Warner Susan

# The Wide, Wide World

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER I

*Enjoy the spring of love and youth,*
*To some good angel leave the rest,*
*For time will teach thee soon the truth,*
*"There are no birds in last year's nest."*

*– Longfellow.*

"Mamma, what was that I heard papa saying to you this morning about his lawsuit?"

"I cannot tell you just now. Ellen, pick up that shawl and spread it over me."

"Mamma! – are you cold in this warm room?"

"A little, – there, that will do. Now, my daughter, let me be quiet awhile – don't disturb me."

There was no one else in the room. Driven thus to her own resources, Ellen betook herself to the window and sought amusement there. The prospect without gave little promise of it. Rain was falling, and made the street and everything in it look dull and gloomy. The foot-passengers plashed through the water, and the horses and carriages plashed through the mud; gaiety had

forsaken the side-walks, and equipages were few, and the people that were out were plainly there only because they could not help it. But yet Ellen, having seriously set herself to study everything that passed, presently became engaged in her occupation; and her thoughts travelling dreamily from one thing to another, she sat for a long time with her little face pressed against the window-frame, perfectly regardless of all but the moving world without.

Daylight gradually faded away, and the street wore a more and more gloomy aspect. The rain poured, and now only an occasional carriage or footstep disturbed the sound of its steady pattering. Yet still Ellen sat with her face glued to the window as if spell-bound, gazing out at every dusky form that passed, as though it had some strange interest for her. At length, in the distance, light after light began to appear; presently Ellen could see the dim figure of the lamplighter crossing the street, from side to side, with his ladder; – then he drew near enough for her to watch him as he hooked his ladder on the lamp-irons, ran up and lit the lamp, then shouldered the ladder and marched off quick, the light glancing on his wet oil-skin hat, rough greatcoat and lantern, and on the pavement and iron railings. The veriest moth could not have followed the light with more perseverance than did Ellen's eyes – till the lamplighter gradually disappeared from view, and the last lamp she could see was lit; and not till then did it occur to her that there was such a place as indoors. She took her face from the window. The room was dark and cheerless; and Ellen felt stiff and chilly. However, she made her

way to the fire, and having found the poker, she applied it gently to the Liverpool coal with such good effect that a bright ruddy blaze sprang up and lighted the whole room. Ellen smiled at the result of her experiment. "That is something like," said she to herself; "who says I can't poke the fire? Now, let us see if I can't do something else. Do but see how those chairs are standing – one would think we had had a sewing circle here – there, go back to your places, – that looks a little better; now these curtains must come down, and I may as well shut the shutters too – and now this tablecloth must be content to hang straight, and mamma's box and the books must lie in their places and not all helter-skelter. Now, I wish mamma would wake up; I should think she might. I don't believe she is asleep, she don't look as if she was."

Ellen was right in this; her mother's face did not wear the look of sleep, nor indeed of repose at all; the lips were compressed, and the brow not calm. To try, however, whether she was asleep or no, and with the half-acknowledged intent to rouse her at all events, Ellen knelt down by her side and laid her face close to her mother's on the pillow. But this failed to draw either word or sign. After a minute or two Ellen tried stroking her mother's cheek very gently; – and this succeeded, for Mrs. Montgomery arrested the little hand as it passed her lips, and kissed it fondly two or three times.

"I haven't disturbed you, mamma, have I?" said Ellen.

Without replying, Mrs. Montgomery raised herself to a sitting posture, and, lifting both hands to her face, pushed back the hair

from her forehead and temples, with a gesture which Ellen knew meant that she was making up her mind to some disagreeable or painful effort. Then taking both Ellen's hands, as she still knelt before her, she gazed in her face with a look even more fond than usual, Ellen thought, but much sadder too; though Mrs. Montgomery's cheerfulness had always been of a serious kind.

"What question was that you were asking me awhile ago, my daughter?"

"I thought, mamma, I heard papa telling you this morning, or yesterday, that he had lost that lawsuit."

"You heard right, Ellen – he has lost it," said Mrs. Montgomery sadly.

"Are you sorry, mamma? – does it trouble you?"

"You know, my dear, that I am not apt to concern myself overmuch about the gain or the loss of money. I believe my Heavenly Father will give me what is good for me."

"Then, mamma, why are you troubled?"

"Because, my child, I cannot carry out this principle in other matters, and leave quietly my *all* in His hands."

"What is the matter, dear mother? What makes you look so?"

"This lawsuit, Ellen, has brought upon us more trouble than ever I thought a lawsuit could – the loss of it, I mean."

"How, mamma?"

"It has caused an entire change of all our plans. Your father says he is too poor now to stay here any longer; and he has agreed to go soon on some government or military business to Europe."

"Well, mamma, that is bad; but he has been away a great deal before, and I am sure we were always very happy?"

"But, Ellen, he thinks now, and the doctor thinks too, that it is very important for my health that I should go with him."

"Does he, mamma? And do you mean to go?"

"I am afraid I must, my dear child."

"Not, and leave *me*, mother?"

The imploring look of mingled astonishment, terror, and sorrow with which Ellen uttered these words took from her mother all power of replying. It was not necessary, her little daughter understood only too well the silent answer of her eye. With a wild cry she flung her arms round her mother, and hiding her face in her lap gave way to a violent burst of grief that seemed for a few moments as if it would rend soul and body in twain. For her passions were by nature very strong, and by education very imperfectly controlled; and time, "that rider that breaks youth," had not as yet tried his hand upon her. And Mrs. Montgomery, in spite of the fortitude and calmness to which she had steeled herself, bent down over her, and folding her arms about her, yielded to sorrow deeper still, and for a little while scarcely less violent in its expression than Ellen's own.

Alas! she had too good reason. She knew that the chance of her ever returning to shield the little creature who was nearest her heart from the future evils and snares of life was very, very small. She had at first absolutely refused to leave Ellen when her husband proposed it, declaring that she would rather stay

with her and die than take the chance of recovery at such a cost. But her physician assured her she could not live long without a change of climate; Captain Montgomery urged that it was better to submit to a temporary separation than to cling obstinately to her child for a few months and then leave her for ever; said he must himself go speedily to France, and that now was her best opportunity; assuring her, however, that his circumstances would not permit him to take Ellen along, but that she would be secure of a happy home with his sister during her mother's absence; and to the pressure of argument Captain Montgomery added the weight of authority – insisting on her compliance. Conscience also asked Mrs. Montgomery whether she had a *right* to neglect any chance of life that was offered her; and at last she yielded to the combined influence of motives no one of which would have had power sufficient to move her, and though with a secret consciousness it would be in vain, she consented to do as her friends wished. And it was for Ellen's sake she did it after all.

Nothing but necessity had given her the courage to open the matter to her little daughter. She had foreseen and endeavoured to prepare herself for Ellen's anguish; but nature was too strong for her, and they clasped each other in a convulsive embrace while tears fell like rain.

It was some minutes before Mrs. Montgomery recollected herself, and then though she struggled hard she could not immediately regain her composure. But Ellen's deep sobs at length fairly alarmed her; she saw the necessity, for both their

sakes, of putting a stop to this state of violent excitement; self-command was restored at once.

"Ellen! Ellen! listen to me," she said; "my child, this is not right. Remember, my darling, who it is that brings this sorrow upon us – though we *must* sorrow, we must not rebel."

Ellen sobbed more gently; but that and the mute pressure of her arms was her only answer.

"You will hurt both yourself and me, my daughter, if you cannot command yourself. Remember, dear Ellen, God sends no trouble upon His children but in love; and though we cannot see how, He will no doubt make all this work for our good."

"I know it, dear mother," sobbed Ellen; "but it's just as hard!"

Mrs. Montgomery's own heart answered so readily to the truth of Ellen's words that for the moment she could not speak.

"Try, my daughter," she said after a pause; "try to compose yourself. I am afraid you will make me worse, Ellen, if you cannot – I am indeed."

Ellen had plenty of faults, but amidst them all love to her mother was the strongest feeling her heart knew. It had power enough now to move her as nothing else could have done; and exerting all her self-command, of which she had sometimes a good deal, she *did* calm herself, ceased sobbing, wiped her eyes, arose from her crouching posture, and seating herself on the sofa by her mother and laying her head on her bosom, she listened quietly to all the soothing words and cheering considerations with which Mrs. Montgomery endeavoured to lead her to take a more

hopeful view of the subject. All she could urge, however, had but very partial success, though the conversation was prolonged far into the evening. Ellen said little, and did not weep any more; but in secret her heart refused consolation.

Long before this the servant had brought in the tea-things. Nobody regarded it at the time, but the little kettle hissing away on the fire now by chance attracted Ellen's attention, and she suddenly recollected her mother had had no tea. To make her mother's tea was Ellen's regular business. She treated it as a very grave affair, and loved it as one of the pleasantest in the course of the day. She used in the first place to make sure that the kettle had really boiled; then she carefully poured some water into the teapot and rinsed it, both to make it clean and to make it hot; then she knew exactly how much tea to put into the tiny little teapot, which was just big enough to hold two cups of tea, and having poured a very little boiling water to it, she used to set it by the side of the fire while she made half a slice of toast. How careful Ellen was about that toast! The bread must not be cut too thick nor too thin; the fire must, if possible, burn clear and bright, and she herself held the bread on a fork, just at the right distance from the coals to get nicely browned without burning. When this was done to her satisfaction (and if the first piece failed she would take another), she filled up the little teapot from the boiling kettle, and proceeded to make a cup of tea. She knew, and was very careful to put in, just the quantity of milk and sugar that her mother liked; and then she used to carry the tea and toast

on a little tray to her mother's side, and very often held it there for her while she ate. All this Ellen did with the zeal that love gives, and though the same thing was to be gone over every night of the year, she was never wearied. It was a real pleasure; she had the greatest satisfaction in seeing that the little her mother could eat was prepared for her in the nicest possible manner; she knew her hands made it taste better; her mother often said so.

But this evening other thoughts had driven this important business quite out of poor Ellen's mind. Now, however, when her eyes fell upon the little kettle, she recollected her mother had not had her tea, and must want it very much; and silently slipping off the sofa she set about getting it as usual. There was no doubt this time whether the kettle boiled or no; it had been hissing for an hour and more, calling as loud as it could to somebody to come and make the tea. So Ellen made it, and then began the toast. But she began to think too, as she watched it, how few more times she would be able to do so – how soon her pleasant tea-makings would be over – and the desolate feeling of separation began to come upon her before the time. These thoughts were too much for poor Ellen; the thick tears gathered so fast she could not see what she was doing; and she had no more than just turned the slice of bread on the fork when the sickness of heart quite overcame her; she could not go on. Toast and fork and all dropped from her hand into the ashes; and rushing to her mother's side, who was now lying down again, and throwing herself upon her, she burst into another fit of sorrow; not so violent as the former,

but with a touch of hopelessness in it which went yet more to her mother's heart. Passion in the first said, "I cannot;" despair now seemed to say, "I must."

But Mrs. Montgomery was too exhausted to either share or soothe Ellen's agitation. She lay in suffering silence; till after some time she said faintly, "Ellen, my love, I cannot bear this much longer."

Ellen was immediately brought to herself by these words. She arose, sorry and ashamed that she should have given occasion for them; and tenderly kissing her mother, assured her most sincerely and resolutely that she would not do so again. In a few minutes she was calm enough to finish making the tea, and having toasted another piece of bread, she brought it to her mother. Mrs. Montgomery swallowed a cup of tea, but no toast could be eaten that night.

Both remained silent and quiet awhile after this, till the clock struck ten. "You had better go to bed, my daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"I will, mamma."

"Do you think you can read me a little before you go?"

"Yes, indeed, mamma;" and Ellen brought the book: "where shall I read?"

"The twenty-third psalm."

Ellen began it, and went through it steadily and slowly, though her voice quavered a little.

"'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.

"'He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

"'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

"'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

Long before she had finished Ellen's eyes were full, and her heart too. "If I only could feel these words as mamma does!" she said to herself. She did not dare look up till the traces of tears had passed away; then she saw that her mother was asleep. Those first sweet words had fallen like balm upon the sore heart; and mind and body had instantly found rest together.

Ellen breathed the lightest possible kiss upon her forehead, and stole quietly out of the room to her own little bed.

# CHAPTER II

*Not all the whispers that the soft winds utter*
*Speak earthly things —*
*There mingleth there, sometimes, a gentle flutter*
*Of angels' wings.*

*– Amy Lathrop.*

Sorrow and excitement made Ellen's eyelids heavy, and she slept late on the following morning. The great dressing-bell waked her. She started up with a confused notion that something was the matter; there was a weight on her heart that was very strange to it. A moment was enough to bring it all back; and she threw herself again on her pillow, yielding helplessly to the grief she had twice been obliged to control the evening before. Yet love was stronger than grief still, and she was careful to allow no sound to escape her that could reach the ears of her mother, who slept in the next room. Her resolve was firm to grieve her no more with useless expressions of sorrow; to keep it to herself as much as possible. But this very thought that she must keep it to herself gave an edge to poor Ellen's grief, and the convulsive clasp of her little arms round the pillow plainly showed that it needed none.

The breakfast-bell again startled her, and she remembered she must not be too late downstairs, or her mother might inquire and

find out the reason. "I will *not* trouble mother – I will not – I will not," she resolved to herself as she got out of bed, though the tears fell faster as she said so. Dressing was sad work to Ellen to-day; it went on very heavily. Tears dropped into the water as she stooped her head to the basin; and she hid her face in the towel to cry, instead of making the ordinary use of it. But the usual duties were dragged through at last, and she went to the window. "I'll not go down till papa is gone," she thought; "he'll ask me what is the matter with my eyes."

Ellen opened the window. The rain was over; the lovely light of a fair September morning was beautifying everything it shone upon. Ellen had been accustomed to amuse herself a good deal at this window, though nothing was to be seen from it but an ugly city prospect of back walls of houses, with the yards belonging to them, and a bit of narrow street. But she had watched the people that showed themselves at the windows, and the children that played in the yards, and the women that went to the pumps, till she had become pretty well acquainted with the neighbourhood; and though they were for the most part dingy, dirty, and disagreeable – women, children, houses, and all – she certainly had taken a good deal of interest in their proceedings. It was all gone now. She could not bear to look at them; she felt as if it made her sick; and turning away her eyes she lifted them to the bright sky above her head, and gazed into its clear depth of blue till she almost forgot that there was such a thing as a city in the world. Little white clouds were chasing across

it, driven by the fresh wind that was blowing away Ellen's hair from her face, and cooling her hot cheeks. That wind could not have been long in coming from the place of woods and flowers, it was so sweet still. Ellen looked till, she didn't know why, she felt calmed and soothed, – as if somebody was saying to her softly, "Cheer up, my child, cheer up; – things are not as bad as they might be: – things will be better." Her attention was attracted at length by voices below; she looked down, and saw there, in one of the yards, a poor deformed child, whom she had often noticed before, and always with sorrowful interest. Besides his bodily infirmity, he had a further claim on her sympathy, in having lost his mother within a few months. Ellen's heart was easily touched this morning; she felt for him very much. "Poor, poor little fellow!" she thought; "he's a great deal worse off than I am. *His* mother is dead; mine is only going away for a few months – not for ever – oh, what a difference! and then the joy of coming back again!" – poor Ellen was weeping already at the thought – "and I'll do, oh, how much! while she is gone – I'll do more than she can possibly expect from me – I'll astonish her – I'll delight her – I'll work harder than ever I did in my life before; I'll mend all my faults, and give her so much pleasure! But oh! if she only needn't go away! Oh, mamma!" Tears of mingled sweet and bitter were poured out fast, but the bitter had the largest share.

The breakfast-table was still standing, and her father gone, when Ellen went downstairs. Mrs. Montgomery welcomed her with her usual quiet smile, and held out her hand. Ellen tried to

smile in answer, but she was glad to hide her face in her mother's bosom; and the long close embrace was too close and too long, – it told of sorrow as well as love; and tears fell from the eyes of each that the other did not see.

"Need I go to school to-day, mamma?" whispered Ellen.

"No; I spoke to your father about that. You shall not go any more. We will be together now while we can."

Ellen wanted to ask how long that would be, but could not make up her mind to it.

"Sit down, daughter, and take some breakfast."

"Have you done, mamma?"

"No; I waited for you."

"Thank you, dear mamma," with another embrace; "how good you are! but I don't think I want any."

They drew their chairs to the table, but it was plain neither had much heart to eat; although Mrs. Montgomery with her own hand laid on Ellen's plate half of the little bird that had been boiled for her own breakfast. The half was too much for each of them.

"What made you so late this morning, daughter?"

"I got up late in the first place, mamma; and then I was a long time at the window."

"At the window! Were you examining into your neighbours' affairs as usual?" said Mrs. Montgomery, surprised that it should have been so. – "Oh no, mamma, I didn't look at them at all – except poor little Billy. I was looking at the sky."

"And what did you see there that pleased you so much?"

"I don't know, mamma; it looked so lovely and peaceful – that pure blue spread over my head, and the little white clouds flying across it. I loved to look at it; it seemed to do me good."

"Could you look at it, Ellen, without thinking of Him who made it?"

"No, mamma," said Ellen, ceasing her breakfast, and now speaking with difficulty; "I did think of Him; perhaps that was the reason."

"And what did you think of Him, daughter?"

"I hoped, mamma – I felt – I thought – He would take care of me," said Ellen, bursting into tears, and throwing her arms round her mother.

"He will, my dear daughter, He will, if you will only put your trust in Him, Ellen."

Ellen struggled hard to get back her composure, and after a few minutes succeeded.

"Mamma, will you tell me what you mean exactly by my 'putting my trust' in Him?"

"Don't you trust me, Ellen?"

"Certainly, mamma."

"How do you trust me? – in what?"

"Why, mamma; – in the first place I trust every word you say – entirely – I know nothing could be truer. If you were to tell me black is white, mamma, I should think my eyes had been mistaken. Then everything you tell or advise me to do, I know it is right, perfectly. And I always feel safe when you are near me,

because I know you'll take care of me. And I am glad to think I belong to you, and you have the management of me entirely, and I needn't manage myself, because I know I can't; and if I could, I'd rather you would, mamma."

"My daughter, it is just so; it is *just* so that I wish you to trust in God. He is truer, wiser, stronger, kinder, by far than I am, even if I could always be with you; and what will you do when I am away from you? – and what would you do, my child, if I were to be parted from you for ever?"

"Oh, mamma!" said Ellen, bursting into tears, and clasping her arms round her mother again – "Oh, dear mamma, don't talk about it!"

Her mother fondly returned her caress, and one or two tears fell on Ellen's head as she did so, but that was all, and she said no more. Feeling severely the effects of the excitement and anxiety of the preceding day and night, she now stretched herself on the sofa and lay quite still. Ellen placed herself on a little bench at her side, with her back to the head of the sofa, that her mother might not see her face; and possessing herself of one of her hands, sat with her little head resting upon her mother, as quiet as she. They remained thus for two or three hours, without speaking; and Mrs. Montgomery was part of the time slumbering; but now and then a tear ran down the side of the sofa and dropped on the carpet where Ellen sat; and now and then her lips were softly pressed to the hand she held, as if they would grow there. The doctor's entrance at last disturbed them. Doctor Green found his

patient decidedly worse than he had reason to expect; and his sagacious eye had not passed back and forth many times between the mother and daughter before he saw how it was. He made no remark upon it, however, but continued for some moments a pleasant chatty conversation which he had begun with Mrs. Montgomery. He then called Ellen to him; he had rather taken a fancy to her.

"Well, Miss Ellen," he said, rubbing one of her hands in his, "what do you think of this fine scheme of mine?"

"What scheme, sir?"

"Why, this scheme of sending this sick lady over the water to get well. What do you think of it, eh?"

"*Will* it make her quite well, do you think, sir?" asked Ellen earnestly.

"'Will it make her well?' To be sure it will; do you think I don't know better than to send people all the way across the ocean for nothing? Who do you think would want Dr. Green if he sent people on wildgoose chases in that fashion?"

"Will she have to stay long there before she is cured, sir?" asked Ellen.

"Oh, that I can't tell; that depends entirely on circumstances – perhaps longer, perhaps shorter. But now, Miss Ellen, I've got a word of business to say to you. You know you agreed to be my little nurse. Mrs. Nurse, this lady whom I put under your care the other day, isn't quite as well as she ought to be this morning; I am afraid you haven't taken proper care of her; she looks to me

as if she had been too much excited. I've a notion she has been secretly taking half a bottle of wine, or reading some furious kind of a novel, or something of that sort – you understand? Now mind, Mrs. Nurse," said the doctor, changing his tone, "she *must not* be excited – you must take care that she is not – it isn't good for her. You mustn't let her talk much, or laugh much, or cry at all, on any account; she mustn't be worried in the least – will you remember? Now you know what I shall expect of you; you must be very careful – if that piece of toast of yours should chance to get burned, one of these fine evenings, I won't answer for the consequences. Good-bye," said he, shaking Ellen's hand, "you needn't look sober about it; all you have to do is to let your mamma be as much like an oyster as possible – you understand? Good-bye." And Dr. Green took his leave.

"Poor woman!" said the doctor to himself as he went down stairs (he was a humane man). "I wonder if she'll live till she gets to the other side! That's a nice little girl, too. Poor child! poor child!"

Both mother and daughter silently acknowledged the justice of the doctor's advice, and determined to follow it. By common consent, as it seemed, each for several days avoided bringing the subject of sorrow to the other's mind, though no doubt it was constantly present to both. It was not spoken of – indeed, little of any kind was spoken of, but that never. Mrs. Montgomery was doubtless employed during this interval in preparing for what she believed was before her; endeavouring to resign herself and

her child to Him in whose hands they were, and struggling to withdraw her affections from a world which she had a secret misgiving she was fast leaving. As for Ellen, the doctor's warning had served to strengthen the resolve she had already made, that she would not distress her mother with the sight of her sorrow; and she kept it, as far as she could. She let her mother see but very few tears, and those were quiet ones; though she drooped her head like a withered flower, and went about the house with an air of submissive sadness that tried her mother sorely. But when she was alone, and knew no one could see, sorrow had its way; and then there were sometimes agonies of grief that would almost have broken Mrs. Montgomery's resolution had she known them.

This, however, could not last. Ellen was a child, and of most buoyant and elastic spirit naturally; it was not for one sorrow, however great, to utterly crush her. It would have taken years to do that. Moreover, she entertained not the slightest hope of being able by any means to alter her father's will. She regarded the dreaded evil as an inevitable thing. But though she was at first overwhelmed with sorrow, and for some days evidently pined under it sadly, hope at length *would* come back to her little heart; and no sooner in again, hope began to smooth the roughest, and soften the hardest, and touch the dark spots with light, in Ellen's future. The thoughts which had passed through her head that first morning as she had stood at her window, now came back again. Thoughts of wonderful improvement to be made during her mother's absence; of unheard-of efforts to learn and

amend, which should all be crowned with success; and, above all, thoughts of that "coming home," when all these attainments and accomplishments should be displayed to the mother's delighted eyes, and her exertions receive their long-desired reward; they made Ellen's heart beat, and her eyes swim, and even brought a smile once more upon her lips. Mrs. Montgomery was rejoiced to see the change; she felt that as much time had already been given to sorrow as they could afford to lose, and she had not known exactly how to proceed. Ellen's amended looks and spirits greatly relieved her.

"What are you thinking about, Ellen?" said she one morning.

Ellen was sewing, and while busy at her work her mother had two or three times observed a light smile pass over her face. Ellen looked up, still smiling, and answered, "Oh, mamma, I was thinking of different things – things that I mean to do while you are gone."

"And what are these things?" inquired her mother.

"Oh, mamma, it wouldn't do to tell you beforehand. I want to surprise you with them when you come back."

A slight shudder passed over Mrs. Montgomery's frame, but Ellen did not see it. Mrs. Montgomery was silent. Ellen presently introduced another subject.

"Mamma, what kind of a person is my aunt?"

"I do not know. I have never seen her."

"How has that happened, mamma?"

"Your aunt has always lived in a remote country town, and I

have been very much confined to two or three cities, and your father's long and repeated absences made travelling impossible to me."

Ellen thought, but she did not say it, that it was very odd her father should not sometimes, when he *was* in the country, have gone to see his relations and taken her mother with him.

"What is my aunt's name, mamma?"

"I think you must have heard that already, Ellen – Fortune Emerson."

"Emerson! I thought she was papa's sister?"

"So she is."

"Then how comes her name not to be Montgomery?"

"She is only his half-sister – the daughter of his mother, not the daughter of his father."

"I am very sorry for that," said Ellen gravely.

"Why, my daughter?"

"I am afraid she will not be so likely to love me."

"You mustn't think so, my child. Her loving or not loving you will depend solely and entirely upon yourself, Ellen. Don't forget that. If you are a good child, and make it your daily care to do your duty, she cannot help liking you, be she what she may; and on the other hand, if she have all the will in the world to love you, she cannot do it unless you will let her. It all depends on your behaviour."

"Oh, mamma, I can't help wishing dear aunt Bessy was alive, and I was going to her."

Many a time the same wish had passed through Mrs. Montgomery's mind. But she kept down her rising heart, and went on calmly —

"You must not expect, my child, to find anybody as indulgent as I am, or as ready to overlook and excuse your faults. It would be unreasonable to look for it, and you must not think hardly of your aunt when you find she is not your mother; but then it will be your own fault if she does not love you, in time, truly and tenderly. See that you render her all the respect and obedience you could render me. That is your bounden duty. She will stand in my place while she has the care of you – remember that, Ellen. And remember, too, that she will deserve more gratitude at your hands for showing you kindness than I do, because she cannot have the same feeling of love to make trouble easy."

"Oh no, mamma," said Ellen, "I don't think so. It's that very feeling of love that I am grateful for. I don't care a fig for anything people do for me without that."

"But you can make her love you, Ellen, if you try."

"Well, I'll try, mamma."

"And don't be discouraged. Perhaps you may be disappointed in first appearances, but never mind that. Have patience, and let your motto be – if there's any occasion – Overcome evil with good. Will you put that among the things you mean to do while I am gone?" said Mrs. Montgomery with a smile.

"I'll try, dear mamma."

"You will succeed if you try, dear, never fear, if you apply

yourself in your trying to the only unfailing source of wisdom and strength, to Him without whom you can do nothing."

There was silence for a little.

"What sort of a place is it where my aunt lives?" asked Ellen.

"Your father says it is a very pleasant place. He says the country is beautiful and very healthy, and full of charming walks and rides. You have never lived in the country. I think you will enjoy it very much."

"Then it is not in a town?" said Ellen.

"No; it is not a great way from the town of Thirlwall, but your aunt lives in the open country. Your father says she is a capital housekeeper, and that you will learn more, and be in all respects a great deal happier and better off than you would be in a boarding-school here or anywhere."

Ellen's heart secretly questioned the truth of this last assertion very much.

"Is there any school near?" she asked.

"Your father says there was an excellent one in Thirlwall when he was there."

"Mamma," said Ellen, "I think the greatest pleasure I shall have while you are gone will be writing to you. I have been thinking of it a good deal. I mean to tell you everything – absolutely everything, mamma. You know there will be nobody for me to talk to as I do to you" (Ellen's words came out with difficulty), "and when I feel badly I shall just shut myself up and write to you." She hid her face in her mother's lap.

"I count upon it, my dear daughter. It will make quite as much the pleasure of my life, Ellen, as of yours."

"But then, mother," said Ellen, brushing away the tears from her eyes, "it will be so long before my letters can get to you! The things I want you to know right away, you won't know perhaps in a month."

"That's no matter, daughter; they will be just as good when they do get to me. Never think of that; write every day, and all manner of things that concern you, – just as particularly as if you were speaking to me."

"And you'll write to me, too, mamma?"

"Indeed I will – when I can. But Ellen, you say that when I am away and cannot hear you, there will be nobody to supply my place. Perhaps it will be so indeed; but then, my daughter, let it make you seek that friend who is never far away, nor out of hearing. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. You know He has said of His children: 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

"But, mamma," said Ellen, her eyes filling instantly, "you know He is not my friend in the same way that He is yours." And hiding her face again, she added, "Oh, I wish He was!"

"You know the way to make Him so, Ellen, *He* is willing; it only rests with you. Oh, my child, my child! if losing your mother might be the means of finding you that Better Friend, I should be quite willing – and glad to go – for ever."

There was silence, only broken by Ellen's sobs. Mrs.

Montgomery's voice had trembled, and her face was now covered with her hands; but she was not weeping; she was seeking a better relief where it had long been her habit to seek and find it. Both resumed their usual composure, and the employments which had been broken off, but neither chose to renew the conversation. Dinner, sleeping, and company prevented their having another opportunity during the rest of the day.

But when evening came, they were again left to themselves. Captain Montgomery was away, which indeed was the case most of the time; friends had taken their departure; the curtains were down, the lamp lit, the little room looked cosy and comfortable; the servant had brought the tea-things, and withdrawn, and the mother and daughter were happily alone. Mrs. Montgomery knew that such occasions were numbered, and fast drawing to an end, and she felt each one to be very precious. She now lay on her couch, with her face partially shaded, and her eyes fixed upon her little daughter, who was now preparing the tea. She watched her, with thoughts and feelings not to be spoken, as the little figure went back and forward between the table and the fire, and the light shining full upon her busy face, showed that Ellen's whole soul was in her beloved duty. Tears would fall as she looked, and were not wiped away; but when Ellen, having finished her work, brought with a satisfied face the little tray of tea and toast to her mother, there was no longer any sign of them left. Mrs. Montgomery arose with her usual kind smile, to show her gratitude by honouring as far as possible what Ellen

had provided.

