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AMONG THE TREES

In our studies of Trees, we cannot fail to be impressed with their importance not only to the beauty of landscape, but also in the economy of life; and we are convinced that in no other part of the vegetable creation has Nature done so much to provide at once for the comfort, the sustenance, and the protection of her creatures. They afford the wild animals their shelter and their abode, and yield them the greater part of their subsistence. They are, indeed, so evidently indispensable to the wants of man and brute, that it would be idle to enlarge upon the subject, except in those details which are apt to be overlooked. In a state of Nature man makes direct use of their branches for weaving his tent, and he thatches it with their leaves. In their recesses he hunts the animals whose flesh and furs supply him with food and clothing, and from their wood he obtains the implements for capturing and subduing them. Man's earliest farinaceous food was likewise the product of trees; for in his nomadic condition he makes his bread from the acorn and the chestnut: he must become a tiller of the soil, before he can obtain the products of the cereal herbs. The groves were likewise the earliest temples for his worship, and their fruits his first offerings upon the divine altar.

As man advances nearer to civilization, trees afford him the additional advantage which is derived from their timber. The first houses were constructed of wood, which enables him by its superior plastic nature, compared with stone, to progress more rapidly in his ideas of architecture. Wood facilitates his endeavors to instruct himself in art, by its adaptedness to a greater variety of purposes than any other substance. It is, therefore, one of the principal instruments of civilization which man has derived from the material world. Though the most remarkable works of the architect are constructed of stone, it was wood that afforded man that early practice and experience which initiated him into the laws of mechanics and the principles of art, and carried him along gradually to perfection.

But as man is nomadic before he is agricultural, and a maker of tents and wigwams before he builds houses and temples,—in like manner he is an architect and an idolater before he becomes a student of wisdom; he is a sacrificer in temples and a priest at their altars, before he is a teacher of philosophy or an interpreter of Nature. After the attainment of science, a higher state of mental culture succeeds, causing the mind to see all Nature invested with beauty and fraught with imaginative charms, which add new wonders to our views of creation and new dignity to life. Man now learns to regard trees in other relations beside their capacity to supply his physical and mechanical wants. He looks upon them as the principal ornaments of the face of creation, and as forming the conservatories of Nature, in which she rears those minute wonders of her skill, the flowers and smaller plants that will flourish only under their protection, and those insect hosts that charm the student with their beauty and excite his wonder by their mysterious instincts. Science, too, has built an altar under the trees, and delivers thence new oracles of wisdom, teaching man how they are mysteriously wedded to the clouds, and are thus made the blessed instruments of their beneficence to the earth.

Not without reason did the ancients place the Naiad and her fountain in the shady arbor of trees, whose foliage gathers the waters of heaven into her fount and preserves them from dissipation. From their dripping shades she distributes the waters, which she has garnered from the skies, over

the plain and the valley: and the husbandman, before he has learned the marvels of science, worships the beneficent Naiad, who draws the waters of her fountain from heaven, and from her sanctuary in the groves showers them upon the arid glebe and adds new verdure to the plain. After science has explained to us the law by which these supplies of moisture are furnished by the trees, we still worship the beneficent Naiad: we would not remove the drapery of foliage that protects her fountain, nor drive her into exile by the destruction of the trees, through whose leaves she holds mysterious commerce with the skies and saves our fields from drought.

It is in these relations, leaving their uses in economy and the arts untouched, that I would now speak of trees. I would consider them as they appear to the poet and the painter, as they are connected with scenery, and with the romance and mythology of Nature, and as serving the purposes of religion and virtue, of freedom and happiness, of poetry and science, as well as those of mere taste and economy. I am persuaded that trees are closely connected with the fate of nations, that they are the props of industry and civilization, and that in all countries from which the forests have disappeared the people have sunk into indolence and servitude.

Though we may not be close observers of Nature, we cannot fail to have remarked that there is an infinite variety in the forms of trees, as well as in their habits. By those who have observed them as landscape ornaments, trees have been classified according to their shape and manner of growth. They are round-headed or hemispherical, like the Oak and the Plane; pyramidal, like the Pine and the Fir; obeliscal, like the Arbor-Vitæ and Lombardy Poplar; drooping, like the White Elm and the Weeping Willow; and umbrella-shaped, like the Palm. These are the natural or normal varieties in the forms of trees. There are others which may be considered accidental: such are the tall and irregularly shaped trees which have been cramped by growing in a dense forest that does not permit the extension of their lateral branches; such also are the pollards which have been repeatedly cut down or dwarfed by the axe of the woodman.

Of the round-headed trees, that extend their branches more or less at wide angles from their trunk, the Oak is the most conspicuous and the most celebrated. To the mind of an American, however, the Oak is far less familiar than the Elm, as a way-side tree; but in England, where many

> "a cottage-chimney smokes
> From betwixt two aged Oaks,"

this tree, which formerly received divine honors in that country, is now hardly less sacred in the eyes of the inhabitants, on account of their familiarity with its shelter and its shade, and their ideas of its usefulness to the human family. The history of the British Isles is closely interwoven with circumstances connected with the Oak, and the poetry of Great Britain has derived from it many a theme of inspiration.

The Oak is remarkable for the wide spread of its lower branches and its broad extent of shade, —for its suggestiveness of power, and consequent expression of grandeur. It is allied with the romance of early history; it is celebrated by its connection with the religion and religious rites of the Druids, —with the customs of the Romans, who formed of its green leaves the civic crown for their heroes, and who planted it to overshadow the temple of Jupiter; and many ancient superstitions give its name a peculiar significance to the poet and the antiquary. From its timber marine architecture has derived the most important aid, and it has thereby become associated with the grandeur of commerce and the exploits of a gallant navy, and is regarded as the emblem of naval prowess. The Oak, therefore, to the majority of the human race, is, beyond all other trees, fraught with romantic interest, and invested with classic and historical dignity.

The American continent contains a great many species of Oak in its indigenous forest. Of these the White Oak bears the most resemblance to the classical tree, in its general appearance, in the contorted growth of its branches, and in the edible quality of its fruit. But the Red Oak, the most

northerly species, exceeds all others in size. No other attains so great a height, or spreads its branches so widely, or surpasses it in regularity of form. As we advance south, the White Oak is conspicuous until we arrive at North Carolina, where the forests and way-sides exhibit the beautiful Evergreen Oak, which, with its slender undivided leaves, the minute subdivisions of its branches, and its general comeliness of form, would be mistaken by a stranger for a Willow. A close inspection, however, would soon convince him that it has none of the fragility of the Willow. On the contrary, it is the most noted of all the genus for its hardness and durability, being the identical Live Oak which has supplied our navy with the most valuable of timber. At the South the Evergreen Oak is a common way-side tree, mingling its hues with the lighter green of the Cypress and the sombre verdure of the Magnolia.

The Oak exceeds all other trees, not only in actual strength, but also in that outward appearance by which this quality is manifested. This expression is due to the general horizontal spread of its principal boughs, the peculiar angularity of the unions of its small branches, the want of flexibility in its spray, and its great size when compared with its height, all manifesting its power to resist the wind and the storm. Hence it is regarded as the monarch of trees, surpassing all in those qualities that indicate nobleness and capacity. It is the emblem of strength, dignity, and grandeur: the severest hurricane cannot overthrow it, and, by destroying some of its branches, leaves it only with more wonderful proofs of its resistance. Like the rock that rises in mid-ocean, it becomes in its old age a just symbol of fortitude, parting with its limbs one by one, as they are broken by the gale or withered by decay; but still retaining its many-centuried existence, when, like an old patriarch, it has seen all its early companions removed.

Standard Oaks are comparatively rare in the New England States, and not many adorn our way-sides and inclosures, which are mostly shaded by Elms, Limes, Maples, and Ash-trees. The scarcity of Oaks in these places is attributable in some degree to the peculiar structure of their roots, which extend downwards to a great depth in the soil, causing them to be difficult of transplantation. It is owing in still greater measure to the value of Oak-wood for ship-timber,—especially as those full-grown trees which have sprung up by the road-sides, and the noble pasture Oaks, contain the greatest number of those joints which are in special demand for ship-building. Year after year, therefore, has witnessed the gradual disappearance of these venerable trees, which the public should have protected from the profane hands of the "timberer," by forcing him to procure his materials from the forest. The community needs to be taught that a standard tree of good size and well-developed proportions is of more value for its shade, and as an object in the landscape, than a whole acre of trees in the middle of a wood.

One of the most majestic trees in the American forest is the Chestnut, remarkable, like the Oak, for its broad extent of shade. In some parts of the country it is one of the most common standards in the field and pasture, having been left unmolested on account of the value of its fruit and the comparative inferiority of its timber. The foliage of this tree is dense and flowing, and peculiar in its arrangement. The leaves are clustered in stars of from five to seven, on short branches that grow from one of greater length. Hence, at a little distance, the whole mass of foliage seems to consist of tufts, each containing a tassel of long pointed leaves, drooping divergently from a common centre. The flowers come out from the centre of these leaves in the same manner, and by their silvery green lustre give a pleasing variety to the darker verdure of the whole mass. "This is the tree," says Gilpin, "which graces the landscapes of Salvator Rosa. In the mountains of Calabria, where Salvator painted, the Chestnut flourished. There he studied it in all its forms, breaking and disposing of it in a thousand beautiful shapes, as the exigencies of his composition required."

The Beech is one of the same class of trees, but does not equal the Chestnut in magnitude. It is distinguished by the beauty of its clean, smooth shaft, which is commonly ribbed or fluted in a perceptible degree; and in a wood, where there is an assemblage of these columns, rising without a branch to the height of thirty feet or more, they are singularly beautiful. A peculiarity often observed in the Beech is a sort of double head of foliage. This is produced by the habit of the tree of throwing

out a whorl of imperfect branches just below the union of the main branches with the trunk. The latter, taking more of an upward direction, cause an observable space a little below the middle of the height of the tree. This double tier of branches and foliage has been noticed by painters in the European Beech. I have observed it in several instances in the American tree.

Standard Beech-trees are not numerous in this part of the country; indeed, they are seldom seen except in a wood, or in clumps which have originated from the root of some tree that has perished. I think they appear to better advantage in groups and small assemblages than when single, as there is nothing greatly attractive in the form of a standard Beech; but there is a peculiar sweep of the lateral branches, when they are standing in a group, which the student of trees cannot fail to admire. They send out their branches more in right lines than most other trees, and, as their leaves and the extremities of their spray all have an upright tendency, they give a beautiful airy appearance to the edge of a wood. The foliage of other deciduous trees, even when the branches tend upward, is mostly of a drooping character. The Beech forms a pleasing exception to this habit, having leaves that point upward and outwardly, instead of hanging loosely. In most other trees the foliage is so heavy and flowing, that the courses of their branches are concealed under their drapery of leaves; but in the Beech all the lines produced by the branches and foliage are harmonious, and may be distinctly traced.

By taking note of these peculiarities in their arborescent growth, one greatly magnifies his capacity for enjoying the beauties of trees. Without this observation, their general appearance forms the chief object of his attention: he observes them only as a person of taste who cannot distinguish tunes would listen to music. He feels the agreeable sensation which their forms and aspects produce; but, like one who thinks without adequate language for his thoughts, his ideas are vague and indefinite. The Beech is particularly worthy of study, as in many points it differs characteristically from most other trees. I am acquainted with no tree in the forest that equals it, when disrobed of its foliage, in the gracefulness of its spray. There is an airiness about its whole appearance, at all seasons, that gives an expression of cheerfulness to the scene it graces, whether it skirt the banks of a stream or spread out its courteous arms over a sunny knoll or little sequestered nook.

