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THE WHITE ROSE OF
MEMPHIS

William Falkner

The White Rose of Memphis

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William C. Falkner

The White Rose of Memphis

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

For thirty-one years, this book has met popular favor, and a sale of *one hundred and sixty thousand copies*. Its sale now is steadily increasing, notwithstanding the worn condition of the plates.

This 35th edition, now printed from new plates, is offered, believing it will outlive its fifty-six years of copyright.

But few works of fiction are accredited with such favor, or with such extensive circulation.

CHAPTER I

“SPEAK it out, captain; I know by your looks you have something to say, and I am full of curiosity to hear it.”

“Very true, my dear fellow; I have at last hit on a scheme which I think will prove very profitable, and will be glad to take you in as an equal partner.”

“Glad to hear it; I am ready for anything to make an honest living.”

“I have chartered the best boat on the river, and mean to put her to work on the line between here and New Orleans, and shall of course be her commander, and would be glad to have you take charge of the office, and we will divide profits.”

“I am truly grateful, captain, for the manifestation of confidence contained in your offer, and will gladly undertake the business.”

“Very good; then we may consider it settled so far. The next thing to be done is to get up a handsome advertisement, and meantime the boat must be re-painted, re-furnished and overhauled generally.”

“Give the necessary instructions as to these things, captain, and draw on me for my share of the expenses. By the by, what boat have you chartered?”

“The ‘Star of the West;’ but I will have her name changed, as I do not like that one. What shall her new name be?”

“I leave that to you, and trust you will select a pretty name; there is nothing like having a pretty name for a pretty boat. Shakespeare was decidedly mistaken when he thought that there was nothing in a name.”

“I agree with you there, Sam, and insist that you shall select the name.”

“No, no; but I’ll tell you what we will do: you write down three names, and I’ll write three; we’ll put them in a hat, and the first one drawn shall be her name.”

“All right.”

The names were written, placed in the captain’s hat, and Sam was requested to draw out one.

“What have you got, Sam?” said the captain.

“The prettiest name that ever was seen on a wheel-house. You might have given me a month to think about it, and I never should have thought of such a sweet-sounding name.”

“Well, what is it?”

“THE WHITE ROSE OF MEMPHIS.”

“I am truly glad to know that you think it a pretty name, and we will have the letters made in gold.”

“When can we be ready to start, captain?”

“It will take six weeks to get everything ready. We must manage to make a grand display when we start on our first trip.”

“You had better prepare the advertisement, then, and let it appear at once. Suppose we give a grand masquerade ball on board just before we start.”

“Capital idea, Sam; we’ll make the first trip one of pleasure, so as to attract the attention of the public. I’ll prepare the advertisement at once.”

The foregoing conversation was carried on between Captain Oliver Quitman and Samuel Brazzleman, two well-known and very popular steam-boat men of Memphis, whose experience in that business had won for them an established reputation for reliability and integrity.

The following advertisement appeared in one of the morning papers a few days after the conversation above related:

The new and splendid passenger boat, “White Rose of Memphis,” has been purchased by Captain Oliver Quitman, and will be put on the line between Memphis and New Orleans. She will

start on her first trip at 9 A. M., on May 1st, for the Crescent City, under the immediate command of her owner. Samuel Brazzleman will officiate at the clerk's desk, and Dave Halliman, at the wheel. The old reliable river man, Thomas Henderson, has agreed to take charge of the engine. Professor Frazzlebrains's splendid string band has been employed to make music for the amusement of the passengers. A grand masquerade ball will be given on board the "White Rose" on the evening of the 30th inst., and arrangements will be made to continue the amusement every night during the round trip. The grand saloon is eminently suited for dancing parties, and has been gorgeously furnished with everything necessary to make the passengers comfortable. It is the intention of the captain to make the first trip one of pleasure and amusement. Reduced rates will be given to excursion parties who may apply for them for the round trip.

This advertisement (as might be expected) created quite a sensation among the fair sex of Memphis, and added very greatly to the cash receipts of silk merchants and milliner shops; while it caused a corresponding shrinkage in the money bags of doting parents of marriageable daughters. Memphis was then, and is now, famous for the beauty of her women, and the muddiness of her streets. Cotton bales and pretty women seem to be a spontaneous production in and about Memphis, and, in spite of bad government and yellow fever epidemics, she is handsome and lively still.

"Well, Sam, old fellow, what do you think of the prospect?"

"Splendid! we have made a ten strike this time – every room has been engaged, and still they come."

"Is she not a beauty, Sam?"

"Never saw her match in my life. What's the time, captain?"

"Eight thirty, and time for the maskers to begin to arrive; by the by, here they come now. Has the music arrived?"

"Long, long ago, captain; everything is ready."

"Good, Sam; we must put our best foot foremost to-night; much depends on first impressions. Have you got plenty of wines and ice?"

"Oceans, oceans of all kinds."

This conversation occurred on board of the "White Rose," between Captain Quitman and Samuel Brazzleman, who were both rejoicing at the prospect of a remunerative trip, which was to begin on the next morning. Before nine o'clock the dazzling lights in the long saloon were streaming down on the vast crowd of maskers as they glided along through the mazes of the dance; while soft, sweet sounds floated out on the night air. Fantastic costumes, sparkling jewels, white, blue and red plumes, rustling silk, shining satin, soft velvet, sparkling diamonds, high-heeled boots, splendid music, the popping of champagne bottles, the hum of many voices, the merry laughter, the brisk and graceful movement of charming women, were all contributing to the dazzling show. All kinds of costumes were to be seen, old-fashioned and new, gaudy and plain. Mary, Queen of Scots, with her rich, royal costume of Scotland, all bedecked with sparkling diamonds, was dancing with Ingomar, the Barbarian Chief, with his savage beard reaching to his waist, and his top-boots all shaded with gold. The knight of Ivanhoe, with his glittering armor on, was dancing with the first maid of honor, who wore blue silk, and yellow mask. Don Quixote, the Knight of Salamanca, dressed in shabby but quaint armor, was jumping high and awkwardly, as he danced with the second maid of honor, who was a graceful dancer, dressed in orange-colored silk with pink mask. Henry of Navarre, with his black plume waving high above the throng, was marching up and down the saloon with the queen of Sheba leaning on his arm. Sancho Panza, with his clownish costume, was playing the clown to perfection, to the great amusement of the children. The Duke of Wellington and Napoleon were taking a mint julep at the bar, while George III. was quarreling with Sam Brazzleman because he wouldn't tell him the name of the lady who represented the Queen of Scots.

"Positively against our rules to divulge the names of parties in mask, without their consent," says Sam.

“Well, does she reside in Memphis?”

“Can’t answer; I tell you it is contrary to orders.”

“Is she going to New Orleans on this boat?”

“Yes.”

“Good! I’ll find out who she is, if I follow her to the other side of the world!” and the imitator of the defunct tyrant made his way to where the mysterious queen stood conversing with her Barbarian Chief.

“Who is that lady dancing with Ingomar?” inquired George III. of Ivanhoe.

“Do not know; wish I did.”

“I’ll give a hundred dollars to know who she is.”

“I’ll go you halves,” says Ivanhoe.

George III. and Ivanhoe were not the only ones who wanted to know who was personating the Scottish queen. It seemed to be a general desire among the male maskers to know who she was. It is hard to say what caused this general wish to know who she was. It might have been caused by a combination of circumstances. There appeared to be a desire on the part of the gentlemen to get near her. Was it the soft, sweet melody of her voice, or was it the queen-like grace of her movements? Perhaps it was the profusion of golden hair that fell, unconfined, beneath the quaint crown of sparkling jewels that graced her brow; or it may have been the little provoking, pretty foot that now and then made its appearance as she floated like a fairy over the floor. When she took her seat at the piano, and began to sing, while the rich, sweet voice rose until the saloon seemed to be filled with soul-stirring music, curiosity went up to fever heat, and George III. would have given his kingdom to know who she was. Ingomar, the Barbarian Chief, with his long, shaggy whiskers, stood near the queen, turning the music sheets as the song progressed, and occasionally stooping to whisper something in her ear, which she answered with a nod and a smile. As soon as the song was ended the knight of Ivanhoe requested Ingomar to present him to the queen. Ingomar in a low whisper asked her permission to present the knight of Ivanhoe, which was promptly granted.

“I have the honor, your Majesty, to present my distinguished and honorable friend, Sir Knight of Ivanhoe.” A graceful bow and the queen held out her little white hand, which Ivanhoe pressed to his lips.

“Sir Knight, we are delighted to know you. Shall we have the pleasure of your presence during our excursion to New Orleans?”

“I am profoundly grateful for your Majesty’s condescension, and shall be overjoyed at the privilege of making one of the party.”

“To-morrow being the first day of May, our festivities will commence, and it is our royal pleasure, sir knight, that you shall attach yourself to our court during the trip.”

“I cannot find language, my dear madame, to express my gratitude for the distinguished honor you confer upon me.”

“Partners for a quadrille,” rang through the saloon as the band struck up a lively tune. George III., the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon all made a dash toward the queen at once, each one anxious to secure her as a partner, but with a low bow and a sweet smile she turned to Ivanhoe, took his arm, and was soon gliding through the dance. The British King appeared to take his discomfiture rather hard, while Wellington looked somewhat chop-fallen; but Napoleon proposed that their sorrow should all be drowned in a bowl of punch, which was agreed to, and the trio marched to the bar to commence the drowning process.

“Devilish provoking,” muttered George III.

“What’s provoking?” says Wellington.

“That mysterious piece of humanity styling herself queen of Scots. I shall always hate masquerade balls after this. I don’t think they are respectable at all.”

“Come, come, your royal highness, you should not surrender at the first repulse; Ivanhoe has only gained a temporary triumph, and if you will come to the charge again with a brave heart, you may yet compel victory to perch on your banner.”

“Ingomar had a monopoly until Ivanhoe leaped into the arena and carried off the prize, and I advise you to show a bold front. Strategy won’t win in battles of love. If you expect to win, don’t attempt to make a flank movement, but come boldly up to the front. Remember that ‘faint heart never won fair lady.’”

“I don’t want to win a fair lady, or any other kind of lady, until I know who she is.”

“I guess you will find that out to-morrow, for she is going to New Orleans.”

“True, but I learn that she means to make the entire trip incog.”

“Impossible, sir, impossible; how can she remain on this boat two or three weeks without being recognized by some one?”

“That’s the question to be settled hereafter; she will have to play the game very cautiously, if she prevents me from finding out who she is. By the by, do you know who that savage-looking fellow is who personates Ingomar?”

“No, but you may be sure the queen knows him; did you notice how affectionately she leans on his arm, and how close she puts her mouth to his ear when she speaks to him?”

“Yes, to be sure I did; but she is now playing the same game on Ivanhoe.”

“Who the deuce is Ivanhoe?”

“I don’t know that either, and without meaning any discourtesy to you, I beg to say that I don’t care a copper to know who he is.”

“I hear that it is the intention of Ingomar and Ivanhoe to imitate the example of the queen by making the trip incog.”

“By all means let them do it; and I suggest that we three do the same, and keep our names concealed from them, and we shall have rare sport. Don’t you know that the ladies will die of curiosity if we conceal our names? Let us form a combination against them, look and talk mysteriously, and my word for it, propositions will be made for a treaty looking to a general disclosure of names and the discarding of masks.”

“Capital idea, my lord, and you may depend upon my hearty co-operation. As soon as the boat leaves the wharf to-morrow let the war begin.”

“Perhaps the captain will object to passengers going in disguise all the time.”

“No; he told me that the queen intended to make the entire trip in mask, and that the same privilege would be extended to all who desired to avail themselves of it.”

“Very good, very good; then the alliance, offensive and defensive, may be considered as ratified and confirmed.”

“Charge, Chester, charge! and on, Stanley on!” said Wellington, as he drew the cork from a fresh bottle of champagne.

“Screw your courage up to the sticking point, my gallant king, and with the emperor and duke at your back, move on the enemy, unfurl your banner, cry ‘havoc,’ and let slip the dogs of war. Confusion and discomfiture shall overwhelm our foes.”

“We must win the queen of Sheba to our side at all hazards, as I learn that she and her two maids of honor are going on the excursion.”

“That shall be your task, then – to secure her co-operation. See her at once, and if she will join us, we will have an easy victory.”

“You may depend on me for that,” said the counterfeit king, as he started on his recruiting expedition. “I’ll be back in a moment, and report progress. Meantime you and Napoleon mature the plan of the campaign during my absence.”

George III. soon returned with a favorable report: “Her Majesty presents her compliments to the emperor, and my lord the duke of Wellington, and will be much gratified to have them enrolled

as permanent members of her festive court, which will be convened on the hurricane deck at eleven o'clock A. M. to-morrow.”

“Now you have her message *verbatim*,” said the king, as he dove both hands into his pockets, with a self-satisfied look. “Won’t we have rare sport? won’t we make the enemy die of curiosity? We must organize thoroughly, and make a systematic siege, and if we don’t capture the entire party before three days, take my hat and hang it on the tallest wave that rises behind the ‘White Rose of Memphis.’ We must seem to ignore the other party entirely – look and talk as if no such party were aboard; drop mysterious hints – about things that never were heard of, speak of love-making that we could tell more about if we would. Let all these hints be carelessly dropped in the hearing of some one of the other party, and you may be sure that they will sue for peace and union before we reach New Orleans. Should any one of the other party ask questions (which they will be sure to do) shake your head, look mysterious, shrug your shoulders, and heave a mournful sigh. Do you think the world ever produced a woman that could stand that? Would you believe it, the queen of Scots’ first maid of honor is now half dead to know who I am? Can’t I see how she has been watching me for the last hour? I’ll capture her the first thing to-morrow and employ her as a spy in the enemies’ camp.”

At last the ball ended, the guests departed, save those who had engaged passage for the grand excursion, and they had retired for the night, to dream of the sport to be enjoyed on the morrow, while Captain Quitman paced proudly on the hurricane deck, with heart swelling with satisfaction at the pecuniary prospects before him.

CHAPTER II

The eventful and long-looked-for day on which the "White Rose of Memphis" was to start on her first trip had come at last, and a mighty stir, indeed, did that day produce on and under the tall, romantic bluff in front of Memphis. The morning was delightful, the atmosphere pure and invigorating, the sweet odor of fresh spring flowers was on the breeze, mingling with the soft notes of music produced by the band from the hurricane deck. The stars and stripes floated gracefully from the flag-staff, dark clouds of black smoke rose from the chimneys, a white cloud of steam struggled up through the black smoke and disappeared far above, innumerable drays rattled along the pavement, carriages thundered over the rocky road, carriage drivers swore at dray drivers, dray drivers returned the compliment with interest, in language not of a religious nature, deck hands sung "Dixie," cabin boys danced juber, chamber-maids darted hither and thither, apparently anxious to perform their duty, without the slightest conception of what that duty was. A villainous urchin, in the arms of his nurse, was making a heart-rending noise with a tin horn, and a passenger muttered something not taught at Sunday-school.

"Them's my sentiments to a T," said another man who had been annoyed with the tin horn.

As the hour drew near when the boat was to start the confusion increased. The pilot was at his wheel, the engineer was at his engine; Captain Quitman stood on the upper deck in front of the pilot house, looking happy, and feeling vastly important. Hundreds of men, women and children in holiday costumes stood on the bluff, shouting and waving white handkerchiefs to their friends on the boat. A mocking-bird in a cage on the boiler deck imitated every imaginable sound with his wonderful voice, while a parrot, perched on a pole near the clerk's office, kept crying, "Let her rip! let her rip, Sam!"

"How much steam have you got, Tom?" cried the pilot through his speaking-tube.

"One sixty, sir, and still rising."

"All right; blow off the mud valves and keep a good head; we must make a good run at the start."

"Time's up, Dave; let her go," said the captain. "Run her up to the mouth of Wolf, make a turn to the left, and then let her come down with her best speed."

"Let go the head line," cried the mate.

"Draw in the stage," says the captain.

"Go ahead on the larboard, and back on the starboard," cried the pilot to the engineer.

"Go ahead on the steward, and back on the cook-house," cries a mischievous little negro, who is dancing a jig in front of the pilot house.

The boat moves slowly up stream until a point opposite the mouth of Wolf river is reached, then makes a graceful curve to the left, and comes flying past the city with a speed never equaled by any other boat on that river. As the "White Rose" passed the last crowd on the bluff a tremendous shout rose from a thousand voices, which was answered by the throng of passengers who lined the deck of the boat. As the golden rays of the morning sun glanced down against the side of the boat, and played and danced with the painted glass of her cabin, a thousand dazzling streaks of light flashed back, presenting a sight of indescribable beauty. It was but a few moments until the boat passed round the bend below President's Island, and shut off from view the tall domes of the bluff city; but the fresh green foliage with which the tall trees were clothed presented a scene of beauty on which the beholders gazed with delight. As might have been expected, quite a sensation was created among the large crowd of passengers when a dozen or more men and women appeared on deck disguised with as many different and curious costumes. A murmur of dissatisfaction rose among some of the passengers, which threatened to produce trouble; but finally it subsided when the clerk announced the fact that all the maskers were well known to him, and that they were respectable people.

"How is your royal highness this morning?" said the Duke of Wellington, as he shook hands with George III.

“First rate, first rate, my lord. How is it with you?”

“Fine, fine, sir! Splendid day this! By the by, where is the emperor?”

“Here he is. Now let us commence the siege at once. I see her Majesty, the queen of Sheba, and her attendants, are waiting for us. The Scottish queen has marshaled her forces on the hurricane deck.”

“How is that?” demanded the emperor.

“They have all taken seats in a circle, and seem determined to continue the selfish plan. Now we will take seats at a respectable distance from them – just so as to be in hearing distance, and begin the battle according to our original plan. Our object is to so rouse their curiosity as to force them to come to our side, or in other words, to induce them to come and mingle with us. A little skillful maneuvering on our part, and the victory is ours.”

“Lead, lead, my gallant king! You shall be our commander in this fight. Take the queen of Sheba to the field, and the emperor and I will bring up the maids of honor, and then let the skirmishing begin.”

A canvas had been put up above the hurricane deck and seats arranged under it, in order to afford passengers an opportunity to view the grand scenery without being exposed to the rays of the sun; and this spot had been selected as the field of action. The queen of Scots and her party were seated in a circle, near the stern of the boat, wholly unconscious of the hostile preparations which were being made by the queen of Sheba and her adherents. Ingomar was entertaining the queen and the ladies of her court with an eloquent description of the burning of the steam-boat “Bulletin,” and the heart-rending scenes that were witnessed on that occasion. The queen of Sheba with her party was located about twenty feet from the spot occupied by the queen of Scots.

“Now,” said George III., making a low bow to the queen of Sheba, “what is your Majesty’s pleasure? What is to be the fun to-day?”

“Social conversation and enjoying the beautiful scenery will occupy us till luncheon, and when we have had enough of that, we will then form our plans for the future.”

“By the by,” said Wellington with a loud voice, evidently intended to attract the attention of the Scottish queen’s party, “have you heard the strange news?”

“No, no; what is it?”

“There are two detectives aboard in mask, on the look-out for the perpetrator of a diabolical murder that was committed near Collierville day before yesterday. They have tracked the man to this boat, and have satisfied themselves that he is aboard, and are prepared to arrest him. They have got a man spotted, and are going to take him off at Vicksburg.”

“That’s the best shot that ever was fired,” whispered Napoleon.

“See,” said the queen, “the shot has taken effect. They are all looking this way, and intently listening. They are dying to hear more. Give them another shot.”

“What were the circumstances of the murder?” inquired Napoleon, as he raised his voice and winked at Wellington.

“Oh, it was a most horrible and cruel murder – it was a love affair. The deceased was a young and pretty girl; she had loved not wisely, but too well. Poison was the means used to produce death.”

“There, there, Wellington,” whispered Napoleon; “let ’em rest on that a while. They have all been gradually moving this way. They can’t hold out much longer.”

“Let me throw one more shell into their camp,” whispered Wellington.

“All right; go ahead.”

“There is a skillful pickpocket aboard of this boat, and those who have money had better be on their guard. One passenger has been relieved of a purse containing five hundred dollars. The pocket was cut clean off, and so skillfully done that the owner knew nothing about it until his attention was called to it by a friend. I fear that our amusements will all be interfered with, and that we shall be compelled to lay aside our disguises, because, whoever he is, you may be assured he is in mask.”

“Good, good, Wellington!” said George III., in a whisper; “stop; you have got them completely demoralized, and we may safely wait for the result.”

“Oh, mercy on us!” exclaimed one of Queen Mary’s maids of honor, “we are in the midst of thieves and murderers! Didn’t you hear that gentleman say that a bloody murder had been committed, and that a gentleman had been robbed, and that both criminals were aboard of this boat? Who knows but what we shall all be murdered and robbed!”

“Don’t look toward them,” said Wellington; “the last shot has mortally wounded the last one of the party.” This sentence was whispered, so as not to be heard by the opposition.

Ivanhoe drew near Wellington and said: “Pardon me, sir, but I beg to inquire about this dreadful murder of which I heard you speak just now.”

Wellington shrugged his shoulders, and gave a deep sigh. “Horrible! horrible; must cruel! unprecedented! but that’s all I know about it.” And with a knowing wink at George III., Wellington observed: “Look at that beautiful little island there. See what delightful foliage. How splendid it would be to have a picnic on that nice green turf under such a cool-looking shade!”

“Oh, wouldn’t that be delightful!” said the queen of Sheba.

“We’ll have a picnic to-morrow,” said Napoleon. “The boat is going to take on a large lot of cotton just below Helena; and we will order the steward to prepare a picnic dinner, and we will have a dance, as well as a dinner.”

Ivanhoe bit his lip with vexation as he returned to his party no wiser than when he left it.

“Hold your hand over my mouth, else I shall be compelled to laugh out,” said the queen to her first maid of honor.

“Pray, don’t laugh,” cried the young lady; “it would cause them to suspect something.”

“What did you learn about the murder?” inquired the queen of Scots, as Ivanhoe returned to his seat.

“Nothing,” was the solemn reply. “They all seem to be an ill-mannered, ungentle crew, and, for my part, I am inclined to think they have been making sport of us.”

“I see through it all,” said Ingomar gravely. “They are offended because we did not invite them to mingle with us. For my part, I am unwilling to notice such silly conduct. I like amusement well enough, but it must be such as sensible people may engage in. Allow me to suggest that we move to another place and inaugurate a regular systematic plan to while away our idle moments.”

The suggestion was unanimously concurred in, and the entire party went to the front end of the boat, and soon were seated, leaving the other party overwhelmed with mortification.

“That is too bad!” exclaimed Napoleon; “we had won the victory, and lost it by all grinning at once. They have evidently seen our hand, and we have lost the game.”

“Suppose we invite the other party to join us,” said Ingomar. “If we expect to enjoy our trip, it would be advisable to dispense with the rigid rules of decorum and become acquainted with each other.”

“Your sentiments are generous and noble, sir, and are heartily approved; and with your permission I will invite the other party to join us.”

“Have I your permission, madame, to deliver the invitation?”

“Yes, and I trust it will be accepted.”

Ingomar approached the spot where the queen of Sheba and her party were seated, and with a dignified bow said: “I am requested by my royal mistress, the queen of Scots, to present her highest regards to your Majesty, and request the pleasure of your company at her royal court. She further requests me to beg you to bring all the ladies and gentlemen of your party with you, in order that a friendly union may be entered into, for the better enjoyment of such festivities and pleasures as may be jointly considered worthy of well-bred and intelligent people.”

“Right noble and worthy chief, most eloquently hast thou delivered the message of thy royal mistress, and it would be extreme rudeness for us to refuse to accept it. Therefore, we request you

to convey to her Majesty our most distinguished regards, and inform her that her generous offer is accepted, and that it will be our pleasure to visit her festive dominions.”

“My royal mistress will be delighted with the news.” And as he said this he raised the queen’s hand to his lips, then turned and delivered his message to the queen of Scots.

“I am going to laugh,” said the first maid.

“Laugh as much as you please, now; it can do no harm; we are forever disgraced; we are beaten, overcome, captured!” said Wellington, as he clinched his fists with vexation.

“Is this the victory that we have been fighting for?”

“I call it a complete victory,” said the queen. “Was it not the object of our plan to force them to invite us to join them, and have they not yielded? You may be sure they would never have given us the invitation had it not been for the bait which we threw out to them.”

“I agree with your Majesty there,” said George III. “We have accomplished the object for which we contended, and now let us join their party, and make ourselves agreeable.”

“Be it so, then,” replied Wellington, as he offered his arm to the queen and led her to where the other party were seated.

The two queens seemed to enter into a contest as to which should be considered most polite. The graceful bowing, the gentle hand-shaking, the sweet smiling, the high compliments, and general bearing, were such as might have been witnessed between Queen Victoria and the Empress Eugenie when they first met.

“Now,” said Ingomar, addressing the two queens, “as I understand the object of this excursion to be one of pleasure and amusement, permit me to suggest that we organize ourselves into a sort of committee of the whole, and agree on some plan by which each hour of the day shall be furnished with some kind of innocent sport.”

“We think the idea a good one, sir,” replied Queen Mary, “and we appoint you and Ivanhoe as a select committee, whose duty it shall be to draft a set of rules or by-laws for the government of our court. We allow you one hour for the performance of that duty; meantime we will amuse ourselves by a promenade in the saloon.”

Promptly at the expiration of the hour the queen ordered her court to convene on deck in order to hear the by-laws read.

“We are now ready to hear what you have written,” said the queen, speaking to Ingomar.

“We have the honor to inform your royal highness that we have performed the duty assigned to us, and are now ready to report.”

“Read the report, my noble chief.”

Ingomar read as follows: “Whereas certain ladies and gentlemen of the good city of Memphis, State of Tennessee, have embarked on an expedition of pleasure, on board of the steam-boat known as the ‘White Rose of Memphis,’ and whereas the aforesaid ladies and gentlemen are desirous of contributing as much as they can to the happiness and pleasure of their comrades thereby, and by means whereof they expect to obtain innocent enjoyment for themselves and their associates, therefore be it remembered that on this, the first day of May, the following rules and regulations have been adopted, and the honor of each member pledged that said rules and regulations shall in all respects be complied with and faithfully obeyed, and that any one who shall be guilty of a willful violation of any one of the rules shall be considered disgraced and unworthy to be a member of this association, and shall be excluded therefrom:

“RULE 1st. Her Royal Highness, the queen of Scots, shall reign as the grand sovereign of this association.

“RULE 2d. It shall be the duty of the reigning sovereign to determine what shall be the plan of amusement for the day, and give orders accordingly.

“RULE 3d. No disrespectful language to be used by any member of this association.

“RULE 4th. The right of each member of this association to remain in disguise is recognized, and no one shall be questioned as to his or her real name without his or her consent.

“RULE 5th. None but harmless sport shall be proposed or indulged in.”