"You have more appetite to-night, mamma."

"I am very glad, daughter," replied her mother, "to see that you have made up your mind to bear patiently this evil that has come upon us. I am glad for your sake, and I am glad for mine; and I am glad too because we have a great deal to do, and no time to lose in doing it."

"What have we so much to do, mamma?" said Ellen.

"Oh, many things," said her mother; "you will see. But now, Ellen, if there is anything you wish to talk to me about, any question you want to ask, anything you would like particularly to have, or to have done for you, I want you to tell it me as soon as possible, now while we can attend to it, for by-and-by perhaps we shall be hurried."

"Mamma," said Ellen with brightening eyes, "there is one thing I have thought of that I should like to have; shall I tell it you now?"

"Yes."

"Mamma, you know I shall want to be writing a great deal; wouldn't it be a good thing for me to have a little box with some pens in it, and an inkstand, and some paper and wafers? Because, mamma, you know I shall be among strangers at first, and I shan't feel like asking them for these things as often as I shall want them, and maybe they wouldn't want to let me have them if I did."

"I have thought of that already, daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery with a smile and a sigh. "I will certainly take care

that you are well provided in that respect before you go."

"How am I to go, mamma?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, who will go with me? You know I can't go alone, mamma."

"No, my daughter, I'll not send you alone. But your father says it is impossible for *him* to take that journey at present, and it is yet more impossible for me. There is no help for it, daughter, but we must entrust you to the care of some friend going that way; but He that holds the winds and waters in the hollow of His hand can take care of you without any of our help, and it is to His keeping above all that I shall commit you."

Ellen made no remark, and seemed much less surprised and troubled than her mother had expected. In truth, the greater evil swallowed up the less. Parting from her mother, and for so long a time, it seemed to her comparatively a matter of little importance with whom she went, or how, or where. Except for this, the taking a long journey under a stranger's care would have been a dreadful thing to her.

"Do you know yet who it will be that I shall go with, mamma?"

"Not yet; but it will be necessary to take the first good opportunity, for I cannot go till I have seen you off; and it is thought very desirable that I should get to sea before the severe weather comes."

It was with a pang that these words were spoken and heard, but neither showed it to the other.

"It has comforted me greatly, my dear child, that you have shown yourself so submissive and patient under this affliction. I should scarcely have been able to endure it if you had not exerted self-control. You have behaved beautifully."

This was almost too much for poor Ellen. It required her utmost stretch of self-control to keep within any bounds of composure; and for some moments her flushed cheek, quivering lip, and heaving bosom told what a tumult her mother's last words had raised. Mrs. Montgomery saw she had gone too far, and willing to give both Ellen and herself time to recover, she laid her head on the pillow again and closed her eyes. Many thoughts coming thick upon one another presently filled her mind, and half-an-hour had passed before she again recollected what she had meant to say. She opened her eyes; Ellen was sitting at a little distance, staring into the fire, evidently as deep in meditation as her mother had been.

"Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, "did you ever fancy what kind of a Bible you would like to have?"

"A Bible! mamma," said Ellen with sparkling eyes, "do you mean to give me a Bible?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled.

"But, mamma," said Ellen gently, "I thought you couldn't afford it?"

"I have said so, and truly," answered her mother; "and hitherto you have been able to use mine, but I will not leave you now without one. I will find ways and means," said Mrs. Montgomery,

smiling again.

"Oh, mamma, thank you!" said Ellen, delighted; "how glad I shall be!" And after a pause of consideration she added, "Mamma, I never thought much about what sort of a one I should like; couldn't I tell better if I were to see the different kinds in the store?"

"Perhaps so. Well, the first day that the weather is fine enough and I am well enough, I will go out with you and we will see about it."

"I am afraid Dr. Green won't let you, mamma."

"I shall not ask him. I want to get you a Bible, and some other things that I will not leave you without, and nobody can do it but myself. I shall go, if I possibly can."

"What other things, mamma?" asked Ellen, very much interested in the subject.

"I don't think it will do to tell you to-night," said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling. "I foresee that you and I should be kept awake quite too late if we were to enter upon it just now. We will leave it till to-morrow. Now read to me, love, and then to bed."

Ellen obeyed; and went to sleep with brighter visions dancing before her eyes than had been the case for some time.

# CHAPTER III

*Sweetheart, we shall be rich ere we depart,*
*If fairings come thus plentifully in.*

*– Shakespeare.*

Ellen had to wait some time for the desired fine day. The equinoctial storms would have their way as usual, and Ellen thought they were longer than ever this year. But after many stormy days had tried her patience, there was at length a sudden change, both without and within doors. The clouds had done their work for that time, and fled away before a strong northerly wind, leaving the sky bright and fair. And Mrs. Montgomery's deceitful disease took a turn, and for a little space raised the hopes of her friends. All were rejoicing but two persons: Mrs. Montgomery was not deceived, neither was the doctor. The shopping project was kept a profound secret from him and from everybody except Ellen.

Ellen watched now for a favourable day. Every morning as soon as she rose she went to the window to see what was the look of the weather; and about a week after the change above noticed, she was greatly pleased one morning, on opening her window as usual, to find the air and sky promising all that could be desired. It was one of those beautiful days in the end of September that

sometimes herald October before it arrives – cloudless, brilliant, and breathing balm. "This will do," said Ellen to herself, in great satisfaction. "I think this will do; I hope mamma will think so."

Hastily dressing herself, and a good deal excited already, she ran downstairs; and after the morning salutations, examined her mother's looks with as much anxiety as she had just done those of the weather. All was satisfactory there also; and Ellen ate her breakfast with an excellent appetite; but she said not a word of the intended expedition till her father should be gone. She contented herself with strengthening her hopes by making constant fresh inspections of the weather and her mother's countenance alternately; and her eyes returning from the window on one of these excursions and meeting her mother's face, saw a smile there which said all she wanted. Breakfast went on more vigorously than ever. But after breakfast it seemed to Ellen that her father never would go away. He took the newspaper, an uncommon thing for him, and pored over it most perseveringly, while Ellen was in a perfect fidget of impatience. Her mother, seeing the state she was in, and taking pity on her, sent her upstairs to do some little matters of business in her own room. These Ellen despatched with all possible zeal and speed; and coming down again found her father gone and her mother alone. She flew to kiss her in the first place, and then made the inquiry, "Don't you think to-day will do, mamma?"

"As fine as possible, daughter; we could not have a better. But I must wait till the doctor has been here."

"Mamma," said Ellen after a pause, making a great effort of self-denial, "I am afraid you oughtn't to go out to get these things for me. Pray don't, mamma, if you think it will do you harm. I would rather go without them; indeed I would."

"Never mind that, daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery, kissing her; "I am bent upon it; it would be quite as much of a disappointment to me as to you not to go. We have a lovely day for it, and we will take our time and walk slowly, and we haven't far to go either. But I must let Dr. Green make his visit first."

To fill up the time till he came Mrs. Montgomery employed Ellen in reading to her as usual. And this morning's reading Ellen long after remembered. Her mother directed her to several passages in different parts of the Bible that speak of heaven and its enjoyments; and though, when she began, her own little heart was full of excitement, in view of the day's plans, and beating with hope and pleasure, the sublime beauty of the words and thoughts, as she went on, awed her into quiet, and her mother's manner at length turned her attention entirely from herself. Mrs. Montgomery was lying on the sofa, and for the most part listened in silence, with her eyes closed; but sometimes saying a word or two that made Ellen feel how deep was the interest her mother had in the things she read of, and how pure and strong the pleasure she was even now taking in them; and sometimes there was a smile on her face that Ellen scarce liked to see; it gave her an indistinct feeling that her mother would not be long away from that heaven to which she seemed already to belong. Ellen had a

sad consciousness too that she had no part with her mother in this matter. She could hardly go on. She came to that beautiful passage in the seventh of Revelation —

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

With difficulty and a husky voice Ellen got through it. Lifting then her eyes to her mother's face, she saw again the same singularly sweet smile. Ellen felt that she could not read another word; to her great relief the door opened, and Dr. Green came in. His appearance changed the whole course of her thoughts. All that was grave or painful fled quickly away; Ellen's head was immediately full again of what had filled it before she began to read.

As soon as the doctor had retired and was fairly out of hearing, "Now, mamma, shall we go?" said Ellen. "You needn't stir, mamma; I'll bring all your things to you, and put them on; may

I, mamma? then you won't be a bit tired before you set out."

Her mother assented; and with a great deal of tenderness and a great deal of eagerness, Ellen put on her stockings and shoes, arranged her hair, and did all that she could toward changing her dress, and putting on her bonnet and shawl; and greatly delighted she was when the business was accomplished.

"Now, mamma, you look like yourself; I haven't seen you look so well this great while. I'm so glad you're going out again," said Ellen, putting her arms round her; "I do believe it will do you good. Now, mamma, I'll go and get ready; I'll be very quick about it; you shan't have to wait long for me."

In a few minutes the two set forth from the house. The day was as fine as could be; there was no wind, there was no dust; the sun was not oppressive; and Mrs. Montgomery did feel refreshed and strengthened during the few steps they had to take to their first stopping-place.

It was a jeweller's store. Ellen had never been in one before in her life, and her first feeling on entering was of dazzled wonderment at the glittering splendours around; this was presently forgotten in curiosity to know what her mother could possibly want there. She soon discovered that she had come to sell and not to buy. Mrs. Montgomery drew a ring from her finger, and after a little chaffering parted with it to the owner of the store for eighty dollars, being about three-quarters of its real value. The money was counted out, and she left the store.

"Mamma," said Ellen in a low voice, "wasn't that

grandmamma's ring, which I thought you loved so much?"

"Yes, I did love it, Ellen, but I love you better."

"Oh, mamma, I am very sorry!" said Ellen.

"You need not be sorry, daughter. Jewels in themselves are the merest nothings to me; and as for the rest, it doesn't matter; I can remember my mother without any help from a trinket."

There were tears, however, in Mrs. Montgomery's eyes, that showed the sacrifice had cost her something; and there were tears in Ellen's that told it was not thrown away upon her.

"I am sorry you should know of this," continued Mrs. Montgomery; "you should not if I could have helped it. But set your heart quite at rest, Ellen; I assure you this use of my ring gives me more pleasure on the whole than any other I could have made of it."

A grateful squeeze of her hand and glance into her face was Ellen's answer.

Mrs. Montgomery had applied to her husband for the funds necessary to fit Ellen comfortably for the time they should be absent; and in answer he had given her a sum barely sufficient for her mere clothing. Mrs. Montgomery knew him better than to ask for a further supply, but she resolved to have recourse to other means to do what she had determined upon. Now that she was about to leave her little daughter, and it might be for ever, she had set her heart upon providing her with certain things which she thought important to her comfort and improvement, and which Ellen would go very long without if *she* did not give them to her,

and *now*. Ellen had had very few presents in her life, and those always of the simplest and cheapest kind; her mother resolved that in the midst of the bitterness of this time she would give her one pleasure if she could; it might be the last.

They stopped next at a book-store. "Oh, what a delicious smell of new books!" said Ellen, as they entered. "Mamma, if it wasn't for one thing, I should say I never was so happy in my life."

Children's books, lying in tempting confusion near the door, immediately fastened Ellen's eyes and attention. She opened one, and was already deep in the interest of it, when the word "*Bibles*" struck her ear. Mrs. Montgomery was desiring the shopman to show her various kinds and sizes that she might choose from among them. Down went Ellen's book, and she flew to the place where a dozen different Bibles were presently displayed. Ellen's wits were ready to forsake her. Such beautiful Bibles she had never seen; she pored in ecstasy over their varieties of type and binding, and was very evidently in love with them all.

"Now, Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, "look and choose; take your time, and see which you like best."

It was not likely that "Ellen's time" would be a short one. Her mother seeing this, took a chair at a little distance to await patiently her decision; and while Ellen's eyes were riveted on the Bibles, her own very naturally were fixed upon her. In the excitement and eagerness of the moment, Ellen had thrown off her light bonnet, and with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, and a brow grave with unusual care, as though a nation's fate were

deciding, she was weighing the comparative advantages of large, small, and middle sized – black, blue, purple, and red – gilt and not gilt – clasp and no clasp. Everything but the Bibles before her Ellen had forgotten utterly; she was deep in what was to her the most important of business. She did not see the bystanders smile; she did not know there were any. To her mother's eye it was a most fair sight. Mrs. Montgomery gazed with rising emotions of pleasure and pain that struggled for the mastery, but pain at last got the better and rose very high. "How can I give thee up!" was the one thought of her heart. Unable to command herself, she rose and went to a distant part of the counter, where she seemed to be examining books; but tears, some of the bitterest she had ever shed, were falling thick upon the dusty floor, and she felt her heart like to break. Her little daughter at one end of the counter had forgotten there ever was such a thing as sorrow in the world; and she at the other was bowed beneath a weight of it that was nigh to crush her. But in her extremity she betook herself to that refuge she had never known to fail: it did not fail her now. She remembered the words Ellen had been reading to her that very morning, and they came like the breath of heaven upon the fever of her soul. "Not my will, but Thine be done." She strove and prayed to say it, and not in vain; and after a little while she was able to return to her seat. She felt that she had been shaken by a tempest, but she was calmer now than before.

Ellen was just as she had left her, and apparently just as far from coming to any conclusion. Mrs. Montgomery was resolved

to let her take her way. Presently Ellen came over from the counter with a large royal octavo Bible, heavy enough to be a good lift for her. "Mamma," said she, laying it on her mother's lap and opening it, "what do you think of that? isn't that splendid?"

"A most beautiful page indeed; is this your choice, Ellen?"

"Well, mamma, I don't know; what do you think?"

"I think it is rather inconveniently large and heavy for everyday use. It is quite a weight upon my lap. I shouldn't like to carry it in my hands long. You would want a little table on purpose to hold it."

"Well, that wouldn't do at all," said Ellen, laughing; "I believe you are right, mamma; I wonder I didn't think of it. I might have known that myself."

She took it back, and there followed another careful examination of the whole stock; and then Ellen came to her mother with a beautiful miniature edition in two volumes, gilt and clasped, and very perfect in all respects, but of exceedingly small print.

"I think I'll have this, mamma," said she. "Isn't it a beauty? I could put it in my pocket, you know, and carry it anywhere with the greatest ease."

"It would have one great objection to me," said Mrs. Montgomery, "inasmuch as I cannot possibly see to read it."

"Cannot you, mamma? But I can read it perfectly."

"Well, my dear, take it; that is, if you will make up your mind to put on spectacles before your time."

"Spectacles, mamma! I hope I shall never have to wear spectacles."

"What do you propose to do when your sight fails, if you shall live so long?"

"Well, mamma – if it comes to that – but you don't advise me then to take this little beauty?"

"Judge for yourself; I think you are old enough."

"I know what you think though, mamma, and I dare say you are right too; I won't take it, though it's a pity. Well, I must look again."

Mrs. Montgomery came to her help, for it was plain Ellen had lost the power of judging amidst so many tempting objects. But she presently simplified the matter by putting aside all that were decidedly too large, or too small, or too fine print. There remained three, of moderate size and sufficiently large type, but different binding. "Either of these, I think, will answer your purpose nicely," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Then, mamma, if you please, I will have the red one. I like that best, because it will put me in mind of yours."

Mrs. Montgomery could find no fault with this reason. She paid for the red Bible, and directed it to be sent home. "Shan't I carry it, mamma?" said Ellen.

"No, you would find it in the way; we have several things to do yet."

"Have we, mamma? I thought we only came to get a Bible."

"That is enough for one day, I confess. I am a little afraid your

head will be turned; but I must run the risk of it. I dare not lose the opportunity of this fine weather; I may not have such another. I wish to have the comfort of thinking when I am away, that I have left you with everything necessary to the keeping up of good habits – everything that will make them pleasant and easy. I wish you to be always neat, and tidy, and industrious; depending upon others as little as possible; and careful to improve yourself by every means, and especially by writing to me. I will leave you no excuse, Ellen, for failing in any of these duties. I trust you will not disappoint me in a single particular."

Ellen's heart was too full to speak; she again looked up tearfully and pressed her mother's hand.

"I do not expect to be disappointed, love," returned Mrs. Montgomery.

They now entered a large fancy store. "What are we to get here, mamma?" said Ellen.

"A box to put your pens and paper in," said her mother, smiling.

"Oh, to be sure," said Ellen; "I had almost forgotten that." She quite forgot it a minute after. It was the first time she had ever seen the inside of such a store; and the articles displayed on every side completely bewitched her. From one thing to another she went, admiring and wondering; in her wildest dreams she had never imagined such beautiful things. The store was fairyland.

Mrs. Montgomery meanwhile attended to business. Having chosen a neat little japanned dressing-box, perfectly plain, but

well supplied with everything a child could want in that line, she called Ellen from the delightful journey of discovery she was making round the store, and asked her what she thought of it.

"I think it's a little beauty," said Ellen; "but I never saw such a place for beautiful things."

"You think it will do then?" said her mother.

"For me, mamma! You don't mean to give it to me? Oh, mother, how good you are! But I know what is the best way to thank you, and I'll do it. What a perfect little beauty! Mamma, I'm too happy."

"I hope not," said her mother, "for you know I haven't got you the box for your pens and paper yet."

"Well, mamma, I'll try and bear it," said Ellen, laughing. "But do get me the plainest little thing in the world, for you're giving me too much."

Mrs. Montgomery asked to look at writing-desks, and was shown to another part of the store for the purpose. "Mamma," said Ellen, in a low tone, as they went, "you're not going to get me a writing-desk?"

"Why, that is the best kind of box for holding writing materials," said her mother, smiling; "don't you think so?"

"I don't know what to say!" exclaimed Ellen. "I can't thank you, mamma – I haven't any words to do it. I think I shall go crazy."

She was truly overcome with the weight of happiness. Words failed her, and tears came instead.

From among a great many desks of all descriptions, Mrs. Montgomery with some difficulty succeeded in choosing one to her mind. It was of mahogany, not very large, but thoroughly well made and finished, and very convenient and perfect in its internal arrangements. Ellen was speechless; occasional looks at her mother, and deep sighs, were all she had now to offer. The desk was quite empty. "Ellen," said her mother, "do you remember the furniture of Miss Allen's desk that you were so pleased with a while ago?"

"Perfectly, mamma; I know all that was in it."

"Well, then, you must prompt me if I forget anything. Your desk will be furnished with everything really useful. Merely showy matters we can dispense with. Now let us see. Here is a great empty place that I think wants some paper to fill it. Show me some of different sizes, if you please."

The shopman obeyed, and Mrs. Montgomery stocked the desk well with letter paper, large and small. Ellen looked on in great satisfaction. "That will do nicely," she said. "That large paper will be beautiful whenever I am writing to you, mamma, you know, and the other will do for other times, when I haven't so much to say; though I am sure I don't know who there is in the world I should ever send letters to except you."

"If there is nobody now, perhaps there will be at some future time," replied her mother. "I hope I shall not always be your only correspondent. Now what next?"

"Envelopes, mamma."

"To be sure; I had forgotten them. Envelopes of both sizes to match."

"Because, mamma, you know I might, and I certainly shall, want to write upon the fourth page of my letter, and I couldn't do it unless I had envelopes." A sufficient stock of envelopes was laid in.

"Mamma," said Ellen, "what do you think of a little note-paper?"

"Who are the notes to be written to, Ellen?" said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling.

"You needn't smile, mamma; you know, as you said, if I don't now know, perhaps I shall by-and-by. Miss Allen's desk had note-paper; that made me think of it."

"So shall yours, daughter; while we are about it we will do the thing well. And your note-paper will keep quite safely in this nice little place provided for it, even if you should not want to use a sheet of it in half-a-dozen years."

"How nice that is!" said Ellen admiringly.

"I suppose the note-paper must have envelopes too?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"To be sure, mamma; I suppose so," said Ellen, smiling; "Miss Allen's had."

"Well, now we have got all the paper we want, I think," said Mrs. Montgomery; "the next thing is ink – or an inkstand, rather."

Different kinds were presented for her choice.

"Oh, mamma, that one won't do," said Ellen anxiously; "you know the desk will be knocking about in a trunk, and the ink would run out and spoil everything. It should be one of those that shut tight. I don't see the right kind here." The shopman brought one.

"There, mamma, do you see?" said Ellen; "it shuts with a spring, and nothing can possibly come out; do you see, mamma? You can turn it topsy-turvy."

"I see you are quite right, daughter; it seems I should get on very ill without you to advise me. Fill the inkstand, if you please."

"Mamma, what shall I do when my ink is gone? that inkstand will hold but a little, you know."

"Your aunt will supply you, of course, my dear, when you are out."

"I'd rather take some of my own by half," said Ellen.

"You could not carry a bottle of ink in your desk without great danger to everything else in it. It would not do to venture."

"We have excellent ink-powder," said the shopman, "in small packages, which can be very conveniently carried about. You see, ma'am, there is a compartment in the desk for such things; and the ink is very easily made at any time."

"Oh, that will do nicely," said Ellen, "that is just the thing."

"Now what is to go in this other square place opposite the inkstand?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"That is the place for the box of lights, mamma."

"What sort of lights?"

"For sealing letters, mamma, you know. They are not like your wax taper at all; they are little wax matches, that burn just long enough to seal one or two letters; Miss Allen showed me how she used them. Hers were in a nice little box just like the inkstand on the outside; and there was a place to light the matches, and a place to set them in while they are burning. There, mamma, that's it," said Ellen, as the shopman brought forth the article which she was describing, "that's it exactly; and that will just fit. Now, mamma, for the wax."

"You want to seal your letter before you have written it," said Mrs. Montgomery; "we have not got the pens yet."

"That's true, mamma; let us have the pens. And some quills too, mamma?"

"Do you know how to make a pen, Ellen?"

"No, mamma, not yet; but I want to learn very much. Miss Pichegru says that every lady ought to know how to make her own pens."

"Miss Pichegru is very right; but I think you are rather too young to learn. However, we will try. Now here are steel points enough to last you a great while, and as many quills as it is needful you should cut up for one year at least; we haven't a pen handle yet."

"Here, mamma," said Ellen, holding out a plain ivory one, "don't you like this? I think that it is prettier than these that are all cut and fussed, or those other gay ones either."

"I think so too, Ellen; the plainer the prettier. Now what comes

next?"

"The knife, mamma, to make the pens," said Ellen, smiling.

"True, the knife. Let us see some of your best pen-knives. Now, Ellen, choose. That one won't do, my dear; it should have two blades – a large as well as a small one. You know you want to mend a pencil sometimes."

"So I do, mamma, to be sure, you're very right; here's a nice one. Now, mamma, the wax."

"There is a box full; choose your own colours." Seeing it was likely to be a work of time, Mrs. Montgomery walked away to another part of the store. When she returned Ellen had made up an assortment of the oddest colours she could find.

"I won't have any red, mamma, it is so common," she said.

"I think it is the prettiest of all," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Do you, mamma? then I will have a stick of red on purpose to seal to you with."

"And who do you intend shall have the benefit of the other colours?" inquired her mother.

"I declare, mamma," said Ellen, laughing, "I never thought of that; I am afraid they will have to go to you. You must not mind, mamma, if you get green and blue and yellow seals once in a while."

"I dare say I shall submit myself to it with a good grace," said Mrs. Montgomery. "But come, my dear, have we got all we want? This desk has been very long in furnishing."

"You haven't given me a seal yet, mamma."

"Seals! There are a variety before you; see if you can find one that you like. By the way, you cannot seal a letter, can you?"

"Not yet, mamma," said Ellen, smiling again; "that is another of the things I have got to learn."

"Then I think you had better have some wafers in the meantime."

While Ellen was picking out her seal, which took not a little time, Mrs. Montgomery laid in a good supply of wafers of all sorts; and then went on further to furnish the desk with an ivory leaf-cutter, a paper-folder, a pounce-box, a ruler, and a neat little silver pencil; also some drawing-pencils, indiarubber, and sheets of drawing paper. She took a sad pleasure in adding everything she could think of that might be for Ellen's future use or advantage; but as with her own hands she placed in the desk one thing after another, the thought crossed her mind how Ellen would make drawings with those very pencils, on those very sheets of paper, which her eyes would never see! She turned away with a sigh, and receiving Ellen's seal from her hand, put that also in its place. Ellen had chosen one with her own name.

"Will you send these things *at once*?" said Mrs. Montgomery; "I particularly wish to have them at home as early in the day as possible."

The man promised. Mrs. Montgomery paid the bill, and she and Ellen left the store.

They walked a little way in silence.

"I cannot thank you, mamma," said Ellen.

"It is not necessary, my dear child," said Mrs. Montgomery, returning the pressure of her hand; "I know all that you would say."

There was as much sorrow as joy at that moment in the heart of the joy fullest of the two.

"Where are we going now, mamma?" said Ellen again, after a while.

"I wished and intended to have gone to St. Clair & Fleury's, to get you some merino and other things; but we have been detained so long already that I think I had better go home. I feel somewhat tired."

"I am very sorry, dear mamma," said Ellen; "I am afraid I kept you too long about that desk."

"You did not keep me, daughter, any longer than I chose to be kept. But I think I will go home now, and take the chance of another fine day for the merino."

# CHAPTER IV

*How can I live without thee – how forego*
*Thy sweet converse, and love so dearly joined?*

*– Milton.*

When dinner was over and the table cleared away, the mother and daughter were left, as they always loved to be, alone. It was late in the afternoon and already somewhat dark, for clouds had gathered over the beautiful sky of the morning, and the wind rising now and then made its voice heard. Mrs. Montgomery was lying on the sofa: as usual, seemingly at ease; and Ellen was sitting on a little bench before the fire, very much at *her* ease indeed, without any seeming about it. She smiled as she met her mother's eyes.

"You have made me very happy to-day, mamma."

"I am glad of it, my dear child. I hoped I should. I believe the whole affair has given me as much pleasure, Ellen, as it has you."

There was a pause.

"Mamma, I will take the greatest possible care of my new treasures."

"I know you will. If I had doubted it, Ellen, most assuredly I should not have given them to you, sorry as I should have been to leave you without them. So you see you have not established

a character for carefulness in vain."

"And, mamma, I hope you have not given them to me in vain either. I will try to use them in the way that I know you wish me to; that will be the best way I can thank you."

"Well, I have left you no excuse, Ellen. You know fully what I wish you to do and to be; and when I am away I shall please myself with thinking that my little daughter *is* following her mother's wishes; I shall believe so, Ellen. You will not let me be disappointed?"

"Oh no, mamma," said Ellen, who was now in her mother's arms.

"Well, my child," said Mrs. Montgomery in a lighter tone, "my gifts will serve as reminders for you if you are ever tempted to forget my lessons. If you fail to send me letters, or if those you send are not what they ought to be, I think the desk will cry shame upon you. And if you ever go an hour with a hole in your stocking, or a tear in your dress, or a string off your petticoat, I hope the sight of your work-box will make you blush."

"Work-box, mamma?"

"Yes. Oh, I forgot; you've not seen that."

"No, mamma; what do you mean?"

"Why, my dear, that was one of the things you most wanted, but I thought it best not to overwhelm you quite this morning; so while you were on an exploring expedition round the store I chose and furnished one for you."

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" said Ellen, getting up and clasping

her hands; "what shall I do? I don't know what to say; I can't say anything. Mamma, it's too much."

So it seemed, for Ellen sat down and began to cry. Her mother silently reached out a hand to her, which she squeezed and kissed with all the energy of gratitude, love, and sorrow; till gently drawn by the same hand she was placed again in her mother's arms and upon her bosom. And in that tried resting-place she lay, calmed and quieted, till the shades of afternoon deepened into evening, and evening into night, and the light of the fire was all that was left to them.

Though not a word had been spoken for a long time, Ellen was not asleep; her eyes were fixed on the red glow of the coals in the grate, and she was busily thinking, but not of them. Many sober thoughts were passing through her little head, and stirring her heart; a few were of her new possessions and bright projects – more of her mother. She was thinking how very, very precious was the heart she could feel beating where her cheek lay; she thought it was greater happiness to lie there than anything else in life could be; she thought she had rather even die so, on her mother's breast, than live long without her in the world; she felt that in earth or in heaven there was nothing so dear. Suddenly she broke the silence.

"Mamma, what does that mean, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me'?"

"It means just what it says. If you love anybody or anything better than Jesus Christ, you cannot be one of His children."

"But then, mamma," said Ellen, raising her head, "how *can* I be one of His children? I do love you a great deal better; how can I help it, mamma?"

"You cannot help it, I know, my dear," said Mrs. Montgomery with a sigh, "except by His grace, who has promised to change the hearts of His people – to take away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."

"But is mine a heart of stone then, mamma, because I cannot help loving you best?"

"Not to me, dear Ellen," replied Mrs. Montgomery, pressing closer the little form that lay in her arms; "I have never found it so. But yet I know that the Lord Jesus is far, far more worthy of your affection than I am, and if your heart were not hardened by sin you would see Him so; it is only because you do not know Him that you love me better. Pray, pray, my dear child, that He would take away the power of sin, and show you Himself; that is all that is wanting."

"I will, mamma," said Ellen tearfully. "Oh, mamma, what shall I do without you?"

Alas, Mrs. Montgomery's heart echoed the question; she had no answer.

"Mamma," said Ellen after a few minutes, "can I have no true love to Him at all unless I love Him *best*?"

"I dare not say that you can," answered her mother seriously.

"Mamma," said Ellen after a little, again raising her head and looking her mother full in the face, as if willing to apply

the severest test to this hard doctrine, and speaking with an indescribable expression, "do *you* love Him *better than you do me*?"