There are some trees which are peculiarly American, being confined to the Western continent, and unknown in other parts of the world. Among these is the Hickory, a well-known and very common tree, celebrated rather for its usefulness than its beauty. The different trees of this family make an important feature in our landscape: they are not abundant in the forest, but they are conspicuous objects in the open plain, hill, and pasture. Great numbers of them have become standards; we see them following the lines of old stone walls that skirt the bounds and avenues of the farm, in company with the Ash and the Maple. In these situations, where they would not "cumber the ground," they have been allowed to grow, without exciting the jealousy of the proprietor of the land. Accident, under these circumstances, has reared many a beautiful tree, which would in any other place have been cut down as a trespasser. Thus Nature is always striving to clothe with beauty those scenes which man has despoiled; and while the farmer is hoeing and grubbing, and thinking only of his physical wants, unseen hands are draping all his fences with luxuriant vinery, and bordering his fields with trees that shall gladden the eyes of those who can understand their beauties.

The Hickory is not a round-headed tree; it approaches a cylindrical form, somewhat flattened at the top, but seldom attaining any strict regularity of shape. It does not expand into a full and flowing head, but is often divided into distinct masses of foliage, separated by vacant spaces of considerable size, and presenting an appearance as if a portion of the tree had been artificially removed. These gaps do not extend all round the tree; they are irregularly disposed, some trees having several of them, others none or only one; and they seem to have been caused, when the tree was young, by the dwindling of some principal branch. The Hickory throws out its branches at first very obliquely from the shaft; afterwards the lower ones bend down as the tree increases in size, and acquire an irregular and contorted shape; for, notwithstanding their toughness, they bend easily to the weight of their fruit and foliage.

This tree is celebrated in the United States for the toughness of its wood; and the term Hickory is used as emblematical of a sturdy and vigorous character. It possesses some of the ruggedness, without the breadth and majesty of the Oak, though it exceeds even this tree in braving the force of a tempest. It is one of our most common pasture-trees, and its deep-green foliage makes amends for the general want of comeliness in its outline.

As we are journeying through the older settlements of New England, the melancholy forms of the ill-fated Plane-trees tower above the surrounding objects, and attract our attention not only by their magnitude, but also by the marks of decay which are stamped upon all. This appearance is chiefly remarkable in the early part of summer: for the trees are not dead; but their vitality is so far gone that they are tardy in putting out their leaves, and seldom before July are they fully clad in verdure. When they are not in leaf, we may observe an unnatural growth of slender twigs in tufts at the ends of their branches. This is caused by the failure of the tree in perfecting its wood before the growth of the branches is arrested by the autumnal frosts; and this accident has been repeated annually ever since the trees began to be affected with their malady. The Plane was formerly a very common way-side tree in New England, until the fatality occurred which has caused the greater number of them to perish. It is a fact worthy of notice, that all the trees of this species below the latitude of Long Island have escaped the malady.

The Chenar-tree, or Oriental Plane, is celebrated in history, having had a place in all the public and private grounds of the Greeks and Romans, as well as of the Eastern nations. The American, or Western Plane, called in New England the Buttonwood, is not less remarkable for its size and grandeur. It is one of the loftiest trees, and its lateral branches, being of great length, give it extraordinary breadth. It also runs up to an unusual height, compared with other trees, before it forms a head, so that its lower branches are sometimes elevated above the roofs of the houses of common height Hence it would be a valuable tree for road-sides, if it were healthy, as it would allow the largest vehicles to pass freely under its boughs.

A far more beautiful tree, gracing equally the forest and the way-side, is the Ash, charming our sight with the gracefulness of its proportions in winter, with its flowing drapery of verdure in summer, and its variety of glowing tints in autumn. The Ash has been styled in Europe "the painter's tree,"—a fact which is worthy of notice, inasmuch as those writers who have theorized concerning the nature of beauty have generally regarded trees of broken and irregular shapes, like the Hickory, as more picturesque than those of prim and symmetrical habit, like the Ash. The practice of the great masters in painting seems adverse to this idea, since they have introduced the Ash more frequently than other trees into their pictures; and it shows the futility of the attempt to draw a distinction between picturesque and beautiful trees. All trees, indeed, of every natural shape, may be considered picturesque, as, in one situation or another, every species may be introduced to heighten the character of a picture or a landscape.

The Ash never fails to attract attention by the peculiar beauty of its outlines, the regular subdivision of its branches, its fair proportions and equal balance without any disagreeable formality. Nothing can exceed the gracefulness of its pinnate foliage, hanging loosely from its equally divergent spray, easy of motion, but not fluttering, and always harmonizing in its tints with the season of the year. Notwithstanding the different character, in regard to symmetry, of the Ash and the Hickory, the two trees are often mistaken for each other, and, when the latter is evenly formed, it is sometimes difficult at first sight to distinguish it. They differ, however, in all cases, in the opposite arrangement of the leaves and small branches of the Ash, and their alternate arrangement in the Hickory. One of these branches invariably becomes abortive, as the tree increases in size, so that their opposite character is apparent only in the spray.

In wet places which have never been subjected to the plough, in grounds partly inundated a great portion of the year, luxuriating in company with the Northern Cypress, over an undergrowth of Dutch Myrtles and Button-bushes, we find the singular Tupelo-tree. This tree is the opposite of the Ash in

all its characteristics. There is no regularity in any part of its growth, and no tree in the forest sports in such a variety of grotesque and fantastic shapes. Sometimes it spreads out its branches horizontally, forming a perfectly flat top, as if it had grown under a platform; again it forms an irregular pyramid, most commonly leaning from an upright position. It has usually no definable shape, often sending out one or two branches greatly beyond the rest, some directed obliquely downwards, others twisted and horizontal. This tree, if it had no other merit, would be prized for its eccentricities; but it is not without beauty. It possesses a fine glossy foliage, unrivalled in its verdure, and every branch is fully clothed with it; and, whatever may be the age of the tree, it never shows the marks of decrepitude.

The pyramidal trees are included chiefly among the coniferous evergreens, embracing the Pine, the Fir, the Spruce, and the Cypress. Though many of the deciduous trees assume more or less of this outline, it is the normal and characteristic form of the Pines and their kindred species. It is a peculiarity of the pyramidal trees, with a few exceptions, to remain always disfigured, after the loss of an important branch, having no power to fill the vacant space by a new growth. Other trees readily fill up a vacancy occasioned by the loss of a branch, and may suffer considerable mutilation without losing their beauty, because an invariable proportion is not necessary to render them pleasing objects of sight. On account of the symmetry of their forms, the pyramidal trees are made ugly by the loss of a limb, as the porch of a temple would be ruined by the removal of one of its pillars. Hence we may understand the charm of that irregularity that prevails in the forms of vegetation. If we remove a branch from an Elm or an Oak, or even from an Ash, we destroy no positive symmetry; it is like removing a stone from a loose stone wall; we do but slightly modify its disproportions.

The White Pine may be selected as the American representative of the pyramidal trees, being the most important as well as the most striking in its appearance. It is a Northern tree, not extending so far south as the region of the Cypress and Magnolia, and attaining perfection only on the northeastern part of the continent. In the New England States, it contributes more than any other species to the beauty of our landscapes, where it is commonly seen in scattered groups, but not often as a solitary standard. We see it in our journeys, projecting over eminences that are skirted by old roads, shading the traveller from the sun and protecting him from the wind. We have sat under its fragrant shade, in our pedestrian tours, when, weary with heat and exercise, we sought its gift of coolness, and blessed it as one of the benign deities of the forest. We are familiar with it in all pleasant and solitary places; and in our afternoon rambles we have listened, underneath its boughs, to the plaintive note of the Green Warbler, who selects it for his abode, and who has caught a melancholy tone from the winds that from immemorial time have tuned to soft music its long sibilant leaves.

The White Pine is a tree that harmonizes with all situations, rude and cultivated, level and abrupt. On the side of the mountain it adds grandeur to the declivity, and gives a look of sweeter tranquillity to the green pastoral meadow. It yields a darker frown to the projecting cliff, and a more awful uncertainty to the mountain-pass or the hollow ravine. Amid desolate scenery it spreads a cheerfulness that detracts nothing from its power over the imagination, while it relieves it of its terrors by presenting a green bulwark to defend us from the elements. Nothing can be more cheerful in scenery than the occasional groups of Pines which have come up spontaneously on the bald hills near our coast, elsewhere a dreary waste of gray rocks, stunted shrubbery, and prostrate Juniper. In the forest the White Pine constitutes the very sanctuary of Nature, its tall pillars extending into the clouds, and its broad canopy of foliage mixing with the vapors that descend in the storm.

Such are its picturesque aspects: but in a figurative light it may be regarded as a true symbol of benevolence. Under its outspread roof, thousands of otherwise unprotected animals, nestling in the bed of dry leaves which it has spread upon the ground, find shelter and repose. The squirrel subsists upon the kernels obtained from its cones; the rabbit browses upon the Trefoil and the spicy foliage of the Hypericum which are protected in its conservatory of shade; and the fawn reposes on its brown couch of leaves, unmolested by the outer tempest. From its green arbors the quails may be roused in midwinter, when they resort thither to find the still sound berries of the Mitchella and the

Wintergreen. Nature, indeed, seems to have designed this tree to protect the animal creation, both in summer and winter, and I am persuaded that she has not conferred upon them a more beneficent gift.

As an object of sight, the White Pine is free from some of the defects of the Fir and Spruce, having none of their stiffness of foliage and inflexibility of spray, that cause them to resemble artificial objects. It has the symmetry of the Fir, joined with a certain flowing grace that assimilates it to the deciduous trees. With sufficient amplitude to conceal a look of primness that often arises from symmetry, we observe a certain negligent flowing of its leafy robes that adds to its dignity a grace which is apparent to all. It seems to wear its honors like one who feels no constraint under their burden; and when smitten by a tempest, it bids no defiance to the gale, bending to its wrath, but securely resisting its power.

Of the American coniferous trees, the Hemlock is of the next importance, being, perhaps, in its perfection, a more beautiful tree than the White Pine, or than any other known evergreen. It is far less formal in its shape than other trees of the same family. Its branches, being slender and flexible, do not project stiffly from the shaft; they bend slightly at their terminations, and are easily moved by the wind; and as they are very numerous, and covered with foliage, we behold in the tree a dense mass of glittering verdure, not to be seen in any other tree of the forest.

The Hemlock is unknown as a shade-tree; it is seldom seen by the road-side, except on the edge of a wood, and not often in cultivated grounds. The want of success usually attending the transplantation of it from the woods has prevented the general adoption of it as an ornamental tree. The Hemlock, when transplanted from the wood, is almost sure to perish; for Nature will not allow it to be desecrated by any association with Art. She reserves it for her own demesnes; and if you would possess one, you must go to its native spot and plant your garden around it, and take heed, lest, by disturbing its roots, you offend the deity who protects it. Some noble Hemlocks are occasionally seen in rude situations, where the cultivator's art has not interrupted their spontaneous growth; and the poet and the naturalist are inspired with a more pleasing admiration of their beauty, because they have seen them only where the solitary birds sing their wild notes, and where the heart is unmolested by the crowding tumult of human settlements.

The Pitch Pine has neither grace nor elegance, and though it is allied botanically to the pyramidal trees, it approaches the shape of the round-headed trees. There is a singular ruggedness about it; and when bristling all over with the stiff foliage that sometimes covers it from the extremities of the branches down almost to the roots, it cannot fail to attract observation. Trees of this species, for the most part too rough and homely to please the eye, are not generally valued as objects in the landscape; but there is a variety in their shape that makes amends for their want of comeliness, and gives them a marked importance. We do not in general sufficiently appreciate the value of homely objects among the scenes of Nature,—which are, indeed, the ground-work of all charming scenery, and set off to advantage the beauty of more comely things. They prepare us, by increasing our susceptibility, to feel more keenly the force of beauty in other objects. They give rest and relief to the eye, after it has experienced the stimulating effects of beautiful forms and colors, which would soon pall upon the sense; and they are interesting to the imagination, by leaving it free to dress the scene with the wreaths of fancy.