“We think the rules very good,” said the queen, “and we now propose their adoption. All who favor the rules make it known by saying aye. It is unnecessary to call for the nays, as the vote is unanimous in the affirmative – and the rules are adopted.”

“Well,” said Ingomar, “your Majesty will issue your commands for the day. What shall be the programme?”

“It is our royal pleasure that each member of the association shall be required to relate a story consisting of events, the truth of which are to be vouched for by the narrator. I dare say that each one will be able to tell something that will be both amusing and instructive. Love stories would be preferable; but no one shall be restricted as to that. Personal reminiscences of the party who may tell the story would be listened to, doubtless, with attention and pleasure. Therefore, it is our royal command that the Barbarian Chief, Ingomar, shall now proceed to relate a story.”

“Ingomar! Ingomar! Ingomar! a story by Ingomar!” cried every one.

“It would have been more to my liking to have listened to others, may it please your Majesty, but as it would be rank treason to disobey your command, I shall endeavor to comply, by relating the history of transactions, many of which came under my own observation in and near the city of Memphis. The substance of the story would no doubt be very interesting were it well told, but I greatly fear I shall bore you all by my awkward manner of telling it. But there will be a consolation in knowing that if you should become wearied of it, you can command me to stop, which order I beg to assure you I would more gladly obey than any other you could give.”

“If your manner of telling the story is as modest and well spoken as the apology, we shall be very much delighted, I assure you. Therefore we command you to proceed.”

“As the occurrences which I am about to describe all have an intimate connection with the city of Memphis, and as many of the persons who played prominent parts in the story are now residing there, I think it proper to inform my audience that the names used are fictitious. I could not for a moment think of parading the real names of the actors before the public without their consent.”

“The idea is commendable, sir, and only serves to increase our anxiety to hear the story. Therefore we again command you to proceed.”

“There’s the gong for luncheon,” cried Napoleon as he sprang to his feet. “Postpone the story until after refreshments.”

“That’s a splendid idea!” said Ingomar. “It will give me time to collect my ideas.”

“Very well,” said the queen. “We will assemble here immediately after lunch, to listen to Ingomar’s story.”

Ingomar led the queen of Scots to the saloon, while Wellington offered his arm to the queen of Sheba, and the party went down to lunch.

CHAPTER III

The arrangements which Captain Quitman had made for the accommodation of the large party of excursionists were of the most costly and liberal character, showing that neither labor nor money had been stingily expended. The spacious saloon had been gorgeously decorated by an experienced artist, while innumerable historical incidents and poetical scenes had been painted on the snow-white surface of the wall in front of each state-room. Three scenes in “Mazeppa” appeared first on the left as you entered from the front. The first picture represented the beautiful wild steed in the act of making a plunge forward, while Mazeppa is being bound to his back. The second scene represented the foaming steed as he bounded through the forest, with the large gang of wolves in pursuit; and the last showed the dying steed stretched on the ground, while a flock of vultures covered the surrounding space, ready to begin the work of destruction. The artist had executed the work so skillfully that one might almost imagine that he could hear the horse’s hoofs as they thundered against the earth, and distinguish the hideous howl of the savage wolves. The next painting represented Achilles driving his chariot round the walls of Troy, dragging the helpless body of Hector by the heels, while the beautiful wife of the dead hero stood weeping on a distant tower, as she witnessed the horrible cruelty. Then a little farther down on the same side, we see Cleopatra seated in her magnificent gondola, gorgeously clad in her royal robes, surrounded by her officers and slaves, while she sails over the glittering surface of the water, where she goes to conquer a mighty warrior with her irresistible charms. We come next to a ludicrous scene representing Gulliver on the island of Lilliput, standing erect with his legs placed far apart, while twenty thousand Lilliputian cavalry, with the king and queen at their head, are marching between his huge legs. A beautiful representation of the burial of De Soto in the Mississippi river appeared farther on. Many other thrilling scenes appeared which we cannot spare time to describe.

So the guests marched into the spacious saloon. Professor Scatterbrains’s band played a national air, the soft, sweet sounds filling the room with a delightful harmony. The gorgeous display of costly table-ware that adorned the festive board was such as one might expect to behold at a king’s palace. Massive goblets of solid silver, tureens, pitchers, castors and fruit stands of shining gold, large china vases, filled with fragrant flowers, arranged in pairs from one end of the table to the other, while gilded china imported from the East, of various colors, green, yellow and blue, wrought in quaint but beautiful patterns, covered the snow-white cloth. Two beautiful thrones for the especial use of the two queens had been erected at the head of the table, one on the left, the other on the right, handsomely decorated with pink velvet cushions and canopied with blue cloth, richly studded with stars of silver and gold. The charming picture that met the eyes of the delighted guests caused an exclamation of delight to escape from the lips of many a beautiful belle, as they filed into the saloon.

As soon as all the passengers were seated, the captain, waving his hand toward the vast crowd by way of commanding silence, said:

“My young friends, if you wish to please me, and enjoy this excursion, I hope you will lay aside all feelings of restraint, become acquainted with each other, and engage in such innocent sport as is calculated to amuse and instruct. Julius Cæsar said:

“Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men who sleep o’ nights.
Yon’d Cassius has a lean and hungry look.
He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.’

“Now, my young friends, the sequel proved that Cæsar was right in his dislike of the lean and hungry Cassius; give me friends who laugh and grow fat – men and women who can throw off the

dull cares of life, and condescend to be pleasant and happy on occasions like this. There are times when man should be serious, but there are also times when he should be social and sportive. I have spent money and labor freely in order to complete the arrangements for the comfort and pleasure of my guests, and it will gratify me greatly to know that I have not made a failure. I was gratified when I heard of the admirable plans which your Majesty has adopted in order to amuse and entertain your loving subjects. Indeed, sir, I am delighted to know that our little scheme meets with your approbation; we thought it would afford innocent amusement, as well as profitable food for thought. The Barbarian Chief has kindly consented to entertain our party by the relation of a story which is to be the first of a series to be told during our trip.”

“I hope,” said Scottie, “that the noble Barbarian Chief will tell us all about Parthenia, the beautiful little captive whose irresistible charm subdued and tamed Ingomar, and led him with the rosy chain of love from the barbarian camp to the walks of civilization, converting a heartless savage into a fond and gentle lover. Oh, how I should like to capture such a hero! it would be such fun to tease him until he began to rave, and then to soothe him with sweet whispers from the soul. I would make him gather flowers for me, and then talk to him about ‘Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one;’ and I would enjoy such sport so much!”

“For my part,” said the queen of Sheba, “I would much prefer to listen to a patriotic story, such as the ‘Scottish Chiefs,’ or ‘Thaddæus of Warsaw;’ I admire those noble-hearted heroes who are always willing to die for their country, but manage somehow not to do it. The heroic Thaddæus of Warsaw was very anxious to sacrifice himself for his country, but finally took a more sensible view of it, and fled to England, and married Mary Buford, the great heiress.”

“I prefer love stories,” replied Scottie; “give us something like ‘Henrietta Temple,’ ‘Alonzo and Melissa,’ ‘Foul Play,’ or ‘Little Dorrit.’”

“I prefer ‘Gulliver’ or ‘Crusoe,’” said George III. “I do not think I could command sufficient patience to listen to such a love story as ‘Henrietta Temple.’”

“Give me something like the ‘Talisman,’ or the ‘Heart of Midlothian,’ and you may count on securing my undivided attention,” said Ivanhoe.

“Permit me to make a suggestion to my young friends,” observed Captain Quitman, “which I have no doubt will contribute greatly to your pleasure. We have a young gentleman aboard whom I consider an excellent Shakespearean reader. I had the exquisite pleasure of hearing his rendition of ‘Hamlet’ one evening at a social gathering in Memphis, and I have no doubt he would consent to gratify his friends by repeating it to-night.”

“We would be more than delighted if you could prevail on him to give us an entertainment of that sort this evening,” rejoined Queen Mary.

“If we can be so fortunate as to organize a troupe of poetical readers,” observed the Duke of Wellington, “it would instruct as well as amuse our friends. If such a scheme should be desirable (and I am pleased to think it would), I can produce a young lady who can repeat ‘Lalla Rookh’ from memory; and I have no doubt that there are many others aboard who could give us some excellent readings of poetry.”

“We commission the duke and Captain Quitman as our agents to organize a troupe,” rejoined Queen Mary; “and our programme will be to listen to Ingomar’s story this evening, and, at night, to assemble in the saloon and hear the recitations.”

“I shall not be able to complete the relation of my story this evening,” said Ingomar.

“That will make no difference,” replied the queen; “we will be entertained by our Barbarian Chief during the day, and the poetical readings during the night.”

“That will be a most excellent plan,” said Captain Quitman; “variety is the spice of life you know.”

“Yes, and I beg to remind your Majesty,” exclaimed the duke, “that the opportunity to shake the fantastic toe must be provided for.”

“Of course,” ejaculated Captain Quitman; “that is a consummation devoutly to be wished. We can find plenty of time for that. Dancing hours will be from seven till nine, and the literary exercises will commence at nine, and continue until Morpheus takes command.”

“I wonder what kind of a story the Barbarian Chief is going to dish out to us,” said George III. “Will it treat of war, love, or politics; will it tell of battles, and blood, or will it describe sweet birds, sweet flowers, and sweet love?”

“It would be better, perhaps, to tell the story first, and answer your questions afterward,” replied Ingomar. “I shall tell it under protest. The materials which are at my disposal, if skillfully handled, would construct an interesting novel; but I am not vain enough to imagine that I can weave them into anything like a good story. My life has been crowded with many thrilling incidents – I have tasted the bitterest dregs in fortune’s cup, and I have sailed on the smooth ocean of pleasure; and as her Majesty has commanded me to entertain her guests with a story, I shall confine myself to a truthful history of scenes in which I have been an actor. In order to save time, I shall group the most prominent incidents, and set them down in the city of Memphis and vicinity, taking the liberty to change the venue of an important criminal case from New York to the Bluff City. If you should ask me by what authority I venture to change the venue from one State to another, I would answer by referring you to the numerous instances where the United States Courts have exercised the arbitrary power to do such things. Shall I, as a champion story teller, regularly commissioned by a mighty and beauteous queen, be denied the privileges claimed by a little United States Court? I say the venue is changed to Memphis, and when I begin to describe the interesting trial, I trust no one will be so inquisitive as to examine the records, with a view to contradicting my truthful history. If I choose to introduce my *dramatis personæ* under *nom de plumes*, I hope my friends will raise no objections, because, while I claim that the acts of public men constitute public property, I am afraid to take too much liberty in that respect, lest I should endanger my valuable person.”

“We command you to cease your continuous talk about preliminaries,” observed Queen Mary, as she waved her hand impatiently toward Ingomar; “no one shall be compelled to listen to the tale. Tell the story, and let us judge for ourselves as to its merits.”

“I obey your Majesty’s commands,” replied Ingomar.

“Perhaps,” said Captain Quitman, as a quizzical smile played on his handsome countenance, “our friend Sancho Panza would contribute something of an intellectual character to our programme to-night.”

“Maybe he will do us the honor to become a member of our literary club,” said Scottie, as she courtesied to him.

“I beg to assure you, madame, that you honor me too highly, but at the same time permit me to say that I have no doubt I shall be able to render some assistance. If, as I understand, it is to be intellectual amusement you seek, I flatter myself with the opinion that my contribution will be invaluable.”

“What shall it be, Sancho?” inquired George III.

“I will repeat the multiplication table from beginning to end, and whistle ‘Yankee Doodle.’”

A perfect roar of laughter was produced by Sancho’s thrust, but the young people became convinced that nothing was to be made by poking wit at him. A couple of politicians, who occupied seats near the lower end of the table, were engaged in an animated discussion which was attracting considerable attention.

“For my part,” said General Camphollower, “I think that our Government dealt too leniently with rebels after the war.”

“I believe,” replied Colonel Confed, “that the views you express were those held by men who never smelled burned powder, or heard the whistle of a hostile bullet; but all brave soldiers who fought in the Union army, from General Grant down to the humblest private, were opposed to any harsh measures.”

“I perceive,” replied General Camphollower, “that you are not being much reconstructed.”

“Gentlemen,” said Captain Quitman, “pardon me for interrupting your conversation, but I would beg to suggest the propriety of eschewing politics while on this excursion. Let the past bury the past – let us cultivate a feeling of friendship between the North and South. Both parties committed errors – let both parties get back to the right track. Let us try to profit by our sad experience – let us teach forgiveness and patriotism, and look forward to the time when the cruel war shall be forgotten. We have a great and glorious nation, of which we are very proud, and we will make it greater by our love and support. It was a family quarrel, and the family has settled it, and woe be to the outsider who shall dare to interfere!”

“Hurrah! hurrah for Uncle Sam!” was unanimously shouted by all the passengers.

“Uncle Sam shall live forever, and those unpatriotic politicians who have crippled him shall be driven into obscurity. Let peace and good will, brotherly love and good faith, exist between the North and South, and let Satan take those who wave the bloody shirt.”

“Good! good! hear! hear!” was shouted long and loud by all the guests, while the two politicians shook hands across the table, and bumped their glasses together.

By this time the table was cleared, and the waiters began to uncork innumerable bottles of champagne.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said Captain Quitman as his tall, handsome form rose high above the crowd, “fill your glasses and hear my toast.” Some little confusion then ensued while each guest was having his glass filled, and then the captain’s voice rang out as he spoke: “Here is to the Union as it was in the days of its purity.” General Camphollower responded in an eloquent speech, and took his seat amid thundering applause. Then, reaching his hand across the table toward Colonel Confed, he exclaimed: “Here is my hand, colonel – let us shake across the table, and consider it the bloody chasm.”

George III. whispered to the duke: “Do you know that lady yonder in the black silk domino?”

“Indeed I do not; in fact, I had not noticed her.”

“There is a mystery about that woman, as sure as we stand here; just look at her, will you – she is weeping. I have been watching her for the last half hour, and there is a strangeness in all her movements hard to understand, and harder still to describe.”

“Come, come, my lord,” exclaimed the duke, as he laid his hand on the shoulder of the king, “you cannot deceive me – you are endeavoring to imitate Romeo; he fell in love with Juliet at a masquerade.”

“Upon honor, I have not said a word to that lady, and I have no intention or desire to do so; but I would like very much to know who she is. What can be the matter with the poor lady, I wonder; don’t you see how she is weeping?”

“I dare say that the song the queen sang a while ago has called up unpleasant reminiscences. She may have sung that song to a lover who was afterward killed in the late war. This unfortunate land is full of aching hearts and crushed hopes. Thousands of mothers, sisters and sweethearts are weeping and wailing for dear ones who silently sleep in bloody graves.”

“That is all very true, but that lady is distressed about something that has happened on this boat, because she was weeping before the queen sang the sweet song. She did not go to the table at lunch, and she has been continually passing among all the passengers and apparently searching for somebody.”

“Well, I hope she will succeed in finding the individual she is looking for, if, as you think, she is really shadowing some one.”

“My lord,” said the queen, as she approached the duke, “if you will be so good as to collect our friends on the hurricane deck, we will order the Barbarian Chief to commence the relation of his little story.” The duke courtesied to the queen and immediately began to execute her commands; and it was but a few minutes until the entire party were seated on the upper deck.

The party having arranged themselves in a circle, in the center of which sat the queen in a large arm-chair, Mary bowed to Ingomar, and requested him to commence his story. Ingomar took his seat facing the queen, in a comfortable low chair which had been provided for his especial use, and began to relate the following story:

INGOMAR'S STORY

“I was born in Nashville, Tennessee, and was six years old when my mother died. I was her only child, and, as a matter of course, was much petted and greatly beloved by her. The memory of my dear mother is as indelibly fixed on my mind as the inscription on a marble monument, though I trust that my poor heart does not in any manner resemble the cold, unfeeling marble. My father was, at the time of my mother's death, a prosperous merchant, but from that date he began to neglect his business, and, I regret to say, commenced to spend his time at hotels and liquor saloons. I was left at home, alone with the house-maid and another servant, except what time I spent at school. I was too young to understand or realize how rapidly my father was traveling the downward road, but I soon began to notice that he was unsteady in his walk, and that he was becoming cross, and hard to please. I did not know then that he was growing fond of brandy, nor did I imagine that one whom I loved so dearly could do anything wrong. But alas, how soon was this blissful ignorance displaced by a knowledge of the awful truth! My father had been born and bred a gentleman, and, when not under the influence of brandy, was as kind and tender with me as heart could wish. The exact amount of his fortune at the date of my mother's death I never knew, though I have since learned that it was no insignificant sum; but, as a natural result of his neglect of business, the firm became involved more and more every year, until it finally collapsed at the end of the second year after my mother's death. When I was eight years old the servants began to talk of leaving, on account of the bad treatment which my father gave them – complaining of a neglect on his part to pay them their wages. I also frequently heard them hint of a second marriage which my father was contemplating, which, as may be imagined, gave me great uneasiness, for I had imbibed the usual prejudice felt by children against step-mothers. But if I had known then what I do now, I should have entertained very different views. If there ever was an angel on earth, my step-mother was one. I shall never forget my feelings when the house-maid informed me that my new mother would be brought home that evening. My heart felt as if it would break, and my eyes were filled with tears, as I let my young mind wander back to the happy days when I had been fondly held to my own dear mother's bosom. While I was dreaming of the happy days that were forever gone, and occasionally shuddering at the prospect before me, my step-mother, accompanied by her two children, entered the room where I was, and without ceremony caught me in her arms and kissed me. I have never ceased to love her from that moment. She was a frail, delicate, darling little woman, with dark brown hair and expressive blue eyes, and a voice as sweet as the music of the cooing dove; and her two children were very much like her as to beauty and gentleness of disposition. Harry Wallingford, her son, was one year younger than I, and his sister, Charlotte, was one year younger than her brother. She was the very image of her mother, having the same kind of deep blue eyes, only somewhat larger, and her hair, of a bright golden hue, floated in pretty curls about her well-shaped neck and shoulders. Her skin I thought was too white, as it had rather a bloodless appearance, amounting to transparency. The eye-lashes were long, the brows likewise, which gave to the countenance something of a dreamy, thoughtful appearance. I may have been rather extravagant in making my judgment as to her personal appearance, but I thought then, and I think now, that she was the most charming little creature that I had ever beheld. Harry was a spare-built, and as I thought, rather effeminate boy, but a more manly fellow than he proved to be I never knew. He and I became bosom friends from the start, and we were both in love with Lottie. He loved her as a brother, and I worshipped her, because I could not help it, and to be candid, I never tried to help it. How was it possible for any one to associate daily with such a darling child and not

love her with all his heart? Lottie seemed to permit me to love her, as if such devotion was no more than her just dues, and without making any demonstrations of affection for me. I am at a loss to know how to begin to describe Harry Wallingford, for I must say that I never had met any one before or since who possessed such a combination of peculiar traits of character as he did. Sometimes you would think he was the most cold-natured, passionless boy that ever was created, and then, when anything happened to rouse him, he would show such signs of passion as to almost frighten me, or when any cause of real sorrow would come upon him, his heart would begin to melt at once, and he would weep like a woman. There was no such feeling as jealousy between Harry and me on account of my love for his sister; being then mere children, and all intensely in love with each other. We were all sent to the same school, situated about a mile from our home. We were kept at the same school for four years, and oh, what happy years were they to me! Not a ripple of sorrow ever crossed the smooth surface of our sea of pleasure, save when my father would come home intoxicated, and then, for a time, we would collect in the garden and speak in whispers, lest he should find us. He was very kind to us when sober, but when his reason was clouded with brandy, he seemed to be jealous of the love which our mother manifested toward us, and often gave way to his passion, and abused her in a most shocking manner. Poverty began at length to make its unwelcome presence at our home, but we were too young to realize or feel its influences as our poor mother did. The servants had all left us, because my father had no money to pay their wages, and our mother was compelled to do her own work; but Lottie was as industrious as a honey bee, and assisted her mother all she could, while Harry and I did all we could to make her work light. We cultivated the garden, made the fires, and assisted Lottie to milk the cow. In fact, we made ourselves useful in every way we could, and in spite of our poverty we were very happy. I don't think my step-mother would have married my father if she had known of his bad habits; but after the fatal step had been taken, she seemed to have made up her mind to make the best of her bad bargain. No matter how thick and heavy were the troubles that crowded on her, she always met us on our return from school with a pleasant smile; and the same love and tenderness which she bestowed on her own children were at all times extended to me. When our wardrobe began to grow scant, and our garments to become seedy and sometimes full of rents, our dear mother would work till midnight, with Lottie by her side, mending them. I would often drop my book and gaze at Lottie as she sat by the dim lamp, the golden curls falling about her shoulders, while her little fingers made the needle bob up and down with lightning speed, as she mended a rent in my old coat, and wonder if the angels in Heaven were like her. My father spent but little of his time at home, which circumstance enabled us to snatch happiness from the very bottom pit of poverty. I was deeply grieved to notice that my mother's health was gradually declining, but I did not know then that it was the result of overwork and scanty food, coupled with the cruel treatment from my father. Neither Harry nor I had a suspicion of the true state of affairs, else we would have quit school, and gone to work in order to help support the family. When our little basket would be filled with provisions every morning by our mother before we started for school, we did not know that she was left frequently to work hard all day without a morsel for dinner. I would have worked night and day as a slave to have made her comfortable, and so would Harry; but the secret of her real condition was concealed from us until we had been at school four years, when we began to realize the situation. We at once left the school and began to seek employment, but in this attempt we were often doomed to disappointment, because we were too young to expect to get situations as clerks, and not strong enough to do much at manual labor. Harry was one of those persevering, tenacious kind of boys that never abandon anything they undertake, and, although he was younger than I, he was the leader in all our enterprises. He was self-reliant, energetic and hopeful. I was the reverse of that, and I could not accomplish anything except when I was encouraged and led by him. I therefore submitted to his leadership, and followed him from place to place seeking employment. Sometimes we would manage to secure several little profitable jobs during the day, and every cent we got was handed over to our mother. Then some days we would traverse the streets from early morning until night without finding

any work to do, and when this would happen our scanty supply of provisions would grow more scant, until we found the wolf at our very door. I do not know how my father managed to obtain his meals, for he scarcely ever came home, and when he did come he was so much overcome with brandy that he would fall down on a bed and sleep for many hours, then rise and go straight to the nearest whisky shop. It was about six months after we were compelled to quit school that a strange-looking man, with red nose, and bloated face, and very shabbily dressed, staggered into our house, and informed my mother that her husband had fallen from a second-story window and broken his neck. I learned that my father had been carousing with a gang of disreputable men in the second story of a drinking and gambling house, and had staggered through the window, falling head-foremost on the stone pavement below. His neck was dislocated, his head and face mangled, and he was quite dead when his drunken companions went to him. This dreadful ending of my poor father's life gave my mother such a shock that she was compelled to take to her bed, from which she never rose again. It was not quite a month after my father's remains were deposited in the grave when my darling step-mother's gentle spirit went to its eternal home. The last days of her life were not days of suffering, as is usual in such cases, for she informed her weeping children that she was perfectly free from pain.

“Come here, my son, and sit near me,” she said to Harry one day a short time before her death. ‘I wish to speak to you about what you shall do when I am gone.’

“Poor boy! he was weeping as if his heart would break. No one ever loved a darling mother more than Harry loved his; and no mother ever had a more noble, dutiful son than Harry.

“You must not grieve about me after I am taken from you, my darling boy; but you will live such a life as will enable you to come to meet me when it is ended. I need not advise you to be good, noble, honorable, all through life, because I feel assured that you will be all that. But few mothers have been blessed with such children as I have, and therefore I can depart from them with a loving faith and hope of meeting them again. One promise I shall ask you to make, though, and that is that you will devote your life to the protection of your sister, Lottie. The pitfalls and dangers which lie in the path of human life are much more numerous and much greater in the road of a young girl than are to be found in the one of a young man.’

“Dear mother,” said I, as I knelt by the bedside and seized her little pale hand, ‘I now solemnly promise to join Harry in this sacred duty. I will follow him through life to aid in protecting my darling sister; for I love her with all my heart, and do here now swear to devote my life to her service!’

“God bless you, Edward!” she said as she placed her hand on my head; ‘this is very good in you, and will be remembered to your credit where good and bad deeds are recorded.’

“Harry was unable to make a promise of any kind, being so overcome with grief that he could not utter a word, but had fallen on the bed by his mother's side, clinging to her neck, and pressing his lips to her pale brow. He appeared to lose control of his feelings – an unusual thing for him to do, for he was generally more self-possessed than other boys. His mother whispered to me, directing me to take him away. I lifted him in my arms and carried him to another room and laid him on the bed, and remained with him until he became somewhat calm.

“Oh, Edward,” said he, while his eyes were full of tears, ‘how can we live without her? Shall that darling, sweet face be forever hidden from us? What will become of poor Lottie when our mother is gone?’

“Can we not work for her? Can we not take care of her? I will help you, Harry. I will never forsake you and Lottie. I will go with you to the end of the world, to help work for Lottie. You are my brother, she is my sister, and nothing shall ever part us but death.’

“Thank you, Eddie, you are very good; and we shall stay together.’

“Lottie was soundly sleeping, unconscious of the fact that she was soon to be motherless. We had so far kept her in ignorance of the situation, but I afterward was convinced of the great error we committed in doing so, for when the time came in which concealment was no longer possible, she was wholly unprepared for the blow. She had not suspected that her mother was on her death-bed,

but had been continually chatting cheerfully about the new blooming flowers, telling her mother how pretty they would be by the time she should be able to walk in the garden. Every morning she placed a fresh bouquet of fragrant flowers on a little table by her mother's bedside, and would sit for hours talking to her, while she was busy mending garments for Harry and me.

“It was a beautiful day in early spring when the gentle spirit of our darling mother took its leave of this world. The sweet songs of many little birds loaded the air with their delightful music. The fresh, cool breeze came stealing through the open windows, sweetened with the fragrance of spring flowers, and all nature seemed to exert her energies to make our mother's last moments happy.

“‘When I am gone’ she said to Harry, ‘you will take Lottie to my brother who resides in Memphis. He will give her a home, and you and Edward can find employment there. I leave you in the hands of Him who promised to be a father to the orphan. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”’

“These were her last words, and without a struggle or symptom of suffering, she fell asleep in the arms of death like one dropping off in usual slumber. Her arms, which had been twined about Harry's neck, were gently removed, and he was carried away in a swoon, while poor Lottie sank down on the lifeless body, totally prostrated with her great sorrow.”

CHAPTER IV

The description of the death-bed scene was given by Ingomar in a low, tremulous voice, which showed that he was struggling hard to smother his grief, while Queen Mary was seen to brush a tear from her cheek quickly, as if she were trying to appear unmoved. A long silence ensued, and the maskers sat motionless and anxious to hear more of the story. Why the queen should be so deeply moved by the story was a mystery to many of the listeners. Who is she, anyway? was the question that many of the maskers mentally asked themselves.

