thunder is necessary. In such seasons when but little occurs—that is, through the summer—when autumn and winter come in, we hear of long, dreary lists of catastrophes by land and sea. In those autumns and winters the tempests are the most desolating, because the electrical agencies must be carried off in some way; but the causes for the production of these are not so numerous in cold climates as in hot ones.”

A few days after this the ship *Lochinvar* had reached its journey's end; and the life-long dreams of Victor and his young wife were being gratified. They stood in the Tropics, amid scenes of natural beauty and wonder, such as their most vivid imaginations never had pictured forth. The great forest desert of the Panaman Isthmus was all before and on each side of them. On the mountains, down in the valleys, on the banks of the rivers, and even in the middle of them—choking them up, and often destroying their passage for days, till cleared again—were masses of vegetable growth, oceans of tree and parasitic life, undulating with all their gorgeous blossoms, like the waves of that Atlantic, over which they had so recently passed when in a semi-calm. And Victor could feel the thrill of the true naturalist as he inwardly exclaimed, “Thy works, O Lord, are very great; and Thy thoughts are very deep!” Here we must leave him with his wife, while we retrograde a little in our narrative, and also attend to other matters.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SISTER SPIRIT FOUND—MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCES—THE
STRANGE CASE OF PROVIDENCE—A LIVERPOOL TEMPERANCE
HOTEL.

THE town of Killington was situated not far from Waltonbury—say five or six miles at the most. Some years ago, and at the period of which we write, in the High-street was a house with two bow-windows, in one of which might be seen a notice to this effect: "Furnished apartments. Inquire within." The owner of the said rooms was a widow once upon a time, but latterly had managed, for a second time, to enter into the matrimonial state. Mrs. Tompkinson had three different means by which to live—the first and invisible one was the income of her husband, from whom she now derived her name; the second, a small annuity, purchased by her late spouse; and the visible one, or third, the lodgings which she let to single gentlemen at five, seven, or ten shillings per week, as she could get them to pay, attendance not included. Mrs. Tompkinson had furnished her house, as she considered, splendidly; in reality, it might be said to be respectable, and might have been comfortable, had the owner been willing to enjoy the things which she possessed, and to let others do the same; but this she could not bring her mind to do. According to her apparent idea, she was expecting to live for ever, and so she wished her possessions to last the same very reasonable length of time. And so everything was taken the utmost care of; the pictures had their frames so covered, winter and summer, with green netting, that it was impossible to see the carvings or mouldings of them; the glasses over the fireplace were served the same. In the bedrooms, wherever there was a chance of the paper of the wall being touched more than usual, a large piece of newspaper was tacked up to protect it, and this was *never* taken down. A handsome carpet was in the best room, and a very good one in the sitting-room; the expense which had been incurred in their purchase was, perhaps, five pounds, for the rooms were not large; but Mrs. Tompkinson, being anxious that their beauties should be preserved, had very laudably purchased, at considerable cost, some damask to lay down over them. This material being very light, required to be cleaned by the dyer twice in the year at least, and so a pound a year was expended for each room, and the carpets were never seen except when the damask was raised for its semi-annual purification, and then no one was allowed to go into the rooms, not even the lodgers; all transactions were then conducted in the kitchen. Mrs. Tompkinson possessed some handsomely bound books, but few persons would be able to know of this fact, because they were always in paper covers to keep the binding clean; every well-bound book was in the same careful condition. Then the large table in the best room was inlaid beautifully (it had been purchased for a small sum at a sale) and highly polished. This we

only found out one day by peeping under the cover ; for, first there was a very handsome table-cover of velvet pile, and over this a common fabric ; the under cover was never allowed to be seen for fear of its being faded by the light. In the best room three other objects were conspicuous—a couple of chairs and a stool, both covered with chintz, and kept everlastingly so ; the reason of this was because they were beautifully worked in Berlin wool underneath ; but who was to know this if they were not told ? The blinds were always kept down in order that the drapery might not be faded, so that the sunlight of heaven could never enter ; and everything in the house was preserved in pretty much the same way. Her lodgers, even, have heard her scold the servants for cleaning the plate too much, as she said they rubbed all the silver away.

Such were the peculiarities of Mrs. Tompkinson.

One evening her latest lodger, whom she strongly suspected to be very poor, though he had got into his head lots of strange notions which she could not understand, came home from his professional engagements earlier than usual, and calling to her, informed the worthy lady that he intended, all being well, to leave home for a few days ; he said, “ I have been working very hard for some time now, and I feel an unaccountable desire for a change, and so I think I must go away and obtain it ; I feel that I require it, for my health is not very first-class.”

“ And where do you think of going, sir ? ” inquired the lady.

“ I have had a strange and unaccountable feeling lately that I should like to visit the sea-side ; the country all round here is so *marine* in its appearance, that every time I look on it the desire, intense longing wish, for the sea-side, comes upon me. I was always fond of the sea ; no place on earth has such a charm for me as that ; and I think a day or two among the shells and sea-weeds will do me infinite good ; so as there is a cheap trip on Monday to Brighton, I shall go there. I must leave to-morrow evening, so as to be in London on Sunday ; I shall then go and hear some of the great preachers, and I shall be ready for the excursion train next day.”

“ La ! Mr. Bancroft, what a queer man you are,” said Mrs. Tompkinson. “ You are never happy, I believe, but when thinking about shells, and stones, and such things. I was only telling my married daughter the other night how fond you were of black-beetles ; and she laughed and said, ‘ If you went into her cellar you might find lots of them, which she would be glad to get rid of.’ I told her I would let you know.”

“ You may thank her for me,” said Mr. Bancroft, smiling ; “ and tell her that her black-beetles are cockroaches, quite a different order of insects. They are of no use to me.”

Mr. Bancroft made known his resolution to visit Brighton to one or two friends ; and one that very evening said, “ As you propose to go to London for the Sunday, you had better favour me by taking a note and this book to my cousin Ellise. She will probably be glad to see you, especially if you will talk to her about her friends at Killington. You might take her out to chapel, too ; for, excepting that old Aunt of hers, Ellise has not a friend to speak to, or to chaperon her out of the house.”

"I shall have no objection to do so," said Mr. Bancroft ; "indeed I am glad of the opportunity of seeing some one that I may talk to, for London is a dull place to a stranger on Sunday."

"You will find her a pleasant girl," said his friend ; "indeed you know how estimable she has always appeared when down here."

"You know it is but little I have seen of her," said Mr. Bancroft. "Certainly I feel I can generally understand the disposition of a person so soon as I have spoken with him or her ; and by the little clue I have had of her character and disposition, I feel convinced that Miss Ellise Wilton is a very worthy young lady, and will receive me kindly as your messenger."

"She will be only too glad, I am convinced. It must be a dull home for her there, with only that aunt of hers to speak to in such a wilderness as London—dependent on an aged relative and distant friend for the care which an orphan girl like her requires."

"Truly so," was the reply ; and at that moment a scarcely-acknowledged feeling of intense pity and interest sprung up in the heart of Mr. Bancroft, succeeded by an impression or presentiment that something more, the nature of which he did not then quite comprehend, would arise out of that commission to Miss Ellise Wilton.

On Saturday Mr. Bancroft joyfully started for London by the evening train. And here he had reason to note a remarkable providence that had protected him. The train was delayed nearly an hour beyond its usual time ; at length it came in, with three of its carriages ripped open from the top to the bottom. Down the line it had run into a luggage train, that was foolishly only half on its siding, and had received a shock that had thus torn the first three carriages, and partly destroyed the engine, in addition to killing one man, and severing the legs from the body of the luggage engine-driver, while he foolishly attempted to spring from his platform. A few passengers were slightly bruised ; and altogether it might be said that, as the train could proceed to London, there had been a narrow escape from a much greater catastrophe. And even this happened before Mr. Bancroft was in the train. Several cases of greater preservation he had known before ; once even when he saw another train which, moving across the line, met his own, and with such rapidity that only a semi-miracle saved them from a calamitous collision. Without any other incident he at length arrived in London ; and, on the following day, after hearing one of the great preachers of the metropolis, proceeded to Cardigan Street to execute the commission of his friend. He found Miss Wilton in extremely delicate health ; to her Mrs. Halleck, the aunt, looked up for all assistance in household and other matters ; and the constant anxiety of her cares had made Ellise a shadow of what she ought to have been. Most gladly did she receive her visitor, and delightedly the message from her cousin in the country. Bancroft stayed to dinner at the request of Mrs. Halleck and her niece ; and, after dining, it was arranged that Ellise should accompany him to another part of the city, where a great preacher was to address a large congregation of children. They went ; but as they were not far from the home of Ellise it was decided that they should return for an early tea, and then go again to another of the great sanctuaries of the city, where a preacher of emin-

ence could be heard, from whose discourse they hoped to derive much pleasure and profit. But just as they were about to go out again, rain came down in torrents, so that it was impossible to venture in it; and so the storm continued till long after service-time at the nearest chapel or church. And so, as the old lady left them to amuse each other, they sat conversing on different matters, chiefly of a scientific tendency, when, suddenly, as if with lightning rapidity, that impression of the previous Friday came upon Bancroft, and the whole subject of their conversation changed. Ellise seemed gradually to be led to talk of her deceased parents, of her desire of travelling, of her loneliness in that dull London, and of her ill-health; and a feeling of boundless compassion crept into the heart of her companion. Then a secret voice seemed to say to him, "Here is a chance of doing good; she is an orphan; she requires some one to watch over and take care of her. Be a brother, or even something nearer and dearer to her, and it shall make you happy beyond conception." Bancroft tried to throw off the feeling and the thought that had risen in his heart, but he could not; the more he struggled with it the more it seemed to rise against his influence, until a deep, tender affection absorbed his whole being. They were silent for a moment, for a pause in the conversation had ensued; then, still under this powerful influence, Bancroft rose, and going over to the side of Ellise, without fear of giving offence, passed his arm gently round her form, drew her to his heart, and whispered, "Ellise, will you be a sister to me? will you let me be your brother? will you love me?" The reply filled his heart with indescribable joy, as that pretty, though care-worn, face rested on his bosom as if it had never known any other place, and whispered, "I will!" Gladly did he learn long afterwards that Ellise had loved him for two or three years before that moment. It was the work of an instant, almost, this compact, and he decided that, all being well, it should last for eternity. And so, in one month from that time, Mr. Bancroft had taken Ellise to his home as his own well-beloved and tenderly-loving wife; and they married with just enough money between them to pay the wedding expenses, and to live for two weeks beyond it. Providence had never deserted him, and Bancroft felt, that while he trusted in Providence—which is another name for God—it never would; and so the sister spirit was found. But we must hurry on to speak of certain experiences which Bancroft had been subjected to from childhood, and which he now began to notice more than ever. It was night, and he slept; but before passing into forgetfulness Mr. Bancroft felt that there were influences round his bed and over his pillow, which would not permit him to slumber for awhile. Ever and anon he would be startled by hearing his name whispered in his ears, or voices coming to him, and speaking to him; sometimes it would seem as if his own thoughts were being uttered audibly; then the words he heard would be exceedingly absurd, or even blasphemous; at other times endearing or solemn. At other moments the spiritual or unseen beings near him—for of the presence of such he was convinced—would speak in languages entirely unknown to him, and not analogous to any he knew to exist on earth. He felt sure these words were real utterances, sounding only a little more palpable than when we fancy we hear our daily thoughts. But at

length this ceased, and distant music was heard—mystical music, that steeped his senses in ecstatic delight, and came nearer and nearer, like the approach of a host, until the room was full of a melody that he was aware no one but himself could have heard, had they tried. It was not like earthly melody, but far more beautiful and chaste; he almost started with fear, then it ceased, and in a few moments he fell asleep. How long this slumber continued he could not say; but from an apparently dreamless state he awoke some time after, and there by his bedside stood a lady, exceedingly fair and beautiful, surrounded by an unearthly light, that seemed to emanate from herself, and render all the objects in the room visible, although the night was dark. The features of the spirit were the exact counterpart of his sleeping wife's; but in a moment the whole face and form moved slightly from its position, and, in the twinkling of an eye, had changed to those of another woman, but still more lovely and unearthly in character. It was but little fear that Bancroft experienced—that little being mixed with awe, and a firm persuasion that what he had seen was not a creation of his own fancy, but a real spiritual being, permitted to appear for some purpose; perhaps to watch as a guardian angel—perhaps as the spirit of his wife's deceased mother. He had received similar visits before his marriage many times, and generally from this lady spirit; but never to take his wife's form, as well as her own proper appearance. But after that occasion he was destined to receive many a more remarkable manifestation of the existence and nearness of *that cloud of witnesses* which we believe inhabits the very space that is round us, though generally unperceived by us. With a deep reflection on what this might mean, Mr. Bancroft fell asleep again, and soon after fancied himself in a foreign clime. Amid dense forests, and over strange mountains, and in groves of beautiful flowers, like those of some tropic land, he found himself continually capturing and examining insects of gorgeous hues, and markings, and birds of every imaginable form and beauty; and so his night passed away. But its fantasies produced a deep impression on him for ever afterwards.

* * * * *

"Why not go to South America, Mr. Bancroft," said Mr. Bayle Johnson, one day, when our friend was at his house conversing on the works of nature. "You would find a paradise of investigation in the wonders of nature there; and would do great things, if you had your health, I am convinced."

"I should like it much, and Mrs. Bancroft would be delighted also; but where am I to get the means?" said Mr. Bancroft. "I have often thought that I *should* go abroad at some future period, and so for years have been preparing myself."

"I will send you there, then," was the reply of Mr. Bayle Johnson. "I will provide means for you. By-and-by, after dinner, we'll talk it over."

Mr. Bancroft felt that a part of his mission was to do good as well as to obtain it; so that when ready for his departure to South America, he obtained means of distributing the Word of Life along his route.

The first place he attempted to carry out this intention in was Liverpool. He saw there such scenes of drunkenness and sorrow that he could hardly have anticipated such things, even in a town like that. On the Saturday evenings, its streets were teeming with a drunken, ignorant, and half-naked mob.

At every street corner were gin-palaces, and some of them fitted up in the most attractive form, with everything that could allure the votaries of drink to their destruction. In one place they had concerts, to which the people were admitted free; and the poor ragged Irish and others were glad to go into the music-saloon on such terms when they could obtain a few pence for the fiery dram, which they were expected to purchase. In another house, a large room was fitted up with a really valuable collection of British and foreign insects in cases—birds, and many other beautiful objects of natural history. It was called the Museum; and there the poor deluded wretches crowded in to drink the liquors of spiritual as well as temporal poverty and death, while God's works were used to entice them. What a horrible mockery! And how sadly our friend felt the doom of sin that seemed to rest on this fluctuating population of Liverpool—rendering many of the people so foul in their habits that every man, in the evening, needed to watch carefully, *in order that his own wife might not be insulted!* “It is the drink that does it,” said he. “If all this foul deluge of intoxicating beverages was swept away, the town would soon find a great purification coming over its inhabitants. How thankful am I that I do not belong to the large class who even call themselves *moderate drinkers!* Certainly I am on the safe side, which is more than the best of them can say.”

It was on the Sunday, and Bancroft, with two other Christian friends, who were likewise going to a foreign land, went out to speak to the people, and to distribute tracts. They found the former a very difficult task, as the police—many of them with little sympathy for such a work—continually ordered them away, so that the streams of people, making their way to visit a vessel in the Mersey, that was exhibited at one shilling per head, might not be inconvenienced. It was right to do wrong there, but wrong to try and get the people to do right. However, at length they found a quiet street, where they felt they could safely address the people. In a few minutes a large crowd of semi-nude persons assembled, and Mr. Bancroft commenced by giving out a hymn. This soon called more together; and numbers of great, fierce men—unshaven and half-intoxicated—made their appearance with sticks, and stood menacingly round. Undauntedly, Mr. Bancroft began to read a passage from his pocket bible, and then to address them—taking, as his leading idea, that English sentiment of “Home, sweet home.” But the ridicule and blasphemies that commenced with the scripture-reading increased so fearfully with the opening of his address, that several times he begged them to hear him, and warned them of the sin they were guilty of in thus treating one who came to do them good. But with a wild yell of filthy blasphemy, the crowd—children, young girls, and women—danced in front of him, the men encouraging them, till Bancroft found it impossible to proceed. He had been foiled in every attempt to preach to them; and so he closed

with a short prayer, and prepared to move away. He could clearly see now that the crowd would mob him, and follow him whichever way he went. And he knew that if they did, he could hardly hope to escape without serious damage to himself and friends. But he put up a prayer for safety in his danger ; and at that moment there was a strange impulse communicated to the crowd by some sudden intelligence that had been brought to them, and they all rushed away—leaving him to return home in safety. Afterwards he learned that, in the street close by, a child had been run over by a passing vehicle, but had received no hurt—having been mercifully preserved ; and ever after our friend looked on this as a direct and manifest operation of Providence. The evening that he arrived in Liverpool, he engaged apartments in what was misnamed a temperance hotel. There are such places as these, some of which are kept by men who have no love for the principles of total abstinence, and are perfect sharks—taking all they can get, and caring little for their victims unless to well fleece them. Of this description was Mike Hicksey, who owned the hotel where Bancroft had taken up his quarters. The charges were for first-class accommodation and board. The real usage was that of a place where the smallest sums were spent for equally inconvenient treatment. It was a custom of Mike to haunt the steamboats, as they ferried the passengers from Birkenhead ; entice them to his house by representing it as being so comfortable to quiet people, and so cheap ; then, when, as they were so burthened with luggage, they were glad, perhaps at a late hour of the night, to go anywhere, Mike had them in his toils. The fare was of the coarsest description, at the highest price, and, if they dared complain, they were informed that they might think themselves fortunate to get *that* ; for it was better than they would have on board ship. One poor girl was staying there, waiting the sailing of her vessel to Canada. She was going out alone to meet her brother. Poor soul ! She had just enough to pay her passage, and live in Liverpool a day or so ; and she was detained a week. Mike had got her in ; and she soon found that she was obliged to stay away from the dinner and tea table, and take a walk—subsisting the remainder of the weary day on a biscuit or two, as she walked about, so as to have sufficient to pay for her bed. Bancroft and his wife found this out ; and, with some of the other inmates of the house, who were likewise going abroad, they saw that she was no longer imposed upon, or allowed to want for food. Glad, indeed, was Bancroft when his ship sailed from that heartless and wicked city ; and great was his surprise when he found that even he had been duped ; for the shipbroker, he soon learned, had charged him twenty-five per cent. on his passage fare—had deducted, from the forty pounds paid, ten pounds for his own private emolument—rather a lucrative way of doing business, if you can only get enough of it to do.

We have now accounted for much that might have seemed abrupt and unexplained in the previous chapter ; and, after we have attended to some little adventures that had befallen Ellen Bancroft, his sister, we will rejoin Victor and his wife in their travels amid the scenes of New Granada, in Spanish South America.

CHAPTER V.

ADVENTURES OF ELLEN BANCROFT.

ELLEN BANCROFT sat in her little room at home, a few days after the funeral of her mother. She was working hard at her needle; for Ellen, wise girl that she was, felt that it was better to be independent of the world and her own master, so long as she could reputably obtain the means of a small living by her industrious fingers. But there were other reasons why it was desirable to support herself in this way. We say desirable; that was according to her own idea. Ellen was not strong. There was much danger of her going into decline, if great care were not observed in respect to her; and Ellen could not undertake more arduous work than that she had chosen. To be a servant, she had no taste; neither would she have had the power to acquit herself properly in such a capacity. Ellen had been reared up as a tender plant—almost an exotic; and this had rendered her unfit for the heavier duties of a servant's life. For a more intellectual capacity, she was unfitted; so she had to make the best of her position, and bravely set to work to keep herself from absolute poverty. Having many friends who highly respected her, Ellen had little difficulty in obtaining such work as she was able to do; and this supplied her with room-rent, and food, and very plain clothing. But as she was a neat and trim young lady—having a great love of personal appearance—she did for herself better than most persons in her situation would have been able.

We observe, again, that Ellen sat working in her little room; and evidently she expected some one to come very soon, by the watchful aspect of her countenance. She was flushed with excitement and fatigue; for she had been completing a dress, which it was necessary should be ready by the evening, so that its owner might be able to wear it on the morrow, and its manufacturer might be able to obtain the money which, just then, she rather wanted. An hour passed, and still the person whom she awaited was absent. Ellen began to grow nervous and anxious.

"He never did so before," she said. "He promised me he would come at six o'clock, and read to me for an hour, and then take me for a walk. I wonder what keeps him! for he is generally to his word."

The door opened, and a person came in with a note, and delivered it to the speaker. "This has just come for you, Miss Bancroft, a minute or two ago," the person said. "The boy that brought it said he would not wait for an answer, and he's gone. I suppose its another order, though it looks like Mr. Marsden's handwriting."

Ellen took the note with an anxious trepidation, and when the person had retired, she opened and read it. It was but a short missive, but yet sufficiently long to produce a change of the most alarming character on her who perused it. Ellen grew pale as death; and in a moment more, she lay on the ground in syncope. Some terrible grief

had stricken her down, and nearly crushed her, as a giant would a leaf. The work she had been doing—a handsome and costly silk dress—lay under her, soiled and nearly spoiled. There, like a stricken lily, she lay for some time; while faint moans only could be heard as she regained consciousness. Not a tear came to relieve the burdened heart, or it might have been better for her. Her sorrow was too great to admit of a comforter.

“Could it be possible that Edwin—dear, good, kind Edwin—should treat me like this?” she murmured. “I could not have believed it of him. It has nearly broken my heart, for all is over between us now; and what have I to live for?”

The person, her landlady, who had brought the letter, now again entered with another note. Her surprise was great to witness the condition of poor Ellen.

“My goodness!” she exclaimed. “Why, Miss Bancroft, what is the matter?”

Ellen slowly rose from the ground, and, placing her face in her hands, remained for some moments wrapped in profound thought, moaning still most grievously.

The landlady, a good motherly woman, who highly esteemed her young lodger, came forward a step or two, and, putting her arm round the poor girl, drew her to her bosom. “My child,” she said, “are you ill, or what has happened? Surely that letter has not brought you all this trouble!”

A flood of tears relieved the sufferer, and saved her reason from the effects of the sudden shock.

“He has cast me off, as if I were some vile thing who had dishonoured him,” she exclaimed, bitterly. “I could not have thought Edwin would be so unjust to me——”

“Mr. Marsden done that, has he? Then he’s a villain! and I’ll tell him so when he comes again,” ejaculated Mrs. Caxton. “He shall not come here, breaking hearts like this—handsome as he is. I never should have thought it.”

“He will not come again; I have lost him for ever!” Ellen said, despairingly.

“But I can’t make out how this is. You have always been a good girl, and have given him no reason to act like this; and all I can say is, that he is a vagabond!”

“Hush, don’t call him that!” said the poor girl. “He has been mistaken, and been made jealous—I can see that. But though I could soon satisfy his mind that I am as good and true to him as he once thought, I will not; for I will never have him now, even if he wished me.”

“Nonsense, child; don’t say that, though he deserves it, if he has been so unmanly as to think you are not good enough for him.”

“I never shall,” said Ellen. “Read his letter, Mrs. Caxton, and then say if you would be the wife of a man who could write that, ever after.”

Mrs. Caxton took up the open note, and read:—

“Miss Bancroft,

“There was a time when I thought you the best of beings. Once,

not many days ago, I would have died to serve you. Even now my love still clings to you. But all is over. I have found that you are as false as woman can be—*perhaps worse!* I would have seen you had I felt that you could have offered any explanation of your conduct towards me; but as I do not, I merely have to say that, bitter as the blow has been to my own heart, *we will be strangers for ever from this.* Should *that other one ever take you to his home*, I trust he will not repent his bargain. Be more true to him than you have been false to me. It is a pity you did not take greater care of the letters you had from him than to let them fall into the hands of others, to whom their contents would prove such an important revelation.

“*Better go again to Wilmington for a few days, so that you may receive his correspondence with greater secrecy.*”

“Yours, &c.,

“E. MARSDEN.”

“Well, I mean to say that after that, I’d kick any man out if he dared come to see me again,” exclaimed Mrs. Caxton, forgetting that, though she might be able to achieve such a triumph, Ellen could not. “It’s quite certain, you can never speak to him again, I should say.”

“I can never speak to him any more after *one* other meeting,” said Ellen, bitterly. “I will *go*, but I will see him once; and then—farewell for ever to him and all happiness!”

“Poor child, I am sorry for you! It’s hard to have such a trouble, and so young too; but, my dear, you must try and cheer up a bit. Come down and have a cup of tea with me (this was generally Mrs. Caxton’s great consolation), and you will feel better. I know what it is to be so tried. I remember once, when I and *my* old man—that was before we came together, months—fell out, how terribly I took on for a day or two; only, he didn’t dare to insult me, or he never would have been Mr. Cax—I mean to say, I never *would* have been Mrs. Caxton. But, my dear, there’s this note. You *must* cheer up, and read it, or you will not get the dress ready to-night. I believe that note is about the dress—to hurry you on.”

And so it proved. The owner of the silk dress was anxious that it should be ready by seven o’clock that evening. But Ellen felt sure she could not now complete it. She felt too ill. But she went down with her landlady to tea; and the good woman did all she could to cheer her up, though to little purpose. They had scarcely finished, when Ellen, in leaning over to take the kettle from the hob, and unthinkingly holding a portion of her work in the other hand, slipped; and, falling, brought down the kettle fortunately on the work instead of herself. The boiling water only slightly scalded the unfortunate girl, but it poured over the work—*i.e.*, the bodice of the silk dress, which had been receiving its finishing touches, and, what with smut and water, completely ruined it—at least, for a time. This was indeed a great misfortune; for Ellen had not any money left to provide herself with food, much more to pay for the ruined dress. And so trouble had followed trouble, and she knew not what to do.

“Not a penny to buy material for a new bodice,” she said, bitterly. “Oh, what can I do? and they wanted it so particularly. It will ruin

me entirely ! Even if I could get fresh material, they would not forgive the disappointment, for I know them. They have no heart for any but themselves."

"I can't tell you, dear, I'm sure," said Mrs. Caxton, weeping. "If I could help you I would, but I can't. I think they would not mind so much if you told them how it was. They can afford the loss ; and as to the young lady, why, she must go to the party in one of her old dresses for once."

Ellen derived no consolation from this suggestion. Her employers she had always regarded as hard people if offended. True, she had never failed to find them prompt in paying her when anything was due ; but beyond that she considered that she would rather offend any but them. Clearly, the dress was spoiled ; and she dreaded the worst.

The intense anxiety caused by these misfortunes brought her into such a state that, in little less than an hour from that time, Ellen was seriously ill, and had to be taken to bed—Mrs. Caxton insisting upon this ; and, at the same time, promising to see the owners of the dress, and do the best she could to appease them, *which promise* she was unable to keep ; for a trouble came upon her that hour, *which was* greater than anything that had befallen Ellen.

She was just preparing to go forth on her kind errand, and had ascertained that Miss Bancroft had fallen into a troubled slumber—wearied out, as she was, with sorrow—when her back door was suddenly flung open, and her eldest son, whom she had not seen for three months, rushed in. He was a fine young man, with features that, ghastly pale as they were, looked handsome and intelligent. He was covered with dust, and seemed to have come in haste from a distance.

"Mother," he said, wildly, "can you lend me, or give me, a pound. If you cannot, I am a lost man, for I shall soon be in a gaol on a charge of robbery."

"What have you done, William?" exclaimed his mother. "Surely you cannot have been guilty of this crime."

"Good heavens ! I must not wait a minute, or I shall be lost. I have only three hours to get back over that long, dreary road. If I do not go back with this money, I am ruined. They have given me only seven hours to make it good ; if I fail, I shall be tried for my crime. I curse the evil genius that could have tempted me to do such a wickedly-foolish action. My goodness ! how the time passes. I shall never get back in time. Have you the money?"

"My poor boy, I haven't a pound in the world. But what *can* I do ? Do tell your mother how you have sinned, and she will see what can be done."

"Listen," he said, hoarsely. "I have been a fool, a madman. There came by at Donningham, a month ago, a lottery sale. They said that every one had a chance of winning prizes, worth from one to five pounds ; and all you had to pay was a shilling for your chance. I went, and saw one person win a picture for his shilling ; and I spent the last shilling I had, hoping to do the same. I lost it ; but I was mad to try and get a prize. They said I could, for sixpence more, have another chance—that many kept on trying, and they were sure in the end to win. I was a fool. I went home with this accursed desire of winning

in my heart, and I took a half-sovereign from my master's till, and managed to make it seem right in his books. I didn't intend to rob him; I thought I could easily put it back again; but I lost all that, and then I took a sovereign. And I tried with that; but I only got for all my thirty-one shillings, a sixpenny boot-hook. But I was mad. You don't know how hard I have tried to return that money. I have only been able to put back ten shillings of it; for with my wages, I have had a difficulty to pay even my debts. Master found it out this morning, and I was obliged to confess what I had done. I hardly knew what I said or he; but I remember he told me that, for my mother's sake, he would give me one chance—if I would go and get him, in seven hours, the other pound, he would forgive me, though he could not take me on again; if I did not bring it within that time, I should be arrested. I know of no one who could or would help but you—if you cannot——”

“Has it come to this, my boy,” almost shrieked the horror-stricken woman. “You a thief! after being so good a son to me. I must save you; and may God forgive you!”

“I did not intend to be a thief; I am not one,” said William, distractedly.

But the faithful woman had left him to get the means of saving him. She had soon selected a few articles that, she thought, would realise the money she wanted; and then was on her way to the pawnshop to pledge them. Her son the while stood before the clock, watching the minute-hand with a look that was almost idiotic.

“There!” she said, as she gave him the money on her return. “I don't know how I can get back what I have parted with; but anything to save you,” and she dropped weeping on his bosom. He kissed her tenderly; and, with a blessing for her goodness, he put her in her seat, and hurried away, and was seen no more. He had just two hours and a half left to do that which he required three good hours to accomplish in.

It was late in the evening. The inmates of the house had retired to rest, and everything was still. With a prayer for his safety had Mrs. Caxton retired, thinking of her son. And Ellen Bancroft had Edwin in her thoughts, as she dreamed in her troubled sleep. She thought she saw him trying to get at her, and save her from some great peril; but a hideous gulf was between them, and warned him back. He was trying to leap the gulf, and place himself by her side; but he could not move; while all the time a hand was on her throat, clutching it fiercely, as if its owner determined to suffocate her. Then the scene changed. She saw Edwin afar off, enveloped in a thick mist, but trying to come towards her, and save her from the grasp of a gigantic vulture. But try as he would, the mist would not let him find his way to her, and the vulture had clutched her throat with such fierce tenacity that she was dying a thousand deaths in her agony of suffocation. But, again, there was a change. She was in a foreign land, and a tall, dark-skinned man, who spoke a language that was unknown to her, had placed a handkerchief of silk round her throat to strangle her. She tried to tear herself away, and to save her life; but it was of no use. He stood exultingly over her, while she felt her life

ebbing from her fast. She tried to pray for mercy; and just then the figure of Edwin met her gaze, hurrying to her assistance. She felt renewed strength; she struggled again. Another moment and Edwin would have saved her, when, with a sardonic grin of triumph, the man took her up in his hands—like as if she had been a doll—and, with mighty power, he hurled her up into the clouds for hundreds of miles, through the air, where she seemed to rush with a speed that was horrible in the agony which it inflicted upon her. And then she fell—down, down into the midst of a boundless ocean, where the waters closed around her, and she was drowning. But, in a moment, the dream changed again; and she stood on a plain, begirt with forest and jungle, and alone—alone. The atmosphere was excessively oppressive and hot to her. It was taking her breath momentarily from her. The sky she observed to be lurid in its strange glare, though it was in the day; and soon the sounds of crackling, and thundering, and of human yells, came on like an avalanche; and in its rear were flames, burning and hissing, from every spot in the great jungles and patches of wood around her. On came the devouring element like a destroying angel; and it seemed as if the world's great doom at last were approaching. Her own breath was rapidly going too; for the smoke was suffocating her, and her agony now became so intense that, with one prayer for mercy from God, she uttered a piercing shriek, and awoke. And, truly, not too soon; for her room was nearly full of smoke, and the flames were bursting through the door and wall on one side; while the glare of light in the heavens, and the confused sounds of the multitudes below, declared that the house and, perhaps, several adjoining ones were in flames, and that the fire was likely to prove a very fatal one. She rushed from her bed, and hurried on some clothing—snatching up instinctively the dress which she had that night spoiled, but which lay by the bedside—and was about to spring to the window, when a dark figure appeared before it on a ladder; and, with intense rapidity, several panes of glass were smashed in; a hand was put through, and the sash lifted, and in one more moment the form was in the room. With wild and almost superhuman effort, the man—and he was only a young one either—tore away the sash, and cutting the cords with a knife, he flung it into the middle of the room. In another instant, the other shared its fate—portions of the lath and plaster-wall coming too. Then catching the failing, shrieking girl in his arms, he rapidly made his way down the ladder, amidst the cheers of the crowd beneath. And just five minutes after his safe descent with the now insensible Ellen, the flooring of the room fell in with a loud crash—the walls following its example—and the house was enveloped in flames. The silk dress was left in the burning building.

In a very few minutes from that time, Ellen Bancroft was an inmate of the house of the Mac Neiles, the owners of the dress; but she knew not, because unconscious and in a raging fever, that he who had saved her from a burning grave was Edwin Marsden. Little did she for months dream of the extent of the blessing which this last catastrophe was to be the means of bringing to her.

Of William Caxton, be it said that he reached his home within the given time, and delivered to his employer the stolen sovereign. But

as he did so, his master was alarmed at the awful aspect of his features, so full of semi-idiotcy it seemed.

"My boy," he said, "I am sorry for you; I am glad you have saved yourself. I thought it best to punish you in this way, better than to let you be taken to prison. I did not mean to have you arrested, but I wanted to teach you a lesson for life, which might be useful to you."

But he spoke to uncomprehending ears; for the poor youth uttered a harrowing cry of anguish, and fell down—bereft of his reason. It was months before he recovered it again; and years before his master was able to forget how fatally even he had erred in this unfortunate case. They had both bitterly learned a lesson of life which they should never forget.

CHAPTER VI.

NEW GRANADA.

WE return to the isthmus of Panama. The island of Manzanilla, situated in the bay of Chagres, on the Atlantic side, and connected with the continent by means of a natural road of brain coral (*meandrina cerebriformis*), was about three miles in circumference, and, at the time when Victor visited the isthmus, the site of a city, which had sprung into existence in consequence of the establishment of a railroad across the narrow strip of land that separates the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. And already did our hero begin to realise the wonderful revelations of natural beauty which that tropic land had promised him. Of itself the island was deeply interesting—being covered with the low brushwood, mangrove trees, pimento, and other floral productions; not to forget the varieties of insects, which seemed to abound in the vicinity. The island teemed with life. Its low mud banks were tunnelled and chambered by the blue land-crab; its sands were swarming with sand-flies and mosquitoes; and the forest, that came down to the water's edge in many instances, was full of gorgeous butterflies, beetles, dragon-flies, and other insects; while snakes, spiders, and beautifully-hued birds found an abode fitting their habits and natures. The scarlet ibis, humming birds, snipes, plovers, teal, pelicans, swallows, parrots, and orioles, rendered the locality a deeply-interesting one; whilst the palms, and other trees, with their wealth of parasitic *convolvuli*, *orchidaceæ*, and *passiflora*, gave rich promise of what might be hoped for when Victor entered the mysterious depths of the forests beyond. On the shore, too, when the tide was out, he could look on a magnificent garden of living animal-plants, by reason of the vast multitudes of anemones of many species, corallines, and *polypi*, that clustered so thickly on the coast. Not far off, a coral-reef, with *gorgoniadæ* (fan-corals), and red, white, pink, and purple-tinted corals, and curious *mollusca* (shell-fish), *echini*, *crustacea*, and other forms of marine life; the shallow waters abounding with fishes, whose metallic tints were as splendid as those of the humming-bird, and amphibious snakes—gave such a feeling of admiration to the observer, that he could not forbear exclaiming, "Great indeed are thy works, O Lord, and thy thoughts

are very deep !” In the narrow pathways of the forests and swamps, behind the town, leaf-cutting ants were hurrying to and fro, with their fragments of leaves, in a great army, the members of which were numberless—their movements being continually regulated and directed by some ants that held the position of commanders, as far as Victor could judge. Sometimes these ant-armies extended all across the island, and had their minor divisions under every thicket, and in many a plant and flower.

The living population of that interesting island seemed to represent all the principal nations of the world. But the deadly malaria from the forests—introduced in the wet season by the winds—brought death to many a visitor and inhabitant ; while the general aspect of the people betokened extreme ill-health ; a sallow visage and a weakly frame told a sad tale of the ravages which fever had produced in many of the Europeans and native Spaniards. With the coloured people—the free negroes and zamboes—it was different. They were better able to bear the climate, and to work in it ; and need have feared but little, if they had been more cleanly in their habits.

Victor saw indications of a desire for religious instruction, and an appreciation of it also. But, sad enough, no missionary had been able to reside there long enough to do his work well ; for the idea prevailed that too much activity prejudiced the chance of preserving health or life. The houses of the people, being light and unsubstantial in structure, though tolerably cool and comfortable, were unable to bear the effects of the terrific hurricanes which sometimes occurred ; and, therefore, it was not unusual to see their roofs carried away by winds, that tore up the trees of the forests, and cast the shipping, as total wrecks, on the reefs in the bay.

But when Victor took his first journey by train, through the forests, to the city of Panama, his heart leaped within him at the glorious visions which momentarily became revealed. As he passed over the coral road, and came upon the mainland, the whole glory of that vast desert of trees burst upon him. He had now left behind him a lagoon, with an archipelago in miniature situated within it—every little island being covered with forest, and hedged round with mangroves ; strange plants sending out young—tender shoots from every branch, that drooped into the water, ultimately found the soil, and came up again as independent plants—the whole being bound together with parasites that, in the rainy season, bore gorgeous flowers. In front of him was a dense mass of foliage, where it seemed as if nature had tried to outdo herself in the luxuriance and variety of her productions. The turtle-dove, the owl, tropicales, and toucans, lizards, and tree-frogs, abounded. Monkeys, boas, and tortoises, were in the interior ; while on either side of the railroad were hot, seething pools of mud, from which lilies, and other aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, reared their stems, and gave forth, from their beautiful flowers, a delicious fragrance. Bushes and sensitive plants margined these swamps ; and the whole were bounded by a growth of forest that became more dense the farther he progressed. The palms shot up above their neighbours, sending forth scarlet and yellow tassels, or only rose a few feet, and displayed a pinnate leaf, several yards in length, and a trunk

thick and scaly. Cedars and espaves (junipers) rose a hundred feet in the air, and clasped each other's branches with their giant arms. Mahogany, lignum-vitæ, and trumpet-plants were there—each trunk covered with climbers, vines, and trailers, endless in number; many of them laden with beautiful flowers, hanging down from each branch of the host-tree in festoons—forming arbours and groves, and oftentimes so massing the other specimens of vegetation as to render an entrance impossible to man. But the parasites afforded Victor much surprise. Fancy a huge tree throwing out a branch that is a giant of itself; and suppose that from the bifurcation of this branch and trunk another tree of a different species takes its existence—sometimes attaining a magnitude greater than that of its supporter. Suppose this, again, to give means of subsistence to a number of smaller trees of a third species, and these latter to others, until you come down to the small tuft of grass, the orchid, lichen, or fungus, and then you have an idea of what Victor saw on that memorable morning. Many of these parasites have had their seeds deposited in such singular situations by birds, as well as by the agency of the winds, and have thus prospered, and become wonders of the forests. Some of the giant trees were thoroughly decayed, but were supported by the tenacity of the millions of climbers round them; and Victor hardly knew that they were dead, so closely did the supporters cling to them. Festoons were hanging from the branches, with bunches of flowers; and sometimes, even on these, parasites were again seen. Every available spot, on the ground as on the trees, was covered densely with vegetation. The hand, in many places, could scarcely be thrust through. Hundreds of species of plants were to be found on a single acre. The gold and silver ferns, *cactaceæ*, *rhododendrons*, *mimosæ* (or sensitive plants), and hosts of other wonderful things abounded. *Callas*, *cerums*, and *regias*, teemed in the muds and low streams that ran into the Chagres from different parts of the forests. In fact, the only channels through the forests were these streams and the larger rivers—the Chagres, Rio Grande, and Obispo—and these were the abodes of tortoises and alligators. The wild hog, or peccary, the puma, and South American tiger, sent forth their savage howls by night, rendering the scene extremely dreary. In many places the ground undulated, and the eye swept over a perfect ocean of vegetation, swaying with the wind like waves in the sea. Villages of a rude description were found here and there, where the natives had cultivated sugar palms, sago, plantains, bananas, Indian corn, bread-fruit, yams, and other necessities of life. Some spots were famous, even amidst this boundless display of life, for greater richness of production. One of these Victor visited, and there he saw the wine-glove, cabbage, ivory, motamba or sago, and seventeen other species of *palmarææ*. In another spot the *cedro* or cedar reared itself a hundred feet without bearing a single branch—its roots ramifying in every direction like immense buttresses; and from its summit spread a canopy of rich foliage over a circumference of one hundred and fifty yards. Some of these trees had a base of eighteen feet in diameter.

Victor was fairly overwhelmed with delight. How grand and glorious did life seem to him at that time, as he passed on to fresh developments of beauty each minute! "These," said he, "are the

manifestations of the beauty of our God. It is a necessity of His Being that He should be continually creating the countless forms of life here beheld, so as to show forth some of that fulness of power and loveliness which His own infinite mind overflows with ! ”

But Victor passed on, and reached the summit of the mountain-chains connecting the Cordilleras and the Rocky Mountains—the great vertebra of the isthmus ; and here the scene slightly changed, and became more bold in outline.

On one side of him towered up a basaltic cliff ; on the other, a deep gorge conveyed you to fresh hills, conical in form—burnt-out volcanoes—but all as richly clothed in vegetation, with here and there patches of agave (pine-apples), and aloes of various species, with their serrated leaves, that would wound the hand attempting to rob them of the insects which they thus protected. Magnificent views were now obtained from the hills—scenes that were continually changing, and producing new surprises for the eye. The volcanic character of the country, and the evident effects of mighty upheavals in past ages, told a tale of strange vicissitudes, of great earthquakes, wondrous eruptions, and gigantic changes of the earth’s crust ; and Victor felt compelled to exclaim, “ Here I see the evidence of the existence of subterraneous furnaces which are still altering the appearance of these regions, and are forcing the vegetation above—making this country a huge conservatory ! Truly the ways of our God in creation are wonderful, and past finding out ! ”

In that district some of the trees were clustered with nests of the oriole, or fire-bird, in every variety of bottle-shape, while the smaller plants had hundreds of wild bees and ants’ nests hanging from each twig. The ant-eater, opossum, sloth, bear, tiger-cat, iguana, and moloch lizard, were only surpassed in numbers by the grouse, parrots, trogons, or scarlet sparrows, crested turkeys, humming-birds, and other winged creatures. On again, through these scenes, to Barbacoas, and Victor crossed the Rio Chagres by one of the finest iron bridges in the world. Here he obtained beautiful vistas of meadow lands bounded by steep hills. The river itself took the shape of a horse-shoe in its windings, bearing on its bosom a group of miniature islands, its banks being studded with massive *caoutchouc* trees, and huge palm and cocoa groves. Then on again through the valleys of the Rio Grande, the swamps of Correndeu, and the savannahs of Corrisal, and Victor sees, for the first time, the glorious Bay of Panama, with its city crouching at the foot of old Mount Ancon, and the Pacific receding unlimitedly away towards the Sandwich Islands, Australia, and other regions of the globe.

As he entered that ancient city, he thought, “ I have lived already to a purpose if only to behold what has passed before my eyes this day.”

He thought so still more some time after, when in New Granada proper, in company with Captain Dunbar and a guide, he galloped through the forests and swamps of the country on horse, riding through miles of water and mud—the haunts of the flamingo, the pelican, and the heron, with the sounds of the mocking-bird and the whip-poor-will around him, and the clouds of insects that rendered the progress

so difficult at times—when he had to wade or swim through rushing streams and saw Captain Dunbar's horse fall, with its rider, from a rude bridge into the torrent, to get out as best they might;—when they had to climb hills where the horses could scarcely find a safe footing;—or when it was difficult to keep their seats by reason of the steepness of their descents;—when they saw the cacti towering up a hundred and fifty feet, and the roots of trees, left by the receding tide of the swamps, themselves thirty feet from the ground before the trunks of the trees began;—when he saw acres of forest covered with flowers and bushes; and by all this the great Rio Magdalena, draining the valley that extended away south seven hundred miles. And then he felt it was pleasing to shut out these gorgeous and wonderful scenes for a time, and take a rest before he entered upon the more minute examination of the miscellaneous objects that were on every side of him.

CHAPTER VII.

LOST IN THE WOODS—A STRANGE SCENE—AN ADVENTURE.