She knew her mother loved the Saviour, but she thought it scarcely possible that herself could have but the second place in her heart; she ventured a bold question to prove whether her mother's practice would not contradict her theory.

But Mrs. Montgomery answered steadily, "I do, my daughter;" and with a gush of tears Ellen sunk her head again upon her bosom. She had no more to say; her mouth was stopped for ever as to the *right* of the matter, though she still thought it an impossible duty in her own particular case.

"I do indeed, my daughter," repeated Mrs. Montgomery; "that does not make my love to you the less, but the more, Ellen."

"Oh, mamma, mamma," said Ellen, clinging to her, "I wish you would teach me! I have only you, and I am going to lose you. What shall I do, mamma?"

With a voice that strove to be calm Mrs. Montgomery answered, "'I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me.'" And after a minute or two she added, "He who says this has promised too that He will 'gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.'"

The words fell soothingly on Ellen's ear, and the slight tremor in the voice reminded her also that her mother must not be agitated. She checked herself instantly, and soon lay as before, quiet and still on her mother's bosom, with her eyes fixed on the

fire; and Mrs. Montgomery did not know that when she now and then pressed a kiss upon the forehead that lay so near her lips, it every time brought the water to Ellen's eyes and a throb to her heart. But after some half or three-quarters of an hour had passed away, a sudden knock at the door found both mother and daughter asleep; it had to be repeated once or twice before the knocker could gain attention.

"What is that, mamma?" said Ellen, starting up.

"Somebody at the door. Open it quickly, love."

Ellen did so, and found a man standing there, with his arms rather full of sundry packages.

"Oh, mamma, my things!" cried Ellen, clapping her hands; "here they are!"

The man placed his burden on the table, and withdrew.

"Oh, mamma, I am so glad they are come! Now if I only had a light – this is my desk, I know, for it's the largest; and I think this is my dressing-box, as well as I can tell by feeling – yes, it is, here's the handle on top; and this is my dear work-box – not so big as the desk, nor so little as the dressing-box. Oh, mamma, mayn't I ring for a light?"

There was no need, for a servant just then entered, bringing the wished-for candles, and the not-wished-for *tea*. Ellen was capering about in the most fantastic style, but suddenly stopped short at sight of the tea-things, and looked very grave. "Well, mamma, I'll tell you what I'll do," she said, after a pause of consideration; "I'll make the tea the first thing before I untie a

single knot; won't that be best, mamma? Because I know if I once begin to look, I shan't want to stop. Don't you think that is wise, mamma?"

But alas! the fire had got very low; there was no making the tea quickly; and the toast was a work of time. And when all was over at length, it was then too late for Ellen to begin to undo packages. She struggled with impatience a minute or two, and then gave up the point very gracefully, and went to bed.

She had a fine opportunity the next day to make up for the evening's disappointment. It was cloudy and stormy; going out was not to be thought of, and it was very unlikely that anybody would come in. Ellen joyfully allotted the whole morning to the examination and trial of her new possessions; and as soon as breakfast was over and the room clear she set about it. She first went through the desk and everything in it, making a running commentary on the excellence, fitness, and beauty of all it contained; then the dressing-box received a share, but a much smaller share, of attention; and lastly, with fingers trembling with eagerness she untied the packthread that was wound round the work-box, and slowly took off cover after cover; she almost screamed when the last was removed. The box was of satin-wood, beautifully finished, and lined with crimson silk; and Mrs. Montgomery had taken good care it should want nothing that Ellen might need to keep her clothes in perfect order.

"Oh, mamma, how beautiful! Oh, mamma, how good you are! Mamma, I promise you I'll never be a slattern. Here is more

cotton than I can use up in a great while – every number, I do think; and needles, oh, the needles! what a parcel of them! and, mamma! what a lovely scissors! Did you choose it, mamma, or did it belong to the box?"

"I chose it."

"I might have guessed it, mamma, it's just like you. And here's a thimble – fits me exactly; and an emery-bag! how pretty! – and a bodkin! This is a great deal nicer than yours, mamma – yours is decidedly the worse for wear; – and what's this? – oh, to make eyelet holes with, I know. And oh, mamma, here is almost everything, I think – here are tapes, and buttons, and hooks and eyes, and darning cotton, and silk-winders, and pins, and all sorts of things. What's this for, mamma?"

"That's a scissors to cut button-holes with. Try it on that piece of paper that lies by you, and you will see how it works."

"Oh, I see!" said Ellen, "how very nice that is. Well, I shall take great pains now to make my button-holes very handsomely."

One survey of her riches could by no means satisfy Ellen. For some time she pleased herself with going over and over the contents of the box, finding each time something new to like. At length she closed it, and keeping it still in her lap, sat awhile looking thoughtfully into the fire; till turning towards her mother she met her gaze, fixed mournfully, almost tearfully, on herself. The box was instantly shoved aside, and getting up and bursting into tears, Ellen went to her. "Oh, dear mother," she said, "I wish they were all back in the store, if I could only keep you!"

Mrs. Montgomery answered only by folding her to her heart.

"Is there no help for it, mamma?"

"There is none. We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God."

"Then it will all be good for you, mamma, but what will it be for me?" And Ellen sobbed bitterly.

"It will be all well, my precious child, I doubt not. I do not doubt it, Ellen. Do *you* not doubt it either, love; but from the hand that wounds, seek the healing. He wounds that He *may* heal. He does not afflict willingly. Perhaps He sees, Ellen, that you never would seek Him while you had me to cling to."

Ellen clung to her at that moment; yet not more than her mother clung to her.

"How happy we were, mamma, only a year ago – even a month."

"We have no continuing city here," answered her mother with a sigh. "But there is a home, Ellen, where changes do not come; and they that are once gathered there are parted no more for ever; and all tears are wiped from their eyes. I believe I am going fast to that home; and now my greatest concern is that my little Ellen – my precious baby – may follow me and come there too."

No more was said, nor could be said, till the sound of the doctor's steps upon the stair obliged each of them to assume an appearance of composure as speedily as possible. But they could not succeed perfectly enough to blind him. He did not seem very well satisfied, and told Ellen he believed he should have to get

another nurse, – he was afraid she didn't obey orders.

While the doctor was there Ellen's Bible was brought in; and no sooner was he gone than it underwent as thorough an examination as the boxes had received. Ellen went over every part of it with the same great care and satisfaction; but mixed with a different feeling. The words that caught her eye as she turned over the leaves seemed to echo what her mother had been saying to her. It began to grow dear already. After a little she rose and brought it to the sofa.

"Are you satisfied with it, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, mamma; it is perfectly beautiful, outside and inside. Now, mamma, will you please to write my name in this precious book – my name, and anything else you please, mother. I'll bring you my new pen to write it with, and I've got ink here – shall I?"

She brought it; and Mrs. Montgomery wrote Ellen's name, and the date of the gift. The pen played a moment in her fingers, and then she wrote below the date —

"'I love them that love Me; and they that seek Me early shall find Me.'"

This was for Ellen; but the next words were not for her; what made her write them? —

"'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.'"

They were written almost unconsciously, and as if bowed by an unseen force Mrs. Montgomery's head sank upon the open page, and her whole soul went up with her petition —

"Let these words be my memorial, that I have trusted in Thee.

And oh, when these miserable lips are silent for ever, remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope; and be unto my little one all Thou hast been to me. Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou? that dwellest in the heavens."

She raised her face from the book, closed it, and gave it silently to Ellen. Ellen had noticed her action, but had no suspicion of the cause; she supposed that one of her mother's frequent feelings of weakness or sickness had made her lean her head upon the Bible, and she thought no more about it. However, Ellen felt that she wanted no more of her boxes that day. She took her old place by the side of her mother's sofa, with her head upon her mother's hand, and an expression of quiet sorrow in her face that it had not worn for several days.

# CHAPTER V

*My child is yet a stranger in the world.*
*She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.*

*– Shakespeare.*

The next day would not do for the intended shopping; nor the next. The third day was fine, though cool and windy.

"Do you think you can venture out to-day, mamma?" said Ellen.

"I am afraid not. I do not feel quite equal to it; and the wind is a great deal too high for me, besides."

"Well," said Ellen, in a tone of one who is making up her mind to something, "we shall have a fine day by-and-by, I suppose, if we wait long enough; we had to wait a great while for our first shopping day. I wish such another would come round."

"But the misfortune is," said her mother, "that we cannot afford to wait. November will soon be here, and your clothes may be suddenly wanted before they are ready, if we do not bestir ourselves. And Miss Rice is coming in a few days; I ought to have the merino ready for her."

"What will you do, mamma?"

"I do not know, indeed, Ellen; I am greatly at a loss."

"Couldn't papa get the stuffs for you, mamma?"

"No, he's too busy; and besides, he knows nothing at all about shopping for me; he would be sure to bring me exactly what I do not want. I tried that once."

"Well, what will you do, mamma? Is there nobody else you could ask to get the things for you? Mrs. Foster would do it, mamma."

"I know she would, and I should ask her without any difficulty, but she is confined to her room with a cold. I see nothing for it but to be patient and let things take their course, though if a favourable opportunity should offer you would have to go, clothes or no clothes; it would not do to lose the chance of a good escort."

And Mrs. Montgomery's face showed that this possibility, of Ellen's going unprovided, gave her some uneasiness. Ellen observed it.

"Never mind me, dearest mother; don't be in the least worried about my clothes. You don't know how little I think of them or care for them. It's no matter at all whether I have them or not."

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, and passed her hand fondly over her little daughter's head, but presently resumed her anxious look out of the window.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Ellen, suddenly starting up, "a bright thought has just come into my head! *I'll* do it for you, mamma!"

"Do what?"

"I'll get the merino and things for you, mamma. You needn't smile – I will, indeed, if you will let me?"

"My dear Ellen," said her mother, "I don't doubt you would

if goodwill only were wanting; but a great deal of skill and experience is necessary for a shopper, and what would you do without either?"

"But see, mamma," pursued Ellen eagerly, "I'll tell you how I'll manage, and I know I can manage very well. You tell me exactly what coloured merino you want, and give me a little piece to show me how fine it should be, and tell me what price you wish to give, and then I'll go to the store and ask them to show me different pieces, you know; and if I see any I think you would like, I'll ask them to give me a little bit of it to show you; and then I'll bring it home, and if you like it you can give me the money, and tell me how many yards you want, and I can go back to the store and get it. Why can't I, mamma?"

"Perhaps you could; but, my dear child, I am afraid you wouldn't like the business."

"Yes, I should; indeed, mamma, I should like it dearly if I could help you so. Will you let me try, mamma?"

"I don't like, my child, to venture you alone on such an errand, among crowds of people; I should be uneasy about you."

"Dear mamma, what would the crowds of people do to me? I am not a bit afraid. You know, mamma, I have often taken walks alone – that's nothing new; and what harm should come to me while I am in the store! You needn't be the least uneasy about me – may I go?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but was silent.

"May I go, mamma?" repeated Ellen. "Let me go at least and

try what I can do. What do you say, mamma?"

"I don't know what to say, my daughter, but I am in difficulty on either hand. I will let you go and see what you can do. It would be a great relief to me to get this merino by any means."

"Then shall I go right away, mamma?"

"As well now as ever. *You* are not afraid of the wind?"

"I should think not," said Ellen; and away she scampered upstairs to get ready. With eager haste she dressed herself; then with great care and particularity took her mother's instructions as to the article wanted; and finally set out, sensible that a great trust was reposed in her, and feeling busy and important accordingly. But at the very bottom of Ellen's heart there was a little secret doubtfulness respecting her undertaking. She hardly knew it was there, but then she couldn't tell what it was that made her fingers so inclined to be tremulous while she was dressing, and that made her heart beat quicker than it ought, or than was pleasant, and one of her cheeks so much hotter than the other. However, she set forth upon her errand with a very brisk step, which she kept up till on turning a corner she came in sight of the place she was going to. Without thinking much about it, Ellen had directed her steps to St. Clair & Fleury's. It was one of the largest and best stores in the city, and the one she knew where her mother generally made her purchases; and it did not occur to her that it might not be the best for her purpose on this occasion. But her steps slackened as soon as she came in sight of it, and continued to slacken as she drew nearer, and she went up the broad flight

of marble steps in front of the store very slowly indeed, though they were exceedingly low and easy. Pleasure was not certainly the uppermost feeling in her mind now; yet she never thought of turning back. She knew that if she could succeed in the object of her mission her mother would be relieved from some anxiety; that was enough; she was bent on accomplishing it.

Timidly she entered the large hall of the entrance. It was full of people, and the buzz of business was heard on all sides. Ellen had for some time past seldom gone a shopping with her mother, and had never been in this store but once or twice before. She had not the remotest idea where, or in what apartment of the building, the merino counter was situated, and she could see no one to speak to. She stood irresolute in the middle of the floor. Everybody seemed to be busily engaged with somebody else; and whenever an opening on one side or another appeared to promise her an opportunity, it was sure to be filled up before she could reach it, and disappointed and abashed she would return to her old station in the middle of the floor. Clerks frequently passed her, crossing the store in all directions, but they were always bustling along in a great hurry of business; they did not seem to notice her at all, and were gone before poor Ellen could speak to them. She knew well enough now, poor child, what it was that made her cheeks burn as they did, and her heart beat as if it would burst its bounds. She felt confused, and almost confounded, by the incessant hum of voices, and moving crowd of strange people all around her, while her little figure stood alone and unnoticed in the midst of them;

and there seemed no prospect that she would be able to gain the ear or the eye of a single person. Once she determined to accost a man she saw advancing toward her from a distance, and actually made up to him for the purpose, but with a hurried bow, and "I beg your pardon, miss!" he brushed past. Ellen almost burst into tears. She longed to turn and run out of the store, but a faint hope remaining, and an unwillingness to give up her undertaking, kept her fast. At length one of the clerks at the desk observed her, and remarked to Mr. St. Clair who stood by, "There is a little girl, sir, who seems to be looking for something, or waiting for somebody; she has been standing there a good while." Mr. St. Clair upon this advanced, to poor Ellen's relief.

"What do you wish, miss?" he said.

But Ellen had been so long preparing sentences, trying to utter them and failing in the attempt, that now, when an opportunity to speak and be heard was given her, the power of speech seemed to be gone.

"Do you wish anything, miss?" inquired Mr. St. Clair again.

"Mother sent me," stammered Ellen – "I wish, if you please, sir – mamma wished me to look at merinoes, sir, if you please."

"Is your mamma in the store?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "she is ill and cannot come out, and she sent me to look at merinoes for her, if you please, sir."

"Here, Saunders," said Mr. St. Clair, "show this young lady the merinoes."

Mr. Saunders made his appearance from among a little group

of clerks with whom he had been indulging in a few jokes by way of relief from the tedium of business. "Come this way," he said to Ellen; and sauntering before her, with a rather dissatisfied air, led the way out of the entrance hall into another and much larger apartment. There were plenty of people here too, and just as busy as those they had quitted. Mr. Saunders having brought Ellen to the merino counter, placed himself behind it; and leaning over it and fixing his eyes carelessly upon her, asked what she wanted to look at. His tone and manner struck Ellen most unpleasantly, and made her again wish herself out of the store. He was a tall, lank young man, with a quantity of fair hair combed down on each side of his face, a slovenly exterior, and the most disagreeable pair of eyes, Ellen thought, she had ever beheld. She could not bear to meet them, and cast down her own. Their look was bold, ill-bred, and ill-humoured; and Ellen felt, though she couldn't have told why, that she need not expect either kindness or politeness from him.

"What do you want to see, little one?" inquired this gentleman, as if he had a business on hand he would like to be rid of. Ellen heartily wished he was rid of it, and she too. "Merinoes, if you please," she answered, without looking up.

"Well, what kind of merinoes? Here are all sorts and descriptions of merinoes, and I can't pull them all down, you know, for you to look at. What kind do you want?"

"I don't know without looking," said Ellen, "won't you please to show me some?"

He tossed down several pieces upon the counter, and tumbled them about before her.

"There," said he, "is that anything like what you want? There's a pink one, and there's a blue one, and there's a green one. Is that the kind?"

"This is the kind," said Ellen; "but this isn't the colour I want."

"What colour do you want?"

"Something dark, if you please."

"Well, there, that green's dark; won't that do? See, that would make up very pretty for you."

"No," said Ellen; "mamma don't like green."

"Why don't she come and choose her stuffs herself, then? What colour *does* she like?"

"Dark blue, or dark brown, or a nice grey would do," said Ellen, "if it is fine enough."

"'Dark blue,' or 'dark brown,' or a 'nice grey,' eh! Well, she's pretty easy to suit. A dark blue I've showed you already; what's the matter with that?"

"It isn't dark enough," said Ellen.

"Well," said he discontentedly, pulling down another piece, "how'll that do? That's dark enough."

It was a fine and beautiful piece, very different from those he had showed her at first. Even Ellen could see that, and fumbling for her little pattern of merino, she compared it with the piece. They agreed perfectly as to fineness.

"What is the price of this?" she asked, with trembling hope

that she was going to be rewarded by success for all the trouble of her enterprise.

"Two dollars a yard."

Her hopes and countenance fell together. "That's too high," she said with a sigh.

"Then take this other blue; come – it's a great deal prettier than that dark one, and not so dear; and I know your mother will like it better."

Ellen's cheeks were tingling and her heart throbbing, but she couldn't bear to give up.

"Would you be so good as to show me some grey?"

He slowly and ill-humouredly complied, and took down an excellent piece of dark grey, which Ellen fell in love with at once; but she was again disappointed; it was fourteen shillings.

"Well, if you won't take that, take something else," said the man; "you can't have everything at once; if you will have cheap goods, of course you can't have the same quality that you like; but now here's this other blue, only twelve shillings, and I'll let you have it for ten if you'll take it."

"No, it is too light and too coarse," said Ellen; "mamma wouldn't like it."

"Let me see," said he, seizing her pattern and pretending to compare it; "it's quite as fine as this, if that's all you want."

"Could you," said Ellen timidly, "give me a little bit of this grey to show mamma?"

"Oh no!" said he impatiently, tossing over the cloths and

throwing Ellen's pattern on the floor, "we can't cut up our goods; if people don't choose to buy of us they may go somewhere else, and if you cannot decide upon anything I must go and attend to those that can. I can't wait here all day."

"What's the matter, Saunders?" said one of his brother clerks passing him.

"Why, I've been here this half-hour showing cloths to a child that doesn't know merino from a sheep's back," said he, laughing. And some other customers coming up at the moment, he was as good as his word, and left Ellen, to attend to them.

Ellen stood a moment stock still, just where he had left her, struggling with her feelings of mortification; she could not endure to let them be seen. Her face was on fire; her head was dizzy. She could not stir at first, and, in spite of her utmost efforts, she *could* not command back one or two rebel tears that forced their way; she lifted her hand to her face to remove them as quickly as possible. "What is all this about, my little girl?" said a strange voice at her side. Ellen started, and turned her face, with the tears but half wiped away, toward the speaker. It was an old gentleman, an odd old gentleman too, she thought; one she certainly would have been rather shy of if she had seen him under other circumstances. But though his face was odd, it looked kindly upon her, and it was a kind tone of voice in which this question had been put; so he seemed to her like a friend. "What is all this?" repeated the old gentleman. Ellen began to tell what it was, but the pride which had forbidden her to weep before

strangers gave way at one touch of sympathy, and she poured out tears much faster than words as she related her story, so that it was some little time before the old gentleman could get a clear notion of her case. He waited very patiently till she had finished; but then he set himself in good earnest about righting the wrong. "Hallo! you, sir!" he shouted, in a voice that made everybody look round; "you merino man! come and show your goods: why aren't you at your post, sir?" – as Mr. Saunders came up with an altered countenance – "here's a young lady you've left standing unattended to I don't know how long; are these your manners?"

"The young lady did not wish anything, I believe, sir," returned Mr. Saunders softly.

"You know better, you scoundrel," retorted the old gentleman, who was in a great passion; "I saw the whole matter with my own eyes. You are a disgrace to the store, sir, and deserve to be sent out of it, which you are like enough to be."

"I really thought, sir," said Mr. Saunders smoothly, – for he knew the old gentleman, and knew very well he was a person that must not be offended, – "I really thought – I was not aware, sir, that the young lady had any occasion for my services."

"Well, show your wares, sir, and hold your tongue. Now, my dear, what did you want?"

"I wanted a little bit of this grey merino, sir, to show to mamma. I couldn't buy it, you know, sir, until I found out whether she would like it."

"Cut a piece, sir, without any words," said the old gentleman.

Mr. Saunders obeyed.

"Did you like this best?" pursued the old gentleman.

"I like this dark blue very much, sir, and I thought mamma would; but it's too high."

"How much is it?" inquired he.

"Fourteen shillings," replied Mr. Saunders.

"He said it was two dollars!" exclaimed Ellen.

"I beg pardon," said the crestfallen Mr. Saunders, "the young lady mistook me; I was speaking of another piece when I said two dollars."

"He said this was two dollars and the grey fourteen shillings," said Ellen.

"Is the grey fourteen shillings?" inquired the old gentleman.

"I think not, sir," answered Mr. Saunders; "I believe not, sir – I think it's only twelve – I'll inquire, if you please, sir."

"No, no," said the old gentleman, "I know it was only twelve – I know your tricks, sir. Cut a piece off the blue. Now, my dear, are there any more pieces of which you would like to take patterns to show your mother?"

"No, sir," said the overjoyed Ellen; "I am sure she will like one of these."

"Now shall we go, then?"

"If you please, sir," said Ellen, "I should like to have my bit of merino that I brought from home; mamma wanted me to bring it back again."

"Where is it?"

"That gentleman threw it on the floor."

"Do you hear, sir?" said the old gentleman; "find it directly."

Mr. Saunders found and delivered it, after stooping in search of it till he was very red in the face; and he was left, wishing heartily that he had some safe means of revenge, and obliged to come to the conclusion that none was within his reach, and that he must stomach his dignity in the best manner he could. But Ellen and her protector went forth most joyously together from the store.

"Do you live far from here?" asked the old gentleman.

"Oh no, sir," said Ellen, "not very; it's only at Green's Hotel in Southing Street."

"I'll go with you," said he, "and when your mother has decided which merino she will have, we'll come right back and get it. I do not want to trust you again to the mercy of that saucy clerk."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Ellen, "that is just what I was afraid of. But I shall be giving you a great deal of trouble, sir," she added in another tone.

"No, you won't," said the old gentleman; "I can't be troubled, so you needn't say anything about that."

They went gaily along – Ellen's heart about five times as light as the one with which she had travelled that very road a little while before. Her old friend was in a very cheerful mood too, for he assured Ellen, laughingly, that it was of no manner of use for her to be in a hurry, for he could not possibly set off and skip to Green's Hotel, as she seemed inclined to do. They got there

at last. Ellen showed the old gentleman into the parlour, and ran upstairs in great haste to her mother. But in a few minutes she came down again, with a very April face, for smiles were playing in every feature, while the tears were yet wet upon her cheeks.

"Mamma hopes you'll take the trouble, sir, to come upstairs," she said, seizing his hand; "she wants to thank you yourself, sir."

"It is not necessary," said the old gentleman, "it is not necessary at all;" but he followed his little conductor, nevertheless, to the door of her mother's room, into which she ushered him with great satisfaction.

Mrs. Montgomery was looking very ill – he saw that at a glance. She rose from her sofa, and extending her hand, thanked him with glistening eyes for his kindness to her child.

"I don't deserve any thanks, ma'am," said the old gentleman; "I suppose my little friend has told you what made us acquainted?"

"She gave me a very short account of it," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"She was very disagreeably tried," said the old gentleman. "I presume you do not need to be told, ma'am, that her behaviour was such as would have become any years. I assure you, ma'am, if I had no kindness in my composition to feel for the *child*, my honour as a gentleman would have made me interfere for the *lady*."

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but looked through glistening eyes again on Ellen. "I am *very* glad to hear it," she replied. "I was very far from thinking, when I permitted her to go on this errand, that

I was exposing her to anything more serious than the annoyance a timid child would feel at having to transact business with strangers."

"I suppose not," said the old gentleman; "but it isn't a sort of thing that should be often done. There are all sorts of people in this world, and a little one alone in a crowd is in danger of being trampled upon."

Mrs. Montgomery's heart answered this with an involuntary pang. He saw the shade that passed over her face as she said sadly —

"I know it, sir; and it was with strong unwillingness that I allowed Ellen this morning to do as she had proposed; but in truth I was making a choice between difficulties. I am very sorry I chose as I did. If you are a father, sir, you know better than I can tell you how grateful I am for your kind interference."

"Say nothing about that, ma'am; the less the better. I am an old man, and not good for much now, except to please young people. I think myself best off when I have the best chance to do that, so if you will be so good as to choose that merino, and let Miss Ellen and me go and despatch our business, you will be conferring and not receiving a favour. And any other errand that you please to entrust her with I'll undertake to see her safe through."

His look and manner obliged Mrs. Montgomery to take him at his word. A very short examination of Ellen's patterns ended in favour of the grey merino; and Ellen was commissioned not only to get and pay for this, but also to choose a dark dress of the same

stuff, and enough of a certain article for a nankeen coat; Mrs. Montgomery truly opining that the old gentleman's care would do more than see her scathless, – that it would have some regard to the justness and prudence of her purchases.

In great glee Ellen set forth again with her new old friend. Her hand was fast in his, and her tongue ran very freely, for her heart was completely opened to him. He seemed as pleased to listen as she was to talk; and by little and little Ellen told him all her history; the troubles that had come upon her in consequence of her mother's illness, and her intended journey and prospects.

That was a happy day to Ellen. They returned to St. Clair and Fleury's; bought the grey merino, and the nankeen, and a dark brown merino for a dress. "Do you want only one of these?" asked the old gentleman.

"Mamma said only one," said Ellen; "that will last me all the winter."

"Well," said he, "I think two will be better. Let us have another off the same piece, Mr. Shopman."

"But I am afraid mamma won't like it, sir," said Ellen gently.

"Pho, pho," said he, "your mother has nothing to do with this; this is my affair." He paid for it accordingly. "Now, Miss Ellen," said he, when they left the store, "have you got anything in the shape of a good warm winter bonnet? For it's as cold as the mischief up there in Thirlwall; your pasteboard things won't do; if you don't take good care of your ears you will lose them some fine frosty day. You must quilt and pad, and all sorts of things, to

keep alive and comfortable. So you haven't a hood, eh? Do you think you and I could make out to choose one that your mother would think wasn't quite a fright? Come this way, and let us see. If she don't like it she can give it away, you know."

He led the delighted Ellen into a milliner's shop, and after turning over a great many different articles, chose her a nice warm hood, or quilted bonnet. It was of dark blue silk, well made and pretty. He saw with great satisfaction that it fitted Ellen well, and would protect her ears nicely; and having paid for it and ordered it home, he and Ellen sallied forth into the street again. But he wouldn't let her thank him. "It is just the very thing I wanted, sir," said Ellen; "mamma was speaking about it the other day, and she did not see how I was ever to get one, because she did not feel at all able to go out, and I could not get one myself; I know she'll like it very much."

"Would you rather have something for yourself or your mother, Ellen, if you could choose, and have but one?"

"Oh, for mamma, sir," said Ellen – "a great deal!"

"Come in here," said he; "let us see if we can find anything she would like."

It was a grocery store. After looking about a little, the old gentleman ordered sundry pounds of figs and white grapes to be packed up in papers; and being now very near home he took one parcel and Ellen the other till they came to the door of Green's Hotel, where he committed both to her care.

"Won't you come in, sir?" said Ellen.

"No," said he, "I can't this time – I must go home to dinner."

"And shan't I see you any more, sir?" said Ellen, a shade coming over her face, which a minute before had been quite joyous.

"Well, I don't know," said he kindly; "I hope you will. You shall hear from me again, at any rate, I promise you. We've spent one pleasant morning together, haven't we? Good-bye, good-bye."

Ellen's hands were full, but the old gentleman took them in both his, packages and all, and shook them after a fashion, and again bidding her good-bye, walked away down the street.

The next morning Ellen and her mother were sitting quietly together, and Ellen had not finished her accustomed reading, when there came a knock at the door. "My old gentleman?" cried Ellen, as she sprang to open it. No – there was no old gentleman, but a black man with a brace of beautiful woodcocks in his hand. He bowed very civilly, and said he had been ordered to leave the birds with Miss Montgomery. Ellen, in surprise, took them from him, and likewise a note which he delivered into her hand. Ellen asked from whom the birds came, but with another polite bow the man said the note would inform her, and went away. In great curiosity she carried them and the note to her mother, to whom the letter was directed. It read thus: —

"Will Mrs. Montgomery permit an old man to please himself in his own way, by showing his regard for her little daughter, and not feel that he is taking a liberty? The birds are *for Miss Ellen*."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Ellen, jumping with delight, "did you ever see such a dear old gentleman? Now I know what he meant yesterday, when he asked me if I would rather have something for myself or for you. How kind he is! to do just the very thing for me that he knows would give me the most pleasure. Now, mamma, these birds are mine, you know, and I give them to you. You must pay me a kiss for them, mamma; they are worth that. Aren't they beauties?"

"They are very fine indeed," said Mrs. Montgomery; "this is just the season for woodcock, and these are in beautiful condition."

"Do you like woodcocks, mamma?"

"Yes, very much."

"Oh, how glad I am!" said Ellen. "I'll ask Sam to have them done very nicely for you, and then you will enjoy them so much."

The waiter was called, and instructed accordingly, and to him the birds were committed, to be delivered to the care of the cook.

"Now, mamma," said Ellen, "I think these birds have made me happy for all day."