It is from these reflections that I have been led to prize many a homely tree as possessing a high value, by exalting the impressions of beauty which we derive from other trees, and by relieving Nature of that monotony which would attend a scene of unexceptional beauty. This monotony is apparent in almost all dressed grounds of considerable extent. We soon become entirely weary of the ever-flowing lines of grace and elegance, and the harmonious blending of forms and colors introduced by art. On the same principle we may explain the difficulty of reading with attention a whole volume on one subject, written in verse. We are soon weary of luxuries; and when we have been strolling in grounds laid out with gaudy flower-beds, the tired eye, when we go out into the fields, rests with

serene delight upon rough pastures bounded by stone walls, and hills clothed with lichens and covered with boulders.

The homely Pitch Pine serves this important purpose of relief in the landscapes of Nature. Trees of this species are abundant in sandy levels, in company with the slender and graceful White Birch, "The Lady of the Woods," as the poet Coleridge called it. From these Pines proceed those delightful odors which are wafted to our windows by a mild south wind, not less perceptible in winter than in summer, and which are in a different manner as charming as a beautiful prospect.

The Juniper, or Red Cedar, known in some places as the Savin, is another homely tree that gives character to New England scenery. It is one of the most frequent accompaniments of the bald hills near certain parts of our coast, giving them a peculiar aspect of desolation. This tree acquires larger dimensions and a fuller and fairer shape in the Middle and Southern States. There the Junipers are beautiful trees, having a finer verdure than they ever acquire at the North. But the Juniper, with all its imperfections, its rugged form, and its inferior verdure, is not to be contemned; and it possesses certain qualities and features which ought to be prized hardly less than beauty. Its sombre ferruginous green adds variety to our wood-scenery at all times, and by contrast serves to make the foliage of other trees the more brilliant and conspicuous. In the latter part of summer, when the woods have acquired a general uniformity of verdure, the Junipers enliven the face of Nature by blending their duller tints with the fading hues of the fully ripened foliage. Thus will an assemblage of brown and gray clouds soften and at the same time enliven the deep azure of the heavens.

In this sketch, I have omitted to describe many important trees, especially those which have but little individuality of character, leaving them to be the subject of another essay concerning Trees in Assemblages. I have likewise said nothing here of those species which are commonly distinguished as flowering trees. But I must not omit, while speaking of the pyramidal trees, to say a word concerning the Larch, which has some striking points of form and habit. Like the Southern Cypress, it differs in its deciduous character from other coniferous trees: hence both are distinguished by the brilliancy of their verdure in the early part of summer, when the other evergreens are particularly sombre; but they are leafless in the winter. The Larch is beautifully pyramidal in its shape when young. In the vigor of its years it tends to uniformity, and to variety when it is old. Indeed, an aged Larch is often as rugged and fantastic as an old Oak. The American and European Larches differ only in the longer flowing foliage and the larger cones of the latter. Among the minor beauties of both species may be mentioned the bright crimson cones that appear in June and resemble clusters of fruit. The Larch is a Northern tree, being in its perfection in the latitude of Maine. It seems to delight in the coldest situations, and, like the Southern Cypress, is found chiefly in low swamps.

There are not many trees that assume the shape of an obelisk, or a long spire; but Nature, who presents to our eyes an ever-charming variety of forms as well as hues, in the objects of her creation, has given us the figure of the obelisk in the Chinese Juniper, in the Balsam Fir, in the Arbor-Vitæ, and lastly in the Lombardy Poplar, which may be offered to exemplify this class of forms. The Lombardy Poplar is interesting to thousands who were familiar with it in their youth, as an ornament to road-sides and village inclosures. It was formerly a favorite shade-tree, and still retains its privileges in many old-fashioned places. A century ago great numbers of Poplars were planted on the village way-sides, in front of dwelling-houses, on the borders of public grounds, and particularly on the sides of lanes and avenues leading to houses situated at a short distance from the high-road. Hence a row of these trees becomes suggestive at once of the approach to some old mansion or country-seat, which has now, perhaps, been converted into a farm-house, having exchanged its proud honors of wealth for the more simple and delightful appurtenances of rustic independence.

Some of these ancient rows of Poplars are occasionally seen in old fields, where almost all traces of the habitation which they were intended to grace are obliterated. There is a melancholy pleasure in surveying these humble ruins, whose history would illustrate the domestic habits of our ancestors. The cellar of the old house is now a part of the pasture-land, and its form can be traced

by the simple swelling of the turf. Sumachs and Cornel-bushes have usurped the place of the exotic shrubbery in the old garden; and the only ancient companions of the Poplars, now remaining, are here and there a straggling Lilac or Currant-bush, a tuft of Houseleek, and perhaps, under the shelter of some dilapidated wall, the White Star of Bethlehem is seen meekly glowing in the rude society of the wild-flowers.

The Lombardy Poplar, which was formerly a favorite way-side ornament, a sort of idol of the public, and, like many another idol, exalted to honors that exceeded its merits, fell suddenly into unpopularity and disgrace. After having been admired and valued as if its leaves were all emeralds and its buds apples of gold, it was spurned and ridiculed and everywhere cut down as a cumberer of the ground. The faults attributed to it did not belong to the tree, but were the effects of the climate into which it had been removed. It was brought from the sunny vales of Italy, where it had been delicately reared by the side of the Orange and the Myrtle, and transplanted into the cold climate of New England. The tender constitution of this tree could not endure our rude winters; and every spring witnessed the decay of a large portion of its small branches. Hence it became prematurely aged, and in its decline carried with it the marks of its infirmities.

But, with all these imperfections, the Lombardy Poplar was more worthy of the honors it received from our predecessors than of its present disrepute. It is one of the fairest of trees, in the vigor of its health and the greenness of its youth. But nearly all the old Poplars are extirpated, and but few young trees are coming up to supply their places. While I am now writing, I see from my window the graceful spire of one solitary tree, towering above the surrounding objects in the landscape, and yielding to the view something of an indescribable charm. There it stands, the symbol of decayed reputation, in its old age still retaining the primness of its youth; neither drooping in its infirmities under the weight of their burden, nor losing in its desertedness the fine lustre of its foliage; and in its disgrace still bearing itself proudly, as if conscious that its former honors were deserved, and not forgetting that dignity which becomes one who has fallen without dishonor.

There is no other tree that so pleasantly adorns the sides of narrow lanes and avenues, or so neatly accommodates itself to limited inclosures. Its foliage is dense and of the liveliest green, tremulous, and making delicate music to the light fingers of every breeze; its terebinthine odors scent the soft vernal wind that enters your open windows with the morning sunshine; its branches, always tending upward, closely gathered together, and slenderly formed, afford a harbor to the singing-birds, who revel among them as a favorite resort; and its long tapering spire, that points to heaven, gives an air of cheerfulness and religious tranquillity to village scenery.

Of the drooping trees, the Weeping Willow is the most conspicuous example, unless we except the American Elm; but a remarkable difference may be observed in the drooping character of these two trees. In the Elm we perceive a general arching or curvature of all its branches, from their points of junction with the tree to their extremities; so that two rows of Elms, meeting over an avenue, would represent, more nearly than any other trees disposed in the same manner, the vault of a Gothic arch. A double row of Weeping Willows would make no such figure by the meeting of their branches. The Weeping Willow extends its long arms in lines more nearly straight, not originating, as in the Elm, for the most part, from one common centre of junction, but joining the shaft of the tree at different points;—hence the drooping character of this tree is observed only in its long, slender, and terminal spray.

The Weeping Willow is one of the most poetical of trees, being consecrated to the Muse by the part which has been assigned it in many a scene of romance, and by its connection with events recorded in Holy Writ. It is invested with a poetical interest by its symbolical representation of sorrow in the pendulous character of its spray, by its fanciful uses as a garland for disappointed lovers, and by the employment of it in burying-grounds, and in pictures as drooping over graves. We remember it in sacred history by its association with the rivers of Babylon, with the tears of the Children of Israel, and with the forsaken harps of their sorrowing minstrels, who hung them upon its

branches. It is distinguished by the graceful beauty of its outlines, its light-green delicate foliage, its sorrowing attitude, and its gently waving spray, all in sweet accordance with its picturesque, poetic, and Scriptural associations.

Hence the Weeping Willow never fails to give pleasure to the sight even of the most insensible observer. There are not many whose minds are so obtuse as to be blind to its peculiarly graceful attitude and motions, and every one is familiar with its history, as recorded in poetry and romance, all the incidents of which have served to elevate it above any association with fashion or vulgarity. When we see it waving its long branches neatly over some private inclosure, overshadowing the gravelled walk and the flower-garden,—or watching pensively over the graves of the dead, where the light hues of its foliage help to soften the glowing fancies which are apt to arise from our meditations among the tombs,—or on some wide common, giving solace to the passing traveller, and inviting the playful children to its shade,—or trailing its sweeping spray, like the tresses of a Naiad, over some silvery pond or gently flowing stream,—it is in all cases a delightful object, always picturesque, always soothing, inspiring, and sacred to memory, and serving, by its alliance with what is hallowed in literature, to bind us more closely to Nature.

Above all the trees of the New World, the Elm deserves to be considered the sovereign tree of New England. It is abundant both in field and forest, and forms the most remarkable feature in our cleared and cultivated grounds. Though the Elm is found in almost all parts of the country, in no other is it so conspicuous as in the Northeastern States, where, from the earliest settlement of the country, it has been planted as a shade-tree, and has been valued as an ornament above the proudest importations from a foreign clime. It is the most remarkable of the drooping trees except the Willow, which it surpasses in stateliness and in the variety of its growth.

When I look upon a noble Elm,—though I feel no disposition to contemn the studies of those who examine its flowers and fruit with the scrutinizing eye of science, or the calculations of those who consider only its practical use—it is to me an object of pleasing veneration. I look upon it as the embodiment of some benign intention of Providence, who has adapted it in numerous ways to the wants of his creatures. While admiring its grace and its majesty, I think of the great amount of human happiness and of comfort to the inferior animals of which it has been the blessed instrument. How many a happy assemblage of children and young persons has been, during the past century, repeatedly gathered under its shade, in the sultry noons of summer! How many a young May-queen has been crowned under its roof, when the greensward was just daisied with the early flowers of spring! And how many a weary traveller has rested from his journey in its benevolent shade, and from a state of weariness and vexation, when o'erspent by heat and length of way, has subsided into one of quiet thankfulness and content!

Though the Elm has never been consecrated by the Muse, or dignified by making a figure in the paintings of the old masters, the native inhabitant of New England associates its varied forms with all that is delightful in the scenery of his own land or memorable in its history. He has beheld many a noble avenue formed of Elms, when standing in rows in the village, or by the rustic road-side. He has seen them extending their broad and benevolent arms as a protection over many a spacious old farm-house and many an humble cottage, and equally harmonizing with all. They meet his sight in the public grounds of the city, with their ample shade and flowing spray, inviting him to linger under their pleasant umbrage in summer; and in winter he has beheld them among the rude hills and mountains, like spectral figures keeping sentry among their passes, and, on the waking of the year, suddenly transformed into towers of luxuriant verdure and beauty. Every year of his life has he seen the beautiful Hang-Bird weave his pensile habitation upon the long and flexible branches of the Elm, secure from the reach of every living creature. From its vast dome of interwoven branches and foliage he has listened to the songs of the earliest and the latest birds; and under its shelter he has witnessed many a merry-making assemblage of children, employed in the sportive games of summer.

To a native of New England, therefore, the Elm has a value more nearly approaching that of sacredness than any other tree. Setting aside the pleasure derived from it as an object of visual beauty, it is intimately associated with the familiar scenes of home and the events of his early life. In my own mind it is pleasingly allied with those old dwelling-houses which were built in the early part of the last century, and form one of the marked features of New England home architecture during that period. They are known by their broad and ample, but low-studded rooms, their numerous windows with small panes, their single chimney in the centre of the roof that sloped down to the lower story in the back part, and in their general unpretending appearance, reminding one vividly of that simplicity of life which characterized our people before the Revolution. Their very homeliness is delightful, by leaving the imagination free to dwell upon their pleasing suggestions. Not many of these charming old houses are now extant: but whenever we see one, we are almost sure to find it accompanied by its Elm, standing upon the green open space that slopes up to it in front, and waving its long branches in melancholy grandeur over the venerable habitation which it seems to have taken under its protection, while it droops with sorrow over the infirmities of its old companion of a century.