WE must now beg the reader to accompany us in imagination to the city of Barranquilla, situated about thirty miles from the mouth of one of the three tributaries of the Rio Magdalena. In order to understand what is meant by this intimation, we may state that the outflow of the Magdalena takes place at three points of the Atlantic coast: one near Cartagena, with which it communicates by a dyke, or connected chain of lagoons, ninety-two miles in length, navigable for small steamers and boats; a second at the little port of Sabanilla—a village which boasts the possession of a custom-house, like three barns in appearance, that is used—and a custom-house, like a palace, that is *not*, except by bats—having been abandoned a few years ago, after its construction, in consequence of a revolution that broke out in New Granada, and destroyed all hopes of the building of the great city that had been planned for that locality; and a third, a few miles from the city of Santa Marta, where the sea is rapidly encroaching on the forest. From Sabanilla, Victor had journeyed for his final stay at Barranquilla. He had travelled by the native bungalow, and borne, with his young wife by his side, heat that almost scorched the skin, a thirst that was strangely increased by the sight of the water around him, and which the water would not quench, and a fatigue that was very great. His men had been sometimes compelled to cut their way through the vegetable growth of a few days, even in the midst of a stream that was a mile in width; and often then there was scarcely room for two bungalows to pass each other—the forest trees having encroached till they grew out of the midst of the river. For sixteen hours had this journey continued, and they found themselves in Barranquilla, a town of ten thousand inhabitants, and the residence of the principal merchants of that part of the country.

With the enthusiasm of true naturalists, Victor and his wife now

commenced ranging the adjoining forests and savannahs, daily discovering fresh forms of life and new floral beauties. But at length Mrs. Bancroft suffered an attack of *calentura*, or tropical fever, and from that time Victor went alone. One morning our hero started early, having taken only his morning cup of coffee and roll at the *fonda* (hotel). Away into the depths of the forests he went, forgetting to preserve his clue for the return. A mistake is easily made in such parts, and so Victor learned. He rushed into a thicket in chase of a beautiful *heliconia* butterfly; and having captured it, prepared to come forth again. But, alas! this was not so easy to do. He had forgotten in which direction to steer. A few moments more, and he had entirely lost his way. This was no pleasant fact to contemplate. He knew not how long he might be compelled to remain in the woods. He had read of travellers, in less dense spots, being lost for days—always going in a circle—and he might do the same. A number of beaten paths ran out before him on either hand, but he knew not which to take. For a moment or two he stood and considered. It was but little use to consult the sun, for he had not taken the precaution of noting its position when he entered. The only landmark that he could at all fix upon was a gigantic *tuna*, or cactus, with three branches, on an elevation close by. This might serve him as a rallying point. He chose a path which he thought might lead him right at last, and with haste he began exploring it. For half an hour it led him under avenues of trees and by little muddy drains, till he found himself being drawn into the deeper parts of the forest, and that he would soon have to cut his way on farther with the long Spanish knife which he was fortunately provided with. He still determined to proceed, however, as it seemed that the route he was taking must run parallel with the pathway he had lost; and so, what with stooping down, and crawling through thick foliage, while the snakes hissed on either side and above him, though he could not see them, he at length found himself in the midst of an open ground, of considerable extent, bounded on every hand by prickly pear trees and brushwood, swarming with ants and wild bees—every leaf being covered with *garrapatos* (ticks). It was evident that he was not in the right direction, unless he could break through the bush beyond him, and re-find the path. This he determined to do at all hazards, and was preparing to carry out his intention, when a great rustling was heard near, and in a moment a beautiful squirrel rushed into a tree before him. Victor could not withstand the temptation of attempting to capture the little creature. Forgetting his intentions with respect to the pathway, he rushed forward to the tree; but the squirrel was gone; some beautiful shells (*achatinæ*), however, rewarded him; and while tearing them from the corners of the trunk where they had so firmly gummed themselves, he saw some dark, yellow object gliding along before him, evidently with the view to escape. He pushed the bushes aside, and beheld the *morta cavallo*, or horse-killer—a dangerous snake of the district, which is said to attack horses and to destroy them. Having made an unsuccessful attempt to capture and kill this animal, Victor addressed himself again to the task of discovering his way back to Barranquilla. Thirst was now coming on. No man can comfortably travel long in

that climate without a supply of water. Victor had not taken any with him, therefore he had an additional impulse urging him to get into his original road as quickly as possible. True, a little water might be had from the low drains of the district, but this water was so muddy and impure, that he scarcely dared taste it, and certainly could not drink of it in large quantities. With a prayer for success in a new trial, our hero retraced his way to the *tuna* (cactus). When there he took another path, nearly opposite in direction, and it led him away down a steep hill, to a hollow where beautiful butterflies were flitting about most temptingly, and a spring ran out of the sand and clay by the side of him; where tall trees ran up on either hand, entirely preventing the rays of the sun from penetrating the hollow by reason of their foliage. In a damp cleft of a rock close by, on the decaying trunk of a tree, grew the *espiritu santu* (the flower of the Holy Ghost)—an orchid, whose blossoms presented within them the exact representation of a white dove, with its bill drooping on a snow-white breast, its wings outspread, as if hovering within the flower, the bill tipped with a delicate carmine tint—a delicious fragrance filling the atmosphere around it—and the whole presenting such a symbol of innocence and purity that the plant (*peristeria elata*) has been well named. But Victor hurried on, till he found himself in dark parts of the forest, where it seemed as if man never trod. He was now quite lost, and he felt he might not hope to recover his pathway perhaps for hours. The heat was growing intense, fatigue was coming on, and in a short time he felt that he would have to take rest; but amid all the anxiety that now filled his mind, whenever a new insect appeared he was obliged to capture it. Victor was resolved to return and try a third pathway—the last that remained. He did so; but this led him away into spots that revealed many beautiful things, but took him apparently farther from his supreme object. With difficulty pushing in among the thick tangled plants and their parasites, under the branches of trees, with strange orchidacæ hanging from each division of them, and, with convolvuli, forming bowers of exquisite beauty, he soon lost the true path entirely, and saw around him nothing but the dark, mysterious depths of the forest on every hand—heard only the hum of the myriads of insects that were now hiding under the leaves and bark, and in the corollæ of the flowers, from the mid-day sun. Suddenly he heard a rustling through the undergrowth near him, and, in another moment, the South American tiger stood before him, as much surprised as himself. The two looked at each other for an instant, then the tiger, or puma, turned and fled. Victor, in his enthusiasm, rushed after it—his knife ready to protect him if necessary; but that mysterious instinct which prompts all wild animals, unless hard pressed or famishing, to run from man, soon took the beautiful creature far away from his reach. Hour after hour passed on, and Victor still failed in recovering his pathway. He was now growing fatigued, and was glad to solace himself often with the muddy water of the streams. Night came on, the sun set, and in a few minutes it was dark—fearfully dark in those depths of foliage. Then came the thunder reverberating through the solitudes, and rendering his situation an awe-inspiring one. For hours this tempest continued—

now shaking the forest with its din, then seeming to growl under the earth, as if from the effects of a subterranean convulsion. The lightning was an assistance to him though, for it enabled him to see while still trying to find his pathway. Then it was that Victor for the first time heard those mysterious sounds which seem peculiar to the great virgin forests of the South—sounds that no man has yet been able properly to account for—not to be referred to the movements of wild animals or the operations of insects, but rather, perhaps, to the action of nocturnal electrical currents. The Indians farther to the interior speak of a spirit of the forests, which we might designate the “old man of the woods”—probably some such existence as the “old man of the mountains,” or the “hag of the mist,” so prominent in the folk-lore of Wales. But it was not pleasant to remain in such a spot at night, so Victor was resolved to find his way back to the town yet if possible.

* * * * *

He has succeeded. He was only going alongside of the true path all the latter part of the day; the path was hidden from him by the dense brushwood. He stepped forth by mistake in the darkness through this bush, and in extricating himself found a new road, which the lightning revealed to him. The moon was now rising tolerably high in the heavens, the worst of the storm was over, the clouds had cleared away, and it was growing lighter; and so, in another hour, Victor entered the silent town, and reached his home, much to the joy of Mrs. Bancroft, who had long grown alarmed.

Let us now pass over some weeks. Mrs. Bancroft had left South America, and was returning home to watch over Victor's interests in England. The terrible *calentura* of New Granada had rendered it advisable that our heroine should no longer remain, especially as Victor found that future travelling would become more difficult for a woman as he proceeded farther into the interior of the country. He was now alone, intending to follow his wife in about twelve months from that period. The toils of an intensely hot day were over, and Victor stood by whilst a strange wild ceremony, or custom, was being enacted. During the day a little child had died of the fever. It was the son of one of the poorest of the inhabitants; but a wake was being held in consequence. The natives of New Granada say, “What is the use of grieving over a dead babe? It has gone to heaven, and therefore we ought to be glad.” So they have high festival. The moon rose over the town, painting the sky with delicate tints of beauty. The cocoa and other palms stood up in relief against the heavens, like plumes of sable feathers waving in the night breeze; the fire-flies, in millions, floated among them, and over the houses and huts of the people; the croaking of bull-frogs, the shrill click and cry of the grasshopper, and the continual ring of the *cicadas*, and other insects, helped to render the scene intensely tropical. By the outskirts of the town a small hut stood. The door was open, and on a rude bench rested a box, serving the purpose of a coffin, with a dead child within. A light was at the foot of this simple sarcophagus. Outside of the door a crowd of people had assembled. A stall had been

erected, at which one of the people sold sweets and cakes of cocoa-nut. A circle was formed of men and women; the women holding lights, the men clapping their hands, and keeping time to the wild chant that all sang. In the centre were two persons—females—dancing and contorting their countenances, while a man sat cross-legged, beating incessantly on a drum, made of the prepared skins of cows. Laughs, and jokes, and repartee were bandied about; but the chant, with little variation, went on hour after hour, the dancers being continually changed for others, who were caught by some practical joke of their predecessors in the circle. For thirty-six hours did that strange orgie continue, and then the child was interred in the cemetery of the town—the friends walking in procession, accompanied by such inhabitants of the town as chose, winding through the principal streets, with little children, heads wreathed in flowers, and carrying lights—the church bells, two in a peal, chiming merrily the while. Victor went back to his home, and prepared to take his rest. It was now late in the evening, and Victor had fallen into a troubled slumber, when he was suddenly awoke by the apparition that had appeared so many times before to him. It had followed him to the tropics, and thrice did the beautiful, light-clothed form come and hover by his side. The third time Victor was rendered so wakeful, that a long two hours had passed over before he again felt able to sleep. Then he heard sounds at the door of his room by the back entrance—for a door opened into the garden from each apartment, all being on the ground-floor. It seemed as if the door was being continually thrust open. It was not quite dark in the apartment, the night being lightened by the moon, and our hero could see through the mosquito curtains this door thrown open, and a man stealing in. He knew the object of the ruffian was plunder, and he was prepared. A *macheté* lay by his side on a chair; Victor, therefore, noiselessly put his hand out and clutched it; then, thrusting the curtain open, he sprang from his bed, and rushed at the intruder. Our robber was so taken by surprise that, with his native cowardice, he fell on his knees, and cried, “Pardon, señor!”

“Move an inch, and I will give you a severe punishment!” said Victor, sternly. “What could you wish for at this time of night, man?”

The man knew not what to reply. “I did not mean any harm,” he muttered.

“I doubt that,” said Victor. “I have heard that many houses have been robbed in the town during the last few nights. I know that the governor, Nieto, would be glad to catch the robbers, and make an example of them, especially as they are *conservadores*. I suspect I see one of the wretched men in you; am I correct?”

The man seemed so thoroughly cowed that he was compelled to answer our hero. “I am a poor man sent down from Bogota. There are some of us who die for want of food and money. Mosquera’s party will not have pity for us: we must steal. We were honest men—good men! The Padre Guardiola would testify to that.”

“The padre is not to be trusted any more than you,” said Victor. “The padres have been the curse of this country, as I hear, and their

word is not esteemed by people who know them. What good, then, is their testimony to me?"

A diabolical smile lit up the features of the *conservador* as he observed that Victor was slightly off his guard at that moment. His hand had grasped a knife that had been concealed under his cloak, and, like a tiger, he sprang on the man who was questioning him. Victor stepped on one side with lightning speed, and the robber fell by the violence of his own movement, the knife breaking in two by the force with which it came to the brick floor. In an instant Victor pointed his *machet  * at the head of the fallen robber.

"Coward and traitor!" he ejaculated. "You would have taken my life! What is to prevent me taking yours, or delivering you up to the governor?"

"Mercy! forgive, se  or! I am in your power!"

"You shall be more so," said Victor. "Scamp, throw away that knife-handle—fling it from you, that I may take it up, and make myself sure of your being harmless!"

With a stifled malediction the *conservador* did as he was desired. The eye of Victor, even in the moonlight, looked so stern and determined, that he was compelled to obey. "Now," said Victor, "I will say a word to you which you may hear with profit. I want to know your history—who you are, and all about you. I intend to know the truth, so that it will be no use to hazard a lie with me. I may be able to make it worth your while to answer truly and faithfully any questions I may put. Will you rise up and take that seat, and try and save yourself by fair means from punishment at the hands of Governor Nieto?"

"Carrambo! yes, se  or. I confess I have been traitorous with you; but, caballero, you will be merciful, and I will honour you for it!"

Victor now produced a light, keeping his eye upon his prisoner the while. Then, in the same cautious way, he closed the door by which the robber had entered, and rendered it impossible for any one else to come in. Had he been more careful early in the evening, the adventure he was now in would not have happened to him. But Victor had a plan in his head which time would only prove whether he could carry out. He would hear the prisoner's account of himself first, and then settle on what could be done. He had some biscuits in the room, a few that he had retained for extra use in cases of urgency or ill-health. He observed, by his appearance, that the prisoner was evidently famished; and, feeling compassion for the man who would have taken his life, he offered him some two or three of them. "Gracias, signor!" said the man, with real thankfulness. "Carrambo! you need not fear that I will injure you now. I am not bad enough to be ungrateful when real kindness is shown me. What I am that's bad, I have been made by the life I have had to lead lately. Both my own people and the government have dealt hard by me."

"I fear it is but too true with all those who have been involved in this unhappy revolution," said Victor. "I expect both sides have erred; and though I am a liberal at heart, and confess my sympathy with the success of General Mosquera, yet I deeply regret some of the

courses of severity which he takes towards the late church governors."

"Truly, noble señor, we have suffered greatly. But I will tell you what I have gone through, and you will pity me, and forgive the wrong I thought to do you this night. Ten months ago I was taken away from my wife and family at Carthagena, and sent up to Honda, where we had a troop watching the movements of the revolutionists. It was grief to me to leave them at home: one little child was then sick, and it died soon after, so I was told; but I was not allowed to stay for that. They took me up by the *vapor* (steamer) to this town, and for some months we were in constant danger. The forces of Mosquera were gaining greater triumphs every day, till at last it was said that he was marching on Bogota by way of Honda. We went out to meet him, and, in the battle that took place, we repulsed him; but his men rallied towards evening, when, after another fight, we had to retreat. Next day we had thrown up some fortifications round the town, and, with a few guns, hoped to keep him out; but he was stronger than us, because many of our men deserted to him. For about two hours the fight went on, and his men were evidently sure of taking our position. 'Diabolo!' said our captain; 'they will take us all prisoners; we must retreat.' And we did retreat, leaving several dead on the works. We left the town by a part where the enemy could not interfere with us; and, with scarcely food for two days, we began our march to Bogota, leaving Honda in the hands of our enemies. But we were free from them, and in advance for the capital. Alongside of the Rio Magdalena some of our men dropped down with sickness and hunger; and there we had to leave them to the mercy of the crows and heaven. I fear they all died; some were wounded, and could not have lived, if they had been cared for ever so much."

"Poor souls!" said Victor, interrupting him. "I have heard that the Europeans found some of them in this state, and gave them water and food; but they could not do more."

"It was kind of them, señor," said the *conservador*. "But to my history. We at last reached Bogota. In the long march through the forests and over the mountains to the great plain, we lost many by fever; so we were glad when the churches of the city could be seen. But here we had little rest. In another direction General Mosquera had made his way, and we heard that he was but three days' march from us, while there were several in the city wishing for him to come. We fortified incessantly, and prepared for a siege. Then the enemy came up and made an assault. He was not successful, and a few days after we went out and fought a pitched battle. When that fight was over there were fifteen hundred dead on the field, and the enemy, in the night, killed the prisoners, and stripped the dead of their clothing. But long, weary weeks went by, and another terrible battle took place. We were defeated, and General Mosquera entered the city in triumph, and several of us, along with myself, were put in prison. They wanted me to join the arms of our victors; but I would not do this. The General was proclaimed Dictator and President of the Republic; the people of Quito recognised him, and so did they of Venezuela. But he had work to do yet, and will have. The mountain

districts of Antioquia were still holding out, and he had to conquer several of the States. Meanwhile I remained a prisoner, but hoping to escape. During the time I was in the citadel a worthy padre, who had been the pastor of Bunda, was brought in to us. His house had been sacked by the conquistadors, and all the possessions of the church confiscated. The monastery near was entered; the reverend Hermanos were turned out; and the general ordered the building to be sold, so that he might raise money to pay the expenses of the war. Padre Carlos and I were not long in company before we arranged a plan for escape, and we got away; but we did not know where to go to then. Padre Carlos took me with him to a friend of his, where we were hidden for months. We at last got across the plains to Mompox, and, after great dangers, were half-way down the river. But the padre died, and I was left with only a few reals in my pocket, and some hundreds of miles before I could reach my home. If you will believe me, señor, I have been hunted like a dog from town to town, and have been compelled to steal, or I should have starved for the want of subsistence, for no one could help me, and I dared not too boldly ask for aid. But I am here now, and I am in your power, señor. You know my history. I thought to have robbed you of sufficient to get home with, for I have not seen my family now for ten months!"

Victor reflected on what the man had said. "It does not seem that you are trying to deceive me," he said. "I will save you from Governor Nieto. I will take you into my employ; but you must be faithful to me. I will let you go to your family at Carthagena, but you must return to me again within a month."

"Señor," said the man, gratefully, "you may trust me. For life I am your servant!"

And Victor trusted him. Time will show whether he did right.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONFLICT.

FOR weeks and weeks Ellen Bancroft hovered between life and death. With almost parental care Mrs. and Miss MacNeile watched over her. Every wish was almost anticipated before she had given utterance to it. For three long, dreary weeks Ellen was insensible to all this kindness. Her reason seemed to have deserted her for a time, in consequence of the terrible trials which she had passed through. Miss MacNeile scarcely thought of her dress. A word or two had fallen from the lips of the sufferer in her ravings, by which the young lady learned what had been the fate of the article, and generously she had given up all care about the disappointment. True, she did not attend the party the evening after the fire: she rather preferred watching over the young, desolate orphan who had fallen into her care. It had been a kind impulse at first that prompted them to take the girl into their house, and they now decided not to desert her. Mrs.

Caxton met with friends also. The master of William, in his great sorrow for the fearful fate that had clouded the future of his assistant, sent her means of help. Other friends came forward too, and provided her with means of recovering her furniture, and fitting up the little cottage which she had taken, and which was bestowed on her for the first twelve months rent-free.

Edwin Marsden, since that night, had been the hero of the town of Fordham. His dangerous feat of rescuing Ellen at the risk of his own life was greatly applauded. A few knew that he had been attached to her by the near tie of affection, but none knew of the canker-worm of jealousy and despair which was gnawing at his heart. He paces his room like one insane, as we, for the first time, fairly introduce him. Never had he contrived to obtain news of the progress of her whom he had saved. What would he not have given to hear that she was out of danger! What would he not have gone through to clear up the doubts which darkened his soul respecting her! For he loved her with a perfect idolatry; and, angry as the tone of his letter had been to her—that letter which we read, and which prefaced the sorrows of Ellen—he would still have gloried in folding her to his heart, and hearing her tell him truthfully that he had erred—that she was true and faithful to him, and had ever been. “I must have been mad,” he murmured, “to have listened to the suggestions of Edward. It must have been a mistake; and yet, how am I to get over that letter?” And the young man fairly groaned with the anguish which this reflection brought him. “But I must see her when she is better; I believe the MacNeiles will permit me. I must talk to her about this matter. Perhaps, after all, she might be able to clear up the mystery of the letter. Could it be possible that she did not write it, or that it bears another meaning than it seems to have done? I cannot say for certain, after all; I must look at it again!” And the young man took a crumpled letter from his pocket, written in a female hand—the identical autograph of Ellen Bancroft, for he knew her handwriting well—and he read it over for the hundredth time.

“Dear Alfred—I cannot help the fate that rests upon me. As you are aware, my heart was given to another long before I knew you. But since you have come across my path, I feel compelled to place that *past image* away among the recollections of other days, and give my affections entirely to you. I told you frankly how I have been situated. I tell you frankly of the circumstances that have already affected me—and this, that you may know that I will be true to you. A future word of jealousy and unkindness would break my heart. Let this, then, be remembered—that the great esteem and affection for the *one now gone* cannot ever pass away; but whenever you wish it, I will be yours. I will see you on the evening you name; and I will bear in mind meanwhile what you told me during the days I was with you so short a time since. Till that appointed hour, which I await, perhaps, as anxiously as yourself, I continue, as I ever will, your truly faithful one, E. B.”

“There can be no mistake,” said Edwin, in anguish. “She can never get over this. She cannot satisfactorily account for such

double-dealing. Heaven forgive her! I will too; for have I not saved her life? though for another! But I will see her once, though the interview doom me to life-long misery; and then, farewell to this place and all its associations for ever! Farewell to all happiness—for *that* is wrecked irretrievably! If I had not seen her myself, I might have doubted the justice of acting as I have; but I could not be mistaken, I who knew her features, and even her way of walking so well. And then, the letter, too. I will go this night and see Mrs. MacNeile—ascertain how Ellen is, and if I may be allowed an interview!" And consistent with his resolution, the youth went. Mrs. MacNeile was rejoicing in the fact that her charge had that day been pronounced out of danger; that the fever was over—her reason had returned; and that Dr. Williamson had said she required some little excitement to bring her vital powers into a healthier action. So, at the earnest entreaty of Edwin, he was admitted to the presence of the being whom he felt to be so dear to him, and whom he now saw for the first time since the night of the fire. He had sent up a message first—asking her to see him; and Ellen, gentle and humble as a child, completely changed by her afflictions, sent him word that for a few minutes she would admit him.

What a shock the sight gave him! He had expected to see a pale, attenuated being; but Ellen was fearfully shattered; and he felt he could not have the heart to speak of those doubts and that subject so vital to his own happiness. She held out her thin hand as he entered, with a wan smile.

"Mr. Marsden," she said, "I am glad you are come. I wished to see you, to thank you,—oh, so gratefully!—for saving my life."

"I was only too happy to do it," he replied. "Ellen, it has been a great boon to me to effect this. I did not call to be thanked; but I foolishly felt I must once more look on that face which has been so dear to me, before I go away from this town for ever."

"Go away!" she said, sorrowfully. "Well, perhaps it is better so, after all that has occurred. I feel it is better for both of us; but believe me, the love I had, *still have*, will ever mingle with the profound gratitude and respect I cherish for you in that matter of the fire!"

"Love!" he said, sadly. "Don't say love! say friendship, Ellen. You have no love for me—neither have I a right to look for it, after what has passed. Have I not given up all hope of it? Do not be offended because I say so, and take a step that saves you from a great embarrassment; only that I would have been glad to have found you more truthful—even if you were so changed by your destiny in your feelings for me."

"My feelings never changed towards you till that evening," said Ellen. "After that, I felt I lost all esteem—at least all respect, all confidence, if not love. But you saved my life; and I shall never cease now to cherish a deeper affection than ever."

"Lost your respect!" said Edwin. "How could you expect me to act otherwise than I did, when I had proofs of your altered affections. I was not jealous till then; and then I felt that I must give you up myself——"

"Mr. Marsden," she put in, "I never yet have understood what

you meant, when alluding to the proofs you spoke of. Believe me that neither in word, or deed, or thought, have I been otherwise than faithful to you, as an affianced girl should be; then how could you doubt me? I do not say this in anger; for I never can be angry with you again—though all is over between us.”

“It need not have been, but for your own fault, Ellen. Even now I could take you again to my heart, and ask your pardon too, if you had a power which I feel you have not, even by what you said just now.”

“What power?” she asked; “though,” she added, “it matters little now what you mean. I could never marry a man who had once doubted me in the way you have—love him as I may.”

“Doubted you!” he cried, agonisingly, as he bent his head down and wept. “I have had too much reason to doubt you; and since you seem to challenge me—do I not now hold a letter written to another—confessing love for him, and speaking of a past affection which you have crushed for his sake? Was not this written at a time when you still continued to receive the visits of the first friend? and is not that letter written and signed with your own hand? And have I not seen you with that other—meeting him? Do I not know that you went to visit his friends for some days, when it was supposed that you were at the funeral of your mother? Then how am I to feel that I did an unjust thing, when breaking off that connection in the way I did a few weeks since? Even your brother Victor, to whom I wrote, could not but justly say I was right—though he thereby decided against his own sister.”

“I do not know how you could hold a letter of mine, or how you could have the unmanliness to possess yourself of such a thing,” she said, coldly. “But why not prove these assertions, by producing the letter which you allude to?”

“I can easily do so,” he answered, gloomily. “Do you know that?”—And he handed the fatal letter to the trembling girl. “Is not that your own production?”

She took the missive and read it over—in deep interest, apparently; then folding it up, and giving it back to him, she said, “You have a strong proof, ’tis true, of what you advance against me. But it is not worth speaking of now; for all is over between us. You may keep the letter. It matters little. You have taken the initiatory step. I do not seek to know how you possessed yourself of this letter; that is your own affair. Let all be forgotten and forgiven; and we will henceforth be as strangers!”

He glanced into her troubled eyes for a moment. He seemed to read firmness of purpose there. He was too proud to say a word more on the matter; so flinging the letter on the couch, he took her hand, pressed it kindly, and, as he walked away, said, “God bless your future, Ellen. May you and he be happy. In a week I shall leave this town. We may never meet again; but should you ever require help in that future, a word or two in the *Times* newspaper, addressed to me, shall bring it!”

“God bless you!” she said; “but I should never ask it!”

He was gone; and when Mrs. MacNeile came into her room,

Ellen Bancroft was sobbing bitterly; whereat that lady marvelled greatly.

"My child, what, in trouble!—what has happened? Surely Mr. Marsden has not been chiding you for anything, or telling you something that has given you grief!" said the lady.

"Dear lady," replied the weeping girl, "I am very foolish; but I am in trouble. There have been the last words said between us for ever perhaps. I thought I could have borne it better, when I allowed Mr. Marsden to come up."

"The last words for ever! You have not quarrelled?"

"I honour him too well for that. But he doubted me—had not faith in my truthfulness *before* he saved my life—and therefore I can never be his wife now. It is all over between us. I wish I had died that night!"

"Hush, my child! don't say so. There will be something good come out of all this trouble yet. Nothing happens but for our welfare, even when it appears most full of dark passages."

"I wish I could think so. I never had great faith. I have not been good and pious like you, my kind benefactor, so I do not know how to take the consolation which you realise. Besides, if you knew my trouble, you would say it was difficult to get consolation, when the hopes of all future life are blighted!"

"Let me know your sorrow, my girl, and I will see Mr. Marsden, and try and make peace between you!"

"I thank you, dear Mrs. MacNeile; but that is impossible. I will tell you the whole history as far as I can understand it, and you must judge what it means." And Ellen related all that had taken place, from the severance of the bond between them by Edwin, to the particulars of the interview that was just concluded.

"I know not what to think, Ellen, especially after reading your letter, which appears greatly to condemn you, if it mean what it seems to do. It would appear, to speak with justice, that he has acted rightly; and you wrongly, unjustly, and unmaidenly towards him! He had a right to expect that you would be truthful with him; and not give or receive communications of this nature from another, when he was addressing you—especially without first acquainting him with the fact. I must truthfully declare, I do not respect you for the way in which you have acted!"

"I never wrote that letter, ma'am," said Ellen, sobbingly. "I never saw it till Mr. Marsden brought it just now. How he got it, I cannot say. But I am as innocent of what he charges me with as woman can be!"

"You greatly mystify me, Ellen," said the lady. "If I am to believe you, some almost impossible forgery has been committed. You say you never wrote this letter, and yet it is in your own handwriting, and signed with the initials of your own name. How can this be? And why did you not tell Mr. Marsden so, and prove it to him?" And Mrs. MacNeile spoke very severely.

"You have a right to chide me, ma'am. Perhaps I have been wrong; but Edwin doubted me, and gave me up without first seeing me himself on the subject; and it hurt my pride. When he was here

just now, I felt all that pride in my heart; and I would not justify myself."

"This was wrong. It is a great sin to leave a person under a bad impression that way. It is trifling with their happiness. If what you say be true, then Mr. Marsden had quite as much right to have these doubts of his cleared away, as you your honour, for his own peace of mind. It is a crime to fling away the future happiness of two persons through pride. But I must hear your account of this letter—see the proof that you did not write it; and then I can better know what to say and advise, and what to think of you. And believe me, that as a friend, I consider under any circumstances, you are more to blame than Mr. Marsden. If you did not write that letter, who do you suspect did?"

"Listen, ma'am," said Ellen. "In all respects but one—and that a comparatively insignificant one—the handwriting is like mine; that is, in the formation of the pronoun *I*. I will write you a line or two presently; and you will see a great difference between my capital *I's*, and those in that letter. In the next place, I have a sister—Mr. Marsden never knew of that, for I did not acknowledge her, she has been such a disgrace to us, till after my poor mother's death, a little while since. It was her wish that her blessing should be given to our sister as soon as she might be found; but I did not tell Edwin, as I ought; and so I am punished. That sister is so nearly like myself, that when we are apart, no one could tell the difference between us; when we are together, it might easily be seen. You have doubtless known many such cases, ma'am?"

"I have, truly," was the reply. "It is one of those mysteries in nature which I cannot account for. I have often felt that even English people might be classified according to their type of features, even as zoological specimens are—that out of a thousand men and women, several might be taken that you would easily mistake one for the other, when apart from each other."

"It is so with my sister and me. Then, although she is older, and has been through much more than I have, she must still bear that strong resemblance. Her voice is like mine—though perhaps a little rougher. Her handwriting is like mine, except in that one case that I have mentioned, respecting the pronoun *I*. For some years I have not heard of her. When last we knew of her whereabouts, she was in Leeds. She must now be in this district—perhaps not knowing that I am here. She has once been married. Her husband died before we lost sight of her. She was greatly attached to him; I suspect that she is corresponding with some one else. Her christian name was Emily, and her widow's name, Burton. This accounts for the initials being the same as mine, 'M. B.' How Edwin possessed himself of this letter I know not. I was too proud to tell him what I have told you. I have acted wrongly; but he will not forgive me now. Still I should like to see him again; and I should like to see my sister Emily, if only to give her the blessing mother left her; and part of the little money which I expect to receive, when my brother Thomas has sold the few things which belonged to our mother. I cannot think how it is that he has not sent it before this."

"I expect he has sent," said Mrs. MacNeile; "for I have this day received a letter for you: I didn't give it to you before, because I feared you were too ill to read it; and it might not be good for you. But you shall have it now; and to-morrow morning I will see Mr. Marsden, and have a talk with him; and together we will try and discover your sister, and clear you in his opinions. So you must hope for a happy future yet, and try and get well!" And the lady pressed the hand of the wan and troubled invalid.

"I know not, kind friend, how I can ever repay you," said Ellen. "There are not many who would be so kind as you are to me!"

"Do not name that," replied her friend; "there are more kind people in the world than any of us dream of. We do not always judge the world aright when we suppose there is not benevolence in it; or that that benevolence is confined to a few." So saying, Mrs. MacNeile handed Ellen her letter, which proved to contain the remittance which she had expected, and the information that her brother was doing well; and left her.

For some time the lady thought over these things deeply; and she resolved to go that very night and see Mr. Marsden.

The result of that interview will appear in another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

VICTOR'S ADVENTURES IN SANTA MARTA.

It was drawing towards nightfall; and already the broad shadows of the Sierras Nevadas were stealing over the city of Santa Marta. A semi-hurricane was blowing from the mountains towards the harbour; and whirling round the ships, as if determined to carry them away to sea, or blow them over. Heavy masses of cloud, like luggage-vans on a railroad, were following each other, thousands of feet up in the mountains—at times making them appear as if one part had been severed from the other, and the upper portions were suspended in atmosphere only. The snowy mountains are grand objects, 17,500 feet above the level of the sea; not connected with the Andes or Cordilleras; but looking about as much isolated as the Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are from the hills of Radnor or Monmouth in England and Wales. The city of Santa Marta, about forty miles from the Rio Magdalena, the first port in New Granada, and the chief town of the state of Magdalena, with a population of 4,400, a hospital, a college, and a cathedral, rested at the base of these mountains; and though of tolerable extent, it yet appeared much more dwarfed in contrast with the stupendous piles of earth's masonry above it. All round, and reaching to the sea, was a broad flat plateau, oftentimes under water. At a little distance, the *gigantesereus tuna*, or giant cactus, flourished—being planted by nature in rows, as perfectly as if man had done it; and far up the mountains on one side this natural plantation continued to be visible. Some beautiful flowers had twined themselves round these cacti; and the pithy flesh of the plants formed

food and an abode for numerous *curculionidæ* (weevils), cochineal insects, and others. *Mimosa* covered the ground down to the water's edge, over which moths of many genera were flying in abundance. In the bay an island appeared, only separated about half a mile from the mainland, from which, at no very distant epoch, it had evidently been severed by the action of the sea.

As the shadows crept more and more over the town and harbour, a young man might have been seen making his way from the *Calle del Iglesia* towards this cactus swamp to which we have alluded. He was gazing listlessly about—not appearing to take much interest in anything but the thoughts which seemed to fill his mind at that time; and yet he had gone forth to look at Nature, and to rejoice in her revelations and teachings. A part of his plan had been seriously interfered with by the force of circumstances. The demon of war still lighted up those parts of the country which he had been anxious to visit, and thereby rendered it perhaps not impossible, but highly impolitic, to proceed to the capital of the Republic, as he had hoped to do; and therefore he was intending to return to England, preparatory to a journey which he resolved, if spared, to make in another region of the globe.

"It would seem," he said to himself, "as if there have been heavy tempests on the seas lately; and if my impressions are correct, as I generally find them to be, she must have been in danger. I shall feel glad when I know how it has been with her; for this anxiety is not good to bear!" He was alluding then to one who had left him to go to her own land. That gift which he possessed, and which might be called the gift of presentiment, had assured him that great gales had been raging in the Carribean Sea; and that *she* was therefore in danger. But he never ceased to hope and pray for her. He could not do better; but the promise would come to him in the same way that all would be well. But while he was thus proceeding, and was now threading the passages between the rows of tall cacti, he did not seem to be aware that a second person dogged his footsteps, keeping at a distance sufficiently far, so that he might not be suspected if the young man looked round. Both of them were almost out of hearing of the city, and quite hidden from it in the swamp. The youth stood still and began carefully to examine a cactus plant that had decayed. With a sharp instrument which he carried, he tore open the joint of the plant, and searched among its dust and decayed tissues for beetles and other insects.

Meanwhile, the man who was following him suddenly paused, and gliding not far off, behind some more massive specimens of the plants, hid himself. He was a tawny, half copper-coloured man, with the dark piercing eyes and the cunning fierceness of feature which the Spaniard seldom can divest himself of—that is, the Spaniard of South America. He evidently did not belong to the poorer classes of the inhabitants; for they were seldom to be seen in any other than a semi-nude garb, while our Spaniard was comfortably clothed, with a *sombrero*, that perhaps cost him a dollar (a good one may be had for that price). "Carrajo! he muttered, "el Englise has placed himself in an awkward position for my purpose. I must be careful, or I may

fail now. Santa Maria! I long to see the colour of his blood, and to show him that if my countrymen do desert the defence of their religion, and speak and act evil towards it, and allow the foreigner to do so, I will not. The Church must be defended at any risk, or the Infidel Mosquera and his sympathisers will break it down entirely, and turn its altars into paving stones. At any rate, whatever he may do, this Englishman shall not come teaching another faith, like a heretic, and throwing dust in our eyes, by this pretence of studying *los animalitos* of the country. My trusty blade, thou must do my bidding; and so earn for me the reward which the Padre Zolanza hath promised." And a diabolical smile passed over his features.

"I wish yon shadows of the mountains would flit across the city with more speed!" he said, looking up into the heavens. "I cannot have it too dark for this work; and I do not care that the conquistadors should have me in their power. It might not be pleasant. But ha!—he is moving! *diabolos*, thy thirst, my *cuchillo de punicion* (dagger), shall soon be sated; and thou shalt now drink that which thou and the Church long for."

The student of Nature, all unconscious of danger, was indeed at this instant moving away; and like a snake in the herbage, this man began to follow, drawing now nearer and nearer to him, as he increased his distance from the city.

Again, the endangered man stopped, and stooped down to gather some curious little plant that had attracted his attention. The Spaniard had stepped noiselessly forward, and was just behind a cactus close to his victim. He now drew forth a murderous Spanish knife, and clenching it firmly, was about to spring forward and transfix the victim at a blow, when the student rose from his stooping position, and commenced tracing the windings of a convolvulus with a spiral-shaped flower of waxy whiteness, which was rare in the district. The assassin shrank back an instant as if undecided how to act, then drawing himself up, like a beast of prey for the final spring, he rushed at the victim, with hand raised to slay. But Victor Bancroft had involuntarily stepped round in chase of an insect that he wished to capture at that moment, and the ruffian missed his mark, sending the knife into the fleshy body of the cactus instead. In a moment, Victor saw the state of matters, and with only the feeble digger (an instrument for tearing off bark from trees, working underneath, and discovering beetles' haunts), he prepared to defend himself.

With a fierce malediction, the Spaniard drew the knife from the cactus, and sprang forward again: a second more, and Victor would have been slain; but in the twinkling of an eye, there was a crushing of bushes near at hand—a man placed himself between them, and received the knife in his right arm—at the same time felling the would-be assassin to the earth with a stick that he held in the other. So quickly had all this been accomplished, that it occupied less time than we have in describing it. For a moment Victor could hardly believe the evidence of his senses. The attempt on his life, and his salvation by a stranger at the risk of that man's own life, and with the penalty of a serious wound, seemed to have been rather the work of enchantment.

"My good friend, are you hurt much?" he said, catching the hand of his preserver, as he saw him growing pale.

"It is nothing, señor; that wretch has only sent his knife through the fleshy part of my arm. Never mind! I have punished him well. He will not want to attempt the life of another. He little thought I followed him when, like a tiger, he was pursuing you!"

"Well, I know not how to thank you for this aid, my friend. You have certainly saved my life at the risk of your own. I must see to your wound. I have a little knowledge of how to treat such things: we will soon get you over that. But what shall we do with this reptile here?"

"Leave him where he is, señor. In a little while he will get over his blow on the head; and he can then go home and tell the Padre Zolanza what success he had, and how he even lost his knife!" And the speaker, with a sickening chuckle, for his wound pained him exceedingly, took up the knife that had fallen to the ground, and placed it in his own belt away from sight. "It is better that we should leave him now, and get away. Señor, you will go tomorrow from this town, and therefore you need not trouble yourself to prosecute; only be more careful next time how you speak of the priests, even to Europeans. They are often jealous, and can find means to avenge themselves. The conquistadors cannot then protect you."

"But you, my friend, I cannot tell how you have known of my danger. You must tell me who you are, that I may be able to cherish your name for ever in my memory."

"Hush!" said his companion, as they walked away. "I do not want you fellow to come to himself and know who I am. It might be dangerous to me. But do you not remember the conservador to whom you acted so much like *un Cristiano* at Barranquilla?—I am he!"

"My word!" exclaimed Victor. "How singular that I did not recognise you! I thought I had seen you before somewhere; but how did you know of my being in the city?"

"Señor, I gave you my promise that I would be with you again soon—within a month. I am able to do so before that. All the time I was away in the army, I heard but once of my family at Boca-Chica near Carthagená. But when I got there, after narrow escapes from the conquistadors, I found that my wife and other child had long been dead of the fever; and there was nothing to keep a desolate man there; so, señor, I made haste back to Barranquilla, when I heard that you were gone, and leaving the country for your own land—that land which I have been told is *un paraíso*. I learned that you came down by *el vapor* to this city; I traced you here; and, as I know that *el vapor del Europe* leaves tomorrow, I am able to tell you what surprised you so much, señor, a moment ago. But I feel more faint; my wound pains me greatly; the arm is getting larger!"

It was almost too dark to see the face of the wounded man; but Victor took his arm in his own, and began to support him. He found that the sufferer trembled violently as he walked along—perhaps with

weakness; and it struck him that the man wanted food; so he asked him the question.

"It is but little that I have had lately, señor," was the reply, "but I have done my best to get on, without again robbing my fellow-men. I have felt that I should like to be *un Cristiano* too; but I don't know how. I cannot be one in the way the padre tells me. So I will be your servant, señor; only teach me how I am to be a good man, and let me go with you to your country."

Victor felt that this was a glorious opportunity of doing good; and he would not miss it. Gently, and as the suffering man was able to listen, he unfolded the great truths of that faith the interests of which he had so much at heart; and greedily did his friend listen, and as one amazed, for he had never heard such things before: they were words of life to him; but he was growing ill—very ill.

Victor got him back to his own hotel; and so skilfully did he tend the wound—which was really a very slight one—that the man felt better; and having had nourishment as well, the conservador was almost recovered by the morning. A deeply earnest conversation had the two men, who had twice been brought together in such a strange manner; and as if by a mysterious presentiment of his approaching dissolution, did the conservador never tire in listening to those portions of Scripture which Victor selected for his reading.

Victor was to start that day by a mail steamer for Carthagena, preparatory to his return to Europe. The revolution had increased in those parts of the country which he hoped to visit; and he had learned that a second revolution for another object was likely to break out—almost at any moment. Already, in anticipation of this, were large consignments of arms and ammunition being smuggled on board the various steamers to be conveyed to the Isthmus of Panama, where they would be in safety. Victor knew that affairs were likely to become so complicated, the difficulties and expenses of travelling so enormously increased, that it would be almost madness to remain; so he would come to England, and organise a new expedition, to a country where he would not be interrupted in his pursuits by revolutions. But now he felt that he was bound to bring home his new friend, or, at all events, find means for him to visit England as early as possible. It was therefore decided that Antonio Racho, for such was his name, should accompany him to Carthagena; and then, during the week they should stay in that city, he would contrive means of getting Antonio a berth, or some occupation, which would partly go towards defraying his travelling expenses; but his plans were overruled in a way that he did not anticipate. They were at length in the famous city; having left the bombarded Santa Marta, with some of its churches and buildings in ruins, and an enemy besides, whom they considered beneath their contempt.

The city was built far within what might be called a creek, running from the sea, and enclosed by islands and forests on each side. The waters were too shallow for large ships to go more than half way in. Two old forts, dismantled, protected the entrance within sight of the city. They had been built by the Spaniards years before, when the country belonged to Spain. From the head of the creek a glorious view of

the forests and islands could be obtained, till the eye at last rested on the site of Boca-Chica, at which point one of the mouths of the Rio Magdalena emptied itself. Down beneath the clear waters of the creek, Victor could see a submarine forest flourishing, and hosts of star-fish and other creatures browsing and living amongst its beautiful forms of vegetation. The city, though antiquated in appearance, and full of dirty, narrow streets, and odoriferous houses and lanes—the houses being perfect rookeries—had a rather imposing appearance from a distance, especially as it was walled, and possessed a large cathedral, whose exterior was finer than its interior. At a little distance was a high hill or mountain, forest-covered, and crowned with a monastery; and a few miles away behind it were the mud-volcanoes of Turbaco. As a port, it is the best in New Granada. In addition, schools, a college, a massive citadel, two hospitals, some stone houses, and 10,000 inhabitants, may be said to be the other features of the place, which forms the principal depôt for the products of the provinces watered by the Magdalena and Cauca rivers.

Victor and his friend had been two days in this city; and Victor had been vainly trying to arrange for the embarkation of Antonio, when returning to his hotel, and going to the room in which he had left the conservador, he found him dangerously ill. The fever had come upon him; and the poor man was in that stage which causes the skin to be so heated that it threatens to crack and show the flesh beneath, while the head is delirious with the agony which racks it. The poor sufferer was almost unconscious when Victor entered; but when he saw him come to his side, and bend over the hammock in which he lay, a feeling of calmness stole over him, and a smile of content lit up his contorted features.

"What, sick again, my friend!" said Victor, sorrowfully. "I thought you would be able to come out with me on a little excursion I was going to make."

"Yes, señor amigo, I am sick. It will not be very long, and I shall die. Better so. Nearly all that belonged to me are gone. Were it not that I have ever trembled at the idea of death, except on the battle-field, *when I had not time to think of it*, I should be glad!"

"You must not think that you will die now. You have only the fever; and we will try and get rid of that, by the help of Heaven!"

"No, señor; you cannot cure me. Your medicine will now be of little use to me. I want that other —. I want you to talk to me of the things in that book from which you have already read to me. I want to know more about that good Christ, who taught these words, '*Bienaventurados los que tienen hambre y sed de justicia: porque ellos serán hartos.*' ('Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.') I want to know more of what he said about those who die, looking to him. You were once good to me when I would have done evil to you. Do you not think he will be good to me, although I have lived a life of evil? for I would have loved him and served him, if I could have seen his beauty before; but the men who were Christians, and came from Europe, did not live as if they were good men; and I said, 'This is all useless. The padres do not seem like holy men. They teach that they can forgive

us our sins. How can they who are so wicked themselves, forgive? They know that they only teach for money. The foreigners know there is nothing in these things they profess, and they don't care!"