“Please to proceed with your story,” said the queen, bowing to Ingomar.

Bending low in acknowledgment of her courtesy, Ingomar proceeded as follows:

“The county undertaker was sent for by some of our neighbors, and was about to take charge of our dead mother’s remains, in order to give it a pauper’s interment, and we never, perhaps, would have understood the deep degradation, but when the plain, pine-board coffin was brought to the house I saw Harry gaze at it for a moment; and such a strange look, too, it was. A deathly paleness overspread his face, as he directed the man to carry the rough box away; and although he spoke low and gently, there was a firmness in his tone that convinced the man that he had better obey.

“Come with me, Eddie’ he said, as he gently plucked at my sleeve. ‘She sha’n’t be buried in such a box as that.’

“I, of course, followed him to the nearest undertaker’s shop. No words passed between us as we walked side by side, but I noticed that he had ceased to weep, and that there was an expression on his features evincing indescribable suffering. His face still retained its extreme paleness, while his thin lips were firmly compressed.

“My mother is dead, sir,’ said he to a middle-aged gentleman of benevolent appearance, who met us at the door of the shop. ‘I want her remains put away in a nice rosewood case. I want her buried in a nice grassy lot in the north-east corner of the cemetery. I have no money to give you, sir, but we have some household furniture, some of which is very valuable; there are some beds and bedclothing, a cow and calf; give my dear mother’s remains a decent burial. Take all we have, and let me know what is lacking to compensate you, and I give you my word of honor that you shall never be the loser thereby.’

“The kind-hearted gentleman fixed his gaze on Harry’s pale face, and continued to stare at him for several seconds, as if he were trying to pierce him through with the fierceness of the look; then, abruptly turning on his heel, he went behind the counter, placed both elbows on it, resting his cheeks on his hands, then commenced a renewal of the strange gaze. Harry never for a moment turned his eyes from the man’s face. At last the man rose up and struck the counter a heavy blow with his fist, as if he were endeavoring to murder some enemy.

“You’ll do! I’ll take your word of honor; there’s no falsehood hidden behind that face – your mother shall have the most cozy spot in the cemetery, and the finest rosewood coffin in the house; there, now, go home, and I’ll attend to everything.’

“Right well indeed did the generous man keep his word, for I don’t think I ever saw a prettier burial case, and the grave was dug in a green shady spot where the turf was very thick and fresh.

“What shall we do now, Harry?’ said I.

“Do as we promised our dying mother, of course. You know she made us promise to take Lottie to our uncle at Memphis; we must prepare to go at once. You stay here with Lottie, while I go to see Mr. Fogg, the undertaker, and arrange with him about the furniture.’

“He soon returned and informed me that the business had been settled, and that Mr. Fogg would take possession of the effects on the next day. We at once began to make arrangements for commencing our journey to Memphis, as soon as Mr. Fogg should take possession of the furniture. That gentleman kindly offered to let us keep the furniture, and allow us to pay him the funeral

expenses when fortune should be disposed to deal more kindly with us. But when Harry informed him that in pursuance of his mother's wishes we were going to Memphis, he agreed to take the furniture, saying that it would amply suffice to pay the debt which we owed him. Accordingly, early the next morning the keys were delivered to Mr. Fogg, and we set out on the road toward Memphis. We had not the most remote idea as to the nature of the journey that lay before us. We were as ignorant regarding the distance as we were about the means necessary to take us there. We had often heard and read about Memphis as a young and thriving city on the banks of the great river, and when I now look back to that time, I can scarcely realize the extreme simplicity of our minds, and the extravagant ideas we had as to our ability to accomplish the journey. We were too deeply plunged in sorrow to ever think of making inquiries as to the distance or the best route to travel. We might have saved money enough by the sale of our effects to pay the funeral expenses, and then had enough left to pay our fare on a boat to Memphis. But we considered nothing – thought of nothing but misery. Kind people there were plenty, who would have gladly aided or advised us, but we sought no aid, nor did we speak of our intentions to any one. The greatest trouble that presented itself to our young and thoughtless minds was the sad leave-taking of the poor but dear home where so many happy days had been spent. There was the little garden, with its neat beds of new flowers that had flourished under the constant care bestowed on them by Lottie; there were the jolly little birds, singing so sweetly in the blooming apple-tree near the window; a thousand things of a trifling sort, but dear to the memory, were now to be looked at for the last time. How could it be expected that under the circumstances we should make the necessary preparations for such a journey? How could we think of bread and meat, clothes or cash, when our poor hearts were melting with the very bitterness of sorrow? The wonder is that we should have started with anything at all. We hastily packed a few extra garments into a couple of sacks, snatched up a few articles of food, and with eyes swimming in tears, bade adieu to our home forever. Harry moved on in front, Lottie and I following. Not a word was spoken; no one bade us good-by; no one consoled us in our desolation; and we neither asked nor sought it. As we passed through the streets, a strange look would occasionally be cast on us by the pedestrians as we passed them. We saw but little, and were moving on in silence, when I perceived that Harry had turned his course and was going toward the cemetery. I knew his object, and was pleased to know that we should once more be near our dear mother. We entered the city of the dead, approached the sacred spot in silence, and fell upon the little mound of fresh earth that rose above our mother, and moistened it with our tears. Harry had brought a little basket of fresh flowers which I had not noticed until I saw him placing it on the grave. Mr. Fogg had promised to have a plain marble slab erected with the proper inscription, to mark the spot where our mother rested. He complied with his promise. But a beautiful monument now rises high over the grave which we afterward had erected. We remained nearly an hour bathing the cold earth with our tears. No words were spoken, no passionate outbursts of grief were heard; but in solemn silence we knelt side by side and paid the last tribute of love to the memory of the dead one who slept below. At length Harry turned away; I took Lottie by the hand and followed him, and soon we were moving along the road outside of the city limits. We traveled about ten miles the first day, and I was surprised to see that Lottie had not appeared to be fatigued at all. She had walked by my side all the time, her beautiful eyes fixed on the ground, and I noticed ever and anon a fresh shower of tears would fall from her eyes. She was a heroine in the strongest sense of the term – never complaining, unselfish, confiding, hopeful, and when not thinking of her great loss, she always smiled sweetly when speaking to Harry and me.

“Are you tired, Lottie?” inquired Harry after we had marched about five miles from the city. ‘If you are, we will stop and rest awhile.’

“With her usual smile lighting up her sweet face, she answered in the negative, shaking her head till the golden curls danced about her shoulders. ‘Go on, brother, pray don’t mind me; I am not the least tired.’

“As the sun began to disappear behind the steep hill that rose on the west side of the road, and the shadows of the tall trees on the hill-top were growing very long, we began to think of the manner in which we should pass the night.

“‘Shall we stop at a way-side inn?’ said Harry; ‘or shall we camp in the woods?’

“‘We had better camp out,’ I replied; ‘because we will soon be out of money if we undertake to secure lodging at a way-side inn.’

“This was the first time that the money question had been mentioned or thought of by either of us. Harry and I both instinctively commenced to examine our pockets to see how much money we could command, and found that the sum total, when put together, amounted to two dollars and seventy-five cents.

“‘I have got twenty-five cents,’ exclaimed Lottie, as she produced the shining coin from her pocket, and handed it to Harry, looking as if she thought it sufficient for all expenses.

“Harry was unanimously chosen cashier, and the funds all handed over to him, the grand total amounting to three dollars; and this little sum was all we had to depend on for our subsistence. Harry sighed as he held the money in his hand, evidently beginning to reflect seriously now (when it was too late) as to the folly of undertaking such a journey with so small a sum of money. This was perhaps the first time that either of us had given a thought to the question of finance, and those who are inclined to sneer at our ignorance must not lose sight of the fact that we had a double excuse for it. In the first place we were mere children – I being then in my thirteenth year, Harry in his twelfth, and Lottie not quite eleven. Besides this, we had been so suddenly deprived of both our parents that our great sorrow absorbed all our thoughts; but now, when the situation began to be disclosed, it was too late to mend the matter.

“‘We will not stop in a house,’ observed Harry sadly. ‘We can’t afford to incur the expense. We must economize in every way we can.’

“So it was agreed that we would depend on grass and leaves for a bed, and the blue sky for our shelter. As the sun finally disappeared we came to a halt near a bubbling spring that gushed from a little bluff near the edge of a thick patch of timber, depositing our little effects at the root of a beech tree, whose branches were thickly covered with leaves, which would protect us from the falling dew; and soon a blazing fire shot its cheerful flames forth, as the blue smoke curled gracefully up among the branches of the tree. Our household and kitchen furniture (if I may be permitted to use a facetious remark), including table-ware and all, consisted of three little tin cups, three pure silver tea-spoons, and one little tin coffee-pot; while our stock of provisions consisted of one pound of pulverized coffee, four pounds of salt pork, three pounds of raw ham, and six pounds of baker’s bread, one box of matches, and one pound of brown sugar. With her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, her round white arms looking very pretty, a clean white apron tied with a pink ribbon about her waist, Lottie was busy broiling some slices of ham on the coals, while Harry was trying to make the water in the coffee-pot boil. As I sat on the turf leaning against the tree, watching the operation with intense interest, my eyes followed Lottie in all her movements; and I am not now ashamed to confess it – I mentally asked myself, whose wife will she be when she becomes a grown lady? ‘Mine, mine!’ The last words seemed to force themselves from my lips in much louder tones than was intended, for Harry asked me whom I was speaking to?

“‘Is the water boiling yet?’ I asked, by way of hiding my confusion.

“‘I think it is,’ was the reply.

“It is a true maxim that ‘necessity is the mother of invention,’ which was practically demonstrated on that occasion by Lottie’s ingenuity in arranging our supper table. She went to the edge of a little brook near by, selected a smooth, flat rock some fifteen inches square, washed it very clean, and placed it on the turf; then she went back, selected three other rocks of the same kind, only not so large; and, after she had scrubbed them till they were very clean, she placed them on the ground near the large rock; then with a little forked stick she lifted the slices of ham, and placed

them on what she was pleased to call a table. When the broiled ham had been placed on the table, she sliced the bread and placed it by the ham, then arranging the three little tin cups in a row on the table, she poured out the strong, black coffee.

“Supper is ready now,” she said with as much dignity as if she had been inviting us to a costly banquet. We accordingly gathered round the table, seating ourselves on the grass and Lottie held a spoonful of sugar toward me.

“Have sugar in your coffee, Eddie?” she said softly as I held my cup toward her to receive it.

“You are a capital cook, Lottie, and a real genius in the way of inventive faculties,” said I.

“I am truly glad you are pleased with my cooking; but you know I have had but little chance to show you what I can do. I shall improve very much too when I have a chance.”

“I dare say you will, and I mean to see that you shall have a fair chance one of these days.”

“I can truly say that I enjoyed that meal as much as any one I ever ate. Notwithstanding its lack of variety, it was enough for me to know that it was prepared by the one I loved so dearly. Supper being over, I began to erect an edifice to be used as a sleeping apartment by Lottie; and having watched the display of inventive genius which she had exhibited in procuring table furniture, I felt it to be my duty to exert all my mechanical skill in the erection of a sleeping chamber for her. I stuck four little forked sticks in the ground, then laid several small straight sticks across the top, and covered the building with branches cut from the green trees. I put them on so thick that it would have kept out the rain. Then I took a great number of the same kind of branches and set them round the sides, leaving a little opening at the end next to the fire; then I gathered up a large quantity of dry leaves and spread them on the turf, in this quaint little house, took my coat, spread it on the leaves, placed my little sack of clothes at the back end for her pillow, and crossing my hands behind my back, inspected the entire building, and was satisfied.

“There it is, Lottie,” said I. “When you wish to retire your bed-chamber is ready.”

“You are very kind, Eddie, and I thank you very much; but where will you and Harry sleep?”

“O, never mind about that; we’ll make us a nice bed of leaves on the other side of the fire.”

“You had better lie down, Lottie,” said Harry. “I dare say you are very tired, and then, you know, we must go a long way to-morrow.”

“Lottie took a little Testament from her satchel, and read a chapter as she stooped near the fire so as to get the benefit of the light, replaced the book in the satchel, then went into her cozy little bedroom. Harry and I sat gazing silently at the fire, watching the columns of smoke as they went winding up through the green leaves above our heads. A mocking-bird every now and then would make the night air ring with a song, as he sat on the top of the tree. The gentle murmur of the little brook, as its sparkling waters went dancing among the rocks, had a soothing effect on my mind. No words were spoken by either of us. We were not asleep, but both were dreaming. My body was still, but my mind was at work. The architectural skill of my mind was being taxed to its utmost capacity. The castle which I was preparing to build was one of indescribable beauty and symmetry; the foundation had been laid, materials for the edifice collected, and the magnificent structure began to assume a finished appearance. But, alas, just as I was rounding off the beautiful dome and giving it a finishing touch, the whole building came tumbling topsy-turvy down.

“I’ll die first!” Those words came gushing forth, and I was as much startled by them as Harry was.

“What are you talking about?” said he.

“Nothing,” was the reply, for I was ashamed to have been caught muttering to myself. I had fallen into a habit of muttering to myself, especially when my mind was very busy with some sort of castle building, which was by no means seldom. The materials out of which my castle had been built were very good, and the workmanship not at all inferior, but the main part of the foundation had been laid on sand, which proved to be too weak or soft to support such a weight; hence the destruction of one of the most beautiful castles ever built. The materials used in the building were composed of

pure love. The dome was made of sweet prospects of a cottage in a shady grove near Memphis, with Lottie as my wife. The magnificent fluted columns that were to adorn the portico of my castle were made of long years of true service, which I had vowed to devote to Lottie's happiness. The polished cornice, that was to make such a charming finish to the four fronts, was made of an imagination, or golden dreams of a long and happy life to be spent with dear Lottie as my wife. But suppose she should fall in love with and marry some other fellow. This supposition was the sand that brought my castle down. As the castle came crumbling down, it was the fall that startled me, and I exclaimed in my bitter anguish: 'I'll die first.' If I had uttered the entire sentence aloud, it would have read thus: 'No other man shall ever be Lottie's husband. No, never! I'll die first!' Let it not be inferred that I was at all disposed to abandon my occupation of castle building, for I set about the work again with a more determined resolution to finish the grand enterprise; but before I got it finished my eyelids began to feel very heavy and I soon was compelled to lay aside my tools for that time, and was directly sleeping soundly on my bed of leaves by the side of my dear brother. I imagine that I must have slept very soundly during the night, for if I was at all disturbed by dreams, they could not have been of an unpleasant kind, else I should have remembered them when I awoke. Only one dream came to interfere with my repose, and that occurred after sunrise next morning. I dreamed that Lottie and I were on the banks of a beautiful little river, whose deep blue water glided smoothly along, filled with innumerable tiny fishes, and that I was holding my hook in the water to catch them. Just as a beautiful little trout began to nibble at my hook, and when I was expecting to fasten him, a huge mosquito, with long, sharp bill, alighted on my nose and began to partake of his breakfast. I struck at the impudent intruder, and hit Lottie's hand, who was tickling my nose with a blade of grass.

"Get up, brother sluggard, breakfast is ready," said she, as she pointed toward the smoking ham which she proceeded to place on the table.

"How did you rest last night, Lottie?"

"O, very well, indeed; thanks for the nice, comfortable bed you made for me."

"Did you not get cold during the night?"

"No, I don't think I did, for I slept very soundly, and probably should have been sleeping yet, but brother Harry called me at daylight to help him get breakfast. I feel so much refreshed that I shall be able to walk a long way to-day."

"We arranged ourselves round the table, and soon dispatched our breakfast, and began to prepare for a renewal of our journey. Harry and I carried all the household and kitchen furniture in the two little sacks which swung on our shoulders; while Lottie was not permitted to carry anything but her little satchel. The road we traveled on the second day of our journey traversed a part of the country that was thickly inhabited by thrifty farmers; rich green clover fields spread out on our left, while large numbers of fat cattle were grazing on the rich pasturage. Many beautiful residences, with well-cultivated gardens in front of them, appeared on each side of the road. Happy children frolicked on the green turf, honey bees sucked the sweet clover blossoms, busily collecting their winter store of food. Hundreds of little birds made charming music among the green trees that lined the roadside. The scenery was altogether delightful, but we stopped not to enjoy it, but moved steadily on, with minds bent on the accomplishment of the task before us. I marched as usual by Lottie, Harry moving steadily in the lead. I would occasionally drop behind, for no other purpose than to watch Lottie's pretty little feet as they rose and fell with fairy-like tread, making such nice little tracks in the dust. Notwithstanding the many eventful years that have passed since then, I remember well how I almost worshipped the dust that kissed her feet. Toward noon I noticed from her movements that she was becoming very tired, but in answer to my questions on that subject, she tried to make me believe differently. I whispered to Harry, calling his attention to the fact, and suggested that we had better stop to let her rest. We halted near a running stream, and selecting a cool shady spot, we threw ourselves on the grass. We had traveled about eight miles, and I began to feel somewhat fatigued myself, and when I was comfortably stretched on the ground I soon fell asleep. We rested about three hours,

eating a cold snack of bread and ham, and then resumed our journey, moving steadily on until the sun went down, when we halted, having marched about fifteen miles in all that day. And I was deeply pained to see that Lottie began to limp with her left foot, which I learned was caused by a painful blister which appeared on her instep. I took my knife and cut a little hole in the shoe, so that the blister would not be rubbed by the leather, and the grateful look that she cast on me would have been compensation for any amount of trouble. A description of our second encampment is unnecessary, as it was nearly similar to the first, the only difference being the lack of cold spring water, which we of course regretted; but we managed to make out with the water from a clear running brook near by. Having finished our frugal repast, I set about preparing Lottie's sleeping apartment, which I soon completed, pretty much on the same plan as the one I had made for her the night before, though I think I made a much better job of it this time. We had finished our preparations for the night, and were seated near the fire, when a strange, hungry-looking dog came up, deliberately seating himself by Lottie, and began to whine and lick her hand. He would in all probability have wagged his tail, but he had none; and it seemed that his misfortunes had not stopped with the loss of his tail, for he had only one eye and one and a half ears, the half of his left ear being painfully missing. Lottie was a little startled and perhaps frightened at first, but when she saw how anxious the poor dog was to make friends with her, she held out her hand and patted his back. The mournful expression of his countenance, and the dilapidated condition of his body, at once enlisted her sympathies, and she gathered up all the scraps of bread and meat and gave them to him, which he devoured quickly, and like *Oliver Twist*, 'wanted more.' When Lottie went to bed the poor tailless old dog laid himself down at her feet with dignity and composure, doubtless thinking that he had found a friend at last. I watched the dignified movements of the strange animal with some degree of interest. He paid no attention to Harry and me, but appeared to consider it his duty to guard Lottie. It was a clear case to my mind of love at first sight. How could the poor dog help loving her? Birds, dogs and men all loved her. The fact is, it seemed that she was made to be worshipped by men, animals and birds. I suppose that with his one eye the old dog could see her kind, beautiful face, and that he knew she was good. Judging from appearances, one might safely conclude that the dog had been an inhabitant of the earth for a great number of years, and that he could form a correct opinion as to the character of those whom he chose to serve. When we started on our journey next morning old Bob (as we had named the dog – the name being suggested to our minds by his lack of a tail) began to walk with strange dignity by the side of Lottie. He was the first dog I ever saw that couldn't trot; but his principal gait was a walk, though he could strike a gallop when occasion required, and was often seen pacing. Trouble began to crowd on us the third day of our journey – our little stock of provisions was exhausted. Lottie, though she would not complain, was beginning to fail; her feet were covered with blisters, and it was distressing to see her struggling to conceal her sufferings. She took off her shoes and attempted to walk barefooted, but the road was covered with innumerable flinty rocks, the sharp points lacerating her tender feet in a shocking manner. It made my heart ache to see the stones stained with the blood from the wounds on her feet, and I told Harry that we would be forced to stop, as it was cruel to keep her on the road in the condition that she was. I saw the tears trembling in his eyes when he examined his sister's feet. We came to a little creek, and I took Lottie down to the water's edge and bathed her feet in the cold water, and wiped them with my handkerchief. I then procured some slippery-elm bark, and made a kind of soft plaster of it and covered her feet with it, then bound cloth over the salve, and was gratified to hear her say that the pain was greatly relieved. It was but a few moments after I had completed my doctoring operations, when a farmer came along the road driving a team of four horses; he invited us to get in his wagon, as he was going on our road as much as ten miles. This invitation was of course gladly accepted, and we were soon seated in the wagon, moving on leisurely, but much faster than we had been in the habit of traveling. I enjoyed the ride more on Lottie's account than on any other, knowing as I did that it was giving her a chance to rest."

"There's the gong sounding for supper," cried Scottie; "let Lottie ride in the wagon till we eat."

The party rose and went down to the table.

CHAPTER V

Queen Mary took Ingomar's arm, and Ivanhoe offered his to Scottie, and as they went toward the saloon, Scottie said to Ingomar, "Do pray tell us what became of Lottie. I am dying with curiosity to know whether you married her or not."

"You had better allow me to tell the story in my own way," he replied dryly.

"I think so, too," observed the queen. "It would spoil the story to skip from one part to another. Let us re-assemble after supper and hear more of it."

"I think the queen has had something to do with the story," whispered Scottie to Ivanhoe. "She has been constantly wiping the tears from her eyes, and she always turned her face another way, endeavoring to conceal her emotion; and I could see her hand tremble distinctly."

"Very true; I noticed it, and I dare say that she knows more of the story than she is willing to tell. By the by, have you noticed those two seedy-looking men who have been watching us all the time?"

"No; pray tell me about it."

"I have a suspicion that they are detectives, looking for some one who has committed some great crime. I accidentally overheard a part of their conversation this morning. One of them pointed at one of our party and said, 'He is the man.'"

"Which one of our party did he point at?"

"Ingomar."

"What further did you hear?"

"The other man replied that there was no doubt about it."

"Are you sure they were speaking about Ingomar?"

"They pointed at him, and I therefore concluded that the conversation referred to him. I fear that our amusements will be broken up ere long."

"I hope they will not interfere with Ingomar until he finishes his story."

"Yes, it would be vexatious to have it cut short by his arrest. It may be a false alarm, but something strange is going on. The movements of the queen have excited my curiosity more than anything else. Look here; those are the men I was telling you about. See how they are eying Ingomar. Don't let them see you looking at them. I mean to try to unravel the mystery."

"I can't think that Ingomar is a criminal; he speaks so kindly to every one, and then he is so eloquent when telling his story."

After supper the party re-assembled on deck, and after a few moments spent in conversation, the queen ascended her throne (the large arm-chair being used for that purpose), and commanded Ingomar to proceed with his story. In obedience to the queen's command, he proceeded as follows:

"It was near night when we reached the point where the farmer informed us that we must get out of the wagon, as he was not going any farther on our road. There was an old, dilapidated, vacant house near the point where we parted with the farmer, which would protect us from a thunder-storm, that was then threatening to burst on us. Lottie's feet were so much swollen and so badly lacerated that she was unable to walk at all, and I lifted her from the wagon and carried her into the old house. I was grieved beyond measure to witness her sufferings; for, in addition to the pain she was suffering on account of her wounded feet, I noticed that she had some fever. Our condition was by no means pleasant; in fact, it was becoming serious. Our provisions were exhausted, Lottie about to fall ill, the weather prospects gloomy, only forty miles of our journey completed, and only three dollars in our purse; the prospects were of a nature to make my heart sink within me. While I was making a fire, Harry went to a farmhouse hard by to purchase provisions. He bought a chicken and a few pounds of bread from a widow lady for twenty-five cents. He also bought a little tea for Lottie. It devolved on Harry to prepare supper, which he commenced as soon as he had returned with the provisions. I was busily engaged in making a bed for Lottie, working very fast, so as to get it finished, before the rain

should begin to fall. The lady who resided at the farm-house permitted me to take some dry straw from a pen near by, which I spread out on the floor near the fire, placing my coat on the straw, and requested Lottie to lie down and rest until we could make her some tea. I took the bandages from her feet, bathed them in cold water, then replaced the bandages, and was greatly pleased to hear her say that she was much better, and felt as if she could sleep very comfortably.

“You must not go to sleep,’ said Harry, ‘before your tea is ready. We shall soon have some nice broiled chicken and good tea ready for you.’

“I shall try to keep awake, but my eyelids begin to feel very heavy, I assure you.’

“It did not take Harry many minutes to cook supper, and it made me very happy to notice that Lottie partook of it with a good relish.

“Well,’ said she, ‘brother Harry, you must permit me to thank you for making such good tea. I am going to sleep now, and I bid you and Eddie good-night;’ and it was but a short time till she was sound asleep.

“Dark, angry-looking clouds began to collect overhead; the ominous sounds of distant thunder gave warning of the approaching storm; heavy drops of rain began to rattle on the dry boards on the house-top, increasing rapidly until it fell in torrents. The wind dashed with great force against the tottering walls, and whistled mournfully among the trees, while Harry and I sat gazing vacantly into the fire, our minds busy, as usual, castle building. Old Bob had managed to make a pretty fair supper off the bones of the chicken and such other scraps as he could find, and was licking his nose with apparent satisfaction, as he coiled himself down by Lottie’s feet. It was after midnight; the rain continued to fall steadily, the wind blew more violently, the fire had ceased to blaze, and darkness pervaded the room. Harry had been asleep several hours, and I was dozing near the hearth, when I was startled by a loud, shrill scream, uttered by Lottie. In an instant Harry and I were by her side. Scream followed scream, while old Bob was leaping and jumping about the room in every direction. Such confusion as appeared was beyond my comprehension. A most singular noise rang through the darkness – slap, slap, crack, crack, and old Bob seemed to be in a deadly struggle with something. What it was we knew not. Lottie kept on screaming, and I knew that something awful had happened, because she was no coward. On the contrary, she was a real heroine.

“For Heaven’s sake make a light,’ said I to Harry, as I took Lottie in my arms. He obeyed me at once, and it was but a few minutes till the fire began to blaze so as to light up the room, though it seemed to me it was a very long time.

“What in Heaven’s name has happened?’ cried Harry, while he was throwing fuel on the fire, and trying to make it blaze.

“I made no answer, of course, for I was busy with Lottie, and knew as little of the cause of the confusion as he did. I was endeavoring to compose Lottie, who was trembling like one with an ague fit. Every now and then I felt some strange substance slap against my legs, while Bob threw himself first one way, then another, struggling as if he was fighting for life.

“What is it, darling?’ said I. ‘Tell me what has happened?’

“No answer, but I felt her head drop heavily on my shoulder as the weight of her body came against my breast, and I knew she had either fainted or was dead.

“Be quick, Harry, she is dead! do pray make a light!’