"Then I hope, daughter, they will make you busy for all day. You have ruffles to hem, and the skirts of your dresses to make, we need not wait for Miss Rice to do that; and when she comes you will have to help her, for I can do little. You can't be too industrious."

"Well, mamma, I am as willing as can be."

This was the beginning of a pleasant two weeks to Ellen;

weeks to which she often looked back afterwards, so quietly and swiftly the days fled away in busy occupation and sweet intercourse with her mother. The passions which were apt enough to rise in Ellen's mind upon occasion were for the present kept effectually in check. She could not forget that her days with her mother would very soon be at an end, for a long time at least; and this consciousness, always present to her mind, forbade even the wish to do anything that might grieve or disturb her. Love and tenderness had absolute rule for the time, and even had power to overcome the sorrowful thoughts that would often rise, so that in spite of them peace reigned. And perhaps both mother and daughter enjoyed this interval the more keenly because they knew that sorrow was at hand.

All this while there was scarcely a day that the old gentleman's servant did not knock at their door, bearing a present of game. The second time he came with some fine larks; next was a superb grouse; then woodcock again. Curiosity strove with astonishment and gratitude in Ellen's mind. "Mamma," she said, after she had admired the grouse for five minutes, "I cannot rest without finding out who this old gentleman is."

"I am sorry for that," replied Mrs. Montgomery gravely, "for I see no possible way of your doing it."

"Why, mamma, couldn't I ask the man that brings the birds what his name is? He must know it."

"Certainly not; it would be very dishonourable."

"Would it, mamma? – why?"

"This old gentleman has not chosen to tell you his name; he wrote his note without signing it, and his man has obviously been instructed not to disclose it; don't you remember, he did not tell it when you asked him the first time he came. Now this shows that the old gentleman wishes to keep it secret, and to try to find it out in any way would be a very unworthy return for his kindness."

"Yes, it wouldn't be doing as I would be done by, to be sure; but would it be *dishonourable*, mamma?"

"Very. It is very dishonourable to try to find out that about other people which does not concern you, and which they wish to keep from you. Remember that, my dear daughter."

"I will, mamma. I'll never do it, I promise you."

"Even in talking with people, if you discern in them any unwillingness to speak upon a subject, avoid it immediately, provided, of course, that some higher interest does not oblige you to go on. That is true politeness, and true kindness, which are nearly the same; and *not* to do so, I assure you, Ellen, proves one wanting in true honour."

"Well, mamma, I don't care what his name is, – at least I won't try to find out, – but it does worry me that I cannot thank him. I wish he knew how much I feel obliged to him."

"Very well; write and tell him so."

"Mamma!" said Ellen, opening her eyes very wide, "can I – would you?"

"Certainly, – if you like. It would be very proper."

"Then I will! I declare that is a good notion. I'll do it the first

thing, and then I can give it to that man if he comes to-morrow, as I suppose he will. Mamma," said she, on opening her desk, "how funny! don't you remember you wondered who I was going to write notes to? here is one now, mamma; it is very lucky I have got note-paper."

More than one sheet of it was ruined before Ellen had satisfied herself with what she wrote. It was a full hour from the time she began when she brought the following note for her mother's inspection: —

> "Ellen Montgomery does not know how to thank the old gentleman who is so kind to her. Mamma enjoys the birds very much, and I think I do more; for I have the double pleasure of giving them to mamma, and of eating them afterwards; but your kindness is the best of all. I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you, sir, but I will always love you for all you have done for me.
>
> *"Ellen Montgomery."*

This note Mrs. Montgomery approved; and Ellen having with great care and great satisfaction enclosed it in an envelope, succeeded in sealing it according to rule, and very well. Mrs. Montgomery laughed when she saw the direction, but let it go. Without consulting her, Ellen had written on the outside, "To the old gentleman." She sent it the next morning by the hands of the same servant, who this time was the bearer of a plump partridge "To Miss Montgomery;" and her mind was a great deal easier on this subject from that time.

# CHAPTER VI

*Mac. What is the night?*
*Lady Mac. Almost at odds with morning, which is which.*

*– Macbeth.*

October was now far advanced. One evening, the evening of the last Sunday in the month, Mrs. Montgomery was lying in the parlour alone. Ellen had gone to bed some time before; and now in the stillness of the Sabbath evening the ticking of the clock was almost the only sound to be heard. The hands were rapidly approaching ten. Captain Montgomery was abroad; and he had been so – according to custom – or in bed, the whole day. The mother and daughter had had the Sabbath to themselves; and most quietly and sweetly it had passed. They had read together, prayed together, talked together a great deal, and the evening had been spent in singing hymns; but Mrs. Montgomery's strength failed here, and Ellen sang alone. *She* was not soon weary. Hymn succeeded hymn with fresh and varied pleasure, and her mother could not tire of listening. The sweet words, and the sweet airs – which were all old friends, and brought of themselves many a lesson of wisdom and consolation, by the mere force of association – needed not the recommendation of the clear

childish voice in which they were sung, which was of all things the sweetest to Mrs. Montgomery's ear. She listened, till she almost felt as if earth were left behind, and she and her child already standing within the walls of that city where sorrow and sighing shall be no more, and the tears shall be wiped from all eyes for ever. Ellen's next hymn, however, brought her back to earth again, but though her tears flowed freely while she heard it, all her causes of sorrow could not render them bitter —

> God in Israel sows the seeds
> Of affliction, pain, and toil;
> These spring up and choke the weeds
> Which would else o'erspread the soil.
>
> Trials make the promise sweet —
> Trials give new life to prayer —
> Trials bring me to His feet,
> Lay me low, and keep me there.

"It is so indeed, dear Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, when she had finished, and holding the little singer to her breast; "I have always found it so. God is faithful. I have seen abundant cause to thank Him for all the evils He has made me suffer heretofore, and I do not doubt it will be the same with this last and worst one. Let us glorify Him in the fires, my daughter; and if earthly joys be stripped from us, and if we be torn from each other, let us cling the closer to Him – He can and He will in that case make

up to us more than all we have lost."

Ellen felt her utter inability to join in her mother's expressions of confidence and hope; to her there was no brightness on the cloud that hung over them – it was all dark. She could only press her lips in tearful silence to the one and the other of her mother's cheeks alternately. How sweet the sense of the coming parting made every such embrace! This one, for particular reasons, was often and long remembered. A few minutes they remained thus in each other's arms, cheek pressed against cheek, without speaking; but then Mrs. Montgomery remembered that Ellen's bedtime was already past, and dismissed her.

For a while after Mrs. Montgomery remained just where Ellen had left her, her busy thoughts roaming over many things in the far past, and the sad present, and the uncertain future. She was unconscious of the passage of time, and did not notice how the silence deepened as the night drew on, till scarce a footfall was heard in the street, and the ticking of the clock sounded with that sad distinctness, which seems to say, "Time is going on – time is going on – and you are going with it, – do what you will you can't help that." It was just upon the stroke of ten, and Mrs. Montgomery was still wrapped in her deep musings, when a sharp, brisk footstep in the distance aroused her, rapidly approaching; and she knew very well whose it was, and that it would pause at the door, before she heard the quick run up the steps, succeeded by her husband's tread upon the staircase. And yet she saw him open the door with a kind of startled feeling,

which his appearance now invariably caused her; the thought always darted through her head, "perhaps he brings news of Ellen's going." Something, it would have been impossible to say what, in his appearance or manner, confirmed this fear on the present occasion. Her heart felt sick, and she waited in silence to hear what he would say. *He* seemed very well pleased; sat down before the fire rubbing his hands, partly with cold and partly with satisfaction; and his first words were, "Well, we have got a fine opportunity for her at last."

How little he was capable of understanding the pang this announcement gave his poor wife! But she only closed her eyes and kept perfectly quiet, and he never suspected it.

He unbuttoned his coat, and taking the poker in his hand began to mend the fire, talking the while.

"I am very glad of it, indeed," said he; "it's quite a load off my mind. Now we'll be gone directly, and high time it is – I'll take passage in the *England* the first thing to-morrow. And this is the best possible chance for Ellen – everything we could have desired. I began to feel very uneasy about it, it was getting so late, but I am quite relieved now."

"Who is it?" said Mrs. Montgomery, forcing herself to speak.

"Why, it's Mrs. Dunscombe," said the captain, flourishing his poker by way of illustration; "you know her, don't you? Captain Dunscombe's wife; she going right through Thirlwall, and will take charge of Ellen as far as that, and there my sister will meet her with a waggon and take her straight home. Couldn't be

anything better. I'll write to let Fortune know when to expect her. Mrs. Dunscombe is a lady of the first family and fashion – in the highest degree respectable; she is going on to Fort Jameson, with her daughter and a servant, and her husband is to follow her in a few days. I happened to hear of it to-day, and I immediately seized the opportunity to ask if she would not take Ellen with her as far as Thirlwall, and Dunscombe was only too glad to oblige me. I'm a very good friend of his, and he knows it."

"How soon does she go?"

"Why, that's the only part of the business I am afraid you won't like, but there is no help for it; and after all it is a great deal better so than if you had time to wear yourselves out with mourning – better and easier too in the end."

"How soon?" repeated Mrs. Montgomery, with an agonised accent.

"Why, I'm a little afraid of startling you – Dunscombe's wife must go, he told me, to-morrow morning; and we arranged that she should call in the carriage at six o'clock to take up Ellen."

Mrs. Montgomery put her hands to her face and sank back against the sofa.

"I was afraid you would take it so," said her husband, "but I don't think it is worth while. It is a great deal better as it is – a great deal better than if she had a long warning. You would fairly wear yourself out if you had time enough, and you haven't any strength to spare."

It was some while before Mrs. Montgomery could recover

composure and firmness enough to go on with what she had to do, though, knowing the necessity, she strove hard for it. For several minutes she remained quite silent and quiet, endeavouring to collect her scattered forces; then, sitting upright and drawing her shawl around her, she exclaimed, "I must waken Ellen immediately!"

"Waken Ellen!" exclaimed her husband in his turn; "what on earth for? That's the very last thing to be done."

"Why, you would not put off telling her until to-morrow morning?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Certainly I would – that's the only proper way to do. Why in the world should you wake her up, just to spend the whole night in useless grieving? – unfitting her utterly for her journey, and doing yourself more harm than you can undo in a week. No, no; just let her sleep quietly, and you go to bed and do the same. Wake her up, indeed! I thought you were wiser."

"But she will be so dreadfully shocked in the morning!"

"Not one bit more than she would be to-night, and she won't have so much time to feel it. In the hurry and bustle of getting off she will not have time to think about her feelings; and once on the way she will do well enough, – children always do."

Mrs. Montgomery looked undecided and unsatisfied.

"I'll take the responsibility of this matter on myself; you must not waken her, absolutely. It would not do at all," said the captain, poking the fire very energetically; "it would not do at all, – I cannot allow it."

Mrs. Montgomery silently rose and lit a lamp.

"You are not going into Ellen's room?" said the husband.

"I must – I must put her things together."

"But you'll not disturb Ellen?" said he, in a tone that required a promise.

"Not if I can help it."

Twice Mrs. Montgomery stopped before she reached the door of Ellen's room, for her heart failed her. But she *must* go on, and the necessary preparations for the morrow *must* be made; – she knew it; and repeating this to herself, she gently turned the handle of the door and pushed it open, and guarding the light with her hand from Ellen's eyes, she set it where it would not shine upon her. Having done this, she set herself, without once glancing at her little daughter, to put all things in order for her early departure on the following morning. But it was a bitter piece of work for her. She first laid out all that Ellen would need to wear, the dark merino, the new nankeen coat, the white bonnet, the clean frill that her own hands had done up, the little gloves and shoes, and all the etceteras, with the thoughtfulness and the carefulness of love; but it went through and through her heart that it was the very last time a mother's fingers would ever be busy in arranging or preparing Ellen's attire; the very last time she would ever see or touch even the little inanimate things that belonged to her; and painful as the task was, she was loth to have it come to an end. It was with a kind of lingering unwillingness to quit her hold of them that one thing after another was stowed

carefully and neatly away in the trunk. She felt it was love's last act; words might indeed a few times yet come over the ocean on a sheet of paper; – but sight, and hearing, and touch must all have done henceforth for ever. Keenly as Mrs. Montgomery felt this, she went on busily with her work all the while; and when the last thing was safely packed, shut the trunk and locked it without allowing herself to stop and think, and even drew the straps. And then, having finished all her task, she went to the bedside; she had not looked that way before.

Ellen was lying in the deep sweet sleep of childhood; the easy position, the gentle breathing, and the flush of health upon the cheek showed that all causes of sorrow were for the present far removed. Yet not so far either; for once when Mrs. Montgomery stooped to kiss her, light as the touch of that kiss had been upon her lips, it seemed to awaken a train of sorrowful recollections in the little sleeper's mind. A shade passed over her face, and with gentle but sad accent the word "Mamma!" burst from the parted lips. Only a moment, – and the shade passed away, and the expression of peace settled again upon her brow; but Mrs. Montgomery dared not try the experiment a second time. Long she stood looking upon her, as if she knew she was looking her last; then she knelt by the bedside and hid her face in the coverings, – but no tears came; the struggle in her mind and her anxious fear for the morning's trial made weeping impossible. Her husband at length came to seek her, and it was well he did; she would have remained there on her knees all night. He feared

something of the kind, and came to prevent it. Mrs. Montgomery suffered herself to be led away without making any opposition, and went to bed as usual, but sleep was far from her. The fear of Ellen's distress when she would be awakened and suddenly told the truth kept her in an agony. In restless wakefulness she tossed and turned uneasily upon her bed, watching for the dawn, and dreading unspeakably to see it. The captain, in happy unconsciousness of his wife's distress and utter inability to sympathise with it, was soon in a sound sleep, and his heavy breathing was an aggravation of her trouble; it kept repeating, what indeed she knew already, that the only one in the world who ought to have shared and soothed her grief was not capable of doing either. Wearied with watching and tossing to and fro, she at length lost herself a moment in uneasy slumber, from which she suddenly started in terror, and seizing her husband's arm to arouse him, exclaimed, "It is time to wake Ellen!" but she had to repeat her efforts two or three times before she succeeded in making herself heard.

"What is the matter?" said he heavily, and not over well pleased at the interruption.

"It is time to wake Ellen."

"No, it isn't," said he, relapsing; "it isn't time yet this great while."

"Oh, yes it is," said Mrs. Montgomery; "I am sure it is. I see the beginning of dawn in the east."

"Nonsense; it's no such thing – it's the glimmer of the

lamplight. What is the use of your exciting yourself so for nothing; it won't be dawn these two hours. Wait till I find my repeater, and I'll convince you." He found and struck it. "There! I told you so – only one quarter after four; it would be absurd to wake her yet. Do go to sleep and leave it to me; I'll take care it is done in proper time."

Mrs. Montgomery sighed heavily, and again arranged herself to watch the eastern horizon, or rather with her face in that direction, for she could see nothing. But more quietly now she lay gazing into the darkness which it was in vain to try to penetrate, and thoughts succeeding thoughts in a more regular train, at last fairly cheated her into sleep, much as she wished to keep it off. She slept soundly for nearly an hour, and when she awoke the dawn had really begun to break in the eastern sky. She again aroused Captain Montgomery, who this time allowed it might be as well to get up; but it was with unutterable impatience that she saw him lighting a lamp and moving about as leisurely as if he had nothing more to do than to get ready for breakfast at eight o'clock.

"Oh, do speak to Ellen!" she said, unable to control herself. "Never mind brushing your hair till afterwards. She will have no time for anything. Oh, do not wait any longer! What are you thinking of?"

"What are *you* thinking of?" said the captain; "there's plenty of time. Do quiet yourself; you're getting as nervous as possible. I'm going immediately."

Mrs. Montgomery fairly groaned with impatience and an agonising dread of what was to follow the disclosure to Ellen; but her husband coolly went on with his preparations, which indeed were not long in finishing, and then taking the lamp, he at last went. He had in truth delayed on purpose, wishing the final leave-taking to be as brief as possible, and the grey streaks of light in the east were plainly showing themselves when he opened the door of his little daughter's room. He found her lying very much as her mother had left her – in the same quiet sleep and with the same expression of calmness and peace spread over her whole face and person. It touched even him, and he was not readily touched by anything; it made him loth to say the word that would drive all that sweet expression so quickly and completely away. It must be said, however; the increasing light warned him he must not tarry, but it was with a hesitating and almost faltering voice that he said "Ellen!"

She stirred in her sleep, and the shadow came over her face again.

"Ellen! Ellen!"

She started up, broad awake now, and both the shadow and the peaceful expression were gone from her face. It was a look of blank astonishment at first with which she regarded her father, but very soon indeed that changed into one of blank despair. He saw that she understood perfectly what he was there for, and that there was no need at all for him to trouble himself with making painful explanations.

"Come, Ellen," he said; "that's a good child, make haste and dress. There's no time to lose now, for the carriage will soon be at the door; and your mother wants to see you, you know."

Ellen hastily obeyed him, and began to put on her stockings and shoes.

"That's right; now you'll be ready directly. You are going with Mrs. Dunscombe; I have engaged her to take charge of you all the way quite to Thirlwall. She's the wife of Captain Dunscombe, whom you saw here the other day, you know; and her daughter is going with her, so you will have charming company. I dare say you will enjoy the journey very much, and your aunt will meet you at Thirlwall. Now, make haste; I expect the carriage every minute. I meant to have called you before, but I overslept myself. Don't be long."

And nodding encouragement, her father left her.

"How did she bear it?" asked Mrs. Montgomery when he returned.

"Like a little hero; she didn't say a word or shed a tear. I expected nothing but that she would made a great fuss; but she has all the old spirit that you need to have – and have yet, for anything I know. She behaved admirably."

Mrs. Montgomery sighed deeply. She understood far better than her husband what Ellen's feelings were, and could interpret much more truly than he the signs of them; the conclusions she drew from Ellen's silent and tearless reception of the news differed widely from his. She now waited anxiously and almost

fearfully for her appearance, which did not come as soon as she expected it.

It was a great relief to Ellen when her father ended his talking and left her to herself, for she felt she could not dress herself so quick with him standing there and looking at her, and his desire that she should be speedy in what she had to do could not be greater than her own. Her fingers did their work as fast as they could, with every joint trembling. But though a weight like a mountain was upon the poor child's heart, she could not cry and she could not pray, though true to her constant habit she fell on her knees by her bedside as she always did. It was in vain; all was in a whirl in her heart and head, and after a minute she rose again, clasping her little hands together with an expression of sorrow that it was well her mother could not see. She was dressed very soon, but she shrank from going to her mother's room while her father was there. To save time she put on her coat, and everything but her bonnet and gloves, and then stood leaning against the bed-post, for she could not sit down, watching with most intense anxiety to hear her father's step come out of the room and go downstairs. Every minute seemed too long to be borne; poor Ellen began to feel as if she could not contain herself. Yet five had not passed away when she heard the roll of carriage-wheels which came to the door and then stopped, and immediately her father opening the door to come out. Without waiting any longer Ellen opened her own, and brushed past him into the room he had quitted. Mrs. Montgomery was still lying on

the bed, for her husband had insisted on her not rising. She said not a word, but opened her arms to receive her little daughter; and with a cry of indescribable expression Ellen sprang upon the bed, and was folded in them. But then neither of them spoke or wept. What could words say? Heart met heart in that agony, for each knew all that was in the other. No, – not quite all. Ellen did not know that the whole of bitterness death had for her mother she was tasting then. But it was true. Death had no more power to give her pain after this parting should be over. His afterwork – the parting between soul and body – would be welcome rather; yes, very welcome. Mrs. Montgomery knew it all well. She knew this was the last embrace between them. She knew it was the very last time that dear little form would ever lie on her bosom, or be pressed in her arms; and it almost seemed to her that soul and body must part company too when they should be rent asunder. Ellen's grief was not like this; —*she* did not think it was the last time; – but she was a child of very high spirit and violent passions, untamed at all by sorrow's discipline; and in proportion violent was the tempest excited by this first real trial. Perhaps, too, her sorrow was sharpened by a sense of wrong and a feeling of indignation at her father's cruelty in not waking her earlier.

Not many minutes had passed in this sad embrace, and no word had yet been spoken, no sound uttered, except Ellen's first inarticulate cry of mixed affection and despair, when Captain Montgomery's step was again heard slowly ascending the stairs. "He is coming to take me away!" thought Ellen; and in terror lest

she should go without a word from her mother she burst forth with "Mamma! speak!"

A moment before, and Mrs. Montgomery could not have spoken. But she could now; and as clearly and calmly the words were uttered as if nothing had been the matter, only her voice fell a little towards the last – "God bless my darling child; and make her His own, – and bring her to that home where parting cannot be."

Ellen's eyes had been dry until now; but when she heard the sweet sound of her mother's voice, it opened all the fountains of tenderness within her. She burst into uncontrollable weeping; it seemed as if she would pour out her very heart in tears; and she clung to her mother with a force that made it a difficult task for her father to remove her. He could not do it at first; and Ellen seemed not to hear anything that was said to her. He was very unwilling to use harshness; and after a little, though she had paid no attention to his entreaties or commands, yet sensible of the necessity of the case, she gradually relaxed her hold and suffered him to draw her away from her mother's arms. He carried her downstairs, and put her on the front seat of the carriage, beside Mrs. Dunscombe's maid, – but Ellen could never recollect how she got there, and she did not feel the touch of her father's hand, nor hear him when he bid her good-bye; and she did not know that he put a large paper of candies and sugar-plums in her lap. She knew nothing but that she had lost her mother.

"It will not be so long," said the captain, in a kind of

apologising way; "she will soon get over it, and you will not have any trouble with her."

"I hope so," returned the lady, rather shortly; and then, as the captain was making his parting bow, she added, in no very pleased tone of voice, "Pray, Captain Montgomery, is this young lady to travel without a bonnet?"

"Bless me! no," said the captain. "How is this? Hasn't she a bonnet? I beg a thousand pardons, ma'am, – I'll bring it on the instant."

After a little delay the bonnet was found, but the captain overlooked the gloves in his hurry.

"I am very sorry you have been delayed, ma'am," said he.

"I hope we may be able to reach the boat yet," replied the lady; "drive on as fast as you can."

A very polite bow from Captain Montgomery – a very slight one from the lady – and off they drove.

"Proud enough," thought the captain, as he went upstairs again. "I reckon she don't thank me for her travelling companion. But Ellen's off – that's one good thing; and now I'll go and engage berths in the *England*."

# CHAPTER VII

*So fair and foul a day I have not seen.*

*– Macbeth.*

The long drive to the boat was only a sorrowful blank to Ellen's recollection. She did not see the frowns that passed between her companions on her account. She did not know that her white bonnet was such a matter of merriment to Margaret Dunscombe and the maid, that they could hardly contain themselves. She did not find out that Miss Margaret's fingers were busy with her paper of sweets, which only a good string and a sound knot kept her from rifling. Yet she felt very well that nobody there cared in the least for her sorrow. It mattered nothing; she wept on in her loneliness, and knew nothing that happened, till the carriage stopped on the wharf; even then she did not raise her head. Mrs. Dunscombe got out, and saw her daughter and servant do the same; then, after giving some orders about the baggage, she returned to Ellen.

"Will you get out, Miss Montgomery? or would you prefer to remain in the carriage? We must go on board directly."

There was something, not in the words, but in the tone, that struck Ellen's heart with an entirely new feeling. Her tears stopped instantly, and wiping away quick the traces of them

as well as she could, she got out of the carriage without a word, aided by Mrs. Dunscombe's hand. The party was presently joined by a fine-looking man, whom Ellen recognised as Captain Dunscombe.

"Dunscombe, do put these girls on board, will you, and then come back to me; I want to speak to you. Timmins, you may go along and look after them."

Captain Dunscombe obeyed. When they reached the deck, Margaret Dunscombe and the maid Timmins went straight to the cabin. Not feeling at all drawn towards their company, as indeed they had given her no reason, Ellen planted herself by the guards of the boat, not far from the gangway, to watch the busy scene that at another time would have had a great deal of interest and amusement for her. And interest it had now; but it was with a very, very grave little face that she looked on the bustling crowd. The weight on her heart was just as great as ever, but she felt this was not the time or the place to let it be seen; so for the present she occupied herself with what was passing before her, though it did not for one moment make her forget her sorrow.

At last the boat rang her last bell. Captain Dunscombe put his wife on board, and had barely time to jump off the boat again when the plank was withdrawn. The men on shore cast off the great loops of ropes that held the boat to enormous wooden posts on the wharf, and they were off!

At first it seemed to Ellen as if the wharf and the people upon it were sailing away from them backwards; but she presently

forgot to think of them at all. She was gone! – she felt the bitterness of the whole truth; the blue water already lay between her and the shore, where she so much longed to be. In that confused mass of buildings at which she was gazing, but which would be so soon beyond even gazing distance, was the only spot she cared for in the world; her heart was there. She could not see the place, to be sure, nor tell exactly whereabouts it lay in all that wide-spread city; but it was there somewhere, and every minute was making it farther and farther off. It's a bitter thing that sailing away from all one loves; and poor Ellen felt it so. She stood leaning both her arms upon the rail, the tears running down her cheeks, and blinding her so that she could not see the place toward which her straining eyes were bent. Somebody touched her sleeve, – it was Timmins.

"Mrs. Dunscombe sent me to tell you she wants you to come into the cabin, miss."

Hastily wiping her eyes, Ellen obeyed the summons, and followed Timmins into the cabin. It was full of groups of ladies, children, and nurses, – bustling and noisy enough. Ellen wished she might have stayed outside; she wanted to be by herself; but as the next best thing, she mounted upon the bench which ran all round the saloon, and kneeling on the cushion by one of the windows, placed herself with the edge of her bonnet just touching the glass, so that nobody could see a bit of her face, while she could look out near by as well as from the deck. Presently her ear caught, as she thought, the voice of Mrs.

Dunscombe, saying in rather an undertone, but laughing too, "What a figure she does cut in that outlandish bonnet!"

Ellen had no particular reason to think *she* was meant, and yet she did think so. She remained quite still, but with raised colour and quickened breathing waited to hear what would come next. Nothing came at first, and she was beginning to think she had perhaps been mistaken, when she plainly heard Margaret Dunscombe say, in a loud whisper, "Mamma, I wish you could contrive some way to keep her in the cabin – can't you? she looks so odd in that queer sun-bonnet kind of a thing, that anybody would think she had come out of the woods, and no gloves too; I shouldn't like to have the Miss M'Arthurs think she belonged to us; – can't you, mamma?"

If a thunderbolt had fallen at Ellen's feet, the shock would hardly have been greater. The lightning of passion shot through every vein. And it was not passion only; there was hurt feeling and wounded pride, and the sorrow of which her heart was full enough before, now wakened afresh. The child was beside herself. One wild wish for a hiding-place was the most pressing thought, – to be where tears could burst and her heart could break unseen. She slid off her bench and rushed through the crowd to the red curtain that cut off the far end of the saloon; and from there down to the cabin below, – people were everywhere. At last she spied a nook where she could be completely hidden. It was in the far-back end of the boat, just under the stairs by which she had come down. Nobody was sitting on the three or four large

mahogany steps that ran round that end of the cabin and sloped up to the little cabin window; and creeping beneath the stairs, and seating herself on the lowest of these steps, the poor child found that she was quite screened and out of sight of every human creature. It was time indeed; her heart had been almost bursting with passion and pain, and now the pent-up tempest broke forth with a fury that racked her little frame from head to foot; and the more because she strove to stifle every sound of it as much as possible. It was the very bitterness of sorrow, without any softening thought to allay it, and sharpened and made more bitter by mortification and a passionate sense of unkindness and wrong. And through it all, how constantly in her heart the poor child was reaching forth longing arms towards her far-off mother, and calling in secret on her beloved name. "Oh, mamma! mamma!" was repeated numberless times, with the unspeakable bitterness of knowing that she would have been a sure refuge and protection from all this trouble, but was now where she could neither reach nor hear her. Alas! how soon and how sadly missed.

Ellen's distress was not soon quieted, or, if quieted for a moment, it was only to break out afresh. And then she was glad to sit still and rest herself.

Presently she heard the voice of the chambermaid upstairs, at a distance at first, and coming nearer and nearer. "Breakfast ready, ladies – Ladies, breakfast ready!" and then came all the people in a rush, pouring down the stairs over Ellen's head. She kept quite still and close, for she did not want to see anybody,

and could not bear that anybody should see her. Nobody did see her; they all went off into the next cabin, where breakfast was set. Ellen began to grow tired of her hiding-place, and to feel restless in her confinement; she thought this would be a good time to get away; so she crept from her station under the stairs, and mounted them as quickly and as quietly as she could. She found almost nobody left in the saloon, and, breathing more freely, she possessed herself of her despised bonnet, which she had torn off her head in the first burst of her indignation, and passing gently out at the door, went up the stairs which led to the promenade deck; she felt as if she could not get far enough from Mrs. Dunscombe.

The promenade deck was very pleasant in the bright morning sun; and nobody was there except a few gentlemen. Ellen sat down on one of the settees that were ranged along the middle of it, and much pleased at having found herself such a nice place of retreat, she once more took up her interrupted amusement of watching the banks of the river.