Gently as possible, though often interrupted by the agonies of the poor Spaniard, who certainly seemed to be dangerously ill, and after he had ministered to the body, did Victor further unfold those blessed promises, which the Redeemer has left to be lamps to our feet, while treading the pathways of life and death. He preached to him of that Jesus, who came to seek and to save those that were lost—he read to him of the death of that blessed one—of his love to his enemies—of the certain atonement which had been made for every living man's sins—of the great law of love which bids man be reconciled to God, and assures him that God is reconciled to man. These and many other cheering facts did he speak of, and the conservador listen to, in the intervals of his agony, till he seemed filled with heavenly hope. The man grew better, then worse, till Victor saw indications of the death that was surely approaching; for the New Granadians say, if the fever-stricken person is to live, the mosquitoes will continue to irritate him as before; but if to die they will not touch him. *The mosquitoes did not come near Antonio*; therefore there was no hope. Later in the evening, and when the conservador began to sink rapidly, he looked up and said—

"Señor, mio caro amigo, I always thought it would be so terrible to die; but I feel it is good now. I have been living many years of discord and suffering here; but I shall be at peace there. I long to know more of that kind Saviour, and to see him. Do you think, señor, I shall know my wife and children if I find them there; for I should be so glad to do so?"

"My friend," replied Victor, "*if you meet them there you will know them*. When Moses and Elias appeared on the mount in company with Jesus, the apostles recognised them, though they had never seen them before; and, therefore, we may be sure that much more shall we know those whom we have lived with on earth, and loved, if they *are* there." And Victor read the narrative to which he referred, and from which he drew his important argument.

"*If I meet them there!*" said the man to himself in a troubled kind of way. "Ah! they have not heard of those things which I have learned. They did not know of His love as I do, thanks to you, señor! I fear for them!" Then he brightened up a little, and murmured, calmly, "I can trust God in that matter. He will have done right—and so I will leave it?"

The crisis was on. The sufferer was again in the burning fever following the terrible perspiration that had relieved his agonies for a time; *but perspiration and fever were now coming on him together*; and the wound of the arm had an angry appearance. All that could have been done had been done, even to the calling in of a native doctor. The doctor ordered twenty leeches round the neck, and gave forty or fifty grains of calomel. The leeches failed; and the calomel was powerless to do more than hasten the disease. Victor knew it would be so; but was obliged to give way a little to the opinions and wishes of the people around him. So at last, he only being present,

the final struggle came on. It was a short, but a triumphant one. A second time Victor saw a soul pass away from the body. The dying man's last smile was given to his friend, and then his gaze seemed fixed on something before him that henceforth absorbed all his attention. What it was Victor could not see; but at the moment such an intense heavenly happiness, and power of glorious anticipation came into his own soul, that he exclaimed to himself, "What a fine thing it must be to die, when we know we are going to so happy a destiny as his!" Victor watched narrowly if perchance he might observe the passing away of that soul; but the vision came not as it did when his mother died. But he saw the head of the dying man clothed with light—perhaps phosphorescence, or odyle: he could see this even above the glare of the candle in the room—could see the happy contented beauty that came over the rough-looking man's face, as he ceased to breathe the air of this world. And so the conservador had gone where revolutions can never come, or crime enter. Even his sin had been made a means of his salvation, and the safety of Victor: wheels within wheels of the machinery of Providence: a new lesson of life learned! The journey to the Tropics had been useful, if only for this: and Victor felt duly thankful.

A few days after that he was on his way to England.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. MACNEILE SEES MR. MARSDEN—EMILY BURTON DISCOVERED.

MRS. MACNEILE felt that it was necessary she should see Mr. Marsden at once. No time ought to be lost, especially as he might be foolish enough to carry out the resolution he had spoken of, by leaving Fordham at an early period. So she started on her kind mission within an hour of the interview she had had with Ellen Bancroft. But the good woman was disappointed. Edwin had not returned to his lodgings, so his landlady said, though she expected him in at any moment. Mrs. MacNeile said she would wait; and she did do so, counting anxiously the minutes that flew by till they had made up an hour. It was beyond her power to remain any longer, therefore she told the landlady that she would call at nine o'clock in the morning, and withdrew. It was sorely trying to herself and Ellen too: anxiety of this nature made them feel it necessary to clear up all their discomforts at once. Mrs. MacNeile, as she had embarked in a good work, could not rest till it was accomplished, one way or the other. Precisely at nine in the morning she presented herself again at the residence of Edwin. He was at home this time, but deeply agitated.

"Mr. Marsden," she said, "I feel that I have called on a difficult and delicate mission. Having embarked in a work of my Master's, and being desirous of doing what I can to serve the interests of Ellen Bancroft, I felt it my duty to call and plead with you respecting her.

I am aware that you last evening parted from her under peculiarly painful circumstances. I am anxious, if possible, to disabuse you of an opinion which you must have imbibed respecting her, and which is really unjust to her."

Edwin bowed. "I thank you, madam, for your kindness, yet I do not feel that I have been unjust to her. I loved her too deeply to wrong her character even in thought, or to judge her harshly. I feel, too, that if you were really acquainted with what has passed between us, you would say that I have not done otherwise than right. I say this, feeling that I speak conscientiously, as one who loves the truth. I am willing gratefully to listen to anything you may have to say for her, and will bless you for taking so much interest in her welfare."

"I believe you possessed yourself of a letter which you assumed that Ellen had written to some stranger, and by the nature of which you inferred that she was not acting faithfully by you," began Mrs. MacNeile.

"I certainly obtained, by the merest accident, such a letter, ma'am," answered Edwin. "As to its contents, they were such that no sane man could err in the matter of their meaning, and Ellen did not attempt to deny their authorship. Then I *knew* that she had written this letter, because the handwriting was identical with that of three letters which I have received from her myself, so that it was impossible there could be a mistake on that point. I had that letter brought to me by a friend, who picked it up near to the post-office. It was not in an envelope; it would rather appear to have been written in readiness for posting, by a person who afterwards discovered that they had not an envelope, and went to procure one from the stationer's, intending to enclose and direct it there, and that it dropped from their pocket by the way. Seeing that it was in Ellen's handwriting—because he had noticed her peculiar style of caligraphy from a bill or two which she had sent his sister—this friend brought it to me; at the same time telling me that he had seen Miss Bancroft, two or three weeks before, meet a stranger near to the railway station. And on one occasion, only a day before I sent the letter I did to Ellen, I saw her do the same thing—ay, and evidently according to the agreement in the letter brought me, of which she must have sent a similar production on discovering her loss. I could not be mistaken under these circumstances, and felt it would be best to act as I subsequently did. Can you blame me?"

"I do, sir, and very much, too. You say the handwriting of the picked-up letter was identical with that of the communications which you have, from time to time, received from Miss Bancroft. Have you any of these letters which you would not object to our comparing with the found letter, for I have *that* with me?"

"You give me a vague hope, ma'am, by your words. I will gladly acquiesce in your proposal; but I fear that you will find what I have stated to be correct. And then, why did not Ellen deny the authorship, if she felt able truthfully to do it? and how about my seeing her go to meet this person of whom the letter speaks?"

"We must never judge by appearances. Circumstantial evidence is not always to be trusted to; many have been condemned on it, and

their judges afterwards have found that they had erred. May this not be a similar case?"

"I would to Heaven that it were!" exclaimed Edwin. "It would take a fearful load of misery from my heart, and I would at once go and sue for pardon of my poor girl. But I will get you a letter or two," he added, despairingly.

Mrs. MacNeile was now so agitated with contending hopes and fears that she could scarcely wait for his return. When he brought forth some of Ellen's letters, she snatched one rudely from his hand, and, tearing it open, instantly compared it with the missive which she had brought with her. Edwin took no apparent notice of her haste, for he was as anxious to clear up this painful question as herself. He watched her countenance narrowly, caring little that another was even reading and weighing every word carefully of an epistle, which some would say she should not have seen. A deep flush of pleasure seemed to be coming over her face now; and in another instant she exclaimed joyfully, "Thank God! my poor child, you are acquitted! You have spoken the truth!"

"Madam, have I really been deceived?" said Edwin, imploringly.

"Edwin Marsden, shame on you, not to know your own betrothed's handwriting better than that! You do not deserve her pardon—I question whether she will give it either. I don't think I would. Look at the letters themselves; compare them carefully, more carefully than you have before; and first, the style. Your Ellen writes a meek, unromantic epistle, with the plainest Saxon words. This other is quite unlike hers. It is more the style of a person who had read any number of novels of the sensational type. Then there is an essential difference in the spelling. The *found* letter is correct in its orthography; while Ellen, I regret to say, does not always prove herself sufficiently scholarly in that respect; but Ellen writes more grammatically."

"There is certainly great force in what you say, ma'am. I can see a difference now you point it out, though I did not observe it before. Yet, how to account for the initials, and Ellen's way of treating the matter last night?"

"Wait awhile, sir! Look carefully over those two letters, and tell me if you cannot, now you examine critically, see another evidence of difference between them, and a glaring one?"

Edwin did as he was desired. Carefully he looked down each page, but, with a sigh, he said, "I see no other sign of a different authorship. Please point it out to me, if there is one."

"You will never make a good hand at comparing ancient documents or writings," she said, playfully. "Cannot you observe how the personal pronouns differ in their formation in the two letters? The *I*'s are really very unlike. I like the way in which Ellen makes *hers* best, I must say. Then the form of many other letters differs greatly; but that is sufficient for our purpose—sufficient to acquit Ellen of the faults which you have charged to her account. What poor blind things we often are, at the best, in our judgments of our fellow-creatures! Well it is that a ruling Providence exists for us!"

"You are very correct, ma'am," said Edwin, with a tear of pleasure

and pain commingled. "But still, although I see these differences, I should be glad to know what these initials mean."

"I will tell you, sir. Ellen was guilty of keeping one fact from your knowledge. Ellen has a sister a year or two older than herself. This sister has been a deep trouble—almost what may be called a black sheep in the flock. By her erring conduct she brought much sorrow and disgrace upon the family, and at length they very wrongly disowned her. For some years they have known nothing of her whereabouts. She was lost to them just after the death of her husband—a poor, drunken wretch, of the lowest caste, whom she, nevertheless, was greatly attached to. This will account for Ellen never having mentioned her to you. It was very wrong, and she is sorry for it, and begs your pardon. This sister, it appears—and I must now believe her statement—is, in build, and even in her general deportment, when it is unstudied, so like Ellen that, apart, none would be able to distinguish them. Their handwriting, except in the particulars I have pointed out, very strongly resemble the one type. Last of all, their initials are alike—'E. B.'—Ellen Bancroft and Emily Burton. Now you have, I think, satisfactory proofs, if this Widow Burton can be found in the vicinity, and it can be proved that she is receiving the attentions of some person who has supplanted the deceased husband in her affections."

"Mrs. MacNeile, from the bottom of my heart I bless you for this encouragement. I will go and see Ellen at once, and ask her to forgive me. I see it all now most plainly. I have learned a lesson which I am deeply thankful for, and my whole future life shall prove to poor dear Ellen how deeply I grieve for having treated her as I have done. Pray let me go to her at once!"

"Hold! not so fast!" said the lady, pushing him back. "Calm yourself, and prepare to learn another lesson. You are falling into the same class of error as before. You have not yet proved to yourself the truth of all the statements I have made. Before I will allow you to see Ellen, I shall insist on your helping me to find out this Emily Burton; because you may be deceived by a cunningly-devised fable after all, and those proofs I have pointed out might only amount to a species of coincidence."

"You are right, ma'am, though I have no doubt of the truth of what you have told me."

"Remember, you had no doubt of the correctness of your *pre-conceptions*, so that it now behoves you to act carefully."

"True; and, by heavens! there is Emily Burton going by! Thank God for it!" and the young man rushed to the door, flung it open wildly, and made his way to intercept the person whose figure he had caught sight of. A few minutes more and he returned triumphantly, accompanied by a woman almost the counterpart of Ellen, except that she looked a little older and much more sorrowful.

And thankfully did Mrs. MacNeile turn her thoughts to heaven, as she saw a brighter future dawning upon those in whom she took so much interest.

CHAPTER XI.

TABLE-TALK—PREMONITIONS.

THE town of Killington had known very little change since Victor left it, but Mrs. Tompkinson had. Two batches of lodgers had taken up their quarters with her, and left again. The carpets had been once taken up, and the damask over them had cost her just an extra one pound for cleaning, not including one penny per room for bran new tin tacks to fix them with. The lodgers had long left in disgust, because of the difficulty of seeing any of the furniture and fixings which they had paid for the use of. Mrs. Tompkinson was deeply grieved thereat, but resolved to get fresh lodgers as soon as possible. Thus the announcement was again in the window—"Furnished Apartments. Inquire Within."

The days were beginning to lengthen out again, the winter having thrown off much of its terror, when one afternoon, rather late, Mrs. Tompkinson sat at tea with two very particular friends of hers. Mrs. T. had that day purchased a new cap, and these friends were invited to give it a welcome. Mrs. T. was in grandeur; so was the cap on her head. Tea, *ad libitum*, toast and ham, and periwinkles, or, as we should say in science, *littorina littoreæ*. Every variety of subject had been introduced and ventilated during the progress of the meal—each person becoming more communicative with each cup of tea imbibed; till at length it would appear that these provincial encyclopædists of gossip had exhausted their lore, and they were compelled to dash out beyond the precincts of their own locality, accompanied by fresh assistance in the toast, ham, tea, and shell-fish department.

"By the bye, Mrs. Tompkinson," said Mrs. Whalebone, making a frantic dash at a refractory wrinkle with her pin as it refused to come out, "have you ever heard what became of that old lodger of yours and his wife—I mean Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft? I have often wondered how they got on in those distant countries, catching butterflies, as they said they were going to do!"

"I never have heard from them," replied the lady, putting down her tea and taking up some toast. "I expect they are still out in their foreign parts, on their mad errand. Catch me going to such places, and leaving my comforts in England, for all the forests, and butterflies, and mountains in the world. I'm sure I couldn't a-bear the heat in summer—it's bad enough here. Besides, what should I do for food?"

"Ay, truly, dear," replied Mrs. Whalebone. "You haven't got no constitution good enough for that. It would never do for you nor me. I should faint at the first flush of the heat, if I didn't at the sight of the horrid things that crawl about there, even in the very houses, I'm told, and I'm sure I should never come to conscientiousness again."

"Ah! they do tell me, ma'am, that the heat are very great there, and the gnats is so troublesome that it kills you a'most to sleep there many nights," remarked Mrs. Horrocks. "What a pity that Mr. Bancroft should take his young creature of a wife to such a place! I shouldn't a bit wonder if it was the death of her, poor thing! and so soon after their marriage, too! I wonder he had the face to do it!"

"And I," said Mrs. Tompkinson; "but you know, Sarah, he was always muddling his poor head about blackbeetles and such things—nasty, frightful things, I can't a-bear. I've known him come down in the middle of the night to look in my kitchen window for the black, ugly things. I remember one night he said he had caught a very rare one. I told him I wished all the horrid things was squashed for ever; they was the plague of my life!"

"So do I wish," acquiesced Mrs. Whalebone and Mrs. Horrocks in a breath. "Whatever he could want with them I don't know."

"Ah! that was the most curious part of it," said Mrs. Tompkinson. "He had got thousands of them in cases, with glass over, and such crack-jawed names, all in Latin, and Greek, and French—making the place so sickly. I'd as soon have a hogshead of silkworms in the place. And he and ever so many others used to be together for hours talking about them. For my part, I never could understand five words of what they said, and didn't want. Why, would you credit it—he used actually to go at night and climb the lamp-posts to get moths, he said, that came to the light! And to see the shells he'd got! They was pretty, I'll confess—especially the large ones; for I've no patience with them little things that no one can see excepting with a mickerscope."

In this opinion Mrs. Whalebone and Mrs. Horrocks exactly coincided. "But did he sell them?" they asked.

"Sell them! no," said their hostess; "that was the most curious part of it. He went to all this trouble for his own pleasure. He said they taught him so much about the love of God. I told him I thought we learnt best on that subject in the Bible; that we didn't want anything else to tell us that, especially such things as these to fodder up the place. But he said we ought to look into everything that can teach us more about the Creator and his goodness. Now I think, as I said, that if we live honestly, pay every man his own, and try to do all the Bible says, that is sufficient for us, particularly if we mind and keep the ten commandments!"

Mrs. Tompkinson forgot that the Bible says, "*The works of the Lord are great; sought out of all them that take pleasure therein,*" and many other things of a similar tendency; but perhaps she had never read these passages.

"After all," she added, "he was very clever, I'll own, and knew all about everything; and he was very harmless and kind to everybody. I recollect how, when my poor sister Janey were ill, how he went and talked to her, and prayed to her, and sent her his last jar of preserves, though so fond of sweets himself; and it wasn't much money he had to buy such things, either. I know he had a good young lady for a wife. I said, and still say, that with all his odd ways he chose a good

partner. They were a handsome and a loving pair; only she, poor dear, was never well, and seemed to take a delight in all his curiosities. All I have to say is, that I'd rather have them now as lodgers, with five shillings a week, than that last one that was here, and was always drinking, at ten. I certainly think Mr. Bancroft was more to be liked than that Eelruff who spoiled my carpets so—I mean the damask; and was always smoking and drinking; although Mr. Bancroft and his wife was teetotallers, which I don't hold with."

"Teetotallers, was they! Well, I never! and so clever as they, to take up with that nonsense!" said Mrs. Whalebone. "I know I never would join such a society. I couldn't live without a little now and then, in my weakly state; so my doctor says, too."

"I hate such muck of talk!" put in Mrs. Horrocks; "as if the good creatures of God isn't to be taken in moderation. Why, bless you, if all took as little as me, no one would ever be the worse for it. I belong to the Moderation Society, I do. Really, I don't believe it costs me and my John two shillings a week, unless we have a friend or so—then we do spend a little more. So if everybody, according to their means, was as temperate as us——. I only know I hate teetotalism."

Mrs. Horrocks' crowning argument thus proved that she spent a sum about equal to the rent per annum of a cottage for her temperate drinking, assisted by her husband, and that she was averse to the safest method of being perpetually sober that the world had ever invented.

"I think," pursued Mrs. Tompkinson, "that it's a grand thing where people is drunkards, and don't know when to stop; but for sober people I think it is very stupid; although Mr. Bancroft used to say that we ought to sign the pledge for example's sake. He told me he did, and that he'd always found it a blessing to him, and that he was ever so much more better since he had, than even when he took a little. I used to laugh at such odd notions, and to tell him that I thought a glass of beer or wine would do him good."

"And what did he say, then?" inquired the good ladies.

"Bless you! he one day went quite into a passion, and told me it was syrup of hell-fire, and such wicked words besides; and he said that all nations had found it such, too, and had given it names that said what it was; that alcohol, in Algebra or Arabic—I forget which—means *the horrors*; and that gin, in the same language, means the devil. I never heard such nonsense in my life, and I told him so. I had the best of the argument with him, too; for I said, how could the Arabians know anything about the devil, to call anything after his name, when we know they are heathens and Turks? and whatever he liked to tell me, I would not give up my little drop, because I like it, when I can't get elder wine, which is better this cold weather. But, my gracious, there's Mr. Bancroft's knock, as I'm a living woman! It's him, or else his ghost!"

The other two ladies sprang up, and turned pale with apprehension, while Mrs. Tompkinson went to the door and opened it, half in fear; and there before her, in very deed, stood Victor and his wife.

Over the sea, amid the warring of the elements—sometimes having

to lay to for a day and a night at a time, because the ship was unmanageable, and the man could not stand at the wheel—past the Antilles, and into the great Atlantic, by the Western Islands—up the rugged coast of Great Britain, from the Scilly group—past the Kentish seaports and watering-places, and to the bosom of old Father Thames ; then to London—and Mrs. Bancroft, Victor's heroic wife, was once again in her native country ; safely brought home under circumstances of peculiar danger—for the sea that bore her vessel uninjured, had engulfed others in its ire.

Over the sea again to Panama, thence to Porto Rico, and the pretty Isle of St. Thomas, in the West Indies—over the great, turbulent Atlantic, fighting night and day for a week with the mighty gales that threatened every moment to send the steamer to a watery grave—and at last along the British coast, by Plymouth and Exeter, and the Isle of Wight, to Southampton—thence by train to London—and Victor was safely home, re-united with his beloved one.

It was a meeting of surprise ; but they had not long to spend in wonderment, for they had immediately to prepare for future achievements. For a time they would, therefore, take up their residence in Killington, while Victor made the necessary preparations for the great journey he hoped to take when he had sufficient means. The first persons he visited on his arrival were Mr. and Mrs. Bayle Johnson, of Waltonbury. To them did he render up an account of what he had done, and his reasons for so early a return ; and they were so well pleased that they promised to assist him as much as possible in his future movements. Thus Mrs. Tompkinson had her lodgers back again, “and more beetles and other nasty things than ever,” as she said.

Soon after this Victor found himself placed in such a situation that he knew not one week with the other where to look for the means of sustaining existence. Sometimes this fact would cause him great anxiety ; but then he would reason, “Why should I fear ? I look back on the past, and see a Providence always caring for me—leading me, year after year, in a mysterious pathway of uncertainty, yet in safety. It will surely be so in the future !” And he was right. In the time of his greatest need, help came. It came to him in wonderful ways too—so unexpectedly, from sources that he had never dreamed of. And at last he began to study his own life more, and to see that God was writing on the tablets of his individual history a wonderful record of mysterious goodness. And at this time the strange psychical gifts which he had always been honoured with were being developed with greater power and distinctness—enabling him to obtain knowledge that no human being could attain by the earthly teachings of philosophy alone. Victor was becoming a more ardent lover of nature than ever ; while the developments of spiritual manifestation were increasing. As time passed on a child was given him. For months before that time it was revealed that this child would again die soon after its entry into the world. The prediction was verified ; it died on the second day. Then the little cherub spirit came to him in a vision, and spoke to him of a glorious heaven in which it resided ; of a mission which it had to do—one of goodness and benevolence—

of occupations in which all spirits are engaged for their God, and of the permission which it had received from God to visit its earthly father, and establish in his heart a new proof of the existence of that great future life which he should enter on in time. This gave Victor joy so great that it seemed as if he had entered upon a new life. Several times had he also seen, when waking from sleep, the female form standing by him and his wife—lighting up the midnight darkness by the odyllic influence which seemed to emanate from her own existence. He also, at intervals, beheld other spirits of various orders—some good, others perhaps evil; and often their appearance seemed to tell him of things good or evil in their tendency, which he had done during the previous day or days. They would come in human garb—sometimes several at a time; at other times as globes or circles of fire, as strange animals, as angels floating in the air. On some occasions spirits unseen would whisper to him in unknown tongues, or blaspheme, or speak of holy matters, interesting or horrifying him, as the case might be. In dreams he would visit distant lands, and mighty cities, and talk with the great, and witness catastrophes, and look on while battles were being fought—so that he was able to anticipate the newspapers sometimes by weeks in their intelligence. But the time was not come for these things to be of any practical advantage to any but himself. Whether it would he was unable to say. But all these things gave him joy and hope for the eternal future. During this time he looked anxiously over the interests of those who were left to his care by the departed mother, and did for them what he could—though that was but little. His testimony at this time was, that for everything he gave to others he received tenfold even in this world. Perhaps he might have been wealthy, according to this, if he had been *always* giving; but he had not the faith for this; and to do so, hoping for reward, would have soon brought him to poverty. At present he was struggling to be faithful in that which was least. Would the time ever come that he might be entrusted with that which was much? Time only could answer such a question, and he had to be contented with his destiny. But he often erred—fell deeply into the temptations which were ever seeking to entrap his soul. Perhaps his sins were not apparent to the eye of man so much; but his own conscience often sat in judgment on him, and impartially condemned him. Then his only resource was to fall at the feet of the Saviour, and cry out with his heart, “Lord be merciful to me a sinner, for thy Son’s sake! Create within me a clean heart! Make me more like thyself! Clothe me in thine own garments of light and holiness!”

* * * * *

Victor and his wife were spending an evening at the house of Mr. Bayle Johnson. They had been diving deep into the mysteries of nature, by means of the microscope, had been conversing on all sorts of philosophical matters, till at length the subject changed to the rapid strides which were being made in the knowledge of the heavens of late years.

“Certainly,” said Victor, “the discoveries of the present century,

in respect to astronomy, are unsurpassed in grandeur by the achievements of all former ages. I certainly feel, when I look over the whole range of human learning and investigation, that we are now entering upon the more prominent signs of a new dispensation. Three have passed nearly away—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian. The millennial must be near at hand, when Christ shall bring together all the excellencies of the preceding and fuse them into one, by that magnificent rule which he will then commence. Hitherto, men have been trying to attain universal dominion ; but all of them—Alexander, Attila, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Charlemagne, Peter the Great, and Napoleon—have failed. Their vast monarchies have broken up or declined in most cases, just as the Roman empire did, by a necessity of their own constitution. But all this time the kingdom of Jesus has been steadily growing—contending against superstition, ignorance, persecution, inconsistency, infidelity, and the myriad other forms of error and enmity which have been assailing it in every age. Like a continent built up to the water's edge at first by coralines, and then gradually raised by forces below, of a volcanic nature, and influences above that are slow in their growth, while the ocean waves were continually trying to overflow and wear it away, until it became fit to support nations and empires, and could laugh the sea to scorn—still growing in strength and magnitude—so has the fabric of Christ's kingdom. A few more struggles now, a little more knowledge for humanity, and then, as rivers flow more rapidly at their mouths, so will the great universal empire of the Lord come in with a shout, and like the atmosphere we breathe, enwrap with its delightful influence every land from pole to pole. And the discoveries of astronomy are signs of the times, as much as wars and rumours of wars, and earthquakes in divers places. Perhaps man in that grand dispensation will be able to traverse the spaces between planet and planet, and find that his previous studies had helped him in some way to this state of things !”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Bayle Johnson. “I don't know what to say of your theory ; but I thought I would ask you, do you think the planets are inhabited ?”

“I do, sir ; and I will tell you the reasons why I think so. In the first place, I know that this world is only one of a number—some smaller, others larger—of worlds belonging to our system. I know again, that on the moon's surface there is a very analogous existence of mountains, and valleys, and volcanoes. True, the arrangement of them differs considerably from that of the earth ; allowed too, that possibly there is not an atmosphere (I do not think this, for I could not then understand how there would be combustion, as in the case of the volcanoes) ; but the Infinite Wisdom can create even what might be called *human* beings to live there. I know that Mars has revealed to us some of her snow-drifts at the poles—her clouds and, possibly, winds, and an island or two. I know that Venus possesses mountains higher than any on the Earth—that Jupiter is belted with winds—that the Sun itself is an opaque body surrounded by a self-luminous atmosphere. I know that millions of suns exist in that ring which we call the *via lactea* ; and that that great group is only a speck in the

heavens, compared with the four or five thousands of other sun groups scattered over the heavens, and displayed by the telescope. And I know that beyond all this, space is boundless, and perhaps teems in all parts with grander systems than we have ever conceived of in our most exalted moods. I look over our Earth: I see it teeming with life—literally everywhere—in the deserts, in the air, in the waters, even in the drops, are worlds with myriads of beings—even in the interior of other animals. So that man is himself a walking universe, having zones of life within him—in the liver, the trachea, the stomach, the brain, and eyes sometimes, coiled up in the muscles, in his animal fluids, even in his mouth. Then, I argue, if life is so abundant here, why should countless other orbs—millions of them myriads of times larger than our Sun—be allowed to exist without sentient beings and intelligent life? I humbly submit that my argument is unanswerable!”

“I think it must be,” said Mr. Bayle Johnson; and so the matter dropped.

That night, the first of four mysterious visions was given to Victor. He was taken up from the earth, beyond the atmosphere of our globe, through the mighty depths of void, till he found himself again descending—this time into the midst of an unknown city, differently constructed from any earthly one. He alighted in the midst of a market-place, where all the wares exposed, as he thought, for sale, were flowers. There were flowers, and plants, and trees—the branches bearing flowers everywhere. The houses were almost built of them; and they were of forms of beauty and development bearing no comparison with earthly flowers. The inhabitants, too, were in the human form, but more grave in appearance. And they spoke in a language that he knew was not terrestrial. It seemed as if their words were uttered in another way—a more perfect way than on earth. They produced effects like sound, not that he could hear, but that he could feel; and in a way that was more easily understood than in human words. The atmosphere of this world was of a different colour; but one that human language has no means of describing. Having made these observations, the vision left him, and he awoke.

The second night the vision came to him again. He was now supported by an unseen power, and held over the surface of a very far off orb. And then he saw landscapes, and mountains, and valleys so fair, that their beauty entranced him. There were rivers of majestic appearance; but their waters were of many beautiful and unearthly colours. The hills and mountains seemed to be arranged as if by design, themselves forming a new species of loveliness by their grouping. Many other things were revealed which he soon forgot; for there was a mysterious tendency to lose all memory of those things which he saw, so as to be unable to describe them. And a second time he awoke.

The third night he saw Heaven itself. There was light too vivid for mortal eyes; but not produced by any sun, as far as he could judge. There were many things there that were quite indescribable. But what he chiefly remembered, was the unsurpassable happiness that came upon him, as if by necessity. And all this seemed to be enhanced by a power of realising the idea of eternal happiness in a way that

the body cannot on earth. No human language will suffice to describe that bliss—so ecstatic, that all earth's joys, experienced by all men from all time, and concentrated in a point of one human experience, would be unworthy of a single moment of its duration. His guide on this occasion seemed to be the spirit of his wife, who had passed away by death some time before—for the vision was prospective. But the vision ceased, and he awoke.

The fourth night, a vision came to him fraught with such intense horror, that not for worlds would he have experienced the like again. He was conducted to the depths of the bottomless pit. A darkness was there blacker and more Stygian than any natural darkness. Down the horrid gulfs of this awful place he could see shapeless forms of sin, blacker than the gloom of their abode. The darkness could be felt; and yet he could see vividly everything in the place, because it was not of a physical nature. No two of these shapes were alike—not one of them bore any resemblance to an earthly object: all seemed to symbolise some type of hellish character peculiarly their own. There was agony awful in the extreme; but it was not physical—it seemed to him to partake largely of the mental, and in the vivid conception of an eternity of this horrible prison life. There was heat there; but not human heat—not the heat of fire; it was much worse—it was something that did not consume. One other fact Victor expressly noticed—*the entire absence of fire*. He felt the agony of the place himself: then awoke in a burning heat *that fever could not account for*.

During those four nights Victor learned some great "Lessons of Life."

CHAPTER XII.

A SERIOUS CONVERSATION—MUTUAL PARDON.

EDWIN MARSDEN, Mrs. MacNeile, and Emily Burton—these three stood and looked at each other in some surprise. It was a confirmation of the truth of Ellen Bancroft's explanations to the lady; it was mingled pleasure and alarm to Edwin; to Emily Burton it was mysticism. She knew not what to make of it. She had never seen these people before, and she wondered what could be their object for calling her in. She little thought that the cause was her extraordinary likeness to her sister.

"Take a seat," Edwin said. "I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. —?"

"Well!" she said, in a tone of vulgar hauteur; "Mrs. Anybody. So you want me to tell you my name! Learn it!"

"I have no desire to speak offensively, Mrs. Burton," said Edwin, slightly chagrined at the asperity of her reply. "I took the liberty of

asking you in, in order that this lady and myself might claim the favour of a little consultation, and ask a few questions which you can answer, and thereby, perhaps, benefit yourself and us too."

"No doubt," she replied, with a strange leer. "I don't mind answering a hundred if it's to my advantage. It is but little I generally make by satisfying people's curiosity, I find; so fire away; and if we can come to terms, perhaps I may not dislike telling you who I am, what I do for a livelihood, and all about me. I suppose you aint a policeman in disguise; and if you are I don't much care, as I never did anything that I cared about their knowing."

Her great vulgarity completely disgusted them. To Edwin it was a pang most acutely felt. This, then, was the sister of his beloved! No wonder this woman had been discarded. Would nothing change and refine such a person?—for she seemed by her appearance as if she were capable of being made something better of.

"I wished to ask you, in the first place, this question, Mrs. Burton—for I know your name, and you will pardon my apparent impertinence—How long have you been in Fordham?"

"I wish to say, and you will pardon *my* impertinence, What is that to you?"

"Tut-tut! Mrs. Burton, we ask this civilly. You need not be offended," said Mrs. MacNeile, gently, and yet severely. "It is, probably, to the interest of all of us that you should reply."

"I have been in Fordham about a month," was the answer; for the woman seemed now in awe of Mrs. MacNeile.

"Very good," said Edwin, with a sigh of relief. "Allow me also to ask you what Christian name you bear?"

"You are welcome to know, my man, that it is Emily, sometimes Amelia; but always signed, 'Yours in duty,' or 'Yours truly, Emily Burton.'"

"Good again!" said Edwin, scarcely suppressing a smile. "And now with respect to your late residence: may I ask where you lived before coming here?"

"I suppose it's something in the '*hear something to his advantage*' style," said Mrs. Burton, sarcastically. "However, here goes. Came here from Manchester, and cost me a lot of money to do it, too; came there from Leeds, where I lived a long time, and lost my husband. I suppose you have found out that he had some property, and want to let me know it. Poor fellow! it was little he had that I ever knew of—like me."

"I regret that you do not divine our object, madam," said Edwin. "But bear with me while I ask one other question. Did you lose a letter a few weeks ago in this town?"

"Did you find one? because, if so, I will thank you to give it up. I daresay you have read it, though, and therefore you know all that's in it. Come, down with it!"

"Stop a minute, madam," said Edwin. "I certainly have a letter, not that I found, but a friend discovered in the road by the post-office. It is signed 'E. B.,' and is in a handwriting so much like that of a young lady in whom I take a great interest, that I am anxious, for her sake as well as my own, that its true owner should be found;

and from what she told this lady here—a kind benefactress of hers—I have reason to believe that it is yours.”

The woman trembled visibly, for a strange excitement had come over her.

“What was your maiden name?” he inquired.

“Bancroft,” she replied, bursting into tears. “Surely, you don’t know any of my family? I think you must. I always weep when I think of them, and the cruel way in which they have ever treated me. You would say it was enough to make me if you knew all. Not a word did I have from them after my husband’s death. They didn’t care; only too glad that he was gone. But are they living here now?”

“From the information which I have received, and which I can fully rely on, I am aware that you are the blamable party, not they,” said Mrs. MacNeile. “It is hardly worth while to try and prejudice them to us, after so long a separation and estrangement. I feel that were you to see your sister Ellen, she would soon show you that the fault has been all of your own making. The true affections of your family have never been taken from you. It was you who broke off the connection between yourself and them.”

“That is a lie! let who may say it,” put in the woman, showing forth a vulgar rage. “My brothers, sisters, and mother and father, too, all despised me from my birth; and, therefore, they took good care, after doing me all the harm they could, to break off all knowledge of me. But I have, and ever will, let everybody know about their cruelty. Didn’t I, at one time, want to be a governess?—and didn’t I get a place once?—and didn’t they get me out of it, and prevent me doing anything like it again? I want to know why I went into a lower situation?—why I went away, after awhile, to Leeds, and had to support myself as I best could till my marriage? Wasn’t it through them? They have been my enemies through life. I might have been comfortable if they hadn’t prevented me. I might have been a lady, and married a rich man, and had a good house and grounds; for everybody said I was fit for one, and lots of gentlemen wanted me. But no, they did all they could to prevent it. I might have been famed, and had a name as great as Sir Walter Scott by my pen, for I could write a novel or a piece of *powertry* with any one. I was a true *powertess*; but the beggarly journal people kept my pieces that I sent, and were too jealous to put them in, and I believe my father urged them on to do it. They never would let me get on in the world, and so I hate them, and will for ever. I shall hold up my head with the best of them yet!”

“Hush!” said Mrs. MacNeile; “do not rail at those who are dead and gone. You may commit a sin that even *you* might be sorry for.”

“Dead and gone!” said the woman, with a start. “What do you mean, I would ask?”

“I mean this, that evidently your sins have been so great as to preclude you from knowing exactly about your family’s affairs, and to prove to me that much of what you have been saying is as false as your own self!”

"Beware what you say!" said Mrs. Burton. "I will soon have the law of you if you tell me I lie."

"Be calm, my good woman," continued the lady, "and hear me out. It does not seem that you were aware that two of your brothers died a considerable time ago?"

"Indeed! my goodness! Which were they?"

"Edward and Francis," the lady answered. "Then I must inform you, also, that your father died a few months before your mother, who was only interred a few weeks since; therefore you will now understand my reasons in reproving your slanders on them."

"Dead—dead! and without a word for poor me—a word of affection or sympathy! They always hated me!"

"Nay! of your mother I can say, that she left her blessing—her deepest love; that she left these, by commission, to your brothers and sister—Victor, Thomas, and Ellen; and had they met with you before, you would have known of this."

"Ah! they wouldn't have tried to find me out, for all that!"

"Nay, you misjudge them. Victor is in South America, and therefore cannot; Ellen is in England, and ever ready to hear from you, and to even deliver up to you a portion of the money realised by the sale of her mother's little furniture and effects."

"Dead!" she murmured, "and I never to have known it—to have thought of it—and before I could go and ask their pardon, too! Oh, I am punished! for I acknowledge that I have been wrong a little, and I did not want them gone without one word of forgiveness!" And the woman covered her face with her hands as if weeping, though no signs remained when she again looked up. "You say you have a letter of mine; may I now see it?"

She was more humble in her tone this time. Edwin produced the letter, and handed it to her.

"Thanks!" she said. "I lost it, and wondered what became of it. I had to write another, as it was. Did Ellen see this?"

"She has seen it; and it was the clue to us of your being in the vicinity," said the lady, suppressing any further information on the subject.

"Then she knows more than I wished her to. Well, I must go and see her. Where is she?"

"At my house. I have no objection to your seeing her for an hour this afternoon—that is, if she has not. I must forbid more than that, because, poor girl, she has only just recovered from the crisis of a very dangerous fever, and is, therefore, too weak for a lengthy interview with any one."

"I will come, then, at three. But you, sir—excuse me—are you her sweetheart?"

Edwin blushed slightly. "I may, possibly, at some future period, be her husband; at present I do not feel that I am worthy of her," he said.

"Very modest, indeed!" she ejaculated. "If I ever write a novel again, I will put you in it as a character for modesty. Why you beat me!" and a curl of the lip, full of sarcasm and scornfulness, followed this observation, from the singular compound of vulgarity and remorse.

Edwin turned away to hide his loathing; and Mrs. MacNeile said, scarcely with civility, "I will expect you at my house, No. 3, Crescent-villas, at three o'clock. Good morning!"

"Good-bye! much obliged to you," said the woman, and she was gone.

"After once that woman has been to my house and seen Ellen, she shall never come again," said Mrs. MacNeile. "The more I see of her, the more I am disgusted."

"She is certainly a horrible being to do with," observed Edwin. "If Ellen ever permits her acquaintance, unless she greatly reforms, I would rather drown myself than be the brother-in-law of such a creature, much as I love poor, injured Miss Bancroft."

"You are right," said the lady; "but let me now go and cheer up poor Ellen's heart. You shall remain below while I see her and tell her what has happened. I will call you up when the proper time comes; then you must make your peace with her. I daresay she will forgive you, though I wouldn't, I know."

"You do yourself injustice," said Edwin. "There are few women so implacable in their offended feelings as that, or they would not be worthy of man's love."

Perhaps the lady thought so too, for she remained silent. In a very short time Mrs. MacNeile had seen Ellen, and delighted the poor, sorrowing, erring girl with the news she had brought. Ellen was glad to find that Edwin had had his opinions so completely revolutionised. She loved him too well to feel eternally offended; her affection had been increased by the service he had rendered her; and so she desired as much as he did to be reconciled. Great was her astonishment when learning of the re-appearance and near interview expected with her lost sister; and poor, simple-hearted Ellen was willing to forgive all, and receive that sister back again to her confidence. Mrs. MacNeile only gave her a slight hint of her own estimate of Mrs. Burton, for fear of hurting her *protégée's* feelings.

Ellen had been thinking over the past while her benefactor was absent, and she felt an accusing voice declaring that even she had not done rightly; that her old stubborn spirit, which had caused her parents much trouble, was still continuing to be her besetting sin. Her pride had likely to have made such a breach between Edwin and herself as might have eternally separated them, and blighted all their earthly prospects, and, for the first time, she began to pray for pardon—to acknowledge her sin to Him who would direct her for the future; and then came peace, and a much better spirit. Perhaps the advice of Mrs. MacNeile had helped her, in some measure, to bring about this altered state of things. Mrs. MacNeile had certainly proved her guardian angel—had been a true though unexpected friend, and intended to continue so, despite her loathing of Mrs. Burton; for she said justly, "Why should the innocent be condemned for the guilty?"

Mr. Marsden was called up, and Mrs. MacNeile left them. He advanced to her couch tremblingly and sad. "I come to ask your pardon, dear Ellen," he said. "I was wrong, very wrong, to treat you so; and if a lifetime of renewed and increased trust and affection can

act as an atonement, believe me it shall be given, for I do not want to part with you."

She took his hand tenderly in her own, and said, "I also have to beg for forgiveness from you, my poor Edwin. You have been greatly harassed, I know, and no doubt it seemed to you just to act as you did; but I erred, for I ought to have explained to you all last night, and I never should have hidden from you any of my family secrets. But, believe me, I did the one for the best; and for the pride of the other I have repented. I have never deceived you, or kept back anything from you besides this knowledge of my sister. Forgive me, as I forgive you!"

"I do, my darling. Both of us have greatly erred—I the most; but we have both learned lessons that will be useful to us in future life. What a debt we each owe to Mrs. MacNeile!"

"No amount of devotion will ever repay it," said Ellen, fervently. "We must ask God to do it for us; for I trust, from this time, we shall be his children."

"So I hope," he added; and he knelt down by her side, and to the prayer offered then there came forth a rich promise for their future happiness. Soon after he left her—himself a far wiser and happier man.

Precisely at three o'clock Mrs. Burton came. What passed between the sisters is of little moment; suffice it to say, that Emily protested her sorrow for the past, and for the death of her relations—especially her mother—though she did not acknowledge herself entirely wrong; that she so influenced the benevolent feelings of her sister by the dismal tale told of suffering and privation—suppressing any mention of future plans, which Ellen did not like to allude to—that, when she left, she took with her nearly the whole of Ellen's share, as well as her own, in the proceeds of the furniture sale, promising to reform her life, and often write to and see Ellen. She shed many tears during the interview, and professed much religious impression, and so left, scarcely speaking to Mrs. MacNeile as she passed out.

It was years before Ellen saw her again, though Victor Bancroft met with her long before that period. Her purpose had been served: she had secured what gain she could from Ellen, and for anything else she must have cared but little.

But from that day Ellen rapidly recovered, and Edwin Marsden began to prepare for their marriage.

We must now return to Victor.

CHAPTER XIII.

UP IN THE AIR.

IN so many words we may call the attention of our readers to the fact that Victor had now been in England for a long time, and, of course, had not neglected visiting his sister and brother. He had also formed the acquaintance of Mrs. MacNeile, and cherished a profound respect for the good lady. But all Victor's aspirations were to obtain means of continuing the researches into every part of Nature which he had commenced, and of learning more about the wonderful mysteries and phenomena of Providence, history, spiritualism, and other things worth studying—not so much alone for their own sakes, as for the purpose, through them, of understanding more of that Divine and Holy Being in whom he lived, moved, and had his existence. His active mind never permitted him to rest night or day; and at such times when he had not to plan for the bread that was necessary for their subsistence, his thoughts were concentrated on these absorbing subjects. There was one other impulse also urging him at times to plan to better his condition in a worldly point of view. He longed to be, at least, moderately wealthy, for two reasons: that he might be able to devote the whole of his life to scientific and literary pursuits, and that he might be able to help many of the poor souls he met with who were struggling, under difficulties, to get on. But at present there were no prospects of his achieving this end; still, he felt that such a time might come, though by what means he knew not. Hitherto he had been bountifully provided for, *from hand to mouth*; yet he felt he could do rightly with more. But he acknowledged, when he thought so, that God saw it best for him to be as he was; and when he was inclined to murmur, he generally came back to this point, and was grateful for what he had received. One thing gave him great sorrow; he had not yet been able, hard as he tried, to obtain the means of renewing his explorations in foreign countries. Would the time ever come?

It was on a sultry day in June. Victor had returned from a hunting expedition, as he called it—had brought home several rarities; and, before attending to the creature comforts which Mrs. Bancroft had prepared for him, he felt he must go and see his daily newspaper. This was a rule with Victor; for he was accustomed to say, that “the footprints of God were very legible in history, and in none more than the events of the present era.” He looked forward to the millennium as being very near at hand, and the newspapers enabled him to judge better of the approach of that glad period. So Victor went to see his paper. That day there was nothing important from abroad, but there was an advertisement that greatly influenced his future. It ran thus:—

"Grand gala at Winterbourn Park. Admission sixpence. On the twenty-eighth of June the great annual gathering will take place in the grounds of this park, by permission of the Hon. Sir Frederick Cranebrook, Bart., when games will be provided for those who care to avail themselves of such. Three bands will be in attendance. At two o'clock the giant balloon, lately constructed by Mr. Boxton, the celebrated aëronaut, will ascend from the grounds. The public will have an opportunity of making a few partial ascents previously, on payment of sixpence extra. In the evening, fireworks and dancing by torch-light will conclude the entertainments. Profits to be given to the Winterbourn Hospital Fund.