The Elm is remarkable for the variety of forms which it assumes in different situations. Often it has a drooping spray only when it has attained a large size; but it almost invariably becomes subdivided into several equal branches, diverging from a common centre, at a considerable elevation from the ground. One of these forms is that of a vase: the base being represented by the roots of the tree that project above the soil and join the trunk,—the middle by the lower part of the principal branches, as they swell out with a graceful curve, then gradually diverge, until they bend downward and form the lip of the vase, by their circle of terminal branches. Another of its forms is that of a vast dome, as represented by those trees that send up a single shaft to the height of twenty feet or more, and then extend their branches at a wide divergency and to a great length. The Elms which are remarkable for their drooping character are usually of this shape. At other times the Elm assumes the shape of a plume, presenting a singularly fantastical appearance. It rises upwards, with an undivided shaft, to the height of fifty feet or more, without a limb, and bending over with a gradual curve from about the middle of its height to its summit, which is sometimes divided into two or three terminal branches. The whole is covered from its roots to its summit with a fringe of vine-like twigs, extremely slender, twisted and irregular, and resembling a parasitic growth. Sometimes it is subdivided at the usual height into three or four long branches, which are wreathed In the same manner, and form a compound plume.

These fantastic forms are very beautiful, and do not impress one with the idea of monstrosity, as we are affected by the sight of a Weeping Ash. Though the Elm has many defects of foliage, and is destitute of those fine autumnal tints which are so remarkable in some other trees, it is still almost without a rival in the American forest. It presents a variety in its forms not to be seen in any other tree,—possessing the dignity of the Oak without its ruggedness, and uniting the grace of the slender Birch with the lofty grandeur of the Palm and the majesty of the Cedar of Lebanon.

Of the parasol-trees the North furnishes no true examples, which are witnessed only in the Palms of the tropics. Not many of our inhabitants have seen these trees in their living beauty; but all have become so familiar with them, as they are represented in paintings and engravings, that they can easily appreciate their effect in the sunny landscapes of the South. There they may be seen bending over fields tapestried with Passion-Flowers and verdurous with Myrtles and Orange-trees, and presenting their long shafts to the tendrils of the Trumpet Honeysuckle and the palmate foliage of the Climbing Fern. But the slender Palms, when solitary, afford but little shade. It is when they are standing in groups, their lofty tops meeting and forming a uniform umbrage, that they afford any important protection from the heat of the sun.

In pictures of tropical scenery we see these trees standing on the banks of a stream, or in the vicinity of the sea, near some rude hut constructed of Bamboo and thatched with the broad leaves of the Fan Palm. In some warm countries Nature affords the inhabitants an almost gratuitous subsistence

from the fruit of the different Palms,—a plantation of Dates and Cocoa-nuts supplying the principal wants of the owner and his family, during the life of the trees. But the Palm is not suggestive of the arts, for the South is not the region of the highest civilization. Man's intelligence is greatest in those countries in which he is obliged to struggle with difficulties sufficient to require the constant exercise of the mind and body to overcome them. Science and Art have built their altars in the region of the Oak, and in valleys which are annually whitened with snow, where labor invigorates the frame, and where man's contention with the difficulties presented by the elements sharpens his ingenuity and strengthens all his facilities. Hence, while the Oak is the symbol of hospitality and of the arts to which it has given its aid, the Palm symbolizes the voluptuousness of a tropical clime and the indolence of its inhabitants.

I have said that the North produces no parasol-trees; but it should be remarked that all kinds of trees occasionally approximate to this shape, when they have grown compactly in a forest. The general shape which they assume under these conditions is what I have termed accidental, because that shape cannot be natural which a growing body is forced to take when cramped in an unnatural or constrained position. Trees when thus situated become greatly elongated; their shafts are despoiled of the greater part of their lateral branches, and the tree has no expansion until it has made its way above the level of the wood. The trees that cannot reach this level will in a few years perish; and this is the fate of the greater number in the primitive forest. But after they have attained this level, they spread out suddenly into a head. Many such trees are seen in recent clearings; and when their termination is a regular hemisphere of branches and foliage, the tree exhibits a shape nearly approaching that of a parasol.

The Elm, under these circumstances, often acquires a very beautiful shape. Unlike other trees that send up a single undivided shaft, the Elm, when growing in the forest as well as in the open plain, becomes subdivided into several slightly divergent branches, running up almost perpendicularly until they reach the level of the wood, when they suddenly spread themselves out, and the tree exhibits the parasol shape more nearly even than the Palm. When one of these forest Elms is left by the woodman, and is seen standing alone in the clearing, it presents to our sight one of the most graceful and beautiful of all arborescent forms.

The rows of Willows, so frequent by the way-side where the road passes over a wet meadow, afford the most common examples of the pollard forms. Some of these willows, having escaped the periodical trimming of the woodcutter, have become noble standards, emulating the Oak in the sturdy grandeur of their giant arms extending over the road. Most of them, however, from the repeated cropping which they have suffered, exhibit a round head of long, slender branches, growing out of the extremity of the beheaded trunk.

My remarks thus far relate to trees considered as individual objects; but I must not tire the patience of the reader by extending them farther, though there are many other relations in which they may be treated. In whatever light we regard them, they will be found to deserve attention as the fairest ornaments of Nature, and as objects that should be held sacred from their importance to our welfare and happiness. The more we study them, the more desirous are we of their preservation, and the more convinced of the necessity of using some active means to effect this purpose. He takes but a narrow view of their importance who considers only their value in the economy of animal and vegetable life. The painter has always made them a particular branch of his study; and the poet understands their advantage in increasing the effect of his descriptions, and believes them to be the blessed gifts of Providence to render the earth a beautiful abode and sanctify it to our affections. The heavenly bodies affect the soul with a deeper sense of creative power; but trees, like flowers, serve to draw us more closely to the bosom of Nature, by exemplifying the beauties of her handiwork, and the wonders of that Wisdom that operates unseen, and becomes, in our search for it, a source of perpetual delight.

VICTOR AND JACQUELINE

[Concluded.]

VII

The three days passed away. And every hour's progress was marked as it passed over the citizens of Meaux. Leclerc, and the doctrines for which he suffered, filled the people's thought; he was their theme of speech. Wonder softened into pity; unbelief was goaded by his stripes to cruelty; faith became transfigured, while he, followed by the hooting crowd, endured the penalty of faith. Some men looked on with awe that would become adoring; some with surprise that would take refuge in study and conviction. There were tears as well as exultation, solemn joy as well as execration, in his train. The mother of Leclerc followed him with her undaunted testimony, "Blessed be Jesus Christ and His Witnesses!"

By day, in the field, Jacqueline Gabrie thought over the reports she heard through the harvesters, of the city's feeling, of its purpose, of its judgment; by night she prayed and hoped, with the mother of Leclerc; and wondrous was the growth her faith had in those days.

On the evening of the third day, Jacqueline and Elsie walked into Meaux together. This was not invariably their habit. Elsie had avoided too frequent conversation with her friend of late. She knew their paths were separate, and was never so persuaded of the fact as this night, when, of her own will, she sought to walk with Jacqueline. The sad face of her friend troubled her; it moved her conscience that she did not deeply share in her anxiety. When they came from Domrémy, she had relied on Jacqueline: there was safety in her counsel,—there was wisdom in it: but now, either?

"It made me scream outright, when I saw the play," said she; "but it is worse to see your face nowadays,—it is more terrible, Jacqueline."

Jacqueline made no reply to this,—and Elsie regarded the silence as sufficient provocation.

"You seem to think I have no feeling," said she. "I am as sorry about the poor fellows as you can be. But I cannot look as if I thought the day of judgment close at hand, when I don't, Jacqueline."

"Very well, Elsie. I am not complaining of your looks."

"But you are,—or you might as well."

"Let not that trouble you, Elsie. Your face is smooth, at least; and your voice does not sound like the voice of one who is in grief. Rejoice,—for, as you say, you have a right to yourself, with which I am not to interfere. We are old friends,—we came away from Lorraine together. Do not forget that. I never will forget it."

"But you are done with me. You say nothing to me. I might as well be dead, for all you care."

"Let us not talk of such things in this manner," said Jacqueline, mildly. But the dignity of her rebuke was felt, for Elsie said,—

"But I seem to have lost you,—and now we are alone together, I may say it. Yes, I have lost you, Jacqueline!"

"This is not the first time we have been alone together in these dreadful three days."

"But now I cannot help speaking."

"You could help it before. Why, Elsie? You had not made up your mind. But now you have, or you would not speak, and insist on speaking. What have you to say, then?"

"Jacqueline! Are you Jacqueline?"

"Am I not?"

"You seem not to be."

"How is it, Elsie?"

"You are silent and stern, and I think you are very unhappy, Jacqueline."

"I do not know,—not unhappy, I think. Perhaps I am silent,—I have been so busy. But for all it is so dreadful—no! not unhappy, Elsie."

"Thinking of Leclerc all the while?"

"Of him? Oh, no! I have not been thinking of him,—not constantly. Jesus Christ will take care of him. His mother is quiet, thinking that. I, at least, can be as strong as she. I'm not thinking of the shame and cruelty,—but of what that can be worth which is so much to him, that he counts this punishment, as they call it, as nothing, as hardly pain, certainly not disgrace. The Truth, Elsie!—if I have not as much to say, it is because I have been trying to find the Truth."

"But if you have found it, then I hope I never shall,—if it is the Truth that makes you so gloomy. I thought it was this business in Meaux."

"Gloomy? when it may be I have found, or *shall* find"—

Here Jacqueline hesitated,—looked at Elsie. Grave enough was that look to expel every frivolous feeling from the heart of Elsie,—at least, so long as she remained under its influence. It was something to trust another as Jacqueline intended now to trust her friend. It was a touching sight to see her seeking her old confidence, and appearing to rely on it, while she knew how frail the reed was. But this girl, frivolous as was her spirit, this girl had come with her from the distant native village; their childhood's recollections were the same. And Jacqueline determined now to trust her. For in times of blasting heat the shadow even of the gourd is not to be despised.

"You know what I have looked for so long, Elsie," she said, "you ought to rejoice with me. I need work for that no longer."

"What is that, Jacqueline?"

Even this question, betraying no such apprehension as Jacqueline's words seemed to intimate, did not disturb the girl. She was in the mood when, notwithstanding her show of dependence, she was really in no such necessity. Never was she stronger than now when she put off all show of strength. Elsie stood before her in place of the opposing world. To Elsie's question she replied as readily as though she anticipated the word, and had no expectation of better recollection,—not to speak of better apprehension.

"To bring him out of suffering he has never been made to endure, as surely as God lives. As if the Almighty judged men so! I shall send back no more money to Father La Croix. It is not his prayer, nor my earnings, that will have to do with the eternity of John Gabrie.—Do you hear me, Elsie?"

"I seem to, Jacqueline."

"Have I any cause for wretched looks, then? I am in sight of better fortune than I ever hoped for in this world."

"Then don't look so fearful. It is enough to scare one. You are not a girl to choose to be a fright,—unless this dreadful city has changed you altogether from what you were. You would frighten the Domrémy children with such a face as that; they used not to fear Jacqueline."

"I shall soon be sailing on a smoother sea. As it is, do not speak of my looks. That is too foolish."

"But, oh, I feel as if I must hold you,—hold you!—you are leaving me!"

"Come on, Elsie!" exclaimed Jacqueline, as though she almost hoped this of her dear companion.

"But where?" asked Elsie, not so tenderly.

"Where God leads. I cannot tell."

"I do not understand."

"You would not think the Truth worth buying at the price of your life?"