“It is a well-known fact that when one gets in a very great hurry to accomplish anything the anxiety to do it quickly very often prevents him from doing it at all, or operates greatly to delay its accomplishment. I was conjecturing a thousand kinds of awful things that had happened, and, as usual in such cases, never hit near the real one. The first thing that suggested itself to my mind was that some savage wild animal had come into the room, and had frightened Lottie. There were at that time many bears, and some few panthers, and large numbers of wolves, existing in that part of the State, and I thought one of those animals had ventured in the house. I heard the continuous snapping of teeth, and the strangest sounds – not like anything I had ever heard before. I spoke sharply to

Harry, and accused him of a want of feeling for his sister, for which I was very sorry as soon as the words had passed my lips; he was so frightened that he hardly knew what he was doing. At last the fire blazed up, casting a bright light over the floor, when I was almost paralyzed with horror at the spectacle before me. One large rattlesnake lay dead at my feet, while old Bob was shaking the life out of another of equal size. It was the noise made by the rattles on the tails of the snakes that had sounded so strangely. I had never seen a rattlesnake until that moment, and therefore did not know what was making such a singular noise. Lottie lay in my arms as pale as death, and I saw that she had been bitten on the wrist by one of the snakes. There were two small holes made through the skin, and two little drops of blood had come out through the wounds. The flesh had already begun to turn a yellowish color. The poisonous fangs had been driven deep into the flesh and the deadly venom was beginning to take effect. I suppose the snakes had come up through the crack in the floor, and had perhaps coiled themselves in the straw near Lottie; and that, in her restless slumbers, she had struck the serpent with her arm, and thus provoked it to strike, because the rattlesnake never bites unless provoked in some way. I have heard it said, too, that they always go in pairs, and I had also heard experienced persons say that the safest remedy for snake bites was to cut out the flesh in which the fangs had struck, and then for some one to suck the wound with the lips so as to extract the poison as soon as possible. Fortunately I happened to have in my pocket a knife with a very sharp blade. Without a moment's reflection or hesitation I seized the flesh of the wrist between my finger and thumb and cut out a piece large enough to include the entire wounds made by the poisonous fangs of the serpent, then placed my lips over the wound and began to suck with all my strength. The wound bled freely, and I continued to suck it for over an hour. Lottie had immediately regained consciousness after the cutting of her wrist, and held her wound to my mouth, while the grateful glance which she cast on me was ample compensation for the risk I was taking. We could not then tell whether she was suffering much or not, for one of her peculiar traits was never to complain of anything; but she declared in most positive terms that the only pain she experienced was the slight suffering caused by the wound I had made with my knife on her wrist. After sucking the wound for an hour, I began to feel deathly sick – a strange dizziness seized upon me – the house appeared to be turning round with great rapidity, and a blindness fixed itself on my eyes; I gasped for breath, and felt as if I was being smothered. My blood seemed to be boiling hot in my veins; I sank insensible on the floor; and when I regained consciousness I was on a clean nice bed, in a cozy little room, with Lottie's golden curls dangling about my face, for she was kissing me when I came to my senses, and my face was moist with the tears that had fallen from her dear eyes.

“Where am I? What has happened?” were the questions I put to her.

“Hush, Eddie dear, you must not talk; you have been dangerously ill; and oh! how I hate myself for being the cause of your illness. Why did you not let me suffer from the poison, instead of trying to kill yourself?”

“Then a dim recollection of what had happened began to come to me. ‘How long have I been ill?’

“Five days, and oh! such long, miserable days were they, too! We thought you were going to die, and that made us so very unhappy; but when the doctor left here this morning he said that all danger was over; and then I knew that God had answered my prayers; because I have prayed constantly and fervently to Him, asking Him not to let you die. If you had died, I should have looked upon myself as your murderer. I never should have seen another happy day. There now, don't talk.’ And she placed her hand on my mouth just as I was going to ask more questions.

“I noticed that she had her hand in a sling, and was about to question her about it when she covered my mouth with her hand. I afterward ascertained that she had not been entirely relieved from pain, that her wrist and arm had been very much swollen, and had caused intense suffering, but that she had watched by my bedside day and night, never sleeping any, except such short naps as she could take by leaning her head on the edge of my bed. If I had loved her before this, and I assert that I did,

what do you imagine my feelings toward her were then? It would require a more expressive term to describe them than I am able to command.

“Tell me, Lottie, all that has happened; it appears like a dream.’

“I will, if you promise to lie still, and keep quiet.’

“I made the promise reluctantly.

“When you fell insensible on the floor, from the effects of the poison which you had sucked from my wrist, I began to scream so loud that Mrs. Holly heard it, and she and her son came to see what the matter was. I thought that you were dead, and I, of course, couldn’t help screaming. We had you brought to this house, and Harry went after Dr. Dodson, who lives five miles away. When he came he made you drunk with strong brandy, then gave you an emetic, then made you drunk again, then gave you another emetic. He kept on repeating this treatment until he thought all the poison had been thrown off. Then he bled you until you fainted; then he gave you more brandy, mixed with opiates, and you slept a long time; but you kept talking all the time in your sleep about me and the snakes. The good doctor remained with you all that day, and all the next night; then he went away, telling us that all danger was past, and that you would be sure to get well, which of course made us very happy, because we had all been so frightened when we thought you were going to die. Doctor Dodson said that there was a slight cut or wound on your lip, and that when sucking my wrist the poison managed to make its way through that little wound and got into your blood, thereby causing all the trouble. There would have been no danger, he said, but for the wound on your lip. He said you were the greatest little hero he had ever heard of; those were his very words, because he said that I would have died in ten minutes from the poison if you had not sucked it out of my veins. Harry, poor fellow, has been working all the time in the field to pay Mrs. Holly for our board, and when we get done paying her, and you get well, we are going to go over to Doctor Dodson’s and work for him, to pay him for saving your dear life; and when we have finished paying the doctor, we will then start on our journey to Memphis. There, now, I have told you everything; take this beautiful bouquet in your hand, and lie perfectly quiet, while I go and make your soup.’

“My eyes followed the lovely form till she disappeared through the door. Then I began to count the minutes by the stroke of the old clock on the mantel, and the wheels of time seemed to stop while she was away from me. She returned at last.

“Here is a nice bowl of soup, and you must drink it, for you have eaten scarcely anything since you have been ill.’

“I had no appetite at all, but I drank the soup to please her; and I dare say it did me much good, for I was very weak.

“On the morning of the eighth day of my illness I was able to leave my bed, and, with Lottie’s assistance, could walk across the room. Then the next morning she took me into the flower garden, while I leaned on her shoulder for support. I was very much gratified to see that all the wounds on Lottie’s feet had disappeared, and that she could wear her shoes again without pain; and I determined to invent some plan to protect her feet when we should again begin our journey. I procured some strong cloth and made a pair of shoes, sewing leather soles on the bottom, so as to prevent the stones from cutting her feet. The cloth uppers would keep her feet from blistering, while the thick leather soles would protect them from the gravel. She watched me intently while the work progressed, and when it was finished she expressed great wonder at my skill. The truth is, it was a very clumsy job, and the shoes were ugly, but they answered the purpose for which they were intended, for she never was troubled any more with blisters or sore feet. We had been at Mrs. Holly’s two weeks, when I entirely recovered; then we went to work for Doctor Dodson, to pay his bill. He was very kind to us; his bill was moderate; in fact, he was willing to let us go without paying anything, but Harry would not hear to it. He vowed he never would leave until the last cent was paid. I always thought he had very strange views on such subjects. He was too sensitive, I imagined, because he abhorred the idea of accepting anything like charity. I do believe he would have starved rather than to eat bread for

which he was unable to pay. We remained with the doctor ten days, during which time Harry and I plowed a large field of corn, and cleaned out all the grass. Lottie insisted on being permitted to help us, but Harry would not allow it; therefore she went to work in the garden, and I mean what I say, when I assert that it is my candid opinion that garden never before had been in such a splendid fix. She destroyed every weed and blade of grass – cultivated the vegetables, trimmed the shrubbery, transplanted the flowers; in fact, she made an Eden out of a wilderness. When the work was finished the kind-hearted old doctor was profuse in his praise.

“I declare,’ said he, as he gently stroked Lottie’s hair, ‘I have been amply rewarded for my attendance on your brother, by your services, to say nothing of the valuable work done on my farm by Harry and Edward. I wish all my patients would pay me as well as I have been paid in this instance; if they did, I should soon grow very rich. I will not allow you to work another lick, and when you wish to start on your journey, you shall have as much provisions as your two brothers can carry.’

“The morning after this conversation we parted from our kind host, and set out on our journey toward Memphis, loaded down with nicely cooked provisions.

CHAPTER VI

“It was on a Friday morning that we parted from Doctor Dodson; the weather was getting to be uncomfortably warm, and we were compelled to travel very slowly, lest Lottie should be prostrated by the heat. Ten miles a day was the average distance which we marched. We usually started at sunrise, walked five miles, then rested in the shade until four o’clock, and marched the other five miles by dark. As we had determined not to travel on the Sabbath, we began early in the day on Saturday to look for a cool, shady spot where we might rest comfortably until Monday morning. Shade and pure water were two articles that must be found adjacent to each other, before we could expect to pass the time pleasantly. We, however, had the good luck to come to a spring where many large trees stood, all overgrown with grape-vines, making a covering not only sufficient to keep off the hot rays of the sun, but a shelter that would have protected us from a heavy shower of rain. It proved to be an unfortunate spot for us, as an occurrence happened there that gave us a great deal of trouble. The place where we halted was only one mile from the county-site, and it was from this village that the source of our troubles came. It was Sunday evening; we had finished our humble supper, and were all engaged in singing an old favorite song. I suppose that it was our singing that attracted the attention of some rude boys from the village. There were three boys in the gang that came up to where we were seated; the leader, a lad whom I supposed to be about fifteen years of age, whose features exhibited unmistakable signs of dissipation and brutality; the other two were much younger and appeared more genteel. The leader, whose name I afterward learned was Benjamin Bowles, in a domineering tone said:

“Is this a singing-school, or a Gipsy camp?”

“Neither, sir,” Harry replied.

“Is it a Sunday-school, or a camp-meeting then?”

“No, sir, it is neither a Sunday-school nor a camp-meeting.”

“Then what in the deuce is it?”

“It is no business of yours, sir, and we would be much obliged if you would let us alone.”

“Oh, would you, now? See here, little sweetheart, I’ll give you a dollar for one of those pretty curls.” And he reached out his hand to take hold of Lottie’s hair. She blushed and moved to Harry’s side. I felt the blood in my veins begin to boil, and the demon to rise within my heart.

“You had better go away and leave us alone,” said Harry, as he made a movement toward the boy.

“Now, do you really think so?” said he sneeringly. “What a polite nice boy you are!”

“I thought Harry was going to strike him, but Lottie laid her hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t have any difficulty with him, brother, he will go away directly,” she said softly.

“Now that’s a daisy, my little queen,” he said; “let us be social.”

“The other two boys seemed to be disgusted with the rude conduct of their comrade, and began to persuade him to go with them back to the village; and when he peremptorily refused, they went away and left him.

“Let us drink and be friends,” said he, as he drew a flask of brandy from his pocket and presented it to Harry, who of course refused; then offering it to me – “You’ll drink with me I know, won’t you, old boy?”

“No.”

“Well, indeed, I must say that I never met such uncivil fellows in my life. If you won’t drink, suppose we have a dance.” Then he began to caper about like a madman. “If you won’t drink nor dance, suppose we have a boxing match.” Then he threw himself in an attitude supposed to be that of an experienced pugilist.

“Give me a drink of water then,” he said, “and I will leave you.”

“I went immediately to the spring to fetch him some water in order to get rid of him. The spring was over a hundred yards from our camp. I had arrived at the spring and had stooped to dip up the water, when I heard Lottie calling me.

“‘Come quick, Eddie,’ she screamed, ‘he is killing Harry!’

“I got there as soon as I could. The boy was gone, and the blood was streaming over Harry’s face from a wound on his head. The boy had evidently sent me off after water on purpose to have a chance to abuse Harry; because as soon as I was gone he seized Lottie by the wrist and attempted to kiss her, when Harry struck him on the head with a small stick; then he threw Harry down (being much larger and stronger than he was), and began to beat him, when old Bob seized Bowles by the leg, tearing the flesh to the bone. Then the boy quickly released Harry and scampered off, vowing that he would have revenge. Harry was not seriously hurt, and very soon we were all asleep. We had scarcely finished breakfast next morning when the town marshal came out and arrested all of us, saying that Bowles had caused a warrant to be issued against Harry for an assault and battery committed on him. We were required to go with the marshal to the mayor’s office, where we were ordered to wait until that individual should finish his morning nap. We had been there about two hours when his honor came bustling in. Falstaff would have appeared lean by the side of this moving mountain of fat. He was the largest man I ever saw; the greasy rolls of flesh under his chin lay in waves on his breast; his jaws bulged out like the jaws of a fat hog, and a couple of teeth in the corners of his mouth stuck out over his lips like the tusks of a wild boar. Two little bunches of hair on the sides of his head were all he had; the red skin on top of his head was sleek, and glistened like polished metal.

“‘What have you got for me this morning, Mr. Marshal?’ he inquired as he seated himself by a table and began to adjust his spectacles on his large nose.

“‘We have two cases for trial this morning, sir,’ said a foppish young man. ‘One criminal case and one civil suit.’

“‘Ah, good! We’ll try the civil suit first.’

“The plaintiff in the civil suit was a pale-faced, poorly-dressed woman, with a forlorn, forsaken, half-starved appearance, who sat on a bench with a sickly-looking infant in her arms. When she stood up to be sworn as a witness she was compelled to lean on the table to keep from falling.

“‘What is your complaint, madame, against Judge Bosh?’ demanded the mayor gruffly, as he stared savagely at the poor woman. In a low, tremulous tone she stated her case:

“‘I contracted with Judge Bosh to work for him three months, for six dollars per month; I worked for him for two months and three-quarters, then fell ill, so that I was unable to work any more. He refused to pay me because I was unable to work the other quarter of a month. As soon as I got able to walk I went back and offered to work out my contract, but he said that it was too late – that he had made other arrangements. We are out of provisions at home, sir, and I hope you will make the judge pay me for the work I have done for him.’

“‘No doubt you do, no doubt you do,’ growled the fountain of justice, as he told the plaintiff to stand aside. ‘What has the defendant got to say?’ and he smiled blandly on Judge Bosh as that distinguished individual stepped forward and laid his hand on the Bible. ‘It is unnecessary to swear you; please make your statement.’

“‘That woman contracted to serve me three months. She failed to comply with her contract. As to her reasons, I know nothing about them, neither do I wish to know. A contract is a contract, and it binds both parties. She violated it, and I demand judgment.’

“‘Certainly, certainly, judge; most assuredly you are clearly entitled to it. Judgment against plaintiff for cost,’ he muttered as he wrote down the entry on his docket.

“The poor woman staggered out of the room, and fell fainting on the pavement.

“‘What’s next, Mr. Marshal?’

“‘A charge of assault and battery against Harry Wallingford.’

“Is that the little scamp who tried to murder our esteemed young friend, Bowles? He looks like a first-class rascal. I’ll teach him a lesson that he’ll not forget soon. O, Lord, how wicked this world is getting to be!” And he attempted to sigh, but it was a savage growl.

“Bowles was sworn as a witness; he took the stand, and commenced uttering falsehoods from the start; I was almost struck dumb with astonishment at his total disregard of the solemn oath he had made to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He wore a bandage on his head, and pretended to be suffering intense pain from the wound on it, while he had his leg in a sling. He stated that he ‘had been attracted to the camp by the singing, and that as soon as he arrived there he was insulted and abused in a most rude and vulgar manner by the two boys, the girl joining in with them. He said that while his back was turned toward the defendant he was knocked down with a club, and the savage dog set on him, lacerating the flesh of his leg; that as soon as he was able to regain his feet he had made his way home, completely prostrated from loss of blood.’

“‘Shocking, shocking!’ growled the mayor savagely, as he began to open and shut his mouth rapidly. ‘I wish I had the power to send all of them to the Penitentiary; they are traveling thieves, no doubt.’

“‘We are no thieves, sir,’ exclaimed Harry, springing to his feet; ‘the insinuation is false!’

“‘Silence, sir! How dare you insult this honorable court? I guess I’ll put you where you won’t have a chance to murder anybody soon. Any other witnesses, Mr. Bowles?’

“‘No, sir,’ said Bowles meekly, ‘that’s all.’

“‘Have you any witnesses, sir?’ he said to Harry.

“‘My sister was present, sir, and knows all about it.’

“‘Of course, of course, she was present; and I suppose you expect me to believe what she has to say, ha?’

“‘She will tell you the truth, sir, and nothing but the truth, and I hope no insinuation will be made to the contrary.’

“‘Ah, no doubt; come here, gal, and be sworn; and be sure you confine yourself to the facts. What are you shaking that way for? Nobody wants to eat you. Put your hand on this Bible.’

“Lottie was very much frightened, and was trembling like an aspen leaf. Tears were streaming down her cheeks and I stepped to her side to re-assure her.

“‘Take your seat, sir, and let her tell her own story,’ said the mayor, as he thrust his huge finger at my nose.

“I obeyed reluctantly, and Lottie began to tell her version of the matter. A large crowd of spectators had come in to witness the proceedings, and I perceived that the eloquent manner in which she was delivering her evidence was winning the sympathies of the crowd. I saw several of the spectators wiping tears from their eyes while she was describing the death of her mother, and telling how she and her brothers were trying to get to their uncle at Memphis. Her extreme beauty and modesty, the sweet melody of her voice, and the simplicity of her pleading, to some extent softened the marble heart of the mayor. She began to regain her self-possession as the story of her sufferings came from her lips. The brutal old official leaned back in his chair, with his mouth wide open, gazing with wonder at the angelic creature before him. Lottie seemed to have lost sight of the case before the court; but she began to plead for her brother with such persuasive eloquence that every man in the house was moved to tears. She gave a graphic description of her adventure with the rattlesnakes; showed her wounded wrist to the court, which had been nearly healed up when it was badly hurt again by the violence of Benjamin Bowles, who had insulted her and hurt her wounded arm at the same time.

“‘Cowardly villain was he, to insult my darling little flower queen!’ exclaimed Doctor Dodson, as he hurriedly caught Lottie in his arms and pressed a kiss on her brow. ‘Where is the cowardly wretch who has dared to insult this poor orphan child? Let me see his face. I’ll venture the assertion that it is more like a beast’s than a man’s face.’

“Bowles limped out of the room, being careful to keep behind the crowd as he passed out, looking as if he had important business that required his immediate attention at some other place. ‘Why, my dear doctor, how do you come on? I declare I’m delighted to see you!’ exclaimed the mayor, seizing the doctor’s hand and making an obsequious bow. ‘I am glad to see that you know this little lady; I dare say you will be able to throw some light on the matter now before the court.’

“‘I should say I did know that darling little orphan child. I know she is the sweetest little lady in the land; and who dares to say otherwise? Yes, and I know those two boys there (pointing to Harry and me); any one who has aught to say against them let him say it now in my presence!’

“The good old doctor was very much excited as he continued to defend our side of the case. Having exhausted himself, he dropped into a chair, and began to wipe the large drops of perspiration from his brow; and, as he blew his nose, he gave a snort that startled every man in the room.

“The mayor seemed to be at a loss how to proceed; for he was afraid to offend Doctor Dodson, who had been his family physician for many years; besides this, he was largely indebted to the doctor; and it was not exactly convenient for him to pay the debt just then. On the other hand, Benjamin Bowles was the son of a merchant to whom he was owing a very considerable sum, and he was anxious to decide the case so as not to offend him. The idea of deciding the case according to the rules of law and justice from the evidence never for a moment came into his mind.

“‘My dear doctor,’ said the mayor, as he scrambled up from his seat, ‘let me consult with you a moment privately.’

“The doctor followed him into a private room, when the mayor said: ‘Doctor, what do you know about those three children?’

“‘I know enough to convince me that the boys are heroes, and that the girl is a lovely little heroine. I know that they are friendless orphans, which should entitle them to the sympathies of all good men. I know that any one who would oppress or wrong them ought to go to the –’

“‘Yes, yes, I know, doctor; I’ll discharge them at once.’

“‘You should never have molested them at first. What business had that Bowles boy at their camp, I should like to know? You knew that he was the meanest, most unprincipled boy in this county, and I am surprised that you should so far have forgotten yourself as to have those poor helpless children dragged into court as if they were thieves. Now that’s what I think of the whole business. You go in there and discharge those children immediately, else we are enemies for life.’

“‘Oh, my dear doctor, I beseech you, don’t for a moment imagine that I would oppress the orphans, or deal harshly with the helpless. I was going to discharge them anyway. I was merely investigating the case for form’s sake. You know one has to appear stern and unbending sometimes, while his heart is melting with pity.’

“‘Yes, I know how it is. I have long been acquainted with the secret goodness of your heart; I wonder how you could keep it smothered so well.’

“‘Ah! doc, one in my position has much to contend with. It’s a difficult thing to hold the scales of justice so as to be impartial. I am not fit to be in office – my heart is too tender; I can’t keep from sympathizing with the weak and helpless, even when they have violated the law. I think I shall resign.’

“‘I would if I were you; your heart is too tender for the place; but let us go in and have the children discharged.’

“The mayor resumed his seat, adjusted his spectacles, and deliberately surveyed the crowd.

“‘My young friend Wallingford, we have had some difficulty in arriving at a correct conclusion respecting our duty in this case. We have patiently listened to the evidence, pro and con, and find in many respects a great conflict; that is to say, somewhat of a contradiction between the statements made by Mr. Bowles and the evidence given by Miss Wallingford. But I am pleased to be able to say that it is the opinion of the court that no willful perjury has been committed in this case; but the apparent conflict grew out of the confusion caused by the interference of that savage old dog in the little unpleasantness. The court very much regrets that it has no power to imprison dogs, or to

impose fines upon them. This is more especially to be regretted in this case, as it is the opinion of the court that the dog is the only MAN to blame in the matter. That being true, and as there is no lawful authority given me to punish the dog as he deserves, I am consequently compelled to dismiss Master Wallingford from custody and tax the corporation with the cost. I would admonish my young friend to endeavor to teach his dog better manners in future, lest he might involve his master in some serious trouble. Adjourn court, Mr. Marshal; and don't fail to collect the cost in the case of Mrs. Bonds against Judge Bosh.'

"Now let the curtain fall, for the farce is finished. It was a lucky thing for us that Doctor Dodson came to town that day, for Harry would have been sent to prison but for his timely arrival. Lottie threw her arms round the old gentleman's neck and kissed him fervently, and I saw the tears trembling in his eyes as he pressed her to his heart.

"'Heaven bless you, my child!' said he. 'I had a daughter about your age, but she is dead. Poor thing, she was very much like you; and should you ever need a home, come to me and you'll find one.'

"'I thank you so very much – much more than words can express, and I hope God will reward you!'

"'There, there, child, hush, or you'll make a fool of me!' and he left the room with the brim of his hat pulled down over his eyes to hide his tears.

"Once more we were permitted to renew our march on the road to Memphis; and during the next three days nothing occurred worthy of mention. We were happy because Lottie kept up so well – she was so cheerful, and never complained; the cloth shoes I had made for her proved a great success; no more blisters appeared on her feet; the weather, though quite warm during the day, was pleasant mornings and evenings, while the nights were delightful. We continued our gipsy plan of camping out nights, and traveled leisurely during the day, so as not to fatigue Lottie.

"But as I hear the music in the saloon, which is the signal for the dance to commence, I shall break off the thread here, and promise to take it up again when her Majesty shall be pleased to command me."

"I had rather listen to the story than to dance," said Scottie.

"So would I," said the queen.

But just then the band struck up a lively air, and the temptation of the dance proved irresistible, for the majority of the maskers hastened to the cabin, and the others had nothing to do but to follow.

CHAPTER VII

IT required no summons to be issued by the queen next morning in order to assemble her followers. They were on deck immediately after breakfast, long before the queen made her appearance, anxiously waiting to hear more of the tale. Therefore, when her Majesty made her appearance, Ingomar was at once requested to proceed, which he did without preliminaries.

“Incidents apparently trifling oftentimes shape our destiny. But in making this statement I do not mean to convey the impression that I am about to describe a trifling incident, but the insignificant circumstances which caused the incident are what I refer to. Had it not been for an old bob-tailed, one-eyed, stray dog that happened to take a fancy to Lottie, and concluded to cast his destiny with her, there would have been no use telling this story. Old Bob was fond of chasing rabbits. One day he started one; the rabbit ran for life; Bob ran for the rabbit. The rabbit ran in a certain direction; Bob ran in the same direction; he followed the rabbit, and we followed him; while doing so we came to a gravel pit, which gravel pit I am sure we never would have seen had Bob not started the rabbit; but as he did start it, thereby causing us to go to the gravel pit, I shall proceed to tell what followed. A large number of men were shoveling the gravel onto flat cars, to be hauled on the line of the railroad for ballasting the track. The rabbit took refuge in a hollow tree near where the men were at work; they came and cut the tree down and caught the rabbit. We sat down near the gravel pit to rest; the foreman invited us to ride on the gravel train to the next station, which was directly on our road. We were delighted at the prospect of a ten-mile ride on the cars, and what made it most desirable was the fact that it would put us ten miles nearer Memphis in a few minutes, whereas it would be a good day’s walk if we had to foot it. We thanked the foreman heartily and accepted his kind offer.

“Hurry up, my men,’ said the foreman, as he looked at his watch, ‘throw in lively; we have no time to spare, for we must get to the station before the passenger train.’

“The men threw the gravel on the cars with great rapidity, and very soon the flats were loaded and the train began to move. Lottie and I took seats on the car next to the engine, while Harry went forward to ride on the pilot.

“My little man,’ said the engineer to Harry, ‘it is very dangerous to ride on the pilot. You had better not attempt it, as we are compelled to run very rapidly so as to reach the station before the passenger train.’

“I was astonished to see that Harry paid no attention to the warning; it was so different from his usual way of doing things. It was I who had been considered reckless, while Harry was looked upon as the embodiment of prudence and wisdom. Lottie called to her brother, begging him to come back and ride with her; but he sat immovable and silent, without turning his head to notice her. Harry afterward informed me that a strange, unaccountable desire to ride on the pilot of the engine seized upon him, and he could not resist it.

“It may be imagination, merely,’ said he, ‘but I thought something whispered to my mind, positively directing me to ride there. I had the inclination to heed the warning of the engineer, but a most mysterious influence seemed to rivet me down to the spot, so I could not move. I have heard that notice of approaching events was often conveyed to the human mind through the medium of dreams, but in my case the notice came while I was wide awake, and in a manner to me incomprehensible and most mysterious. Call it superstition if you will; call it nonsense if you choose; I care not; I state facts, and you may draw your own conclusions.’

“I did not argue the question with him, for I perceived that he was deeply in earnest, and his manner was so serious that I thought best to say nothing against his strange theory.

“Let her run, Dan,’ said the conductor to the engineer, as he held his watch in his hand; ‘only ten minutes till number four is due at the station, and eight miles to run.’