"P. S. THOMPSON, *Secretary.*"

Another advertisement, just beneath, informed him that an excursion train would take him for six shillings, there and back, on the same date.

Victor's mind was instantly made up. For a long period both he and his wife had passionately desired to ascend in a balloon, in order to obtain a view of the earth from a great height, for they knew that it was a sight worth any amount of risk to the true lover of Nature. He immediately communicated his resolution to Mrs. Bancroft, and she gladly agreed to accompany him in an aërial journey if he could prevail on the balloonist to permit it. He therefore wrote at once to ask the question, giving his reasons for wishing to go, and proffering a sum (all he could afford) to be allowed. After much correspondence the aëronaut consented to take our hero and heroine without any expense. How slowly the intervening days seemed to pass, and how they longed for the twenty-eighth to arrive! It came at last, and opened magnificently. Never was there a brighter prospect for an adventure; everything went well. They started by the train on the previous day, so as to be on the ground at the earliest moment, and also have time to visit the balloonist beforehand.

When Mrs. Whalebone and Mrs. Horrocks were informed by Mrs. Tompkinson of the expedition her lodger and his lady had now started for, they declared they believed both would be killed before they came back; and Mrs. Tompkinson said she recommended them to take a little brandy up with them, in case the air became too rarefied for their lungs, and they should faint; but they refused to do it. Mrs. Whalebone said, "Some folks, when they was teetotallers, had odd and obstinate notions about them. She hated such mucky bigotry!"

Mr. Boxton, a man eminent in his profession, and exceedingly well-informed on most matters of scientific interest, was greatly pleased with his visitors, and particularly admired the courage of the lady. He told them that they might expect to meet with some dangers on their journey, and was very anxious to ascertain whether they were at all affected with heart disease, as this was an important consideration. Victor said he always thought that he was; but medical men had declared the contrary, so he must give in to their opinion. With respect to his wife, he felt there would be no difficulty on that point. They had no fear of danger, having met with it too often. And in addition, they were entirely in the hands

of Providence. It was not idle curiosity that prompted them to go up, but an intense love of science and Nature. Mr. Boxton was well pleased with their explanations, and promised to do all he could to render their firmamental journey a pleasant and profitable one.

The day arrived. The revels in the park began. Triumphal arches, and flags, and streamers were seen along the streets leading to the grounds. From every tree-top were devices in coloured calicoes, with appropriate mottoes. Chinese lanterns in thousands were to be seen, forming bridges from tree to tree, intended to light up the grounds in the evening. Bands of music and processions of children from the various schools, and of the members of the clubs, were continually entering, enlivening the district by their splendid banners and other accompaniments, and the martial music from the instrumentalists. In the park, in an open space, a review of the Rifle Volunteers took place; and in another, a cricket match. Every imaginable rustic game was included. Tents were reared, where provisions and every kind of edible and fruit were vended. Nothing had been excluded, excepting intoxicating beverages. The proprietor of the park very wisely prohibited them, on pain of a heavy fine. He knew that while the people abstained from these, they could be innocently happy. He said he might as well admit the devil in *propria persona*, and with more safety. A few did get intoxicated; but they obtained the means outside from the publicans, who plied their dangerous trade out of the jurisdiction of the park owner. But the grand feature of interest was the balloon. Several persons went up a little distance, and came down again. One old lady, of sixteen stone weight, ventured. Of course, every one said the balloon could never rise with her; and one even called to the balloonist to put in a little more gas, and make a subscription among the company for the extra expense, much to the enjoyment of the assembled crowd. But the balloon did take her up. When she came down again, she was so frightened, that in reply to the numerous queries as to how she liked it, and how she felt, the old lady declared she would never do such a wicked thing again, for she didn't know whether she stood on her head or her heels; and she really thought it would have been awful, if it had taken her right away to the Cannibal Islands. "And who knew? it might have happened!" Whereat several persons vociferously inquired how much per pound they would have given for her, considering how lean she was. But the fun at length ceased, and preparations were made in earnest to take the great journey, in which Victor and his brave little wife were to join. Two o'clock struck from St. Dandolph's tower: they took their seats, amidst intense excitement; the fastenings were severed that bound the impatient monster to the earth, a quantity of ballast was thrown out, and away went the balloon into the air, followed by tremendous cheers and well wishes. Victor offered up a silent prayer for safety for them all; then exclaimed, "Now for the pleasure which we have anticipated so long!" It was a glorious journey. Every object seemed to be receding from them. They were not moving away from the earth: it was the earth moving from them, flying downward with an amazing velocity. They did not appear to move at all. The shouts of the people still came up audibly, though they were now at a great height,

and the people still going down. The whole park in a few moments had dwindled to a mere speck. Then the earth began to spread out before them, like a magnificent garden exceedingly diversified. Down and down still went the earth, appearing like an immense saucer of wonders. They could see the gigantic towers of churches, like so many rods of willow. The towns and hamlets were mere points, at last. All up above them was the unlimited blue sky, with the bright burning sun in one spot, rendering the fleecy clouds coming down to them as so many specks of silver. The sounds from the earth had nearly ceased, except when, in passing over a line of railroad, a train, like a serpent of black thread, with a white streak passing from its head, sent forth its shrill whistle. This they could faintly hear. Then all was silent as the dead. The wind now sprung up, or rather, they entered the influence of a slight current, and they soon altered their direction, until they hovered over the great city of London; but little of it was visible, by reason of the smoky cloud far down, that partially hid it from them. The Thames now seemed like a bright thread of light, with here and there specks darker on its surface where the shipping were in full sail. But in a little while this was gone, as all other things had, downward. Then Victor began to realise the insignificance of man, and even his world, in comparison with the boundless universe that was above and all around him: down, down, still rushed the earth, producing at each stage of their aerial progress gorgeous scenes, as they changed their position. But at last they entered a dense mist; and for a few minutes they were in a semi-gloom. Neither the sun nor the earth were visible. They were in a cloud. A clammy atmosphere clung round them like a garment; but there was a deadly silence, that could almost be felt. Mr. Boxton had taken up scientific instruments; and with the aid of Victor, he began to use them. They had taken with them, on the advice of the aéronaut, an extra coat and shawl; and they began to experience the value of them now, for the cold increased; and they were glad to have a protection against the fog for their lungs. But in a few moments more the fog shot down below them, and they were again in the full blaze of sunlight. They looked down; the earth was still invisible, and they were over an immense bank of clouds, bright as silver, and making it appear like an ocean of molten metal. There was another stratum of heavier clouds above them. Mr. Boxton looked up anxiously, for they were going right into the midst of it. A moment more, and a rift appeared, through which they shot, and they were beyond in a few seconds. Now and then they obtained beautiful views of the earth through these rifts; but it had shrunk so much, that they could sensibly appreciate its rotundity. They had reason to be thankful for a narrow escape, too; for they perceived that they had passed through an electrical cloud, and a thunder-storm was raging below them. A discharge of it a few moments before, and they would all have been in eternity! Again did their course change: they were now travelling rapidly over the counties of Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Warwick, and in the direction of Staffordshire, as near as they could judge. They calculated that they were about two and a half miles from the earth, and still rising. The cold was now intense; and the

air was becoming so rarefied that they found it somewhat difficult to breathe. The hands became blue and then dark blue. The lips assumed a livid hue; and the oppression at the chest increased momentarily, while it became no easy matter to move; but they were resolved to ascend as high as they dared. A little while more, and they had advanced a mile higher, still, however, in the same direction; and then they passed through a snow-storm. Snow, in the midst of summer! And yet not more wonderful than for Victor to find that snow even crowned the Sierras Nevadas of Santa Marta. At this stage of the journey they prepared to descend. For three long hours they had been traversing terrific solitudes, where the silent magnificence of space had cast a deep feeling of awe over the minds of the travellers. But time was passing on. It would be well to get safely to earth before nightfall. Mr. Boxton, therefore, began to allow the gas to escape a little, and immediately, as everything went upward again, they knew they were descending to the earth. With incredible velocity the clouds continued apparently to ascend; and at last, the earth was beneath in all its glory, its scenes gradually changing at every moment. A broad patch of black, over which smoke came from many points, declared to them that they were not very far from Birmingham. Beyond they began to obtain a view of the black country, with its numerous jets of fire, its blast furnaces, their flames being visible more and more, as they came more closely over them. A strange scene now greeted their eyes. The numerous canals and streams that intersected that dirty country, all the way from Soho to Wolverhampton on one hand, and on the Liverpool route by the other, made the country seem like a net of waters, with towns, furnaces, and mines teeming in every spot. They still descended, till the inhabitants below could see them; and crowds of people were assembling to greet them, at whatever point they might descend finally. A short time more, and the real dangers commenced. They were within a very little distance of the earth, and the grapnels were flung out. Away past tall chimneys, over furnaces, and by the shafts of coal-mines, sometimes threatening to become entangled amongst some of them—the monster striking the ground, and then rebounding, once even carrying away a portion of a weakly gate that stood in the way of the grapnels, till at length the balloon was fairly anchored; the remaining portion of the gas was discharged from the panting and jumping monster, and it lay in a collapse, only a shadow of its former grandeur.

With thankfulness for their preservation, the almost cramped and stiffened travellers alighted from the car, amid the plaudits of hundreds; and proud themselves of their achievement, and the glorious visions of Nature which they had risked their lives to obtain.

“Here we are at last, not far from Dudley,” said Mr. Boxton. “Another voyage in safety, and in company with two heroes. Mrs. Bancroft, I compliment you greatly, because, as a woman, you have a wonderful courage.”

But scarcely had they alighted on terra firma, when Victor felt himself grasped by the hand, and a friendly voice, which he fancied he recognised, exclaimed, “My word! if it isn’t the very gentleman I wrote to this morning. Mr. Bancroft, how are you? I suppose this

is your lady. How remarkable! for I believe you have come down to make a great discovery, and to obtain a fortune. I did not anticipate seeing you before my letter could reach you, though."

In great astonishment Victor said, "I recognise your features, but do not remember your name, sir."

"Perhaps not; never mind, you will presently; but come away to my house, and bring this gentleman with you. You will want your dinners. I will be at the expense of attending to the balloon. Now to pleasure before business."

And the trio, after giving a few directions, made their way into the town, and to the house of one of the great iron merchants of the place. Little did Victor suppose that his aerial journey was destined to have such an important influence on his future fortunes.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CONVERSATION—A MESSAGE FROM INDIA—DOWN IN THE MINES.

MR. JOHN CARRINGTON owned one of the most extensive furnaces in Staffordshire. In addition to this, he was proprietor of three mines, besides a limestone pit, all of them paying well. This gentleman was noted for his liberal tendencies, and for the exceeding generosity with which he treated all in his employ. Pity it is that more of our great manufacturing princes do not follow his example! Being immensely wealthy, he had an opportunity of dispensing good on every hand; and being wise, he never failed to embrace every means that presented itself of doing this good. He was resolved that the world should be better for him; and he was generous almost from a necessity of his being. He did not certainly live in a princely mansion, as some men would have done; for this reason, that he felt the great cost might be better employed. He had a home that was replete with every comfort and elegance, and stored with such things as could render life in it really enjoyable to every wise mind. His hospitality might be said to be unsurpassable; and in this both poor and rich participated. Mr. Carrington was a *good* man—a practically pious man, loving to forward the interests of foreign missions, but attending also to those at home. He believed that it was necessary to take food and clothing, and help, too, for the struggling, as well as tracts and good words. He said it was a capital thing to furnish the poor with books of a secular description, so that they might have the opportunity of forming their minds by a perusal of good authors on many subjects; and then, he said, they would be much more likely even to study the higher departments of human learning, *i.e.*, those pertaining to religion and God. With such a man Victor felt it to be a great treat to commune.

It appears that some two or three years before this period, Victor

had met with Mr. Carrington, and had been entertained for an evening at his house. But as he met with so many persons in his passage through life, it cannot be wondered at if he had nearly forgotten the features of the gentleman till they were recalled by certain reminiscences which Mr. Carrington mentioned. As if by tacit consent, all allusion to the business on which his entertainer had written to him was banished away for that evening; and Mr. Carrington thought little about anything else than rendering their stay enjoyable to Victor and Ellise Bancroft, and Mr. Boxton, the *aéronaut*. As the latter gentleman was compelled to leave for London early on the ensuing morning, it was felt that till he rested in his bed the party would enjoy as much as possible his scientific conversation. This was, indeed, a great treat: Mr. Boxton was a perfect enthusiast, and fully believed, as did Victor, that the time would soon come for the solution of the great problem of *aërial travelling*. He said we should in a short time have greatly extended means of traversing the earth and air. Steam would be, in a great measure, replaced by electricity as a motive power. All human labour nearly would be accomplished by the aid of machinery, even to the raising of and excavating for coal: electricity, perhaps, driving that mechanism. Our power of travelling through the air would be more perfected. Hitherto we had gone on a wrong principle. In every age, men of all nations had been aspiring to *aërial conveyances*, but they had never yet discovered the true theory of steering them against winds and currents.* He believed that time would come; and, on his own part, he would do all in his power to hasten it; "for," said he, "why should we not travel as safely through the atmosphere as on the ocean?" Spiritual manifestations were then alluded to, and Mr. Boxton said he felt assured that the time would soon arrive when it would not be thought an unnatural thing for men to hold a very close intercourse with the invisible world. The wonderful developments of this power of late years were such as undoubtedly to promise us that privilege. The inhabitants of the ancient world in the purer ages, before the world became so gross as to deserve the deluge, evidently held intercourse with higher intelligences, according to the tenour of Scripture: then why not again? He believed that the very atmosphere we breathe is another universe teeming with inhabitants of a higher order than man—perhaps some of them disembodied spirits; and it was not impossible, but highly probable, that there were invisible beings that possessed no human or angelic intelligence—but creatures holding the same subordinate position in that existence as the fauna and flora do in our material world. Said he, "Were there not horses and chariots of fire when Elijah was taken up to heaven? Do not the prophecies and the Revelation of St. John teem with allusions to creatures that were not *intelligences*, in the sense in which we understand it? And when the Syrian army was sent to Dothan, to capture the prophet Elisha, and had compassed the city about with

* It is most possible that M. Nadar has theoretically solved this problem, for he argues that as a bird is specifically much heavier than the medium through which it flies, so a balloon should really be constructed on this principle—the only one by which the *aéronaut* may ever hope to obtain a full command over its movements. We think he is correct in his inference.

their great host; and when the servant of the prophet trembled for the safety of his master, did not Elisha pray that his faithful servitor might have his eyes opened? and when the prayer was answered, did he not see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round them? I think these are unanswerable proofs of what I have advanced."

"I cannot help agreeing with you, sir," said Victor. "Being privileged to behold occasionally some of the wonders of that invisible world, I feel called upon to support you by a few items of my own experience. On many occasions have I seen strange animal and even vegetable forms that were not earthly, neither referable to the effects of imagination, though I am aware that it plays sad tricks with us all at times. But there is a natural power of discernment given me in all my private experiences, so that I know I am not imposed upon by any illusions of the mind. From amongst the most remarkable of these sights I will take an illustration:—I awoke one night within a quarter of an hour of my retiring to rest, and saw a singular form, of inconceivable beauty, spread entirely over the body of my sleeping wife. The moon was shining into the room, and rendering every material object visible. This form seemed exceedingly like as if the whole arterial and venous system of a human being had been placed alone over her—being of exactly the same length. Through the almost *network* of ramifications, I could see the portions of white counterpane, the network being of a rich ruby colour. But as I lay and watched, it grew more vivid and palpable; then, slowly rising, it at length stood in the air, between the bed and the window; the moonlight, and even objects out of the window, being visible through its spaces. Then I noticed hundreds of small nodules (if I may use the term) fixed on every branch and veinlet, like fruit or flowers on a plant, but slightly different in colour; and so slowly did the whole resolve itself into the thin air, that I had some difficulty in deciding exactly when it had disappeared. Of the object served by this appearance, I am as ignorant as of that of others which I have been favoured with. I simply accept it with them, hoping that time may clear up the mystery."

"It is certainly very remarkable," said the gentleman. "But we live in an age of strange things; and this can be strengthened by the testimony of millions—many of them trustworthy, sane, and of a strong intellectual stamina."

"But," said Mr. Carrington, "it is high time that we depart for bed, as Mr. Boxton is compelled to leave so early in the morning; though I could sit all night listening to your conversation, my dear sirs." And so the party broke up, and each one retired to rest.

But Victor was to have a new experience of spiritualism given him within a very short time of his closing his eyes for his first slumber. Almost immediately on entering his room, sundry rappings were audible in various parts of the apartment, and then increased in vigour as time went on, and particularly after the light was extinguished. There could be no mistaking them; on the walls, ceiling, doors, cupboards—everywhere they sounded now, until it became difficult to sleep. Several times Victor tried to compose himself, and to fall

asleep; but the voices would then speak in his ears, the bed would be shaken under him, and once or twice it would appear as if a gun had been fired at his ear, though he felt that his partner could not hear that. It was then like *the striking of a heavy iron weapon against a thick plate of iron, coated with wood*. But at length he dropped asleep. The fatigues of the day rendered this inexpressibly sweet to him; but the mind or spirit was active still. In vision he saw the forms of his maternal grandfather and grandmother. Although he had never seen them in life, he now recognised them as if he had been always acquainted with them. They came and told him of the sin which their daughter had committed, by her leaving with her husband for a foreign land, without their concurrence, and of her being so long wilfully lost to them. They said that in life they had a hard struggle to *forgive*; but they had at length, and then died—at least, her father had. This male form seemed to promise that at some future period Victor would know more about the whole mystery connected with that portion of his family. But what struck Victor most forcibly was the fact that the female—the *dream-spirit* of his maternal grandmother—had the exact features of that beautiful figure that had on so many previous occasions stood by his bedside, both in England and in South America. The spirits of his dream passed away, and he awoke; but in a few moments the beautiful female form actually stood by his wife, looking down on both of them with a smile, though a sweetly sorrowful one. He contemplated it for a moment with intense surprise; but as he started almost with terror, it was gone—having resolved itself into the thin air, as steam appears to do when flying from the locomotive. But the rappings continued violently all that night—Victor being too nervous on this occasion to ascertain why they should—that is, to interrogate them.

Early on the following morning he rose to see his friend Boxton off; and when that gentleman had departed, and Victor had taken some breakfast, he entered into a private room with Mr. Carrington, and the following important interview ensued:—

“From a mutual friend I obtained your Killington address a few days ago,” said Mr. Carrington. “I happened to be in the house of a poor old man, about a mile or so out of this town, by the name of Wilson, on business matters. Some few days before, his grandson had been brought in from a neighbouring mine, having received, while down, a serious injury. My business—as I generally look up all cases worthy of help—was to do something for the poor fellow in his trouble. I found that he had lodged with the grandfather for a year or two, the old man having a servant, a neighbour’s daughter, to attend to his wants, in the way of doing up and cleaning the cottage, and other little matters for the comfort of her aged neighbour. This was all gratuitous; but I may mention that the grandson hoped, some future day, to take his poor relative to live with *him*, when this young girl would continue to do her best for his comfort, but in another capacity—as the wife of young Wilson. It was a great blow to the poor old man, having his grandson brought in thus; but a few words of encouragement soon cheered him up. I learned that the young man had received a simple fracture of one of the bones of the right leg; but there was little hope of

his getting about again for some weeks. I asked the name of this young maiden, who was now so affectionately waiting upon both the men, and was informed that she was the daughter of a neighbour, the mother being dead, and the father seldom being at home—by name, Mattingly. The father had in early life left his home on the death of a remaining parent, and married. He, it appeared, was the only child of that parent, supposed to be alive, or, at all events, known to be. It was said that his family had been a fated one; for, in the first place, many years before, the eldest son of his parents went away to India, in the service of the East India Company, and after a while was never heard of again. The next son died suddenly of heart disease; but, before this, the daughter left home, and married clandestinely, against the wishes of her parents. An estrangement resulted—she went abroad with her husband and never again communicated with the family. The remaining child, this son, Daniel Mattingly, remained to close the eyes of both his parents in death (the mother died of a broken heart), and then he left the locality, and fortune brought him to this district, where he married and had a daughter, his wife leaving the world soon after. Now, sir, I was much struck with this recital, in its main features agreeing with some particulars which, when you were here before, I remembered your naming, and I felt I had some clue to the mystery which enveloped the family on your mother's side. You will recollect that on that occasion you said you had had certain particulars entrusted to you by your mother, more than your brothers and sisters knew of, and that you were anxious to unravel this mystery as soon as an opportunity presented itself. I say I thought of you; and will you believe me if I fancied I could detect a slight similarity of features between this young Alice Mattingly and yourself? I resolved to ascertain your address, and wrote to you immediately on the subject, as I felt that you would be glad to hear of my fancied discovery."

"You are indeed good, sir," answered Victor, trembling violently. "I must see these people as soon as possible. Surely, *at last* I am going to know something about my poor mother's family. But have you heard any other particulars?"

"I am glad to say more than you anticipate, my dear sir," replied Mr. Carrington. "I told you when I saw you yesterday near the balloon, that you had come down to meet with a fortune, or words to that effect. Now judge if I am not likely to be correct. A day or two ago, and before I ascertained your present address, a curious advertisement in the *Times* met my attention. I have it here"—and the gentleman produced the paper in question—"hear it," he said:—

"'Wanted, the next of kin, or any relatives of one *George Mattingly*, who some years ago went to India, and was never heard of again by his family. If any of his brothers or sisters, or either of his parents, are still in existence, by communicating instantly with Messrs. Haroun and Blunter, of 17½, Lombard Street, they will hear of something greatly to their advantage.'

"Of course, I immediately visited Mattingly's daughter, and desired her to send her father to me, in order that he might learn the news so closely relating to his own interests. I also made increased exer-

tions to discover your whereabouts. When I saw Mr. Mattingly, and had conversed with him, I felt sure, from what he told me, that the advertisement affected both of you. And we arranged that, as soon as possible, he should go to London and see the head of the firm, and that you should follow as soon as I could find you ; but an illness of an apparently serious nature prevented him from carrying out this plan. A note was therefore dispatched to the firm, informing them that in a few days a relative, and perhaps two, would meet them to hear the matter which the advertisement referred to in respect to Mr. George Mattingly. Almost directly after dispatching this note, I ascertained your address from a gentleman who had met you at Waltonbury House, the residence of Mr. Bayle Johnson, and so Mr. Mattingly decided, if he recovered, to wait for you, and proceed with you to London. The fact is, he is not much of a traveller ; and has never in his life been in the metropolis—so he is naturally timid of going alone. Two days ago, I had a reply from Messrs. Haroun and Blunter, stating that it was necessary to see the relatives of their client Mr. Mattingly soon, as some or all of them would have to visit India, if they wished to obtain an immense fortune. The said Mr. Mattingly was in ill-health : did not think of returning to England ; but hoped some relative would come out to him. For this purpose an adequate sum of money was lodged in their care, and the whole matter left to their management. Now," said the gentleman, "would you like to go and see this Daniel Mattingly at once? Since his convalescence, for his illness was only a slight one, after all, he has gone down as usual to his duties in the mines, where he is a sort of overseer in one of the minor departments. We shall just about find him there if we start at once—for it is at least a couple of miles to the pit."

"With all my heart," said Victor, gladly, and greatly interested. "I will just see Mrs. Bancroft, and tell her where I am going, and what for, and then be ready, sir."

In a few minutes more they were on their way to the mine.

It was a dirty, rough road, a long way out of Dudley, across fields that were torn up so that only a few patches of turf were left here and there. They passed several large iron works and blast furnaces, where night and day the flames were rising from the chimneys and conical towers. The heat within these is intense, as it requires to be, to melt iron—immense bellows cast in heated air that would liquefy lead in a moment or two, so that the stimulation of combustion should not for an instant decrease the heat, but rather the contrary. They passed on by the shafts of several mines, outside of which piles of coal were burning in the manufacture of coke. Near the furnaces too were hillocks of vitrified material—the refuse of the fires, forming an amalgam of iron dross, coal, flint, and limestone. A thick cloud hung over the country, and swept all along to the Stour Valley, for it was one of the dark days of the black country. The scene looked prettier and lighter in the vicinity of the castle and the hills of Worcestershire. But the black cloud continually increased from the masses of smoke pouring forth from other iron works before them. They were not far from the mines to which they were bound. The road where tram-lines were laid down was pretty easy to walk upon ; but

Victor observed that an inferior seam of coal came up to the surface. This was not worked, because it possessed no commercial value. Along this road of trams and coal they again passed till they stood by the shaft of the pit in which they hoped to find Mr. Mattingly. We must here explain that there are generally two shafts to a pit, by which a pure current of air can be communicated to the depths below. The skip, an iron or strong wooden circular platform, is so constructed as to bring up a ton of coal at one time—the mineral being kept in place by several iron hoops at intervals from each other. The skip is fixed at the end of a perpetual chain. As soon as the coal has reached the surface of the earth, it is lifted up a little way, and a sliding trap-door is closed on the mouth of the shaft, upon which the skip now rests. The vessel of coal, having wheels, is rolled off the skip, and another empty one put in its place, unless some one has to go down, when of course they step on instead, holding on by the chains above them, and so are carried into the bowels of the earth. While the empty skip is descending, generally a ton of coals is being drawn up from the other shaft by the same machinery and chain. On this platform Mr. Carrington and Victor stepped, and the trap being moved away they began the descent, Victor for the first time seeing the strata of the coal measures displayed around him till the darkness seemed entirely to enclose the subterranean travellers. It was a curious sensation which they now experienced; but not unlike the feelings of Victor in descending from the air on the previous day. Down, down—hundreds of feet in a now Cimmerian darkness, till at last they saw a strong light coming up from below. A moment more and a fire was blazing, and of immense proportions, while hideous noises of moving vehicles, echoes of uncouth voices and dialects, and it seemed as if they were really descending into the realms of Tartarus. But in another moment the skip bumped on the ground slightly, the chains above loosened, and they stepped off, Mr. Carrington inquiring for Mattingly. The skip was then loaded, and on a given signal the whole mass again ascended. A fire was really burning at the bottom of the shaft for the creation of a proper draft of air. The temperature of this region was almost stifling to Victor for a few moments. But he soon became accustomed to it. The darkness was his greatest difficulty. Being near-sighted it was the worse for him. Small thin tallow candles, fixed in bits of clay, were given to them now, and their guide began to lead the way to that part of the mine where Daniel Mattingly was supposed to be at the time. They held the lights high above their heads, so as to obtain all the advantage of them; but even then the blackness was so great that Victor continually stumbled over blocks of coal, some of which had fallen from the wagons that conveyed them to the mouth of the pit. Victor noticed that the coal had been taken out in such a way as to leave passages a few feet in width and height. Along these were tramroads for the wagons to run upon them, and in many of them water was oozing through the ground, and forming black, slimy pools. Above, below, and on every hand was coal. The mine seemed to consist of miles of streets formed from this material, while here and there, in some parts of the mine were immense squares or circular spaces, the ceilings being at least

thirty feet above them, and the whole supported at intervals by gigantic pillars. In some places large beams of timber contributed towards their support as well, especially where the processes of excavation or blasting were still going on. At the end of each long street, and where it did not communicate with another at right angles, a large door was constructed, kept generally by a lad, whose duty was to close it as soon as the horse dragging the wagon had passed through. Inattention to this rule for any short period would probably have caused an explosion in the pit, and the death of all the workers. Victor was informed that many of the horses had been down for years—living there, and sleeping in comfortable stables provided for them, though many of them *never laid down*. Victor shuddered as he observed the means by which the huge blocks of coal were undermined. He saw at first only a faint glimmering of light almost near to his feet coming from under the wall on that side, and he also heard the sounds of picks, and falling coal. Looking down, he observed that two or three poor men were underneath, in nearly a nude state. One or two boys were with them, holding the lights, while the men continually tore away the underlying material, till a gap was formed several feet from the opening. It was of course a matter of pretty exact calculation, so as to prevent the whole superincumbent mass from giving way and crushing them to death. And besides this they were in continual danger of suffocation by noxious gases. When the undermining has proceeded as far as necessary, these men come out of their dangerous and hideous positions, and a few blows of the pick, cleverly administered, will generally bring down two or three tons of the mineral ready for going on to the wagons.

"I hope the time will soon come," said Victor, with a shudder, "when all this will be done with machinery, and these poor men be able to do something better than thus to work for their daily existence."

"I hope so too," replied Mr. Carrington. "And as our friend remarked last evening, I have no doubt it will. Yet these men earn, when in health, considerable wages, and are really in receipt of princely means in comparison with the wages of the agricultural labourer. But, unfortunately, they waste their money in riotous living—eating and drinking. Drinking is especially their curse. You have observed how Dudley teems with gin palaces and dram shops?"

"I am sorry to say, I have," returned Victor; "and I have also noticed that the houses of the miners and furnace-men are in many cases such as would be thought to disgrace the agricultural labourers of the poorest districts of Essex."

"It is but too true!" said Mr. Carrington, sadly. "When will our people ever be better?"

"When the rising generations have become water-drinkers," said Victor. But he learned at that moment that Mr. Carrington was not a teetotaler himself, though he so greatly deplored the evils of drink in his neighbourhood. How many there are as inconsistent. Victor thought then there might be hope when those who see and recognise the evil will abstain from drink themselves, if only for example's sake. But Mr. Carrington believed in *moderate* drinking, as he called it; and though a good man in other respects, could not divest himself of the

mistaken notion that though others erred by intoxicating liquors, it was no reason why he should be called upon to give up his little. He forgot that Paul said, "*If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*" And again, "*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*"

They were now close to a spot where a second shaft, of smaller dimensions, presented itself. Another mine was below. A basket of strong construction, and a rope were the means of reaching this lower seam of coal. Victor would have had to descend to see Mr. Mattingly, but they learned that he came up a few minutes before, and went to another part of the pit. It was well that they had not to go down, for they thereby escaped an accident which might have been caused by their weight; for at this moment the basket began to ascend, when suddenly there was a strong vibration of the rope, and in a second or two a noise below proclaimed that the rope had broken, and the basket, with its contents, had fallen down at least fifty feet. By a good chance no one was injured below; but for a time their connection with the upper pit was destroyed. And so Victor and his friend went on again to seek Daniel Mattingly; Victor's heart beating with excitement at the possibility of meeting an uncle whom he had never before seen. A walk of a few more moments, and he stood face to face with one whom he had seen in vision months before. It was Daniel Mattingly, his deceased mother's brother. And through the means of two advertisements, and a curious series of subsequent steps taken, he had possessed himself of a clue to a great mystery, and the acquisition of what he had always longed for—a vast fortune, if what the London firm of Haroun and Blunter had said were correct.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO WEDDINGS.

EMILY BURTON felicitated herself on doing a smart thing that day when she managed so well as to carry with her Ellen's share, as well as her own, of the money derived from the furniture sale. For some years she had been such a perfect mistress of the art of dissimulation, that it was not really difficult to impose on the heart of her simple-minded sister, and induce her to believe that she (Emily) was penitent for the past, and deeply grieved at the death of so many of her near relations. Mrs. Burton could command tears and heart-rending looks whenever she had a mind to do so, and, on this occasion, she did not hesitate to employ them for her own advantage. Perhaps we may do her justice if we say that she did feel somewhat touched by the words of her deceased mother; but as she had fallen very far into infidelity—though she took care, when it could serve her, to profess religious convictions—she had but little faith in the efficacy of those blessings

and good wishes which her mother had bequeathed to her. We now find her far away from Fordham. Her exact object in coming there at all had been for the accomplishment of certain designs which she had had on a person who has not yet been introduced. How she had paid her way thus far, and provided herself with food, only she could tell. We have no means or desire to enter into the matter. Now she felt herself provided for for a week or two, till she had really placed herself beyond the necessity of self-exertion. But, according to present appearances, her little stock of dishonourably-obtained money would soon melt away. Mrs. Burton was a drunkard. She was falling lower and lower in vice and hypocrisy. It would be a miracle that should save her from utter ruin. We say she was far away from Fordham. It was in a little rural village where she had now taken up her abode for a day or two; she expected to be married there. "Woe to the man who had her!" you will say; and perhaps you are right. It certainly was a misfortune to him, at all events, for a long period. Did you ever see those matrimonial advertisements in the cheap periodicals? Yes? Perhaps you thought they were mere fictions to fill up a page: we inform you that these are realities. Numbers in our land obtain life partners in this way, and, in a few cases, good ones; but, at the best, it is a dangerous experiment. Emily had been a great reader of this class of books; and having seen a notice to the effect that "Edward Blank was, &c. &c., and possessed of three hundred pounds per annum, and would like to meet with, &c. &c. &c. Address——;" Mrs. Burton wrote, and the result was a correspondence, and then a meeting. Time passed on; the gentleman became deeply smitten—though there is no accounting for taste. Now they went to be married in this little out-of-the-way village. We will add that certainly the attachment was mutual; it was sincere on both sides.

The morning opened bright and beautiful. Edward Blank drove into the village, and then sought the temporary residence of Mrs. Burton. He found her ready, in all the finery she could command; and he led her off to the church, where he had arranged that they should be married by special licence. She was sober that morning. She had been very particular not to let him know of her great failing, for fear of losing him. Little did she dream that her intended second husband was a drunkard too, like the former one. But it turned out so. The ceremony was gone through—the sexton and pew-opener acting as father and bridesmaid—and they were pronounced man and wife. She was now Mrs. Blank, with three hundred pounds per annum to her dower, as she thought, derived from some landed property, which Mr. Blank had a life interest in. Her husband was evidently very fond of her, and considered that he had obtained a great earthly treasure. He did not tell her of his dire failing; but in his heart (for Mr. Blank knew very little about female character, his acquaintances being exceedingly limited, as we may suppose) he hoped that she might have an influence to draw him away from that vice which had already sapped the foundations of a good constitution, as well as commenced his impoverishment, good as his income was. But he did a wrong thing at the dinner they took

before leaving: he had wine on the table, and before they rose, both husband and wife were intoxicated, and they had discovered each other's weakness. Not only so, but they quarrelled; and the first dark cloud of retribution had already blackened their future prospects. With returning sobriety came reproaches, renewed affection, pardon, and promises of being better for the future. By a singular coincidence this strange union was built upon a love that amounted to infatuation. Mrs. Blank almost worshipped her new husband; Mr. Blank idolised his new wife, though one of his hopes had been cast to the winds already. And so matters stood. But they had married in haste; time only would show whether the repenting would be conducted at leisure. It is not our intention to more than slightly glance at their future fortunes; but we may just add, in this place, that about six months from their wedding-day the couple had both fallen lower and lower towards Tophet by this curse of drink. Their money was fast being wasted, and they were nearly in the second stage of poverty—for Mr. Blank was deeply in debt—when, by good fortune (another name for Providence), a temperance meeting was held in their town, and Mr. Blank went, alone. He came away an altered man. He had taken a step that saved him—he had signed the pledge. Henceforth he would devote all his powers to retrieving his condition, and saving his wife, whom he still passionately loved. But he had a difficult work. For years he bore with her, pleaded with her, at last prayed for her (for he became a good man); but she fell lower and lower—even selling his goods, when he was absent, for drink. Twice she left him for weeks; but, in his increasing love to her, he sought her out, and brought her back. He resolved that her salvation should be his life's work, and he shrank not from the task, though oft defeated. But she fell more and more, till nearly all trace of womanhood and humanity had deserted her. Still he strove on, hoping that the time would come when his great purpose should be achieved. One thing he resolved upon: whatever might happen, he would *never take his affection from her*. One fact we may mention in justice to Emily—*her heart clung* to him undeviatingly through all her sins, black as they were; and had it not been for her great failing, possibly she might have made him a good and faithful wife. But we leave them now for some time, while we attend to others.

It was about eighteen months from the time of the fire, and Edwin Marsden had, at length, seen the beginning of the day when he was to lead Ellen Bancroft to the altar. This day had been to him, in anticipation, the bright star period of his existence. He loved Ellen with an unselfish devotedness that, if possible, increased with time. The bonds that bound them were of no ordinary nature. He had saved her once from a terrible fate, and he loved her the more for this; for it is a law of our being, *that if we do any great good for another, our friendship and affection for the recipient are increased*. How often do we hear of men wronging others till they begin to hate them! Is it possible (and this we only suggest as a thought for mental reflection) that the dear Saviour of man loves his redeemed ones all the more because he has given his life for them? But there was a still stronger impulse urging Edwin to cherish his Ellen in his

heart of hearts : he had once deeply wronged her in thought and deed. Unjustly had he accused her of a want of sincerity and truth toward him, and for this he felt a lifetime of reparation would be due to her ; and he was right. The time came on for the solemn ceremony. Proudly Edwin took his dear one in the modest vehicle that had been hired for the occasion, and joyfully did he again meet her at the spot where they were united. Miss MacNeile kindly officiated as bridesmaid. She did not think it beneath her to do so ; for she said, " All are sisters and brothers, whatever their social distinctions may be, and therefore there can be no loss of dignity in taking this step, although Ellen is poorer and a little lower in station than myself." Miss MacNeile loved Ellen, and therefore she did her this honour. The brother of the bride gave her away — not Victor, for he was now absent for the second time (although he had sent a message) from England—but the other brother, who came over expressly to do for Edwin. It was a modest, quiet little affair. No bells were rung, unless by the angels in the invisible spheres around them. Being a marriage of truth and affection, they cared little to make any display, or to go into expenses which they felt would only rob them of some enjoyments for their immediate future. They did not even go on a tour, though they had the money to do so, for Edwin was prospering ; but they retained what such a journey would have cost them towards adding a few additional elegances to their dove-cot of a home. Very kindly had the MacNeiles and other friends helped the young lady, so that she could make a fitting appearance on the occasion ; even Mrs. Caxton had contributed a little present, and Mrs. Caxton was invited to dinner as an old friend. So happy were the few persons present at this meal, that all social distinctions were laid aside as cumbersome ; and Mrs. MacNeile, her daughter, Edwin and his young wife, the brother of the bride, and Mrs. Caxton, were free and friendly, resolved each to do his or her part for the general entertainment—Ellen already playing the part of hostess admirably. At length, when the dinner was over, Edwin drew forth a letter which had been sent him by Ellise Bancroft, who was unable to be present, though she could have wished, enclosing another from Victor, and which he had written for the occasion before his second departure from England. Ellise wrote an affectionate and sensible epistle, full of good wishes, and promises of little presents when they came to see her ; and she stated that Victor had entrusted the enclosed to her, wishing it to be forwarded, as soon as necessary, for Edwin to read aloud to his wife and friends on the day of the wedding. " And now," said Edwin, " I will do as my brother Bancroft and his good wife desire ;" then, opening the missive, he read the following :—

" Dear Brother Marsden,—I write this letter to serve two purposes, both of them being of importance. All having gone well, I presume that, at this time, you will have been united to my sister Ellen by a bond that you will no longer have the power to sever, if you have the desire. I earnestly hope that your married lives will be fraught with all the blessings and comforts that earth and heaven can bestow. Remember much depends upon yourselves whether this shall be so or

not. When I married dear Ellise, I considered that I had taken to myself a partner for eternity; that for ever, both in this and the future existences, there would be one spirit more near and dear to me than any other in the boundless universe. I might have friendships that were built upon a deep stratum of love in this world, but, of course, living or dead, Ellise would be the one spirit who claimed a regard deeper, and infinitely removed in its character from any other. In the world of spirits I believe that we may meet with countless myriads of loving and beloved friends, with whom our converse shall be inexpressibly sweet and precious; but there will ever be one cherished angel, a kindred spirit, who will be closer than any finite being to my immortal affection, and holding a place next below the holy Saviour himself. I am speaking now of the sacred and blessed; and this will be, *at all events, the largest part of mankind by far*. I want you to bear this in mind, and hope and aspire to the same joyful realisation. Remember, the world above will be fuller of supreme means of blessedness and affection, investigation and God-serving, than the world below: therefore, cannot we hope to have this *one supreme* sister spirit—the other part of our being that was created for us—to share in all these enjoyments? Think of this, both of ye. Again: do you wish to secure unceasing affection from each other? I will tell you how to do it. I have tried the experiment on a limited scale of time, and have succeeded, as I ever hope to do. The secret may be put in these few words—*bear and forbear*; and let the ante-connubial attentions which you tendered to one another be increased in the post-connubial period. Be open with one another; have no secrets apart; let everything be mutually known, from your several failings and weaknesses to the affairs of business. Honour God, and he will honour you. Walk through life hand in hand, and be meek towards one another. Never be too proud to confess yourself in error when you *have done* wrong, and to seek for the pardon of the other. Never fail to trust your heavenly Father for everything—making all the exertion possible to help yourselves. Of all your income, at least let a *tenth* be laid aside as God's portion—for his work, to be applied as he may give you wisdom; but do this humbly, and add as much more as you can afford. Be economical, but render your home as replete as possible with good, substantial furniture, nice pictures, plenty of books on every worthy subject, and other things that may be desirable, and that you can afford. Become total abstainers from intoxicating drinks, and you will have more money at command for other purposes. Occasionally you will find it well to entertain a friend or two in your house, and make them happy. These should be worthy people, whether poor or rich, just as you may see best. Proper attention to the *little* things of life will secure you such happiness and respect as will embellish it with something of more sterling value than gilt, and cheer you up even amid the sorrows which all must expect on earth; because it is said, '*In the world ye shall have tribulation*,' by One who has overcome the world for your sakes. Live by the rules which I have here sketched out, and then, whoever survives the other may confidently hope that the dear departed one will be amongst the angels at heaven's gate, to wel-

come you to the life which they did not consider perfect without your presence.

"In the second place, I wish to inform you more fully of the reasons why I have again left England. By a singular series of providences, as you are already apprised, it has been my good fortune to meet with our uncle, Daniel Mattingly, my mother's youngest brother. You know why he has been unknown to us for so many years. I have also told you of the expectations which that discovery has given us—of the possibility of our acquiring a vast fortune, which will be divided amongst us, I trust, and enable us to do some good, as wise stewards. It was arranged that Uncle Daniel and I should go to London for the purpose of seeing Messrs. Haroun and Blunter. We did so, and had to go through a rather sharp ordeal of questioning, so that our identity with the relations of the Indian Mattingly might be proved beyond a doubt; and then we were informed that Mr. George Mattingly went to India forty-three years ago, in the service of the East India Company. For some time he regularly corresponded with his family. At this time he was stationed in Calcutta. Being of an ambitious turn of mind, and being possessed of considerable abilities, he was not long in acquiring, not only a good bit of money, but also promotion; in fact, his promotion was most rapid. Soon after this he went, with his regiment, into the Mahratta country. Several battles were fought, in all of which he greatly distinguished himself; but he was at last taken prisoner, and condemned to death by the enemy. By a long series of apparently fortuitous circumstances, his life was spared; but several years elapsed before he was again able to escape, and then *he had lost the desire*, for he had become a Mahratta chief, and had won a rich Hindoo wife, and the esteem of his adopted people. But he had fallen from honour, for he had been compelled to lead a division of his new people's army against the British. Fortunately peace was made before they came within many leagues of each other's forces, and therefore he was saved from the terrible crime which he had nearly been led to commit. However, he felt he could never again claim the friendship of his own race or his own relatives. Hence he took no step, through all the succeeding years, to know anything of them. But he is now an old man. Sixty years of life have been given him; but in that tropical country this may be considered, for an European born, as a great age. His wife died several years ago, and he has never had children. He is now on the verge of the grave, with no European friend to cheer him up or advise him about the future. His possessions are truly enormous, but he has no heir. His lands he will leave to his wife's family, but all other wealth has been converted into jewels and gold, so as to render it portable; and thus he anxiously awaits the arrival of an heir or heiress to his possessions, who will, at the same time, remain with him, and close his eyes in death. His wealth is to be divided amongst the relations in equal proportions—that is, amongst brothers, sisters, or nephews and nieces; the one who is with him in India having a double portion. A copy of his will he has sent to his London agents, so that no mistake may be made, and they also have a list of his possessions. Now, dear ones, I must inform you that Uncle Daniel Mattingly

could not go out to India. He felt that I could much better do that, as I had already travelled so much, and that he could trust me to do all that was right for his poor brother, as well as for ourselves; for I have to bring back the jewels, &c. He was quite willing that I should have the double portion, which I am sure I do not care for, except that I can do double the amount of good with it. It was felt inadvisable to take Ellise; so she remains in England till my return, unless our uncle should get better, in which case she will come over to me, or else I shall bring him to England, whichever he thinks best. I do not like leaving Ellise; but I feel that duty bids me make this painful sacrifice, and I must submit. My dove is in the hands of God; I feel that he will take care of her for me. And I humbly trust that when the time comes to take us from earth, we may be permitted to go together, or, at least, within a very short time of each other—Ellise being the first. Now, I may return soon, and then you will also come in, dear friends, for a portion of this promised inheritance, and I shall rejoice in it. I desire greatly that you may have wisdom to use it. Still, let not one of us build upon this hope of future fortune, for it might become a snare to us. After all, the nature of the wisest prayer, and perhaps the most desirable blessing, may be understood from those words of Agur—“*Give me neither poverty nor riches!*” In conclusion, dear Ellise will see you as soon as possible, and she hopes you will visit her also. My very kind regards and respectful thanks to our good friends, Mrs. and Miss MacNeile; accept the same, with expressions of deepest affection, from your faithful brother,

“VICTOR BANCROFT.”