It was a fair, mild day, near the end of October, and one of the loveliest of that lovely month. Poor Ellen, however, could not fairly enjoy it just now. There was enough darkness in her heart to put a veil over all nature's brightness. The thought did pass through her mind when she first went up, how very fair everything was; – but she soon forgot to think about it all. They were now in a wide part of the river; and the shore towards which she was looking was low and distant, and offered nothing to

interest her. She ceased to look at it, and presently lost all sense of everything around and before her, for her thoughts went home. She remembered that sweet moment last night when she lay in her mother's arms, after she had stopped singing: could it be only last night? it seemed a long, long time ago. She went over again in imagination her shocked waking up that very morning, – how cruel that was! – her hurried dressing, – the miserable parting, – and those last words of her mother, that seemed to ring in her ears yet. "That home where parting cannot be." "Oh," thought Ellen, "how shall I ever get there? who is there to teach me now? Oh, what shall I do without you? Oh, mamma! how much I want you already!"

While poor Ellen was thinking these things over and over, her little face had a deep sadness of expression it was sorrowful to see. She was perfectly calm; her violent excitement had all left her; her lip quivered a very little sometimes, but that was all; and one or two tears rolled slowly down the side of her face. Her eyes were fixed upon the dancing water, but it was very plain her thoughts were not, nor on anything else before her; and there was a forlorn look of hopeless sorrow on her lip and cheek and brow, enough to move anybody whose heart was not very hard. She was noticed, and with a feeling of compassion, by several people; but they all thought it was none of their business to speak to her, or they didn't know how. At length a gentleman who had been for some time walking up and down the deck, happened to look, as he passed, at her little pale face. He went to the end of his walk

that time, but in coming back he stopped just in front of her, and bending down his face towards hers, said, "What is the matter with you, my little friend?"

Though his figure had passed before her a great many times Ellen had not seen him at all; for "her eyes were with her heart, and that was far away." Her cheek flushed with surprise as she looked up. But there was no mistaking the look of kindness in the eyes that met hers, nor the gentleness and grave truthfulness of the whole countenance. It won her confidence immediately. All the floodgates of Ellen's heart were at once opened. She could not speak, but rising and clasping the hand that was held out to her in both her own, she bent down her head upon it, and burst into one of those uncontrollable agonies of weeping, such as the news of her mother's intended departure had occasioned that first sorrowful evening. He gently, and as soon as he could, drew her to a retired part of the deck where they were comparatively free from other people's eyes and ears; then taking her in his arms he endeavoured by many kind and soothing words to stay the torrent of her grief. This fit of weeping did Ellen more good than the former one; that only exhausted, this in some little measure relieved her.

"What is all this about?" said her friend kindly. "Nay, never mind shedding any more tears about it, my child. Let me hear what it is; and perhaps we can find some help for it."

"Oh no, you can't, sir," said Ellen sadly.

"Well, let us see," said he, "perhaps I can. What is it that has

troubled you so much?"

"I have lost my mother, sir," said Ellen.

"Your mother! Lost her! – how?"

"She is very ill, sir, and obliged to go away over the sea to France to get well; and papa could not take me with her," said poor Ellen, weeping again, "and I am obliged to go to be among strangers. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Have you left your mother in the city?"

"Oh yes, sir! I left her this morning."

"What is your name?"

"Ellen Montgomery."

"Is your mother obliged to go to Europe for her health?"

"Oh yes, sir; nothing else would have made her go, but the doctor said she would not live long if she didn't go, and that would cure her."

"Then you hope to see her come back by-and-by, don't you?"

"Oh yes, sir; but it won't be this great, great, long while; it seems to me as if it was for ever."

"Ellen, do you know who it is that sends sickness and trouble upon us?"

"Yes, sir, I know; but I don't feel that that makes it any easier."

"Do you know *why* He sends it? He is the God of love, – He does not trouble us willingly, – He has said so; – why does He ever make us suffer? do you know?"

"No, sir."

"Sometimes He sees that if He lets them alone, His children

will love some dear thing on the earth better than Himself, and He knows they will not be happy if they do so; and then, because He loves them, He takes it away, – perhaps it is a dear mother, or a dear daughter, – or else He hinders their enjoyment of it; that they may remember Him, and give their whole hearts to Him. He wants their whole hearts, that He may bless them. Are you one of His children, Ellen?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, with swimming eyes, but cast down to the ground.

"How do you know that you are not?"

"Because I do not love the Saviour."

"Do you not love Him, Ellen?"

"I am afraid not, sir."

"Why are you afraid not? what makes you think so?"

"Mamma said I could not love Him at all if I did not love Him best; and oh, sir," said Ellen, weeping, "I do love mamma a great deal better."

"You love your mother better than you do the Saviour?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen; "how can I help it?"

"Then if He had left you your mother, Ellen, you would never have cared or thought about Him?"

Ellen was silent.

"Is it so? – would you, do you think?"

"I don't know, sir," said Ellen, weeping again; "oh, sir, how can I help it?"

"Then, Ellen, can you not see the love of your Heavenly

Father in this trial? He saw that His little child was in danger of forgetting Him, and He loved you, Ellen; and so He has taken your dear mother, and sent you away where you will have no one to look to but Him; and now He says to you, 'My daughter, give *Me* thy heart.' Will you do it, Ellen?"

Ellen wept exceedingly while the gentleman was saying these words, clasping his hands still in both hers; but she made no answer. He waited till she had become calmer, and then went on in a low tone —

"What is the reason that you do not love the Saviour, my child?"

"Mamma says it is because my heart is so hard."

"That is true; but you do not know how good and how lovely He is, or you could not help loving Him. Do you often think of Him, and think much of Him, and ask Him to show you Himself that you may love Him?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "not often."

"You pray to Him, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; but not so."

"But you ought to pray to Him so. We are all blind by nature, Ellen; – we are all hard-hearted; none of us can see Him or love Him unless He opens our eyes and touches our hearts; but He has promised to do this for those that seek Him. Do you remember what the blind man said when Jesus asked him what He should do for him? – he answered, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight!' That ought to be your prayer now, and mine too; and the Lord

is just as ready to hear us as He was to hear the poor blind man; and you know He cured him. Will you ask Him, Ellen?"

A smile was almost struggling through Ellen's tears as she lifted her face to that of her friend, but she instantly looked down again.

"Shall I put you in mind, Ellen, of some things about Christ that ought to make you love Him with all your heart?"

"Oh yes, sir! if you please."

"Then tell me first what it is that makes you love your mother so much?"

"Oh, I can't tell you, sir; – everything, I think."

"I suppose the great thing is that she loves *you* so much?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen strongly.

"But how do you know that she loves you? how has she shown it?"

Ellen looked at him, but could give no answer; it seemed to her that she must bring the whole experience of her life before him to form one.

"I suppose," said her friend, "that, to begin with the smallest thing, she has always been watchfully careful to provide everything that could be useful or necessary for you; she never forgot your wants, or was careless about them?"

"No indeed, sir."

"And perhaps you recollect that she never minded trouble or expense or pain where your good was concerned; – she would sacrifice her own pleasure at any time for yours!"

Ellen's eyes gave a quick and strong answer to this, but she said nothing.

"And in all your griefs and pleasures you were sure of finding her ready and willing to feel with you and for you, and to help you if she could? And in all the times you have seen her tired, no fatigue ever wore out her patience, nor any naughtiness of yours ever lessened her love; she could not be weary of waiting upon you when you were sick, nor of bearing with you when you forgot your duty, – more ready always to receive you than you to return. Isn't it so?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"And you can recollect a great many words and looks of kindness and love – many and many endeavours to teach you and lead you in the right way – all showing the strongest desire for your happiness in this world, and in the next?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen tearfully; and then added, "do you know my mother, sir?"

"No," said he, smiling, "not at all; but my own mother has been in many things like this to me, and I judged yours might have been such to you. Have I described her right?"

"Yes indeed, sir," said Ellen, "exactly."

"And in return for all this, you have given this dear mother the love and gratitude of your whole heart, haven't you?"

"Indeed I have, sir;" and Ellen's face said it more than her words.

"You are very right," he said gravely, "to love such a mother

– to give her all possible duty and affection; she deserves it. But, Ellen, in all these very things I have been mentioning Jesus Christ has shown that He deserves it far more. Do you think, if you had never behaved like a child to your mother – if you had never made her the least return of love or regard – that she would have continued to love you as she does?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "I do not think she would."

"Have you ever made any fit return to God for His goodness to you?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, in a low tone.

"And yet there has been no change in *His* kindness. Just look at it, and see what He has done and is doing for you. In the first place, it is not your mother, but He, who has given you every good and pleasant thing you have enjoyed in your whole life. You love your mother because she is so careful to provide for all your wants; but who gave her the materials to work with? She has only been, as it were, the hand by which He supplied you. And who gave you such a mother? – there are many mothers not like her; – who put into her heart the truth and love that have been blessing you ever since you were born? It is all – all God's doing, from first to last; but His child has forgotten Him in the very gifts of His mercy."

Ellen was silent, but looked very grave.

"Your mother never minded her own ease or pleasure when your good was concerned. Did Christ mind His? You know what He did to save sinners, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, I know; mamma often told me."

"'Though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.' He took our burden of sin upon Himself, and suffered that terrible punishment – all to save you and such as you. And now He asks His children to leave off sinning and come back to Him who has bought them with His own blood. He did this because He *loved* you; does He not deserve to be loved in return?"

Ellen had nothing to say; she hung down her head further and further.

"And patient and kind as your mother is, the Lord Jesus is kinder and more patient still. In all your life so far, Ellen, you have not loved or obeyed Him; and yet He loves you, and is ready to be your friend. Is He not even to-day taking away your dear mother for the very purpose that He may draw you gently to Himself and fold you in His arms, as He has promised to do with His lambs? He knows you can never be happy anywhere else."

The gentleman paused again, for he saw that the little listener's mind was full.

"Has not Christ shown that He loves you better even than your mother does? And were there ever sweeter words of kindness than these? —

"'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

"'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.'

"'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.'"

He waited a minute, and then added gently, "Will you come to Him, Ellen?"

Ellen lifted her tearful eyes to his; but there were tears there too, and her own sank instantly. She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed out in broken words, "Oh, if I could – but I don't know how."

"Do you wish to be His child, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, sir – if I could."

"I know, my child, that sinful heart of yours is in the way, but the Lord Jesus can change it, and will, if you will give it to Him. He is looking upon you now, Ellen, with more kindness and love than any earthly father or mother could, waiting for you to give that little heart of yours to Him, that He may make it holy and fill it with blessing. He says, you know, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' Do not grieve Him away, Ellen."

Ellen sobbed, but all the passion and bitterness of her tears was gone. Her heart was completely melted.

"If your mother were here, and could do for you what you want, would you doubt her love to do it? would you have any difficulty in asking her?"

"Oh no!"

"Then do not doubt His love who loves you better still. Come to Jesus. Do not fancy He is away up in heaven out of reach of hearing – He is here, close to you, and knows every wish and

throb of your heart. Think you are in His presence and at His feet, – even now, – and say to Him in your heart, 'Lord, look upon me – I am not fit to come to Thee, but Thou hast bid me come – take me and make me Thine own – take this hard heart that I can do nothing with, and make it holy and fill it with Thy love – I give it and myself into Thy hands, O dear Saviour!'"

These words were spoken very low, that only Ellen could catch them. Her bowed head sank lower and lower till he ceased speaking. He added no more for some time; waited till she had resumed her usual attitude and appearance, and then said —

"Ellen, could you join in heart with my words?"

"I did, sir, – I couldn't help it, all but the last."

"All but the last?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, Ellen, if you say the first part of my prayer with your whole heart, the Lord will enable you to say the last too, – do you believe that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you not make that your constant prayer till you are heard and answered?"

"Yes, sir."

And he thought he saw that she was in earnest.

"Perhaps the answer may not come at once, – it does not always; but it will come as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow morning. 'Then shall we know, if we *follow on* to know the Lord.' But then you must be in earnest. And if you are in earnest, is

there nothing you have to do besides *praying*?"

Ellen looked at him without making any answer.

"When a person is in earnest, how does he show it?"

"By doing everything he possibly can to get what he wants."

"Quite right," said her friend, smiling; "and has God bidden us to do nothing besides pray for a new heart?"

"Oh yes, sir; He has told us to do a great many things."

"And will He be likely to grant that prayer, Ellen, if He sees that you do not care about displeasing Him in those 'great many things'? – will He judge that you are sincere in wishing for a new heart?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Then if you are resolved to be a Christian, you will not be contented with praying for a new heart, but you will begin at once to be a servant of God. You can do nothing well without help, but you are sure the help will come; and from this good day you will seek to know and to do the will of God, trusting in His dear Son to perfect that which concerneth you. My little child," said the gentleman, softly and kindly, "are you ready to say you will do this?"

As she hesitated, he took a little book from his pocket, and turning over the leaves said, "I am going to leave you for a little while – I have a few moments' business downstairs to attend to; and I want you to look over this hymn and think carefully of what I have been saying, will you? – and resolve what you will do."

Ellen got off his knee, where she had been sitting all this while,

and silently taking the book, sat down in the chair he had quitted. Tears ran fast again, and many thoughts passed through her mind as her eyes went over and over the words to which he had pointed: —

"Behold the Saviour at the door,
He gently knocks, – has knocked before, —
Has waited long, – is waiting still, —
You treat no other friend so ill.

Oh lovely attitude! – He stands
With open heart and outstretched hands.
Oh matchless kindness! – and He shows
This matchless kindness to His foes.

Admit Him – for the human breast
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest.
Admit Him – for the hour's at hand
When at *His* door, denied you'll stand.

Open my heart, Lord, enter in;
Slay every foe, and conquer sin.
Here now to Thee I all resign, —
My body, soul, and all are Thine."

The last two lines Ellen longed to say, but could not; the two preceding were the very speech of her heart.

Not more than fifteen minutes had passed when her friend

came back again. The book hung in Ellen's hand; her eyes were fixed on the floor.

"Well," he said kindly, and taking her hand, "what's your decision?" Ellen looked up.

"Have you made up your mind on that matter we were talking about?"

"Yes, sir," Ellen said in a low voice, casting her eyes down again.

"And how have you decided, my child?"

"I will try to do as you said, sir."

"You will begin to follow your Saviour, and to please Him, from this day forward?"

"I will try, sir," said Ellen, meeting his eyes as she spoke. Again the look she saw made her burst into tears. She wept violently.

"God bless you and help you, my dear Ellen," said he, gently passing his hand over her head; "but do not cry any more – you have shed too many tears this morning already. We will not talk about this any more now."

And he spoke only soothing and quieting words for a while to her: and then asked if she would like to go over the boat and see the different parts of it. Ellen's joyful agreement with this proposal was only qualified by the fear of giving him trouble. But he put that entirely by.

# CHAPTER VIII

*Time and the hour run through the roughest day.*

*– Shakespeare.*

The going over the boat held them a long time, for Ellen's new friend took kind pains to explain to her whatever he thought he could make interesting; he was amused to find how far she pushed her inquiries into the how and the why of things. For the time her sorrows were almost forgotten.

"What shall we do now?" said he, when they had at last gone through the whole; "would you like to go to your friends?"

"I haven't any friends on board, sir," said Ellen, with a swelling heart.

"Haven't any friends on board! What do you mean? Are you alone?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "not exactly alone; my father put me in the care of a lady that is going to Thirlwall; but they are strangers and not friends."

"Are they *un*friends? I hope you don't think, Ellen, that strangers cannot be friends too?"

"No indeed, sir, I don't," said Ellen, looking up with a face that was fairly brilliant with its expression of gratitude and love. But casting it down again, she added, "But they are not my friends,

sir."

"Well then," he said, smiling, "will you come with me?"

"Oh yes, sir! if you will let me, and if I shan't be a trouble to you, sir."

"Come this way," said he, "and we'll see if we cannot find a nice place to sit down, where no one will trouble us."

Such a place was found. And Ellen would have been quite satisfied though the gentleman had done no more than merely to permit her to remain there by his side; but he took out his little Bible, and read and talked to her for some time, so pleasantly that neither her weariness nor the way could be thought of.

When he ceased reading to her and began to read to himself, weariness and faintness stole over her. She had had nothing to eat, and had been violently excited that day. A little while she sat in a dreamy sort of quietude, then her thoughts grew misty, and the end of it was, she dropped her head against the arm of her friend and fell fast asleep. He smiled at first, but one look at the very pale little face changed the expression of his own. He gently put his arm round her and drew her head to a better resting-place than it had chosen.

And there she slept till the dinner-bell rang. Timmins was sent out to look for her, but Timmins did not choose to meddle with the grave protector Ellen seemed to have gained; and Mrs. Dunscombe declared herself rejoiced that any other hands should have taken the charge of her.

After dinner, Ellen and her friend went up to the promenade

deck again, and there for a while they paced up and down, enjoying the pleasant air and the quick motion, and the lovely appearance of everything in the mild hazy sunlight. Another gentleman, however, joining them, and entering into conversation, Ellen silently quitted her friend's hand and went and sat down at the side of the boat. After taking a few turns more, and while still engaged in talking, he drew his little hymn-book out of his pocket, and with a smile put it into Ellen's hand as he passed. She gladly received it, and spent an hour or more very pleasantly in studying and turning it over. At the end of that time, the stranger having left him, Ellen's friend came and sat down by her side.

"How do you like my little book?" said he.

"Oh, very much indeed, sir."

"Then you love hymns, do you?"

"Yes, I do, sir, dearly."

"Do you sometimes learn them by heart?"

"Oh yes, sir, often. Mamma often made me. I have learnt two since I have been sitting here."

"Have you?" said he. "Which are they?"

"One of them is the one you showed me this morning, sir."

"And what is your mind now about the question I asked you this morning?"

Ellen cast down her eyes from his inquiring glance, and answered in a low tone, "Just what it was then, sir."

"Have you been thinking of it since?"

"I have thought of it the whole time, sir."

"And you are resolved you will obey Christ henceforth?"

"I am resolved to try, sir."

"My dear Ellen, if you are in earnest you will not try in vain. He never yet failed any that sincerely sought Him. Have you a Bible?"

"Oh yes, sir! a beautiful one. Mamma gave it to me the other day."

He took the hymn-book from her hand, and turning over the leaves, marked several places in pencil.

"I am going to give you this," he said, "that it may serve to remind you of what we have talked of to-day, and of your resolution."

Ellen flushed high with pleasure.

"I have put this mark," said he, showing her a particular one, "in a few places of this book for you. Wherever you find it, you may know there is something I want you to take special notice of. There are some other marks here too, but they are mine. *These* are for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Ellen, delighted. "I shall not forget."

He knew from her face what she meant – not the *marks*.

The day wore on, thanks to the unwearied kindness of her friend, with great comparative comfort to Ellen. Late in the afternoon they were resting from a long walk up and down the deck.

"What have you got in this package that you take such care

of?" said he, smiling.

"Oh, candies," said Ellen. "I am always forgetting them. I meant to ask you to take some. Will you have some, sir?"

"Thank you. What are they?"

"Almost all kinds, I believe, sir. I think the almonds are the best."

He took one.

"Pray take some more, sir," said Ellen. "I don't care for them in the least."

"Then I am more of a child than you – in this, at any rate – for I do care for them. But I have a little headache to-day; I mustn't meddle with sweets."

"Then take some for to-morrow, sir. Please do!" said Ellen, dealing them out very freely.

"Stop, stop!" said he, "not a bit more. This won't do. I must put some of these back again. You'll want them to-morrow, too."

"I don't think I shall," said Ellen. "I haven't wanted to touch them to-day."

"Oh, you'll feel brighter to-morrow, after a night's sleep. But aren't you afraid of catching cold? This wind is blowing pretty fresh, and you've been bonnetless all day. What's the reason?"

Ellen looked down, and coloured a good deal.

"What's the matter?" said he, laughing. "Has any mischief befallen your bonnet?"

"No, sir," said Ellen in a low tone, her colour mounting higher and higher. "It was laughed at this morning."

"Laughed at! Who laughed at it?"

"Mrs. Dunscombe and her daughter and her maid."

"Did they? I don't see much reason in that, I confess. What did they think was the matter with it?"

"I don't know, sir. They said it was outlandish, and what a figure I looked in it."

"Well, certainly that was not very polite. Put it on and let me see."

Ellen obeyed.

"I am not the best judge of ladies' bonnets, it is true," said he, "but I can see nothing about it that is not perfectly proper and suitable – nothing in the world! So that is what has kept you bare-headed all day? Didn't your mother wish you to wear that bonnet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that ought to be enough for you. Will you be ashamed of what *she* approved, because some people that haven't probably half her sense choose to make merry with it? – is that right?" he said gently, "Is that honouring her as she deserves?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, looking up into his face, "but I never thought of that before. I am sorry."

"Never mind being laughed at, my child. If your mother says a thing is right, that's enough for you; let them laugh!"

"I won't be ashamed of my bonnet any more," said Ellen, tying it on, "but they made me very unhappy about it, and very angry too."

"I am sorry for that," said her friend gravely. "Have you quite got over it, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, sir, long ago."

"Are you sure?"

"I am not angry now, sir."

"Is there no unkindness left towards the people who laughed at you?"

"I don't like them much," said Ellen. "How can I?"

"You cannot of course *like* the company of ill-behaved people, and I do not wish that you should; but you can and ought to feel just as kindly disposed towards them as if they had never offended you – just as willing and inclined to please them or do them good. Now, could you offer Miss – what's her name? – some of your candies with as hearty goodwill as you could before she laughed at you?"

"No, sir, I couldn't. I don't feel as if I ever wished to see them again."

"Then, my dear Ellen, you have something to do, if you were in earnest in the resolve you made this morning. 'If ye forgive unto men their trespasses, my Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will my Father forgive your trespasses!'"

He was silent, and so was Ellen for some time. His words had raised a struggle in her mind, and she kept her face turned towards the shore, so that her bonnet shielded it from view; but she did not in the least know what she was looking at. The

sun had been some time descending through a sky of cloudless splendour, and now was just kissing the mountain tops of the western horizon. Slowly and with great majesty he sank behind the distant blue line, till only a glittering edge appeared, and then that was gone. There were no clouds hanging over his setting, to be gilded and purpled by the parting rays, but a region of glory long remained, to show where his path had been.

The eyes of both were fixed upon this beautiful scene, but only one was thinking of it. Just as the last glimpse of the sun had disappeared Ellen turned her face, bright again, towards her companion. He was intently gazing towards the hills that had so drawn Ellen's attention a while ago, and thinking still more intently, it was plain; so though her mouth had been open to speak, she turned her face away again as suddenly as it had just sought his. He saw the motion, however.

"What is it, Ellen?" he said.

Ellen looked again with a smile.

"I have been thinking, sir, of what you said to me."

"Well?" said he, smiling in answer.

"I can't *like* Mrs. and Miss Dunscombe as well as if they hadn't done so to me, but I will try to behave as if nothing had been the matter, and be as kind and polite to them as if they had been kind and polite to me."

"And how about the sugar-plums?"

"The sugar-plums! Oh," said Ellen, laughing, "Miss Margaret may have them all if she likes – I'm quite willing. Not but I had

rather give them to you, sir."

"You give me something a great deal better when I see you try to overcome a wrong feeling. You mustn't rest till you get rid of every bit of ill-will that you feel for this and any other unkindness you may suffer. You cannot do it yourself, but you know who can help you. I hope you have asked him, Ellen?"

"I have, sir, indeed."

"Keep asking Him, and He will do everything for you."

A silence of some length followed. Ellen began to feel very much the fatigue of this exciting day, and sat quietly by her friend's side, leaning against him. The wind had changed about sundown, and now blew light from the south, so that they did not feel it at all.

The light gradually faded away till only a silver glow in the west showed where the sun had set, and the sober grey of twilight was gently stealing over all the bright colours of sky, and river, and hill; now and then a twinkling light began to appear along the shores.

"You are very tired," said Ellen's friend to her – "I see you are. A little more patience, my child; we shall be at our journey's end before a very great while."

"I am almost sorry," said Ellen, "though I *am* tired. We don't go in the steamboat to-morrow, do we, sir?"

"No, in the stage."

"Shall *you* be in the stage, sir?"

"No, my child. But I am glad you and I have spent this day

together."

"Oh, sir," said Ellen, "I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for you."

There was silence again, and the gentleman almost thought his little charge had fallen asleep, she sat so still. But she suddenly spoke again, and in a tone of voice that showed sleep was far away.

"I wish I knew where mamma is now!"

"I do not doubt, my child, from what you told me that it is well with her wherever she is. Let that thought comfort you whenever you remember her."

"She must want me so much," said poor Ellen, in a scarcely audible voice.

"She has not lost her best friend, my child."

"I know it, sir," said Ellen, with whom grief was now getting the mastery; "but oh, it's just near the time when I used to make the tea for her – who'll make it now? she'll want me – oh, what shall I do?" and overcome completely by this recollection, she threw herself into her friend's arms and sobbed aloud.

There was no reasoning against this; he did not attempt it; but with the utmost gentleness and tenderness endeavoured, as soon as he might, to soothe and calm her. He succeeded at last; with a sort of despairing submission, Ellen ceased her tears, and arose to her former position. But he did not rest from his kind endeavours till her mind was really eased and comforted; which, however, was not long before the lights of a city began to appear in the

distance. And with them appeared a dusky figure ascending the stairs, which, upon nearer approach, proved by the voice to be Timmins.

"Is this Miss Montgomery?" said she; "I can't see, I am sure, it's so dark. Is that you, Miss Montgomery?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "it is I; do you want me?"

"If you please, miss, Mrs. Dunscombe wants you to come right down; we're almost in, she says, miss."

"I'll come directly, Miss Timmins," said Ellen. "Don't wait for me – I won't be a minute – I'll come directly."

Miss Timmins retired, standing still a good deal in awe of the grave personage whose protection Ellen seemed to have gained.

"I must go," said Ellen, standing up and extending her hand "Good-bye, sir."

She could hardly say it. He drew her towards him and kissed her cheek once or twice; it was well he did, for it sent a thrill of pleasure to Ellen's heart that she did not get over that evening, nor all the next day.

"God bless you, my child," he said gravely, but cheerfully; "and good-night! – you will feel better, I trust, when you have had some rest and refreshment."

He took care of her down the stairs, and saw her safe to the very door of the saloon, and within it; and there again took her hand and kindly bade her good-night.

Ellen entered the saloon only to sit down and cry as if her heart would break. She saw and heard nothing till Mrs. Dunscombe's

voice bade her make haste and be ready, for they were going ashore in five minutes.

And in less than five minutes ashore they went.

"Which hotel, ma'am?" asked the servant who carried her baggage – "the Eagle, or Foster's?"

"The Eagle," said Mrs. Dunscombe.

"Come this way, then, ma'am," said another man, the driver of the Eagle carriage. "Now, ma'am, step in, if you please."

Mrs. Dunscombe put her daughter in.

"But it's full!" said she to the driver; "there isn't room for another one."

"Oh yes, ma'am, there is," said the driver, holding the door open; "there's plenty of room for you, ma'am – just get in, ma'am, if you please, – we'll be there in less than two minutes."

"Timmins, you'll have to walk," said Mrs. Dunscombe. "Miss Montgomery, would you rather ride, or walk with Timmins?"

"How far is it, ma'am?" said Ellen.

"Oh, bless me! how can I tell how far it is? I don't know, I am sure, – not far; say quick, – would you rather walk or ride?"

"I would rather walk, ma'am, if you please," said Ellen.

"Very well," said Mrs. Dunscombe, getting in; – "Timmins, you know the way."

And off went the coach with its load; but tired as she was, Ellen did not wish herself along.

Picking a passage-way out of the crowd, she and Timmins now began to make their way up one of the comparatively quiet

streets.

It was a strange place – that she felt. She had lived long enough in the place she had left to feel at home there; but here she came to no street or crossing that she had ever seen before; nothing looked familiar; all reminded her that she was a traveller. Only one pleasant thing Ellen saw on her walk, and that was the sky; and that looked just as it did at home; and very often Ellen's gaze was fixed upon it, much to the astonishment of Miss Timmins, who had to be not a little watchful for the safety of Ellen's feet while her eyes were thus employed. She had taken a great fancy to Ellen, however, and let her do as she pleased, keeping all her wonderment to herself.

"Take care, Miss Ellen!" cried Timmins, giving her arm a great pull. "I declare I just saved you out of that gutter! poor child! you are dreadfully tired, ain't you?"

"Yes, I am very tired, Miss Timmins," said Ellen; "have we much further to go?"

"Not a great deal, dear; cheer up! we are almost there. I hope Mrs. Dunscombe will want to ride one of these days herself, and can't."

"Oh, don't say so, Miss Timmins," said Ellen, "I don't wish so, indeed."

"Well, I should think you would," said Timmins. "I should think you'd be fit to poison her; —*I* should, I know, if I was in your place."

"Oh no," said Ellen, "that wouldn't be right; that would be very

wrong."

"Wrong!" said Timmins, – "why would it be wrong? she hasn't behaved good to you."

"Yes," said Ellen, "but don't you know the Bible says if we do not forgive people what they do to us, we shall not be forgiven ourselves?"

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Timmins, "you beat all! But here's the Eagle at last, and I am glad for your sake, dear."

Ellen was shown into the ladies' parlour. She was longing for a place to rest, but she saw directly it was not to be there. The room was large, and barely furnished; and round it were scattered part of the carriage-load of people that had arrived a quarter of an hour before her. They were waiting till their rooms should be ready. Ellen silently found herself a chair and sat down to wait with the rest, as patiently as she might. Few of them had as much cause for impatience; but she was the only perfectly mute and uncomplaining one there. Her two companions, however, between them, fully made up her share of fretting. At length a servant brought the welcome news that their room was ready, and the three marched upstairs. It made Ellen's very heart glad when they got there, to find a good-sized, cheerful-looking bed-room, comfortably furnished, with a bright fire burning, large curtains let down to the floor, and a nice warm carpet upon it. Taking off her bonnet, and only that, she sat down on a low cushion by the corner of the fire-place, and leaning her head against the jamb, fell fast asleep almost immediately. Mrs. Dunscombe set about

arranging herself for the tea-table.