“The engineer, who had a frank, open countenance and keen, intelligent eyes and iron-gray hair, seized the lever and gave a backward pull, and the engine dashed forward like a ball discharged from a siege gun. Fences, trees and houses all seemed to be flying; the wind whistled about Harry’s face, and played with his dark-brown hair as it floated straight out behind his head. He held his hat in his hand, while his face was all aglow with excitement.

“‘You had better order that boy away from the pilot,’ said the engineer to the conductor, as he opened the throttle to let on more steam; ‘he might get hurt where he is; we are taking great risk anyway; the track, you know, is very crooked from here to the station; if a cow, or hog, or anything should be on the track, he would be killed.’

“‘You had better not ride there, my little man,’ said the conductor, ‘it is very dangerous.’

“Harry sat immovable, as if he had been fastened there with bolts of steel, while the train flew onward at the extraordinary speed of a mile per minute. It is very probable that Harry did not hear the warning given by the conductor, as the noise made by the engine as it thundered on may have prevented it. At all events, he did not move; he was rapidly approaching his destiny; whether that destiny was for weal or woe will be a matter for after consideration. Harry always contended that it was a supernatural influence that compelled him to take his seat on the pilot of that particular engine at that particular time. He said that the influence, or whatever it was, came upon him with such unmistakable distinctness that he would have resisted any attempt to force him away. The more I ridiculed the idea, the more firmly did he stick to it.

“‘It was Providence,’ said he, ‘that is certain.’

“‘I wonder if Providence made old Bob start the rabbit, merely to guide us to the gravel pit?’ said I.

“‘No doubt of it,’ was his reply.

“‘I didn’t know before now that you were so full of superstition.’

“‘If it is superstition to believe that Providence prompted me to ride on the engine that day, then I am overflowed with it.’

“The brave old engineer stood with his hand on the lever, his sleeves rolled above his elbows, his face blackened with smut and smoke, his gray locks pushed back and streaming in the wind. Undaunted courage was stamped on every feature; his lips were firmly closed, and the picture he presented reminded me of the description of Vulcan which I had read in Homer.

“‘Will she make it, Dan?’ inquired the conductor.

“‘Yes, I think so,’ replied the engineer; ‘but it will be a close race – two miles to run; two minutes and a quarter to make it in.’

“‘We’re safe then,’ said the conductor. ‘They can hear us coming and will wait for us.’

“Within one mile of the station there was a sharp curve in the track where it swung round the base of a tall ridge, then lay out on the top of a very high embankment, thence across a bridge, with a straight run from there to the station. The train was coming round the curve with unusual speed, as it was running down grade. Harry sat on the pilot with his eyes fixed in front, and just as the train came round the last spur of the ridge, he saw a little girl sitting on the gravel in the center of the track, with her apron filled with wild flowers, which she was busily weaving into festoons. The train was within one hundred yards of her before she was discovered. She was on the part of the track that lay on the top of the high embankment, the sides of which were very steep, and it was full thirty feet to the ground from where the little girl sat. The engineer immediately blew the signal for down brakes, then reversed his engine (a very dangerous operation to perform while running rapidly down grade); all the brakes were put on, and the brakeman seemed to strain every nerve to hold them as much down as possible. The engineer kept his whistle shrieking and screaming in order to warn the child of her danger. She rose and started to run toward the bridge, then hesitated a moment, and made a move as if she were going to jump over the embankment. An Irish woman who was the child’s nurse had imprudently left her on the track while she was gathering the flowers some distance from it.

When the nurse discovered the danger to which the little girl was exposed she hallooed to the child, telling her to leap down the side of the embankment. She made a movement as if she were going to do it, then evidently became frightened at the great distance to the ground. Meantime the train was rapidly approaching the spot where the child was, notwithstanding the fact that all the brakes were down and the engine reversed. The momentum was so great, and the grade being downward, the train continued to move forward. The noise made by the whistle, added to the thundering sounds made by the approaching train, only served to increase the child's confusion. The second time she started to run across the bridge, and again she ran back a few paces; then became so paralyzed with fright that she stopped, unable to move. The train was within a few feet of the little girl, and it now became certain that the engine could not be stopped before it reached the bridge, although it was running quite slowly, not faster than a man could run; but what did that signify? Wouldn't the child be crushed to death unless the engine could be stopped before she was reached? It was plain to be seen that the little girl had lost her self-possession, and she stood gazing at the approaching train in despair. She had very long hair, which floated loose down her back, while the flowers lay scattered on the ground where she stood. The picture she presented then was pretty, 'tis true, but the situation was awful. My heart grew sick at the sight. I noticed Harry getting down on the very front of the iron frame commonly called the cow-catcher; but what good could he do by that? The engine was within ten feet of the little girl when I saw the old engineer turn his face away and throw both hands to his eyes, as if he were trying to shut out the shocking scene that was about to be witnessed.

“Oh! great God have mercy on us,” he exclaimed, as he turned away.

“Harry placed his foot on the outer end of the longest bar of iron, then made a desperate leap forward, seized the child by the arm, and both went rolling down the steep side of the embankment. He made the leap when the engine was only about six feet from the child, and he must have made his calculations very accurately, for he only let one foot strike the ground between the rails, while the other struck the ground outside of the rails. The slightest miscalculation or the least mistake, would have been fatal to him as well as her for whom he made the gallant leap. At the base of the embankment there was a pond of muddy water, bordered with briars and broken rocks. Harry and the little girl landed in the middle of the pond, bruised and bleeding from many wounds. The engine came to a halt as soon as it struck the bridge, and the engineer leaped down to where Harry lay in the water and lifted him up in his arms. It was an affecting sight to see the man of iron nerve weeping like a child.

“My brave little hero,” he exclaimed, as he pressed Harry's brow to his lips, ‘are you hurt?’

“Not much sir, I believe, though my leg is broken,” said Harry.

“Poor fellow! he fainted in the arms of the strong man who carried him up the embankment and placed him on the train. The little girl had a severe contusion on her temple, caused by falling against a sharp-cornered rock at the base of the embankment. She was also placed on the train, and then it was put in motion, and soon was at the station, and a surgeon sent for, while the wounded children were removed to a hotel near the depot. The mother of the little girl (a pale-faced, delicate little woman of great beauty) swooned and fell to the ground when she saw the bleeding child in my arms. The father of the child took her from me.

“In Heaven's name pray tell me what has happened!” said he, as he took his daughter from me.

“She is not seriously hurt, sir,” said I, and then I told him what had occurred.

“Harry had regained consciousness before we reached the station, and when he saw how Lottie was weeping as she held his head in her lap, he smiled pleasantly. ‘Don't be alarmed, Lottie dear, I am not seriously hurt – just one leg broken, that's all. Wasn't it lucky that I happened to be on the front of that engine? Is the little girl much hurt?’

“No, I think not,” said the conductor, ‘she got a slight cut on the temple.’

“Wasn’t she a pretty little darling?” continued Harry; ‘I fell in love with her as we rolled down the embankment together; and when I get to be a man, if she is willing, we’ll go down the path of life together.’

“His mind is wandering,’ whispered the conductor.

“Harry overheard him.

“Perhaps it is,’ said he, ‘but let it wander as much as it likes, so long as it happens to stray in that direction. Hush crying, Lottie dear, I tell you I am not much hurt; I shall be well again in three weeks.’

“The old surgeon arrived, threw off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work like a man who knew what he was about; and I was struck with admiration for the man when I saw the skill with which he reset the broken bones and placed the splints.

“There now, we’re all right, my brave little hero,’ he said, smiling as he finished pinning the bandage. ‘Keep it moist with cold water to prevent inflammation, and in three weeks this leg will be as good as the other one. By the by, what’s your name, little man?’

“Harry Wallingford, sir.’

“Ah, ha! a very nice name, too, it is. And the pretty little girl whose life you saved is the sweetest little angel that ever touched the earth!’

“Who is she?’ Harry inquired.

“Viola Bramlett is her name. She is the daughter of Mr. Bolivar Bramlett, of New York City, who is traveling in the South for the benefit of his wife’s health. They have been stopping at this hotel some three or four weeks, and being called in to see Mrs. Bramlett professionally, I have had a chance to become well acquainted with the family; therefore, you see, I speak advisedly when I say that little Viola is an angel.’

“I hope,’ said Harry, ‘that she is not badly hurt.’

“Oh, no; she is not hurt much at all – a slight contusion on the temple, and a few scratches from the briars – that’s all. Her father will be in to see you directly; he is overwhelmed with gratitude to you; and little Viola (Heaven bless her!), won’t talk about anything except the pretty little brave boy who kept her from being killed. She insisted on coming to see you now, but I persuaded her to wait till your wounds were dressed. So you see that you may expect soon to be overflowed with thanks and kisses from the sweetest little darling that the world ever saw. Ah, you’re a lucky lad, anyway. Good morning; I’ll see you again this evening; don’t move the wounded leg; keep it perfectly still, and talk as much as you please to the little angel when she comes to see you.’

“Then the old surgeon bustled out of the room, and went to visit his other patients. It was but a little while after Harry’s wounds had been dressed when Viola came bounding into the room, threw her arms round his neck, kissing his lips at least a dozen times in rapid succession. Then she said, with a voice which I thought very sweet and musical: ‘Oh, you don’t know how much I thank you for saving my life! Papa says that I should have been crushed to death but for your bravery. He says you are a real hero, and he is going to divide all his money with you. My papa has great heaps of money, and he is going to give you half of it, and I am to have the other half. Now, won’t that be nice?’

“I watched her movements with intense interest, and concluded that the old surgeon’s description of her charms had not been exaggerated. Harry gazed at her with such a look of admiration that I was convinced that he concurred in the opinion expressed by the surgeon in regard to her exceeding great beauty. Mr. Bramlett then made his appearance, and was very enthusiastic and profuse in his thanks to Harry for saving his little darling, as he called Viola.

“She is all we have, sir, and if she had been taken from us, it would have been a fatal blow to our happiness. Words cannot express the gratitude we feel toward you; and, as soon as you get well, we shall talk more about it. I am a man of business, and not a man of many words; therefore, you shall hear from me again when you get well;’ then, bending down, he gathered Viola to his heart, and as he kissed her fervently, said: ‘Go now, my darling, and get some choice flowers for the little brave hero who risked his life to save you. You must be his nurse, you know, and must keep him

well supplied with flowers and iced lemonade, etc., etc;’ and before the sentence was finished Viola had skipped off to collect the flowers.

“Very soon she came in with her apron full of roses, pinks and geraniums, and deposited them in great heaps on Harry’s bed, filling the chamber with their sweet odor.

“Now, Mr. Harry,’ she said, ‘there’s your nice flowers; and, while you are enjoying their fragrance, I must go and fetch you some lemonade and ice. Papa is making the lemonade for you, and he told me to give you the flowers, and then to come for the lemonade.’

“She was gone but a moment, when she returned with a little tray, on which sat three goblets full of lemonade and ice; giving the first goblet to Harry, she then gave the other two to Lottie and me. When she went out Harry said: ‘Eddie, isn’t she the sweetest little thing you ever saw?’”

“Yes, with one exception, undoubtedly,’ I replied, casting a side glance at Lottie. She understood my meaning, and blushed crimson as she turned her face away.

“Of course you think Lottie is the prettiest, and I sha’n’t quarrel with you about that.’

“I was delighted to see Harry so cheerful under his sufferings, because it was plain that his wound was paining him. His leg was broken about three inches above the ankle joint; but thanks to the skillful old surgeon, no lameness or deformity resulted from it, and in less than four weeks he was able to walk without crutches. The railroad men from far and near came to see Harry, and they almost worshiped him. The old engineer came every day to inquire how he was getting on, calling Harry his brave little hero. Mrs. Bramlett was unremitting in her attention to Harry, overwhelming him with grateful thanks. She said that her husband had concluded to go with us to Memphis, and never to part from us until he saw us safely landed with Harry’s uncle. The days of Harry’s convalescence were days of unalloyed happiness to me; for I had nothing to do but to saunter among the flowers with Lottie, while Harry was with Viola all the time.”

The queen requested Ingomar to suspend a while. Then the party began to promenade the deck.

CHAPTER VIII

SCOTTIE was leaning on the arm of Ivanhoe, as they promenaded the deck, conversing in subdued tones.

“Have you noticed that lady with black silk domino and yellow mask?”

“No; what about her?”

“That’s she leaning on the arm of the old gentleman with long, white whiskers. I suppose he is her father. Her movements have a mystery about them that excited my curiosity. She has been listening to Ingomar attentively all the time, yet she never speaks a word to any one, except the old gentleman, nor does she mingle with our party; yet she follows Ingomar wherever he goes, as though she was a spy on his track.”

“Indeed! that is strange; and to add to the mystery, I see that those two seedy men have kept close to Ingomar all the time, and appear to be in earnest conversation, which is always carried on in whispers. I think something unusual will develop itself soon.”

“So do I; but I hope it will be nothing against Ingomar; I believe he is a perfect gentleman.”

“I hope you may be right there; but it won’t do to judge by appearances.”

“Look, look! see that woman in the black domino! she is pointing at Ingomar now, and whispering to the old gentleman. I heard her say in a whisper to the same person last night that the suspense was killing her; now, what could that mean?”

“You are too much for me there; but we must wait patiently for further developments; meantime, let us get our party together and hear more of Ingomar’s story.”

“Yes, yes; I am anxious to hear more; go see the queen, and ask her to order the tale continued.”

“About five weeks after Harry had been hurt Mr. Bramlett came into his room, and after talking for a few minutes on general topics, he handed him a roll of bank bills, containing one thousand dollars.

“‘Take this, my brave little hero,’ said he, ‘as a present from Viola; and if ever the time comes when you should need a friend, just write to me, and I promise you that I will respond.’

“‘You are very, very kind, sir,’ said Harry, as he bit his lips, and it was plain to be seen that he was deeply offended, on handing the money back; ‘I hope you won’t think me rude, sir, but I can’t take your money.’

“‘I was greatly vexed at Harry’s conduct; here was money enough to answer all our demands; it seemed to me that no one but a crazy person would refuse such a sum.

“‘Why, my little friend,’ said Mr. Bramlett, ‘you must allow me to show my gratitude in some way; and how could I do it any better than by helping you with ready money? You must think of your little sister; she must be taken care of; and how can you do it unless you have money to pay her board and buy her clothes?’

“‘I can work for her, sir, and so can Eddie; we shall both work for her; I should feel like a beggar, sir, if I were to take your money.’

“‘All a mistake, I assure you; I have an ample fortune; you saved the life of my darling Viola, and you must allow me to do something to show my gratitude.’

“‘I was not thinking of money, sir, when I saved your daughter; I was thinking of her.’

“‘No doubt, no doubt you were; but you have suffered much on account of the gallant deed, and I shall be deeply mortified if you refuse to allow me a chance to show how much I feel the obligation.’

“‘I am very sorry, sir, to hear you say that; but really, I cannot take any money.’

“‘Suppose then, we make a trade. Let me loan you three thousand dollars at five per cent. interest, taking your note, with Edward as security, on condition that you use the money in completing the education of yourself, your sister and Edward; then you study law, and when you begin to make money at your profession, you shall pay my money back with interest. What say you to that?’

“That would be worse; it would be receiving the money under false pretenses; I can readily understand the kindness that prompts you to make the offer, but as I never should be able to pay your money back, it would not be right for me to take it.”

“Mr. Bramlett left the room rather abruptly; he was vexed at Harry’s obstinacy, and when he went into his wife’s room he said: ‘That foolish boy refuses to accept any aid from me; I declare it is too bad; it is a shame to see them start out afoot again; he is the most high-strung chap I ever saw; I’ll resort to strategy; I’ll employ some agent to look after those children.’”

“‘Allow me to make a suggestion,’ said Mrs. Bramlett to her husband; ‘as we are going to Memphis, anyway, you might procure a situation for the boys with some of your business friends in Memphis, and then you could place money with your agent and have it paid to them in such sums as they need, making them believe all the while that they are earning it; that would keep them from feeling that they are objects of charity, for to tell you the truth, I rather admire their high-strung notions, as you call them. Of course they are too young to be of much service to anybody, but it would encourage them if they could be made to think that they were earning their support.’”

“‘Thank you, dear, for the suggestion; it is the very thing. We will go to Memphis to-morrow, and the matter shall be arranged.’”

“Of course, we were ignorant of this arrangement, and did not find it out for many years afterward. I was at that time unable to support Harry’s independent views, and tried to argue the question with him, but it was a failure on my part.

“‘I should despise myself,’ said he, ‘if I were to take the kind gentleman’s money, knowing that I never should be able to pay it back. Then, perhaps, it would displease our uncle if he knew we had accepted money in the way of charity.’”

“He went so far as to refuse to take the train with Mr. Bramlett until that gentleman promised to furnish him employment as soon as we should reach Memphis, by which we could re-imburse him for the money advanced to pay our fare; and I don’t believe he would have done that but for the influence brought to bear on him by Viola, who threw her arms about his neck and declared that she would cry her eyes out unless he went with her to Memphis.

“When we arrived at Memphis, Mr. Bramlett took us to the Worsham House, promising to inquire for our uncle on the next day; and when he came back, after having gone out for that purpose, and informed us that our uncle had gone to California, with a view of making it his permanent home, we began to realize the fact that we were now left all alone and must think and act for ourselves.

“‘What are we to do now, Harry?’ I inquired.

“‘We must seek employment at once,’ said he, ‘and we must lose no time about it either. You stay with Lottie, and I’ll go out and see what we can get to do.’”

“Harry returned after three hours’ absence, and the look of disappointment that appeared on his face convinced me of his failure before he told it.

“‘No one seems to want us,’ he said gloomily, as he dropped exhausted on a chair. ‘I have met nothing but disappointment at every point; but I will try again, when I get rested.’”

“Lottie wiped the perspiration from his brow with her handkerchief, and ran her fingers through his hair.

“‘You must get some work for me to do, too, Harry; you know how nicely I can sew, and how neatly I can cut and fit a lady’s dress. I shall make a great deal of money, if you’ll only get the work for me to do.’”

“‘I know you would, Lottie, but no one will give us work. I fear, because we are strangers here, and people don’t like to trust strangers, you know.’”

“‘Papa has gone out to hunt work for you to do, Harry,’ said Viola, as she pushed Lottie gently away from her brother; ‘you go and stay with Eddie there, Miss Lottie, and leave me to look after Harry. I shall be jealous, you know, if you pay so much attention to my hero. Speaking of work, I heard papa say to mamma that he would find a good place for you to live at before he left the city;”

then we are going to New Orleans, and then we are going to Havana, and then we are going to come back here to see you; and then won't we have lots of fun?' And stooping down with her mouth to Harry's ear she said: 'I've got something nice for you, but you must come with me to my room before I show it to you, because Eddie and Lottie are not to see it at all, so come along now.'

"Of course Harry went, and he was not prepared for the surprise which she gave him, for she held up a large golden locket swinging to a heavy gold chain. 'There it is; isn't it pretty? Papa gave seventy-five dollars for it, and you must accept it as a present from me. You see it has got my picture in it. I thought maybe you would like my picture to look at when I am gone; for I'm sure I should like very much to have yours to look at when I am so far away from you.'

"I shall wear this pretty picture next to my heart as long as I live, and I shall always love the darling who gave it to me.'

"You must get your picture made, and give it to me before I go away, won't you?"

"Harry did not know what answer to make, for he knew that it required money to have a picture made, and money was not his.

"Maybe so,' he said sadly.

"O! don't say that; you must not by any means refuse me your picture.'

"You shall have it as soon as I can earn the money to pay for it.'

"Never mind the money, I'll get that from papa; he always gives me money when I ask him.'

"I should rather pay for it with my own money; then it would be a present from me.'

"I persuaded Harry to remain at the hotel until I should make a tour through the city to try my luck in seeking employment. I went from house to house, from one end of Main street to the other, asking at all places for work; and then I went on Front row, and tried every business house for employment, willing to do anything to make an honest living. I offered to drive a dray, or to roll barrels, or any sort of work that anybody might want done; but no one seemed to care to employ me. I suppose it was my green and seedy appearance that went against me, and I was returning to the hotel, completely overcome with fatigue and disappointment, when I heard a familiar voice call my name.

"Ah, ha! here we are again, Eddie, old fellow; you are the very chap I was looking for. Ah, ha! Eddie, what good luck?"

"I was seized by both hands, and looking up, saw the kind eyes of old Doctor Dodson bent on me. No one will ever know how my sad heart leaped for joy when I heard his kind words.

"Yes, yes. Ah, ha! You were the very lad I wished to see. I have just come to Memphis with a view of making it my home; I have bought a drug-store, and mean to practice my profession here, and sell drugs also, and I mean to put you in the store as my clerk, etc., etc. Ah, ha! Eddie; yes, yes; you see it all now, don't you?"

"I was so overjoyed with the news that I was unable to answer then; but as soon as I could collect my ideas I thanked him and promised to accept his kind offer. It was agreed that I should commence business with the doctor on the next morning.

"Ah, ha! Eddie, all settled, you see; that's business. I mean to make a great doctor out of you one of these days. You've got a splendid head for a doctor. Ah, ha! that you have, my boy. There now, you may go until to-morrow, and then to business, you know.'

"I hastened to the hotel to impart the good news to Harry and Lottie, and I must say that I had risen at least one hundred per cent, in my own estimation. Wouldn't I now be able to support Lottie, and Harry, too? I imagined that I should be able to support them with all ease; but that, of course, was one of the childish dreams which often found lodgment in my simple brain. When I returned to the hotel and imparted the good news to Harry and Lottie, it made me very happy to see how much pleasure it gave them. Meantime Mr. Bramlett had been arranging his plans, or rather executing the plans he had determined on previously. He was seated in the office of Mr. Rockland, an eminent lawyer, who had for many years been his agent and adviser.

“Mr. Rockland,’ said Mr. Bramlett, ‘this is a delicate matter, and I trust you with its management; and I may as well tell you now that it will require some strategy, and much skill, to make the plan work smoothly. I have never met with three such children. They are as proud as Lucifer, and as independent as if they had the wealth of the Rothchilds; and if they ever should suspect that the money comes from me, the whole business goes overboard certain.’

“I see,’ said the lawyer. ‘I think I shall be able to manage the business so as to accomplish what you wish. If I understand you correctly, Mr. Bramlett, you want those children properly educated, and then you want the boys to be put to the law as soon as their education shall have been completed.’

“Just so, Mr. Rockland; you understand me correctly. I feel under great obligations to young Mr. Wallingford, and have offered to show it by aiding him, but he rejects my offer merely through pride; therefore I mean to help him in this secret manner. I beg you not to stand back on account of money – draw on me for all that may be necessary, and the cash will come.’

“The description you have given of those children convinces me that my task will be rather an agreeable one; because pride and independence are by no means evil qualities, unless possessed by ignorant people; and they are far from being ignorant, judging from what you have told me. Mrs. Rockland will be glad to receive them, as we have no children of our own; consequently, she leads rather a lonely existence; so you may consider the matter settled.’

“Here is a card for Harry Wallingford,’ said a bell-boy, as he dipped his head in the door.

“Harry read as follows:

“HARRY WALLINGFORD:

“SIR – Please call at my office immediately. I wish to see you on important business.
Respectfully,

N. ROCKLAND.’

“Harry went to the office without delay, while his mind was crowded with conjectures as to what kind of business was to be discussed. He found Mr. Rockland seated near a table covered with a huge mass of papers, busily engaged looking over them, and when Harry entered the office the old lawyer fixed his eyes on him for a moment as if measuring his worth.

“Take a seat, little man; I suppose you are Harry Wallingford?”

“Yes, sir.’

“Mr. Bramlett was speaking to me about you, and, by the by, he has given you a very favorable recommendation, and I have concluded to offer you employment, if we can agree on terms. I want a boy to help me in my office, and you shall have the place, if you think it will suit you.’

“I shall be glad, sir, to get the place, and shall try to please you.’

“Very good; I shall not be able to offer you very large wages.’

“I could not expect it, sir.’

“Then to come to the point, I propose to board and clothe you and your sister for the work you and she can do. She can be a sort of companion to Mrs. Rockland. You see we have no children, therefore your sister will no doubt be able to help Mrs. Rockland in many ways; meantime she can go to school; so can you; but then you will have to work very hard, because I shall require you to work mornings and evenings, and sometimes late at night. This, you know, must be understood before we close the contract. If I board, clothe and educate you and your sister, you see it will require all the money that you and she could earn.’

“I am afraid, sir, we shall not be able to earn enough to pay for all that.’

“I’ll risk that; but you’ll find I shall keep you very busy. And then I must find a situation for your step-brother.’

“He has found a situation with Doctor Dodson, sir.’

“Oh! has he? That’s lucky; then we are all right; is it a bargain between us?”

“Yes, sir; and I am very thankful. When do you wish me to commence?”

“Stay with Mr. Bramlett until he starts to New Orleans, then bring your sister to my house, and we shall go to work.’

“When Harry came back his handsome face was beaming with pleasure; and while relating what had occurred, he did not fail to congratulate Lottie on the chances which she would have of securing an accomplished education. Fortune seemed to have made up her mind on this occasion to shower her brightest smiles on us all at once. Had she not provided us with good homes, kind friends and all we could expect or wish for? And right here I feel it to be my duty to express my thanks to old bob-tail Robert; for it was all brought about by him. What a slice of good luck it was that caused him to take a fancy to Lottie on that eventful night when he came to our camp and began to lick her hand! I suppose Madame Fortune had prompted him to do it. We never knew who was old Bob’s master before he concluded to cast his lot with us, but from his ‘lean and hungry look’ we inferred that he had been serving a cruel master, and that he was out on a foraging expedition when he happened to come upon our camp. The night was dark, and I suppose he came near enough to see Lottie’s sweet face, as she sat gazing into the fire, and here is the substance of what I imagine passed through old Bob’s mind as he peered into Lottie’s face with his one eye:

“I am very hungry; the fact is, I am about to perish for food; my master is unkind and cruel; instead of giving me food, he gives me nothing but blows and curses, and I believe I shall run away from him, and seek me another master. That little girl has a beautiful countenance, and I expect she has a kind heart, and I think she would have compassion on a poor old hungry dog like me; I believe I’ll venture up to her, and lick her hand, and maybe she will give me a bone to gnaw on. Oh! how I wish I had a beautiful tail to wag, in order to make her pity me. I am afraid my ugliness will frighten her, and if it does, I shall be driven off, and then shall get no bone; but my poor stomach is so empty, and my mouth waters so, that I shall venture up at all hazards. If she drives me away it can’t make matters worse, and if she is kind and gives me a bone, I’ll follow her, for her sweet face leads me to think she’ll do to tie to.’