CHAPTER XVI.

IN INDIA—VICTOR TO MR. BAYLE JOHNSON.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I rejoice to inform you that I am once again safely landed on the shores of the tropics, and now tread the soil of Western India. At first I had hoped to have come by the overland route, but found that highly impracticable. I have been again brought through many visible dangers, and even those that were probably unseen. Many more of the wonders of the ocean—that seems to rest on the submarine countries like a royal crowned personage, whose fitful humour bodes good or evil to us, as he alters his mind—have been shown to me, from those hosts of luminous points that crowd on the crest of every wave by night (organic existences, I know), to that mysterious *ignis fatuus* that so often leads us to believe, at night, we see the light of a ship in the distance where no ship is. And now I feel that I have only accomplished a part of my long journey. As you are aware, I am bound for the great city of Indore, in the province of Malwar, on the plain that lies to the northward of the Vindhya mountains, where I hope to meet my uncle, George Mattingly. But

something seems to tell me that, when I get there, from some reason or other, I shall have to go yet farther, and at great peril. Well, I am prepared to do this if it should be the will of Providence, and I can accept the additional knowledge which may thereby be gained as my reward. But I must now proceed to describe the adventures through which I have thus far passed. I landed at Bombay—the Sierra Leone of this country, as one has called it—a city with half a million of inhabitants, founded on the southern part of the island of the same name, and connected, by an artificial causeway, with another island called Salsette. On this, and the island of Elephanta, to the eastward, are many interesting relics of bygone days: gigantic temples, that have been cut out of the solid rock, and adorned with images of Buddha, and pillars so fantastic, and yet artistic, that I long to see them—so wonderful are the accounts that I have read and heard; but at present I have been compelled to deny myself that pleasure. My face must be towards Indore. Perhaps when I come back I may be better able to visit them—that is, should I return by the same route, which is highly improbable. I look upon my journeying as an ascent from plateau to plateau, for it is an incessant up-hill in this singular country. Between the ghauts—a range of mountains and mountain-passes, that run along this coast, from Tinevelly, nearly opposite Ceylon, to the Gujerat country—is an incessantly narrow coast, that is certainly level for about five miles inland, and covered with sand, with here and there palm-trees growing on it. Farther inland there is a greater unevenness of ground, terminating with ranges of minor hills—themselves the advanced posts of the ghauts. Here the natives cultivate rice. The *sandy coast* is indented with numerous small inlets, where, during the rainy season, swamps are formed. Between the hills are hundreds of valleys, and on the sides of them numerous villages, enclosed by extensive plantations of fruit-trees. The swamps are a great blessing to the people, as the soil, by them, becomes fitted for the culture of the great staff of life—rice. But in front of us tower up the ghauts, the mighty highlands of this part of India. We soon saw them, covered with forests of tall trees—teak, sandal wood, bamboos, and other valuable woods. When we entered among them we were not about thirty miles from Bombay. I suppose their greatest height is about three thousand feet, but in some places they only form a high coast line, and nearly approach the Indian Ocean. Beyond them the country still rises, but in the form of a table-land, where cotton can be cultivated, I should say, with profit. There are some strange forms of rocks and mountain scenery here. The roads are often between two ranges of bare granite, allowing a pathway sufficiently wide for several persons to ride abreast; but a thousand feet up they seem to be falling over against each other, sometimes so closely that we can hardly see the blue sky above them. The whole untutored mind is at once filled with awe, as the thought continually forces itself upon me that these rocks are falling to crush me. But what an interesting land this is to me! I expected much; and my expectations are more than realised. I find many of the same forms of life that I met with in England; the same genera of butterflies, in increased numbers of species, with hundreds of varieties that are also new. The whole

country swarms with life, and in a much more dangerous degree than in South America. I have here to regard it possible to meet with tigers, lions, jackals, leopards, pumas, and other fierce creatures, whilst I can see rich promises of birds and reptiles during my stay in the country. I have a curious escort given me—a set of the roughest-looking fellows living—consisting of Brahmins, Buddhists, and even Parsee merchants who are also going my way, and therefore kindly bear me company. The god of the latter is the sun, or the fire, or anything of the same nature that reminds them of the subtle influences of the universe. If I could speak their languages fluently, I would have some interesting conversations with them respecting their peculiar faiths; but I regret I am not gifted with these linguistical powers, and therefore I only can converse with an attendant, who speaks bad English, and an Englishman, who joins me as an interpreter and guide, though he cares very little to help me in the matter I have at heart, for fear of offending the escort, as he says. He tells me they are very dangerous fellows when their religious prejudices are talked about, and he has a wholesome fear of coming into collision with them. Of course, I think him a coward; but I can do nothing better, and so the matter drops. An adventure occurred to me whilst threading the Bhow-no Pass, a short time since, that had very nearly proved fatal to the object of my journey. I must relate it to you. We had passed over a part of the valley, clothed in all the luxuriance of the tropics, and yet presenting many temperate-region features—such as acacias, and palms, and pines, and oak and maple-trees, covered with epiphytal orchidaceæ, while bamboos were mingled with clematis and ivy in a singularly-contrasted manner; and we had stepped once more into the midst of one of these ghauts, or passes, where the rocks on either side were bare and rugged as the elements and sterility could make them. We had travelled till all of our party were intensely fatigued, and desired rest and refreshment. I told my interpreter, therefore, to call a halt, which the coolies and others were only too glad to do. A number of tents were soon reared, and mats spread on the ground, and in a short time we had all begun to feast and enjoy ourselves—of course, each religious sectary eating apart. Some choice fruits, which we had brought from Bombay, were spread before us, whilst a quantity of goat's milk served to enrich the coffee, which was made on the spot. I must here notice that, not many feet from where I sat under the tent so hastily raised, was a little cleft in the rock on the right, from which some clear spring water issued in a thin stream—a great boon to us, as water is not always to be had when we want it. I had taken a little of this water for drinking just before sitting down, and had thrown off my coat, and hung it on a ledge of the rock over the stream, as I wished to dispense with it while under the tent, so as to enjoy a fine cool time of it. After the meal most of our people laid down to rest—it being the middle of the day, and of course the hottest. I also followed their example, and in a few minutes fell into a doze. There was a profound quiet for the next hour in the camp, as I called it; then we all rose up, and prepared to depart. I went to obtain my coat from the ledge of rock, and was about to put it on, lifting it up for that purpose; but in another moment my whole frame was filled

with an irrepressible shudder, as I observed something fall from a sleeve to the ground, and begin to glide away. It was a snake, of a dangerous species, too, I am told, though I am unacquainted with its name. The reptile had crawled into the sleeve from the cleft of rock over the spring ; and had he not fallen out in time, I might have lost a limb, if not my life. It goes to show how careful we ought to be in such a country as this. But before any effort could be made to secure the snake, one of our party, who had been loitering behind in the forest, for what purpose I do not know, came in with haste, and began to tell his companions something that evidently filled them with greater alarm than the snake had myself. I could not tell, for a few moments, the meaning of this ; but my interpreter went amongst them, and, after quelling the clamour that had arisen, made the man relate to him what had caused all this excitement. It appears that the hills have a number of forts on them, strongly built, and extending away towards Scinde—these being held by the chiefs of the hill tribes. Sometimes these fellows are very troublesome, especially to travellers who go out of the way of the regular road, as we had appeared to do, and they are not averse to a raid upon such a party for the purpose of taking their possessions, and sending them adrift. This would be no joke among these ghauts, where the country is only partially explored, and the means of defence, if just out of the pass, are not great. Well, the man, Dagher Beg, as he called himself, had brought in the intelligence, that he had, from fatigue, laid down to rest for awhile, feeling sure of being able to overtake us ; that he had fallen asleep for some time—being only awakened by hearing horses' hoofs and voices near him. He listened, and found that he could understand their conversation—it being in a dialect that was familiar to him ; and from what he then learned, it was evident this party was planning to overtake us, and to rob us of our possessions, though without doing us any bodily harm, for fear of the vengeance of the Government, which would assuredly fall upon them. The man had no sooner heard this than he prepared to steal away from the spot unobserved, and warn us, when his slight, cat-like movements reached the quick ears of one of them, and they were immediately on the alert. He crawled away in a nearly opposite direction to the true one ; and after a race, that must have been almost of life and death, he succeeded in getting clear of them, and entering the ghaut where we were. This was not pleasant intelligence to me, I confess ; and I felt that some plan should be at once adopted to save us from the power of these hill marauders. I did not want to be robbed, even if there were no danger to life or limb, because it might upset the whole success of my journey to India. I felt, also, that some of our escort were in the humour for fighting if the party appeared. I did not wish this either. I felt that I must always act as a man of peace, and I should wish those who were with me to do the same. How were war or danger to be avoided ? I looked at the Indians in interrogation, and could at once see that they had decided on a plan of strategy, with their usual Asiatic spirit of craft. I may state that we were not far in the pass, but that there was a long distance before us ere we could hope to get on to the next mountain pathway leading to the open country. My party had decided

to go back—that is, to retrace our footsteps to the forests. Through my interpreter they explained that we might, with haste, get to the opening of the ghaut before the hill robbers could come upon us; and if they then made their appearance, we should have the advantage of possessing this opening and barring their entrance. A few men then, if it came to the worst, could keep them out. But, on the other hand, if they had not yet gotten up to the pass, we might succeed in penetrating into some of the forests among the hills, and hiding for a time till the danger were over. They said that the robbers would then go into the ghaut and travel after us, as they would imagine, hoping to overtake us before we were well away; and when they discovered that we were gone, and, as they would think, were out of the more immediate range of their safe influence, they would return, of course highly disappointed with their achievements, and we could re-enter the pass, and travel away as fast as possible in the darkness of the night. It seemed so good a plan to me, that I at once consented for this step to be taken, and signified, by the interpreter, my desire for the immediate commencement of the stratagem. I at once could appreciate the value of the possession of the ghaut opening. Whereupon we were ready for moving in a very few moments, and all our party again *en route* for the forests we had lately evacuated. Within half-an-hour we were close to the mouth of our mountain pass, and in a few moments more would have emerged, when we heard a wild, exultant yell, and, looking forward, then beheld the dreaded enemy coming to us in a force that was probably overwhelming, and with faces that betokened a resolution to overcome us. I suppose there were at least fifty or sixty of them, all well mounted and armed, fine-looking fellows, such as one scarcely would care to deal with at the best of times. We were about twenty in number, including our two Parsee merchant friends, and scarcely half of us were armed. I had not a weapon about me that would have been of much use; for my contemplations were not to use weapons on my fellow-men, but only on wild animals, and as seldom as possible even on them; but I could see that my escort were determined. The armed portion, and all of us, were glad that we possessed the mouth of the pass, as it enabled us to hold our own with more facility. The chief of the hill robbers called upon us with a wild sort of defiance, and began to menace us, as far as I could judge, while his men were evidently ready to make an assault on our position at the earliest word of command from him. One of our number listened with apparent composure; then began a reply—a species of harangue that I should gladly have understood. Unfortunately, neither myself nor the interpreter knew many words of the dialect, so we were indebted to the Indian whom I previously mentioned, as being acquainted slightly with English. He said that the chief of the hill robbers had called upon us to deliver up two horses and our baggage to them, when they promised to allow us to pass on our way without any further molestation; and the reply was to the effect, that we could not do that, as we were now limited in our resources; our baggage was of little value to any but ourselves, and we were able and prepared to fight any number of them in defence, if assaulted, and to send a strong British force upon them at the earliest opportunity. At

the name of the Feringhees, as they are called, the hill men seemed to vacillate a little; but remembering that they were in strong force, and had our party almost in a species of trap, they prepared to compel us to accede to their wishes; and I verily believe that in another moment there would have been a contest, when fresh sounds were heard behind the enemy, with galloping of horses, voices of men, and, lastly, the noise of wheels. The enemy heard them too, and, on a given signal from their chief, with a yell of disappointment, the hill men wheeled their horses' heads round, and made off in a direction to the right of a swampy valley that existed very conveniently for them in the vicinity, and we saw no more of them. We were not long either in ascertaining the character of the new arrivals, for the view of horses, elephants, and cannon, with about two hundred men, half English and half sepoys, enabled us to realise our safe position, in the fact that a small British force was making its way also through the ghauts to take up its cantonment in one of the plateau villages, so we should have a good escort through the remainder of our hill journey; and we received them with hearty cheers. Col. Leverson, of the —th Bombay Regulars, a gallant and intelligent officer, was with them, and I soon made his acquaintance, and obtained from him much valuable information respecting our future journey. He told me that latterly the hill tribes had become very troublesome, and it was no uncommon occurrence for some of the small travelling parties to be robbed, especially if it were known that a Parsee merchant was with it, as these gentlemen are rich, and generally carry wealth in their baggage sufficient to tempt the cupidity of the escort, let alone the hill men. I happened to mention to him the name of my uncle, and to tell him my object in visiting India. I told him what Indian name my uncle had taken, that of Rajah Bowallah, and he informed me that he had once been at the house of the Rajah, in his own city, and had been very courteously received. He said that the Rajah was nearly naturalised now, and really spoke the language of the district better than his own. It had long been known by the Government who he really was; but they had never availed themselves of this knowledge to punish him as a renegade in consideration of several circumstances—one that he had great influence with the Mahrattas, and had on many occasions served his own original Government most materially; and therefore he was now recognised as a Rajah, and all honour ceded to him as a truly native prince.

“About five years ago, the late Rajah died. Before this your uncle had won the hearts of the people, and their ruler too, by his benevolence and medical skill. He had constituted himself a sort of teacher and benefactor amongst them,” said my new friend the colonel; “and when the old prince died, and left no immediate heir, they naturally looked to Bowallah as his successor—he having been, in addition, connected by marriage with the deceased, as well as having been one of his chief advisers—I may say *the* chief.” I asked my companion who would be likely to succeed *Uncle Bowallah* in case of his immediate death, for I did not expect to find myself allied so nearly to an Indian prince; but he could give me little information, save that a cousin of the late Rajah, a comparatively young man, belonging to one of the chief Mahratta families, but now residing in a semi-domesticity in a part

of the country beyond the Nerbudda, in the state of Scinde, was the most likely—especially if Bowallah nominated him to the people. He has paid several visits to this young man, and there is every prospect of his succeeding, though a host of claimants may at any moment, and probably have, risen up for the expected vacancy. The colonel likewise informed me that Rajah Bowallah had for some time been in declining health, and he would not feel surprised to learn at any moment that he was dead.

“‘You might, perhaps, take his place in the vacant rajahship,’ said the officer, smiling.

“‘Me! I have no ambition for such an office,’ I remarked, laughing. ‘I find it difficult enough to *rule and please MYSELF*; I know not how then I should manage with a race of people so different in language, religion, and national distinction.’

“‘You are right,’ remarked the colonel. ‘It is very difficult justly and righteously to govern the Hindoos at the best of times. Unfortunately, they understand an argument from a bayonet or cannon’s mouth much better than from any gentle source. And it is not desirable always to be in hot water on that plan.’

“I did not quite agree with my companion’s views; but I felt it would be wise to let him have his own way, whilst we journeyed with him, at least. I found him a very pleasant, true gentleman all along the route; and can gratefully acknowledge myself as having been under deep obligations for many kindnesses received while we were together. I lost sight of him at Boolcoote, where he took the place of a relieved garrison, and then we had to go on again alone. I will now pass over the incidents connected with our journey along the table lands of the more level country, and bring these extracts from my journal down to a few days before my entrance into Indore. We were not far from an immense grove of magnolias that terminated the forests in that part, and led us again on to a jungle extending to within a short distance of the banks of the river Tapte. It was not our intention to cross the river that night, but to put up at a cluster of bungalows very near, and cross the river in the morning. Then arose signs of a great tempest; for the heavens were clouding over, and a stiff breeze was coming up. Accordingly, we hastened our pace, and hoped soon to reach our journey’s end for that night. The breeze, hot and changeable, was now increasing; the insects, too, became more troublesome, and fairly swarmed round us, as if conscious that some aerial disturbance were at hand, and desirous of seeking protection round our heads and on our skin. We could see, at some distance before us, and over the jungle, that a peculiar-looking cloud was rapidly making its way in our direction, the distant waters of the river being greatly agitated, and the tall reeds and grasses bending as it passed over them. A disagreeable hissing noise too, every now and then drowned by a din like that of thunder, and the hurricane was upon us, sweeping with a force that threatened to bear everything before it. I sprang from my horse, and led him quickly to such a place as I might hope for any shelter. One or two of our escort had much difficulty in saving themselves from being blown away. There was a great deal of dry sand even along this route, and this so filled the agi-

tated atmosphere as to render it almost impossible to see objects many yards distant from us. We could hear the tall trees of the forests behind, and the plantations stricken down with ease, or torn up by the roots, whilst gigantic boughs were hurled with terrific force through the air, or on to our pathway, rendering our position more unsafe than ever. Now and then, as the air became less thick, I could see the trees bending down with the force of the wind, and then suddenly rebounding and snapping off in an opposite direction. Others, when in isolated positions, were torn up by the roots, and thrown down several yards from the spot on which they formerly stood. Our horses and elephants were so terrified that it was with difficulty we retained our command over them, and the hurricane increased momentarily in violence. What might we not fear, then, in our exposed condition? There were a couple of small hills not far off, to the right. Should we venture to approach them? for we might expect some better shelter on the opposite side, if we could reach them. We thought it would be best to try. Then the rain came—tropical rain, that deluged the earth, and seemed second in power only to the wind, accompanied by lightning and thunder; and an awful elemental war was now being waged. Still, while the hurricane lulled for a time, we decided to try our fortune in reaching the aforesaid rocks. They were not a quarter of a mile away, in a straight line; but we were at least twenty minutes in reaching them. But, within a few minutes of our success, when we looked like drowned rats, the wind again rose, booming ominously through the regions we were safely out of, and committing greater damage than ever to the beautiful trees and flowers that teemed in these forests. By this time, I should say that, save low on the ground, not a leaf or small twig were left, the hurricane having taken everything away, or beaten it down. We were correct in our conjectures that the south side of the rocks would afford us comparative shelter. They certainly protected a part of the jungle and forest, as well as ourselves, and some natural hollows or caverns afforded us an immunity from the drenching rains. But our adventures were not yet over: we were to meet with much more serious dangers in that spot than those we had escaped. I must explain that portions of the tall jungle occurred right up to the rocks, from the direction of the river, though a tolerable open space had been left from our entrance point. The rocks slightly jutted over, and our animals stood under these juttings, ourselves taking the caves. It was growing dark, but we had some means of making a fire, which would be necessary if we waited long, if only as a protection against savage beasts. One or two of our attendants went forward to procure some of the jungle-reeds that the rain had not touched. Most unfortunately, within that bit of jungle, a highly respectable tiger had his lair, so that as soon as our men began to move the reeds, the tiger began to look out for game. There was a fearful roar, a crash in the reeds, and the savage brute came like an arrow over the heads of the men, and on to the body of the elephant-driver, bringing him down, and crushing his arm simply with the animal's own weight. The elephant became terrified, and rushed away into the jungle with his luggage on his back, some of the men of our party seeming equally inclined to follow his

example. But a look from my interpreter, who levelled his rifle at the tiger, recalled them to a sense of their responsibility, and every man bravely prepared to rescue their unfortunate companion, or die in the attempt. Then a terrible battle began, during which we forgot all about the progress of the tempest. Fortunately, the huge beast had not yet touched his prey with his teeth, but held him down whilst glaring fiercely at his foes, and preparing to spring on them. A shot from my interpreter, and a ball lodged in his shoulder, only tending to make him still more furious. Lashing his tail, with a fearful roar, he struck the wounded man away from him as he would a stone, and crouched low on the ground in preparation for a spring upon my interpreter. Just then, a couple of balls from the escort, aimed at his head, took effect, causing the poor wretch to sway his head to and fro for several minutes, as if stunned or dizzy, and then to fall, roaring pitiably. Three or four men now ran up to him with their tulwars—a sort of sword—and their guns, the butt-ends of which they could only use, as there was no time for re-loading, except on the part of the interpreter. One of them ventured near, aiming a murderous blow at the creature's head, but the tiger was up in a moment, and had dashed down the man, and was ready for new execution before the others could follow up their comrade's blows. The whole party of us now formed a ring round the dangerous beast, hardly knowing whether we should succeed in overcoming him. The interpreter lodged another bullet in his head, which, if it had missed, might probably have taken the life of an Indian behind; and then we combined in a grand assault with butt-ends of muskets and rifles, swords and knives, my own achievement being to pour in a couple of balls from a double-barreled pistol which my interpreter handed me. Several of us got severe contusions and scratches, but we soon became conquerors; and in half an hour from that time the foe lay dead before us, and half skinned. My men took his skin off more especially for me, as I was glad to give a good sum for it as a specimen and as a trophy. Fortunately, I had means of preserving it, and I am glad to say I was able to do something to aid the poor man whose arm had been crushed, till we could get into our village of bungalows, and the poor fellow could have it amputated, for that was inevitable. The other casualty was not a severe one, the man being more frightened than hurt. The hurricane was over, too, now. We recovered our elephant; for the beast had not gone far into the jungle; then prepared again to go to the village, which we reached some time after dark. From that village I write this letter. I don't know where the next will be dated from; but I hope it will be Indore, as I intend to push on as fast as possible. I trust our poor Indian will do well. I shall have to leave him behind to the care of the inhabitants, with money for his expenses, which will not be great. I shall be glad if you will send this letter to Mr. Carrington, when read. My next will be addressed to him, and I will then desire him to send it to you. I am, sir, with the kindest remembrances to Mrs. Johnson, yours faithfully,

“VICTOR BANCROFT.”

CHAPTER XVII.

VICTOR TO MR. CARRINGTON.

"Indore, October 17th.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am glad to inform you that I have at last arrived at the end of this stage of my journey. As I expected when entering India, I have to go still further on, before I can hope to meet with my uncle Mattingly. My impressions are generally correct, though I cannot say how they are produced, except on the theory of spiritual influence. The journey from Bombay to this city has been attended by difficulties and dangers, though I have been permitted by Providence to overcome them all, and to be very little the worse. In health I may say I feel quite satisfactory, though I have had an attack of low fever, which left me very weak, and delayed my journey some days, while on the road. I imagine I caught it from exposure in wet clothes so long after the hurricane, which you will have read an account of in my letter to our friend, Mr. B. Johnson. It was fortunate that I did take this sickness. You will say, How? My stock of money, a very necessary thing, was greatly trencned upon by several unforeseen events: and on my arrival in this city I should have been puzzled how to act for want of more than I possessed. I certainly could have reached the next stage of my journey on what I had left, and returned to Indore again; but should anything happen that I missed Uncle Mattingly, and did not see him till after his death, I might find myself in an awkward predicament; for, of course, I rely entirely on him for the means of returning to England. Foolishly, he made no calculation, in the sum entrusted to his London agents, for my return. I presume he made sure of some one coming and taking away his wealth. But I must tell you that whilst in the town of Jowly Mehser, this fever came on, though long delayed. I was for days exceedingly ill, hardly hoping to recover. Naturally, I have a good constitution—a power of combatting disease, which I feel owing physically to my total abstinence from intoxicating beverages. About the fourth day I began to feel better. The fever was gone, though it had left me very weak and debilitated. Mr. Thompson, my interpreter, had gone out to procure some little Indian delicacies that he said would do me exceeding good after fever. I lay for an hour waiting his return, when who should you think I saw enter my apartment? No other than Mr. Thompson in company with Colonel Leverson. My good interpreter met him in the street of the town. The Colonel told me that he had obtained leave of absence for a week or two, and intended to seek me out at Indore. He had felt considerable interest in my fortunes from the moment of meeting me; and it occurred to him that I might be met by difficulties which neither of us could anticipate: therefore he would like to help me all in his power, especially

as he knew the country and people better than I did. He was at my service for a week or two, and would be delighted to join me in my natural history investigations, and point out where some rare things might be obtained, if I would excuse the liberty he had taken with me, and accept of his company. Of course I was glad to do so, and exceedingly thankful for the disinterested kindness of the gentleman ; and feel pleasure in being able to bear testimony to the high appreciation and regard I experience towards a man who would befriend, as he has done, so entire a stranger. My friend perfectly understood the mode of treatment for convalescents after the fever of this country, and with his kind ministrations, joined to those of my interpreter, Mr. Thompson, I soon felt competent to continue my journey. It was not long before the Colonel gave me some particulars of his family history ; and I learnt that he had been a great sufferer by the cholera that raged a few years ago so as to decimate some entire regiments, when he did not occupy the high post that he now does. Amongst the victims that fell at that terrible time in the towns was his lady, Mrs. Leverson, with whom he had only been united a year, and to whom he was deeply attached. His only solace is now a very dear sister, who lives at Bombay, and keeps his house for him—having refused all offers of marriage for his sake, at least till he marries again, which I think is very unlikely, as the Colonel has a great dislike to the idea of second marriages, just as I have. On many points of this sort I find we are kindred spirits. Well, in due time, we continued our journey, and at length arrived safely in this city.

“Indore is the chief town of the original Mahratta Empire, lying in the province of Malwar, on a great plain north of the Vindhya Mountains. I suppose there is a population of 15,000 or 16,000 souls. The river Nerbuddah, which empties itself into the Gulf of Cambay, must be crossed in order to reach it. The great valley, which takes its name from the river, extends mostly along its southern bank, the mountains which enclose it on the north often advancing to its margin, or very near it. The elevation of these mountains cannot be much greater than that of the ghauts—that is, from their base ; but as so much of the country is table-land, we may expect that their actual altitude from the level of the Indian Ocean is much greater. Some of these mountains are nearly inaccessible, being almost perpendicular. In some parts the declivities are indented by deep ravines, which frequently make the rocks convey to us the idea of bastions that are falling to decay and desuetude. There are several temples in the city, but they are going to decay, though still giving evidence of their ancient grandeur. Colonel Leverson very kindly took me to the house of a friend living there, where he said I might hope to take up my quarters with him till I had seen my uncle, and knew more of the circumstances that were still before me. I told him that I should be glad to do this, if the people—English, of course—whom he alluded to would not be incommoded by receiving a stranger on such short notice. He overruled my scruples by telling me that the hospitality of his friends was unparalleled, and that therefore I might be quite comfortable on that point. And he was right. Dr. Williams and his lady received us both with delight ;

and if they had known me for years could not have made me feel more at home with them. Of course I was not an hour in their society before I began to make inquiries respecting the Rajah Bowallah. I was not at all surprised to find that my presentiments had been correct. The Rajah had been in very ill health lately. His disease was a general breaking up of the system, aggravated by some mental suffering which Dr. Williams could never ascertain the nature of ; for, singularly enough, he was the Rajah's medical adviser. A few months ago the doctor felt sure he could not long continue in this world, and had urged him to settle all his affairs. This was about the period when he first sent to England for an heir to his possessions. But he grew better again about a month ago, and resolved to take the opportunity of journeying to Hyderabad, in Scinde, beyond the Indian desert and the Indus, so as to get the benefit of a change, and finally settle in his mind respecting his successor to the Rajahship. He had left orders, it appears, for whoever might arrive at Indore to follow him as soon as possible to his new place of residence, so as to be with him should anything occur. So I have, after all, to take a second Indian journey, and to cross the desert, that terror to most Indian travellers who wish to get into the provinces of Scinde or Candahar. The day after our arrival I paid a visit to the house of my uncle, with Colonel Leverson and Doctor Williams, as the doctor had access whenever he pleased. And I confess that I was much interested in the details of his house. It was part of an ancient temple, which he had fitted up as a residence, several chambers having been made into suitable apartments, and all of them furnished in a style of magnificence that would do credit to any European palatial house. Of course everything was Oriental in its style, although much of the furniture seemed to have been made abroad, and not by native artists, as it was a union of the European and Indian. The Rajah had a large number of retainers, who, I was told, were passionately devoted to him. In the centre of his suite of rooms was a sort of garden—open to the air, understand—with palms and other trees and plants arranged in parterres, and now in full luxuriance. Within the whole of the beds of flowers was a fountain, that gave an air of coolness most delicious in such a place. I observed that the Rajah had also a number of cages filled with living animals in this garden, and gorgeous birds, and even reptiles. He had evidently a taste for natural history. Dr. Williams informs me that the Rajah possesses a vast collection of objects, including insects of all orders, and from all parts of India, shells, reptiles, birds, skins of animals, ancient manuscripts and idols, coins of the country, and general antiquities, worth an immense sum ; 'and,' said he, 'you are fortunate, my dear sir, if you inherit them, for you will find them interesting to you.' The collection, he said, had been going on for some years, the Rajah purchasing everything he could obtain that was new to him, every new insect as well as antiquity. I quite longed to see the collection, and could not rest till Dr. Williams, who had been entrusted with its care, unlocked the doors leading to it, and admitted me. I was in ecstasies. Here was a perfect museum : the China relics being alone an invaluable acquisition. I felt there could be little need for me to linger in the country after my object had been

completed, for collecting, if I were to have this store of natural riches. But, poor man! I soon felt it would be wrong to covet them. I must try and find my uncle, and do the best I can to serve him. Dr. Williams had known him for some years, and was able to give me much additional information respecting his former life. One incident I feel I must relate to you, and it will enable you to account for the rapid rise of the Rajah, from being a prisoner of war, to the ruler of the very tribe that had captured him. Soon after his marriage with the sister of the late Rajah, who fell in love with him because he was a truly handsome man, he had the good fortune to save the life of the Rajah in a singular manner. The old prince was accustomed to entertain friends rather often, when they would sit and drink coffee and smoke all day long. In the service of the old Rajah was a youth whom he had taken greatly into his favour, and been a great benefactor to. The youth waited on him with an apparently intense devotion; but once or twice when present, Mattingly had observed that this youth would look strangely when any political remarks fell from his master's lips, especially when certain relatives were mentioned who were then supposed to stand a favourable chance of succeeding the Rajah in his position at some future period. Mattingly entertained a suspicion that this youth looked forward to the possibility of his becoming Rajah; and certainly, as time passed on, the favour shown him was such that there could be little doubt of it. The Rajah became inordinately fond of the young man, and raised him from post to post, until he ceased to be a menial, and took a rank nearly equal to that of a son. Often and often now did Mattingly notice a certain sinister and malignant expression on the features of this young man, when near the Rajah, and when he thought he was not observed. Mattingly resolved to watch him; for he felt sure that the Rajah was in danger, and nursing a viper in his bosom. One day the old prince was took ill, and his life was despaired of. For a long time the chances were equally balanced, then passed over to the dark side—to the probability of death; and during this time the youth seldom left his benefactor, except for a while in the evening, perhaps an hour or so. The symptoms from which the Rajah suffered were very difficult to understand. A peculiar somnolency would take him for hours, and then he would wake unrefreshed and worse than ever. It was noticed that these attacks came on about the early part of the morning. So the Rajah wasted away almost to a shadow. One evening Mattingly went to the residence of the Rajah to inquire after his health, and observed not far from the gateway of the temple or palace, as it might be called, and in a dark corner, two persons conversing together. They did not observe him, but he heard them, and comprehended two things in a very short time: first, that one of the persons was the youth of whom I have spoken, and the other a stranger, a wandering fakir, apparently; and secondly, that there was a plot between them inimical to the interests and safety of the Rajah. He instantly conceived a plan by which he might find out their object. Drawing back he glided from the entrance to the street again, on the assumption that the fakir would soon emerge also. He was correct. In a few seconds the fakir came forth, and unsuspectingly made his way to

the open country, which was not far off. Mattingly followed cautiously, *and then beheld the fakir gathering a particular plant which was said to contain poisonous properties.* He only took a few leaves, which he carefully hid away, and then returned to the city. Mattingly took some also, and followed him again, ascertaining where he lived. The next morning Mattingly went early to see the Rajah, and found him better. He was a welcome guest at any time, and now particularly, as he himself knew a little about the treatment of disease. The Rajah dismissed his attendant, the youth, and began to say how much better he was ; but he added, 'I fear I shall be worse again by-and-by, as I am always thus at this time of the morning.' He also told Mattingly that he felt he should soon die, and therefore had fixed upon his successor, and intended that day in council if well enough, in fact that very hour, to nominate him. Mattingly said he had done an unwise thing, for *he* felt that he might hope to live for some years yet, if proper treatment were applied ; and he was certain that he could undertake the cure, from some meditation that he had had on the subject. The Rajah brightened up at this, and said he would gladly submit to his treatment if he thought so. Mattingly said he would stipulate then that he should place himself entirely under his own care—not allowing even a native doctor to come in—not even permitting his favourite friend. The Rajah looked at him suspiciously, and then said, 'Be it so : I am in your hands !' The Rajah had a favourite dog that always lay on the cushion by him, or near his couch. The dog was present on this occasion. Every morning at about ten o'clock the coffee and pipe came, for the old man could not dispense with these even in his illness—though he only took a cup of coffee generally, and sometimes hardly a whiff at the pipe. 'I have brought coffee with me this morning, and the means of preparing it,' said Mattingly. 'As to the pipe, you can take it if you please, but I will fill it. Let your usual meal, however, be brought in.' The Rajah did not know what to make of this, but he resignedly gave the required order—Mattingly calling in the attendant who usually did this, and whom he found waiting without, not far from the youth. It was impossible for them to hear the conversation though, so he knew his plan would succeed. The coffee and pipes were introduced, the necessary smoking material with them ; and the attendant withdrew. Mattingly filled the pipe with his own tobacco, and lighting it, handed it to the Rajah to smoke. He then poured out some of the coffee, and gradually cooled it by the addition of a quantity of milk. Then catching up the dog, he in a few minutes compelled it to swallow the whole of the mixture. The Rajah smoked in silence, looking on, though, with an alarmed curiosity. The dog was placed down on the ground, and attempted to run away, but fell before he had got half across the apartment, and began to snore fearfully. *He was narcotised.* For an hour the two men watched the animal in dismay. At length Mattingly said, 'You now understand that had you taken that coffee, and probably the pipe, as some one else fills it, you would have been sleeping too. You feel better than you did yesterday at this time ?' The Rajah was ghastly pale ; but he said he felt better nevertheless, and so he was, for he had not taken his diurnal poison, a few doses

more of which probably would have killed him, when the youth would have reigned in his stead. 'Now,' said Mattingly, 'allow me to give orders for the arrest of Baghva Mahmoud (the name of the youth), 'for he is the guilty party!' I need not lengthen out my story unnecessarily. I may just add that B. Mahmoud was arrested, and kept in a strong prison for some days; during which the Rajah grew rapidly better. A body of men was sent to the residence of the fakir to arrest him, but he had fled: and he never again showed himself in that part. Mattingly made experiments with the plants which he saw the fakir gathering, and ultimately proved to the satisfaction of the Rajah that they were possessed of those singularly dangerous narcotic properties which rendered a person able to take the life of another by placing a drop or two of an infusion of them in his drink, or putting a small fragment in his pipe daily, though he would be unable to detect its flavour. Baghva Mahmoud was now ordered to be brought before the old Rajah for trial; and a council was convened to try him for his crime. Already were they waiting, and the officer had been sent to bring the prisoner. But he returned to tell a strange tale. The youth had committed suicide. He had opened a vein in his arm, and was lying dead in his own life fluids. From that time the attachment of the Rajah was transferred entirely to Mattingly, and of course his chances of succeeding to the Rajahship were greatly increased. The people were informed of the kindnesses he had rendered their prince; and what with that and the other services he did them, they unanimously elected him, on the death of the old Rajah, a few years after. I must not now linger over this letter. Only a few hours are left me for sleep, and then I start on the arduous journey to Hyderabad, across the great sandy desert. I will trouble you to send this when read to Mr. B. Johnson.

"And believe me, my dear friend,

"Very faithfully and respectfully yours,

"VICTOR BANCROFT."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DANGERS.

FROM the mass of letters sent by Victor to his wife and different friends, we must compile the following particulars, portions of which we put in our own wording. The most difficult journey that Victor had taken was now to be accomplished, if he wished to succeed in the grand object for which he had visited India. He had to traverse regions inhabited by the most uncivilised people of the peninsula. He had to cross streams, and go through jungled regions reeking with malaria and dangers. And if he were to penetrate Rajpootana and reach Hyderabad, he must cross that desert which at all times was the terror of Indian travellers. Colonel Levenson had obtained an

extension of leave of absence, and resolved very kindly to bear him company, as he had traversed these regions before, and therefore was qualified to be of use. In his capacity of British officer, he would also exercise an influence over the occasionally lawless character of the people among whom they would expect to find themselves in the land of princes, as Rajpootana might be translated. Victor had a small escort. His interpreter, Mr. Thompson, still accompanied the party, and about half the number of men who had come up from Bombay. He had with him also two elephants, and horses for himself and the colonel. Some days had gone by, and the cavalcade had left Indore far behind. The party encamped close by a jungle just as the night came on. They were greatly fatigued. The dusty road during the day had almost suffocated them, for sand rises in the hot season so thickly at times, that it is difficult to make any way at all. Thirst is of course increased sometimes to an unbearable extent by this circumstance, and our travellers had obtained the full benefit of the inconvenience. They were so far from any signs of human abode that it was seen necessary to travel in the night, as there was a brilliant moon. This would be cooler and more comfortable than in having the hot sun falling down almost vertically as in the day-time. There were some extra dangers, as of wild beasts, to be encountered; but they felt that all this must be risked. Their halting ground was too unhealthy to remain on long, especially to contemplate sleeping on. The provisions were now drawn forth, and each one fell to with a hearty goodwill, having quenched thirst with some of the water Victor had been careful to bring with him, and into his share of which he put a grain or so of sulphate of quinine, as he found in South America that this was an excellent means of keeping off thirst as well as fever, and at the same time of purifying the water. The moon had already begun to rise. The fire-flies were abroad, coming from every point of the grass and reeds, and certain sounds not far off told that Nature had begun her awakening for the night.

"How strange and wild everything appears," said Victor to Colonel Levenson, after they had been silently observing these facts. "Night, although the physical antipodes of day, has its world of active inhabitants, and a mighty host of creatures of the great living family rise up to seek their food, and to render the night as lifelike as possible. Not only the jungle, but the air is teeming with life. See those immense moths, the great silk weavers of the *Lepidoptera*, how much they look like bats!—one would fancy they were bats."

"Yes, they are much larger than many bats; but you will see the latter creatures very soon, and the magnitude of some of them will surprise you. I have seen them in these districts apparently nearly as large as a fox, as they flitted by."

"Ah! I have had accounts of such creatures," returned Victor. "I have also seen some of them, stuffed, in the British Museum. They must look strange objects as they fly along."

"They look like creatures of evil omen," said the colonel. "Would you believe it, but although I have been in India some years now, and have seen these animals many times, I never can get over

a certain superstitious feeling about them, much as I have tried? I always feel that they symbolise some unholy powers in the unseen world. Perhaps this has been the effect of an early education; for when a child, I remember looking at pictures of the infernal regions, and of magical rites where witches were performing, and I know bats always occupied a prominent position in the scene."

"I believe, sir, these early impressions are never effaced from the mind, especially in what relates to the superstitious feelings; for I recognise a species of childish and ignorant, as well as an intellectual, superstition; though I am quite sure of the existence of spiritual operations all around and within us at the same time. I often have wondered why *bats* should be chosen to symbolise demons. I cannot discover any earthly animal that I could exactly suppose to resemble them, or any of the existences of hell. But talking about bats, did you ever dream of having lived in the form of a bat in some previous age, or of flitting through the air by night in such a body, as naturally as if it were all reality?"

"You ask me a question that I am able to reply to in the affirmative. I have done so. I have often fancied myself flying at great distances from the earth, with perfect ease, and sometimes in the form of a bat. I never like this; for of all creatures, I have an unaccountable horror of these nocturnal animals; and nothing would sooner take away my courage, though I should not like to acknowledge this to every one!"

"Our experiences seem to run in the same parallel," put in Victor. "I have sometimes known these flights above the earth in the body of a bat, so that when I awoke, my reason would nearly leave me with fright—the idea forcing itself upon my attention that I had received an intimation or recollection of a pre-existence. I expect these Hindoos round us would say that I *had* once been in the body of a bat: for few Asiatics can get rid of the doctrine of the metempsychosis. Of late years these dreamy flights have, however, somewhat changed, and I now only rise a little way in the air in my own proper form, or float without any assistance in a room, rising from the floor to the ceiling, and oftentimes seeming to lay in the air, as a swimmer would lay on the water. Generally, I do this in the presence of other persons, and challenge them to do the like, which I feel sure they cannot. Several times I have even felt that I was not dreaming; have spoken in my sleep and made this remark, 'There I have often dreamt I could stand in the air, but I find it is reality?' Have you had experiences like this?"

"Not exactly: but I often fly in my dreams, and have known many others who do the same."

"I may also mention one other phenomenon which I have experienced," said Victor. "I have had, instead of flying, to swim through immense oceans. Now some persons who have never experienced the flying, have testified to this swimming process, or else to riding on swift horses. It seems to me that they are all modifications of the same phenomenon."

"Probably," answered the colonel. "But talking about dreams, have you ever observed how the antipathies of the mind seem to influ-

ence the dreaming state? For instance: I hate bats—have a terror of them. I often dream of them. Another person dislikes some kind of bird, and at intervals his night visions are haunted by these animals. Perhaps with a third, some particular insect is his utter detestation, and accordingly, that annoying creature will come to him in his sleep.”

“I know a little of this too,” Victor replied. “The antipathies of human beings are very strange and unaccountable. Some detest pork, others spiders; I used to hate toads and frogs, while the cry of an owl by night brought my mind into the most intense horror. Some dislike cows, some cats, others centipedes, others long-necked, or long-legged birds, many even fear a moth or a butterfly. These are mysterious facts, particularly as these antipathies are hardly ever got over, try as one may. With some persons, colours are an objection. My eye is exceedingly hurt if it looks many minutes on a scarlet geranium. I detest the thought of drinking a liquid that is green. I could take any nauseous medicine except rhubarb, and so forth. But I could understand that such antipathies would influence us in our dreams, where these phenomena are not the result of spiritual influence—just as a fever will often cause us to dream of fire, or a difficulty of breathing suggest tight clothes or drowning.”

“It seems to me that your explanation is the only rational view we can take of the matter,” said the colonel.

“Understand me, sir; there is one reservation now,” added Victor. “I do believe that occasionally unseen spirits hovering round the pillow influence our dreams, and cause those antipathies and waking impressions to convey to us certain feelings. I know there are always busy round us when we sleep, both good and bad spirits; and sometimes they converse with us, tempt us, teach us, lead us to distant scenes, as the case may be. I was once taken in this way to a far-off country, and witnessed a fire, and dreamed that I put it out with my own breath. I thought it was at the house of my parents (for it was some years ago); and I afterwards found that a fire had occurred at that very hour in their house, and was with some difficulty extinguished. But what’s the matter? You look frightened.”

Victor might well utter this exclamation, for Colonel Levenson had turned pale as death, and began to tremble violently, though trying to conceal the fact.

“I am foolish, I dare say,” he said; “but I am sure there is one of those large bats in the neighbourhood; I can feel it.”

“My dear friend,” ejaculated Victor, “I did not suppose your antipathy to these poor harmless creatures to be so great as that!”

“There it is,” said the colonel, now in much greater alarm; and sweeping through the night air Victor truly saw a gigantic specimen of this tribe of animals. It had a peculiar appearance, and conveyed a strange feeling to the nerves as its sharp cry was heard. Had it come upon Victor unexpectedly, it would probably have caused him some terror for the moment, being so large—nearly five feet in the expansion of the wings, the body a fifth of that length. What they saw was probably a variety of the *Pteropus Javanicus*, seeking its food of wild fruits, insects, and other edibles.

"I wish we were well through the night," said the colonel. "I always dread the succeeding midnight hours when I have seen any of these large creatures."