"Well!" she said, "one day of this precious journey is over!"

"Does Ellen go with us to-morrow, mamma?"

"Oh yes! – quite to Thirlwall."

"Well, you haven't had much plague with her to-day, mamma."

"No – I am sure I am much obliged to whoever has kept her out of my way."

"Where is she going to sleep to-night?" asked Miss Margaret.

"I don't know, I am sure. I suppose I shall have to have a cot brought in here for her."

"What a plague!" said Miss Margaret. "It will lumber up the room so! There's no place to put it. Couldn't she sleep with Timmins?"

"Oh, she *could*, of course – just as well as not, only people would make such a fuss about it! – it wouldn't do; – we must bear it for once. I'll try and not be caught in such a scrape again."

"How provoking!" said Miss Margaret. "How came father to do so without asking you about it?"

"Oh, he was bewitched, I suppose – men always are. Look here, Margaret, I can't go down to tea with a train of children at my heels. I shall leave you and Ellen up here, and I'll send up your tea to you."

"Oh no, mamma!" said Margaret eagerly; "I want to go down with you. Look here, mamma! she's asleep, and you needn't wake her up – that's excuse enough. You can leave her to have tea up

here, and let me go down with you."

"Well," said Mrs. Dunscombe, "I don't care; but make haste to get ready, for I expect every minute the tea-bell will ring."

"Timmins! Timmins!" cried Margaret, "come here and fix me – quick! and step softly, will you? or you'll wake that young one up, and then, you see, I shall have to stay upstairs."

This did not happen, however; Ellen's sleep was much too deep to be easily disturbed. The tea-bell itself, loud and shrill as it was, did not even make her eyelids tremble. After Mrs. and Miss Dunscombe were gone down, Timmins employed herself a little while in putting all things about the room to rights, and then sat down to take *her* rest, dividing her attention between the fire and Ellen, towards whom she seemed to feel more and more kindness, as she saw that she was likely to receive it from no one else. Presently came a knock at the door – "The tea for the young lady," on a waiter. Miss Timmins silently took the tray from the man and shut the door. "Well!" said she to herself, "if that ain't a pretty supper to send up to a child that has gone two hundred miles to-day and had no breakfast – a cup of tea, cold enough I'll warrant, bread and butter enough for a bird, and two little slices of ham as thick as a wafer! Well, I just wish Mrs. Dunscombe had to eat it herself, and nothing else! I'm not going to wake her up for that, I know, till I see whether something better ain't to be had for love or money. So just you sleep on, darling, till I see what I can do for you."

In great indignation downstairs went Miss Timmins, and at

the foot of the stairs she met a rosy-cheeked, pleasant-faced girl coming up.

"Are you the chambermaid?" said Timmins.

"I'm *one* of the chambermaids," said the girl, smiling; "there's three of us in this house, dear."

"Well, I am a stranger here," said Timmins; "but I want you to help me, and I am sure you will. I've got a dear little girl upstairs that I want some supper for; she's a sweet child, and she's under the care of some proud folks here in the tea-room that think it too much trouble to look at her, and they've sent her up about supper enough for a mouse – and she's half-starving; she lost her breakfast this morning by their ugliness. Now ask one of the waiters to give me something nice for her, will you? – there's a good girl."

"James!" said the girl in a loud whisper to one of the waiters who was crossing the hall. He instantly stopped and came towards them, tray in hand, and making several extra polite bows as he drew near.

"What's on the supper-table, James?" said the smiling damsel.

"Everything that ought to be there, Miss Johns," said the man, with another flourish.

"Come, stop your nonsense," said the girl, "and tell me quick; I'm in a hurry."

"It's a pleasure to perform your commands, Miss Johns. I'll give you the whole bill of fare. There's a very fine beefsteak, fricasseed chickens, stewed oysters, sliced ham,

cheese, preserved quinces – with the usual complement of bread and toast and muffins, and doughnuts, and new-year cake, and plenty of butter, likewise salt and pepper, likewise tea and coffee and sugar, likewise – "

"Hush!" said the girl. "Do stop, will you?" and then laughing and turning to Miss Timmins, she added, "What will you have?"

"I guess I'll have some of the chickens and oysters," said Timmins; "that will be the nicest for her, and a muffin or two."

"Now, James, do you hear?" said the chambermaid; "I want you to get me now, right away, a nice little supper of chickens and oysters and a muffin – it's for a lady upstairs. Be as quick as you can."

"I should be very happy to execute impossibilities for you, Miss Johns; but Mrs. Custers is at the table herself."

"Very well – that's nothing; she'll think it's for somebody upstairs – and so it is."

"Ay, but the upstairs people is Tim's business – I should be hauled over the coals directly."

"Then ask Tim, will you? How slow you are! Now, James, if you don't I won't speak to you again."

"Till to-morrow? I couldn't stand that. It shall be done, Miss Johns, instantum."

Bowing and smiling, away went James, leaving the girls giggling on the staircase and highly gratified.

"He always does what I want him to," said the good-humoured chambermaid; "but he generally makes a fuss about it first. He'll

be back directly with what you want."

Till he came, Miss Timmins filled up the time with telling her new friend as much as she knew about Ellen and Ellen's hardships, with which Miss Johns was so much interested that she declared she must go up and see her; and when James in a few minutes returned with a tray of nice things, the two women proceeded together to Mrs. Dunscombe's room. Ellen had moved so far as to put herself on the floor with her head on the cushion for a pillow, but she was as sound asleep as ever.

"Just see now!" said Timmins; "there she lies on the floor – enough to give her her death of cold. Poor child, she's tired to death, and Mrs. Dunscombe made her walk up from the steamboat to-night rather than do it herself; I declare I wished the coach would break down, only for the other folks. I am glad I have got a good supper for her though – thank *you*, Miss Johns."

"And I'll tell you what, I'll go and get you some nice hot tea," said the chambermaid, who was quite touched by the sight of Ellen's little pale face.

"Thank you," said Timmins, "you're a darling. This is as cold as a stone."

While the chambermaid went forth on her kind errand, Timmins stooped down by the little sleeper's side. "Miss Ellen!" she said; "Miss Ellen! wake up, dear – wake up and get some supper – come! you'll feel a great deal better for it; you shall sleep as much as you like afterwards."

Slowly Ellen raised herself and opened her eyes. "Where am

I?" she asked, looking bewildered.

"Here, dear," said Timmins; "wake up and eat something – it will do you good."

With a sigh, poor Ellen arose and came to the fire. "You're tired to death, ain't you?" said Timmins.

"Not quite," said Ellen. "I shouldn't mind that if my legs would not ache so – and my head too."

"Now I'm sorry!" said Timmins; "but your head will be better for eating, I know. See here, I've got you some nice chicken and oysters, and I'll make this muffin hot for you by the fire; and here comes your tea. Miss Johns, I'm your servant, and I'll be your bridesmaid with the greatest pleasure in life. Now, Miss Ellen, dear, just you put yourself on that low chair, and I'll fix you off."

Ellen thanked her, and did as she was told. Timmins brought another chair to her side, and placed the tray with her supper upon it, and prepared her muffin and tea; and having fairly seen Ellen begin to eat, she next took off her shoes, and seating herself on the carpet before her, she made her lap the resting-place for Ellen's feet, chafing them in her hands and heating them at the fire, saying there was nothing like rubbing and roasting to get rid of the leg-ache. By the help of the supper, the fire, and Timmins, Ellen mended rapidly. With tears in her eyes, she thanked the latter for her kindness.

"Now just don't say one word about that," said Timmins; "I never was famous for kindness, as I know; but people must be kind sometimes in their lives, unless they happen to be made of

stone, which I believe some people are. You feel better, don't you?"

"A great deal," said Ellen. "Oh, if I only could go to bed now!"

"And you shall," said Timmins. "I know about your bed, and I'll go right away and have it brought in." And away she went.

While she was gone, Ellen drew from her pocket her little hymn-book, to refresh herself with looking at it. How quickly and freshly it brought back to her mind the friend who had given it, and his conversations with her, and the resolve she had made; and again Ellen's whole heart offered the prayer she had repeated many times that day —

> "Open my heart, Lord, enter in;
> Slay every foe, and conquer sin."

Her head was still bent upon her little book when Timmins entered. Timmins was not alone; Miss Johns and a little cot bedstead came in with her. The latter was put at the foot of Mrs. Dunscombe's bed, and speedily made up by the chambermaid, while Timmins undressed Ellen; and very soon all the sorrows and vexations of the day were forgotten in a sound, refreshing sleep. But not till she had removed her little hymn-book from the pocket of her frock to a safe station under her pillow; it was with her hand upon it that Ellen went to sleep; and it was in her hand still when she was waked the next morning.

The next day was spent in a wearisome stage-coach, over

a rough jolting road. Ellen's companions did nothing to make her way pleasant, but she sweetened theirs with her sugar-plums. Somewhat mollified, perhaps, after that, Miss Margaret condescended to enter into conversation with her, and Ellen underwent a thorough cross-examination as to all her own and her parents' affairs, past, present, and future, and likewise as to all that could be known of her yesterday's friend, till she was heartily worried and out of patience.

It was just five o'clock when they reached her stopping-place. Ellen knew of no particular house to go to; so Mrs. Dunscombe set her down at the door of the principal inn of the town, called the "Star" of Thirlwall.

The driver smacked his whip, and away went the stage again, and she was left standing alone beside her trunk before the piazza of the inn, watching Timmins, who was looking back at her out of the stage window, nodding and waving good-bye.

# CHAPTER IX

*Gadsby. Sirrah carrier, what time do you mean to come to London?*
*2nd Car. Time enough to go to bed with a candle, I warrant thee.*

*– King Henry IV.*

Ellen had been whirled along over the roads for so many hours, – the rattle of the stage-coach had filled her ears for so long, – that now, suddenly still and quiet, she felt half stunned. She stood with a kind of dreamy feeling, looking after the departing stage-coach. In it there were three people whose faces she knew, and she could not count a fourth within many a mile. One of those was a friend, too, as the fluttering handkerchief of poor Miss Timmins gave token still. Yet Ellen did not wish herself back in the coach, although she continued to stand and gaze after it as it rattled off at a great rate down the little street, its huge body lumbering up and down every now and then, reminding her of sundry uncomfortable jolts; till the horses making a sudden turn to the right, it disappeared round a corner. Still for a minute Ellen watched the whirling cloud of dust it had left behind; but then the feeling of strangeness and loneliness came over her, and her heart sank. She cast a look up and down the street. The afternoon was lovely; the slant beams of

the setting sun came back from gilded windows, and the houses and chimney-tops of the little town were in a glow; but she saw nothing bright anywhere – in all the glory of the setting sun the little town looked strange and miserable. There was no sign of her having been expected; nobody was waiting to meet her. What was to be done next? Ellen had not the slightest idea.

Her heart growing fainter and fainter, she turned again to the inn. A tall, awkward young countryman, with a cap set on one side of his head, was busying himself with sweeping the floor of the piazza, but in a very leisurely manner; and between every two strokes of his broom he was casting long looks at Ellen, evidently wondering who she was and what she could want there. Ellen saw it, and hoped he would ask her in words, for she could not answer his *looks* of curiosity, but she was disappointed. As he reached the end of the piazza, and gave his broom two or three knocks against the edge of the boards to clear it of dust, he indulged himself with one good long finishing look at Ellen, and then she saw he was going to take himself and his broom into the house. So in despair she ran up the two or three low steps of the piazza and presented herself before him. He stopped short.

"Will you please to tell me, sir," said poor Ellen, "if Miss Emerson is here?"

"Miss Emerson?" said he; "what Miss Emerson?"

"I don't know, sir; Miss Emerson that lives not far from Thirlwall." Eyeing Ellen from head to foot, the man then trailed his broom into the house. Ellen followed him.

"Mr. Forbes!" said he, "Mr. Forbes! do you know anything of Miss Emerson?"

"What Miss Emerson?" said another man, with a big red face and a big round body, showing himself in a doorway which he nearly filled.

"Miss Emerson that lives a little way out of town."

"Miss Fortune Emerson? yes, I know her. What of her?"

"Has she been here to-day?"

"Here? what, in town? No, not as I've seen or heard. Why, who wants her?"

"This little girl."

And the man with the broom stepping back, disclosed Ellen to the view of the red-faced landlord. He advanced a step or two towards her.

"What do you want with Miss Fortune, little one?" said he.

"I expected she would meet me here, sir," said Ellen.

"Where have you come from?"

"From New York."

"The stage set her down just now," put in the other man.

"And you thought Miss Fortune would meet you, did you?"

"Yes, sir; she was to meet me and take me home."

"Take you home? Are you going to Miss Fortune's home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why, you don't belong to her any way, do you?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "but she's my aunt."

"She's your what?"

"My aunt, sir; my father's sister."

"Your father's sister! You ben't the daughter of Morgan Montgomery, be you?"

"Yes, I am," said Ellen, half-smiling.

"And you are come to make a visit to Miss Fortune, eh?"

"Yes," said Ellen, smiling no longer.

"And Miss Fortune ha'n't come up to meet you; that's real shabby of her; and how to get you down there to-night, I am sure it is more than I can tell." And he shouted, "Wife!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Forbes?" said a fat landlady, appearing in the doorway, which she filled near as well as her husband would have done.

"Look here," said Mr. Forbes, "here's Morgan Montgomery's daughter come to pay a visit to her aunt, Fortune Emerson. Don't you think she'll be glad to see her?"

Mr. Forbes put this question with rather a curious look at his wife. She didn't answer him. She only looked at Ellen, looked grave, and gave a queer little nod of her head, which meant, Ellen could not make out what.

"Now, what's to be done?" continued Mr. Forbes. "Miss Fortune was to have come up to meet her, but she ain't here, and I don't know how in the world I can take the child down there to-night. The horses are both out to plough, you know; and besides, the tire is come off that waggon wheel. I couldn't possibly use it. And then it's a great question in my mind what Miss Fortune would say to me. I should get paid, I s'pose?"

"Yes, you'd get paid," said his wife, with another little shake of her head; "but whether it would be the kind of pay you'd like, *I* don't know."

"Well, what's to be done, wife? Keep the child over night, and send word down yonder?"

"No," said Mrs. Forbes, "I'll tell you. I think I saw Van Brunt go by two or three hours ago with the ox-cart, and I guess he's somewhere up town yet; I ha'n't seen him go back. He can take the child home with him. Sam!" shouted Mrs. Forbes; "Sam! here! – Sam, run up street directly, and see if you see Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart standing anywhere – I dare say he's at Mr. Miller's, or may be at Mr. Hammersley's the blacksmith – and ask him to stop here before he goes home. Now hurry! and don't run over him and then come back and tell me he ain't in town."

Mrs. Forbes herself followed Sam to the door, and cast an exploring look in every direction.

"I don't see no signs of him – up nor down," said she, returning to Ellen; "but I'm pretty sure he ain't gone home. Come in here; come in here, dear, and make yourself comfortable; it'll be a while yet maybe afore Mr. Van Brunt comes, but he'll be along by-and-by; – come in here and rest yourself."

She opened a door, and Ellen followed her into a large kitchen, where a fire was burning that showed wood must be plenty in those regions. Mrs. Forbes placed a low chair for her on the hearth, but herself remained standing by the side of the fire, looking earnestly and with a good deal of interest upon the little

stranger. Ellen drew her white bonnet from her head, and sitting down with a wearied air, gazed sadly into the flames that were shedding their light upon her.

"Are you going to stop a good while with Miss Fortune?" said Mrs. Forbes.

"I don't know, ma'am, – yes, I believe so," said Ellen faintly.

"Ha'n't you got no mother?" asked Mrs. Forbes suddenly, after a pause.

"Oh yes!" said Ellen, looking up. But the question had touched the sore spot. Her head sank on her hands, and "Oh, mamma!" was uttered with a bitterness that even Mrs. Forbes could feel.

"Now what made me ask you that!" said she. "Don't cry! – don't, love; poor little dear; you're as pale as a sheet; you're tired, I know – ain't you; now cheer up, do, – I can't bear to see you cry. You've come a great ways to-day, ha'n't you?"

Ellen nodded her head, but could give no answer.

"I know what will do you good," said Mrs. Forbes presently, getting up from the crouching posture she had taken to comfort Ellen; "you want something to eat, – that's the matter. I'll warrant you're half starved; no wonder you feel bad. Poor little thing! you shall have something good directly."

And away she bustled to get it. Left alone, Ellen's tears flowed a few minutes very fast. She felt forlorn; and she was besides, as Mrs. Forbes opined, both tired and faint. But she did not wish to be found weeping, she checked her tears, and was sitting again quietly before the fire when the landlady returned.

Mrs. Forbes had a great bowl of milk in one hand, and a plate of bread in the other, which she placed on the kitchen table, and setting a chair, called Ellen to come and partake of it.

"Come, dear, – here is something that will do you good. I thought there was a piece of pie in the buttery, and so there was, but Mr. Forbes must have got hold of it, for it ain't there now; and there ain't a bit of cake in the house for you; but I thought maybe you would like this as well as anything. Come!"

Ellen thanked her, but said she did not want anything.

"Oh yes, you do," said Mrs. Forbes; "I know better. You're as pale as I don't know what. Come! this'll put roses in your cheek. Don't you like bread and milk?"

"Yes, very much indeed, ma'am," said Ellen, "but I'm not hungry." She rose, however, and came to the table.

"Oh, well, try to eat a bit just to please me. It's real good country milk – not a bit of cream off. You don't get such milk as that in the city, I guess. That's right! I see the roses coming back to your cheeks already. Is your pa in New York now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You expect your pa and ma up to Thirlwall by-and-by, don't you?"

"No, ma'am."

Mrs. Forbes was surprised, and longed to ask why not, and what Ellen had come for; but the shade that had passed over her face as she answered the last question warned the landlady she was getting upon dangerous ground.

"Does your aunt expect you to-night?"

"I believe so, ma'am, – I don't know, – she was to have met me; papa said he would write."

"Oh, well! maybe something hindered her from coming. It's no matter; you'll get home just as well. Mr. Van Brunt will be here soon, I guess; it's most time for him to be along."

She went to the front door to look out for him, but returned without any news. A few minutes passed in silence, for though full of curiosity, the good landlady dared not ask what she wanted to know, for fear of again exciting the sorrow of her little companion. She contented herself with looking at Ellen, who on her part, much rested and refreshed, had turned from the table, and was again, though somewhat less sadly, gazing into the fire.

Presently the great wooden clock struck half-past five, with a whirling rickety voice, for all the world like a horse grasshopper. Ellen at first wondered where it came from, and was looking at the clumsy machine that reached nearly from the floor of the kitchen to the ceiling, when a door at the other end of the room opened, and "Good day, Mrs. Forbes," in a rough but not unpleasant voice, brought her head quickly round in that direction. There stood a large, strong-built man, with an ox-whip in his hand. He was well-made and rather handsome, but there was something of heaviness in the air of both face and person mixed with his certainly good-humoured expression. His dress was as rough as his voice – a grey frock-coat, green velveteen pantaloons, and a fur cap that had seen its best days some time

ago.

"Good day, Mrs. Forbes," said this personage; "Sam said you wanted me to stop as I went along."

"Ah, how d'ye do, Mr. Van Brunt?" said the landlady, rising; "you've got the ox-cart with you, ha'n't you?"

"Yes, I've got the ox-cart," said the person addressed. "I came in town for a barrel of flour, and then the near ox had lost both his fore shoes off, and I had to go over there, and Hammersley has kept me a precious long time. What's wanting, Mrs. Forbes? I can't stop."

"You've no load in the cart, have you?" said the landlady.

"No; I should have had though, but Miller had no shorts nor fresh flour, nor won't till next week. What's to go down, Mrs. Forbes?"

"The nicest load ever you carried, Mr. Van Brunt. Here's a little lady come to stay with Miss Fortune. She's a daughter of Captain Montgomery, Miss Fortune's brother, you know. She came by the stage a little while ago, and the thing is how to get her down to-night. She can go in the cart, can't she?"

Mr. Van Brunt looked a little doubtful, and pulling off his cap with one hand, while he scratched his head with the other, he examined Ellen from head to foot; much as if she had been some great bale of goods, and he were considering whether his cart would hold her or not.

"Well," said he at length, "I don't know but she can; but there ain't nothing on 'arth for her to sit down upon?"

"Oh, never mind; I'll fix that," said Mrs. Forbes. "Is there any straw in the bottom of the cart?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, I'll fix it," said Mrs. Forbes. "You get her trunk into the cart, will you, Mr. Van Brunt? and I'll see to the rest."

Mr. Van Brunt moved off without another word to do what was desired of him, – apparently quite confounded at having a passenger instead of his more wonted load of bags and barrels. And his face still continued to wear the singular, doubtful expression it had put on at first hearing the news. Ellen's trunk was quickly hoisted in, however; and Mrs. Forbes presently appeared with a little armchair, which Mr. Van Brunt with an approving look bestowed in the cart, planting it with its back against the trunk to keep it steady. Mrs. Forbes then, raising herself on tiptoe by the side of the cart, took a view of the arrangements.

"That won't do yet," said she; "her feet will be cold on that bare floor, and 'tain't over clean, neither. Here, Sally! run up and fetch me that piece of carpet you'll find lying at the top of the back-stairs. Now, hurry! Now, Mr. Van Brunt, I depend upon you to get my things back again; will you see and bring 'em the first time you come in town?"

"I'll see about it. But what if I can't get hold of them?" answered the person addressed, with a half smile.

"Oh," said Mrs. Forbes, with another, "I leave that to you; you have your ways and means. Now, just spread this carpet down

nicely under her chair, and then she'll be fixed. Now, my darling, you'll ride like a queen. But how are you going to get in? Will you let Mr. Van Brunt lift you up?"

Ellen's "Oh no, ma'am, if you please!" was accompanied with such an evident shrinking from the proposal, that Mrs. Forbes did not press it. A chair was brought from the kitchen, and by making a long step from it to the top of the wheel, and then to the edge of the cart, Ellen was at length safely stowed in her place. Kind Mrs. Forbes then stretched herself up over the side of the cart to shake hands with her and bid her good-bye, telling her again she would ride like a queen. Ellen answered only "Good-bye, ma'am;" but it was said with a look of so much sweetness, and eyes swimming half in sadness and half in gratefulness, that the good landlady could not forget it.

"I do think," said she, when she went back to her husband, "that is the dearest little thing, about, I ever did see."

"Humph!" said her husband, "I reckon Miss Fortune will think so too."

The doubtful look came back to Mrs. Forbes' face, and with another little grave shake of her head she went into the kitchen.

"How kind she is! how good everybody is to me!" thought little Ellen, as she moved off in state in her chariot drawn by oxen. Quite a contrast this new way of travelling was to the noisy stage and swift steamer. Ellen did not know at first whether to like or dislike it; but she came to the conclusion that it was very funny, and a remarkably amusing way of getting along. There was one

disadvantage about it certainly, – their rate of travel was very slow. Ellen wondered her charioteer did not make his animals go faster; but she soon forgot their lazy progress in the interest of novel sights and new scenes.

Slowly, very slowly, the good oxen drew the cart and the little queen in the arm-chair out of the town, and they entered upon the open country. The sun had already gone down when they left the inn, and the glow of his setting had faded a good deal by the time they got quite out of the town; but light enough was left still to delight Ellen with the pleasant look of the country. It was a lovely evening, and quiet as summer; not a breath stirring. The leaves were all off the trees; the hills were brown; but the soft warm light that still lingered upon them forbade any look of harshness or dreariness. These hills lay towards the west, and at Thirlwall were not more than two miles distant, but sloping off more to the west as the range extended in a southerly direction. Between, the ground was beautifully broken. Rich fields and meadows lay on all sides, sometimes level, and sometimes with a soft, wavy surface, where Ellen thought it must be charming to run up and down. Every now and then these were varied by a little rising ground capped with a piece of woodland; and beautiful trees, many of them, were seen standing alone, especially by the roadside. All had a cheerful, pleasant look. The houses were very scattered; in the whole way they passed but few. Ellen's heart regularly began to beat when they came in sight of one, and "I wonder if that is Aunt Fortune's house!" – "Perhaps it is!" –

or "I hope it is not!" were the thoughts that rose in her mind. But slowly the oxen brought her abreast of the houses, one after another, and slowly they passed on beyond, and there was no sign of getting home yet. Their way was through pleasant lanes towards the south, but constantly approaching the hills. About half a mile from Thirlwall they crossed a little river, not more than thirty yards broad, and after that the twilight deepened fast. The shades gathered on field and hill; everything grew brown, and then dusky; and then Ellen was obliged to content herself with what was very near, for further than that she could only see the outlines. She began again to think of their slow travelling, and to wonder that Mr. Van Brunt could be content with it. She wondered too what made him walk, when he might just as well have sat in the cart; the truth was he had chosen that for the purpose that he might have a good look at the little queen in the arm-chair. Apparently, however, he too now thought it might be as well to make a little haste, for he thundered out some orders to his oxen, accompanied with two or three strokes of his heavy lash, which, though not cruel by any means, went to Ellen's heart.

"Them lazy critters won't go fast anyhow," said he to Ellen, "they will take their own time; it ain't no use to cut them."

"Oh no! pray don't, if you please!" said Ellen in a voice of earnest entreaty.

"'Tain't fair, neither," continued Mr. Van Brunt, lashing his great whip from side to side without touching anything. "I have seen critters that would take any quantity of whipping to make

them go, but them 'ere ain't of that kind; they'll work as long as they can stand, poor fellows!"

There was a little silence, during which Ellen eyed her rough charioteer, not knowing exactly what to make of him.

"I guess this is the first time you ever rid in an ox-cart, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Ellen; "I never saw one before."

"Ha'n't you never seen an ox-cart! Well, how do you like it?"

"I like it very much indeed. Have we much further to go before we get to Aunt Fortune's house?"

"'Aunt Fortune's house!' a pretty good bit yet. You see that mountain over there?" pointing with his whip to a hill directly west of them, and about a mile distant.

"Yes," said Ellen.

"That's the Nose. Then you see that other?" pointing to one that lay some two miles further south; "Miss Fortune's house is just this side of that; it's all of two miles from here."

And urged by this recollection, he again scolded and cheered the patient oxen, who for the most part kept on their steady way without any reminder. But perhaps it was for Ellen's sake that he scarcely touched them with the whip.

"That don't hurt them, not a bit," he remarked to Ellen, "it only lets them know that I'm here, and they must mind their business. So you're Miss Fortune's niece, eh?"

"Yes," said Ellen.

"Well," said Mr. Van Brunt, with a desperate attempt at being

complimentary, "I shouldn't care if you was mine too."

Ellen was somewhat astounded, and so utterly unable to echo the wish, that she said nothing. She did not know it, but Mr. Van Brunt had made, for him, most extraordinary efforts at sociability. Having quite exhausted himself, he now mounted into the cart and sat silent, only now and then uttering energetic "Gee's!" and "Haw's!" which greatly excited Ellen's wonderment. She discovered they were meant for the ears of the oxen, but more than that she could not make out.

They plodded along very slowly, and the evening fell fast. As they left behind the hill which Mr. Van Brunt had called "the Nose," they could see, through an opening in the mountains, a bit of the western horizon, and some brightness still lingering there; but it was soon hid from view, and darkness veiled the whole country. Ellen could amuse herself no longer with looking about; she could see nothing very clearly but the outline of Mr. Van Brunt's broad back, just before her. But the stars had come out; and, brilliant and clear, they were looking down upon her with their thousand eyes. Ellen's heart jumped when she saw them with a mixed feeling of pleasure and sadness. They carried her right back to the last evening, when she was walking up the hill with Timmins; she remembered her anger against Mrs. Dunscombe, and her kind friend's warning not to indulge it, and all his teaching that day; and tears came with the thought, how glad she should be to hear him speak to her again. Still looking up at the beautiful quiet stars, she thought of her dear far-off mother,

how long it was already since she had seen her; faster and faster the tears dropped; and then she thought of that glorious One who had made the stars, and was above them all, and who could and did see her mother and her, though ever so far apart, and could hear and bless them both. The little face was no longer upturned – it was buried in her hands and bowed to her lap, and tears streamed as she prayed that God would bless her dear mother and take care of her. Not once nor twice; the fulness of Ellen's heart could not be poured out in one asking. Greatly comforted at last at having, as it were, laid over the care of her mother upon One who was able, she thought of herself and her late resolution to serve Him. She was in the same mind still. She could not call herself a Christian yet, but she was resolved to be one; and she earnestly asked the Saviour she sought to make her and keep her His child. And then Ellen felt happy.

Quiet, and weariness, and even drowsiness succeeded. It was well the night was still, for it had grown quite cool, and a breeze would have gone through and through Ellen's nankeen coat. As it was she began to be chilly, when Mr. Van Brunt, who, since he had got into the cart, had made no remarks except to his oxen, turned round a little and spoke to her again.

"It's only a little bit of way we've got to go now," said he; "we're turning the corner."

The words seemed to shoot through Ellen's heart. She was wide awake instantly, and quite warm; and, leaning forward in her little chair, she strove to pierce the darkness on either hand of

her, to see whereabouts the house stood, and how things looked. She could discern nothing but misty shadows and outlines of she could not tell what, the starlight was too dim to reveal anything to a stranger.

"There's the house," said Mr. Van Brunt after a few minutes more; "do you see it yonder?"