“Immediately after having the unuttered conversation with himself, old Bob ventured up and licked Lottie’s hand; the result was he got a medium supper, and found that the favorable opinion he had formed as to the kindness of her heart was by no means too extravagant. We know what followed – at least we know that Bob followed Lottie, and we further know that his fondness for rabbits led us to the gravel pit, which led us to the gravel train which carried Harry to the embankment, where he saved the life of Viola, whose father caused Mr. Rockland to give us good homes, and this proves that it is better to give a poor dog kindness than kicks. Now who knows what might have happened to us if old Bob had not trusted to Lottie’s kind face that night, or if she had taken a stick and beaten him? I dare say we should have been wandering about the streets of Memphis, friendless, houseless, and penniless; working for our daily bread, and sleeping in some filthy, sickly den, while dear Lottie would have been dressed in rags. But now, through her kindness to poor old one-eyed, tailless Bob, she has got a splendid home, good friends, fine clothes, and bright prospects unfolding themselves for the future. Who will venture to deny that old Bob was possessed of good judgment? Who will say that he did not make a good selection, when he concluded to take Lottie for his mistress and protector?

“Well, here we are. Ah, ha! Eddie,’ said Doctor Dodson next morning, when he met me at the door of his new drug-store. ‘I suppose you are ready for business? Ah, ha!’

“Yes, sir.’

“Good, my boy, good!’

“Then he began to instruct me as to the duties I was to perform, and teaching me the names of the various kinds of drugs. I went to work with the determination to succeed, and to please my kind-hearted employer. It was but a few months before I knew the names of all the drugs, and could make up the prescriptions with skill and safety; I was very proud to find that the doctor was pleased with me. The doctor’s wife was as kind to me as if she had been my own mother, and, all things considered, I had a happy home, and was contented.

“Harry and Lottie were delighted with their new situations; but I did not see them as often as I wished, though I went with Lottie to church occasionally, and sat in the same pew with her, and read my prayers in her book, and then mixed drugs and built air castles the remainder of the week. But I am getting tired of talking about children, and I expect my hearers are tired of it, too, and I shall therefore say but little more about it. If I have bored you with too much talk of dogs and children, I beg pardon, and promise to make a long leap over the space of seven years. They were years of happiness to me – so were they to Lottie and Harry. Lottie is eighteen, and more beautiful than ever. The large dreamy eyes are the same, but the tall, queenly form has filled out, presenting a model that an artist would delight to paint from. The stamp of intellect was sparkling on her white brow, and she was (as I thought then, and think now) the most charming girl that my eyes had ever looked upon. Harry had made rapid progress in his legal studies, and would be ready to enter on his professional career by the time he was twenty-one; while I was an overgrown, awkward young man, rather shy, and sneaky when in the presence of strangers; though I had studied closely, and Doctor Dodson said I would some day be a great physician. It was arranged that I should attend the lectures in Philadelphia, and I thought it best to have an understanding with Lottie before I left. I had never asked her to be my wife. I became jealous and unhappy because Lottie was surrounded by devoted admirers, many of whom were men of wealth and high social standing; and I was alarmed lest I should after all lose the great prize. But let us rest a while, and I’ll tell more about it in the next chapter.”

CHAPTER IX

“Lottie had been at the Bards Town School in Kentucky for four years; but she usually spent the summer vacation at home. She graduated with the highest honors, having won the first prize in Greek, Latin and French, and triumphantly carried off the costly gold cup offered for the best original poem. There were two things combined which contributed to her success. In the first place, she possessed the active brain, and the ambition; and in the second place, she had been trained and taught much of the time by Mr. Rockland before she went to the Kentucky school. The iron lawyer would often take her into his library and make her recite lesson after lesson, when he would lecture her on the different branches of her studies. Then he would stray away into ancient and modern history, poetry and politics, spending hours in expounding them to the mind that was so able and willing to grasp the meaning. He would often make Lottie draw up bills in chancery – write pleas and declarations under his direction. Then he would explain all the legal points in some important case, and request her to look up the law and arrange his brief. It was a remarkable fact that Mr. Rockland would neglect his best paying clients in order to cram his solid ideas into Lottie’s grasping mind.

“‘Ed, she will be home to-morrow,’ said Harry Wallingford as he ran his hand under my arm and walked down the street by my side. ‘I have just received a telegram from her; she left Bards Town this morning, and is now in Louisville. Mr. Rockland is going to give a grand ball in honor of her great triumph as the champion prize-taker at Bards Town. I suppose you have heard about her wonderful victory?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘See here, old fellow, is that all you have to say in praise of this wonderful sister of mine? What is the matter with you, anyway? You look as if you wanted to murder somebody.’

“‘There is nothing wrong with me at all, and I am glad to hear of Lottie’s grand achievements,’ I replied rather dryly, because I had begun to discuss with my mind on the probabilities of losing Lottie. I knew full well that many a gallant knight would be ready to leap into the arena as a contestant for the charming prize – ready to battle to the death to win the hand and heart of the most lovely, the most beautiful and the most talented girl in Tennessee. When I weighed my chances well I was forced to the conclusion that they were too light to go into the balances against many other young men who I knew were going to enter the lists. Lottie had always manifested a partiality for me, but I was afraid that it was more a feeling of sisterly love than anything else. During our childhood days we had often talked of the feelings of true love which we had for each other; but Lottie was now a woman, and I did not want her to love me as a brother. I had no money, and but little education – was green and awkward, timid and ugly, and had no confidence in myself; but I was determined to break many a lance before a rival should carry off the great prize.

“Mr. Rockland was so deeply in love with Lottie that it amounted to idolatry, and it was generally believed, and publicly expressed, that he would settle his large fortune on her. He was extravagant in the expenditure of money for her comfort; in fact, he poured it out like water to gratify her slightest wish, though she was rather inclined to be economical and prudent. She seemed to think more of her books and music than she did of dress and display.

“‘Ed, old boy,’ exclaimed Wallingford, after a long pause, ‘did you know that I was very proud of my sister?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Ah, yes, I tell you what it is, she is ahead of any girl in Memphis, so far as intelligence and goodness are concerned. Mrs. Rockland says that she is going to set Lottie out when the ball comes off.’

“‘How set her out?’

“Pshaw! don’t you know what they mean by setting a girl out? Of course you do. When a girl is ready to receive matrimonial propositions they set her out; that is, they hang out the sign. As the gamblers say, they spread their lay-out, don’t you see? Well, Mrs. Rockland is going to rig Lottie up and throw her at the heads of the male community, as it were. Now, Ed, let me tell you one thing: I mean to have something to say in that little skirmish, and the man who marries my sister must be the reliable sort. If any sap-head bumpkin begins to caper around Lottie, I’ll just give him unlimited leave of absence; and if he don’t take it, I’ll wring off his head.’

“Do you intend to marry her to a rich man; or shall she marry for love?”

“Of course she shall marry the man of her choice, provided he is of the right stamp. I don’t care about the length of his purse, but he must have brains, and a heart of the right sort, and he must have an established reputation for honor and integrity. If any man were to marry my sister and be unkind to her, don’t you know I would kill him?”

“I should be inclined to do such a man some great bodily harm myself.’

“Thank you, Ed, I believe you would; and well you might, because, you know, Lottie always loved you as a brother.’

“I felt my heart make a sudden leap and drive the blood to my cheeks when he spoke of brotherly love. I wanted none of that sort. I felt miserable, and was unable to conceal my feelings.

“By-by, old boy,’ said Wallingford, as he turned into the street that led to his office. ‘You must call and see us when Lottie gets home.’

“I bowed stiffly, said nothing, and hurried on to my home by no means satisfied with the prospects. ‘They are going to set her out, are they?’ I said mentally. ‘Good! I’ll be there when the show begins, and though my chance is slim, yet I’ll die hard, if die I must.’ I made a draw on Doctor Dodson for cash to pay for a first-class ball dress, and felt profoundly thankful to my tailor for the skill he displayed in the make-up. I did not call to see Lottie when she arrived, because I wanted to appear at the ball in my splendid new costume, so as to take a fair start in the matrimonial tilt I knew the other young men would make.

“Grand indeed were the preparations that were being made for the great ball, and the young people who had been so fortunate as to receive an invitation were looking forward impatiently to the eventful day; and no one thought about it more anxiously than I did. I was very full of apprehension and doubt in regard to Lottie’s feelings toward me, and I propounded a thousand questions to my own mind about it. ‘Will she look down from the high circle where fortune has placed her to the humble sphere in which I am doomed to dwell? or will she forget the poor awkward boy who, in the happy days of old, was glad to kiss the dust that had felt the touch of her little feet? Why should she stoop so low as to even think of me? What right have I, a poor half-educated clerk, to expect such a brilliant, beautiful heiress to lavish her favors on me, when men of wealth and high position are ready to lay their honors and wealth at her feet? What right have I to aspire so high?’ ‘None – none – none!’ was thundered in my ear by Common Sense, as the answer to my mental questions. ‘Miss Charlotte Wallingford is not for your sort,’ said Reason. ‘She is fit for the wife of a king!’ ‘Yes, but I saved her life,’ said my Mind, ‘and she is under obligations to me.’ ‘True enough,’ Reason replies, ‘but it does not follow that she must marry you. Women’s lives are often saved by their servants, yet they do not marry them.’ ‘But it will kill me if Miss Wallingford marries any other man.’ ‘No matter if it does – why should she care? the world will never feel the loss – the sun will shine as bright, the flowers grow as sweet, and the seasons will come and go after you are dead just as they did when you were alive.’ With such unpleasant reflections as these I had managed to work my mind up to an unusual degree of excitement. I became gloomy and unhappy to such an extent as to attract the attention of my good mother (as I called Mrs. Dodson), and she begged me to tell her the cause of my misery. I evaded her questions, and sought solitude, where I could give vent to my sorrow unmolested. She cast many an imploring look at me when I would leave my food untasted. My cheeks grew pale and my appetite failed, and I hugged my misery to my breast, and told my secret to none. I was proud,

and felt offended, but had no reasons to give for it. No one had been unkind to, or in any manner maltreated me, yet I was querulous, melancholy and despairing.

“Ah, ha! here we come, my boy,” said Doctor Dodson one morning as he came into the store. “What’s the matter, what’s the matter, Ed, my boy? speak it out, speak it out, let it come; what makes you look like a ghost, my boy? Pshaw! don’t tell me such a tale as that, my boy, ah, ha! don’t you do it, I say; indigestion! did you ever know a Russian bear to have bad digestion? No, no, Ed, my boy, you needn’t try to fool me – you can’t do it. The disease is in your mind, ah, ha! don’t you see? Yes, yes, that’s what’s the matter. Something has gone wrong. I’d say it was a love scrape, if it was any other boy; but my old booby has too much sense for anything of that sort; ah, ha! don’t you see how it is, my boy?”

“I soon became convinced that the good old doctor would pry the secret out of me unless I resorted to falsehood, which I resolved not to do; therefore I begged him to let me alone, promising to tell him everything at the end of ten days.

“Ah, ha! very good, my boy; I won’t press you further just now, but I mean to hold you down to your promise, don’t you see? I won’t let you go to Philadelphia while you are looking like a defunct specimen of humanity, ah, ha! don’t you see? You look more like a fit subject for a grave-yard than a medical school, ah, ha! yes, that you do, my boy. There now, go to work, and quit this moping about as if you wanted to sneak into a tomb.”

“I was glad when the doctor was called to see one of his patients.

“At last the time for the grand ball arrived, and I had arranged my toilet with unusual care. My good mother had been persuading me to send my card to Miss Ella Willchester, a charming young lady residing just across the street from our house, but it would have required the strength of a forty horse-power engine to make me escort any other girl to Lottie’s ball. I thought it would be treason to her if I offered any favors to any other girl. The fact is, I could not think of anybody else but Lottie; her image was floating before my eyes by day, and swimming in my mind when I was asleep. I did not make my appearance at the ball until after ten o’clock, for I wanted to slip in quietly, unobserved, in order that I might see whether Lottie had even so much as thought about me. I must acknowledge that I felt rather sheepish when I was going round so as to come in at the side entrance, hoping to get in unnoticed. The band commenced playing a lively waltz as I stepped on the veranda at the end of the ball-room, and a dozen couples went whirling round and floating gracefully through the hall. I took a seat on a chair near a window, where I could peep between the folds of the rich lace curtains and watch the movements of the guests within. I noticed a half dozen young men crowd round a young lady whose back was toward me. They were struggling with, and jostling each other, all apparently eager to get a word with the young lady. Who was the fair one that attracted such attention? was the question that came up in my mind. I could see the tall, queen-like form, but could not get a view of her face. The square shoulders and straight body, the beautiful arms and bright golden hair were visible, but my mind was full of curiosity to know who she was. I thought it might be Lottie, but then she was too tall – or at least I concluded that after a moment’s reflection. It was Lottie, nevertheless, and I had lost sight of the fact that it had been nearly a year since I had seen her. She abruptly left the crowd of admirers.

“Excuse me a moment, please,” I heard her say as she went to her brother, who occupied a seat just inside the room, and within six feet of where I was. “Brother, has Eddie come yet?” I heard the question distinctly.

“No; I don’t think he has,” was the reply.

“I am afraid he is ill, else he would have been here long ago.”

“Pshaw! sister, never mind Ed; he isn’t the sort that gets sick.”

“Oh, I am so sorry he is not here!”

“I could bear it no longer; my heart was again in my throat, and I thrust my hand in between the curtains, and said: ‘I did not expect you would have time to spare a thought about me on such an occasion as this.’

“She uttered a smothered scream, sprang through the door, and seized both of my hands and began to jerk them up and down. Never had my eyes beheld such a lovely object as the one then before me, such radiant beauty, such lofty, dazzling charms, such large, liquid blue eyes and bright golden hair, such round, pretty arms, such a tall, stately form! Nothing could match this angelic creature! I was stunned – surprised, and almost paralyzed, as I stood staring with open mouth at the wonderful beauty before me. ‘Is this Lottie? Can this be the same little blue-eyed thing who tramped so many miles by my side long, long ago?’ That was the question that naturally forced itself on my mind. I could not realize the fact that this radiant model of perfection and the little sore-footed tramp were one and the same person.

“‘I am going to give you a real good scolding, Eddie,’ she said as she still held both of my hands tightly clasped in hers. ‘Why have you not come to see me before now; and what made you come so late to-night; and what made you slip in here and hide as if you had been doing a mean thing?’

“All I could do was to stand like an idiot, staring at the indescribable beauty before me, unable to utter a word. I then and there concluded that she never would be mine. No such woman could ever come down low enough to be the wife of a half-educated pill-maker.

“‘What is the matter, Eddie?’ she exclaimed in an anxious tone, as she cast a look of surprise at me. ‘You are ill – your hands are very cold, and your face is as pale as death.’

“‘No, I am very well, I thank you,’ I managed with a struggle to say.

“‘You are trying to deceive me, but you cannot do it; you have been ill?’

“‘Partners for a quadrille!’ exclaimed the leader of the band, and three young men made a dash toward Lottie, each one claiming her as a partner. She took the arm of Mr. Heartsell, after some little controversy as to whose turn it was to dance with her, and soon was floating through the waltz with him.

“‘By Jupiter! She is a stunner, ain’t she, Sam?’ exclaimed a dandyfied youth as Heartsell led her away.

“‘Your head’s level, and don’t you forget it!’ replied the one addressed, who was a little, hook-nosed law student with but a small amount of brains and lots of brass.

“Wherever I went I could hear groups of young men lavishing their extravagant praises on the wonderful young beauty who had so suddenly blazed down among them like a newly discovered planet.

“As soon as Lottie was released from Heartsell she came back to me. ‘Eddie,’ said she, ‘I want you to enjoy yourself here to-night, and you must let me introduce you to some of these charming young ladies. I heard one expressing an anxiety to be introduced to that tall, handsome young gentleman with the shaggy whiskers. I think she is smitten with both you and your whiskers; come, let me introduce you!’

“‘No, you must excuse me – Lottie, I will not dance to-night, unless it is with you.’

“‘Indeed, you do me great honor, and I’ll put you down for the third set, as I am engaged for the next two, and would have been for every other one but I declined the honor. You must excuse me now – I am acting hostess to-night, as mother is not very well.’

“I waited for my turn with no small degree of impatience, as I sat like a picture against the wall watching Lottie as she glided like a fairy through the mazes of the dance. She was dressed in white satin, trimmed with lace of the most exquisite and costly pattern, with close and smooth-fitting body, which set off her round, straight form to great advantage. A cluster of sparkling diamonds fastened both ends of a pearl necklace which met on her bosom, while a large white rose was pinned at her throat with a little golden arrow; and a broad band of gold encircled each wrist, while a large amethyst set glittered from each one of the bracelets. Her long, golden hair was coiled up in two plaited rolls,

and pinned on the back of her head with a pair of Cupid-darts set in diamonds. I never had seen Lottie so exquisitely dressed before, although she was always very particular and neat in her toilet. Mr. Rockland had ordered her set of diamonds from New York especially for that occasion.

“At last the time arrived when I was to waltz with her, and I would have been glad to offer an excuse, because I was trembling like one in an ague fit, and felt as if I were going to make a botch of it. I knew I was clumsy, awkward, and a novice at the business, and just as I was about to stammer out an excuse, the band struck up a lively waltz, and Lottie seized me without ceremony and almost dragged me to the middle of the floor. I imagined that the eyes of every one in the room were gazing at me, and I was about half right, for my tall, gawky form loomed up above all the other men, which attracted the attention of the spectators. When we began to whirl round the room Lottie let her cheek rest on my shoulder; and I felt her cool sweet breath fanning my face, while her beautiful eyes gazed up into mine with an expression of unmixed delight. I had not failed to notice how differently she acted when waltzing with me from what she did with other men. Her fair cheek had never touched another man’s shoulder on that night, and no one had been able to keep her on the floor as long as I did. I soon became warmed up, and my blood boiled with the intoxicating influence of the music, and the love for the girl whose cheek rested on my shoulder. I forgot everything but the dear idol who was so near my heart, and would have kept whirling round until my limbs gave way under me, but the music ceased, and I led Lottie to a seat; but I did not get a chance to enjoy her company many moments before she was surrounded by a crowd of young men, who insisted on leading her to the piano. The musicians had laid down their instruments, and were enjoying a smoke on the veranda, and Lottie was urged to sing. I drew as near as I could, and took my stand on her left. She ran her fingers rapidly over the keys and then asked me what she should sing.

“Give us something to remind us of olden times!”

“Very well, here is one of my own invention:

“In the happy days of yore
A hero loved me then.
Let my tears of sorrow pour,
My happy days are o’er,
For he loves me now no more —
He loved me truly then.

“Oh, what bliss it is to know
A hero loved me then!
His young heart was all aglow,
And as pure as driven snow;
I must let my hero go.
He loved me truly then.

“All the happy days are past —
A hero loved me then.
This poor heart is o’ercast
With sorrow’s consuming blast,
My hero broke it at last,
He loved me truly then.

“I remember every vow —
A hero loved me then.
It crowds my memory now,

For he kissed me on the brow,
Then he sweetly told me how
He loved me truly then.'

"Every time she lingered on the words 'A hero loved me then,' her eyes were raised to mine for a moment and I thought I saw an appealing look in them, and a glance of inquiry. When she came to the last three lines her voice trembled slightly, and when she fixed her beautiful eyes on me I saw that they were moist, though no tears fell from them. She repeated the last three lines in a low, plaintive tone.

"For a few seconds after the last sweet sound had ceased not a word was spoken. Lottie declined to sing any more, notwithstanding she was urged to do so by the entire audience, but she rose from the piano and made her way to me, and running her arm under mine, said:

"Come, Eddie, take me out where we can get a little fresh air – I am smothering in here.'

"The proposition suited me admirably, for I was anxious to be alone with her, and went out on the portico and began to walk up and down the floor, while Lottie leaned on my arm, with her face turned up toward mine. I was too happy to talk; my heart thrilled with delight, and I remained silent. After making a few rounds on the portico without speaking, we took seats on a low wooden bench, where a thick cluster of honeysuckle vines formed a canopy that would conceal us from the prying eyes of Mr. Heartsell and two other young men who were apparently watching us.

"Now, Edward,' said Lottie, 'I want you to tell me what is the matter with you? Come now, don't try to deceive me, for you know you cannot do it. I have not seen you smile to-night. You don't look or act as you did in the happy days of old. You were always cheerful and pleasant then, but you look pale and serious now.'

"Lottie, I know I could not deceive you if I were to try; but I have no wish to do anything of the sort. I am unhappy, but I do not know that I could give any good reason for it. One thing, however, I will say, and that is I think we shall never see any more such happy days as we have spent together. I see a great gulf beginning to flow in between you and me, which sooner or later will drive us apart forever!

"Pshaw! Edward, you ought not to talk that way – it pains me deeply to hear it. No gulf could be made wide enough to separate me from such a dear, good, noble *brother* as you have been to me; but what do you mean when you speak of a gulf coming between us?"

"You have an accomplished education, a superior mind, as well as very great beauty, and are to be a great heiress. Mr. Rockland is proud and wealthy, and is very fond of you, he will expect you to marry some distinguished man of his own choosing. I may be mistaken, but I don't think he would be pleased to have me as a frequent visitor at his house. He did not speak to me to-night, but cast on me a cold, contemptuous look, and bowed stiffly.'

"Now see here, Edward, in the first place, I think you are very much mistaken in supposing Mr. Rockland dislikes you. He is naturally a very stern, sad man, but he has a warm, tender heart, and I believe he loves me dearly; but I tell you now plainly that the man who hates my dear, noble brother must hate me too. And when it comes to the question of matrimony, I guess I will have something to say about that. In the first place, I do not want to marry at all, and in the next place, I shall be very certain never to marry any man unless I love him with all my heart!

"While she was uttering the words just mentioned she made the heels of her little boots clatter against the floor rapidly, and I could see by the sparkle of her eyes that she meant what she said. I was partially pleased, and partially vexed – pleased to hear her say that she never would marry any man unless she loved him; vexed to hear her speak of her love toward me as a dear *brother* – I wanted a different sort of love. She now took the beautiful white rose from her throat and put it in the button-hole of my coat, and while she was doing so her lovely face was within three inches of mine, and I felt her cool breath gently touching my cheek. When she finished the job, over which I thought she lingered a long time, she gave me a gentle slap on the cheek and said:

“There, now, that is very nice; and I want you to drive away that ugly frown from your brow, and go in and help me to entertain my guests. Will you do it?”

“Yes, Lottie, you know I will do anything to please you; but stop a moment – I want to know what you meant by composing such a song as the one you sang a moment ago? Who is it that loved you truly then, and loves you now no more?”

“Ask me no questions, and I will tell you no falsehoods, but I guess you could answer that question better than I could. But come along now – we must go in, for I heard some one inquiring for me; give me your arm, and don’t forget the ugly frown.”

“Trust me now, Lottie, and I’ll be as polite to your guests as a French dancing master.”

“Good enough, Edward! so come along.”

“We returned to the ball-room, when Mr. Heartsell came up to engage Lottie as his partner for the next set.

“I beg you to excuse me, Mr. Heartsell – I am going to dance with Mr. Demar in this set.”

“Now here was unmistakable evidence of partiality on Lottie’s part toward me, for I had not asked her to dance with me; in fact, I had not intended to dance any more that night.

“My self-conceit went up to a premium, my heart swelled with indescribable delight, and I began to think that after all I was not to be laid entirely on the shelf. I knew that Heartsell was going to be a suitor for Lottie’s hand, and I considered him my most dangerous rival, as I was aware of the fact that he was Mr. Rockland’s favorite. He bit his lip with vexation as I led Lottie off to begin the waltz, while a feeling of triumph swelled up in my bosom. When the waltz was ended, Lottie parted from me as she whispered:

“Now, Eddie, remember my guests, and try to help to entertain them.”

“As she left me, Heartsell drew up in front of me, and stared at me for a moment, while I thought that I perceived something like a sneer of contempt play for a second on his face. ‘Hullo, Demar!’ he exclaimed, ‘where did you get that beautiful white rose?’

“That, sir, was fastened here by the prettiest girl in this room,” I replied, haughtily, as I drew myself up and walked away. I saw his cheeks grow purple with anger as he went toward Lottie, who was talking with a middle-aged lady near by.

“Miss Wallingford,” he said as he bowed low before her, ‘will you honor me with a short interview?’

“Without uttering a word, Lottie took his arm and was led out through a side door which opened on the corridor. They came round on the outside of the room and stopped within six feet of the seat where I was, and immediately opposite a window, the sash of which was up, but the curtains were down. I knew from the tone of Mr. Heartsell’s voice that he was angry with Lottie about something.

“You seem to be enjoying yourself better than usual to-night.”

“Why should I not enjoy myself when I am among so many good kind friends?”

“I am truly glad to see you enjoying the society of your very good *friend*.”

“Why do you choose to use the singular number?”

“Because if you have any more than one friend (and I am happy to believe you have), you have been very careful to avoid letting them know that you recognized them.”

“Why, Mr. Heartsell, how can you be so unjust as to say that?”

“How many times have you danced with me to-night?”

“Once.”

“How many times with Mr. Campston?”

“I have not danced with him at all.”

“Did he ask you?”

“Yes.”

“How many sets have you danced with Demar?”

“Two.”

““Now, in the name of all the gods at once, upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed that he is grown so great? Why, *man*, he doth bstride the narrow world like a Colossus, and we petty men walk under his huge legs and peep about to find ourselves dishonorable graves.”

“If your sarcasm is intended for Mr. Demar, I beg permission to say that you might find a dishonorable grave without peeping about his legs to find it.’

“Oh, I crave your pardon, Miss Wallingford, I assure you I meant no offense; but candidly, I should be glad to know what Demar has done to entitle him to such distinguished privileges? How is it that this great Cæsar can monopolize the beauteous belle of the ball, while we petty men must peep about among common people to find ourselves partners?’

“Mr. Heartsell, it is not agreeable for me to listen to wit of this nature, because Mr. Demar has been to me a devoted friend, a true, noble, unselfish brother. Look at that scar on my wrist, if you please.’

“Well, I see it; what about that?’

“That scar was made by the poisonous fangs of a rattlesnake, and I would have died in ten minutes but that this generous, heroic brother drew the poison from my veins with his lips, and came very near losing his own life by the brave deed. Well may you compare him with Cæsar, because, while you do it in jest, I will do it in earnest, for his courage entitles him to all the honors that an inexperienced girl like me can bestow. If it should be my pleasure to grant him more favors than I do to other gentlemen, I trust I can do so without giving offense to them.’

“Ah, Miss Wallingford, you are an eloquent orator, and if Cæsar did have his friend Marcus Antonius to defend him, Demar has a more eloquent defender in you. I envy him, and would make any sacrifice to win such favors as fall to his share. I dare say you are quite lucky to have two such brave, good brothers as Demar and Wallingford.’

“Indeed, I think so, and am happy in the thought, too.’

“By the by, Miss Wallingford, you have lost that beautiful white rose that I saw on your throat a while ago.’

“You are mistaken, sir, I did not lose it.’