"We had better prepare to continue our journey," added Victor; "therefore we will give orders to that effect." But just then, far away in the jungle even to the forests that extended beyond, a faint, lurid light began to show itself, growing brighter and brighter, until it seemed to overpower the rays of the moon; at the same time they could hear a faint humming sound, that gradually increased till it seemed to partake more of the character of a hissing and crackling. They looked on in surprise for a moment or two; then a wild shout of alarm fell from the escort, and the colonel cried out, "Good heavens! the jungle and woods are on fire! In a few minutes the whole country, in this direction, will be in flames. We must get to the high ground there, northward; it is nearly in our route, cleared, and our only chance of safety." And now an indescribable scene of confusion ensued. As quickly as possible everything was in readiness; and the whole party, scarcely daring to look back, was hurrying or galloping over the uneven ground, through the mud and water of some places, and the grassy and bushy parts of others, in their endeavours to reach the high ground. Once on that part, they were safe; and would be able to view the unusual event that was now transpiring, without any fear of the terrible, destroying element. Meanwhile, the glare of the heavens behind rapidly intensified itself; seeming as if the world was taking fire, and the end of all things was at hand. Hissing, like some venomous serpent, the fire was making itself heard. Other sounds were now coming in to mingle with these ominous signs, and render the horrors of the scene more frightful. The inhabitants of the distant forests were pouring into the jungle, and the wild beasts, birds, reptiles, even the insects of the district, were becoming greatly agitated. Presently, our travellers might expect a mighty army of them to follow, and, perhaps, greatly increase the difficulties of the flight. Victor and the colonel tried to cheer on the natives immediately near them, while Mr. Thompson, the interpreter, attended to the elephant-drivers, and inspired them by his words of hope. Victor looked behind as he urged on his steed, and saw that the appearance of the heavens was truly awe-inspiring. Clouds of black, suffocating smoke went up, sometimes from several spots at once; showing clearly that the fire was running in different directions; and this augmenting cloud began to stand, visible, even in the night, as if covering with a shroud the face of the burning country. Flocks of birds were now flying over head, shrieking out their terror, wildly hurrying, as if fearful that they might also meet death in the smoke, if not in the flames. Ever advancing, like the vanguard of a destroying army, on towards the rear of their flight, in measured time but sure, was the pillar of smoke. But now its blackness was suddenly illumined by a column of flame, that shot high into the heavens, like as from the crater of a huge volcano, causing the cloud to become blacker than ever; while the sky, on the other hand, was crimson with its glow. A frightful roaring and crashing could be heard at intervals, as some giant oak, or other forest tree, bowed its head to rise no more

for aye. Then, like the explosion of musketry, the fire gained power more than ever; sometimes rushing along some track of tender and dry herbage, and fairly devouring it as it were in an instant. The fire was gaining upon the travellers, and they could not reach the safe ground in less than two or three miles; their whole route being encompassed with jungle that would burn without difficulty. It was a race of life and death, and each one felt that he would soon have to look to himself.

"The bat—the Great Kalong!" cried Colonel Leverson. "I told you it boded no good."

"Never mind the bat," said Victor, hurriedly; "it is now the fire, and *it* bodes us no good. With care all shall escape it. Trust in Heaven, and do your best, and all will yet be well."

The cries of the wild animals were drawing nearer; hundreds of them were trampling through the tall grass and the bushes, forgetting all their natural instincts and antagonisms in their efforts to escape their common danger. The larger often flung down the weaker and smaller, trampling them to death. And still on came the foe, devouring everything in its path. It was a mighty leveller. A stream was not far off; on both sides of the stream the jungle flourished, and half a mile on either way the forests again. The flames easily leaped the stream, and plunged their fangs into the dry vegetation thereabout, every now and then sending up volumes of steam as well as smoke, that looked white and strange in contrast with the blacker element. Every few minutes explosions could be heard, like as of barrels of gunpowder; then myriads of sparks would be flung high into the atmosphere, to fall again into the ever-enlarging and raging furnace beneath, as the coruscations from a rocket. Fortunately, the winds were lulled. If these came up in the least, and blew in their direction, it would be all over with our travellers. This might be expected at any moment; for, as a large heated space of atmosphere was created behind, the cool air must naturally soon rush in to fill the vacuum, and so produce a dangerous current, at the very least. But they hurried on incessantly, stumbling at every step; yet resolved never to give in while hope remained. Victor held the bridle of his horse firmly in, that he might prevent it from falling; for such an occurrence would become, perhaps, a perfect catastrophe. But the ground was growing more and more uneven—the wild animals were hurrying past them—there was a difficulty of seeing their path, everything was becoming so dark; for the moon's light was waning, because the smoke every now and then clouded it; and the contrast of the light of the flames blackened the air in front of them. The tremendous furnace was now gaining on them at every point; but they had reached the ascending ground, and would soon be out of danger, if they kept on. They could see that the forests were here running in another direction; the jungle was less thick, and all before them indicated that even sandy, sterile ground was not far distant.

Victor exclaimed, "It will be all right! I rejoice to say we shall escape!"

"I hope so!" said the colonel, excitedly; when, as if to cast a doubt upon the assertion, Victor's horse stumbled over a large, rolling

stone (he had not held the bridle so firmly at that moment, while speaking), and the poor animal fell, rolling over one leg of its rider, though only bruising him slightly. Victor sprang up in a moment, and taking the bridle, tried to encourage the horse to rise, calling to the colonel not to stop a moment, or let the escort do so either. But the horse seemed to understand that he must be up, for in an instant or two more Victor was again in his saddle. But even the few moments thus lost were pregnant with increased danger, for the fire had gained rapidly upon them, and they were liable to be crushed by the crowds of animals that were coming by. The whole country behind was now in a blaze—a perfect seething, hissing furnace of fire, extending in a vast semicircle, and still rushing forward and towards the open country in every direction. On again, with intensified anxiety, up the rising ground, that grew steeper and steeper, and at length they were out of danger, even of the hot atmosphere; for a mighty gale was blowing—a tornado it might be called—spreading the fire farther and farther, and fanning it nearly into white heat. They had halted, and were now looking on the stupendous conflagration, that was raging as madly as if it would destroy the whole province. About a mile away to the left ran the stream we mentioned. Down on one bank of it Victor could now see that a glorious forest extended, with its palms and other floral wonders. And the flames enabled him to see this glorious luxuriance of vegetation, before they touched it, waving in the wind, portions being torn away by the tornado, and flung forward, as if to protect them from the enemy. Then on came the fire, enswathing them, rushing up the whole height of their trunks, like luminous snakes, and finally bursting forth at the summit in a gorgeous frond of fire. The wind was taking up countless myriads of sparks, and even burning embers, and casting them still farther over the country, to other portions of the forest and jungle, making it appear as if fire were coming down from heaven like hail. When the dry grass caught, the flames shot along with the rapidity of lightning, enveloping tigers, snakes, and everything in their course. But Victor could see that the furnace must now soon burn out in that region, for want of fuel; though it might yet extend unlimitedly beyond in another—fortunately not in their route. It was a grand sight to our hero—one he had often wished to see. He was gratified now, though himself and escort had only escaped by the “skin of their teeth.” The fire was dying out in front for want of fuel, leaving a smoking, charred, offensive country and atmosphere; so that they were glad to hurry away on their journey, carefully keeping the country of the greatest sterility, to be safe from danger for the rest of the night. Whatever had been the cause of this stupendous conflagration, so unusual in India, Victor felt that he was glad to have had such an opportunity of witnessing it. He had heard, and he felt there must be some truth in the assertion, that the trees of the tropical forests always being in motion, and a good deal of the timber often in that decayed state that rendered it peculiarly liable to the effects of friction, it was not impossible that these forest conflagrations might be attributed to their taking fire by this friction among the decayed wood. But in a few hours they had other matters to think about,

for they were now entering upon the great sandy Indian desert, and the signs of its proximity were multiplying before them. They must traverse many a long mile of total desolation before they might hope to reach the mountains beyond, that separated the desert from the province of the Indus. The general features of this desert may be summed up in a few words—alternate hills and valleys, composed of loose and heavy sand, in some parts; a level floor of hard clay in others. Some of these sand-hills are from twenty to a hundred feet in height, and appear to have been formed by the same means as those of the sea-shore. The winds affect them to the extent of constantly altering their shape and position, so that during the dry season the clouds of moving sand render the passage of the desert exceedingly dangerous. When the rains come they acquire a degree of permanence and solidity that renders them fit for the growth of a few thorns, shrubs, and a scant sort of grass, when the traveller might regard the district as being fertile. A few oases, or fertile spots—*islands in the desert*—may be seen here and there; and such situations have been taken advantage of by the natives, who rear miserable huts and villages, and possess a few fields, in which they cultivate pulse and bajra (*holcus spicatus*), a grass belonging to the tribe *avenae*, but which will grow anywhere better than there. A few wells, several hundreds of feet deep, lined with masonry, and their openings covered with boards, on which sand is piled to conceal their existence, constitutes the greatest wealth of the people. Fortunately, the Creator has placed there in abundance a species of water-melon, that attains magnificent proportions, and proves a great blessing to the traveller when he has no other way of quenching his thirst. The antelope, wild ass (fleetier than the swiftest horse), two varieties of the fox, and the desert rat, are also to be seen there; and for the first day or so, in some spots, Victor and his escort found it very difficult to make their way on, the horses' feet continually slipping into some of the countless holes made by these rats in situations where the ground would admit of their excavation. One of the Indians very adroitly captured a specimen of the tiresome animal for our hero, and he then observed that the little creature resembled a squirrel more than a rat, having a tuft at the end of its tail, and being often seen sitting up, just in the manner of the kangaroo. It was much less in size than a jerboa, and used all its feet. India swarms with these rodents; but this particular species inhabits all the sandy and desert parts to the westward of the Jumna. We have intimated that Victor and his party took with them what they hoped might be a sufficient supply of water; but they soon found that so great were the requirements for this article, in consequence of the increase of thirst, that the supply did not last out as it was desirable that it might. Continually, as they penetrated more into the interior of the desert, did they find it necessary to draw upon their stock; for thirst became maddening to some of them, and made demands that would not be put off. By-and-by, when a day or two had passed away, and fertility was far behind them, and the eye rested on an unbroken vista of sand and sand hillocks, the last drop of water was exhausted, and they knew not how long it would be ere they could obtain more. That last drop

had been given to Victor by Colonel Levenson, who had deprived himself thereby of his own share, for the express reason that our hero was ill—a severe attack of fever having seized his frame, though he persevered in the journey, not willing to succumb while there was any hope. But what a terrible fate was before them now! A scorching sun from above, the parched and heated sand below, and occasionally hot dust flying into their faces, rendering the situation still more distressing. The last drop of water gone, the agonies of thirst soon came, every hour increasing in intensity, till some of them scarcely knew a moment that they might be rendered incapable of proceeding at all, and so be left in the desert, unless they killed and quaffed the blood of some of their equally perishing cattle. Water! they began to feel that they would give worlds for it had they possessed them. Victor felt the terrible depression of spirits which such a state of affairs must inevitably bring on, and he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had never come out at all. He saw a number of perishing fellow-creatures round him, and a friend by his side who had risked all this to serve him; while he himself was ill and dried up, and he could not see any help now, even though he had prayed for it. Oh, how he wished himself well back in old England, by the side of his Ellise! Don't blame him, reader. If you had been with him, you would have felt the same. If you think him a coward, perhaps you might not be braver, under such circumstances. Do you say he ought to have had faith in that Providence that had ever defended him? So he had, in his inner heart; but it is difficult for man, when in such anxiety, and when the heart can realise no chance of safety, to trust in Providence that all will be well, even though he were a far superior man to Victor or you! Victor was not a coward, though: he was exceedingly brave; but the spirit will despond when fever, thirst, and danger to others, as well as self, are present. He had prayed for help, but it seemed as if the prayer would not be answered; for the same dull uniformity of country still lay before them, and not a sign of water. The heavens were still brass, and not a hope of a friendly cloud, or a chance of it either, and Victor felt he could almost have wept; for the individuals of his escort were becoming very haggard in their suffering. Still they journeyed on, hour after hour, ready almost to sink down and die. But all at once there was a shout from the escort, and Colonel Levenson joyfully exclaimed, "Thank God! at last, there is a hope of relief!"

Victor's head had sunken on his breast in deep despondency, his mouth and lips parched, and his tongue almost refusing to do its duty, by reason of the thick, viscid mucous that now clung to it, forming a loathsome layer on the lips; but so hopefully had his friend spoken, that he looked up and gasped out, "Do you see water, then?"

"Yes," said the colonel; "not only water, but a beautifully fertile spot, with a village near it. Look in front, there, by those distant mountains!"

Victor looked in the direction indicated. There could be no mistake. A beautiful landscape was now before them. The eye rested upon groves of palms and fields of flowers, and several rude dwellings near them; and best of all, a river with clear, delightful-looking

water, flowing down, and producing a feeling of coolness that seemed to infuse new hope into the hearts of all the people. Oh, how gladly and thankfully he asked Colonel Levenson to urge on the caravan—for such it might be called—so as to reach this delightful spot as speedily as possible. There was no need of that; as if seized with an overpowering impulse, each one began to gallop or hurry towards the oasis, fully hoping to slake their thirst in its cool waters, in a very short time, for it could not be many miles off. Every exertion was made to reach it; all control over the thirst-stricken wretches was lost, so that each one did as seemed best in his own eyes. For an hour they journeyed on—the sight of the water aggravating the desire for it; but, alas! they seemed to get no nearer, and it was evident they were going very much out of their course, though they cared little for this in the desire of reaching the oasis.

“I cannot understand it,” said Colonel Levenson, at last. “We do not appear to be much nearer, after an hour’s travelling. It was much further off than I thought. It is astonishing how you may be deceived by distance in these deserts.”

An appalling thought had just now forced itself upon the attention of Victor, and he felt compelled to give it utterance. “Surely,” he said, “we cannot have been mistaken! Surely, we are not under a delusion. I know, though I have never before been in a desert, that the mirage often lures men to destruction, by taking them far out of their course, while all the time they regard the phantom as a reality. Do you think we are following the mirage? for I fear greatly that we are, because we seem to get no nearer. I fancy that it rather recedes as we advance.”

“I have thought of this, too,” returned the colonel; “but I trust it is a reality. Look again; do you not observe that all is substantial in appearance? There cannot be a mistake. You can even see the shadows of the palm-trees that grow by the river, reflected in its sparkling waters.”

“That is true enough, and it seems a hopeful sign; yet I have seen the same thing on the ocean, and that was only a mirage. But we shall find out in a very short time now.”

And they did. They discovered that however much they advanced, the oasis was still as far before them, and looking behind they could see the same phenomenon in action there. What a wail of despair then came from each burdened heart when this fact forced itself upon them; for there was the distressing feeling that they had wasted invaluable time, and were farther off from their journey’s end, where they *might* hope to obtain relief. More like a band of ghosts than men they laboured on, feeling now that death would soon overwhelm them, and perhaps destroy the whole party. And what a death! Raving madness, perhaps, with the tongue swollen, or lolling from the mouth, racking fever in all the veins, and the eyes starting from their sockets. A death of slow suffocation or perhaps to be torn by raptorial and other birds before life had quite fled the body! They could hope little from the slaying of a horse; for only one could be spared, and its blood would not quench the thirst, even temporarily, of half the number. But there were their other animals to think of?

If they succumbed, all hope would be gone. It would be impossible to go the remainder of the way on foot. But just then one of the poor animals fell. It was the interpreter, Mr. Thompson's. The fallen creature never rose again. Finding that it was dying, they ended its misery, and began to take its life juices—all but the Englishmen. They felt, especially Victor, that they could have died rather than have joined in the miserable banquet. The interpreter took his seat on an elephant, and the mournful procession moved on again. There was not a particle of hope remaining. No one now knew when his turn might come, or his faithful animal might sink down under him to share the fate of the dead horse, whose flesh the birds had already scented afar, and were assembling to eat. But, fortunately, Victor felt the glancing into his soul of one last anticipation of better things. He felt constrained to pray—ay, and to do it audibly and visibly. He spoke to Colonel Levenson of the impulse that was coming strong into his soul. "Let it be so, for our only hope can be in God," said the colonel. "We will order a halt, and do you stand up, and supplicate this blessing. Who can say that succour may not come then?" A word or two to the interpreter; and though having little faith in what was about to be done, he very willingly explained to the escort, in their own language, the proposal of their chief, Mr. Bancroft. They were in that state of mind, that though they believed not in the Christian's God, yet they very gladly conceded that possibly he might be as powerful as some of their 360,000,000 of deities; and, therefore, they would unite in supplication to Him. It was well for all that they did. Victor stood up, and, with his poor heathen brethren round him, began to implore the help they needed, the interpreter translating as he went on, for the benefit of the Indians; and, as he prayed, so it seemed that his sufferings assuaged, and his heart was filled with an entire certainty that the prayer would soon be answered. It was but a short one, and they went on again. Could it be that they were doomed to destruction after all, though? that for some unknown reason the Heavens would not admit the prayer of our hero? For not many minutes after a wind rose up, gently at first, but increasing, and it was *intensely hot*; it was like the *Sonda* of the American Salinas, or the *Samiel* of Arabia and Africa, only not so dangerous as yet. They were troubled at this; for, in a few moments more, the winds might deprive them of life; and evidently the Indians began to think they had sinned by joining in the prayer of the Christian, and thereby offended their gods, who would wreak a vengeance on them in consequence. Their prejudices were strengthened as the hot winds intensified, rendering the desert so oppressive that the thirst-stricken travellers now gasped for breath, and respiration was performed in agony. They obtained still greater influence, as they saw two or three sand-pillars and sand-clouds approaching them, raised up and driven by the winds, and threatening at any moment to overwhelm the whole party, and bury them on the spot. And then did murmurs break forth, and the poor souls were losing all their respect for Victor. A few minutes more, and he would be in danger from his own servants. It was a trying moment for him; and to any superficial thinker it would have been evident that Heaven had deserted him as well as the whole party.

But Victor had seen so many instances where prayer had been equally answered in the moment of the greatest extremity, that, combined with the mysterious Heaven-sent hope in his own heart, he could not feel that Heaven would be unfaithful to his request; and he told Colonel Levenson so; and the colonel told Mr. Thompson, by whom the cheering words were imparted to the escort in their own tongue. Just then, the hot wind ceased to blow, and a few clouds were observed coming up in the horizon, indicative of help. The Indians saw them, and were calmer. The sand-pillars ceased to trouble them, the air was growing cooler, and the clouds increasing. Victor's heart palpitated with anxiety. He felt sure that succour was being sent; it would probably be in the form of rain that would refresh them for a time. Meanwhile the clouds increased till they had hidden the face of the sun (a most unusual thing in that district); flashes of lightning came out of the clouds, the thunder shook the atmosphere, and rain, for a few moments, poured down in torrents, cooling and refreshing the travellers, and permitting them to catch a great quantity in their clothes, and by other means, from which they drank or supped this reviving and blessed draught. Remember, reader, it was not a very delicious kind of beverage that could be thus obtained—that is, it does not seem so to you and me; but these people were thirsty, and therefore they were glad with anything Providence might send, and esteemed as a blessing that which you would look on with loathing. But the showers went over, and the thunder was only heard in the distance. They were endowed with new life for a time; their feverish state had given place to a more comfortable feeling, and the sand did not now annoy or heat them so much, being forced down on the earth by the wetting it had received. But there was greater help in store for them. Already the Indians had been compelled to admit among themselves that Victor's God had answered him, and in a way that their gods had never proved themselves capable of doing; and they looked up to Mr. Bancroft and the other Englishmen as beings of a superior power and influence. Evidently a deep impression had been made on them, and thankfully Victor acknowledged it—feeling that some mission work might now open up for his hands and heart to engage in; and he resolved to do his best to preach the gospel to these benighted and ignorant heathen. Mr. Thompson seemed willing to be the medium, too; so Victor lost no time. He felt so much better, that he often during the next two hours, spoke of the great facts of his own faith, and gently insisted on their utility to the Indians. The Indians listened as well as they were able, and with respect. But again there arose a shout from the escort, and again did Colonel Levenson utter an exclamation—

“There is the mirage once more, but in another form, and, if possible, still more natural. We must not be deluded by it this time.”

At a considerable distance before them, they could now see an oasis, apparently of fields with a few trees growing on them, but not a drop of water; and before them, still nearer, plants seemed to be coming up from damp spots in the sand, assuming magnificent proportions. There were rude huts, conical in shape, in the oasis, and several persons could be observed outside of them.

"Were it not for our being deceived once already, I should certainly say that this is reality," observed Mr. Thompson.

"I feel assured it is," answered Victor, with renewed animation. "Greater help is coming to us now, and our prayers are to be answered more fully."

They shook their heads. They hoped it might be true; but they feared that it could not be. Nevertheless, a very short time sufficed to bring them into the midst of a glorious crop of wild water-melons—a most delicious boon to them under such circumstances, and to which they did ample justice; and in a little while more they really stood in an oasis, owned by a miserable remnant of the Jaut tribes. Here they rested; and here, by the aid of a large bribe, Victor induced the Jauts to give them water for present use, and a little for the remainder of their journey—this water having been hidden in a well more than three hundred feet deep, and covered with boards, on which sand had been piled. And then Victor, with the concurrence of the awe-stricken escort, offered up a public thanksgiving for the Divine aid in their distress, Mr. Thompson, as usual, translating for the benefit of the Indians.

We need not trace their progress any more so minutely. Suffice it to say that we find them, after a while, out of the desert, and crossing the *Aravulli* mountains, and subsequently entering the city of Hyderabad, the chief town of Scinde—a province that produces rice, wheat, barley, maize, and the other grains of India—opium, sugar, cotton, tobacco, hemp, cucumbers, water-melons, musk-melons, carrots, turnips, radishes, onions, pumpkins, dates, mangoes, pomegranates, apples, grapes, limes, citrons, figs, tamarisk and acacia shrubs, indigo; dromedaries, asses, horses, buffaloes, sheep, goats, tigers, wolves, jackals, wild hogs, porcupines, deer, rabbits, hares, alligators, otters, badgers, and insects greatly resembling some of the very species found in England; besides lots of other equally interesting things. At the very earliest moment, you may depend upon it, Victor sought out Rajah Bowallah, his uncle Mattingly, as he called him, and anxiously made his acquaintance. Let us now pass over a few days.

Hyderabad, with its thirty thousand inhabitants, contains no remarkable buildings, the streets being composed of mud huts chiefly. In one of the best of its houses, a sort of bungalow with one upper floor, George Mattingly and Victor Bancroft were now to be seen. The Rajah was a rather tall, stern-featured man, bearing a striking likeness to his nephew; though Victor was fair, and Mattingly the opposite. This dark appearance of the skin had probably been the result of a long life among the Hindoos—the effects of climate and *sympathy*. The latter often *producing a strong influence on the features of persons, on perhaps the same principle that dogs ultimately assimilate in character and appearance to their masters (for a noble-looking dog generally has a noble master, and vice versa; the breed of dogs having been varied so much by the associations and intercourse they have held with their human friends)*. The instant that Victor saw his uncle, he felt that the face was familiar to him; he had seen it in vision, or in one of his *spiritual perceptions*. The instant the Rajah met Victor, he took to him; he felt he could rely on him, and that he had found a trusty

friend. The Rajah was habited in the Indian garb, so thoroughly had he naturalised himself; and Victor found that he could only speak English with difficulty, having been accustomed so long to the Hindostanee and other cognate tongues. Evidently he was a kindly-hearted man. Victor felt this as soon as he saw him, and he had not afterwards any reason to alter his opinion. The Rajah seemed to be in very ill health; he had grown painfully thin. Though not an old man yet, he looked as if the weight of years had rested with no light hand; as if he had known much sorrow and anxiety in life—as if, in the midst of great prosperity, there had been a canker-worm secretly at work on his vitals. Victor was greatly drawn towards him, and experienced a considerable amount of reverence for the man of such a mysterious past life. He had also seen enough to assure him that George Mattingly would not be long before he passed away to another world. He wished to prevail on him to return to England; but the old man did not care to try a voyage.

“No, my boy,” he said, “I feel that may never be. I would gladly see my brother; rejoice to speak with him, and my sister’s children too; but I am too far gone. In a few weeks at the most I shall pass away. Now you are come, I feel a presentiment of it. Oh! how I have longed to know the result of my message to England, and hoped that my past errors might be pardoned, and a relative sent to me to cheer up my last moments of earthly life, if only as a token of Heaven’s forgiveness! for I have, and still do regard my desertion of my own race, and my naturalisation in this dark, wicked country, as a great sin—a crime. But tell me; do you suppose my relatives ever thought or cared about me during these long years of silence?”

“I can only judge by what I have heard my mother say,” was the answer of Victor. “I know she has often told us of you—of that brother whom she had never seen. But from what she said, your parents, at the early period of her life, often spoke of you in terms of deep affection. But they could scarcely have deemed you other than dead, as they could hear no tidings of you.”

“Natural enough,” returned the Rajah. “I kept myself so secluded, that it was years before even the East India Company knew of my being still in existence, after having been taken prisoner. You have been told my reasons for this, and therefore you know that there was a dark passage in my life that prompted me thus to act. But of late months, when I felt sure that my constitution was rapidly giving way—that an incurable disease was sapping the foundation of my life, I began to feel that I would like to hear from the old country, and to see some remnant of my family; if only to learn whether they could look at me with the eye of pardon, and acknowledge me as one of themselves. I also felt that I should like my *realised* wealth to pass into the possession of such as were worthy, immediately on my death; but it was necessary that I should know a little of them first. I am naturally anxious to know now the exact number of those near relatives to whom I may bequeath what I have. With regard to all land and other property of the like description, of course it will remain as the inheritance of my successor to the rajahship, whoever that may be. I have chosen him, though the choice is not yet publicly made known;

but since I have seen you, I feel that I should like to offer you the succession, if you will accept it. You might soon be master of the language, so that you would not be disqualified for the office; and the people of Indore would receive you gladly for my sake, as I am vain enough to think their confidence in me sincere, I have had so many proofs of it."

"My dear uncle," replied Victor, "I thank you; but I am not ambitious of ruling a lot of Indians. I would not like to live in such a land as this, much as I enjoy travelling through it. I am glad you have chosen your successor. I hope to be introduced to him soon—and I must beg you to honour him by allowing him to reign in your stead."

"I am not sorry to hear you say so," returned the Rajah. "I have still more faith in you now. It would not be a desirable inheritance for you, especially with your tastes and endowments; and with the fact that when you are at home you love study, and the genial attentions of a young wife. Well, I rejoice that I can at least offer you something that may be useful to you. For some years I have collected, at great expense, everything that could illustrate the productions of this and adjoining Asiatic lands. I believe I have nearly a perfect collection of the larger-sized things and many of the smaller. I do not understand them any more than by their Indian names. To you they will be invaluable. I will leave them to you—in fact, I will let you have them as a living gift. When we get back, if I ever do, to Indore, you shall commence packing them up for transmission to England."

"I know not how to thank you," said Victor; "your present is a most valued one. I wish it were possible to take you with me, and that we might have the pleasure of keeping you alive with us, so as to see what a grand use I would put them to."

"That is not possible," said Mattingly, with a sigh. "But, in respect to your brothers and sisters, how many do you say are living?"

"Three," answered Victor. "My brother Thomas, and sisters Emily and Ellen." And he gave a glancing account of each, speaking, as well as he might, honourably of Emily.

"Just so," said the Rajah. "With respect to your sister Emily, I should like her to share with you the inheritance of money which I shall leave; but I fear she will not be worthy of having so large a portion as the others. I am speaking now in a business point of view."

"I will frankly observe that (in the same business-like way) I should deeply regret it if she were not treated in exactly the same way as the rest of us," said Victor.

"Be it so. You know best; and perhaps you are right. She must take the responsibility of using it. But, for a time, I must appoint you her guardian, until you can tell whether it would be prudent to trust her with so much, or her husband, if she have one. Well, there will be four of you to provide for. Then there is my brother Daniel and his daughter, two more—that is six. As my nearest relation, he has the greatest right to the largest share; but, it would seem that his station in life is not of that nature to render him a requirer of so much as younger and better educated men or women. I think, then, that to do right, his share should be ample,

but not more, and his daughter receive a double amount. Do you not think I am right?"

"I cannot say," replied Victor. "It is a painful thing to me, hearing you thus, while living, dispose of your property; but I suppose, as it is necessary, I must submit. But I would have you do as you think best, without any reference to me. Uncle Daniel should be considered before any of us, I feel."

"I honour you, my boy. But now listen, and I will just go over with you the sum and substance of my will. In the first place, I wish to be equitable in its arrangement. There are several Indian friends to whom I intend to leave a proof of my affection and esteem. My means will allow me to be princely towards them. My will shall be in two sections—one for India, and the other for England. The British section, it is not my desire that the Indian friends shall know anything about. I can quite arrange so as to satisfy them of having received all that I had to leave. I am free also to confess that I have felt it to be my duty to give by far the greatest part of this wealth to the people through whom I obtained it. I wish to do right, and atone a little for the errors of my life. God knows, I have enough to answer for as it is! A great portion of what I shall send to England will be brought together in a small compass, in the form of diamonds and other precious stones, jewellery, and so forth. I am able to state the exact value of each of these, and shall have grouped them together, and apportioned each group to the members of my family whom I wish to receive it. The possessions I hold for India consist of much territory—the palace and its furniture (excepting the museum), and money in my treasury, the amount of which I only know, and which will be distributed in accordance with my written instructions, by the British Government, to whom I shall entrust this task. Well, first there is my successor to the rajahship. He has wealth already, and can obtain more from his office; for it gives a large revenue. But I shall leave him the palace, its furniture, and a gift of two hundred thousand pounds, English. Dr. Williams, of Indore, will receive a few thousands also. Several of my Indian relations will come in for legacies; and my pipe-bearer, who has ever proved a faithful servant to me, will be provided with means of advancement. My other servants, and some officers, will share in my bounty, so far as they have deserved. Thus much for them. I have seen so much poverty in this country—so much of the ill effects of foreign and native taxation—that I am minded to do a little for the poor of my city. I have made arrangements for that, then. A handsome sum is to go to the British Government for the task which I give them to do; so that all parties may be satisfied. You will say I can hardly have much left for England; but I have. A casket of gems, which I intend to entrust to your care, with a copy of my will, so as to satisfy my relatives at home, will be worth, deducting loss on the sale of them, at least two hundred thousand pounds; and, in addition, I have provided money for the expenses of your return. This, then, is the way in which I wish the gems to be apportioned:—Group one, for brother Daniel, value twenty thousand pounds; group two, for his daughter, value thirty thousand pounds; group three, for your sister Ellen, value twenty-five thousand; groups four and five, same

value each, for your sister Emily and brother Thomas; group six, for yourself, a double portion, value fifty thousand pounds; and, lastly, group seven, value twenty-five thousand pounds, to be placed in your care for distribution amongst the poor; for building and endowing a museum, or hospital, or sending a missionary or two to this country, or in any way you may think fit. I shall write letters to each of my relations, explaining more fully my reasons for this particular kind of distribution, which you will deliver to them. I shall also take means of forwarding the *will* itself to my London agents, Haroun and Blunter. My object in giving you the jewels is to preclude the possibility of their missing their destination, and to save the government duties, which would be heavy. Since I first saw you, and learned so much, I have, after great thought, decided on the course of action just sketched out. The gems I brought with me from Indore, having never let them go from my care. I am not aware that a soul, except Dr. Williams, knows of their existence, independent of myself. I hope you will reach home with them in safety. I trust that God will give you grace to do what is right, and to use your own wealth so as to feel at last happier about your life and actions than I do about mine. Could I feel sure of the future being a safe and happy one to me, I could welcome death, for I am weary of life; but all, alas! looks so dark and ominous that I dread the moment that shall take me to the unseen world. Tell me, my boy, do you think there is any hope for me?—that a long series of years of neglect of God and religion, added to other crimes, can be forgiven?”

“Yes,” said Victor, fervently, “if you repent, uncle, and go to Him who died for you, and plead through him. For he is able to forgive to the uttermost all who come to God through him. ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’”

“But I heard this before, years—long years ago; yet it does not seem to give me comfort. I am not able to feel that I believe in this promise being for me. You do not know the extent of my sins, or you would say that there could be no hope for me.”

“I do not, certainly,” replied Victor; “but this I know, that however greatly you have sinned, though your crimes were like mountains in height, and deep as the earth’s foundations for evil, yet there would be a full pardon—there is a free pardon for you, if you truly repent, and reconcile yourself to God.” And earnestly Victor preached hopeful and cheering truths to the Rajah, till his own face glowed with eloquence, as he dilated on the love and tender mercies of his God. The stern-looking Rajah bowed his head at last, and wept in bitter agony. Evidently the sorrow that was in his heart was of no ordinary magnitude, and his mental sufferings were like worlds of exquisite torment, bearing down all hope, and annihilating it. Several times severe spasms seemed to convulse him through and through, by which Victor was able to see that, when he had been calm, it had only been with an effort almost superhuman. How much more surprised and grieved was he when his uncle revealed to him that for many months he had not been free from acute pain—an internal disease that never gave him rest, unless for a few minutes at a time. But that, although he knew it was wearing him away rapidly, he accepted it as a heaven-

sent punishment for the great sins of his life, from which *one* stood out more fearfully prominent in his conscience than the others. "There are times when I could fill the house with yells of agony," said he; "when mind and body are racked with indescribable suffering, increased by the check I lay upon myself. Oh! Victor, pray for me; do not leave me, or tire of serving me while I live. I have so wished for some one to whom I could pour out my heart; and I do now so hope you will be that friend."

"I will never leave you, uncle, while you live," said Victor. "Whatever may happen, if God permit me, I will be with you to the last. I am deeply concerned to hear of this agony that you suffer. You *must* accept it as God's chastening; for he does punish even the righteous in this world. Not one can or shall escape. But he will do it as a kind Father; and *I am sure* he will forgive, and take you to himself, if you will let him."

"Oh, that I could think so!" moaned the Rajah, now utterly prostrate for a time, his power of veiling his feelings being taken from him. "Listen, my boy, and then say if you still have hope for me. You already know that the origin of my coming amongst the Mahrattas was being taken prisoner by them. Some of those who captured me were cruel, ruthless demons, that would have had me put to death by the most ingenious and exquisite torments they could have devised. But when I was taken before the Rajah, his policy seemed to be to save my life, as he feared the effects of murdering me upon my government. My enemies, however, were resolved to carry their point, and being very powerful, the Rajah was fearful of offending them. I lay in a dungeon for a long time, not knowing a moment that I might be led out to execution or the torture. I again came before the Rajah, and while there his sister saw me, I will not say how. But I was condemned to die, and by terrible means. While awaiting this fearful moment, it appears that the Rajah, urged on now by his sister, who had become attached to me, was resolved in his mind how I might be saved. His plan soon came out. It was this: I was to abjure, in the first place, my country, and become naturalised as an Indian. Secondly, I was to be ready on any occasion to march against my own people, if required. And, lastly, and worst of all—though I did not think so then—I was to abjure my own faith, and become an adherent of Brahma. Under these circumstances I might live, and be greatly honoured by my enemies. On the other hand, sure destruction of a terrific nature was threatened for non-compliance. What should you have done under the circumstances?"

"I don't know," said Victor, sadly. "I hope I should have had strength to scorn their threats; but I might possibly have fallen, as I suppose you did, uncle."

"In shame and agony, I confess I did fall; and the abjuration of my faith I did not grieve so much over even as the other parts of the compact, I sorrow to say, for I was not a good man at that time. For years I lived thus, and ever since have been known by my people as a Brahmin nominally; though I never but once bowed down at any idol shrine. I have never had the courage to return openly to my old religion, and this is why I fear to die—why I suffer—why I feel that

there can be no hope for me—that it is impossible God can forgive me.”

“Uncle,” said Victor, “your narration has made me very unhappy about you; and yet I am sure you can have hope. I am certain God will forgive you your great, great sin; but you must publicly acknowledge it in Indore, and bear whatever enmity the people may please to show you. Unless this be done, you cannot look for peace.”

“Then there is not a moment to lose,” said the Rajah. “We must return to Indore immediately, or I may die before it can be done!”

And we may add that the following day Victor, Colonel Levenson, Mr. Thompson, and the escort, along with the Rajah and his successor, a youth of the better-disposed class of Asiatics, and their suite, started for the Mahratta country, the Rajah being borne all the way in a litter.

Having intimated that they arrived in safety in a few days, though George Mattingly was now growing more alarmingly ill, we will request you to witness with us an interesting though painful scene in the palace of the dying man.

It was in the reception-room of the Rajah’s palace—time, early morning—when a *darbar*, or audience, was convened, at which all the chief officers of the dying prince had been invited to meet Bowallah, and hear an important statement from his lips.

They had all arrived, and stood round the throne. In addition, Victor, Colonel Levenson, Mr. Thompson, and Dr. Williams were there. Victor looked pale, and seemed to tremble with anxiety. The other Europeans were armed, and seemed deeply interested, and resolved to be ready for any emergency, in case their services might be required to protect the Rajah from the anger of his people, or to fight their way from the *darbar*. On the outside of the palace was assembled an immense crowd, drawn thither by a proclamation from the chief officer of the court, to hear a communication from their prince relative to the succession. The news had already got abroad that Rajah Bowallah was in a dying state; and so greatly was he beloved, that the deepest sorrow was depicted on the countenances of the people. Amongst that crowd were all the members of Victor’s escort; and they were energetically relating to the people—with enlarged narratives, of course, the whole history of their adventures in the forests, jungles, and great desert, while conducting their English employer to Hyderabad: how, in answer to the Christian’s prayer, his God had performed stupendous miracles, and saved all their lives—saved them from a most terrible fate: whereat great astonishment filled the minds of all the hearers, old and young. Meanwhile, a heart-rending scene was being enacted in the audience-chamber of the palace. The poor old Rajah was borne in on a litter, feeble and dying, his face deadly pale, and evidently with a mind and body agonisingly racked. They rested him down by the throne, the movement causing him to shudder horribly. The officers and others looked on sympathisingly. Then, on a given signal, a curtain near the throne was drawn on one side, and Durhwal Rao, the supposed successor, entered, and bowed. A mournful greeting of

applause was offered him, and the young man passed to the side of the Rajah, and kneeling down, took his hand, bending over it reverently. This proof of respect and esteem seemed to give George Mattingly greater pain, and he hastened to require him to rise. The youth rose and stood near modestly, while all looked on, curious as to what would come next. A profound silence ensued; then, with a deep, smothered groan, the Rajah painfully lifted himself up, and sat for a moment to rest. A second effort and he got out, ascended the steps of the throne, and stood up before the whole *darbar*. There was a slight quivering of the mouth, and then, with an unnatural calmness, he spoke: "Gentlemen and brothers, I have called you together to say a few last words to you. I do not expect again to meet you in council, and therefore I wish to offer a few parting words about the future, and to bid you farewell!"

The officers unanimously declared that they hoped the Rajah would live long yet, and protested their deep sorrow at his words.

"No, no," he said; "it is impossible. The message of death has been sent to me, and the time appointed for my going away to the other world, and I cannot flee from my destiny. But I wish at this time to name my successor to that position which you have so long sustained me in. For many months you have known my wishes in this respect; you were aware that I had chosen in my heart a young prince of our house to assume the reins of government at my decease. Durhwal Rao is a youth; age hath not yet fixed its signet upon his forehead; but I feel that wisdom hath. He has known my policy, and studied it well. He knows that I wished well to all my subjects, and would do them good; and as I have seen that his heart went with me in the reforms and other objects I had for the good of the state, I do not fear but that he would be worthy of your acceptance. You formerly, by the desire of the late Rajah—rest his soul in the Divine arms!—adopted me as your prince; and when I came to the possession of that honour, I hoped I might be useful to you. I still desire to serve my adopted people; and in choosing Prince Durhwal Rao, I believe that I am acting according to your true interests. He is brave, he is wise, and he is generous: I offer you as your future prince, then, the Rajah Durhwal Rao, and long may he live—honour, and be honoured!"

A shout of applause shook the chamber—the nomination of the youth was so well received. Cries of "Long live the Rajah, Durhwal Rao!" came from every voice. But George Mattingly had to rest on the shoulder of Dr. Williams for a time, ere he continued the task he had set himself: and probably he was uttering a prayer for help as his head bowed upon his breast. If so, he obtained strength; for looking up again, he composed his troubled countenance, and beckoning to the youth, called him up to his side. Then, taking from his own breast a handsome jewelled decoration, he affixed it to the breast of his heir, and said in a bold voice, "Long live the new Rajah of Indore! Let the people without hear the glad tidings!" A second shout from the assembly, and one of the officers went out to the people, informing them of what had taken place. In a little while the voices of the great multitude came in like a peal of thunder:

it was a sound of sad joy, for although troubled at the prospect of the Rajah's death, they gladly welcomed the successor he had chosen. But the dying man again prepared to speak, and with an increased tremor, though fainter this time. "There are other things I have yet to tell you," he said. "My possessions are now to be spoken of; and I may say that none of those whom I have loved and esteemed are forgotten in the will which I have left, and which, after my death, will be strictly executed. I have thought also of the poor of this city. I remember that you once chose me to be your ruler, and that all my people have shown me affection. In my will, it is stipulated that not one poor person of this city shall fail to receive a proof of my gratitude and friendship; while I trust that all this nation, all India, may be happy and great—greater than it has ever yet been!"

Another shout of applause from the assembly, caught up by those outside, and sent reverberating through the whole city. The Rajah continued: "I have now to say that I am thankful to you for the esteem and kindness which I have at all times received from you. I do not know how to express to you this feeling of my heart. But believe me when I say, that had I the power, no member of the state or city should be without every blessing that it were possible for them to enjoy. Gentlemen, I do from the bottom of my heart thank you, and through you, the people, for the past; but now, alas! my next words must be uttered in deep grief, and I know not how you will receive them. I fear you will overwhelm me with reproaches, and, perhaps greet me with execrations. Well, let it be so, for I deserve it all, and I fear another Being more than I have a right to fear you; but bear with me for a moment."

So utter was now the surprise of the assembly, that they looked on with a species of consternation—the greetings of affection which they were about to give vent to, dying away on their tongues. And at this juncture Victor boldly stepped forward, and reverently ascending, while tears were coursing rapidly down his cheeks, placed himself on the other side of the Rajah, supporting him in the stead of Dr. Williams, while he murmured audibly in the ear of his uncle, "Courage! trust in God, and make reparation for your sin, my poor uncle!"

An intense excitement now prevailed in the *darbar*, for every one expected that something which they could not but imagine to be of a painful nature was going to happen, though what it was they were unable to comprehend.

The Rajah, too, was now shaking like an aspen leaf, and sobbing so wildly that, from sheer sympathy, the naturally apathetic Asiatics could hardly show a dry eye. But George Mattingly now became so weak, that he was obliged to be fairly sustained by the help of his nephew and his successor. His head had again bowed itself, and in agony of soul he seemed to be seeking the only strength and courage which could avail him in that awful hour of trial. "Courage! God give you his aid!" said Victor, anxiously and passionately.

"This is a bitter moment!" sobbed the Rajah. "I am torn in pieces by anguish. I know not how to do this work, but I must: Heaven help me!" Then, lifting his head, he looked the assembly full in the face, and with a voice becoming bolder as he proceeded, he said:

“Gentlemen, well as you have ever thought of me, I have been guilty of a crime so terrible in its magnitude, that I wonder the arrows of Heaven have not, long ere this, come down on me, to hurl me to destruction.” (Increased excitement.) “The only atonement which I am now able to make is to stand and confess this crime to you, and bear all you may afterwards choose to inflict on me. You know that I have ever walked among you, and lived before you, as a follower and a true disciple of your faith. Many years ago, I adopted your race as my own; and though an Englishman born, I have been your ruler and a follower of your god, Brahma.” (Cheers of gladness from the assembly.) “Years ago I was compelled to abjure my own faith and adopt yours. You have always thought that I did this from choice; but it was forced upon me by enemies who do not now walk the earth. I have long forgiven them, as I hope to be forgiven by *my* God!” The Rajah was now speaking boldly, and he seemed to be endowed with such a preternatural energy, that his voice fairly thundered through the audience chamber, and struck with a peculiar influence on every heart in the *darbar*, while their interest seemed to be culminating to semi-delirium, so utterly without parallel was the scene in which they were engaged. He continued: “I became a follower of Brahma by another *will* than my own. You have at all times imagined that I revered your faith. But when, even though to save my life—to save myself from a horrible death—I gave up my own God, the only true God, I was a coward, unworthy of your reception, unworthy of my own original nation, and worthy of everlasting misery and wrath!” (Immense excitement among the officers.) “I now stand forth,” the speaker thundered out, “to declare that I hate myself as a renegade, as a wretch of the deepest dye, for embracing so false a faith as yours, and to say that I utterly detest the idolatry of this land, *though I love its people*; and that I believe Brahma to be an idol set up by the devil, having no life in himself: that only one God exists in the universe, the God of the Christians, whom I humbly pray to forgive me for my great sin!” (Increased excitement, mingled with horror and rage among some.) “Brothers, I fearlessly proclaim you as worshipping that which has no power to do you good or evil of itself; that you are perishing from knowing not the true God; and that I have sinned still more horribly in keeping this knowledge from you so long. Brahma and Buddha, and Mahomet and Kalee, and Guadama and Juggernaut, and every other deity believed in by this people, are false gods. There is but one true God—he whom the English worship; he whom I crave pardon from! Forgive me for keeping you so long in ignorance of this!” And the speaker crossed his hands on his breast, and prepared himself meekly to bear the effects of their rage. It was a moment of awful peril, even to Victor, standing as he did by the side of his uncle, and being known as his relative. And the peril culminated at that instant, for with a yell of demoniacal rage, two or three of the most fanatical of the officers sprung forward to immolate him on the spot. But at the same instant others, and amongst them the Europeans (save Victor), drew their swords, and rushed up to protect him, even the new Rajah assisting them. But they were unable to prevent the enemy from spitting

contemptuously in his face before they were dragged out of the chamber by the better inclined and more liberal officers and nobles. George Mattingly never flinched, but even smiled as he received the indignity, and turning to Victor, who again sustained him, joyfully murmured, "Thank God! I am saved—I am happy! There is no pain now. I have triumphed! I have hope! I am——"

"Pardoned!" said Victor, with a quiver of pity and joy. By this time the multitude were acquainted with what had happened. But not a single execration did they utter: the narratives of the escort had made a deep impression on them, even if it were not destined to last. But within a great clamour had ensued, in which the voice of Durhwal Rao was heard commanding silence, and during which the Rajah had sunken on his knees, and his head had again fallen, this time heavily on his breast. In a moment more the assembly calmed down, and gazed with a curious and afflicted eye upon their ruler, the fanatical members having been taken away to prison, to await the orders of him whom they had insulted.