Ellen strained her eyes, but could make out nothing, not even a glimpse of white. She sat back in her chair, her heart beating violently. Presently Mr. Van Brunt jumped down and opened a gate at the side of the road; and with a great deal of "gee" – ing, the oxen turned to the right, and drew the cart a little way uphill, then stopped on what seemed level ground.

"Here we are!" cried Mr. Van Brunt, as he threw his whip on the ground, "and late enough! You must be tired of that little arm-chair by this time. Come to the side of the cart and I'll lift you down."

Poor Ellen! There was no help for it. She came to the side of the cart, and taking her in his arms her rough charioteer set her very gently and carefully on the ground.

"There!" said he, "now you can run right in; do you see that little gate?"

"No," said Ellen, "I can't see anything."

"Well, come here," said he, "and I'll show you. Here – you're running agin the fence; this way."

And he opened a little wicket, which Ellen managed to stumble through.

"Now," said he, "go straight up to that door yonder, and open it, and you'll see where to go. Don't knock, but just pull the latch and go in."

And he went off to his oxen. Ellen at first saw no door, and did not even know where to look for it; by degrees, as her head became clearer, the large dark shadow of the house stood before her, and a little glimmering light of a path seemed to lead onward from where she stood. With unsteady steps Ellen pursued it till her foot struck against the stone before the door. Her trembling fingers found the latch, lifted it, and she entered. All was dark; but at the right a window showed light glimmering within. Ellen made toward it, and groping, came to another door-latch. This was big and clumsy; however, she managed it, and pushing open the heavy door, went in.

It was a good-sized cheerful-looking kitchen. A fine fire was burning in the enormous fireplace; the white walls and ceiling were yellow in the light of the flame. No candles were needed, and none were there. The supper table was set, and with its snow-white tablecloth and shining furniture, looked very comfortable indeed. But the only person there was an old woman, sitting by the side of the fire, with her back towards Ellen. She seemed to be knitting, but did not move nor look round. Ellen had come a step or two into the room, and there she stood, unable to speak or to go any further. "Can that be Aunt Fortune?" she thought; "she can't be as old as that!"

In another minute a door opened at her right, just behind the

old woman's back, and a second figure appeared at the top of a flight of stairs which led down from the kitchen. She came in, shutting the door behind her with her foot; and indeed, both hands were full, one holding a lamp and a knife, and the other a plate of butter. The sight of Ellen stopped her short.

"What is this? and what do you leave the door open for, child?" she said.

She advanced towards it, plate and lamp in hand, and setting her back against the door, shut it vigorously.

"Who are you? and what's wanting?"

"I am Ellen Montgomery, ma'am," said Ellen timidly.

"*What?*" said the lady, with some emphasis.

"Didn't you expect me, ma'am?" said Ellen; "papa said he would write."

"Why, is this Ellen Montgomery?" said Miss Fortune, apparently forced to the conclusion that it must be.

"Yes, ma'am," said Ellen.

Miss Fortune went to the table and put the butter and the lamp in their places. "Did you say your father wrote to tell me of your coming?"

"He said he would, ma'am," said Ellen.

"He didn't! Never sent me a line. Just like him! I never yet knew Morgan Montgomery do a thing when he promised he would."

Ellen's face flushed, and her heart swelled. She stood motionless.

"How did you get down here to-night?"

"I came in Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart," said Ellen.

"Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart! Then he's got home, has he?" And hearing at that instant a noise outside, Miss Fortune swept to the door, saying as she opened it, "Sit down, child, and take off your things."

The first command at least Ellen obeyed gladly; she did not feel enough at home to comply with the second. She only took off her bonnet.

"Well, Mr. Van Brunt," said Miss Fortune at the door, "have you brought me a barrel of flour?"

"No, Miss Fortune," said the voice of Ellen's charioteer, "I've brought you something better than that."

"Where did you find her?" said Miss Fortune, something shortly.

"Up at Forbes's."

"What have you got there?"

"A trunk. Where is it to go?"

"A trunk! Bless me! it must go upstairs; but how it is ever to get there, I am sure I don't know."

"I'll find a way to get it there, I'll engage, if you'll be so good as to open the door for me, ma'am."

"Indeed you won't! That'll never do! With your shoes!" said Miss Fortune, in a tone of indignant housewifery.

"Well, without my shoes then," said Mr. Van Brunt, with a half giggle, as Ellen heard the shoes kicked off. "Now, ma'am,

out of my way; give me a road."

Miss Fortune seized the lamp, and opening another door, ushered Mr. Van Brunt and the trunk out of the kitchen and up, Ellen saw not whither. In a minute or two they returned, and he of the ox-cart went out.

"Supper's just ready, Mr. Van Brunt," said the mistress of the house.

"Can't stay, ma'am, it's so late; must hurry home." And he closed the door behind him.

"What made you so late?" asked Miss Fortune of Ellen.

"I don't know, ma'am – I believe Mr. Van Brunt said the blacksmith had kept him."

Miss Fortune bustled about a few minutes in silence, setting some things on the table and filling the teapot.

"Come," she said to Ellen, "take off your coat and come to the table. You must be hungry by this time. It's a good while since you had your dinner, ain't it? Come, mother."

The old lady rose, and Miss Fortune taking her chair, set it by the side of the table next the fire. Ellen was opposite to her, and now, for the first time, the old lady seemed to know that she was in the room. She looked at her very attentively, but with an expressionless gaze which Ellen did not like to meet, though otherwise her face was calm and pleasant.

"Who is that?" inquired the old lady presently of Miss Fortune, in a half whisper.

"That's Morgan's daughter," was the answer.

"Morgan's daughter! Has Morgan a daughter?"

"Why, yes, mother; don't you remember I told you a month ago he was going to send her here?"

The old lady turned again with a half shake of her head towards Ellen. "Morgan's daughter," she repeated to herself softly; "she's a pretty little girl – very pretty. Will you come round here and give me a kiss, dear?"

Ellen submitted. The old lady folded her in her arms and kissed her affectionately. "That's your grandmother, Ellen," said Miss Fortune, as Ellen went back to her seat.

Ellen had no words to answer. Her aunt saw her weary, down look, and soon after supper proposed to take her upstairs. Ellen gladly followed her. Miss Fortune showed her to her room, and first asking if she wanted anything, left her to herself. It was a relief. Ellen's heart had been brimful and ready to run over for some time, but the tears could not come then. They did not now, till she had undressed and laid her weary little body on the bed; then they broke forth in an agony. "She did not kiss me! she didn't say she was glad to see me!" thought poor Ellen. But weariness this time was too much for sorrow and disappointment. It was but a few minutes, and Ellen's brow was calm again, and her eyelids still, and with the tears wet upon her cheeks, she was fast asleep.

# CHAPTER X

*Nimble mischance, that com'st so swift of foot!*

*– Shakespeare.*

The morning sun was shining full and strong in Ellen's eyes when she awoke. Bewildered at the strangeness of everything around her, she raised herself on her elbow, and took a long look at her new home. It could not help but seem cheerful. The bright beams of sunlight streaming in through the windows lighted on the wall and the old wainscoting, and paintless and rough as they were, Nature's own gilding more than made amends for their want of comeliness. Still Ellen was not much pleased with the result of her survey. The room was good-sized, and perfectly neat and clean. It had two large windows opening to the east, through which, morning by morning, the sun looked in; that was another blessing. But the floor was without the sign of a carpet, and the bare boards looked to Ellen very comfortless. The hard-finished walls were not very smooth nor particularly white. The doors and wood-work, though very neat, and even carved with some attempt at ornament, had never known the touch of paint, and had grown in the course of years to be of a light brown colour. The room was very bare of furniture, too. A dressing-table, pier-table, or what-not, stood between the windows, but it

was only a half-circular top of pine board set upon three very long, bare-looking legs – altogether of a most awkward and unhappy appearance, Ellen thought, and quite too high for her to use with any comfort. No glass hung over it, nor anywhere else. On the north side of the room was a fireplace; against the opposite wall stood Ellen's trunk and two chairs. That was all, except the cot bed she was lying on, and which had its place opposite the windows. The coverlid of that came in for a share of her displeasure, being of home-made white and blue worsted mixed with cotton, exceedingly thick and heavy.

"I wonder what sort of a blanket is under it," said Ellen, "if I can ever get it off to see! Pretty good, but the sheets are cotton, and so is the pillow-case."

She was still leaning on her elbow, looking around her with a rather discontented face, when some door being opened downstairs, a great noise of hissing and spluttering came to her ears, and presently after there stole to her nostrils a steaming odour of something very savoury from the kitchen. It said as plainly as any dressing-bell that she had better get up. So up she jumped, and set about the business of dressing with great alacrity. Where was the distress of last night? Gone – with the darkness. She had slept well; the bracing atmosphere had restored strength and spirits; and the bright morning light made it impossible to be dull or down-hearted, in spite of the new cause she thought she had found. She went on quick with the business of the toilet; but when it came to the washing, she suddenly

discovered that there were no conveniences for it in her room – no sign of pitcher or basin, or stand to hold them. Ellen was slightly dismayed, but presently recollected her arrival had not been looked for so soon, and probably the preparations for it had not been completed. So she finished dressing, and then set out to find her way to the kitchen. On opening the door, there was a little landing-place from which the stairs descended just in front of her, and at the left hand another door, which she supposed must lead to her aunt's room. At the foot of the stairs Ellen found herself in a large square room or hall, for one of its doors, on the east, opened to the outer air, and was in fact the front door of the house. Another Ellen tried on the south side; it would not open. A third, under the stairs, admitted her to the kitchen.

The noise of hissing and spluttering now became quite violent, and the smell of the cooking, to Ellen's fancy, rather too strong to be pleasant. Before a good fire stood Miss Fortune holding the end of a very long iron handle, by which she was kept in communication with a flat vessel sitting on the fire, in which Ellen soon discovered all this noisy and odorous cooking was going on. A tall tin coffee-pot stood on some coals in the corner of the fireplace, and another little iron vessel in front also claimed a share of Miss Fortune's attention, for she every now and then leaned forward to give a stir to whatever was in it, making each time quite a spasmodic effort to do so without quitting her hold of the long handle. Ellen drew near and looked on with great curiosity, and not a little appetite, but Miss Fortune was far too

busy to give her more than a passing glance. At length the hissing pan was brought to the hearth for some new arrangement of its contents, and Ellen seized the moment of peace and quiet to say, "Good morning, Aunt Fortune."

Miss Fortune was crouching by the pan turning her slices of pork. "How do you do this morning?" she answered without looking up.

Ellen replied that she felt a great deal better.

"Slept warm, did you?" said Miss Fortune, as she set the pan back on the fire. And Ellen could hardly answer, "Quite warm, ma'am," when the hissing and spluttering began again as loud as ever.

"I must wait," thought Ellen, "till this is over before I say what I want to. I can't scream out to ask for a basin and towel."

In a few minutes the pan was removed from the fire, and Miss Fortune went on to take out the brown slices of nicely fried pork and arrange them in a deep dish, leaving a small quantity of clear fat in the pan. Ellen, who was greatly interested, and observing every step most attentively, settled in her own mind that certainly this would be thrown away, being fit for nothing but the pigs. But Miss Fortune didn't think so, for she darted into some pantry close by, and returning with a cup of cream in her hand, emptied it all into the pork fat. Then she ran into the pantry again for a little round tin box, with a cover full of holes, and shaking this gently over the pan, a fine white shower of flour fell upon the cream. The pan was then replaced on the fire and stirred, and

to Ellen's astonishment the whole changed, as if by magic, to a thick, stiff, white froth. It was not till Miss Fortune was carefully pouring this over the fried slices in the dish that Ellen suddenly recollected that breakfast was ready, and she was not.

"Aunt Fortune," she said timidly, "I haven't washed yet; there's no basin in my room."

Miss Fortune made no answer nor gave any sign of hearing; she went on dishing up breakfast. Ellen waited a few minutes.

"Will you please, ma'am, to show me where I can wash myself."

"Yes," said Miss Fortune, suddenly standing erect, "you'll have to go down to the spout."

"The spout, ma'am," said Ellen; "what's that?"

"You'll know it when you see it, I guess," answered her aunt, again stooping over her preparations. But in another moment she arose and said, "Just open that door there behind you, and go down the stairs and out at the door, and you'll see where it is, and what it is too."

Ellen still lingered. "Would you be as good as to give me a towel, ma'am," she said timidly.

Miss Fortune dashed past her and out of another door, whence she presently returned with a clean towel which she threw over Ellen's arm, and then went back to her work.

Opening the door by which she had first seen her aunt enter the night before, Ellen went down a steep flight of steps, and found herself in a lower kitchen, intended for common purposes.

It seemed not to be used at all, at least there was no fire there, and a cellar-like feeling and smell instead. That was no wonder, for beyond the fireplace on the left hand was the opening to the cellar, which, running under the other part of the house, was on a level with this kitchen. It had no furniture but a table and two chairs. The thick heavy door stood open. Passing out, Ellen looked around her for water; in what shape or form it was to present itself she had no very clear idea. She soon spied, a few yards distant, a little stream of water pouring from the end of a pipe or trough raised about a foot and a half from the ground, and a well-worn path leading to it, left no doubt of its being "the spout." But when she had reached it Ellen was in no small puzzle as to how she should manage. The water was clear and bright, and poured very fast into a shallow wooden trough underneath, whence it ran off into the meadow and disappeared.

"But what shall I do without a basin," thought Ellen, "I can't catch any water in my hands, it runs too fast. If I only could get my face under there – that would be fine!"

Very carefully and cautiously she tried it, but the continual spattering of the water had made the board on which she stood so slippery that before her face could reach the stream she came very near tumbling headlong, and so taking more of a cold bath than she wished for. So she contented herself with the drops her hands could bring to her face – a scanty supply; but those drops were deliciously cold and fresh. And afterwards she pleased herself with holding her hands in the running water, till they were

red with the cold. On the whole Ellen enjoyed her washing very much. The morning air came playing about her; its cool breath was on her cheek with health in its touch. The early sun was shining on tree, and meadow, and hill; the long shadows stretched over the grass, and the very brown out-houses looked bright. She thought it was the loveliest place she ever had seen. And that sparkling trickling water was certainly the purest and sweetest she had ever tasted. Where could it come from? It poured from a small trough made of the split trunk of a tree with a little groove or channel two inches wide hollowed out in it. But at the end of one of these troughs, another lapped on, and another at the end of that, and how many there were Ellen could not see, nor where the beginning of them was. Ellen stood gassing and wondering, drinking in the fresh air, hope and spirits rising every minute, when she suddenly recollected breakfast! She hurried in. As she expected, her aunt was at the table; but to her surprise, and not at all to her gratification, there was Mr. Van Brunt at the other end of it, eating away, very much at home indeed. In silent dismay Ellen drew her chair to the side of the table.

"Did you find the spout?" asked Miss Fortune.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, how do you like it?"

"Oh, I like it very much indeed," said Ellen. "I think it is beautiful."

Miss Fortune's face rather softened at this, and she gave Ellen an abundant supply of all that was on the table. Her journey, the

bracing air, and her cool morning wash, all together, had made Ellen very sharp, and she did justice to the breakfast. She thought never was coffee so good as this country coffee; nor anything so excellent as the brown bread and butter, both as sweet as bread and butter could be; neither was any cookery so entirely satisfactory as Miss Fortune's fried pork and potatoes. Yet her teaspoon was not silver; her knife could not boast of being either sharp or bright; and her fork was certainly made for anything else in the world but comfort and convenience, being of only two prongs, and those so far apart that Ellen had no small difficulty to carry the potato safely from her plate to her mouth. It mattered nothing; she was now looking on the bright side of things, and all this only made her breakfast taste the sweeter.

Ellen rose from the table when she had finished, and stood a few minutes thoughtfully by the fire.

"Aunt Fortune," she said at length timidly, "if you've no objection, I should like to go and take a good look all about."

"Oh yes," said Miss Fortune, "go where you like; I'll give you a week to do what you please with yourself."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Ellen, as she ran off for her bonnet; "a week's a long time. I suppose," thought she, "I shall go to school at the end of that."

Returning quickly with her white bonnet, Ellen opened the heavy kitchen door by which she had entered last night, and went out. She found herself in a kind of long shed. It had very rough walls and floor, and overhead showed the brown beams

and rafters; two little windows and a door were on the side. All manner of rubbish lay there, especially at the farther end. There were scattered about and piled up various boxes, boards, farming and garden tools, old pieces of rope and sheepskin, old iron, a cheese-press, and what not. Ellen did not stay long to look, but went out to find something pleasanter. A few yards from the shed door was the little gate through which she had stumbled in the dark, and outside of that Ellen stood still awhile. It was a fair, pleasant day, and the country scene she looked upon was very pretty. Ellen thought so. Before her, at a little distance, rose the great gable end of the barn, and a long row of outhouses stretched away from it towards the left. The ground was strewn thick with chips; and the reason was not hard to find, for a little way off, under an old stunted apple-tree, lay a huge log, well chipped on the upper surface, with the axe resting against it; and close by were some sticks of wood both chopped and unchopped. To the right the ground descended gently to a beautiful plane meadow, skirted on the hither side by a row of fine apple-trees. The smooth green flat tempted Ellen to a run, but first she looked to the left. There was the garden, she guessed, for there was a paling fence which enclosed a pretty large piece of ground; and between the garden and the house a green slope ran down to the spout. That reminded her that she intended making a journey of discovery up the course of the long trough. No time could be better than now, and she ran down the slope.

The trough was supported at some height from the ground by

little heaps of stones placed here and there along its whole course. Not far from the spout it crossed a fence. Ellen must cross it too to gain her object, and how that could be done was a great question; she resolved to try, however. But first she played awhile with the water, which had great charms for her. She dammed up the little channel with her fingers, forcing the water to flow over the side of the trough; there was something very pleasant in stopping the supply of the spout, and seeing the water trickling over where it had no business to go; and she did not heed that some of the drops took her frock in their way. She stooped her lips to the trough and drank of its sweet current, – only for fun's sake, for she was not thirsty. Finally, she set out to follow the stream up to its head. But poor Ellen had not gone more than half way towards the fence, when she all at once plunged into the mire. The green grass growing there had looked fair enough, but there was running water and black mud under the green grass, she found to her sorrow. Her shoes, her stockings, were full. What was to be done now? The journey of discovery must be given up. She forgot to think about where the water came from, in the more pressing question, "What will Aunt Fortune say?" – and the quick wish came that she had her mother to go to. However, she got out of the slough, and wiping her shoes as well as she could on the grass, she hastened back to the house.

The kitchen was all put in order, the hearth swept, the irons at the fire, and Miss Fortune just pinning her ironing blanket on the table. "Well, what's the matter?" she said, when she saw Ellen's

face; but as her glance reached the floor, her brow darkened. "Mercy on me!" she exclaimed, with slow emphasis, "what on earth have you been about? where have you been?"

Ellen explained.

"Well, you *have* made a figure of yourself! Sit down!" said her aunt shortly, as she thrust a chair down on the hearth before the fire; "I should have thought you'd have wit enough at your age to keep out of the ditch."

"I didn't see any ditch," said Ellen.

"No, I suppose not," said Miss Fortune, who was energetically twitching off Ellen's shoes and stockings with her forefinger and thumb. "I suppose not! you were staring up at the moon or stars, I suppose."

"It all looked green and smooth," said poor Ellen; "one part just like another; and the first thing I knew I was up to my ankles."

"What were you there at all for?" said Miss Fortune, shortly enough.

"I couldn't see where the water came from, and I wanted to find out."

"Well, you've found out enough for one day, I hope. Just look at those stockings! Ha'n't you got never a pair of coloured stockings, that you must go poking into the mud with white ones?"

"No, ma'am."

"Do you mean to say you never wore any but white ones at

home?"

"Yes, ma'am; I never had any others."

Miss Fortune's thoughts seemed too much for speech, from the way in which she jumped up and went off without saying anything more. She presently came back with an old pair of grey socks, which she bade Ellen put on as soon as her feet were dry.

"How many of those white stockings have you?" she said.

"Mamma bought me half-a-dozen pair of new ones just before I came away, and I had as many as that of old ones besides."

"Well, now, go up to your trunk and bring'm all down to me – every pair of white stockings you have got. There's a pair of old slippers you can put on till your shoes are dry," she said, flinging them to her; "they aren't much too big for you."

"They're not much too big for the *socks*, they're a great deal too big for me," thought Ellen; but she said nothing. She gathered all her stockings together and brought them downstairs, as her aunt had bidden her.

"Now you may run out to the barn to Mr. Van Brunt; you'll find him there, and tell him I want him to bring me some white maple bark when he comes home to dinner – white maple bark, do you hear?"

Away went Ellen, but in a few minutes came back. "I can't get in," she said.

"What's the matter?"

"Those great doors are shut, and I can't open them. I knocked, but nobody came."

"Knock at a barn door!" said Miss Fortune. "You must go in at the little cow-house door, at the left, and go round. He's in the lower barn-floor."

The barn stood lower than the level of the chip-yard, from which a little bridge led to the great doorway of the second floor. Passing down the range of outhouses, Ellen came to the little door her aunt had spoken of. "But what in the world should I do if there be cows inside there?" said she to herself. She peeped in; the cow-house was perfectly empty; and cautiously, and with many a fearful glance to the right and left, lest some terrible horned animal should present itself, Ellen made her way across the cow-house, and through the barn-yard, littered thick with straw, wet and dry, to the lower barn-floor. The door of this stood wide open. Ellen looked with wonder and pleasure when she got in. It was an immense room – the sides showed nothing but hay up to the ceiling, except here and there an enormous upright post; the floor was perfectly clean, only a few locks of hay and grains of wheat scattered upon it; and a pleasant sweet smell was there, Ellen could not tell of what. But no Mr. Van Brunt. She looked about for him, she dragged her disagreeable slippers back and forth over the floor in vain.

"Hilloa! what's wanting?" at length cried a rough voice she remembered very well. But where was the speaker? On every side, to every corner, her eyes turned without finding him. She looked up at last. There was the round face of Mr. Van Brunt peering down at her through a large opening or trap-door in the

upper floor.

"Well," said he, "have you come out here to help me thrash wheat?"

Ellen told him what she had come for.

"White maple bark; well," said he in his slow way, "I'll bring it. I wonder what's in the wind now."

So Ellen wondered, as she slowly went back to the house; and yet more, when her aunt set her to tacking her stockings together by two and two.

"What are you going to do with them, Aunt Fortune?" she at last ventured to say.

"You'll see when the time comes."

"Mayn't I keep out one pair?" said Ellen, who had a vague notion that by some mysterious means her stockings were to be prevented from ever looking white any more.

"No; just do as I tell you."

Mr. Van Brunt came at dinner-time with the white maple bark. It was thrown forthwith into a brass kettle of water, which Miss Fortune had already hung over the fire. Ellen felt sure this had something to do with her stockings, but she could ask no questions; and as soon as dinner was over she went up to her room. It didn't look pleasant now. The brown wood-work and rough dingy walls had lost their gilding. The sunshine was out of it; and what was more, the sunshine was out of Ellen's heart too. She went to the window and opened it, but there was nothing to keep it open; it slid down again as soon as she let it go. Baffled

and sad, she stood leaning her elbows on the window-sill, looking out on the grass-plat that lay before the door, and the little gate that opened on the lake, and the smooth meadow and rich broken country beyond. It was a very fair and pleasant scene in the soft sunlight of the last of October; but the charm of it was gone for Ellen; it was dreary. She looked without caring to look, or knowing what she was looking at; she felt the tears rising to her eyes, and, sick of the window, turned away. Her eye fell on her trunk; her next thought was of her desk inside of it, and suddenly her heart sprang. "I will write to mamma!" No sooner said than done. The trunk was quickly open, and hasty hands pulled out one thing after another till the desk was reached.

"But what shall I do?" thought she; "there isn't a sign of a table. Oh, what a place! I'll shut my trunk and put it on that. But here are all these things to put back first."

They were eagerly stowed away; and then kneeling by the side of the trunk, with loving hands, Ellen opened her desk. A sheet of paper was drawn from her store, and properly placed before her; the pen dipped in the ink, and at first with a hurried, then with a trembling hand she wrote, "My dear Mamma." But Ellen's heart had been swelling and swelling, with every letter of those three words, and scarcely was the last "a" finished, when the pen was dashed down, and flinging away from the desk, she threw herself on the floor in a passion of grief. It seemed as if she had her mother again in her arms, and was clinging with a death-grasp not to be parted from her. And then the feeling that she

was parted! As much bitter sorrow as a little heart can know was in poor Ellen's now. In her childish despair she wished she could die, and almost thought she should. After a time, however, though not a short time, she rose from the floor and went to her writing again; her heart a little eased by weeping, yet the tears kept coming all the time, and she could not quite keep her paper from being blotted. The first sheet was spoiled before she was aware; she took another.

"My dearest Mamma, – It makes me so glad and so sorry to write to you, that I don't know what to do. I want to see you so much, mamma, that it seems to me sometimes as if my heart would break. Oh, mamma, if I could just kiss you once more, I would give anything in the whole world. I can't be happy as long as you are away, and I'm afraid I can't be good either; but I will try. Oh, I will try, mamma. I have so much to say to you that I don't know where to begin. I am sure my paper will never hold it all. You will want to know about my journey. The first day was on the steamboat, you know. I should have had a dreadful time that day, mamma, but for something I'll tell you about. I was sitting up on the upper deck, thinking about you, and feeling very badly indeed, when a gentleman came and spoke to me, and asked me what was the matter. Mamma, I can't tell you how kind he was to me. He kept me with him the whole day. He took me all over the boat, and showed me all about a great many things, and he talked to me a great deal. Oh, mamma, how he talked to me. He read in the Bible to me, and explained it, and he tried to make me a Christian. And

oh, mamma, when he was talking to me, how I wanted to do as he said, and I resolved I would. I did, mamma, and I've not forgotten it. I will try indeed, but I am afraid it will be very hard without you or him, or anybody else to help me. You couldn't have been kinder yourself, mamma; he kissed me at night when I bid him good-bye, and I was very sorry indeed. I wish I could see him again. Mamma, I will always love that gentleman, if I never see him again in the world. I wish there was somebody here that I could love, but there is not. You will want to know what sort of a person my Aunt Fortune is. I think she is very good-looking, or she would be if her nose was not quite so sharp; but, mamma, I can't tell you what sort of a feeling I have about her; it seems to me as if she was sharp all over. I am sure her eyes are as sharp as two needles. And she don't walk like other people; at least sometimes. She makes queer little jerks and starts and jumps, and flies about like I don't know what. I am afraid it is not right for me to write so about her; but may I not tell you, mamma? There's nobody else for me to talk to. I can't like Aunt Fortune much yet, and I am sure she don't like me; but I will try to make her. I have not forgotten what you said to me about that. Oh, dear mamma, I will try to mind everything you ever said to me in your life. I am afraid you won't like what I have written about Aunt Fortune; but indeed I have done nothing to displease her, and I will try not to. If you were only here, mamma, I should say it was the loveliest place I ever saw in my life. Perhaps, after all, I shall feel better, and be quite happy by-and-by; but oh, mamma, how glad I shall be when I get a letter from

you. I shall begin to look for it soon, and I think I shall go out of my wits with joy when it comes. I had the funniest ride down here from Thirlwall that you can think; how do you guess I came? In a cart drawn by oxen. They went so slow we were an age getting here; but I liked it very much. There was a good-natured man driving the oxen, and he was kind to me; but, mamma, what do you think? he eats at the table. I know what you would tell me; you would say I must not mind trifles. Well, I will try not, mamma. Oh, darling mother, I can't think much of anything but you. I think of you the whole time. Who makes tea for you now? Are you better? Are you going to leave New York soon? It seems dreadfully long since I saw you. I am tired, dear mamma, and cold; and it is getting dark. I must stop. I have a good big room to myself; that is a good thing. I should not like to sleep with Aunt Fortune. Good-night, dear mamma. I wish I could sleep with you once more. Oh, when will that be again, mamma? Good-night. Good-night.

*"Your affectionate Ellen."*

The letter finished was carefully folded, enclosed, and directed; and then with an odd mixture of pleasure and sadness, Ellen lit one of her little wax matches, as she called them, and sealed it very nicely. She looked at it fondly a minute when all was done, thinking of the dear fingers that would hold and open it; her next movement was to sink her face in her hands, and pray most earnestly for a blessing upon her mother and help for herself – poor Ellen felt she needed it. She was afraid of lingering lest tea should be ready; so, locking up her letter, she went downstairs.

The tea was ready. Miss Fortune and Mr. Van Brunt were at the table, and so was the old lady, whom Ellen had not seen before that day. She quietly drew up her chair to its place.

"Well," said Miss Fortune, "I hope you feel better for your long stay upstairs."

"I do, ma'am," said Ellen; "a great deal better."

"What have you been about?"

"I have been writing, ma'am."

"Writing what?"

"I have been writing to mamma."

Perhaps Miss Fortune heard the trembling of Ellen's voice, or her sharp glance saw the lip quiver and eyelid droop. Something softened her. She spoke in a different tone; asked Ellen if her tea was good; took care she had plenty of the bread and butter, and excellent cheese, which was on the table; and lastly cut her a large piece of the pumpkin pie. Mr. Van Brunt too looked once or twice at Ellen's face as if he thought all was not right there. He was not so sharp as Miss Fortune, but the swollen eyes and tear stains were not quite lost upon him.