“Ah, indeed! I asked you to give it to me, and you refused; you certainly did not present it to another gentleman?’

“And why should I not give it to whom I pleased; was it not mine?’

“Hem! yes, I cannot deny that, but such partiality as that would clip an insult very close, and I am loth to believe such a charming lady as Miss Wallingford would offer an indignity to one who loves and who esteems her so highly as I do.’

“Now, Mr. Heartsell, I should be very unhappy if I thought I had given you any just cause for offense, but in this instance I must say it appears to me that you are manufacturing a mountain out of a mole-hill. If you desire it, I will present you with a basketful of roses this instant.’

“No, no; you shall do nothing of the sort. It was not the rose itself that I cared for, but it was the emblem which would have come with it. May I know who was the lucky donee?’

“Certainly you may, for I assure you there is no secret connected with it. I had the *honor* (she put the accent heavy on the honor) to present the rose to my noble, heroic brother, Edward Demar.’

“Now we should never use extravagant language, and we should worship no living being except God; but on that particular occasion I confess I committed such a sin; though if the recording angel sets it down against me, I believe he will credit me with a partial justification, at least. How could I sit there and hear the most charming woman in America boasting of the *honor* she had done herself by presenting a rose to me, and not feel an inclination to fall down and worship her? How could I hear her dear voice sounding eloquently in praise of me, without thinking extravagant thoughts? The fact is, I was so much excited that they might have heard the loud throbbings of my heart, if they had listened. I determined, however, to put an end to Mr. Heartsell’s little *tete-a-tete*, because I knew it

would please her. I went round on the north side and passed across, coming up to where they stood, and coughed as I approached, in order to notify Lottie of my arrival.

“Your friends will be curious to know what has become of their fair hostess, Miss Wallingford,” I observed, as I halted by her side.

“Ah, thank you, *brother*, for reminding me of my duty,” she replied, as she took my arm and bowed stiffly to Heartsell. “We will finish our little quarrel at another time, sir.”

“No, no; the victory is yours, and I make an unconditional surrender. Render unto Cæsar that which is his, but don’t crowd things on him that don’t belong to him.”

“That fellow Heartsell is an impertinent scamp, and I mean to tell him so.”

“If you do you will displease me beyond measure, for I think he is a perfect gentleman; I am ashamed to say that I have treated him rather unkindly to-night, and I mean to apologize as soon as I have an opportunity.”

“Oh! very well, if you love him, you should let him know it by all means!”

“See here, Edward, I must request you not to mention Mr. Heartsell’s name in my presence any more to-night; and I will also ask you to excuse me now, as I must really mingle among my guests, and give them some attention.”

“Then she left me, and soon was surrounded by a crowd of young men. I did not have a chance to talk with her any more that night, and when I went home my mind was full of strange conjectures and conflicting emotions. One question appeared to be pretty well settled, and that was a perfect knowledge on my part that all my hopes of happiness would be destroyed if Lottie should refuse to marry me. Love is a strange passion, and no one knows how it can upset a man’s equanimity, unless he has learned it by actual experience. It is a passion that produces indescribable happiness to those who are loved in return, but of all the distressing pains and horrible torture that mortal man ever felt, that which he suffers when his mind is racked with doubt on that subject is the greatest. I had resolved a hundred times to have that question settled, but when in Lottie’s presence my tongue was paralyzed and my brain refused to lay out a sensible idea. I had ordered a jeweler to make an exquisite gold ring, with a beautiful diamond set, and had Lottie’s and my name engraved on the inside. This I had carried in my pocket for two weeks, intending to ask her to accept it as an engagement ring, but for reasons already stated I failed to do it. I had written out and memorized what I supposed to be an eloquent speech, which I intended to deliver with the ring, but my courage oozed out the very moment those large, beautiful blue eyes set their sight on me. Lottie had a strange habit of looking me square in the face, which never failed to set my limbs to trembling and my heart to thumping. I was considered a privileged guest at Mr. Rockland’s house, not by him, but by Lottie, and I visited there often, and was frequently so unlucky as to meet Mr. Heartsell there, and sometimes other young men who had entered the lists. I watched Lottie very closely, but I could not tell whether she loved any one of her suitors or not. So far as I was able to judge, she treated all alike.

“I spent at least three days of each week strolling about by Lottie’s side, half crazy with love for her, sometimes buoyed up with hope, at others struggling with suspense and despair. Summer was about to step out, and autumn was ready to walk in. The weather was hot and dry, while dust and heat hung about over all things. Vegetation was parched and withered by the long drought, while gloom and dust combined to make me very miserable, except when I was lingering with Lottie in her beautiful flower garden, which, owing to her industry, was always delightful and cool, for she had everything thoroughly watered every evening. The east side of her garden was thickly shaded with young magnolias, whose broad green leaves protected the thick velvety turf that covered the ground beneath. The west side was set apart for flowers alone, and notwithstanding the protracted drought that had prevailed, they looked as fresh and vigorous as they did in May and June. Old Uncle Zack, as Lottie called the old negro gardener, was always anxious to please his pretty nightingale (a pet name he had given Lottie). During her attendance at the Kentucky school, Uncle Zack had been the manager of her garden and her birds, and on her return she found that the duty had been faithfully

performed. A charming summer-house stood near the east boundary of the garden, all covered over with clustering vines and blooming roses. It was at this delightful spot that I had spent so many happy hours with Lottie. A large wooden table sat in the center of the summer house, and low willow chairs were ranged around the sides, and when the weather was fine the table was covered with books, maps, sheet music, drawing materials, magazines and a guitar. Lottie called this her study, for that was the delightful spot where she practiced music and drawing and reviewed her studies generally.

“The time when I was to start to Philadelphia for the purpose of attending the medical lectures was near at hand, and still I had not been able to muster up the courage to make my love known to her. Doctor Dodson was anxious for me to start immediately, because he was uneasy about my health, which was on the decline, but he had no suspicions as to the cause. He thought that a trip to the sea-coast would be beneficial; then he had some business at New York and Boston which he wanted me to transact for him. I could have told him that no journey would restore my health. There was one thing, and only one, that could ever bring health and happiness back to me. I knew that could I be assured of Lottie’s love, all would be well with me; but if that was denied, I never would know health or happiness any more.

“One sultry evening near the end of August, when the sun was about to disappear in the West, after having scorched and burned the earth for twelve consecutive hours, I found myself lingering in the summer-house by Lottie, where I had been for a long time trying to collect the necessary courage to tell her of my love.

“‘Sing one more song for me, Lottie, before I go, please,’ said I, as I drew my chair closer to hers.

“‘What shall it be?’ she inquired, as she picked up her guitar and began to run her fingers over the strings.

“‘I would like to hear the one you sang the night of the ball – I do not know its name. It says something about a hero who loved you in the happy days of old, who loves you now no more.’

“‘Oh, yes; I never will forget that song, for it is one of my favorites, and my own composition. Do you like it, Edward?’

“‘I like to hear you sing it, but I do not think I like the sentiment, for I am sure no one ever loved you in the days of old who does not love you now.’

“‘I saw a crimson tinge steal over her cheeks, as her beautiful eyes were for a moment fixed on me.

“‘A hero did love me, long ago, anyway, though I don’t know so well about it now; but let that pass – we poor, foolish women should never complain about anything.’

“She then began to tune the instrument, which was suspended by a broad blue ribbon that passed over her left shoulder and was tied to a little brass hook in each end of the guitar.

“Lottie’s voice seemed to be in excellent tune, and in all respects under her control, though it was low and tremulous; and when she came to the line that said, ‘He loves me now no more,’ she looked me full in the face, and repeated the line in a pathetic tone that brought the tears to my eyes. Every vein in my body was full of hot blood. When Lottie came to the last three lines her voice sank to a mere whisper, and I could see that some unusual emotion was at work in her bosom. She paused a moment as the sweet echo of her voice gradually died away, and then she turned round, and fixing her eyes upon me, repeated the last verse:

“‘I remember every vow —
A hero loved me then.
It crowds my memory now,
For he kissed me on the brow,
Then he sweetly told me how
He loved me truly then.’

“She laid the guitar down and turned her face another way, and as I leaned forward slightly, I saw something like a drop of dew trembling on her cheek. That little trembling tear settled my fate. An unaccountable boldness came upon me, and all my timidity disappeared, and I was rash, impetuous, and I might say rude, because I seized her hand and pressed it to my lips a dozen times in rapid succession. My impetuosity seemed to astonish and frighten her, and she began to move away.

“‘It is time I was in the house, Edward,’ said she as she moved away; ‘mother will be calling me if I don’t go.’

“‘No, no, Lottie!’ I exclaimed as I moved toward her; ‘don’t go now; remember I am going away next week, to stay a long, long time, and we never may meet again. The fact of the business is, I think I never shall come back to Memphis any more.’

“Her beautiful face grew a shade paler, but she soon regained composure: ‘Come along then, and let me show you my pretty birds,’ she said as she moved toward a little latticed house that stood about fifty feet from the summer-house. I imagined she was endeavoring to get my mind fixed on other subjects than the one on which my thoughts were bent. I followed her, and when we entered the cozy little house, the old parrot began to laugh and chatter away.

“‘Lottie! Lottie! Lottie!’ he screamed, as he leaped down on her shoulder. ‘Ah, ha! here we come. Lottie! Lottie! Lottie! ah, ha! here we come!’

“‘How did he learn to imitate Doctor Dodson so perfectly?’ I asked.

“‘The doctor frequently comes to see me, and old Roderick has heard him so often that he has caught his expressions.’

“A mocking-bird was singing in a cage that sat on the joist, and a dozen canaries were making sweet music in their little silver-mounted houses, while an old jackdaw was muttering to himself in a wire cage. Each bird seemed to be making music for his own amusement, and on his own hook. It was a combination of discordant sounds, which might have been good music if they could have been induced to sing one at a time. It was a shrewd maneuver of Lottie to decoy me to that place, for no man could talk loud enough to be heard amid such an ear-splitting clatter as was made by these birds.

“I concluded that she had resorted to this strategic maneuver in order to avoid the disagreeable revelation which she had guessed I was about to make. Then I became angry, and that increased my courage and made me quite reckless, and I was determined to know my fate before I left. I believed she could read my inmost thoughts, for I had never seen her more embarrassed than she was then. The sun had entirely disappeared, and a dark purple bank began to loom up in the East, indicating the approach of twilight; while the face of the moon every now and then peeped down through a column of white clouds that flew across the horizon. As the dew began to dampen the flowers around us, a delicious fragrance arose and filled all the air with its ravishing sweetness. I took Lottie’s hand, and placing it under my arm, led her back to the summer-house, and took a seat by her side. Old Bob came up and laid his head on my knee and began to whine, and tried to wag his tail, but it was too short. Notwithstanding the poor old dog was stone blind, it was plain that he recognized me.

“‘Lottie,’ said I, ‘this faithful old friend remembers me, and I am glad to know that there is one living thing in this cold world that cares for me. I want you to take good care of him for my sake when I am gone, for I guess I will not see him any more. I never shall forget those happy days when we were poor, homeless tramps – penniless, friendless and simple, but hopeful and cheerful.’

“Her face was turned away – her eyes were bent on the ground, and she was busy plucking the tender leaves from a bunch of roses, and scattering them at her feet. I knew from the rise and fall of her bosom that some strong emotion was at work in her breast; but I thought it was caused by an unwillingness to listen to my melancholy expressions.

“Taking her left hand, I enclosed it in both of mine, and after holding it a moment, I ventured to raise it to my lips and stamp it with many fervent kisses; then I pressed it over my loud throbbing heart, while her face was still turned away from me.

“‘I wonder if any other man ever will press this little hand against his heart, and call it his?’

“She instantly withdrew it with a sudden jerk, as if an insect had stung her, and then fixing her expressive eyes on me with a reproachful look, said:

“I declare, we must go to the house now; mother does not like to keep tea waiting for any one.’

“She will excuse you when you inform her that I was making my farewell visit; who knows that we ever shall meet again in this world?”

“Once more she turned her face away and gazed on the ground.

“Lottie, here is a beautiful diamond ring I want you to wear; it will prevent you from entirely forgetting the one who has always loved you.’

“As I uttered those words in a trembling tone, I took her hand and slipped the ring on her finger, which she did not resist, nor did she give any signs of assent; in fact, she did not seem to notice what I was saying or doing; but I could see that she was deeply moved with excitement, as her body was trembling violently.

“Lottie, will you write me a letter occasionally when I am far away from the one I love so dearly?”

“Yes, Edward, I will answer all your letters.’

“After I had placed the ring on her finger, I again pressed her trembling hand against my heart.

“Lottie, it will be a long time ere we meet again, and I suppose you will be married to some distinguished man before my return?”

“A gentle shake of the head, and a slight jerk of the hand, was her only answer.

“Will you ever think of the boyish tramp who long ago claimed you as his little wife, after I am gone?”

“Yes, Edward, I never shall forget the halcyon days of old, for although we were poor, homeless wanderers, we were not unhappy.’

“Lottie, I loved that pretty little tramp devotedly then, and time has increased that holy passion, until it has filled my heart, my mind, my soul, my brain, my body, my thoughts, my dreams and my blood! Fortune has not lavished her favors on me, but that is not my fault. I know I am ignorant, green, poor and uneducated, doomed to occupy an humble sphere in life, while the blind goddess has been more liberal in the bestowal of her favors on you. Your beauty and your talent alone would have placed you on a plane far above my lowly valley; but when it is known that you are to be a great heiress, I feel as if it would be too presumptuous on my part to ask you to be mine. I know that I have a rough, ugly and awkward appearance – that I am not such a person as fine ladies love to look on; but I possess a large, fond heart, that holds an ocean of pure love for you. Lottie, why do you not say something; why do you turn your face away from me? Have I offended you by my presumption? If I have dared to talk of love to you, it does not necessarily follow that you are bound to give a favorable answer; in fact, I have no right to expect you to make such a one. If you cannot love me, say so, and I promise never to annoy you any more with my suit, but will endeavor to promote your happiness in every way I can. I profess to be a man of honor, and believe I possess a remarkable amount of pride – too much to annoy any lady about my love who cannot return my honorable passion.’

“Her body now began to tremble more violently than ever, shaking like a leaf stirred by the storm, but she still remained silent, and kept her face averted.

“Why do you not speak to me, Lottie? Am I to understand that the refusal is caused by the scorn you feel for my presumption, or is it because you hate to pronounce the doom which you know will consign me to a life of misery? In the name of those happy days of old – in the name of our dear, dead mother – in the name of the great ocean of love which this poor heart holds for you, I implore you to speak to me now!”

“A tear then fell from my eyes, and dropped on her hand, which I still held against my heart; that caused her to start up suddenly, and snatch her hand away. Then she gazed down at the tear which still glistened on her hand, and I saw another tear start from her left eye and roll slowly down her cheek – it trembled on her chin a second, and then fell right on the one that still sparkled on her hand.

The two tears mingled into one, and as they did so her head suddenly fell against my heart, and then I knew that the great prize was mine. Looking up into my face with a gaze of unutterable sweetness, while tears were streaming from her beautiful eyes, she whispered:

“Eddie, I have always loved you more than language can express, or mind can imagine, and I was sure you knew it all the time. I have never thought of loving any one else; and I do not mean to allow you to slander yourself any more in my presence as you have done here this evening, for I think you noble-hearted, generous, intelligent and brave, and I know you are very handsome!”

“I was too full of joy to speak; and the man who never kissed the lips of a pure woman with a knowledge that her virtuous heart was all his own, cannot understand the indescribable bliss that was mine.

“Edward,” she whispered, while her large, liquid blue eyes were rooted on me, “have you ever read “Romeo and Juliet?””

“Yes, darling, very often; but why do you ask the question?”

“My love for you is like that which Juliet felt for Romeo. I gave you my heart long, long ago, and if I had it back again then I would borrow her sweet words which she employs in speaking to Romeo:

“But to be frank and give it thee again,
And yet I wish but for the thing I have.
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep: the more I give to thee
The more I have: for both are infinite.”

“The sentiment is very sweet, and the language appropriate and expressive, but I trust that our love will not end so sadly as did that of Romeo and Juliet.”

“In the midst of my great joy I did not forget to return my sincere thanks to the great Creator, for bestowing on me such a precious gem.

“Lottie, dear, I believe if you would try you could compose a sweet song suited to this occasion, and I hope you will do so, and sing it here every evening while I am far away. Make the effort, and I dare say you will compose one with sentiments as sweet as ever poet wrote; then fix an hour at which you will come to this very spot and sing it, and I will at the same hour steal away and commune with you in spirit, while I gaze on yonder bright star, and listen with my imagination to the sweet music my darling is making here for me.”

“Edward, I promise to make the attempt, and if I succeed, I will sing it here at this lovely spot every evening at precisely nine o’clock, when the sky is cloudless; and I will think of you while singing it.”

“And will my darling promise to be mine when I return, thereby making me the happiest man that ever walked on the earth?”

“If papa gives his consent, and if brother Harry is willing, and if you do not fall in love with, and marry, some beautiful Philadelphia belle, and if I do not die of loneliness while you are so far away from me, and if you do not withdraw the proposition, and if, upon reflection, you are willing to take me with all my imperfections, why, then, I reckon so.”

“Now there are a great many if’s contained in that answer, but let it rain if’s until I return, and I will surmount them all. If my path was sown thick with dragons’ teeth, and at every step producing armed men to oppose me, I would march on to secure my great prize!”

“Edward, can you not postpone the time set for you to start to Philadelphia for a few weeks?”

“Yes, and will gladly do so, for I must settle the question of the if’s before I go. I must know Mr. Rockland’s mind, as well as Harry’s in regard to our betrothal, before I leave Memphis.”

CHAPTER X

“Well,” said Ivanhoe to Scottie, “what was it you wished to say to me?”

“Oh, I was dying of curiosity, you see, and I thought maybe you could save my life by telling me something. I declare, something strange is going to happen; and you must tell me what it is.”

“It would be an easy task to tell you all about it, if I knew anything about it myself; but as I happen to know nothing, how can I tell you anything?”

“Pshaw! You are no true knight, Sir Ivanhoe, else you would not let a lady die of sheer curiosity, without an effort to save her. You are not like the brave knight of Ivanhoe of Sir Walter Scott’s creation.”

“Show me an enemy who fights with steel, face to face, and then you’ll have cause to change your mind. By the by, what discoveries have you made about the black domino?”

“Very little, I assure you – just enough to keep me on the rack. But have you really unearthed no secret respecting the two seedy men?”

“Just enough to keep me on the rack, too.”

“Well, aren’t you going to tell me what it is?”

“I have been setting Greek against Greek, and you know what Byron says will happen when Greek meets Greek.”

“Oh, bother Byron and his Greeks; tell me what you know?”

“I bribed the chamber-maid and set her on the track of the seedy men.”

“And, pray, what’s the result?”

“They are sure-enough detectives; that much I have discovered through my spy.”

“Good! What else?”

“They are shadowing some one on this boat.”

“They are doing what to some one on this boat?”

“Shadowing him.”

“Oh, is that all? You mean that they are keeping some one out of the sunshine.”

“No, no! I mean to tell you that they have spotted their man.”

“Spotted their man! Poor fellow! what color were the spots they put on him?”

“Ah, Scottie, I perceive that you are not posted in regard to the peculiar language usually employed by the police department; when a detective officer sees a man who he thinks is the one he wishes to catch, he begins to follow and watch him, and this is called shadowing him.”

“Ah, indeed! then what is meant by spotting their man?”

“The same thing.”

“Yes, yes, I see now; but who have they been spotting or shadowing?”

“Ingomar.”

“Goodness gracious! Is it possible?”

“It is not only possible, but it is absolutely so.”

“I declare, that is too bad! If I were a man I’d pitch ’em both overboard, so I would. They look like a brace of sneak thieves anyhow. What can they want with Ingomar?”

“That I don’t know; but you may be sure I’ll find out ere long, for I have got a clever detective on their track; in other words, I have got them spotted.”

“If a hundred witnesses were to swear that Ingomar was a criminal, I wouldn’t believe it.”

“Don’t believe anything unless you want to, but what would you think if it should turn out after all that Ingomar has murdered his rival in love?”

“Oh, horrible! Don’t speak so, I beseech you!”

“Such things have happened, and why not happen again?”

“Yes, but Ingomar is not a man of that sort; I’d risk my life on it.”

“Well, now, I have told you all I know, let’s hear about the black domino.”

“I have found out scarcely anything, except the fact that she is very sad, and is often found weeping in her state-room. I have been watching her closely, though she seems to avoid me as much as she can. I think the old gentleman with the white beard is her uncle, and I heard her say to him this morning that she could not endure it much longer.”

“Endure what much longer?”

“That was all I heard; but she was weeping as if her heart would break, and the old gentleman tried to comfort her, and I heard him say that the matter should be settled in some way soon.”

“What matter did he say should be settled?”

“How should I know? I have told you all I heard.”

“I’ll put my detectives on her track, too, and I’ll unravel this business, if it takes all the money I possess. See here, Scottie, did you know that I am dying with curiosity to know your real name?”

“Indeed, I did not.”

“Well it’s so; and why not relieve me?”

“Because the queen would be offended if I were to do it.”

“Tell me your real name, and the queen shall never know of it.”

“You shall know me when I know you, and not before.”

“Very well; that is fair, at all events, and I am content. But I see the queen beckoning us to come to our seats to listen to Ingomar’s story.”

As soon as the maskers were seated the queen ordered Ingomar to resume.

“The next morning after Lottie had promised to be my wife, I mentioned the subject to Doctor Dodson, as I considered it my duty to do so.

“I am going to be married, sir,” said I, “as soon as I get my diploma.”

“Ah, ha, indeed! and pray who’s to be the unlucky woman that you have resolved to render miserable for life?”

“I don’t intend to make any woman miserable, neither do I expect to marry any woman.” I said this rather sharply, as I felt a little ruffled.

“Ah, ha! and you don’t mean to marry a woman, yet you say you are going to be married. I suppose you expect to marry a wood-nymph or a fairy. I guess you do not aspire to an angel.”

“That’s exactly the state of my case; it’s an angel sure enough.”

“When did she light on this part of the globe?”

“Seven years ago.”

“Ah, ha! here we come, you sly old rascal! I see how it is now. I have suspected you of villainous designs against Lottie for some time, and I see I was not mistaken; but look here, my boy, that dear girl is too good for you; she’s worth a thousand such bundles of humanity as you; and right here let me say a few words with the bark on them. If ever you speak a cross word to that dear girl, or give her an unkind look, the fact is, if you ever give her cause to regret her choice, I’ll – I’ll, yes, I’ll, ah, ha! I’ll give you a dose of strychnine, which is considered by the profession the most polite way of getting rid of mean dogs; ah, ha! don’t you see, my boy?”

“He gave me a punch under the arm with his thumb. ‘Yes, ah, ha! I’ll poison you as I would a rat or a dog, if ever you dare to cause my little queen a moment’s pain.’”

“I promise to swallow all the strychnine in the drug-stores if ever I do an act willingly to give dear Lottie pain.”

“There! there! ah, ha! spoken like a man. Here we come; take my hand, and my blessing with it, you rascal! Ah, ha! what a lucky scamp you are! What on earth possessed the girl, to make her fall in love with such an overgrown mushroom. Well, well, well! I can scarcely believe that Lottie is in earnest; she has agreed to marry you out of pure pity, you good-for-nothing scamp. Well, if Lottie is fool enough to marry you, I’ll be fool enough to give her all my property in order to enable her to support you; ah, ha! you see how it is, don’t you, my boy?”

“I was very glad to see that the good old doctor was really delighted with the news of my engagement.

“Ah, ha! Eddie, here we come, my boy! go to work, go to work; you are going to be the head of a family, you know, therefore you must have something to support a family with.’

“What do you wish me to do, sir?’ I inquired.

“Take an inventory of these drugs, of course; ah, ha! my boy, take stock, take stock; find out how the business stands. See how the business stands; see what’s on hand, and mind that you don’t lose too much time thinking about Lottie. Ah, ha! my boy, you see how it is yourself, don’t you? Take stock, find out everything. How can a man support a family without something to do it with? Ah, ha! my boy, tell me how it can be done? Can’t tell? of course you can’t; neither can I – impossible! – family can’t be supported on air, or gas – must have bread – bread, of course. Well, how are you going to buy bread when you have nothing to buy it with? Lottie must have bread – you know; therefore go to work, take stock, take an inventory, then the business is half yours; ah, ha! you see now, don’t you, Eddie, my boy? Full partner signboard: Dodson & Demar, Druggists and physicians, etc., etc., etc. Ah, ha! do you see, Eddie, my boy? Lottie’s a lady, you know; must have nice clothes; must have bread; money buys bread, money buys clothes, money buys nice home; where does the money come from? Drug-store, of course – full partner. Ah, ha! Eddie, my boy, here we come, Dodson & Demar; now go to work, fix things lively, let me see balance sheet with nice figures; have everything done up in apple-pie order; think of Lottie as much as you please, but mind you don’t take a dose of dog poison by mistake. Do you know the reason why I like you, Eddie, my boy? Ah, ha! of course you do; ’tis because you don’t play billiards. You can’t play whist; you can’t play poker; you can’t play chess; you’re a booby, that’s what you are, Eddie, my boy, ah, ha! therefore I like you. I admire boobies, who can’t play billiards nor poker. I’m a booby myself, you see, consequently I like ’em. Lottie likes boobies – that accounts for her foolish love for you; she learned that from me; shows her good sense. I told her that boobies were the best in the long run; billiard players, poker players, chess players, perfumed pretty boys are splendid fellows in a short race, but when it comes to long heats, they are always left behind.’

“Doctor Dodson had the utmost contempt for idle young men, and usually expressed his opinion in language by no means complimentary to that class. I was highly pleased to know that I was to be admitted into the firm as an equal partner – it would enable me to support my Lottie as a lady in that station of life to which her accomplishments and beauty entitled her. It was my duty to make known my engagement to Mr. Rockland, and to ask his consent to our marriage; and this was a task which I dreaded exceedingly; because I was not so sure that he would sanction the union. Mr. Rockland was a first-class lawyer who had accumulated a splendid fortune by his profession, and he was one of those austere, cold-natured kind of men whose ambition had usurped many of his good qualities; yet he loved Lottie with all his heart, and so did his wife; but I had a strong suspicion that they were inclined to encourage Mr. Heartsell in his suit for Lottie’s hand. The more I thought the matter over, the more I dreaded to mention it to Mr. Rockland; I had a high regard for him because he loved Lottie. He had given her a home, a real happy home, where she had been surrounded with all the comforts and luxuries that money could procure; he had given her a first-class education – nay, more than that, he had educated Harry, who was now preparing to enter the legal profession with brilliant prospects. Mr. Rockland was always busy – in fact, he was injuring his health by incessant labor, and I knew he would be annoyed if I should attempt to seek an interview with him during business hours; I therefore watched for an opportunity to speak to him when he should be passing from his office to his residence. One evening, about three days after Lottie had promised to marry me, I saw Mr. Rockland walking toward his residence, with a large bundle of papers under his arm. He was looking very pale and sad, and I felt my knees trembling as I approached him for the purpose of speaking to him about Lottie.