"My life?"

"Or such a price as he pays who—has been branded to-day?"

"It was not the truth to your mother,—or to mine. It was not the truth to any one we ever knew, till we came here to Meaux."

"It is true to my heart, Elsie. It is true to my conscience. I know that I can live for it. And it may be"—

"Hush!—do not! Oh, I wish that I could get you back to Domrémy! What is going to come of this? Jacqueline, let us go home. Come, let us start to-night. We shall have the moon all night to walk by. There is nothing in Meaux for us. Oh, if we had never come away! It would have been better for you to work there for—what you wanted,—for what you came here to do."

"No, let God's Truth triumph! What am I? Less than that rush! But if His breath is upon me, I will be moved by it,—I am not a stone."

Then they walked on in silence. Elsie had used her utmost of persuasion, but Jacqueline not her utmost of resistance. Her companion knew this, felt her weakness in such a contest, and was silent.

On to town they went together. They walked together through the streets, passing constantly knots of people who stood about the corners and among the shops, discussing what had taken place that day. They crossed the square where the noonday sun had shone on crowds of people, men and women, gathered from the four quarters of the town and the neighboring country, assembled to witness the branding of a heretic. They entered their court-yard together,—ascended the stairway leading to their lodging. But they were two,—not one.

Elsie's chief desire had been to get Jacqueline safely into the house ere she could find opportunity for expression of what was passing in her mind. Her fear was even greater than her curiosity. She had no desire to learn, under these present circumstances, the arguments and incidents which the knots of men and women were discussing with so much vehemence as they passed by. She could guess enough to satisfy her. So she had hurried along, betraying more eagerness than was common with her to get out of the street. Not often was she so overcome of weariness,—not often so annoyed by heat and dust. Jacqueline, without remonstrance, followed her. But they were two,—not one.

Once safe in their upper room, Elsie appeared to be, after all, not so devoid of interest in what was passing in the street as her hurried walk would seem to betoken. She had not quite yet lost her taste for excitement and display. For immediately she seated herself by the window, and was all eye and ear to what went on outside.

Jacqueline's demonstrations also were quite other than might have been anticipated. Each step she took in her chamber gave an indication that she had a purpose,—and that she would perform it.

She removed from her dress the dust and stain of toil, arranged her hair, made herself clean and decent, to meet the sober gaze of others. Then she placed upon the table the remains of their breakfast,—but she ate nothing.

VIII

It was nearly dark when Jacqueline said to Elsie,—

"I am now going to see John and his mother. I must see with my own eyes, and hear with my own ears. I may be able to help them,—and I know they will be able to help me. John's word will be worth hearing,—and I want to hear it. He must have learned in these days more than we shall ever be able to learn for ourselves. Will you go with me?"

"No," cried Elsie,—as though she feared she might against her will be taken into such company. Then, not for her own sake, but for Jacqueline's, she added, almost as if she hoped that she might prove successful in persuasion, "I remember my father and mother. What they taught me I believe. And that I shall live by. I shall never be wiser than they were. And I know I never can be happier. They were good and honest. Jacqueline, we shall never be as happy again as we were in Domrémy, when the pastor blessed us, and we hunted flowers for the altar,—never!—never!" And Elsie Méril, overcome by her recollections and her presentiments, burst into tears.

"It was the happiness of ignorance," said Jacqueline, after a solemn silence full of hurried thought. "No,—I, for one, shall never be as happy as I was then. But my joy will be full of peace and bliss. It will be full of satisfaction,—very different, but such as belongs to me, such as I must not do without. God led us from Domrémy, and with me shall He do as seemeth good to Him. We were children then, Elsie; but now may we be children no longer!"

"I will be faithful to my mother. Go, Jacqueline,—let me alone."

Elsie said this with so much spirit that Jacqueline answered quickly, and yet very kindly,—

"I did not mean to trouble you, dear,—but—no matter now."

No sooner had Jacqueline left the house than Elsie went down to a church near by, where she confessed herself to the priest, and received such goodly counsel as was calculated to fortify her against Jacqueline in the future.

* * * * *

Jacqueline went to the house of the wool-comber, as of late had been her nightly custom,—but not, as heretofore, to lighten the loneliness and anxiety of the mother of Leclerc. Already she had said to the old woman,—

"I need not work now for my father's redemption. Then I will work for you, if your son is disabled. Let us believe that God brought me here for this. I am strong. You can lean on me. Try it."

Now she went to make repetition of the promise to Leclerc, if, perchance, he had come back to his mother sick and sore and helpless. For this reason, when she entered the humble home of the martyr, his eyes fell on her, and he saw her as she had been an angel; how serene was her countenance; and her courage was manifestly such as no mortal fear, no human affliction, could dismay.

Already in that room faithful friends had gathered, to congratulate the living man, and to refresh their strength from the abounding richness of his.

Martial Mazurier, the noted preacher, was there, and Victor Le Roy; besides these, others, unknown by name or presence to Jacqueline.

Among them was the wool-comber,—wounded with many stripes, branded, a heretic! But a man still, it appeared,—a living man,—brave as any hero, determined as a saint,—ready to proclaim now the love of God, and from the couch where he was lying to testify to Jesus and his Truth.

It was a goodly sight to see the tenderness of these men here gathered; how they were forgetful of all inequalities of station, such as worldlings live by,—meeting on a new ground, and greeting one another in a new spirit.

They had come to learn of John. A halo surrounded him; he was transfigured; and through that cloud of glory they would fain penetrate. Perchance his eyes, as Stephen's, had seen heaven open, when men had tried their torments. At least, they had witnessed, when they followed the crowd, that his face, in contrast with theirs who tormented, shone, as it had been the face of an angel. They had witnessed his testimony given in the heroic endurance of physical pain. There was more to be learned than the crowd were fit to hear or *could* hear. Broken strains of the Lord's song they heard him singing through the torture. Now they had come longing for the full burden of that divinest melody.

Jacqueline entered the room quietly, scarcely observed. She sat down by the door, and it chanced to be near the mother of Leclerc, near Victor Le Roy.

To their conversation she listened as one who listens for his life,—to the reading of the Scripture,—to the singing of the psalm,—that grand old version,—

"Out of the depths I cry to thee,
Lord God! Oh, hear my prayer!
Incline a gracious ear to me,
And bid me not despair.

If thou rememberest each misdeed,
If each should have its rightful meed,
Lord, who shall stand before thee?

"Lord, through thy love alone we gain
The pardon of our sin:
The strictest life is but in vain,
Our works can nothing win,
That man should boast himself of aught,
But own in fear thy grace hath wrought
What in him seemeth righteous.

"Wherefore my hope is in the Lord,
My works I count but dust;
I build not there, but on his word,
And in his goodness trust.
Up to his care myself I yield;
He is my tower, my rook, my shield,
And for his help I tarry."

To the praying of the broken voice of John Leclerc she listened. In his prayer she joined. To the eloquence of Mazurier, whose utterances she laid up in her heart,—to the fervor of Le Roy, which left her eyes not dry, her soul not calm, but strong in its commotion, grasping fast the eternal truths which he, too, would proclaim, she listened.

She was not only now among them, she was of them,—of them forevermore. Though she should never again look on those faces, nor listen to those voices, of them, of all they represented, was she forevermore. Their God was hers,—their faith was hers; their danger would she share,—their work would aid.

Their talk was of the Truth, and of the future of the Truth. Well they understood that the spirit roused among the people would not be quieted again,—that what of ferocity in the nature of the bigot and the powerful had been appeased had but for the moment been satisfied. There would be unremitting watch for victims; everywhere the net for the unwary and the fearless would be laid. Blood-thirstiness and lust and covetousness would make grand their disguises,—broad would their phylacteries be made,—shining with sacred gems, their breast-plates.

Of course it was of the great God's honor these men would be jealous. This heresy must needs be uprooted, or no knowing where would be the end of the wild growth. And, indeed, there was no disputing the fact that there was danger in open acceptance of such doctrines as defied the authority of priestcraft,—ay, danger to falsehood, and death to falsehood!

Fanaticism, cowardice, cruelty, the spirit of persecution, the spirit of authority aroused, ignorance and vanity and foolishness would make themselves companions, no doubt. Should Truth succumb to these? Should Love retreat before the fierce onset of Hate? These brave men said not so. And they looked above them and all human aid for succor,—Jacqueline with them.

When Mazurier and Victor Le Roy went away, they left Jacqueline with the wool-comber's mother, but they did not pass by her without notice. Martial lingered for a moment, looking down on the young girl.

"She is one of us," said the old woman.

Then the preacher laid his hand upon her head, and blessed her.

"Continue in prayer, and listen to the testimony of the Holy Ghost," said he. "Then shall you surely come deep into the blessed knowledge and the dear love of Jesus Christ."

When he had passed on, Victor paused in turn.

"It is good to be here, Jacqueline," said he. '"This is the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

And he also went forth, whither Mazurier had gone.

Then beside the bed of the poor wool-comber women like angels ministered, binding up his wounds, and soothing him with voices soft as ever spoke to man. And from the peasant whose toil was in harvest-fields and vineyards came offers of assistance which the poor can best give the poor.

But the wool-comber did not need the hard-earned pence of Jacqueline. When she said, "Let me serve you now, as a daughter and a sister, you two,"—he made no mistake in regard to her words and offer. But he had no need of just such service as she stood prepared to render. In his toil he had looked forward to the seasons of adversity,—had provided for a dark day's disablement; and he was able now to smile upon his mother and on Jacqueline, and to say,—

"I will, indeed, be a brother to you, and my mother will love you as if you were her child. But we shall not take the bread from your mouth to prove it. Our daughter and our sister in the Lord, we thank you and love you, Jacqueline. I know what you have been doing since I went away. The Lord love you, Jacqueline! You will no longer be a stranger and friendless in Meaux, while John Leclerc and his mother are alive,—nay, as long as a true man or woman lives in Meaux. Fear not."

"I will not fear," said Jacqueline.

And she sat by the side of the mother of Leclerc, and thought of her own mother in the heavens, and was tranquil, and prepared, she said to herself, to walk, if indeed she must, through the valley of the shadow of death, and would still fear no evil.

IX

Strengthened and inspired by the scenes of the last three days, Martial Mazurier began to preach with an enthusiasm, bravery, and eloquence unknown before to his hearers. He threw himself into the work of preaching, the new revelation of the ancient eternal Truth, with an ardor that defied authority, that scorned danger, and with a recklessness that had its own reward.

Victor Le Roy was his ardent admirer, his constant follower, his loving friend, his servant. Day by day this youth was studying with indefatigable zeal the truths and doctrines adopted by his teacher. Enchanted by the wise man's eloquence, already a convert to the faith he magnified, he was prepared to follow wherever the preacher led. The fascination of danger he felt, and was allured by. Frowning faces had for him no terrors. He could defy evil.

Jacqueline and he might be called most friendly students. Often in the cool of the day the young man walked out from Meaux along the country-roads, and his face was always toward the setting sun, whence towards the east Jacqueline at that hour would be coming. The girls were living in the region of the vineyards now, and among the vines they worked.

It began to be remarked by some of their companions how much Jacqueline Gabrie and the young student from the city walked together. But the subject of their discourse, as they rested under the trees that fringed the river, was not within the range of common speculation; far enough removed from the ordinary use to which the peasants put their thought was the thinking of Le Roy and Jacqueline.

Often Victor went, carefully and with a student's precision, over the grounds of Martial's arguments, for the satisfaction of Jacqueline. Much pride as well as joy had he in the service; for he reverenced his teacher, and feared nothing so much, in these repetitions, as that this listener, this animated, thinking, feeling Jacqueline, should lose anything by his transmission of the preacher's arguments and eloquence.

And sometimes, on those special occasions which were now constantly occurring, she walked with him to the town, and hearkened for herself in the assemblages of those who were now one in the faith.

Elsie looked on and wondered, but did not jest with Jacqueline, as girls are wont to jest with one another on such points as seemed involved in this friendship between youth and youth, between man and woman.