"Gentlemen, I ask you to keep silence awhile, for your prince is exhausted, and, I fear, dying!" he said. Then bending down, he asked the Rajah, affectionately, his will concerning those who had spit upon him.

"I forgive them, and have left them proofs of my affection," was the reply; and feebly looking to Victor, he added, "Take my love to Brother Daniel, and all who belong to me. God bless *you*; and a dying man's blessing be on you, too."

These words were his last. He fell heavily to the ground; and when they lifted him, it was found that he was dead, and that Durhwal Rao reigned in his stead.

Within a month from that date Victor left India, with the immense wealth and glorious collection of natural history objects that his deceased uncle had bequeathed him and his relatives, having seen George Mattingly honoured with a magnificent funeral; Colonel Leverson, Mr. Thompson, and Dr. Williams munificently rewarded; and the new Rajah recognised by the British Government, as well as firmly installed in the Rajahship.

As to Colonel Leverson and himself, a deep friendship was created between them, that was never again severed. Let us now return with him.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PARTY, AND SOME MORE TABLE-TALK—ANOTHER PARTY, AND WHO WERE THE GUESTS.

BUT you will ask, "What has become of Ellise, all this while? We hear of Victor writing to Mr. Johnson, and to Mr. Carrington, but not to his wife: how is this?" I will tell you. The last chapter contained extracts from Victor's letter to Ellise, and his private journal. If I have not introduced any other passages of that letter,

it is simply because there are some things in a letter from a *true* husband to a *true* wife that are so sacred in their nature, that they should *never* be made public, *unless in a divorce case*, when everything ceases to be true. But Victor had received a letter from Ellise, on his second arrival in Bombay, the only one he had in India, and therefore most precious to him, coming from whom it did. The information given in that letter was of a gratifying character, judging by a single paragraph, which we willingly transcribe, and which ran thus: "*If you return really with a fortune, dear Victor, you will, all being well, find that a little son has come to inherit it, after you were gone away; a fine child he is, and so beautiful! The very image of my own Victor!*" No man's heart beat more anxiously and rejoicingly than did our hero's at that moment; for he felt that God had given him *two*—the mother and child—and a link on earth as well as in heaven.

Killington had not much changed since Mr. Bancroft went to India. Ellise was still residing at Mrs. Tompkinson's, looking after Victor's insects, and shells, and his other treasures, amongst which most prominently stood out **THE BABY**. Mrs. Tompkinson was as particular as ever about her furniture, not even Ellise being permitted to do as she liked in her own rooms, though the worthy landlady highly respected her. Baby had been the great drawback to a host of things. Before he came, it was suggested very kindly that Mrs. Whalebone should be on the spot to welcome him into the world. But as Mrs. W. was not a teetotaller, but partial to certain beverages that Ellise detested, Mrs. Bancroft had declined. Thereupon, at a private tea-drinking, Mrs. Bancroft's name had a thorough rating by the assembly, consisting of Mrs. W. as hostess, Mrs. Horrocks, and sundry other ladies, while they regaled themselves with tea, toast, and a little gin in the tea, in consequence of it being spring-time, as Mrs. Whalebone said.

"I don't know what the world is coming to," remarked Mrs. Horrocks, "when a poor woman is not to be engaged because she chooses to be sensible, and not fall in with the mucky notions of people as drinks only water!"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Whalebone, "everybody do seem mad now-a-days, about this teetotal rant: making themselves thin as whipping posts with water. I wish they had more sense. Why, would you believe it? but actually at our chapel there's likely to be a split, because a lot of them has got a notion in their heads that it aint right to take fermented wine at the ord'nance, and they say they will leave rather! My goodness! the wickedness of people now-a-days!"

"Ay, deary-me," put in an old lady who took snuff and toast together, Bantam by name; "in a very short time it will be teetotallers for nusses, ditto for ministers, ditto for doctors, ditto for lawyers, ditto for everybody. Well, I am glad I be an old woman. They hadn't many of them queer notions when I was a gal. But since they've had steam, and railroads, and thrashing machines, and such like, I aint surprised at anything. I shall be glad when I go out of the world; for I don't believe in such things, and therefore I know I aint wanted in such times. It grieves me to think of the madness the world is coming to!"

Poor soul! no wonder if she felt so; for her son was head man

at a brewery, where they sold the material for sending men half-way to hell, and largely contributed with the money obtained thereby towards bringing them back again. So, of course, it was a grievous consideration to Mrs. Bantam.

"The wust of it is that the children is all getting crazy about it," said Mrs. Horrocks, spitefully. "Every boy and girl is being members of the Band of Hope, and taught to disbelieve their Bible, which says, we are to take a little wine for our stomachs' sakes. There's even my Tom always throwing it up to me that I oughtn't to have a little porter, which I am sure I couldn't do without, and saying that it's wrong, and all that; instead of learning to keep the fifth commandment, and to honour his poor old mother, which can't set him a bad example. It isn't as if everybody was drunkards, because if they was, then I'd vote to keep 'em without drink. But I hate such cant, I do! But—my gracious! here's Mr. Whalebone!"

Yes, there was. The door was flung open furiously, and an intoxicated man staggered into the room, a perfect picture of grovelling misery and evil passions—with bloodshot eyes, dishevelled hair, and untidy, unkempt appearance. He looked for a moment or two on the group before him with a cunning leer, then turning to his wife, he almost yelled out in his thick, husky voice, "So this is the way you do it when I'm not at home, is it? Having a party, an' not inviting me—wasting my money that I has to work so hard for, eh? Come, out with you, all the lot, or I'll soon make you!" And he lifted his hand as if to strike one of them.

A general scream ensued. Each one sprang up, to get out of his way, for he seemed capable of doing anything at that moment.

"Oh, Jack! don't be stupid," said Mrs. Whalebone. "They aint doing no harm. I only asked them to take a cup of tea, before chapel."

"I don't care a bit," said the drunkard, nearly turning over a chair at the moment; "I say, I will not have gossiping meetings in my house; so get out, or I'll soon know why: do you hear, you baggages?"

"John! I will not have my friends insulted," said Mrs. Whalebone. "If you can only come home like this, you had better stay away. Never mind him, dears, he's only drunk!"

"Is he?" said the man. "We'll soon see!" and catching up a plate of toast, he flung it at the head of Mrs. Horrocks, spoiling her silk dress, though fortunately not injuring her.

"John! John!" shrieked Mrs. Whalebone; but John was now grown valiant, and resolved to finish as he had begun; so that in a few moments a perfect shower of cups, saucers, plates, tea, knives and forks, and butter flew so ominously about, that all the ladies, including the hostess herself, were routed, and glad to take refuge out of doors, with the consolation of having had their clothes spoiled, and Mrs. Whalebone's best set of *chiney* smashed to atoms. And all because Mr. Whalebone, good man! was not a teetotaler. But turn we to another scene.

Ellise sat in her little room, playing with her baby. It was truly a beautiful infant, with an intelligence far beyond its age. Though only a few months old, it already delighted to look at pictures,

especially if they related to the works of Nature; and it would crow over them, in its little way, "just like an older child," Ellen said. Already the young mother fancied she observed indications that the child would be gifted as her Victor was, not only with learning, but with that higher perception of the spiritual—that influence which she felt the people of the latter days would be subject to, more or less, as they varied in holiness. She did not exactly feel able to say why she thought so. There were reasons that she could not explain. All babies, probably, converse and hold intercourse in their first earthly days with beings that are invisible to their parents; but Edrick, as she had named him, was especially able to do this. At the name of his father, the child seemed to be particularly interested; and if he were at any time restless and cross, she had only to speak the name of "Papa Victor," and baby would smile immediately, and be quiet. Ellise had publicly dedicated him already; for this had been Victor's wish. He did not believe in christening, or anything of that sort; but he did believe in publicly dedicating the child to God; and therefore, Ellise, had taken care to gratify this desire. She sat, when we again introduce her, caressing the child, and looking down lovingly into the depths of its dark, intelligent eyes, as if she could read something there which no other person was privileged to understand but herself—and perhaps she could. It is a beautiful sight, at any time, to see a true mother with a true, sensible baby; because you are able to look upon a scintillation of heaven thereby—a mingling together of pure love and pure innocence.

"Dear little Eddy!" she murmured, "don't we wish papa Victor were back again to see us?"

Baby took her thumb, and pressed it in his little hand, and looked up at her with a faint smile, as much as to say "he did."

"What do you think, Eddy?" she pursued. "To-day, at dinner-time, we ought to have a letter from papa. The Bombay mail was in the day before yesterday; and papa will have sent a letter by that, which must reach us to-day. Don't we wish that the time had come, and the two hours were over that must be before post time?"

Baby did not seem quite so interested; for there was no smile this time, because baby was going off to sleep.

"Sleeping, my Eddy!" said Ellise, fondly. "Well, go to by-by, and perhaps mamma will too, and sleep till post time, so as not to feel the time pass so slowly till the letter comes."

And in a few minutes both mother and child were in a sound slumber. But Ellise dreamed she thought the time had passed over, and the letter-man had gone by, bringing no letter for her. She thought she grieved, and even wept about this, for she felt there must be at least two long weary months now to wait, and she would be out of money by that time. And there were the fears, too, of something having happened to Victor; perhaps he might be ill, or dead, and she thousands of miles away from him. But the dream changed; and she was showing her baby to a lot of people in her little room, and they were all admiring it, and talking about Victor, and wondering why he had not written; and then, when they had wondered enough, were amusing themselves by looking over the contents of his insect and shell

cabinets, and examining his collection of Roman coins, which Ellise said he valued next to his lepidoptera and coleoptera ; and she thought that while thus engaged she suddenly found Victor himself by her side, and every one congratulating him on his return. And then the dream changed ; and she saw a poor lonely man sitting in his room, in a strange town. He was weeping bitterly. His features were the very picture of despair. There seemed to be no lack of comforts around him ; but he himself was evidently in deep misery. She fancied she could see his thoughts lying open before her, like the pages of a book ; and there were many holy things written therein, and many that were terrible. But among the darkest, was the picture of a woman, who had once been passably good-looking, but had now fallen so deeply into sin and drunkenness, that she seemed only a terrible wreck of her former self—almost a loathsome creature. But another page showed how fondly the poor desolate man still loved her ; and how he had prayed for her, and striven with her, day by day, till it seemed that she never would alter—never change her mode of life, till it took her down to Tophet. Ellise could see that the solitary man had been deserted for the third time by this creature, and yet he still felt resolved to forgive her, and to do his utmost to reclaim her—never ceasing the effort till death came to one or both. But a cloud passed before the vision, and Ellise in her dream was looking on a more terrible scene—one of deep profligacy and crime. Then she saw a woman still in the prime of life ; but oh ! so fallen—the companion of drunkards, of other fallen women, of thieves, and a fearful crew besides, and she was trying to surpass them with her oaths and filthy language. Unseen by her, there were hosts of hideous spirits whispering in her ears, and doing their utmost to lead her still further from virtue and good. The forms of the spirits typified every bad passion and evil thought that humanity is deceived by. But there were two or three good and beautiful existences there, trying their utmost, also, to neutralise the influence of these evil ones ; and what they whispered in her ear most was, of her husband—her good and forbearing husband—a man of very few, who still cared for her, and prayed for her, and longed to have her restored to a better life. But they wept when she smothered these better thoughts, as they seemed to be to her, and plunged deeper and deeper into the foul life she was leading. And as the vision again faded away, Ellise knew that the man she had seen must be the husband of that fallen, bad woman. Then a third change came. It was in another town ; and she saw into an apartment where sat a young couple, completely happy in each other's society. The husband was reading to his wife, while she occupied her time usefully, and listened. An aroma of angelic presences was there. Everything betokened the existence of a pure, unalloyed affection and contentment. It was a picture of a terrestrial heaven. An apartment comfortably furnished—a cat sleeping by the fire—for, though in spring-time, the fires were not yet given up in that town, evidently—the young couple with their book and clasped hands, every now and then, fondly looking at each other. It thrilled poor Ellise through and through, for just then she thought of her husband far away in India, and the letter that was expected, and which she dreamed had

not arrived. But just then she was awakened by a loud rat-tat-tat at the door below. She started up. Was it possible that she had slept till the postman had come? Baby was awake, and amusing himself by smiling and putting out his little hand to invisible things. Ellise kissed it, and looked at the clock. She had slept till long past post time. There was not a letter then; and the dream had come true in that respect. For this knock could not be from the postman; and she was filled immediately with grief. But footsteps were on the stairs. She rose up, and opened the door, sadly, and there before her, to her great surprise, stood—Mr. Bayle Johnson and Mr. John Carrington, from Dudley. She smiled faintly, and welcomed them; but was exceedingly absent all the while, for her heart was far away in India.

"My dear Mrs. Bancroft," said Mr. Johnson, "my friend here has come up to spend a fortnight with me. We are going to do some shooting—I mean with billiard-balls, and some fighting—I mean with chess and draughts. So Mrs. Johnson packed me off to ask you to bring your baby with you, and spend a week or two at our place."

"Yes, do come," added Mr. Carrington, pinching the cheek of little Edrick softly.

"I regret that I cannot do so, sir," said Ellise. "The fact is, I am not in the mood for going out—I feel too anxious; so that I should be poor company for you; and I fear that baby would put you to much inconvenience, though he is very quiet generally."

"Never mind about baby. He will be all right. We expect babies to be babies. But tell me, Mrs. Bancroft, what makes you in such an unwilling mood? for I confess you don't look so happy as you used to. I hope you are in health. I suppose, though, it is because Mr. Bancroft is so long absent. But cheer up. Some of these days he will come home, and bring you such a fortune, you will be too proud to speak to such as me. Ah, well! people do get proud then, and enough to make them. But you don't seem to smile, even now. One would think you had received a letter with bad news from Mr. Bancroft; for I suppose he has written to you again?"

"That is the worst of it," replied Ellise, sadly. "The mail from Bombay has brought me no letter. I felt certain of receiving one by the post that was due an hour ago."

"Oh, well! you must not be down-hearted, you know. Perhaps there were good reasons why Mr. B. did not write. Perhaps, and that is most likely, the letter may have miscarried; or perhaps it will come next post—has been delayed in England."

"I have not had it so before. The letters have always arrived safely, and in time, on other occasions; and why should they not now?" said Ellise, despondingly. "There must be something the matter with Victor, or he would have written. I wish I had gone out with him. If he ever come back again, I will take good care he shall not go to a foreign country any more without me."

"Nonsense, little woman!" said Mr. Johnson, smiling, though he did not seem half to like it; "don't meet trouble half way, when there is no trouble, perhaps, to meet. You believe in a Providence, do you not?"

But her answer was interrupted by footsteps without ; and as the door opened a second time, she saw Mr. Daniel Mattingly, her husband's uncle, walk in. She just recognised him ; for she had only seen him once before. But Mr. Johnson, the rogue, was not at all mystified by his sudden appearance. He knew that Mr. Mattingly was coming ; but he did not know that some one else was coming too, quite unexpected by even Mr. Johnson or Ellise, just at that time. But it was just so that, within half an hour of the appearance of Victor's uncle, and when they had just succeeded in persuading Ellise to visit Waltonbury House, and had invented all sorts of reasons for the non-appearance of the expected Bombay letter, the omnibus stopped at the residence of Mrs. Tompkinson. A lady and gentleman alighted, with their luggage—not much, it is true—and Ellise became aware that Edwin Marsden and his wife had come down to spend just a week with her—it being the first time that they had had the opportunity.

"That quite settles the matter," said Ellise. "My brother and sister have arrived on a visit, and therefore you *must* excuse me, gentlemen ; and Mrs. Johnson must not be angry."

"Never mind," said Mr. Johnson, triumphantly. "We are not beaten yet. For we will carry off your sister and brother as well. Our house is quite large enough to afford room for such a lot of little people, and my wife will be delighted."

Mrs. Bancroft could say no more, for the Marsdens had come in ; and, of course, all sorts of greetings and introductions were going on amongst the parties so coincidentally brought together. And after a time all was settled. The whole of the company would remain to tea ; they wouldn't put Mrs. Bancroft to trouble, not a bit. They could manage to help themselves—when Mrs. Tompkinson had brought up the materials—and look after their hostess into the bargain. And such jokes and good words of cheering influence were spoken by each, that Ellise soon began to feel happier, and to get a little over the first bitterness of her disappointment, for the time. And the tea passed over, and everything was in readiness for them to start for Waltonbury House, and carry it and Mrs. Bayle Johnson by storm, as Mr. Carrington remarked, when suddenly Mrs. Tompkinson came in in great excitement exclaiming—

"My goodness ! only to think of it ; and he be come all that way home safe again !"

"What is the matter ?" inquired Ellise in alarm.

"Matter !" said the landlady excitedly. "Plenty of it ! begging these ladies' and gentlemen's pardons ; but Mr. Bancroft has come all the way from India, and here he is, safe as eggs !"

There was a cry of joy from the guests, and a faint sob from Ellise, and the next minute Victor bounded into the room, as handsome as ever, looking excellent after his voyage, and had caught his wife and child in his arms—his heart uttering a prayer the while.

Strangely enough, they had all come to meet him—though undesignedly ; and to hear of the death of George Mattingly (which he had not had an opportunity to write about), and the entire success of his mission.

Sadness and joy were there in that hour. Every member of the group, too, might be said to be immensely wealthy. As he contemplated that fact, so did it seem to Victor as if he had entered upon a new and most novel existence.

CHAPTER XX.

LESSONS OF LIFE.

SOME years are passing away while we write the next chapter. With the acquisition of a fortune Victor found a corresponding responsibility coming upon him. So much so, that he often feared lest he might do harm instead of good with it. He had built a handsome, though not a large, residence, near Killington; and he had made it substantial. Of course, within it, and rendered fire-proof, was a room to serve as the receptacle for the immense collections which he was continually receiving from abroad; a gentleman of considerable taste and great knowledge having been engaged to look after it, and arrange the objects as they arrived, when Victor could not find time to do so. To assist in this work, our hero purchased a copy of every book, British or Foreign, that any information could be obtained from respecting these particular matters. In addition to these, he ordered books on every other subject, so as to know what was going forward in each branch of learning, science, theology, medicine, or politics; while he anxiously read the reports in the various organs of every religious sectary, whether they were Baptists, Church (high or low), Independents, Wesleyan or its branches, Friends, Plymouth Brethren, Shakers, Presbyterians, Swedenborgians, Mormonites, Bible Christians, Millenarians, and Catholics; or Secularists, Radicals, Red-republicans, Tories, Whigs of the old school, Chartists of the fanatical type, Advanced Liberals, Liberal Conservatives, and the hundred other forms of political feeling in Europe; or, Homœopathists, Allopathists (Lancet-men), Hydropaths, Turkish-bath men, or Morrisonians; or—in fact, any of the *quack means* of doing more for the human system than legitimate medicine and Nature are supposed by the ignorant to be capable of achieving. All these and hosts of others came down with every monthly parcel; so that there were means when at home of his having information on every question that came up, and of his judging of the way in which the world wagged from year to year. He did not exclude even the works of professed sceptics on theological matters; so that even such a book as that of Dr. Colenso's would have found a ready place on his shelf. And Victor was not afraid to do all this; for he said he was thereby able to judge of both sides of a question. He would not condemn anything till he had studied it himself. But Victor had built and endowed a museum for Killington, with the money given him for general purposes of good by his uncle. He had also done many other things which I can't think of now, and if I could, they would take too long to speak about. Of his own private

fortune, he had at first put by a tenth to be given to the poor; and a further tenth of the interest which his capital brought him was used in the same way,—not as the sum total of what he felt called upon to do; but as an acknowledgment of the goodness of God, and his gratitude for that goodness, and his love for his fellow-men. Victor was very fond of helping poor, struggling, worthy tradesmen, of whatever creed or political party they might be: lending, not giving, them sums on a small interest, and generally without security, so that they might retrieve themselves, and at the same time, recognise their obligation to him, *for their own good*. He never lost by this. Many a poor, struggling man had reason to bless him, and the good wife who entered into all his schemes for others' weal. And nearly every one faithfully paid him back both principal and interest as soon as possible. Then he would give the man the interest, and generally a good sum besides, to be invested as a reserve fund for his children, if he thought it necessary; so that the borrower generally found that he had been, unconsciously, saving money for himself; and when thanking Victor, our hero would stop him by saying, "he must thank God; for he (Victor) was only God's steward, and a very unworthy one too." Sometimes, by the force of circumstances, the creditor was unable to pay; was even compelled to acknowledge that he had lost the whole of the money entrusted to his care; and when he bitterly deplored this, and said that he would repay it, if ever so little at a time, as soon as he was able, Victor would take his hand, and pressing it in a friendly, brotherly way, would say, "Cheer up, my friend; things might have been worse." And he would give him another trial, lending a little more money. Sometimes these men would always prove unfortunate. They were honestly unable to get on in the world. Everything they attempted, failed, simply because, in the first place, perhaps, they had chosen, or there had been chosen for them a business or profession for which they had been unfitted by nature or providence. With these Victor was always forbearing; when they had nothing with which to pay, he frankly forgave them the debt, provided them with some kind of employment which they could do, and paid them liberally; for he said, "It is a bad plan to give, except to the aged and sick. If the charities of England, so colossal as they are, were half of them paid for labour, by the donors of the moneys on which they are kept up, the poor would really be much better off than they are." And he was right. He reduced his theory to practice, and found it so. You say he could afford to do it. Just so; and so could thousands of other benevolent souls. And so, day by day, he saw a wonderful structure of good rising in his pathway, of which he was the architect, under the Divine guidance. But he felt he must hide his eyes from this, or it might lead him to be self-righteous. Day by day, therefore, he groaned in spirit to think how little he really did achieve, even of that which it was his duty to do. He could ever say from the innermost heart, "I am an unprofitable servant!" And he could feel conscientiously, that he must obtain *some other merit* than this to entitle him to a better home when his time came to die.

One of the earliest courses which he took on his return from India, and immediately after he had rendered up to each of his relatives

their portions of the inheritance from George Mattingly, was to seek out the lost, degraded sister, Emily. But all these efforts had proved futile. He advertised for her, he searched half England over; but she was not to be found. He was unaware of the fact that she had again married; knew nothing about the dreary life of sin and wretchedness into which she was falling lower and lower, and the mental sufferings of the man who had taken her to wife, and was praying and striving for her. Wisely, perhaps, had this been kept from him; for though it was an alloy in his cup of happiness, he was still spared much sorrow which he must otherwise have had. And so he carefully watched over the immense sum that belonged to her, hoping, that some day or other she would turn up, and be able to use it wisely and well. He little thought that she had been wandering so far away from virtue and goodness, that it must be something next to a miracle that would bring her back again. He little thought that a poor solitary disappointed man, who deserved perhaps a better fate, wept, day by day, over this wreck of his affections. He did not know that Emily had left her husband for the third time, and that he was now so ignorant of her whereabouts as to have not a single clue by which to try and allure her back again. Evidently, Mr. Blank had a task given him. He was to make an atonement for his own past errors in this way. And nobly he strove to do his work—still resolved to forbear and forgive, and love to the end—till death came, if need be—ay, if he died first, and received permission to watch over her after his death—a noble work for a noble spirit to do.

Victor knew not of these things, we say. But Victor carried on another work. He saw that there were thousands of poor fallen ones about the streets of our towns and cities who might be reclaimed, if a helping hand were held forth to them in the right way and spirit. And *his hand* was held forth gladly. He prospered in at least half these cases, and perhaps would have done in more, if the rest of the world had done also what was right. It grieved him to see the misery which sin and vice had brought upon these poor souls. And when he looked upon one who had been a beautiful and innocent being once—and would have continued so but for the lust of man, or the power of strong drink—he longed to be able to lead that fallen sister back to the right path, and to the Saviour who died for her as well as for him. Of course, he sometimes, being an original thinker on most matters, met with a good deal of ridicule and vilification from such persons as could not understand his method. Unworthy motives were often imputed to him. But, like John Wesley of old, he left God to take care of his character, while he occupied his time in God's work.

Victor had only one child, little Edrick, the joy of his heart. Both he and Ellise had striven to rear up this boy in the fear of God, and in wisdom and truth. From the earliest period he had decided that he would never resort to corporeal punishment; and he never did. He said there was no necessity of beating a child, if you commenced with its infancy in the right way. It was easy to punish more effectually and more severely in other ways—to convince the child of your justice and its own fault, and to teach it to mend. He found the system to answer. So well was Edrick tutored, that as he grew older, if he saw

the parents frown, or fancied that their approbation was taken from him, he was inexpressibly unhappy till his fault had been confessed, and pardon had been obtained. Victor had seen in early life the danger of too quickly accusing the child of a fault or a crime, because it immediately began to try and get off by means of a lie. By his method the child was made to feel that its parents were conscious of its sin, and were sorrowfully angry; and in a little while it would voluntarily come forward and accuse itself—which did it great good, and gave a promise of better things in the future. In early infancy Edrick was supplied with playthings of all kinds; but he was taught that the giver expected them to be kept in order and unbroken, and all of them, when done with, to be put in their proper places. As the child grew older, order thus became a natural habit with it. Then, with respect to its education: Victor did not force it—did not put it in an educational hot-press, and try to manufacture a prodigy at six years of age. He believed in gradually leading it on to love knowledge for its own sake. He permitted it to learn something about any subject in which it took a delight—insensibly guiding even that predilection. Education was not made a task; for he did not stipulate that anything should be got by heart; though he offered rewards for the achievement of knowledge in this way. He never, on any account, allowed the boy to have a memoric task set him as a punishment; he did not consider this wise. He said it gave the child a distaste for learning. *In the case of giving verses or chapters of the Bible as a punishment, he was particularly loud in denouncing such a course; because he saw that many children had been led to detest the Bible from this reason, and come to ruin.* Thus Edrick grew older, and as he grew, learned. He certainly was not sent to school; but he was ever in school, for all that, without suspecting it; so beautifully pleasant did his educational life seem to him. And as years passed on, he began to acquire a knowledge of every subject worth knowing about, and to rejoice especially in the works of creation, at the same time that he was fitting himself to get his own living, were it possible that he might, from unforeseen circumstances, be rendered poor. But there was another course that Victor and Ellise also followed out. From the first day of its birth, Ellise had prayed for it every afternoon. As it grew older, she went with it, or its father did, into their chamber, and there held communion with the Most High. When the child grew old enough to understand anything, it comprehended the reason for this; and thus daily private prayer was made a habit with it. As it grew up, it did not depart from this habit; but continued it as a pleasure and a privilege. I don't say that Victor might have been equally fortunate with every child, or that every one might be as fortunate as he. But I certainly believe that if every one were to follow out his course, they would more generally be able to rejoice in good children. Some people cannot have their children under their eye, as had Victor his boy; but then, for all that, they could still copy Victor as nearly as circumstances permitted. Allow me to hint at one other thing. Victor never permitted his boy to find him out in an untruth, or the semblance of it. When Victor erred himself, if the boy were cognisant of it, Victor always confessed his fault before his child. If Victor, in his teachings,

made any mistake, and Edrick found it out, or discovered that papa was wrong, papa confessed to it, and was glad that his child had corrected him. And Edrick revered him all the more for this, and had greater faith in him in consequence. Victor always let his child see how deeply he loved Ellise; and when she were absent, would converse with the boy, and tell him how greatly he cherished her in his heart—asking Edrick to honour and love her, and be all a son could to her, if he (Victor) were taken from her. Then the boy would look grave, and with a kind smile, say that he would be another papa to her. Ellise took the same course; and thus Edrick knew full well that papa and mamma loved each other so dearly. When he grew a little more advanced in his education, Victor said one day, “Edrick, my boy, it is time you should know a little more about the snares which you are likely to meet with as you grow older, even with regard to your religious faith; so, from this day, I will try and teach you a little about them. You must know that though you and I believe in all the blessed things that the Bible says, yet there have been, and are still, many poor men who place no faith in them, and think that the Bible is a cunningly-devised fable; and they have written hundreds of volumes to prove it. I think I should like to read these with you, and see what things may be said, even about the Book in which all our knowledge of God seems to reside. You will find there are many things that will make you think the authors are right, and the Bible wrong. But we will see how well other men, who have studied these Biblical difficulties, are able to explain and harmonise them.” And from that day they read together (beginning each time with prayer) the works of Volney, Hume, Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Dr. Colenso, the German infidels, deists, and rationalists, and the English secularist and infidel strictures on the Scriptures and religion in general. And with them they perused the able answers of Bishop Horne, Watson, McCaul, and others who had taken up the cause of the truth, and so nobly defended it; so that the boy became able to give a reply to any insinuations that a sceptic might attempt to bring forward against his faith in after life. It would be well if all our youth were posted up in the same way, were acquainted with these difficulties, and what both sides had said about them. We should not have so many theoretical infidels then.

We may mention another fact. Edrick had a certain allowance of pocket-money, increasing every year in amount, a large portion of which he was insensibly led to appropriate to good purposes—that is, for the use of the poor, and other god-like objects; and sometimes his father contrived that he should practise self-denial for the sake of others—taking care that he should always afterwards find himself rewarded, though he should never suspect that there was a design in this, or he might have been led to practise the principle on a mercenary calculation. Whenever Victor or Ellise visited the sick or the poor, Edrick, if he had been extra good, was permitted to accompany them; so that he soon loved this work of humanity. Victor, as *he* grew older, loved the peace principles more and more, and had more faith in them—though he believed the world would fight and war to the end of this dispensation; but he often remarked to his son that he believed, if

England would reduce her armaments and fortifications to *nil*, she would never (if trusting implicitly in God) be permitted to be conquered, or even troubled by any nation. And Edrick learned to think so too. Victor was a bitter enemy to capital punishment. He said that it only increased crime. He told Edrick that when hanging was the penalty for thefts of all descriptions, there were many more infractions of the law than since its abolition; and that in countries where capital punishment was not allowed to be inflicted on even a murderer, there murders were comparatively rare crimes; and he thought it would be the same in England, under an enlightened *régime*. He added that we should not punish illegal murder by a legal deprivation of life. The one was nearly as bad as the other—especially where more merciful, and yet more just and effective retributions could be devised.

And so, under the care of his parents, Edrick grew up in wisdom and favour, we hope, with God and man, as every child should so, after the pattern of their prototype, the holy Child Jesus.

But during these years, Victor occasionally travelled in foreign lands, as we will show in the next chapter, Ellise and Edrick accompanying him, and assisting in the acquisition of those wonderful things in every department of natural history, for which the love of each became more intense as they grew in years.

But, for a moment, we must return to others.

Edwin and Ellen Marsden prospered, and did what was right with their money. Their affections were now centred in a family, that each year seemed to spring up more largely round them. And they were happy—living modestly, and still clinging to the friends who had helped them, of which more anon.

Daniel Mattingly invested his wealth in some mines, and used every endeavour to better the condition of the people in his employ; and he reaped a rich harvest of reward. The old man, Wilson, had long passed away to a better world. His grandson had married Miss Mattingly, and united in partnership with his father-in-law; so that, ultimately, it became a firm, till Daniel died; and then young Wilson—as some of his friends still affectionately called him—had the whole of the concern in his own hands. I may mention that his parents were both dead at this time.

At that period, could George Mattingly have seen, from the spirit world, as perhaps he did, the good results of his legacies, he would have rejoiced, though one sorrowful fact remained to indicate that all was not perfect: one of his heirs still came short of her inheritance, and by her own sins. Would she ever receive it? Time only could show.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE REWARD OF THE PAST—THE RESULTS OF A DOUBLE SIN.

It was a beautiful summer morning. How lovely all Nature appeared ! How sweetly the birds carolled, as they flew round the house, or alighted from time to time on the bushes and flowers, then laden with dew-drops that sparkled in a myriad tints, and all the primary colours—prismatic as they were ! Everything betokened gladness and hopeful anticipation. Mrs. and Miss MacNeile rose that morning, and descended to the breakfast-room with a peculiar feeling of happiness that was most unusual. Not often did they feel in such high spirits as at that hour, when life itself seemed sunny to their feelings. Mrs. MacNeile remarked to her daughter, as she gave her the morning greeting that never since the death of her husband had she been so unusually comfortable in mind, and so light-hearted. "I feel," she said, "as if all my youth had come back to me, and I were a child again. I could dance and laugh with glee, for everything seems to wear a smile."

"I suppose it is the exquisite beauty of the morning, dear mamma," returned her daughter. "I can quite rejoice with you, for I too feel this buoyancy of spirits ; as if I could fly through the air, and rush to the home of every poor person, and give them means to rejoice with me. But is it not enough to make one's heart glad ? see the country, how lovely it looks !"

"Indeed it does," said her mother. "Truly, we ought to be good people, when God has given us such a beautiful world to live in ! Why, it would be a paradise, if it were not for the presence of that dark spot, *sin*, which mars its sweetness, and often denies us the pleasure of seeing beauties that, perhaps, none but the spiritual mind can behold. Really, I feel that I love the world, because God has made it so much as I like it to be ; showing us, that if we were good, all would be good and glad too. I do indeed feel happy ! Let's have breakfast and away on a long walk !"

"I rejoice in saying 'yea' to that proposal," said Miss MacNeile, gaily. "They say that it is not a good sign when you are so light-hearted—that something disagreeable is going to happen ; and your unusual happiness is a premonition of it ; but I don't believe it ; though, if I were superstitious, I should certainly say we were in for some trouble this morning, because we are so very happy."

"Ay, my darling, I don't believe in that old superstition. We are not generally made happy to be more miserable after by contrast. But let's have breakfast ! By the by, I should think the postman will soon bring the letter bag, and we shall then know whether your friend Carry has made up her mind to come and pay you a visit or not. Ah ! there it is."

The servant brought the bag in at that moment, and Mrs. MacNeile having produced the key, proceeded to open it. There was but one letter and one newspaper. But the letter was directed in the handwriting of the friend Carry's father. When opened, it was found to contain information that cast a blight on all their previous happiness, and dispelled it in a moment. The writer said, "I regret most deeply to inform you that my poor daughter Carry, whom you so kindly invited to spend a month with you in Fordham, was taken ill suddenly, the day before yesterday. We called in medical advice immediately; but in two hours, to our great and overwhelming sorrow, our dear child was dead. It is supposed that the cause was heart disease. We are all, of course, in great trouble. In the midst of our bereavement, we also lament the intelligence we observe in the accompanying paper, which must greatly affect you; as I suppose you largely banked with the firm of Pethel, Bethel, and Wolf. I am, certainly, greatly astonished at their failing. People had as much confidence in them as they would have had in the Bank of England."

Mrs. MacNeile turned pale as death. Tearing open the newspaper, she nervously turned to the part indicated in the letter, and there read a confirmation of the intelligence so gloomily alluded to by their deceased friend's father. All their wealth had been invested in the firm of Pethel, Bethel, and Wolf. The firm had not suspended payment for a time, but utterly broken up; leaving themselves liable to a criminal prosecution, and the shareholders and creditors to utter ruin. Sir James Pethel and Mr. Wolf were already in custody, it was added; and Mr. Bethel would probably be apprehended if found; but it was supposed that he had escaped to the Continent. Terrible misery was thus brought into the homes of many who had known prosperity; and of hundreds who had placed their little savings in the broken bank. Mrs. MacNeile felt now that she could not boast of the possession of twenty pounds in money, and that they would have to give up their house and furniture, sell it all off, and go into a cottage, till they could decide what to do next. It was very hard; but it must be submitted to, and with the best grace possible. Who would have anticipated such a trouble as this? The hearts of the poor know a deep bitterness often and oft; but the hearts of the rich, when they fall by the force of stern misfortune, know a sorrow that is still harder to bear. It requires something more than philosophical phlegm to render us able, after knowing every comfort in life, to part with all, and uncomplainingly go into a life of poverty and denial. We must not, therefore, blame our friends if they failed to take this sudden trouble so calmly as could be wished. They knew that it had been said, "Set your affections on things above, and not on things of the earth;" but they had not arrived at that sublime stage of a Christian life, when the soul rejoices in tribulation; though in their inner hearts they would not have hesitated, if asked, to declare their conviction that all this trouble had been permitted for the best—for their good. They wept over the change—hot, scalding tears of unavailing regret. I am not sure but that they felt much bitterness against the authors of their ruin. It was better that they should weep: tears are a gift from Heaven, by which the burdened heart may be often relieved of a weight

that else would crush reason, and reduce her throne to ruins. They grew calm, and tried to look their situation full in the face, as a monster that must be boldly confronted. But turn which way they might, there seemed to be little hope of aid, small chance of successfully battling with the grim tyrant, misfortune. What were they to do? Where could they look for help? Could their fortune be so irretrievably gone?—was not some little spared from the general wreck? Perhaps it would turn out that in a little while a dividend, if ever so small, might be looked for. No: that would not be; for the paper declared emphatically, that the whole affairs of the firm were in inextricable confusion. The directors had speculated in the most reckless manner; lost heavily; and wasted their assets by a long course of extravagance—having lived upon others' means by the most princely system of dissipation. So that, if ever a dividend were to be hoped for, perhaps a year or two might elapse before it could be declared; and in the meantime, the law and criminal expenses would swallow up much of the residue, and the sufferers must find some other means of existence—in fact, they *must* live. Something, therefore, would have to be done directly. They must call a sale: their furniture must go; and so also must the house and grounds. They might secure, after the payment of all expenses concurrent with such a course, the means of support for a few years, if they lived economically; especially if they could devise some means of earning a little. Yes, this might be done. It was hard, and went much against the will; but pride must be put away now, and other considerations take its place!

At the time when this shock had come to the MacNeiles, Mr. Marsden was away with his wife and children by the sea-side. He went originally for a month; but stayed a week longer than he had at first intended, because the weather continued so fine; and the children, who had not been well for some time, seemed to improve in health by their change. Judge of his utter astonishment, then, when, on his return, he saw the auctioneer's bills up announcing two sales—that of the furniture, to last two days; and of the house for another. And when he made inquiries, and learned the particulars of the MacNeiles' losses, how they were compelled to discharge all their servants, and manage for themselves in their house till it was sold from them, and how Mrs. MacNeile was now quite ill with the shock of their adversity, he could hardly help weeping then and there. He went home and told Ellen, and the young wife was as much grieved as he.

"What can they do?" she asked, tearfully. "Can we not do something to help them? for they were good friends to us once!"

"I have thought of that," answered Edwin; "but at present it is difficult to say what we can do. Naturally, they will feel sensitive in their distress, and whatever we do for them must be offered in the most delicate manner, so as not to give them unnecessary pain."

"Poor Mrs. MacNeile!—poor Laura! I am so sorry for them!" murmured Ellen. "I would almost rather that it had happened to us than to them. How will they bear up against it?"

"I cannot tell, for I have not yet seen them," said Edwin. "This I know, whatever is done, must be done speedily. We must buy in the furniture for them, and make them a present of it at all events—that will help them a little!"

"Yes, very true; but what will they do with all their furniture in a small cottage such as I fear they will have to take?" inquired Ellen.

"Let me ask you a question, my little wife," said Edwin, seriously; "and I would have you consider it well too, before you reply. You know that once, years ago, these people did for you and for me, what no other earthly being might perhaps have done. The time has now come when that great service can be rewarded, in part, by us. They were the means, in God's hands, of giving us all the joy and years of happiness which we have had together. Now, the money inherited by you from your uncle, George Mattingly, is certainly in my power to dispose of as I might see fit; because you have been foolish enough to give me that right," and the speaker patted her cheek affectionately. "But I should like to consult you how these friends are to be helped with your means; to obtain your consent to my plan, which must be freely given."

"You know you may do as you like, dear Edwin," said Ellen.

"Yes, that is all very well; but look here: would you be willing to forego many little luxuries (for our children's sake), so as to be able, thereby, to help our friends. Their house will probably realise seven or eight hundred pounds, perhaps a thousand. Their furniture may sell for a hundred and fifty more. Now, this is a large sum; and we must reduce our luxuries for some years to pay for it, if we wish to do right by our children. Would you be willing to sacrifice this to make the MacNeiles happy?"

"How can you wait an instant to ask me?" said Ellen, reproachfully. "You know I would, or more, if required!"

"That is well, then," he said, kissing her. "I can manage for them so that the home of years shall not be swept away in the wreck of their fortunes, and I am thankful we can do it. Privately, I will purchase this house and furniture. I will pay the expenses that have already been incurred, so that there shall be no embarrassment for them. I also propose to write to Victor and your cousin at Dudley; for, perhaps they will send a donation, which will all greatly help to make these people more comfortable. Then, when all is settled, I know what we will do with our purchase!"

They looked searchingly into each other's eyes for a moment; and each nodded as if the same conclusion had been arrived at by both of them, as probably it had.

In two hours, letters were dispatched to Victor, and also to Mr. Wilson (late firm of Mattingly and Wilson).

Early on the following morning, the solicitor for Fordham paid a visit to Mrs. and Miss MacNeile, and was closeted with them nearly an hour. When he had departed, the ladies threw themselves into each other's arms and wept as if their hearts would break. They had sold the house and grounds, and even the furniture. The deeds of conveyance were signed, and the money paid into their hands—one thousand two hundred pounds in all, clear of all expenses, and cheaply at that; but they were poor women now, and glad to do this, as far as they could be glad of anything. The name of the purchaser, they were told, was a secret for the present.

"Gone!" sobbed Mrs. MacNeile. "The home of my childhood

and yours, gone away into the hands of strangers. Not a vestige scarcely of what we see around us can we call our own. I think my heart will break ! ”

“ Don’t cry,” said the younger lady, though failing to practise her own precept. “ We are beyond the possibility of want for the present. This money will keep us respectable, even if we do live in a cottage. I begin to feel resigned, myself. One thing does grieve me most of all, that the Marsdens have neither written a line, or called to show their sympathy. I did expect better from them. But they must go, if they care not to see us now *we* are in trouble. But I wonder who could have bought our property.”

“ I am at a loss to decide,” said the elder lady. “ I cannot understand their kindness in permitting us to remain, as Mr. Hardwick said, till we receive further notice. Probably it is some one who is not coming just yet, and will be glad to have the place taken care of.”

Two days more, and no sign of the Marsdens. One or two other friends had just called, and professed their sorrow at the misfortune of these people ; but only one of them promised help, and this in vague terms. But they felt the tears of joy and gratitude stealing down their wan cheeks that afternoon, as they perused the contents of two notes—one from Killington, and the other from Dudley. The former was written by Ellise, on behalf of herself and husband, saying how deeply they deplored the misfortune of their friends, Mrs. and Miss MacNeile, and ended by a delicate hint of the pleasure it would give them if the ladies would accept the inclosed cheque for fifty pounds, and pay them a visit at the earliest period. The second letter, among other things, contained also a cheque ; but for a more munificent sum—two hundred pounds. Then, soon after, Ellen Marsden came in for the first time, with a packet from Edwin. The packet contained the conveyance papers, and other documents which they had signed, which Ellen begged them to take back, and thereby to accept as a free gift the house and furniture, as some little acknowledgment of the kindnesses which she and Edwin had received from their hands. And the MacNeiles were compelled to do it too ; and they confessed at once the error which they had been guilty of in misjudging the Marsdens a few days before. Edwin came in soon after, and he and Ellen stayed to tea—greatly cheering up the hearts of their friends by their kindly presence.

Edwin said he believed the time would come for them to receive back a dividend of their fortune ; and about two years after a dividend of five shillings in the pound was declared. But Sir James Pethel was transported ; Mr. Bethel committed suicide, and Mr. Wolf escaped to drag out a miserable existence as a gambler at Baden-Baden. Edwin and his wife never had any reason to regret their good deed ; for, somehow or other, everything prospered with their children in the different professions which they chose, and all the children became blessings to them ; so surely does a good action meet its reward, even in this world.

But before concluding this chapter, we must just look in for a few moments at the village of Donningham, where years before poor William Caxton (you remember William Caxton, who robbed his master of

the money to invest in the travelling lottery, and afterwards became an idiot for a time) had been smitten with such a punishment for his crime.

From that fatal evening, when, pale and desponding, the poor lad returned in time to deliver up to his master the sovereign he had stolen from him, William Caxton had, in his insane moments, never ceased to mutter to himself his fear that the Nemesis of justice was still on his track. A continual horrible dread haunted him, night and day, that he would be taken to prison, and transported for his crime; and as months flew by, and he scarcely seemed to grow better, the heart of his master, Mr. Walton, became heavier. The lad was pining to death, and Walton could not devise any means by which to cheer his soul, and restore the reason which his own ill-advised course had partially destroyed. Deep indeed was the retribution that fell upon the master, as he heard every night the footsteps of the boy, pacing backward and forward in his bed-room—himself still re-enacting the scenes of that fatal day in his history. "Far better that he had never been discovered," would the old man say to himself; "far better that I had left the lad to restore the money when he could, or talked to him seriously, and given him another trial." It was the latter course that he should have adopted. A word of stern kindness would have saved the susceptible soul of William from any further descent into sin. With proper treatment, his first crime would have been his last.

The old man being childless, and a widower, tolerably well to do in the world, tried his best to make up to the mother for the sufferings of the son; but the good woman indignantly repelled all his advances. "Should my son ever become a sane lad again, you may do what you like for him," she said; "but I will never touch a farthing of your money. Of course, I feel it your duty to do what you can for him till he gets better; for though he sinned, your crime was still greater—especially a man professing to be a Christian, and to practise charity!" And he bowed to her decision, for he felt that her words were just and right, that he deserved her deep censure and contempt. Old as he was, he was not too far advanced in years to learn a lesson of life. But if the months went heavily and wearily by, seeming to bring no hope of consolation with them, they were not destined to last for ever.