“Are you in a great hurry, Mr. Rockland?’ I inquired timidly.

“Yes, Edward,’ was the solemn answer, ‘I am always in a hurry; but why do you ask the question?’

“I was wanting to speak to you about a matter of great moment; but if you are busy, I can wait.’

“Will it occupy much time, Edward?’

“No, sir.’

“Then walk with me to my residence, and I’ll hear what you have to say.’

‘I walked in silence by his side as he led the way to his home. Lottie met us at the gate, and greeted Mr. Rockland with a kiss, then took my arm.

“What is the matter with you, Eddie? you look as if you had been ill.’

“You must be mistaken, Lottie, for I never was in better health in my life.’

“Come then with me into the garden; I wish to show you my new pet – it is the prettiest one of all.’

“I beg you will excuse me just now; I have come to see Mr. Rockland on a matter of importance; and he has kindly granted me an interview; when that is attended to, I shall be more than pleased to see your pets.’

‘She looked inquiringly up into my face: ‘Oh, very well, I will excuse you on that plea. You know you men are always thinking of business.’

‘I don’t think she had any idea of the nature of the business I had come to attend to. She walked by my side till we arrived at the house; then placing her mouth to my ear, she whispered:

“Don’t be long about the business – I am dying to be with you.’

“What’s that you are whispering to Edward about, Lottie?’ said Mr. Rockland, with his low, solemn voice.

“Oh, never mind, papa! you go in and attend to your business, and don’t be inquisitive; you are so much accustomed to cross-examining witnesses in court that you wish to practice on me to keep from getting rusted. You can’t pump me as you do other witnesses; so there now, go along about your business.’ And as she finished the sentence she threw her arms about his neck and gave him two or three kisses. ‘Now go, you dear old darling you!’ Then she went capering off toward the garden, while Mr. Rockland’s eyes followed her with an eager look of intense love.

“Ah, Mr. Demar,’ said he, as he stood and gazed at Lottie, ‘she is the sweetest darling in the world; do you know that I love her just as much as I could if she were my own child? She is the most extraordinary girl I ever saw, sir; the most charming disposition; sings like a nightingale. I have employed an eminent music teacher, and mean to bring out her great genius. She has been taught music, but it was by ordinary teachers; the one I have secured lately is of a different sort. The fact of the business is, Mr. Demar, that girl has so wound herself about my heart that it would kill me to lose her. My wife loves her dearly; but, sir, the feeling I have for her goes beyond mere love – it is something like idolatry – soul worship; something which one may feel, but which he can’t describe. I mean to will all my property to Lottie; and I may be permitted to say to you, Mr. Demar, confidentially, that it will be no inconsiderable sum. She will be ahead of any girl in Memphis, so far as wealth is concerned, and far beyond them in the way of accomplishments. Be seated, Mr. Demar,’ said Mr. Rockland, at the same time taking his seat at the table opposite to me. ‘I’ll hear you now.’

‘I gasped for breath, and felt like one choking; I struggled desperately to regain self-possession, and succeeded sooner than I thought I should. The fact is, I became very angry at seeing the cold, unfeeling expression that settled on Mr. Rockland’s face; and I began to reason with myself: ‘Why should I tremble in this man’s presence? Why should I be afraid of him? What right had he acquired that he should be able to hold my fate in the hollow of his hand? What if he did love Lottie – didn’t I love her more than he did? Why should I be compelled to come as an humble suppliant to him, begging him to give Lottie to me? What right had he to give her to anybody? How came she to be his property? Who should dare dispute my superior claim to her?’

“Mr. Rockland,’ said I, ‘Lottie has promised to be my wife, and I thought perhaps it was proper to tell you of it.’ I did not ask his consent, which it was really my duty to do; but, as I have said, I was angry at the austerity and coldness of his manner, and tried to assume an independence which I now think was wrong. Mr. Rockland made a grab at a chancery bill that lay near him, and commenced turning over the pages as if he were looking in it for an answer to my words. I thought I saw a slight tremulousness in his hand as he held the paper, while his face turned a shade paler.

“It was very imprudent in Lottie, to say the least of it, and I must say, Mr. Demar, that common courtesy should have induced you to mention the matter to me before saying anything to Lottie. She is young and inexperienced – much too young to think of matrimony.’

“I will wait, sir, until she is old enough,’ said I.

“Mr. Rockland patted the floor with his boot-heel, and tapped the table with the chancery bill, and I thought he was viewing me with contempt. The blood burned in my cheeks, and doubtless made them very red; he remained silent for some time, as if undecided as to what he should say next; at length he struck the table a sharp blow with the bill and said:

“Lottie is not my daughter, Mr. Demar; but she has been placed under my protection, and I consider it to be my duty to act in this matter as if she were my own child. Doubtless she imagines that she is in love with you; young girls of her age always act foolishly, no doubt; but I suppose it to be a mere childish fancy, and not, as you imagine, a real love affair. Therefore, you will pardon me for suggesting the propriety of canceling what you are pleased to call an engagement, leaving her free to act as her best judgment may dictate when she arrives at an age that will enable her to view things from a more matured standpoint.’

“If Lottie wishes to cancel the engagement, Mr. Rockland, it may be done. But, sir, I think you are mistaken when you conclude that her love for me is a mere girlish fancy. We have loved each other for many years, and I assure you it is no common love either.’

“No doubt you think so, Mr. Demar; and your confidence in that respect may help us to arrive at a proper understanding. If (as you think) she really loves you with such a true devotion, you certainly will not object to allowing the engagement to be canceled, with the understanding that it may be remade when Lottie shall arrive at the age of twenty-one, provided she then may wish it.’

“I can only repeat what I have said before, Mr. Rockland; if Lottie wishes to be released, by all means let it be done; otherwise, I must beg you to let the engagement remain undisturbed. But, sir, I am willing that the marriage may be postponed until I shall have obtained my diploma, and settled down to work in my profession; meantime understand me, sir; if at any time Lottie shall intimate a wish to be released from her engagement, I promise to raise no objections.’

“Very well, sir; if such is your decision I must acquiesce, of course; therefore, you must promise not to mention the matter to Lottie any more until I shall have interviewed her on the subject.’

“Certainly, I give you the promise most cheerfully.’

“You must promise further than that, Mr. Demar; you must pledge your honor not to speak to Lottie at all until I have had a talk with her. She is in the garden now. You will return to your place of business, and allow me to make your excuse for leaving without seeing her.’

“I hesitated, because my suspicions were roused. I did not like the cold, iron look that appeared on his face, nor the evasive expression of his piercing dark eyes. I was afraid he intended to make Lottie believe it was my wish that the marriage engagement should be broken off – else why was he so anxious for me to go away without seeing her? Noticing my hesitation, he evidently divined the cause, for he said:

“Oh, you need not fear to make the promise, Mr. Demar; I will do everything openly and above board. I shall, of course, endeavor to convince Lottie of the great error she has committed. No dishonorable means shall be resorted to. I shall say nothing to her behind your back that I would not say to your face; but I only wish to have a talk with her alone, when she is not influenced by your presence; that’s all, I assure you, Mr. Demar.’

“You will not try to make her believe that I wish the engagement broken?”

“Certainly not; how could I do that when I know you don’t wish anything of the sort?”

“His frank, candid manner re-assured me, and I made the promise, and immediately took my leave. As I passed out through the gate Lottie saw me, and called me to come to her. I shook my head and passed on. Notwithstanding the distance that lay between us, I could plainly see the look of astonishment that overspread her beautiful face. She had started to meet me, almost in a run, but when she perceived that I was avoiding her she came to a sudden halt, and the little basket she held in her hand instantly fell to the ground, scattering the flowers round her feet, while she appeared to be struck dumb with wonder. What could I do? Had I not given my most solemn promise not to speak to her until Mr. Rockland could have an interview with her? When I saw the painful expression of her dear face I wheeled round and started toward her; then recollecting the promise I had made, I hastened away. I began to snuff danger in the breeze.

“Mr. Rockland was an honorable man – so were Cæsar’s assassins all honorable men. Mr. Rockland thought it was his duty to prevent the marriage between Lottie and me – the lean and hungry Cassius thought it was his duty to kill Cæsar. Mr. Rockland did not think of this poor heart of mine, or care how it would wither and die if he took Lottie from me – Brutus did not think or care for the heart of his friend, as he plucked away the bloody blade from Cæsar’s heart. If Mr. Rockland thought it was his duty to have the engagement broken off, I felt certain that he would leave no means unused which would tend to accomplish it. I thought then, and think yet, he was really an honest, conscientious man; but what will a man not do in order to gain his object, when he feels that in doing it he is performing his duty? More cruelties have been committed by men while doing what they believed to be their duty than ever were committed wantonly. I suppose that Jeffries, the bloody tool of a tyrant, thought he was performing his duty as an impartial judge when he was making all the air of England shriek with the cries of dying victims.

“I left Mr. Rockland in his library. He rang a little bell, which was answered by a servant.

“Tell Lottie I wish to see her in my library immediately.”

“In a few moments she came in with an inquiring look on her face.

“What is it, papa? Tell me quick – I am in a great hurry.” She had come up behind his chair, and was running her fingers through his gray hair, every now and then pressing a kiss on his brow.

“Oh, you dear old darling! why don’t you commence? can’t you see I am all attention? What made you let Eddie run off like a thief? Don’t you think when I called him back he shook his shaggy head and refused to come! Now, papa dear, what have you been doing to my Eddie?”

“How came he to be your Eddie?”

“Because he loves me, and I love him; now the cat’s out of the bag.”

“Nonsense, child! I implore you not to talk so foolishly.”

“No nonsense about it at all; pray where does the foolish part come in? Is it wrong, papa, to love such a dear fellow as my Eddie?”

“It was wrong for a girl of your age to enter into an engagement without consulting any one; and that was what I wished to speak to you about.”

“Oh, indeed! was it? Now, you dear old darling, you aren’t going to scold me about it, are you? No, of course you won’t; if you do, I’ll make your tea as weak as water, and I’ll put pepper in your toast till it shall burn you up, indeed I will!”

“I couldn’t have the heart to scold my darling!”

“As Mr. Rockland said this he threw his arms round her waist and drew her to his heart, covering her brow with a kiss. Mr. Rockland was vanquished; her charms were irresistible; and the great lawyer, with nerves of steel and an iron will, who could brow-beat witnesses, intimidate judges and over-ride facts, found himself confounded, vanquished and helpless – all done by a pretty face and two large, dreamy blue eyes. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Rockland loved Lottie so devotedly that he was unable to withstand her displeasure.

“Take a seat, Lottie,” he said, “and let us come to an understanding in this business at once; sit down, and we will talk the matter over dispassionately, like sensible people.”

“Lottie took a chair on the opposite side of the table, and fixing her beautiful eyes on him, said:

“I’ll hear what you have to say, papa.”

“The man of iron returned the gaze with a cold, calm look. After a long silence he said:

“Lottie, my dear child, you know I love you as I love life. The only aim I have is to promote your happiness; and I demand of you permission to cancel this foolish engagement which you have so imprudently entered into with Edward Demar. Have I your permission to cancel it?”

“Only on condition that Eddie wishes it to be canceled.”

“Mr. Demar did not say he wished the engagement canceled; but he agreed that it should be done if you were willing, and authorized me to say as much to you.”

“The blood left her cheeks for a moment, then came back with a tremendous rush, yet she managed to keep calm.

“Send for Eddie now, papa, and let me hear him say he is willing to annul our engagement.”

“That is unnecessary, Lottie; you have my word that such is his wish, and you know me too well to suspect me of prevarication; again I command you to break off this most absurd and imprudent engagement; will you, or will you not, do it? I demand an answer, yes or no?”

“Lottie’s bosom rose and fell with unusual emotion, while her eyes were fixed on Mr. Rockland.

“Yes or no, Lottie?” again demanded the man of iron.

“Dear, dear papa, for Heaven’s sake don’t ask me to be false to the man I love! I’ll not marry him until he returns from Philadelphia; by that time I will be better able to make you a sensible answer, but I beseech you not to press me so now; you know how I love you – you know how much I appreciate your kindness to me; listen, therefore, to my entreaty – grant me time for reflection.”

“Not another moment will I give you to make an answer to such a sensible request; any girl whose judgment was not choked with a foolish infatuation would be able to answer such a reasonable demand without a moment’s reflection. Do you wish to tie yourself to a man who is anxious to get rid of you?”

“No, no! a thousand times, no, papa; and no one knows this better than you.”

“Then, Lottie, for the last time, I demand authority from you to cancel this foolish engagement; will you, or will you not, give it?”

“Not unless Eddie wishes it,” was the calm reply.

“At last the man of iron lost his temper:

“Then, Miss Wallingford, you will oblige me by seeking a home elsewhere.”

“Oh, papa, dear, darling papa! please unsay those cruel words! I am not afraid of hardships; neither am I afraid of poverty, but it is your displeasure that I dread more than all. I love you truly, earnestly, devotedly, as much as any child ever loved a parent. Oh, papa, revoke those cruel words!”

“Leave me, leave me!” thundered the lawyer, as he pushed Lottie away from him rather roughly. She retreated to the farther end of the room and stared at Mr. Rockland with astonishment, while a mysterious change came over her. She approached the table, took a seat, and hastily penned a note to Edward Demar:

“DEAR EDDIE – Come to me as quickly as you can. I wish to consult you on important business. Yours,

“*LOTTIE.*”

“Then she touched a little silver bell that lay on the table and a man-servant bowed himself in at the door.

“Did you ring, miss?” inquired the servant.

“Take this note to Mr. Edward Demar without delay; you’ll find him at Doctor Dodson’s drug-store. Tell Burley to come to me instantly.”

“The man servant had scarcely passed the veranda when Burley, a mulatto woman, appeared at the door.

“Did you send for me, miss?”

“Pack my clothes in the large trunk, Burley; then get Archie to help you bring it down; set the trunk on the front portico; tell Archie to put my parrot in his cage, and to bring all my pets and place them by my trunk. Tell him to tie a string round old Bob’s neck, so I can lead the poor blind friend along while I am seeking a new home. Old Bob and I have been tramps many days together, and we’ll not part now.’

“Oh, Lottie, my darling, come to your old cruel papa’s arms! I give up – I surrender – I take back all I have said. Marry Eddie if you will, but don’t leave me – I can’t live without you; you shall have your own way in everything.’

“Lottie, of course, went into Mr. Rockland’s arms, and covered his brow with kisses. That was what I call a triumph of woman’s rights. Here was a lawyer who commanded money, influenced courts, directed banks, intimidated witnesses, cleared guilty clients, compelled judges to bow to his great talent; and then in comes a weak little girl and rules him, the same as a raw recruit is ruled, by the commanding general. She bids him go, and he goes – she commands him to come, and he comes. Talk about woman’s rights! What on earth do women want with any more rights than they have? They have complete control of the world – because they control man, and through him the world.”

“There is the gong for lunch,” observed the queen, “and you may suspend until it is over. It is our wish, though, that our friends re-assemble here immediately after luncheon, to hear more of the story.”

CHAPTER XI

“Suppose you and I don’t go down to luncheon,” said Scottie to Ivanhoe; “I am not a bit hungry, and would very much prefer remaining up here; how is it with you?”

“That’s my fix, exactly; I’m glad you mentioned it. Take my arm, and let us have a walk and a talk both.”

“Agreed; now what did your spy report, a moment ago, about the two detectives?”

“I shall find out everything that is going on. It is such rare sport, too, to be tracking detectives who imagine themselves to be so clever!”

“Oh, bother the clever detectives! tell me what you know.”

“Now, Scottie, don’t you begin to lose your temper; you know I have made a confidante of you.”

“I think you and I ought to be very good friends.”

“So do I.”

“I think we ought to know more about each other.”

“So do I.”

“When do you intend to tell me who you are, Scottie?”

“As soon as the queen gives her consent.”

“What has the queen got to do with it, I should like to know?”

“No doubt you would; but I have given my solemn promise not to reveal her name nor my own to any person without her permission; and she has promised that as soon as Ingomar’s story is finished all secrecy may be discarded. But now I want to hear what you have discovered about the two seedy men.”

“They are going to arrest Ingomar, and take him off at Vicksburg; he is charged with a bloody murder (so the seedy men say). They state that he committed the crime somewhere in Mississippi, and while in jail awaiting trial managed to make his escape. The friends of the murdered man offered a large reward for the capture of the perpetrator, and then the State added another large sum to that offered by the friends of the deceased, and those two seedy men are officers from Mississippi who have got Ingomar spotted.”

“Does Ingomar know they are watching him?”

“No, I think not.”

“Then why not warn him of the danger?”

“That would be wrong, because if he is guilty he ought to suffer; if he is innocent he is in no danger.”

“Do you believe he is guilty?”

“I can’t say that I do, for I know nothing about it. I shall therefore accept the legal theory, which regards every man innocent until the contrary is established by competent proof.”

“It would require a pile of evidence as high as Pike’s Peak to make me believe that Ingomar is a murderer.”

“So it would to convince me.”

“What have you discovered about the mysterious lady in the black domino?”

“Ah, my spy has met her match there! With all her cleverness, the black domino is too much for her. One circumstance, however, has been brought to the surface; the black domino is shadowing Ingomar too, and the strangest thing about it is, that she is not in any manner working with the seedy men – it’s a separate game.”

“Goodness gracious! what on earth can it all mean?”

“I’m sure I don’t know; I wish I did.”

“Perhaps she is the wife of the murdered man; or she may be his sister, or his sweetheart, who is watching him.”

“Can’t say as to that; but it is certain that she is shadowing him. One circumstance connected with her, however, tends to prove your theory about it. The lady in the black domino seems to be unusually melancholy all the time – has often been seen weeping, and never speaks to any one. That goes to prove that she has lost a dear friend or relative; and it may be, as you say, that she was related to the man who was murdered.”

“The truth is, I can’t stand this suspense much longer; I shall die of mere curiosity if things don’t change soon.”

“I beg you not to make a die of it, Scottie, before I get a look at your face.”

“And pray why should you wish to see my face?”

“I am sure I should like it.”

“Suppose you did like it – what would that signify?”

“It might bring about a coincidence, you know.”

“Look, look! there comes the black domino; see how she follows Ingomar! I saw her pointing at him just now, and whispering something in her uncle’s ear. The whirlwind is going to burst on us ere long; don’t you think so?”

“Indeed I do! There is a strange game being played on this boat – it may end in a tragedy.”

“Pray don’t talk that way – you frighten me. I think I had better mention the matter to the queen, and have this nonsense ended at once.”

“No, no! don’t do that, by any means, I beseech you. Our best plan is to remain silent and wait for the denouement.”

“Be it so, then, sir knight. You shall be my champion when the war begins.”

“I shall be proud of the honor – I’ll emblazon my banner with the name of Scottie, in letters of gold, and fight the world in arms in defense of my lady-love. Then I’ll imitate the brave Spanish king, when he met Sir Roderick Dhu on Clanalpine’s lofty height. You know he threw himself against a rock – which I’ll do when the fight opens.”

“But there are no rocks here, you see.”

“Oh, never mind that; I’ll make the pilot-house answer for the rock. I’ll just throw myself against it while you can hide inside, and then hear me cry:

“Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I.”

“Brave, bravo! my gallant knight. I’ll swap my domino for a laurel crown, to deck the brow of my brave champion.”

“There, there, Scottie, I cry enough! Come, let us join our friends – they are waiting for us yonder. Don’t you see the queen is beckoning to you?”

“When I received Lottie’s note requesting me to come to her immediately, you may guess how my heart fluttered – for I thought something serious had surely occurred, and but very few moments elapsed before I was at the gate in front of Mr. Rockland’s residence. It was a considerable walk from the drug-store to his residence, and I was compelled to halt in order to rest a moment before entering, as I wished to appear composed. While I was leaning against a tree wiping the perspiration from my face and panting with fatigue, I saw Lottie coming rapidly toward me. She had been watching for me.

“Oh, Eddie, it’s all settled!” she exclaimed, as she caught both my hands in hers. I made a move as if I were going to take her in my arms. She gently pushed me back. ‘Don’t be quite so familiar, Eddie – can’t you see papa looking at us? Oh, such a storm as we have had here to-day! Papa ordered me to go away from his home because I wouldn’t let him tell you that I wanted our engagement broken off.’

“Well, why didn’t you take him at his word? you knew where you could find another home.’

“I did, but the good, dear old darling relented before I could pack my things, and fell to hugging and kissing me, and wouldn’t let me go.’

“Lottie, Mr. Rockland is really a good man, and I respect him very much – mainly because he loves you.’

“Indeed he is! and my heart was most broken when he ordered me to go away; but did you wish to have our engagement broken off?”

“No, you know I did not! What could have put such an idea as that into your mind? Mr. Rockland did not tell you I wished it ended, did he?”

“He didn’t say that you said so, but he said you were willing to cancel it if I would consent to it.’

“Ah, I see now how it is: Mr. Rockland put the case very strong in favor of his side. That was a good stroke of policy, you see, Lottie; you didn’t believe for a moment that I wanted to have the engagement canceled?”

“No, I did not.’

“I declare, Lottie, I never saw you look so pretty before.’

“I am truly glad that you think so; it makes me very happy to please you.’

“Ah! how could I be otherwise than well pleased when I know Lottie loves me? I feel like a new man since I found it out. Will my Lottie always love me?”

“Yes, of course I will; I am so very, very happy when you are with me, and so miserable when you are away from me. What shall become of poor me when my Eddie goes away to Philadelphia?”

“Let us look forward to the happy day that brings me back to my love. Let us keep our minds on the bright future, when we shall be always together.’

“I wish I could do that, but I cannot; I shall all the time be thinking you are ill, or that something has gone wrong with you. I should die if you were to fall ill among strangers!’

“I’ll take good care of myself for your sake; I’ll be prudent in all things, and let you know if anything goes wrong; but you must do the same.’

“Let us go in; I see Mr. Rockland waiting for you – he is going to talk to you about our engagement, and you must be careful not to offend him.’

“Fear nothing on that score; I think we will now come to an understanding entirely satisfactory to all parties concerned.’

“Mr. Rockland met me on the portico with his cold, placid smile, and directed me to follow him into the library. He also asked Lottie to go with us. Pointing to a seat, he requested me to take it; Lottie stood calmly by my chair, while Mr. Rockland took his usual seat on the opposite side of the table.

“Mr. Demar,’ he began, with his austere tone of voice, ‘I have had an interview with Lottie on the subject about which we were speaking a short while ago.’

“So Lottie told me, Mr. Rockland.’

“Her views and mine differed somewhat; but we have managed to reconcile them to some extent; and we may therefore reasonably hope to have all things amicably settled.’

“I am truly glad to hear it, Mr. Rockland.’

“Thank you, Edward; are you willing to promise me that the marriage shall be deferred until the end of two years from this date?”

“Indeed, Mr. Rockland, I should like very much to be able to comply with your request, but why not let the marriage be solemnized when I return from Philadelphia in the spring?”

“Lottie would be too young to marry then.’

“Grant papa’s request, Eddie,’ said Lottie; ‘I am very willing to put it off indefinitely, if you can be with me often.’

“That settled the question; so it was agreed that Lottie should be my wife at the end of two years.

“Come,’ said Lottie, as she took my arm, and looking up at me, her sweet little mouth puckered up in a comical shape; ‘we’ll go to the study now, as everything has been settled between you and papa; I want to show you some new flowers that I have secured; oh, they are such nice ones! They flourish better in the fall season than they do in the spring.’

“She led me through her flower garden, stopping occasionally to point out the different plants, giving a graphic description of their nature and the manner of their culture; and when we came near the summer-house the old parrot began to chatter:

“Ah, ha! Lottie! here we come – here we come!”

“Can’t he say anything but that, Lottie?” I inquired.

“Oh, yes, he can talk a great deal when he takes a notion. Did you know I had a letter from Viola, Eddie?”

“No, have you?”

“Yes; let me read it to you; she writes such a nice, smooth hand, and her letter is so friendly; but here it is:

“New York, Aug. 16.

“DEAR LOTTIE – I must first offer an apology to you for neglecting to answer your last letter. You must not for a moment think that the delay was caused by a lack of love for you on my part. When your letter came I had not returned from my boarding school, but as soon as I came home and found your darling letter I lost no time in answering it. Oh, Lottie, I am so happy just now that I cannot find words to tell you as I should like to do. Papa has consented to let me spend the winter in Memphis, and you may look for me by the last of September. Oh, isn’t that delightful? Won’t we have lots of fun? I often think of you and your heroic little brother – but I ought not to speak of him as your little brother now, I suppose, because he must be a man by this time. I have his picture, you know, Lottie, and oh, how much I do think of it! I keep it next to my heart all the time. All the gold in California could not buy it from me. I expect Harry has changed very much since we parted – you know I was only a little child then, but now I am a great, overgrown mushroom – and as green as a half-grown gourd. Dear papa says I am pretty, but you know evidence of that kind is unreliable; still I confess I should like to know it was true. You may tell Harry – I suppose I ought to say Mr. Wallingford – that I have not forgotten him, and I don’t think I ever shall. I was so glad to hear that he was going to make a great lawyer of himself. Mr. Rockland says, in his letters to papa, that Mr. Wallingford possesses great talent, and will be sure to distinguish himself some day. Would you believe it, I shed lots of joyful tears when papa read the letter to me? I envy you; how happy you must be! how proud of such a brave, heroic, talented brother! You see, I am well posted in everything that concerns you and your noble brother. I often wonder if he ever thinks of the little foolish girl he kept from being crushed to death by the engine? I wonder if he has forgotten how he and I went rolling and tumbling down the embankment together! I was so much delighted at your description of your flower garden; I know I shall enjoy it very much. You people of the dear sunny South have great advantages over us in that respect. I think I should like to live in the South all the time. I suppose you knew I had a darling little brother – yes, I know you did, because I remember now that I told you of it in my other letters. Poor little fellow, he is not a healthy child at all; he is now nearly five years old, and looks like a mere baby, though papa says he will come out all right after a while. Did I ever tell you what his name was? I don’t think I did. Well, you see mamma and papa couldn’t agree on a name for him, and, to keep peace in the family, it was agreed that I should have the honor of selecting his name. What do you think I did? I named him after your heroic brother. We call him Wallie. That, you know, is an abbreviation of Wallingford. He was baptized as “Harry Wallingford Bramlett,” and papa and mamma were both delighted with the good selection I made. But I must close now, because I fear I have made this letter too long, anyway. Present my highest regards to your brother, and accept my best, truest love for yourself, and write soon to

“Your true friend,

“VIOLA.”

“That’s a splendid letter, Lottie, for a girl of sixteen to write,” said I, when it was read through.

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