Towards the conclusion of the girls' appointed labor in the vineyard, a week passed in which Victor Le Roy had not once come out from Meaux in the direction of the setting sun. He knew the time when the peasants' labor in the vineyard would be done; Jacqueline had told him; and with wonder, and with trouble, she lived through the days that brought no word from him.

At work early and late, Jacqueline had no opportunity of discovering what was going on in Meaux. But it chanced, on the last day of the last week in the vineyard, tidings reached her: Martial Mazurier had been arrested, and would be tried, the rumor said, as John Leclerc had been tried; and sentence would be pronounced, doubtless, said conjecture, severe in proportion to the influence the man had acquired, to the position he held.

Hearing this, oppressed, troubled, yet not doubting, Jacqueline determined that she would go to Meaux that evening, and so ascertain the truth. She said nothing to Elsie of her purpose. She was careful in all things to avoid that which might involve her companion in peril in an unknown future; but at nightfall she had made herself ready to set out for Meaux, when her purpose was changed in the first steps by the appearing of Victor Le Roy.

He had come to Jacqueline,—had but one purpose in his coming; yet it was she who must say,—

"Is it true, Victor, that Martial Mazurier is in prison?"

His answer surprised her.

"No, it is not true."

But his countenance did not answer the glad expression of her face with an equal smile. His gravity almost communicated itself to her. Yet this rebound from her recent dismay surely might demand an opportunity.

"I believe you," said she. "But I was coming to see if it could be true. It was hard to believe, and yet it has cost me a great deal to persuade myself against belief, Victor."

"It will cost you still more, Jacqueline. Martial Mazurier has recanted."

"He has been in prison, then?"

"He has retracted, and is free again,—has denied himself. No more glorious words from him, Jacqueline, such as we have heard! He has sold himself to the Devil, you see."

"Mazurier?"

"Mazurier has thought raiment better than life. *He* has believed a man's life to consist in the abundance of the things he possesseth," said the youth, bitterly. He continued, looking steadfastly at Jacqueline,—"Probably I must give up the Truth also. My uncle is dead: must I not secure my possessions?—for I am no longer a poor man; I cannot afford to let my life fall into the hands of those wolves."

"Mazurier retracted? I cannot believe it, Victor Le Roy!"

"Believe, then, that yesterday the man was in prison, and to-day he is at large. Yes, he says that he can serve Jesus Christ more favorably, more successfully, by complying with the will of the bishop and the priests. You see the force of his argument. If he should be silenced, or imprisoned long, or his life should be cut off, he would then be able to preach no more at all in any way. He only does not believe that whosoever will save his life, in opposition to the law of the everlasting gospel, must lose it."

"Oh, do you remember what he said to John,—what he prayed in that room?

Oh, Victor, what does it mean?"

"It means what cannot be spoken,—what I dare not say or think."

"Not that we are wrong, mistaken, Victor?"

"No, Jacqueline, never! it can never mean that! Whatever we may do with the Truth, we cannot make it false. We may act like cowards, unworthy, ungrateful, ignorant; but the Truth will remain, Jacqueline."

"Victor, you could not desert it."

"How can I tell, Jacqueline? The last time I saw Martial Mazurier, he would have said nobler and more loving words than I can command. But with my own eyes I saw him walking at liberty in streets where liberty for him to walk could be bought only at an infamous price."

"Is there such danger for all men who believe with John Leclerc, and with—with you, Victor?"

"Yes, there is danger, such danger."

"Then you must go away. You must not stay in Meaux," she said, quickly, in a low, determined voice.

"Jacqueline, I must remain in Meaux," he answered, as quickly, with flushed face and flashing eyes. The dignity of conscious integrity, and the "fear of fear," a beholder who could discern the tokens might have perceived in him.

"Oh, then, who can tell? Did he not pray that he might not be led into temptation?"

"Yes," Victor replied, more troubled than scornful,—"yes, and allowed himself to be led at last."

"But if you should go away"–

"Would not that be flying from danger?" he asked, proudly.

"Nay, might it not be doing with your might what you found to do, that you might not be led into temptation?"

"And you are afraid, that, if I stay here, I shall yield to them."

"You say you are not certain, Victor. You repeat Mazurier's words."

"Yet shall I remain. No, I will never run away."

The pride of the young fellow, and the consternation occasioned by the recreancy of his superior, his belief in the doctrines he had confessed with Mazurier, and the time-serving of the latter, had evidently thrown asunder the guards of his peace, and produced a sad state of confusion.

"It were better to run away," said Jacqueline, not pausing to choose the word,—"far better than to stay and defy the Devil, and then find that you could not resist him, Victor. Oh, if we could go, as Elsie said, back to Domrémy,—anywhere away from this cruel Meaux!"

"Have you, then, gained nothing, Jacqueline?"

"Everything. But to lose it,—oh, I cannot afford that!"

"Let us stand together, then. Promise me, Jacqueline," he exclaimed, eagerly, as though he felt himself among defences here, with her.

"What shall I promise, Victor?" she asked, with the voice and the look of one who is ready for any deed of daring, for any work of love.

"I, too, have preached this word."

Her only comment was, "I know you preached it well."

"What has befallen others may befall me."

"Well."

So strongly, so confidently did she speak this word, that the young man went on, manifestly influenced by it, hesitating no more in his speech.

"May befall me," he repeated.

"'Whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,'" she answered, with lofty voice, repeating the divine word. "What is our life, that we should hold it at the expense of his Truth? Mazurier was wrong. He can never atone for the wrong he has done."

"I believe it!" exclaimed Victor, with a brightening countenance. The clouds of doubt rose from his face and floated away, as we see the mists ascending from the heights, when we are so happy as to live in the wild hill-country. "You prize Truth more than life. Stand with me in this, Jacqueline.

Speak of this Truth as it has come to me. You are all that I have left. I have lost Mazurier. Jacqueline, you are a woman, but you never,—yes! yes! though I dare not say as much of myself, I dare say it of you,—you never could have bought your liberty at such a price as Martial has paid. I know not how, even with the opportunity, he will ever gain the courage to speak of these things again,—those great mysteries which are hidden from the eyes of the covetous and worldly and unbelieving. Promise, stand with me, Jacqueline, and I will rely on you. Forsake me not."

"Victor, has He not said, who can best say it, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'?"

"But, Jacqueline, I love you."

Having said these words, the face of the young man emerged wholly from the eclipse of the former shadow.

"What is this?" said the brave peasant from Domrémy, manifestly doubting whether she had heard aright; and her clear pure eyes were gazing full on Victor Le Roy, actually looking for an explanation of his words.

"I love you, Jacqueline," he repeated. "And I do not involve you in danger, oh, my friend! Only let me have it to believe that my life is dear to Jacqueline, and I shall not be afraid then to lose it, if that testimony be required of me. Shall we not stand side by side, soldiers of Christ, stronger in each other than in all the world beside? Shall it not be so, Jacqueline? True heart, answer me! And if you will not love me, at least say, say you are my friend, you trust me. I will hold your safety sacred."

"I am your friend, Victor."

"Say my wife, Jacqueline. I honored you, that you came from Domrémy.

You are my very dream of Joan,—as brave and as true as beautiful.

Jacqueline, it is not all for the Truth's sake, but for my love's sake.

Is not our work one, moreover? Are we not one in heart and purpose, Jacqueline? You are alone; let me protect you."

He needed no other answer than he had while his eyes constantly sought hers. Her calm look, the dignity and strength of her composure, assured him of all he longed to learn,—assured him that their hearts, even as their purposes and faith, were one."

"But speak one word," he urged.

The word she spoke was, "I can be true to you, Victor."

Won hardly by a word: too easily, you think? She loved the youth, my friends, and she loved the Truth for which he dared not say that he could sacrifice himself.

"We are one, then," said Victor Le Roy. "It concerned me above all things to prove that, Jacqueline. So you shall have no more to do with these harvest-fields and vineyards henceforth, except to eat of the fruits, if God will. You have borne all the burden and heat of labor you shall ever bear. I can say that, with God's blessing. We shall sit under our own vine. Death in one direction has prepared for life in another. I inherit what my uncle can make use of no longer. We shall look out on our own fields, our harvests; for I think this city will keep us no longer than may he needful. We will go away into Picardy, and I will show you where our Joan was a prisoner; and we will go back to Domrémy, and walk in the places she loved, and pray God to bless us by that fountain, and in the grave-yard where your father and mother sleep. Oh, Jacqueline, is it not all blessed and all fair?"

She could hardly comprehend all the brightness of this vision which Victor Le Roy would fain bring before her. The paths he pointed out to her were new and strange; but she could trust him, could believe that together they might walk without stumbling.

She had nothing to say of her unfitness, her unworthiness, to occupy the place to which he pointed. Not a doubt, not a fear, had she to express. He loved her, and that she knew; and she had no thought of depreciating his choice, its excellency or its wisdom. Whatever excess of wonder she may have felt was not communicated. How know I that *she* marvelled at her lover's choice, though all the world might marvel?

Then remembering Mazurier, and thinking of her strength of faith, and her high-heartedness, he was eager that Jacqueline should appoint their marriage-day. And more than he, perhaps, supposed was betrayed by this haste. He made his words profoundly good. Strong woman that she was, he wanted her strength joined to his. He was secretly disquieted, secretly afraid to trust himself, since this defection of Martial Mazurier.

What did hinder them? They might be married on Sunday, if she would: they might go down together to the estate, which he must immediately visit.

Through the hurry of thought, and the agitation of heart, and the rush of seeming impossibilities, he brought out at length in triumph her consent.

She did consent. It should all be as he wished. And so they parted outside that town of Meaux on the fair summer evening.—plighted lovers,—hopeful man and woman. For them the evening sky was lovely with the day's last light; for them the serene stars of night arose.

So they parted under the open sky: he going forward to the city, strengthened and refreshed in faith and holy courage; she, adorned with holy hopes which never until now had found place among her visions. Neither was she prepared for them; until he brought them to a heart which, indeed, could never be dismayed by the approach and claim of love.

Love was no strange guest. Fresh and fair as Zephyrus, he came from the forest depths, and she welcomed him,—no stranger,—though the breath that bore him was all heavenly, and his aspiration was remote from earthly sources. Yes, she so imagined.

She went back to the cottage where she and Elsie lodged now, to tell Elsie what had happened, —to thankfulness,—to gazing forward Into a new world,—to aspiration, expectation, joy, humility, —to wonder, and to praise,—to all that my best reader will perceive must be true of Jacqueline on this great evening of her life.

X

That same night Victor Le Roy was arrested on charge of heresy,—arrested and imprisoned. Watchmen were on the look-out when the lover walked forward with triumphant steps to Meaux.

"This fellow also was among the wool-comber's disciples," said they; and their successful dealing with Mazurier encouraged the authorities to hope that soon all this evil would be overcome, —trampled in the dust: this impudent insurrection of thought should certainly be stifled; youth and age, high station, low, should be taught alike of Rome.

Tidings reached Martial Mazurier next day of what had befallen Victor Le Roy, and he went instantly to visit him in prison. It was an interview which the tender-hearted officials would have invited, had he not forestalled them by inviting himself to the duty. Mazurier had something to do in the matter of reconciling his conscience to the part he had taken, in his recent opportunity to prove himself equally a hero with Leclerc. He had recanted, done evil, in short, that good might come; and was not content with having done this thing: how should he be? Now that his follower was in the same position, he had but one wish,—that he should follow his example. He did not, perhaps, entirely ascertain his motive in this; but it is hardly to be supposed that Mazurier was so persuaded of the justice of his course that he desired to have it imitated by another under the same circumstances.

No! he was forever disgraced in his own eyes, when he remembered the valiant John Leclerc; and it was not to be permitted that Victor Le Roy should follow the example of the wool-comber in preference to that he had given,—that politic, wise, blood-sparing, flesh—loving, truth-depreciating, God-defrauding example.