William gradually improved. The moments of insanity were not so frequent now, or so long continued. Every additional week brought forth happier prospects for the future; and at length the sinning but very repentant boy was restored, though it was a year or two before he recovered his health and spirits. From this time not a word was spoken on either side about the past; but the old man took steps to place the boy in the business, in such a position that he might gradually rise and retrieve his former errors. He did rise, too, till he became a partner with his master, and married, and saw his poor mother reconciled to Mr. Walton. Then other years fled by, and the old man was gathered to his fathers, leaving the business, which had latterly been conducted entirely by William, as a legacy to the partner of his latter days—the man who, when a lad, he had been the means of punishing so fearfully. And when children had risen up round William Caxton, he often spoke to them for their edification of the lessons of life which he had learned so painfully in *his* young days.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE HOSPITAL—THE ISLE OF IONA.

ALBEMARLE STREET, Hoxton, was blessed with a hospital—one of those noble institutions that preach an eloquent discourse about two things—the generosity of the British people, and the great curse of drink that obtains among them. For St. Ethelred's Hospital was built and kept up by subscriptions, and a large number of its patients are the victims of intoxicating liquors, directly or indirectly—the latter a sad fact to contemplate. Every day some fresh case was brought in ; every night the house-surgeon was called up to attend immediately to some sufferer who had often brought on his misery by his vices—his sins, generally the selfish sin of which we have already hinted. The internal arrangements of this institution were of the best kind. The second floor of the building was in an admirable condition ;—a long gallery, on either side divided off into high rooms, neat and clean, and so constructed that a current of pure air could traverse the whole range without interfering with the comfort of the patients. The walls were sufficiently thick between each compartment to preclude the possibility of much sound coming from the next room ; so that in all respects the sufferers were nearly as comfortable (often more so) as if they had been in their own houses, with the additional advantage of having a medical man ready to see them at any moment. A staff of kind Christian people was attached to the institution, who made it a part of their duty to go and visit each sufferer in turn, talk to them on cheerful subjects, or read, when they were able to bear it—not tracts, or the Bible, alone, but all kinds of books of a healthy tendency, even fiction ; for these are invaluable agencies in the treatment of sick people, I think. If you can get the mind happy, you may do much towards bringing the body also into a subjection to the laws of health. A small stock of books and several nice pictures were in each room—the pictures being chiefly coloured—the colours not being selected without reference to the good or evil influences of certain tints (for some colours are prejudicial to the health of an invalid). Flowers were there, but only a very few in each room, and these were removed at night, as were the potted plants, for the obvious reason that it is injurious to have these things in a bed-room after dark. So that everything betokened a scientific comprehension of the laws of health and comfort. We may add that it was a rule to light fires for an hour or two twice a week, at least, in each room, even in summer-time, so that the air might be still further purified.

In one of these compartments lay a woman raving in delirium, blaspheming in a terrible manner, of whom few present could entertain a hope of recovery. Poor soul ! she had been brought in the night before, having been found coiled up under, and in a niche of a

railway arch, intoxicated, and then nearly mad. A few good Samaritans had taken up her case, and were anxious that if anything could be done for her to save her life and reason, and her soul too, it should be done immediately. They might have taken her off to the police-station—for she flew at one of them like a tiger in her drunken fit, and had left the traces of her finger-nails on his face—but they chose to place her where she might undergo a more merciful discipline, and have a chance of becoming better; for they could see that she was ill, and, as they too truly believed, in the preliminary stage of *delirium tremens*. The attendants where she was placed had a terrible night of it with her. If ever man or woman can be qualified to breathe forth the whisperings of evil spirits, or the smoke of hell, she did in her ravings. Evidently she could see the horrible forms of the bottomless pit, and of her own evil fancies, crowding into the room more and more as the hours flew by, and in all their fantastic hideousness and mockery of her state. Sometimes the friends round her would have to hold the poor sin-whipped creature in her bed by force, when the strong paroxysms came on, as they did in a fearful manner at midnight. There seemed to be little hope of life at that time, and perhaps none for the soul. They had no need to ask her name—to speak when she was calmer of what she had been; for they understood only too well that she had not only fallen into the inebriate's pit, but her virtue was gone, and had been, till she became the sport of any foul being who cared to look at her. Once she must have been tolerably comely—not beautiful, not pretty, but still passable; but all the little glory she possessed had departed. It was all *Ichabod* now. Scarcely a trace of womanhood was left to her. It would seem as if even the one who may at a past time have loved her, would now look on her with loathing, and horror, and contempt. She had on some soiled finery when they brought her in—such gaudy attire as the painted harlot wears, though her under garments are scarcely enough to keep the cold from searing her limbs and frame. What wonder, then, if she has been long in this state—the companion of the vile and lost—if she be crushed, and torn, and soiled like a plant that is hastening to corruption in a dank morass?

They had no means of knowing her name. She was, and had been spoken of as the nameless one, even among her own crew, before she entered the hospital. People had seen her in the neighbourhood for months—a year or two—and had wondered at her rare audacity and profligacy. Even among her own crew, where Vice sat as a queen over them, and ruled, sceptre in hand, the mocking, maddened mob beneath it, it was remarked of the nameless one that she did and said things they would shudder at, fallen as they were. In *their* eyes she seemed to roll sin as a sweet morsel under her tongue, and mock them and gibe at them because they could not follow her in everything. Infidelity, drunkenness, harlotry—these were her crimes; and she seemed to plunge into them deeper as she lived on, as if thereby to drown all reflection, which had become horrible to her. Such is the portrait I am obliged faithfully to draw. If the setting and surroundings are black as hell itself, blame not me, but the very liquors which probably some of you take at this time, because you have not the courage to deny yourself

the *thing that you like*, even for the sake of your sisters and brothers. I am trying to teach you a lesson of life, remember; and if you say, Learn the lesson that you would teach us, I reply, I have learned it long ago. I preach, because it is my duty to do so.

As the night passed away, the nameless one became a little better. The awful delirium, much to the surprise of the medical attendant, gradually lost its hold upon her mind; and when morning dawned, and a few sun-rays crept into the apartment, to smile upon its suffering inmate, she lay on her bed, pale as death, and so weak that she could not lift an arm. She was very quiet, too. Not a word escaped her lips. The look of terrified vacancy (if such a term may be used) had fled away, and been succeeded by a thoughtful gaze that still had much of agonising pain in it. Towards the middle of the day she called feebly to an attendant, and asked her to listen a few moments while she made a communication. The nurse came (for she was a nurse there) and bent over her compassionately, though loathingly.

"I can understand where I am," said the nameless one, feebly. "I am in a hospital. It was kind to bring me here. What a terrible dream I have had all the past night! I have been in hell, if ever a human soul was. I long disbelieved in such a place. Now I am sure there is one. I shudder to think of it. But since I came back—though I never thought I should—I have been reflecting. I have been thinking what a life I have led; and that if one more trial were given me, if I could get well, and not die just yet, as I fear I shall, how I would mend my life, though I know it would be difficult when I got into the influence of that drink that has been my curse."

"It is my duty to tell you," said the attendant, "that I do not think you can live; and if you wish to be happy hereafter, now will be the time to mend—to repent, and seek for pardon!"

"I have thought of this too," she said, "but is it possible that I can be forgiven now?—I have no opportunity of living a life that can deserve pardon from heaven. I have seldom believed in heaven till within the last few hours; and you know not what a sinner I have been, and what a hypocrite too—the worst of all sinners."

"If we were never pardoned till we did something to deserve it, all of us would go to hell," said the attendant, solemnly and pointedly.

The nameless one reflected for a few moments, and then began to weep. They were tears that betokened good fruit—not the tears of false repentance, like they had been in past times, but the genuine dew-drops of a godly sorrow which worketh unto salvation. At last she said, "You think, then, that I may be pardoned, even now, if I look for it?"

"I am sure you may!"

"Would you forgive, if I had sinned against you, as I have sinned against my God?"

"I am not God," was the reply. "I am only a poor sinning woman; but I think, if you repented, I could forgive you; and He is more merciful than humanity can ever be, can ever conceive of, even in its most exalted moments."

"He must be, or he would never have borne with me so long as he has, and now given me another chance, after what passed last night,"

she murmured. "And I remember now, that there is another from whom I might, perhaps, get forgiveness also. He did swear never to desert me. I have always loved him; and he has given me proofs that he wished me well; but I deserted him, and I did not let him know where I have been all these months, these two years. But I know where he is—poor man! Perhaps he is now thinking of me, and praying for me!"

"Who do you mean?" inquired the attendant; "is it any one I could send for?"

"I should like to see him," the nameless one answered; "but I am ashamed to look him in the face. I have dishonoured him so much—I must be such a reptile in his sight—so vile, so horrible a monster, that he must almost hide his face from me, if he came. He must indeed."

"Try him!" suggested the attendant. "Do you speak of a husband? Is it possible that you have one living? if so, send for him, at once; and if a good and merciful man, he will come!"

"You guess my secret!" the sick one said, wildly. "You think I refer to a husband. You think it possible that I can have left him, and have plunged into all this sin, while he were alive. You are right. Alas, I have done many worse things than you know of. But a secret feeling seems to say he would come now, if I sent to him."

"Send for him, by all means!" again urged the nurse; for she was anxious that the poor sinner might be brought more into a repentant state of mind.

"I will risk it," at length the nameless one murmured. "It is my last chance of getting hope—of getting help!" So the woman called for writing materials, and while she dictated, the nurse wrote. It was a short note—a very few words; but when, an hour after, the person to whom it was directed received it, his eyes filled with tears: he went down on his knees, and his pallid face was lifted up to heaven in prayer. Then he started quickly for the hospital.

And as he entered the sick ward of the nameless one, he stood a moment, and contemplated the wreck of womanhood that lay before him, with her hands covering her eyes to hide her tears and sobbings, if possible, and her shame in his presence. "She is a terrible wreck of her former self," he said. "But I have promised to be faithful to her to the last. I will forgive her!" And approaching more nearly, he took her hand from her face, and tenderly pressing it in his own, he said, "I have come, Emily: and still to forgive, still to love, still to take back and overlook all the past, if the poor sinner be willing to forsake the sins of the past, and be faithful and good for the future!"

"Then I *can* hope. I *am* saved. For God cannot be less merciful than you. I have hidden myself from you for two years; you forgive. I have hidden from God for many; still He will pardon me now. But I shall die soon: I cannot get over this illness. Still, it is a comfort to find you here, and bringing pardon and faithful affection with you!"

"Emily (I will again say, dear Emily), I feel that the time has come when my prayers are to be answered, and my wife is to be a good, repentant woman. I don't know why I think so, unless it is because

I have faith in the good God above, and in his promises. I think it must be this. You will live. According to appearances, there is no hope of your life, I should say; but with striving prayer you will live yet, perhaps to redeem the past!"

"I desire life but for that object," she said, humbly and fervently.

He bent over her and pressed his lips to her forehead, not repelled in his faithful affection by her hideous looks, the brands which sin had caused to be deeply impressed upon her features. She was now a changed being—truly changed; and greater hope came to him for her, when he heard her say, "Alfred, if I do get well, and you will deign to take me back to your home and love, remove me from the influence of drink, for that is my strong temptation, and I can't say that I should not again fall if it were to come near me. Take me somewhere, where intoxicating liquors cannot be had, unless with great difficulty; and I will try, by Heaven's aid, to redeem the past. I will be your slave, and ever so humble and so true—let me but live in your kitchen, so that I may be near you."

"I will take you where drink cannot come!" he said, thankfully. "I do not want a slave. I want a loving wife—a truly repentant one; and let by-gones be forgotten; and the future may become bright for us."

And so this was the meeting between Mr. Blank and his long lost wife. Then let us return to Victor, and follow him in his remaining travels and discoveries.

Victor had felt for a long time that he should not go again to the tropics. His work was completed in that respect; not that he was tired of those beautiful parts of the earth, but that he felt he should like to see some of the countries more immediately near his own. For this reason, he and Ellise organised an expedition through the most interesting regions of Europe, Edrick now being old enough to accompany them, for he had seen fifteen years of life, and had a deep regard for all the pursuits of his father. Starting for Paris one day, they visited its monuments, and palaces, and public buildings, and from thence passed on to Switzerland, collecting specimens as they went. From Switzerland across the Alps into Italy, with its classic scenes at Rome, Milan, Florence, the Lake of Como. Then again on to Naples, viewing the ruins and site of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and ascending Vesuvius to the crater; again on to Sicily, where Palermo found them a residence for a time, and Etna displayed to them some of its wonders, after exploring a part of the island. On leaving Sicily they sailed down into the Adriatic and landed in Austria, traversing the country as far as Vienna; thence on to Berlin by the longest and wildest routes, and from there to St. Petersburg. From St. Petersburg they made excursions to many parts of the Russian interior; and when they finally decided to leave the capital, they travelled down by the Baltic, struck through the grander provinces of Sweden, and away into Norway, to regions where, in some parts of the year, the sun shines at midnight, though the birds and insects retire to rest as if it were only the moon that gave the light. Here they stayed a long time, sailing about among the more northern islands, the Lofoden group, where the famous Maelström is to be seen with its whirling waters,

and where, on winter nights, the Aurora Borealis sends forth inconceivable splendours. The lakes and floods of this country were to them objects of peculiar contemplation. The wild and gloomy pine districts, covering miles of plain and forest, and the clefts between the mountains, some of them so awful in appearance as to horrify rather than to give a feeling of sublimity—these our travellers delighted in. The Hardanger Fiord, near Bergen, on the most ragged part of the Norwegian coast, with its perpendicular mountains, and mighty glaciers, and almost unfathomable depths of gloom, where it took hours for the sunlight to penetrate them—these were features of scenery that our hero and his wife and child never forgot. Then, as a contrast to this dark grandeur, they entered Rosendale (the Vale of Roses), a great plain running in from the sea, and presenting to the eye a long vista of meadows, and fields, and groves of fruit trees, the trees being covered at certain periods with beautiful foliage and blossoms, and the meadows teeming with flowers, the whole presenting a paradisiacal effect, and bounded on every hand, as if set in a framework, by the crags and dark mountains, with their snow fields above, especially those of the Folge Fonden. And so their hearts were able to rejoice more and more every day; and Victor would often remark how much more glorious the anticipation of heaven seemed to be, when he could find such wonderful beauties on this earth, and feel that the universe teemed with worlds that were still more wonderful, and still more beautiful, to which he prayed that his blood-washed spirit might be permitted to have access, so that he might, through eternity, be contemplating these mighty—these stupendous illustrations of the Creator's infinite thoughts. When they arrived safely once more in England, it was to add an immense collection of fresh things to their museum, and also to that which they had built for the town of Killington. But in the following year, Victor set out with his family again, this time for Scotland, ultimately making their way northward till they passed the Trossachs, went on to the Western Islands, or Hebrides, and finally landed on the sacred Isle of Iona. And here it was that Victor was destined to make a discovery, and to clear up a mystery that had occupied his thoughts and attentions for some years.

One day they were out walking over the island, and coming near to a little burial-ground near the church, Edrick said—

"Papa, let us go in and see what sort of epitaphs they have on their tombstones."

The proposition was an interesting one; for Victor loved to read the inscriptions as much as his son. So they entered, and rambled about, finding many very old stones on which the inscriptions had been, but were now obliterated by time and the rains and frosts; while others were in the Gaelic tongue, and therefore unintelligible to them.

"I wish there were some in English," said Edrick. "One can't read these barbarous names and inscriptions: I fancy I should never learn such a language as they belong to."

"I fancy you will not find many, if any, of our English people buried here," said Victor. "However, we will look about and see."

There is a stone that must have been recently put up over there ; let's go and examine it!" and the party immediately proceeded to do as Victor suggested. At the same time a gentleman, in the clerical garb, was entering the burial-ground from an opposite point, though they did not observe this for a moment or two. The tombstone had evidently been put up very recently ; and, moreover, there was a garland of flowers—wild flowers—strung round it, as we often see in our own village cemeteries in England—little proofs of the love and veneration of the surviving friends. There was only a short inscription on the stone—a large blank space being left beneath, as if with the intention of adding, at some future date, a new epitaph. And this was what they read :—

"ALFRED BLANK,
A self-exiled man ; who
for
the love he bore to
his

erring but repentant Wife,
consented to live with her
in

this island, so that she might be saved
from again falling into
temptation.

This stone is raised in token of the deep affection of his
Widow, who found him faithful in *his*
love, so long as life remained."

"You seem interested in that inscription, my friend," said a voice behind them at that moment. Victor turned suddenly round, and beheld the clergyman of the parish by his side.

"I am, sir," was the reply. "I am wondering what it means."

"I thought so. It is a strange story, but a deeply-affecting one. One of those instances of conjugal affection which one could wish were more general."

"You make me anxious to hear the history of this epitaph, sir," said Victor ; "and if I may be so bold as to ask this favour of you, I see you will oblige me, by your looks."

"Willingly," said the reverend gentleman, with a smile. "I said it was a strange story ; but I can give it you in a few words. About twelve months ago, a gentleman came down here with his wife, to take up his residence for ever, or, at least, so long as they lived. His original place of abode had been near London. His wife, as he told me in confidence, had been a victim to the terrible power of strong drink. She had nearly been lost through it, body and soul. But she repented. His love clung to her through all, and when she begged him to forgive her, and take her to some place where she could not obtain the poison that had so scathed her, he willingly exiled himself to this island for her sake, because he heard that here intoxicating drinks were not permitted to come. He was a singularly good man—idolising his wife, and clinging to her till death. She seemed to have suffered much, and fallen very low ; but she is now a most holy woman—deeply repentant for the past, and anxious to help in every

good work. About two months ago, and a month after his death—for Mr. Blank has passed away to his reward—she had this stone put up, and that vacant space left to place her name in, when she lays beside him; for she intends never to leave the island. I may say that I have not a member of my congregation and church whom I more highly respect, or have more confidence in than her. It appears that she has friends in England who know nothing now of her whereabouts, or of the past years of her life; and she does not care to let them know, because she thinks it would disgrace them. Perhaps she may be right, perhaps wrong; however, she knows best, and it is a sign of her deep humility."

"It is a strange story," said Victor. "I feel great interest in this lady. Would it be asking too much if I inquire her Christian name?"

"Not at all. It is Emily, I believe; and Mr. Blank, I may add, was her second husband."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Victor, "it must be my own sister?" and he became deeply agitated.

The clergyman looked at him for a moment, then said, "I believe you are right, sir. There is a great similarity between your features and hers. If you would care to see her, and will accompany me, I will introduce you; for her house is not far from mine." And the whole party moved away for that purpose.

And Victor did meet his sister in that far-off Isle of Iona, a humble and pious woman, whom he might now be proud of. Need we say that he delivered up to her a knowledge of the immense fortune which he had received for her years before in India? or how that, when she had heard all he had to tell, she refused more than a few thousands of the wealth he had to offer her?

"You keep the rest, my brother," she said. "I have seen and learned that the inhabitants of these Western Islands are very poor. Two or three thousand pounds would be a great boon, if distributed judiciously amongst them. Let this be my task from my head-quarters here. For myself, my husband has left me sufficient for every want, and a little over. Keep the rest of Uncle George's legacy, and use it for me in England, especially in helping the fallen and the degraded. It is my wish. I shall, for my own part, never leave this island. Where my husband lies, there will I."

And she kept her word. But before taking her place at his side, she did such good in that dreary region of the earth, that thousands had reason to bless her memory; and when she died, her mortal remains were attended to their last resting-place by crowds of persons who had come over from the other islands to attend at the funeral. I believe that had she lived in the former ages, she would have been spoken of as St. Emily Blank, and enrolled in the army of Catholic saints. As it was, the people spoke of her for years after as little less than one.

And this was the last journey that Victor and Ellise ever took out of England. But on their return to their own country, they were to make a stranger discovery than this had been. Let us now see what it was.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

THEY were home again by Christmas time. And in that year Victor had planned to have a perfect festival—a time of rejoicing that should surpass anything that they had ever done before. The money which Emily Blank had left to his care for the poor would contribute something handsome, from its bulk, towards doing the thing in a splendid manner for the needy people around him; and both he and Ellise felt that they must make as many happy as possible—especially as the winter threatened to be an unusually severe one, and great distress had already been felt in all parts of the country. He would have liked to have sent bonny Christmas boxes to all the poor people in the three divisions of the kingdom; but it would have needed the wealth of a Croesus to do that. He must therefore be content with piling up stacks of wood and logs at the door of many of his less-provided brethren; in sending bedding and warm clothing, some books for the season, toys for the children (for he believed in making the children happy in their own way), and large stores of creature-comforts for the building up of their material frames. His own residence had also been fitted up with extra care and magnificence (I don't mean extravagance), with large masses of laurel, and holly, and mistletoe, and chrysanthemums intermixed. The Killington band was ordered to be in readiness to play every night at twelve o'clock, for a fortnight. A large copper in the kitchen was employed for some days in boiling gigantic puddings (plum, of course), for the express purpose of sending large slices, hot, with other accompaniments of a Christmas dinner, to the *old* people, who would thereby be saved the trouble of preparing for themselves. The guests invited on this occasion to share in his hospitality, consisted entirely of those whom he loved and respected most highly—just such friends and relatives as he could find room for, and with whom he could make free, and know how to amuse for the fortnight they were to stay at his house. Mrs. and Miss MacNeile, the Marsdens, his brother Thomas and *his* wife (this being the first time that we have thought of mentioning her), and his friend and museum curator, Mr. Tanks. And as they arrived and began to make themselves at home, so did Victor proudly and thankfully rejoice with his good wife, that God had given him such an opportunity of once again scattering round him the happiness of a true English gentleman and Christian's Christmas. But the guests had all arrived, and were congratulating each other on their good looks, and the rich treat in store for them during the next two weeks, when the sunlight became hidden by clouds from a heavy bank that had all the morning been making as though it intended to come up at its earliest convenience; and in a

very short time more a few heavy flakes of snow began to fall. But the *few* became *many*, and the *many* *more*; and at last it snowed over hill and dale, on towns, and cottages, and gardens, and frozen ponds, and half-frozen streams, till everything was covered very deeply, and people could scarcely have travelled very safely, even if they wanted; and when night came on, it was still snowing; so that some people predicted that they would have to dig themselves out of their houses in the morning, if only to attend to the cattle in the farmyards and stables. But before the morning (Christmas morning) lots of things happened at Victor's residence ("Bowallah Villa," as he called it).

"Now then," said Victor; "we are all here, I believe, at last; and before we do anything towards our own enjoyment, let us kneel down and praise God for what he has given us, and ask him to sanctify our merry-makings; so that we may not be guilty of the sins which Job's children were, when feasting in their houses, before the calamities came upon them. And let us not forget the poor, whom we cannot help, but whom we can ask God to aid."

And in obedience to the suggestion of their host, the whole party did kneel down—Victor leading the little devotional exercises. But they had scarcely risen from their prayerful position, when a knock at the hall door—a timid sort of knock, as if the knocker was shivering with cold, and was afraid to exert itself overmuch—was heard. Victor himself hastened to the door, because he knew the servants were busy below; and when he opened it, he almost started with affright; for there, before him, in a ragged, miserable garb, pale and attenuated, and nearly half frozen, stood a man, prematurely old, and yet bearing in his countenance features that seemed very familiar to our hero, though he could not at the moment say where he had seen them. The man looked for a moment at him, as if afraid to speak, or at least, too full of grief—for he had begun to weep; then he said—

"Do you not know me, Victor?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bancroft, "I feel sure I have seen you somewhere. Come in, out of the cold, by all means."

"I must be changed then, as I thought I was!" murmured the man. "But I should have known you anywhere, if I had met you even in Africa, for your features are not much altered."

"Quickly! tell me, who are you?" said Victor, excitedly; for a sickening feeling had taken hold upon his heart—a strange thought had come to him, as if by necessity.

"Then, you do not know your brother Francis, whom you have thought all these years to have been lost at sea, I suppose?"

"Francis! is it possible? But there can be no mistake. Why, where have you been all these years? for we did hear that your vessel had been lost at sea, and you drowned by the upsetting of the boat in which some of your party had taken refuge. But come in. I am glad you are back, though apparently from the grave!" And he led the new-found brother into a private apartment, and called Ellise. What a surprise it was for her! But how strange, that for all these years they had never heard a word about the supposed dead brother. How could it be that he had not communicated with them before? But he was too exhausted to say much just then. He only for the

time told them that he had returned to England about a fortnight before, having recently come from a long and dreary slavery among the Tuaricks of the great African desert, from which he escaped, after a series of terrific dangers and sufferings. He had landed in Liverpool, and begged his way up the country, living and sleeping as best he could till he might find out, or hear of the whereabouts of his relations and friends, from whom he might hope to get relief. Of course he had made his way first to the place where his parents had originally lived, and where he learned of their death, and other matters connected with the family. But, as he was told that his brother Victor still lived in Killington, and, as the people thought who told him, was doing well, having made a fortune abroad, he resolved at once to walk to that town, though it was another hundred miles journey. The terrible life of suffering which he had endured in Africa had greatly broken up his constitution ; but the contrast of an English temperate climate had so far restored his vigour, as to enable him to do what otherwise would have been impossible. And there, at last, he was ; met by a brotherly welcome, and at a season when the pleasure of his new condition should a little atone for his former sufferings. They set food before him, Victor rapidly sketching out for him the account of George Mattingly's legacy, and telling him about the family history since he last saw any of them, and concluding in these words, "When uncle George had settled on the way in which he would apportion his wealth among us, he gave me a double portion, no less than fifty thousand pounds. I don't know why I should have been chosen to inherit this sum more than another. I felt at the time that uncle Daniel should have had it, not I. However, I now feel, dear Francis, that that portion of wealth was given me, by Providence, in trust for you, against the time that you returned to require it. And I now most freely and gladly (and dear Ellise will concur with me as willingly) proceed to declare that after to-morrow, and when we can first attend to business for a short time, I will take steps to immediately transfer the money into your hands."

"But what am I to do with so much ? I don't want it," said Francis Bancroft. "I am not married ; I feel that I am a broken-down man. I may not live very long on earth. All I care for now is to spend the remnant of my days in quiet. Let me be with you, and I am content to be dependent on your bounty."

"You shall live with us by all means," said Victor. "We will never again part with you this side of heaven ; but we insist on you taking what we think is justly your own."

"Well, if it must be so, I suppose I must submit. I shall leave it to your son, if I go first, so it will not matter much. And you must help me to use it rightly, as you would have done, had you retained it. Ever consider me as your banker, if you wish for extra means of doing good. I hope I shall be able, from my long acquaintance with the country, to assist you with any information you may require about the natural productions of Africa—as no doubt you have things from there. I have brought (for I always thought of you, in the greatest of my miseries) some few little things in the way of shells and insects. I have carried them about me for a long time, and

here they are." And the speaker produced a little rough box in which Victor found some insects and other things that were entirely new to him, and over which he rejoiced—prizing them the more because his brother had brought them. And he truly found him a help in after times, when Francis would tell him about the habits of many species which he had possessed for years, though he knew little about them, not having been in Africa. But after the new-found brother had refreshed himself with food, and felt better, Victor had him up stairs, and proceeded to array him in a better garb, and to give him means of washing and making himself presentable to the company below, while Ellise went back to them, and acquainted them with the wonderful discovery which had just been made. What a day of rejoicing that was—a day doubly to be thankful for! How great and sincere were the congratulations and expressions of sympathy which Francis Bancroft received. As he said afterwards, could the Tuaricks, who had held him so long in a vile captivity, and treated him so contemptuously, have seen him then, how astonished they would have been; the contrast was so exceedingly unexpected and wonderful. And when evening closed in, and the curtains were drawn, and the Christmas-eve had commenced, instead of occupying their attention by any games or other amusements, they unanimously installed Francis in the easy-chair of honour, and asked him to relate to them the history of his adventures in the state of Barbary, and in the great Zahara desert of Africa. I only wish I had space left to give you even an abridged account of the strange things he told them at that time, of the terrible wild life of captivity he had for years endured. Unfortunately, I can only sum up his narrative in a very few words, by saying that, after running away to sea (this was when he was fifteen years of age), the vessel he sailed in was bound for Morocco, with a miscellaneous cargo. Great storms came on when they got near the coast, and drove them out of their course for days together. Then the currents changed, and they were at last in a terrific hurricane cast on shore, a sandy waste extending for hundreds of miles on either side of them. The ship broke up. They were then almost without provisions, till at length the native (the Tuaricks) tribes came down upon them, murdered all but two or three including himself, plundered them and the wreck too, and finally drove them before them like cattle into the interior of the desert; subjecting them to such a course of cruelty—the women proving even worse than the men—that all but Francis died of fatigue and ill-usage. After this, being a Christian, and his captors Mahometans of the most fanatical type, his life became one great burden of slavery and torture. For years he was compelled to wander where they wandered, being reduced to perform the most menial offices, and often, when ready to sink with sickness and fatigue, stimulated with brutal blows and other cruelties. Twice was he tempted to make away with himself. Three times did his attempts to escape become frustrated by the vigilance of his inhuman captors; but the hope ever remained strong upon him that he should get away at last. And at length he did, by what means it would take too long to relate. He reached, more dead than alive, the country of Dates, penetrated into Morocco, by crossing the Atlas Mountains, and at last,

to his great joy, reached the city of Tangier. From thence he at length escaped in a French ship to Gibraltar opposite, where he met with a generous-hearted captain of an English brig, who brought him home to Liverpool, giving him a little money to last him a part of his journey up the country. During the years of his African captivity, he had traversed most parts of the great desert, in one direction nearly to Timbuctoo, in another to Fezza kingdom, and in a third almost to Algiers. This was his history, as far as space permits me to tell it.

What more shall I say of that Christmas gathering, but that the presence of the African traveller increased tenfold the joys of those festivities which had begun so auspiciously, and which they kept up a fortnight beyond New Year's Day, though it was not originally contemplated to do such a thing?

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT LAST.

BUT the end comes at last, as the end of all things must come—the end of life, with its sufferings and its joys—the end of nations, with their rise and decay—the end of time itself—the end of evil, of everything, perhaps, save man's future of happiness, God's love, and eternity, which three things shall never end. Of late, life had seemed to Victor to become very solemn and important. At times (and these often occurred) he felt as if much remained for him to do, and yet so little time was left to do it in. He was not old—he had scarcely got into the prime of life—of the orthodox fourscore years existence; but he knew from some intuitive perceptions—had known for years—that he would not live to be an old man; and these feelings were now strongly influencing his mind, urging him to do every earthly duty with his whole heart, as if aware that he might be interrupted in the very midst of work by death. There were many mournful thoughts, at intervals, coming into his heart, and often sapping the foundations of his peace—the sense of his own utter unworthiness—of his failure in doing as much good as he felt God intended him to have done. Each day a cry of mental anguish would force itself almost to an utterance, “How unprofitable I have been! Can it be possible that I shall ever reach heaven? for when I look back on the past, and consider my errors, they affright me, and I can scarcely feel that, with the aid of Him who hath died for me, I can expect to be admitted as one of the host of those pure spirits that inhabit the celestial world.” Verily, our hero's heart often sank beneath the agonising thoughts that would come up within him, and take away his hope, and his faith in the truthfulness of his God. His mind continually suggested that he had lived a selfish and a comparatively frivolous life; that there could be nothing in him to render him at all able to inherit the promises of the Morning Land. Said he, “I pierce the veil of time with curious eye, seeking to read my future beyond, and every page of that future life seems dark, and growing darker still. In a short time I *must* go away, never to return. My eternal destiny is fixed irrevocably when that time comes—where shall I be?—how situated? Happy and saved; or lost amidst the outer darkness of a state where love and hope cannot come? I long to

join with the armies of heaven who reverently ascend the countless steps of that great temple of knowledge and bliss, whose top-stone is God, and my heart says, No; thou hast failed in thy work. Thy life hath been profitless, and for ever must thou cower dismally amid the ruins of the fallen ones; thou must only hope to lay for ever among the sherds of the marred and broken vessels, to herd with dethroned monarchs and fallen stars. There can be no ever-growing light for thee; for thou art only fit for the darkness that ever groweth deeper and blacker through an illimitable reign of night!" Many of these were probably only the promptings of malicious spirits—beings that were already in that darkness which they spoke of to him; but they gave him much anguish, nevertheless, till he laid hold upon that cheering fact, "It is not in me at all, but in thee, my Saviour, that my hope and salvation rests; therefore, the sun shines into my soul again, and I will hope in him who can be the only source of hope." But there were other things that gave him anxiety. Ellise, though as cheerful as usual, and apparently not in worse health than she had ever been, according to the observations of other people, to his practised eye, was growing paler, and fading away. Victor's heart had clung so tenaciously to her for years—his love had grown with their years, and had become so almost supernatural in its character, that he dreaded the time when she might perhaps be taken from him, and he left to live alone, at least for a considerable period; and life would be so dreary without her. He had long hoped to die with her, or at least within a few days of her decease, so as only to be parted for a short period; but he feared that this aspiration might not be granted to him. Of course, he ought to have left the matter entirely in the hands of God, and be content with what He willed. But Victor was a very faulty, erring man, and therefore not able to fall in entirely with this view of the question, though he knew it was very wrong in him.

Poor Ellise! She was wasting away. For years she had been a sufferer; though few but herself and husband knew what she had endured. Life-long pain had been her inheritance, with a few short intervals of ease. But now the burden grew heavier. The vital energies were rapidly losing their vigour. A hectic flush, a painful cough, a failing frame, told Victor that his treasure was slipping from his grasp, and would soon be gone—for she did not improve on the means which he took for her restoration to health, *as she had formerly done*, and this was an ominous sign, and one which he could not but attach much significance to. His own health was as good as it ever had been; so that every indication was in favour of his continuing to remain for a long time yet on earth; but he would receive warnings very often, both as regarded himself and his wife.

One evening Ellise became very ill; and far into the night Victor watched over her. Then as he saw her fall into a calm slumber, he laid him down and slept too. But he was not long in this state before the visions, of which he had many of late, came to him, and he was more than ever able to realise a sense of the interior life which man lives synchronically with the earthly. Many things were said to him on that occasion, and much revealed; but what interested him more was a book that some spirit put into his hands. What the book was about, it matters not to us, though it did to him. But two of its pages were examples of what might be called spirit-writing—having doubtless a significance which time only could unfold, but which was deeply important to him. Imagine a page covered with broad, undulating, curved bands, from top to bottom. Imagine then each being divided into smaller bands, still curving in the same direction, and these last into countless myriads of still more minute curved lines—so fine that no human artist, with his

utmost skill and best instruments, could have produced the like—so thin that their diameter was less than that of a spider's web. Then consider them as being all written in gold that was prismatic, shining so brightly that at one angle of light it dazzled the eyes as much as the light of the sun. Then add to these lines words written in the brightest silver—the letters being beautifully formed, and scattered elegantly over the page of gold lines, and you have an idea of one of the pages of that book. The other was a design, not larger than our largest English coin, but containing thousands of pictures in miniature, illustrating all the contents of that book, and engraved apparently in a style that no human artist could have imitated, though his graver were microscopic in its operations. But as this passed away, some spirit told him that the world would see a terrible history during the next few months, or years at the most. And significant hints were given of mighty earthquakes in Europe, especially in Italy, in America, West Indies, and other regions of the earth; of wars in Europe that for some nations (the names of which he heard) would be more terribly desolating than anything they had ever yet endured; of pestilences so fearful in other countries, that again in a few cities the old terrors would be re-enacted, for there would be homes without owners, and scarcely living to bury the dead. And yet beyond all this there would be a glorious future for the world. At that moment, when his spirit seemed to be on the verge of fresh knowledge, a sound (a spirit sound) as of a cannon being fired at his ear, and he awoke, to see once again the beautiful shadowy, odyllic being whom he had so many times observed, rise in appearance from the body of his sick wife, and float away across the room, melting into the unseen air, in a moment or two afterwards.

The next day Ellise was better for a time; but so weak that she could hardly sit up in her bed. It was summer time, but the day was cloudy and chilly, and a deep feeling of depression and care rested upon both the invalid and her husband. She spoke of this to Victor, as the afternoon came on, and wondered why she should feel so mournful, and yet so full of an idea that something was going to happen that she should rejoice in.

"Dear Victor," she observed, "I can hardly help thinking that it indicates the near approach of a change for me. I have thought lately that I should not be long before I left the world. I have determined to bear up as well as I may to the last. But don't you think, although Dr. Bordman says there is nothing dangerous in my illness, that I shall not again get over it; that he knows it too, only will not tell us?"

"I am sure of it, dear Ellise," answered Victor; "and in accordance with what I have ever thought to be right, I cannot hide from you my own impression that you will not be long with me in this world. I dread that time; for I would rather die too, then. It will be a lonely world without you, for you have always been the light of my existence, and you grow more precious to me every day."

Ellise was a woman of few words on such subjects as that of death and the religious responsibilities resting upon the departing one; so that she only replied, "If it were not for you, dear Victor, I should be glad to go away and be at rest. However, if I go, I will wait for you in the other world; or perhaps come to you, and watch over you, and talk to you, visibly and audibly, if I am permitted."

"If you are permitted, and it will not do harm to me, I would be glad of this. But, my darling, let me ask you one solemn question, Are you quite ready to die? for I have been anxious about this for years. You know you have never given me the decided proofs that I would have gladly seen with respect to this important matter. And I do earnestly

desire that we may be together in eternity, and live, roaming the boundless plains and hills of heaven, a closer, purer unity, than we could on earth."

Ellise did not say anything—she was a reticent little creature on these matters; but as she placed her hand in his, and laid her head on his bosom so lovingly, while the tears started into her eyes, glistening like pearls down the thin cheeks of the still pretty face, he felt that all must be well. And when she bashfully admitted that she had ever thought about these things, though she could not talk of them, he rejoiced with hope that he had never realised so fully before. Within one hour of that time, and when she had given him instructions as to the disposal of certain little possessions which she wished might go to various friends, and while her son Edrick stood near, talking with her, and trying to amuse her while Victor attended to other matters, a change came on, sudden as a whirlwind. She had grown weak. The cough had begun to tear her frame violently, while spasms at the heart assisted the work of dissolution. Victor rushed in; the doctor was sent for in haste; but before *he* came, another visitor had been there. Up to this moment it had been cloudy and gloomy. As Victor drew the head of the dying wife to his bosom, and tenderly kissed it, he saw a happy smile steal gently over the pain-stricken features. She murmured that all suffering was gone then; she looked into his eyes words of a meaning that had a spiritual depth in it; and while Victor prayed for her happy transit into eternal life, the clouds of heaven moved suddenly away, and a glorious flood of sun-light blazed full upon them, revealing more of the unearthly beauty that was fast covering the pale, dying woman, and warming up the survivor's heart with a feeling akin to Paradise itself. Victor felt sure at that moment that holy presences were there. He could feel it. He knew by certain sensations that they were moving near him and his wife, and his heart felt very thankful; all life seemed concentrated in that moment. His thoughts were so multifarious and delicious in their tendency, that he almost seemed to be going away with Ellise in spirit, and to lose his connection with the material world. But he was recalled partly by the heavier pressure of his wife's form upon his bosom, and, looking very earnestly into her face, he saw that the spirit had fled—gone quite away with the visitor Death, who doubtless appeared to her as a messenger of angelic appearance, leading her to a brighter Presence up on high, and not in the form of the ghastly skeleton that is supposed to typify death.

Then the floodgates of Victor's heart burst open, and a torrent of tears coursed down his cheeks—his sorrowful solitude, that he had long anticipated, came upon him, wrapping him round like a garment, and showing him that with all his gifts, with all his spiritual as well as material privileges and endowments, he was still only a man—and a poor, frail, almost faithless being—unable to bow resignedly to the will of his God.

But days passed over, and they were preparing for the funeral. A glorious day it was—such a day as Victor said he should like to die on—for all Nature seemed to rejoice, and to tell the heart of her student of unrevealed glories which her Maker would yet manifest. Victor followed the remains of his beloved one to the grave—saw them interred, and the earth cover up all the visible parts of what had been so precious to him. Then he returned to his home, and began to think about his work for the future. And he thought deeply, and planned many things for others as well as himself. Edrick was by his side, reverently listening to him, and mentally resolving to help him all in his power, so as to supply the place, as much as a good son could, of the departed wife and mother. They lingered in deep conversation for hours, till the sun began to sink low in

the heavens, showing that night would soon be coming on. Then they rose up to leave the room, and take the afternoon meal, when an alarming faintness came upon Victor, and, reeling, he fell to the floor, almost insensible, and as pale as death. In one short moment his strength had left him, and he was as helpless as a child. Edrick, in great terror, raised him up, and tenderly led him to an easy-chair, where he soon grew better; but a dull pain at the heart remained, accompanied by a difficulty of breathing. Within a short time the thoughts of the past came crowding into his memory, so rapidly that his whole life, with all its panoramic events, was now presented before his mental vision as distinctly as if they had been delineated on the canvas of many pictures in a vast gallery of paintings. And then he saw so much, that the great horror came upon him again, as to his utter unworthiness of God's love, and his despair about the future. Most anxiously did he now reflect, that if this sudden illness were destined to be the last scene but one of his earthly life, could he expect, when that was over, that his spirit would really be in the promised land? Had he not all his life been living in self-deceit, building upon a false foundation? But something said to him, "Do you love your God? Have you hated sin for its own sake? Have you a pure conviction that the blood of Jesus was shed for *all men*, irrespective of their merits or demerits? Do you love that Saviour now, and desire to rest entirely upon Him?" "Yes," said Victor, aloud, "bless Him! I do rest entirely upon him, trusting in his all-clothing purity and holiness, and not in anything that I have done, on the supposition that it was good—for I abhor myself, as having led a life of utter unworthiness; and I wonder at the grace that can see anything in me to be loved at all!" With this Victor became inexpressibly happy and contented about the future. Much he said to Edrick that I have not time to write about; many arrangements were made that I need not refer to, most of them connected with the future of the young heir, both temporal and spiritual. Messages were sent to different relations and friends; and among them Mr. Bayle Johuson and Mr. John Carrington. Many gifts for the poor—proofs of his ever-anxious attention to their necessities; and then he prepared to think of nothing but the passage into the new life that he was assured could not be far off.

The sun was setting now. The heavens were arrayed in gorgeous beauty, the clouds tipped with ruby and sapphire tints on an amber ground, with resplendent rays diverging in every direction—and the whole looking like some scene in the heavenly world. Victor was taken in an easy-chair into the garden, by his own desire; for he wished, if he might, to die with these beauties before him. And the desire was gratified; for as he sat in ecstatic contemplation, an intense anticipation of the future began to flow into his soul, like an influx from the Holy Spirit, and all Nature began to reveal itself as being possessed of an occult beauty that only the spirit of man when passing from the body can fully understand; and as he felt the hand of his son in his own, and his eyes were fixed upon that sun-lit vision of loveliness, a change, slowly and surely, passed over him. The physical sight, perhaps, was dimmed, but the *true eye*—the eye of the soul—saw the earth and all its beautiful objects—not melt, perhaps, away of themselves, but resolve themselves into more beautiful scenes *that surprised even the man who had anticipated such wonderful revelations*, even as a beautiful picture of a dissolving view resolves itself insensibly into a fairer and stranger scene. There stood his wife—there the babe (but now grown into a lovely angel of mature figure) that had been born to them in early life, and left them so soon. Then father and mother, and many other dear friends and relatives of many generations, all came from the different spheres of the heavenly world to welcome him

to them, to the great empire of the universe, and to the universal God. And then the glory of his future destiny became so vivid, that he burst the bands that bound him to the body and the earth, and found himself in the *true* life, and the world that, though unseen by mortal eyes except in vision or thought, nevertheless exists in the very spaces that hold the material earth itself. In other words, Victor Bancroft had ceased learning the lessons of this lower life, and had commenced the study of a sublimer series. He was dead, as we are apt to say. *Let us add, that though dead, he yet liveth.*

One word in conclusion.

Reader,—I have not tried to write for you a sensation tale. My object has been to teach you a few lessons of life—some of them from the experiences of now living persons (that is, in A.D. 1864). Have I succeeded? You only know. With respect to the *spiritual experiences* of Victor, I have only to say that they are real facts—the majority of them—related exactly as they occurred to these same living persons, who know that their testimony is true. Perhaps it may be useful to state that he who has principally been subject to the manifestations recorded in the hundred and sixty pages of this book has never yet had the opportunity of witnessing any of those prominent and (he believes) trustworthy phenomena that we read of as occurring to all classes of persons, in all parts of the world, in the present age, and which come to the *thinking* part of us as signs of the near approach of a new dispensation, when man shall again hold converse with angels, and live with them, even upon earth, because He will have come whose right it is to reign, and shall have banished all sin, and consequently, all death and suffering from the fair earth, which must then be a part of heaven. Of a few other events in this book, I may only say, that if they have not yet happened to the individuals of whom I spoke, they probably will, in a more or less literal point of view.

Farewell, dear reader! God bless all our “lessons of life” to each of us. If we meet again, may it be with increased wisdom; if not on earth, may we commune together more perfectly in the Bright Morning Land.

ROBERT H. F. RIPPON.

THE END.