Accordingly he lost no time in seeking Victor in his cell. It was the very cell in which he himself had lately been imprisoned. Within those narrow walls he had meditated, prayed, and made his choice. There he had stood face to face with fate, with God, with Jesus, and had decided—not in favor of the flogging, and the branding, and the glorious infamy. There, in spite of eloquence and

fervor and devotion, in spite of all his past vows and his hopes, he had decided to take the place and part of a timeserver;—for he feared disgrace and pain, and the hissing and scoff and persecution, more than he feared the blasting anger of insulted and forsaken Truth.

He found Victor within his cell, his bright face not overcast with gloom, his eyes not betraying doubts, neither disappointed, astonished, nor in deep dejection. The mood he deemed unfavorable for his special word,—poor, deceived, self-deceiving Mazurier!

He was not merely surprised at these indications,—he was at a loss. A little trepidation, doubt, suspicion would have better suited him. Alas! and was *his* hour the extremity of another's weakness, not in the elevation of another's spiritual strength? Once when he preached the Truth as moved by the Holy Ghost, it was not to the prudence or the worldly wisdom of his hearers he appealed, but to the higher feelings and the noblest powers of men. Then he called on them to praise God by their faith in all that added to His glory and dominion. But now his eloquence was otherwise directed,—not full of the old fire and enthusiasm,—not trustful in God, but dependent on prudence, as though all help were in man. He had to draw from his own experience now, things new and old,—and was not, by confession of the result of such experience, humiliated!

"You are under a mistake," was his argument. "You have not gone deep into these matters; you have made acquaintance only with the agitated surface of them." And he proceeded to make good all this assertion, it was so readily proven! *He* also had been beguiled,—ah, had he not? He had been beguiled by the rude eloquence, the insensibility to pain, the pride of opposition, the pride of poverty, the pride of a rude nature, exhibited by John Leclerc.

He acknowledged freely, with a fatal candor, that, until he came to consider these things in their true light, when shut away from all outward influences, until compelled to quiet meditation beyond the reach and influence of mere enthusiasm, he had believed with Leclerc, even as Victor was believing now. He could have gone on, who might tell to what fanatical length? had it not been for that fortunate arrest which made a sane man of him!

Leclerc was not quite in the wrong,—not absolutely,—but neither was he, as Mazurier had once believed, gloriously in the right. It was clearly apparent to him, that Victor Le Roy, having now also like opportunity for calm reflection, would come to like conclusions.

With such confident prophecy, Mazurier left the young man. His visit was brief and hurried;—no duty that could be waived should call him away from his friend at such a time; but he would return; they would speak of this again; and he kissed Victor, and blessed him, and went out to bid the authorities delay yet before the lad was brought to trial, for he was confident, that, if left to reflection, he would come to his senses, and choose wisely—between God and Mammon? Mazurier expressed it in another way.

* * * * *

In the street, Elsie Méril heard of Victor's arrest, and she brought the news to Jacqueline. They had returned to Meaux, to their old lodging, and a day had passed, during which, moment by moment, his arrival was anticipated. Elsie went out to buy a gift for Jacqueline, a bit of fine apparelling which she had coveted from the moment she knew Jacqueline should be a bride. She stole away on her errand without remark, and came back with the gift,—but also with that which made it valueless, unmentionable, though it was a costly offering, purchased with the wages of more than a week's labor in the fields.

It was almost dark when she returned to Jacqueline. Her friend was sitting by the window,—waiting,—not for her; and when she went in to her, it was silently, with no mention of her errand or her love-gift. Quietly she sat down, thankful that the night was falling, waiting for its darkness before she should speak words which would make the darkness to be felt.

"He does not come," said Jacqueline, at length.

"Did you think it was he, when I came up the stairs?" inquired Elsie, tenderly.

"Oh, no! I can tell your step from all the rest."

"His, too, I think."

"Yes, and his, too. My best friends. Strange, if I could not!"

"Oh, I'm glad you said that, Jacqueline!"

"My best friends," repeated Jacqueline,—not merely to please Elsie. Love had opened wide her heart,—and Elsie, weak and foolish though she might be,—Elsie, her old companion, her playmate, her fellow-laborer,—Elsie, who should be to her a sister always, and share in her good-fortune,—Elsie had honorable place there.

"Could anything have happened, Jacqueline?" said Elsie, trembling: her tremulous voice betrayed it.

"Oh, I think not," was the answer.

"But he is so fearless,—he might have fallen into—into trouble."

"What have you heard, Elsie?"

This question was quietly asked, but it struck to the heart of the questioned girl. Jacqueline suspected!—and yet Jacqueline asked so calmly! Jacqueline could hear it,—and yet how could this be declared?

Her hesitation quickened what was hardly suspicion into a conviction.

"What have you heard?" Jacqueline again questioned,—not so calmly as before; and yet it was quite calmly, even to the alarmed ear of Elsie Méril.

"They have arrested Victor, Jacqueline."

"For heresy?"

"I heard it in the street."

Jacqueline arose,—she crossed the chamber,—her hand was on the latch.

Instantly Elsie stood beside her.

"What will you do? I must go with you, Jacqueline."

"Where will you go?" said Jacqueline.

"With you. Wait,—what is it you will do? Or,—no matter, go on, I will follow you,—and take the danger with you."

"Is there danger? For him there is! and there might be for you,—but none for me. Stay, Elsie. Where shall I go, in truth?"

Yet she opened the door, and began to descend the stairs even while she spoke; and Elsie followed her.

First to the house of the wool-comber. John was not at home,—and his mother could tell them nothing, had heard nothing of the arrest of Victor. Then to the place which Victor had pointed out to her as the home of Mazurier. Mazurier likewise they failed to find. Where, then, was the prison of Le Roy's captivity? That no man could tell them; so they came home to their lodging at length in the dark night, there to wait through endless-seeming hours for morning.

On the Sunday they had chosen for their wedding-day Mazurier brought word of Victor to Jacqueline,—was really a messenger, as he announced himself, when she opened for him the door of her room in the fourth story of the great lodging-house. He had come on that day with a message; but it was not in all things—in little beside the love it was meant to prove—the message Victor had desired to convey. In want of more faithful, more trustworthy messenger, Le Roy sent word by this man of his arrest,—and bade Jacqueline pray for him, and come to him, if that were possible. He desired, he said, to serve his Master,—and, of all things, sought the Truth.

To go to the prisoner, Mazurier assured Jacqueline, was impossible, but she might send a message; indeed, he was here to serve his dear friends. Ah, poor girl, did she trust the man by whom she sent into a prison words like these?—

"Hold fast to the faith that is in you, Victor. Let nothing persuade you that you have been mistaken. We asked for light,—it was given us,—let us walk in it; and no matter where it leads,—since the light is from heaven. Do not think of me,—nor of yourself,—but only of Jesus Christ, who said, 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it.'"

Mazurier took this message. What did he do with it? He tossed it to the winds.

A week after, Le Roy was brought to trial,—and recanted; and so recanting, was acquitted and set at liberty.

Mazurier supposed that he meant all kindly in the exertion he made to save his friend. He would never have ceased from self-reproach, had he conveyed the words of Jacqueline to Victor,—for the effect of those words he could clearly foresee.

And so far from attempting to bring about an interview between the pair, he would have striven to prevent it, had he seen a probability that it would be allowed. He set little value on such words as Jacqueline spoke, when her conscience and her love rose up against each other. The words she had committed to him he could account for by no supposition acceptable and reasonable to him. There was something about the girl he did not understand; she was no fit guide for a man who had need of clear judgment, when such a decision was to be made as the court demanded of Le Roy.

Elsie Méril, between hope and fear, was dumb in these days; but her presence and her tenderness, though not heroic in action nor wise in utterance, had a value of which neither she nor Jacqueline was fully aware.

When Jacqueline learned the issue of the trial, and that Victor had falsified his faith, her first impulse was to fly, that she might never see his face again. For, the instant she heard his choice, her heart told her what she had been hoping during these days of suspense. She had tried to see Martial Mazurier, but without success, since he conveyed, or promised to convey, her message to the prisoner. Of purpose he had avoided her. He guessed what strength she would by this time have attained, and he was determined to save both to each other, though it might be against their will.

XI

Victor Le Roy's first endeavor, on being liberated, was—of course to find Jacqueline? Not so. That was far from his first design. His impulse was to avoid the girl he had dared to love. Mazurier had, indeed, conveyed to his mind an impression that would have satisfied him, if anything of this character could do so. But this was impossible. The secret of his disquiet was far too profound for such easy removal.

He had not in himself the witness that he had fulfilled the will of God. He was disquieted, humiliated, wretched. He could not think of Leclerc, nor upon his protestations, except with shame and remorse,—remorse, already. In his heart, in spite of the impression Mazurier had contrived to convey, he believed not that Jacqueline would bless him to such work as he could henceforth perform, no longer a free man,—no longer possessed of liberty of speech and thought.

He had no sooner renounced his liberty than he became persuaded, by an overwhelming reasoning, as he had never been convinced before, of the pricelessness of that he had sacrificed. When he went from the court-room, from the presence of his judges, he was not a free man, though the dignitaries called him so. Martial Mazurier walked arm in arm with him, but the world was a den of horrors, a blackened and accursed world, to the young man who came from prison, free to use his freedom—as the priests directed!

He went home from the prison with Mazurier. The world had conquered. Love had conquered, —Love, that in the conquest felt itself disgraced. He had sold the divine, he had received the human: it was the old pottage speculation over again. This privilege of liberty from his dungeon had looked so fair!—but now it seemed so worthless! This prospect of life so priceless in contemplation of its

loss,—oh, the beggar who crept past him was an enviable man, compared with young Victor Le Roy, the heir of love and riches, the heir of liberty and life!

Yes,—he went home with Mazurier. Where else should he go? Congratulations attended him. He was compelled to receive them with a countenance not too sombre, and a grace not all thankless, or—or—they would say it was of cowardice he had saved his precious body from the sentence of the judges, and given his precious LIFE up to the sentence of the JUDGE.

Yes,—Martial took him home. There they might talk at leisure of those things,—and ask a blessing on the testimony of Jesus, made and kept by them!

Victor Le Roy was too proud to complain now. He assented to all the preacher's sophistry. He allowed himself to be cheered. But this was no such evening as had been spent in the room of the wool-comber, when Leclerc's voice, strong, even through his weakness, called on God, and blessed and praised Him, and the spirit conquered the flesh gloriously,—the old mother of Leclerc sharing his joy, as she had also shared his anguish. Here was no Jacqueline to say to Victor, "Thou hast done well! 'Glory be to Jesus Christ, and His witnesses!'"

Mazurier thanked God for the deliverance of His servant! He dedicated himself and Victor anew to the service of Truth, which they had shrunk from defending! And his eloquence and fervor seemed to stamp the words with sincerity. He seemed not in the least to suspect or fear himself.

With Victor Le Roy such self-deception, such sophistry, was simply impossible.

* * * * *

Not of purpose did he meet Jacqueline that night. She had heard that Le Roy was at liberty, and alone now she applied at the door of Martial Mazurier for admittance, but in vain. The master had signified that his evening was not to be interrupted. Therefore she returned, from waiting near his door, to the street where she and Elsie lived.

Should her woman's pride have led her to her lofty lodging, and kept her there without a sign, till Victor himself came seeking her? She knew nothing of such pride,—but much of love; and her love took her back to the post where she had waited many an hour since that disastrous arrest: she would wait there till morning, if she must,—at least, till one should enter, or come forth, who might tell her of Victor Le Roy.

The light in the preacher's study she could see from the door-step in a court-yard where she waited. Should Mazurier come with Victor, she would let them pass; but if Victor came alone, she had a right to speak.

It was after midnight when the student came down from the preacher's study. She heard his voice when the door opened,—by the street-lamp saw his face. And she recognized also the voice of Mazurier, who, till the last moment of separation, seemed endeavoring to dissuade his friend from leaving him that night.

He heard footsteps following him, as he passed along the pavement,—observed that they gained on him. And could it be any other than Jacqueline who touched his arm, and whispered, "Victor"?

His fast-beating heart told him it was she. He took her hand, and drew it within his arm, and looked upon her face,—the face of his Jacqueline.

"Now where?" said he. "It is late. It is after midnight. Why are you alone in the street?"

"Waiting for you, Victor. I heard you were at liberty, and I supposed you were with him. I was safe."

"Yes,—for you fear nothing. That is the only reason. You knew I was with the preacher, Jacqueline. Why? Because—because I *am* with him, of course."

"Yes," she said. "I heard it was so, Victor."

"Strange!—strange!—is it not? A prison is a better place to learn the truth than the pure air of liberty, it seems," said he, bitterly.

"What is that?" she asked. She seemed not to understand his meaning.

"Nothing. I am acquitted of heresy, you know. It seems, what we talked so bravely meant—nothing. Oh, I am safe, now!"

"It was to preach none the less,—to hold the truth none the less. But if he lost his life, there was an end of all; or if he lost his liberty, it was as bad. But he would keep both, and serve God so," said Jacqueline.

"Yes," cried Victor, "precisely what he said. I have said the same, you think?"

"If you are quite clear that Leclerc and the rest of us are all wrong, Victor."

"Jacqueline!"

"What is it, Victor?"

"'The rest of us,' you say. What would *you* have done in my place?"

"God knows. I pretend not to know anything more."

"But 'the rest of us,' you said. You think that you at least are with Leclerc?"

"That was the truth you taught me, Victor. But—I have not yet been tried."

"That is safe to say. What makes you speak so prudently, Jacqueline? Why do you not declare, 'Though all men deny Thee, yet will I never deny Thee'? Ah, you have not been tried! You are not yet in danger of the judgment, Jacqueline!"

"Do not speak so; you frighten me; it is not like you. How can I tell? I do not know but in this retirement, in this thought you have been compelled to, you have obtained more light than any one can have until he comes to just such a place."

"Ah, Jacqueline, why not say to me what you are thinking? Have you lost your courage? Say, 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.'"

"No,—oh, no! How could I say it, my poor Victor? How do you know?"

"Surely you cannot know, as you say. But from where you stand, that is what you are thinking. Jacqueline, confess! If you should speak your mind, it would be, 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God, poor coward!' Oh, Jacqueline, Mazurier may deceive himself! I speak not for him; but what will you do with your poor Victor, my poor Jacqueline?"

She did not linger in the answer,—she did not sob or tremble,—he was by her side.

"Love him to the end. As He, when He loved His own."

"Your own, poor girl? No, no!"

"You gave yourself to me," she answered straightway, with resolute firmness clinging to the all she had.

"I was a man then," he answered. "But I will never give a liar and a coward to Jacqueline Gabrie. Everything but myself, Jacqueline! Take the old words, and the old memory. But for this outcast, him you shall forget. My God! thou hast not brought this brave girl from Domrémy, and lighted her heart with a coal from Thine altar, that she should turn from Thee to me! If you love a liar and a coward, Jacqueline, you cannot help yourself,—he will make you one, too. And what I loved you for was your truth and purity and courage. I have given you a treasure which was greater than I could keep.—Where is it that you live now, Jacqueline? I am not yet such a poltroon that I am afraid to conduct you. I think that I should have the courage to protect you to-night, if you were in any immediate danger. Come, lead the way."

"No," said Jacqueline. "I am not going home. I could not sleep; and a roof over my head—any save God's heaven—would suffocate me, I believe."

"Go, then, as you will. But where?"

Jacqueline did not answer, but walked quietly on; and so they passed beyond the city-borders to the river-bank,—far away into the country, through the fields, under the light of stars and of the waning moon.

"If I had been true!" said Victor,—"if I had not listened to him! But him I will not blame. For why should I blame him? Am I an idiot? And his influence could not have prevailed, had I not so

chosen, when I stood before my judges and they questioned me. No,—I acquit Mazurier. Perhaps what I have denied never appeared to him so glorious as it did once to me; and so he was guiltless at least of knowing what it was I did. But I knew. And I could not have been deceived for a moment. No,—I think it impossible that for a moment I should have been deceived. They would have made a notable example of me, Jacqueline. I am rich,—I am a student.—Oh, yes! Jesus Christ may die for me, and I accept the benefit; but when it comes to suffering for His sake,—you could not have expected that of such a poltroon, Jacqueline! We may look for it in brave men like Leclerc, whose very living depends on their ability to earn their bread,—to earn it by daily sweat; but men who need not toil, who have leisure and education,—of course you would not expect such testimony to the truth of Jesus from them! Bishop Briconnet recants,—and Martial Mazurier; and Victor Le Roy is no braver man, no truer man than these!"

With bitter shame and self-scorning he spoke.—Poor Jacqueline had not a word to say. She sat beside him. She would help him bear his cross. Heavy-laden as he, she awaited the future, saying, in the silence of her spirit's dismal solitude, "Oh, teach us! Oh, help us!" But she called not on any name; her prayer went out in search of a God whom in that hour she knew not. The dark cloud and shadow of Satan that overshadowed him was also upon her.

"Mazurier is coming in the morning to take me with him, Jacqueline," said Victor. "We are to make a journey."

"What is it, Victor?" she asked, quietly.

There was nothing left for her but patience,—that she clearly saw,—nothing but patience, and quiet enduring of the will of God.

"He is afraid of me,—or of himself,—or of both, I believe. He thinks a change of scene would be good for both of us, poor lepers that we are."

"I must go with you, Victor Le Roy," said the resolute Jacqueline.

"Wherefore?" asked he.

"Because, when you were strong and happy, that was your desire, Victor; and now that you are sick and sorrowing, I will not give you to another: no! not to Mazurier, nor to any one that breathes, except myself, to whom you belong."

"I must stay here in Meaux, then?"

"That depends upon yourself, Victor."

"We were to have been married. We were going to look after our estate, now that the hard summer and the hard years of work are ended."

"Yes, Victor, it was so."

"But I will not wrong you. You were to be the wife of Victor Le Roy. You are his widow, Jacqueline. For you do not think that he lives any longer?"

"He lives, and he is free! If he has sinned, like Peter even, he weeps bitterly."

"Like Peter? Peter denied his Lord. But he did weep, as you say,—bitterly. Peter confessed again."

"And none served the Master with truer heart or greater courage afterward. Victor, you remember."

"Even so,—oh, Jacqueline!"

"Victor! Victor! it was only Judas who hanged himself."

"Come, Jacqueline!"

She arose and went with him. At dawn they were married. Love did lead and save them.

I see two youthful students studying one page. I see two loving spirits walking through thick darkness. Along the horizon flicker the promises of day. They say, "O Holy Ghost, hast thou forsaken thine own temples?" Aloud they cry to God.

I see them wandering among Domrémy woods and meadows,—around the castle of Picardy,—talking of Joan. I see them resting by the graves they find in two ancient villages. I see them walk

in sunny places; they are not called to toil; they may gather all the blossoms that delight their eyes. Their love grows beyond childhood,—does not die before it comes to love's best estate. Happy bride and bridegroom! But I see them as through a cloud whose fair hues are transient.

From the meadow-lands and the vineyards and the dark forests of the mountains, from study and from rest, I see them move with solemn faces and calm steps. Brave lights are in their eyes, and flowers that are immortal they carry in their hands. No distillation can exhaust the fragrance of those blooms.

What dost thou here, Victor? What dost thou here, Jacqueline?

This is the place of prisons. Here they light again, as they have often lighted, torch and fagot;—life must pay the cost! Angry crowds and hooting multitudes love this dreary square. Oh, Jacqueline and Victor, what is this I behold?

They come together from their prison, hand in hand. "The testimony of Jesus!" Stand back, Mazurier! Retire, Briconnet! Here is not your place,—this is not your hour! Yet here incendiaries fire the temples of the Holy Ghost!

The judges do not now congratulate. Jacqueline waits not now at midnight for the coming of Le Roy. Bride and bridegroom, there they stand; they face the world to give their testimony.

And a woman's voice, almost I deem the voice of Elsie Méril, echoes the mother's cry that followed John Leclerc when he fought the beasts at Meaux,—

"Blessed be Jesus Christ, and His witnesses."

So of the Truth were they borne up that day in a blazing chariot to meet their Lord in the air, to be forever with their Lord.

* * * * *

ON A MAGNOLIA-FLOWER

Memorial of my former days,
Magnolia, as I scent thy breath,
And on thy pallid beauty gaze,
I feel not far from death!

So much hath happened! and so much
The tomb hath claimed of what was mine!
Thy fragrance moves me with a touch
As from a hand divine:

So many dead! so many wed!
Since first, by this Magnolia's tree,
I pressed a gentle hand and said,
A word no more for me!

Lady, who sendest from the South
This frail, pale token of the past,
I press the petals to my mouth,
And sigh—as 'twere my last.

Oh, love, we live, but many fell!

The world's a wreck, but we survive!—
Say, rather, still on earth we dwell,
But gray at thirty-five!

SOME NOTES ON SHAKSPEARE

In 1849, the discovery by Mr. Payne Collier of a copy of the Works of Shakspeare, known as the folio of 1632, with manuscript notes and emendations of the same or nearly the same date, created a great and general interest in the world of letters.

The marginal notes were said to be in a handwriting not much later than the period when the volume came from the press; and Shakspearian scholars and students of Shakspeare, and the far more numerous class, lovers of Shakspeare, learned and unlearned, received with respectful eagerness a version of his text claiming a date so near to the lifetime of the master that it was impossible to resist the impression that the alterations came to the world with only less weight of authority than if they had been undoubtedly his own.

The general satisfaction of the literary world in the treasure-trove was but little alloyed by the occasional cautiously expressed doubts of some caviller at the authenticity of the newly discovered "curiosity of literature"; the daily newspapers made room in their crowded columns for extracts from the volume; the weekly journals put forth more elaborate articles on its history and contents; and the monthly and quarterly reviews bestowed their longer and more careful criticism upon the new readings of that text, to elucidate which has been the devout industry of some of England's ripest scholars and profoundest thinkers; while the actors, not to be behindhand in a study especially concerning their vocation, adopted with more enthusiasm than discrimination some of the new readings, and showed a laudable acquaintance with the improved version, by exchanging undoubtedly the better for the worse, upon the authority of Mr. Collier's folio, soon after the publication of which I had the ill-fortune to hear a popular actress destroy the effect and meaning of one of the most powerful passages in "Macbeth" by substituting the new for the old reading of the line,—

> "What beast was it, then,
> That made you break this enterprise to me?"

The cutting antithesis of "What *beast*" in retort to her husband's assertion, "I dare do all that may become a *man*," was tamely rendered by the lady, in obedience to Mr. Collier's folio, "What *boast* was it, then,"—a change that any one possessed of poetical or dramatic perception would have submitted to upon nothing short of the positive demonstration of the author's having so written the passage.

Opinions were, indeed, divided as to the intrinsic merit of the emendations or alterations. Some of the new readings were undoubted improvements, some were unimportant, and others again were beyond all controversy inferior to the established text of the passages; and it seemed not a little difficult to reconcile the critical acumen and poetical insight of many of the corrections with the feebleness and prosaic triviality of others.

Again, it was observed by those conversant with the earlier editions, especially with the little read or valued Oxford edition, that a vast number of the passages given as emendations in Mr. Collier's folio were precisely the same in Hanmer's text. Indeed, it seems not a little remarkable that neither Mr. Collier nor his opponents have thought it worth their while to state that nearly half, and that undoubtedly the better half, of the so-called new readings are to be found in the finely printed, but little esteemed, text of the Oxford Shakspeare. If, indeed, these corrections now come to us with the authority of a critic but little removed from Shakspeare's own time, it is remarkable that Sir Thomas Hanmer's, or rather Mr. Theobald's, ingenuity should have forestalled the *fiat*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.