After tea, when Mr. Van Brunt was gone, and the tea things cleared away, Ellen had the pleasure of finding out the mystery of the brass kettle and the white maple bark. The kettle now stood in the chimney corner. Miss Fortune, seating herself before it, threw in all Ellen's stockings except one pair, which she flung over to her, saying, "There, I don't care if you keep that one." Then, tucking up her sleeves to the elbows, she fished up pair

after pair out of the kettle, and wringing them out hung them on chairs to dry. But, as Ellen had opined, they were no longer white, but of a fine slate colour. She looked on in silence, too much vexed to ask questions.

"Well, how do you like that?" said Miss Fortune at length, when she had got two or three chairs round the fire pretty well hung with a display of slate-coloured cotton legs.

"I don't like it at all," said Ellen.

"Well, *I* do. How many pair of white stockings would you like to drive into the mud and let me wash out every week?"

"*You* wash!" said Ellen in surprise; "I didn't think of *your* doing it."

"Who did you think *was* going to do it? There's nothing in this house but goes through my hand, I can tell you, and so must you. I suppose you've lived all your life among people that thought a great deal of wetting their little finger; but I am not one of 'em, I guess you'll find."

Ellen was convinced of that already.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" said Miss Fortune presently.

"I'm thinking of my nice white darning cotton," said Ellen. "I might just as well not have had it."

"Is it wound or in the skein?"

"In the skein."

"Then just go right up and get it. I'll warrant I'll fix it so that you'll have a use for it."

Ellen obeyed, but musing rather uncomfortably what else

there was of hers that Miss Fortune could lay hands on. She seemed in imagination to see all her white things turning brown. She resolved she would keep her trunk well locked up; but what if her keys should be called for?

She was dismissed to her room soon after the dyeing business was completed. It was rather a disagreeable surprise to find her bed still unmade; and she did not at all like the notion that the making of it in future must depend entirely upon herself; Ellen had no fancy for such handiwork. She went to sleep in somewhat the same dissatisfied mood with which the day had been begun; displeasure at her coarse heavy coverlid and cotton sheets again taking its place among weightier matters; and dreamed of tying them together into a rope by which to let herself down out of the window; but when she had got so far, Ellen's sleep became sound, and the end of the dream was never known.

# CHAPTER XI

*Downward, and ever farther.*
*And ever the brook beside;*
*And ever fresher murmured,*
*And ever clearer, the tide.*

*– Longfellow. From the German.*

Clouds and rain and cold winds kept Ellen within doors for several days. This did not better the state of matters between herself and her aunt. Shut up with her in the kitchen from morning till night, with the only variety of the old lady's company part of the time, Ellen thought neither of them improved upon acquaintance. Perhaps they thought the same of her; she was certainly not in her best mood. With nothing to do, the time hanging very heavy on her hands, disappointed, unhappy, frequently irritated, Ellen became at length very ready to take offence, and nowise disposed to pass it over or smooth it away. She seldom showed this in words, it is true, but it rankled in her mind. Listless and brooding, she sat day after day, comparing the present with the past, wishing vain wishes, indulging bootless regrets, and looking upon her aunt and grandmother with an eye of more settled aversion. The only other person she saw was Mr. Van Brunt, who came in regularly to meals; but he never said anything unless in answer to Miss Fortune's questions and

remarks about the farm concerns. These did not interest her, and she was greatly wearied with the sameness of her life. She longed to go out again; but Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday passed, and the weather still kept her close prisoner. Monday brought a change, but though a cool drying wind blew all day, the ground was too wet to venture out.

On the evening of that day, as Miss Fortune was setting the table for tea, and Ellen sitting before the fire, feeling weary of everything, the kitchen door opened, and a girl somewhat larger and older than herself came in. She had a pitcher in her hand, and marching straight up to the tea-table, she said —

"Will you let granny have a little milk to-night, Miss Fortune? I can't find the cow. I'll bring it back to-morrow."

"You ha'n't lost her, Nancy?"

"Have, though," said the other; "she's been away these two days."

"Why didn't you go somewhere nearer for milk?"

"Oh, I don't know; I guess your'n is the sweetest," said the girl, with a look Ellen did not understand.

Miss Fortune took the pitcher and went into the pantry. While she was gone the two children improved the time in looking very hard at each other. Ellen's gaze was modest enough, though it showed a great deal of interest in the new object; but the broad, searching stare of the other seemed intended to take in all there was of Ellen from her head to her feet, and keep it, and find out what sort of a creature she was at once. Ellen almost shrank from

the bold black eyes, but they never wavered, till Miss Fortune's voice broke the spell.

"How's your grandmother, Nancy?"

"She's tolerable, ma'am, thank you."

"Now, if you don't bring it back to-morrow, you won't get any more in a hurry," said Miss Fortune, as she handed the pitcher back to the girl.

"I'll mind it," said the latter, with a little nod of her head, which seemed to say there was no danger of her forgetting.

"Who is that, Aunt Fortune?" said Ellen, when she was gone.

"She is a girl that lives up on the mountain yonder."

"But what's her name?"

"I had just as lief you wouldn't know her name. She ain't a good girl. Don't you never have anything to do with her."

Ellen was in no mind to give credit to all her aunt's opinions, and she set this down as in part at least coming from ill-humour.

The next morning was calm and fine, and Ellen spent nearly the whole of it out of doors. She did not venture near the ditch, but in every other direction she explored the ground, and examined what stood or grew upon it as thoroughly as she dared. Towards noon she was standing by the little gate at the back of the house, unwilling to go in, but not knowing what more to do, when Mr. Van Brunt came from the lane with a load of wood. Ellen watched the oxen toiling up the ascent, and thought it looked like very hard work; she was sorry for them.

"Isn't that a very heavy load?" she asked of their driver, as he

was throwing it down under the apple-tree.

"Heavy? Not a bit of it. It ain't nothing at all to 'em. They'd take twice as much any day with pleasure."

"I shouldn't think so," said Ellen; "they don't look as if there was much pleasure about it. What makes them lean over so against each other when they are coming up hill?"

"Oh, that's just a way they've got. They're so fond of each other, I suppose. Perhaps they've something particular to say, and want to put their heads together for the purpose."

"No," said Ellen, half laughing, "it can't be that; they wouldn't take the very hardest time for that; they would wait till they got to the top of the hill; but there they stand just as if they were asleep, only their eyes are open, poor things."

"They're not very poor anyhow," said Mr. Van Brunt; "there ain't a finer yoke of oxen to be seen than them are, nor in better condition."

He went on throwing the wood out of the cart, and Ellen stood looking at him.

"What'll you give me if I'll make you a scup one of these days?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"A scup?" said Ellen.

"Yes – a scup! How would you like it?"

"I don't know what it is," said Ellen.

"A scup! – maybe you don't know it by that name; some folks call it a swing."

"A swing! Oh yes," said Ellen; "now I know. Oh, I like it very

much."

"Would you like to have one?"

"Yes, indeed I should, very much."

"Well, what'll you give me if I'll fix you out?"

"I don't know," said Ellen; "I have nothing to give. I'll be very much obliged to you indeed."

"Well now, come, I'll make a bargain with you; I'll engage to fix up a scup for you if you'll give me a kiss."

Poor Ellen was struck dumb. The good-natured Dutchman had taken a fancy to the little pale-faced, sad-looking stranger, and really felt very kindly disposed towards her; but she neither knew nor at that moment cared about that. She stood motionless, utterly astounded at this unheard-of proposal, and not a little indignant; but when, with a good-natured smile upon his round face, he came near to claim the kiss he no doubt thought himself sure of, Ellen shot from him like an arrow from a bow. She rushed to the house, and bursting open the door, stood with flushed face and sparkling eyes in the presence of her astonished aunt.

"What in the world is the matter?" exclaimed that lady.

"He wanted to kiss me!" said Ellen, scarce knowing whom she was talking to, and crimsoning more and more.

"Who wanted to kiss you?"

"That man out there."

"What man?"

"That man that drives the oxen."

"What, Mr. Van Brunt?" And Ellen never forgot the loud ha! ha! which burst from Miss Fortune's wide-opened mouth.

"Well, why didn't you let him kiss you?"

The laugh, the look, the tone, stung Ellen to the very quick. In a fury of passion she dashed away out of the kitchen and up to her own room. And there, for a while, the storm of anger drove over her with such violence that conscience had hardly time to whisper. Sorrow came in again as passion faded, and gentler but very bitter weeping took the place of convulsive sobs of rage and mortification, and then the whispers of conscience began to be heard a little. "Oh, mamma! mamma!" cried poor Ellen in her heart; "how miserable I am without you! I never can like Aunt Fortune; it's of no use – I never can like her. I hope I sha'n't get to hate her! – and that isn't right. I am forgetting all that is good, and there's nobody to put me in mind. Oh, mamma! if I could lay my head in your lap for a minute!" Then came thoughts of her Bible and hymn-book, and the friend who had given it – sorrowful thoughts they were; and at last, humbled and sad, poor Ellen sought that great Friend she knew she had displeased, and prayed earnestly to be made a good child. She felt and owned she was not one now.

It was long after mid-day when Ellen rose from her knees. Her passion was all gone; she felt more gentle and pleasant than she had done for days; but at the bottom of her heart resentment was not all gone. She still thought she had cause to be angry, and she could not think of her aunt's look and tone without a thrill of

painful feeling. In a very different mood, however, from that in which she had flown upstairs two or three hours before, she now came softly down and went out by the front door to avoid meeting her aunt. She had visited that morning a little brook which ran through the meadow on the other side of the road. It had great charms for her; and now crossing the lane and creeping under the fence, she made her way again to its banks. At a particular spot, where the brook made one of its sudden turns, Ellen sat down upon the grass and watched the dark water – whirling, brawling over the stones, hurrying past her with ever the same soft, pleasant sound, and she was never tired of it. She did not hear footsteps drawing near, and it was not till some one was close beside her, and a voice spoke almost in her ears, that she raised her startled eyes and saw the little girl who had come the evening before for a pitcher of milk.

"What are you doing?" said the latter.

"I'm watching for fish," said Ellen.

"Watching for fish!" said the other, rather disdainfully.

"Yes," said Ellen; "there, in that little quiet place they come sometimes. I've seen two."

"You can look for fish another time. Come now and take a walk with me."

"Where?" said Ellen.

"Oh, you shall see. Come! I'll take you all about and show you where people live. You ha'n't been anywhere yet, have you?"

"No," said Ellen, "and I should like dearly to go, but – "

She hesitated. Her aunt's words came to mind, that this was not a good girl, and that she must have nothing to do with her; but she had not more than half believed them, and she could not possibly bring herself now to go in and ask Miss Fortune's leave to take this walk. "I am sure," thought Ellen, "she would refuse me if there was no reason in the world." And then the delight of rambling through the beautiful country and being for awhile in other company than that of her Aunt Fortune and the old grandmother! The temptation was too great to be withstood.

"Well, what are you thinking about?" said the girl. "What's the matter? Won't you come?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "I'm ready. Which way shall we go?"

With the assurance from the other that she would show her plenty of ways, they set off down the lane; Ellen with a secret fear of being seen and called back, till they had gone some distance, and the house was hid from view. Then her pleasure became great. The afternoon was fair and mild, the footing pleasant, and Ellen felt like a bird out of a cage. She was ready to be delighted with every trifle; her companion could not by any means understand or enter into her bursts of pleasure at many a little thing which she of the black eyes thought not worthy of notice. She tried to bring Ellen back to higher subjects of conversation.

"How long have you been here?" she asked.

"Oh, a good while," said Ellen; "I don't know exactly; it's a week, I believe."

"Why, do you call that a good while?" said the other.

"Well, it seems a good while to me," said Ellen, sighing; "it seems as long as four, I am sure."

"Then you don't like to live here much, do you?"

"I had rather be at home, of course."

"How do you like your Aunt Fortune?"

"How do I like her?" said Ellen, hesitating. "I think she's good-looking, and very smart."

"Yes, you needn't tell me she's smart – everybody knows that; that ain't what I ask you. How do you *like* her?"

"How do I like her?" said Ellen again; "how can I tell how I shall like her? I haven't lived with her but a week yet."

"You might just as well ha' spoke out," said the other somewhat scornfully. "Do you think I don't know you half hate her already? and it'll be whole hating in another week more. When I first heard you'd come, I guessed you'd have a sweet time with her."

"Why?" said Ellen.

"Oh, don't ask me why," said the other impatiently, "when you know as well as I do. Every soul that speaks of you says, 'poor child,' and 'I'm glad I ain't her.' You needn't try to come cunning over me. I shall be too much for you, I tell you."

"I don't know what you mean," said Ellen.

"Oh no, I suppose you don't," said the other in the same tone; "of course you don't; I suppose you don't know whether your tongue is your own or somebody's else. You think Miss Fortune

is an angel, and so do I; to be sure she is!"

Not very well pleased with this kind of talk, Ellen walked on for a while in grave silence. Her companion meantime recollected herself; when she spoke again it was with an altered tone.

"How do you like Mr. Van Brunt?"

"I don't like him at all," said Ellen, reddening.

"Don't you?" said the other, surprised, "why, everybody likes him. What don't you like him for?"

"I don't like him," repeated Ellen.

"Ain't Miss Fortune queer to live in the way she does?"

"What way?" said Ellen.

"Why, without any help – doing all her own work, and living all alone, when she's so rich as she is."

"Is she rich?" asked Ellen.

"Rich! I guess she is! she's one of the very best farms in the country, and money enough to have a dozen help, if she wanted 'em. Van Brunt takes care of the farm, you know."

"Does he?" said Ellen.

"Why, yes, of course he does! didn't you know that? what did you think he was at your house all the time for?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Ellen. "And are those Aunt Fortune's oxen that he drives?"

"To be sure they are. Well, I do think you *are* green, to have been there all this time and not found that out. Mr. Van Brunt does just what he pleases over the whole farm, though; hires what

help he wants, manages everything; and then he has his share of all that comes off it. I tell you what – you'd better make friends with Van Brunt, for if anybody can help you when your aunt gets one of her ugly fits, it's him; she don't care to meddle with him much."

Leaving the lane, the two girls took a footpath leading across the fields. The stranger was greatly amused with Ellen's awkwardness in climbing fences. Where it was a possible thing, she was fain to crawl under; but once or twice that could not be done, and having with infinite difficulty mounted to the top rail, poor Ellen sat there in a most tottering condition, uncertain on which side of the fence she should tumble over, but seeing no other possible way of getting down. The more she trembled the more her companion laughed, standing aloof meanwhile, and insisting she should get down by herself. Necessity enabled her to do this at last, and each time the task became easier; but Ellen secretly made up her mind that her new friend was not likely to prove a very good one.

As they went along, she pointed out to Ellen two or three houses in the distance, and gave her not a little gossip about the people who lived in them; but all this Ellen scarcely heard, and cared nothing at all about. She had paused by the side of a large rock standing alone by the wayside, and was looking very closely at its surface.

"What is this curious brown stuff," said Ellen, "growing all over the rock – like shrivelled and dried-up leaves? Isn't it

curious? Part of it stands out like a leaf, and part of it sticks fast; I wonder if it grows here, or what it is."

"Oh, never mind," said the other; "it always grows on the rocks everywhere. I don't know what it is, and what's more, I don't care. 'Taint worth looking at. Come!"

Ellen followed her. But presently the path entered an open woodland, and now her delight broke forth beyond bounds.

"Oh, how pleasant this is! how lovely this is! Isn't it beautiful?" she exclaimed.

"Isn't *what* beautiful? I do think you are the queerest girl, Ellen."

"Why, everything," said Ellen, not minding the latter part of the sentence; "the ground is beautiful, and those tall trees, and that beautiful blue sky – only look at it."

"The ground is all covered with stones and rocks – is that what you call beautiful? and the trees are as homely as they can be, with their great brown stems and no leaves. Come! what *are* you staring at?"

Ellen's eyes were fixed on a string of dark spots which were rapidly passing overhead.

"Hark," said she; "do you hear that noise? What is that? What is that?"

"Isn't it only a flock of ducks," said the other contemptuously; "come! do come!"

But Ellen was rooted to the ground, and her eyes followed the airy travellers till the last one had quitted the piece of blue sky

which the surrounding woods left to be seen. And scarcely were these gone when a second flight came in view, following exactly in the track of the first.

"Where are they going?" said Ellen.

"I am sure I don't know where they are going; they never told me. I know where *I* am going; I should like to know whether you are going along with me."

Ellen, however, was in no hurry. The ducks had disappeared, but her eye had caught something else that charmed it.

"What is this?" said Ellen.

"Nothing but moss."

"Is that moss? How beautiful! how green and soft it is! I declare it's as soft as a carpet."

"As soft as a carpet!" repeated the other: "I should like to see a carpet as soft as that! *you* never did, I guess."

"Indeed I have, though," said Ellen, who was gently jumping up and down on the green moss to try its softness, with a face of great satisfaction.

"I don't believe it a bit," said the other; "all the carpets I ever saw were as hard as a board, and harder: as soft as that, indeed!"

"Well," said Ellen, still jumping up and down, with bonnet off, and glowing cheek, and hair dancing about her face, "you may believe what you like; but I've seen a carpet as soft as this, and softer, too; only one, though."

"What was it made of?"

"What other carpets are made of, I suppose. Come, I'll go with

you now. I do think this is the loveliest place I ever did see. Are there any flowers here in the spring?"

"I don't know – yes, lots of 'em."

"Pretty ones?" said Ellen.

"*You'd* think so, I suppose; I never look at 'em."

"Oh, how lovely that will be," said Ellen, clasping her hands; "how pleasant it must be to live in the country!"

"Pleasant, indeed!" said the other; "I think it's hateful. You'd think so too if you lived where I do. It makes me mad at granny every day because she won't go to Thirlwall. Wait till we get out of the wood, and I'll show you where I live. You can't see it from here."

Shocked a little at her companion's language, Ellen again walked on in sober silence. Gradually the ground became more broken, sinking rapidly from the side of the path, and rising again in a steep bank on the other side of a narrow dell; both sides were thickly wooded, but stripped of green, now, except where here and there a hemlock flung its graceful branches abroad and stood in lonely beauty among its leafless companions. Now, the gurgling of waters was heard.

"Where is that?" said Ellen, stopping short.

"'Way down, down, at the bottom, there. It's the brook."

"What brook? Not the same that goes by Aunt Fortune's?"

"Yes, it's the very same. It's the crookedest thing you ever saw. It runs over there," said the speaker, pointing with her arm, "and then it takes a turn and goes that way, and then it comes round

so, and then it shoots off in that way again and passes by your house; and after that the dear knows where it goes, for I don't. But I don't suppose it could run straight if it was to try to."

"Can't we get down to it?" asked Ellen.

"To be sure we can, unless you're as afraid of steep banks as you are of fences."

Very steep indeed it was, and strewn with loose stones, but Ellen did not falter here, and though once or twice in imminent danger of exchanging her cautious stepping for one long roll to the bottom, she got there safely on her two feet. When there, everything was forgotten in delight. It was a wild little place. The high, close sides of the dell left only a little strip of sky overhead; and at their feet ran the brook, much more noisy and lively here than where Ellen had before made its acquaintance; leaping from rock to rock, eddying round large stones, and boiling over the small ones, and now and then pouring quietly over some great trunk of a tree that had fallen across its bed, and dammed up the whole stream. Ellen could scarcely contain herself at the magnificence of many of the waterfalls, the beauty of the little quiet pools where the water lay still behind some large stone, and the variety of graceful, tiny cascades.

"Look here, Nancy!" cried Ellen, "that's the Falls of Niagara – do you see? – that large one; oh, that is splendid! and this will do for Trenton Falls – what a fine foam it makes – isn't it a beauty? – and what shall we call this? I don't know what to call it; I wish we could name them all, but there's no end to them. Oh, just look at

that one! that's too pretty not to have a name. What shall it be?"

"Black Falls," suggested the other.

"Black," said Ellen dubiously, "why – I don't like that."

"Why, the water's all dark and black, don't you see?"

"Well," said Ellen, "let it be Black, then; but I don't like it. Now remember, – this is Niagara – that is Black – and this is Trenton. And what is this?"

"If you are a-going to name them all," said Nancy, "we sha'n't get home to-night; you might as well name all the trees; there's a hundred of 'em and more. I say, Ellen! suppos'n we follow the brook instead of climbing up yonder again; it will take us out to the open fields by-and-by."

"Oh, do let's!" said Ellen; "that will be lovely."

It proved a rough way; but Ellen still thought and called it "lovely." Often by the side of the stream there was no footing at all, and the girls picked their way over the stones, large and small, wet and dry, which strewed its bed, against which the water foamed and fumed and fretted, as if in great impatience. It was ticklish work getting along over these stones; now tottering on an unsteady one, now slipping on a wet one, and every now and then making huge leaps from rock to rock, which there was no other method of reaching, at the imminent hazard of falling in. But they laughed at the danger; sprang on in great glee, delighted with the exercise and the fun; didn't stay long enough anywhere to lose their balance, and enjoyed themselves amazingly. There was many a hairbreadth escape, many an *almost* sousing; but that

made it all the more lively. The brook formed, as Nancy had said, a constant succession of little waterfalls, its course being quite steep and very rocky; and in some places there were pools quite deep enough to have given them a thorough wetting, to say no more, if they had missed their footing and tumbled in. But this did not happen. In due time, though with no little difficulty, they reached the spot where the brook came forth from the wood into the open day, and thence making a sharp turn to the right, skirted along by the edge of the trees, as if unwilling to part company with them.

"I guess we'd better get back into the lane now," said Miss Nancy, "we're a pretty good long way from home."

# CHAPTER XII

*Behind the door stand bags o' meal,*
*And in the ark is plenty.*
*And good hard cakes his mither makes,*
*And mony a sweeter dainty.*
*A good fat sow, a sleeky cow,*
*Are standing in the byre;*
*While winking puss, wi' mealy mou',*
*Is playing round the fire.*

*– Scotch Song.*

They left the wood and the brook behind them, and crossed a large stubble field; then got over a fence into another. They were in the midst of this when Nancy stopped Ellen, and bade her look up towards the west, where towered a high mountain, no longer hid from their view by the trees.

"I told you I'd show you where I live," said she. "Look up now, clear to the top of the mountain, almost, and a little to the right; do you see that little mite of a house there? Look sharp, – it's a'most as brown as the rock, – do you see it? – it's close by that big pine-tree, but it don't look big from here – it's just by that little dark spot near the top."

"I see it," said Ellen, "I see it now; do you live 'way up there?"

"That's just what I do; and that's just what I wish I didn't. But granny likes it; she will live there. I'm blessed if I know what for,

if it ain't to plague me. Do you think you'd like to live up on the top of a mountain like that?"

"No, I don't think I should," said Ellen. "Isn't it very cold up there?"

"Cold! you don't know anything about it. The wind comes there, I tell you – enough to cut you in two; I have to take and hold on to the trees sometimes to keep from being blowed away. And then granny sends me out every morning before it's light, no matter how deep the snow is, to look for the cow; and it's so bitter cold I expect nothing else but I'll be froze to death some time."

"Oh," said Ellen, with a look of horror, "how can she do so?"

"Oh, she don't care," said the other; "she sees my nose freeze off every winter, and it don't make no difference."

"Freeze your nose off!" said Ellen.

"To be sure," said the other, nodding gravely, "every winter; it grows out again when the warm weather comes."

"And is that the reason why it is so little?" said Ellen innocently, and with great curiosity.

"Little!" said the other, crimsoning in a fury; "what do you mean by that? It's as big as yours any day, I can tell you."

Ellen involuntarily put her hand to her face to see if Nancy spoke true. Somewhat reassured to find a very decided ridge where her companion's nose was wanting in the line of beauty, she answered in her turn —

"It's no such thing, Nancy! you oughtn't to say so; you know better."

"I *don't* know better! I *ought* to say so!" replied the other furiously. "If I had your nose I'd be glad to have it freeze off; I'd a sight rather have none. I'd pull it every day, if I was you, to make it grow."

"I shall believe what Aunt Fortune said of you was true," said Ellen. She had coloured very high, but she added no more, and walked on in dignified silence. Nancy stalked before her in silence that was meant to be dignified too, though it had not exactly that air. By degrees each cooled down, and Nancy was trying to find out what Miss Fortune had said of her, when on the edge of the next field they met the brook again. After running a long way to the right it had swept round, and here was flowing gently in the opposite direction. But how were they ever to cross it? The brook ran in a smooth current between them and a rising bank on the other side so high as to prevent their seeing what lay beyond. There were no stepping-stones now. The only thing that looked like a bridge was an old log that had fallen across the brook, or perhaps had at some time or other been put there on purpose, and that lay more than half in the water; what remained of its surface was green with moss and slippery with slime. Ellen was sadly afraid to trust herself on it; but what to do – Nancy soon settled the question as far as she was concerned. Pulling off her thick shoes, she ran fearlessly upon the rude bridge; her clinging bare feet carried her safely over, and Ellen soon saw her re-shoeing herself in triumph on the opposite side; but thus left behind and alone, her own difficulty increased.

"Pull off your shoes and do as I did," said Nancy.

"I can't," said Ellen; "I'm afraid of wetting my feet; I know mamma wouldn't let me."

"Afraid of wetting your feet!" said the other; "what a chickaninny you are! Well, if you try to come over with your shoes on you'll fall in, I tell you; and then you'll wet more than your feet. But come along somehow, for I won't stand here waiting much longer."

Thus urged, Ellen set out upon her perilous journey over the bridge. Slowly and fearfully, and with as much care as possible, she set step by step upon the slippery log. Already half of the danger was passed, when, reaching forward to grasp Nancy's outstretched hand, she missed it —*perhaps* that was Nancy's fault – poor Ellen lost her balance, and went in head foremost. The water was deep enough to cover her completely as she lay, though not enough to prevent her getting up again. She was greatly frightened, but managed to struggle up first to a sitting posture, and then to her feet, and then to wade out to the shore; though, dizzy and sick, she came nearly falling back again more than once. The water was very cold; and, thoroughly sobered, poor Ellen felt chill enough in body and mind too; all her fine spirits were gone; and not the less because Nancy had risen to a great pitch of delight at her misfortune. The air rang with her laughter; she likened Ellen to every ridiculous thing she could think of. Too miserable to be angry, Ellen could not laugh, and would not cry, but she exclaimed in distress —

"Oh, what shall I do! I am so cold!"

"Come along," said Nancy; "give me your hand; we'll run right over to Mrs. Van Brunt's – 'tain't far – it's just over here. There," said she, as they got to the top of the bank, and came within sight of a house standing only a few fields off – "there it is! Run, Ellen, and we'll be there directly."

"Who is Mrs. Van Brunt?" Ellen contrived to say as Nancy hurried her along.

"Who is she? – run, Ellen! – why, she's just Mrs. Van Brunt – your Mr. Van Brunt's mother, you know – make haste, Ellen – we had rain enough the other day; I'm afraid it wouldn't be good for the grass if you stayed too long in one place; hurry! I'm afraid you'll catch cold – you got your feet wet after all, I'm sure."

Run they did; and a few minutes brought them to Mrs. Van Brunt's door. The little brick walk leading to it from the courtyard gate was as neat as a pin; so was everything else the eye could rest on; and when Nancy went in poor Ellen stayed *her* foot at the door, unwilling to carry her wet shoes and dripping garments any further. She could hear, however, what was going on.

"Hillo! Mrs. Van Brunt," shouted Nancy; "where are you? – oh! Mrs. Van Brunt, are you out of water? 'cos if you are I've brought you a plenty; the person that has it don't want it; she's just at the door; she wouldn't bring it in till she knew you wanted it. Oh, Mrs. Van Brunt, don't look so or you'll kill me with laughing. Come and see! come and see!"

The steps within drew near the door, and first Nancy showed

herself, and then a little old woman, not very old either, of very kind, pleasant countenance.

"What is all this?" said she in great surprise. "Bless me! poor little dear! what is this?"

"Nothing in the world but a drowned rat, Mrs. Van Brunt, don't you see?" said Nancy.

"Go home, Nancy Vawse! go home," said the old lady; "you're a regular bad girl. I do believe this is some mischief o' yourn, go right off home; it's time you were after your cow a great while ago."

As she spoke, she drew Ellen in, and shut the door.

"Poor little dear!" said the old lady kindly, "what has happened to you? Come to the fire, love, you're trembling with the cold. Oh dear! dear! you're soaking wet; this is all along of Nancy somehow, I know; how was it, love? Ain't you Miss Fortune's little girl? Never mind, don't talk, darling; there ain't one bit of colour in your face, not one bit."

Good Mrs. Van Brunt had drawn Ellen to the fire, and all this while she was pulling off as fast as possible her wet clothes. Then sending a girl who was in waiting, for clean towels, she rubbed Ellen dry from head to foot, and wrapping her in a blanket, left her in a chair before the fire, while she went to seek something for her to put on. Ellen had managed to tell who she was, and how her mischance had come about, but little else, though the kind old lady had kept on pouring out words of sorrow and pity during the whole time. She came trotting back directly with one

of her own short gowns, the only thing that she could lay hands on that was anywhere near Ellen's length. Enormously big it was for her, but Mrs. Van Brunt wrapped it round and round, and the blanket over it again, and then she bustled about till she had prepared a tumbler of hot drink which she said was to keep Ellen from catching cold. It was anything but agreeable, being made from some bitter herb, and sweetened with molasses; but Ellen swallowed it, as she would anything else at such kind hands, and the old lady carried her herself into a little room opening out of the kitchen, and laid her in a bed that had been warmed for her. Excessively tired and weak as she was, Ellen scarcely needed the help of the hot herb tea to fall into a very deep sleep; perhaps it might not have lasted so very long as it did, but for that. Afternoon changed for evening, evening grew quite dark, still Ellen did not stir; and after every little journey into the bedroom to see how she was doing, Mrs. Van Brunt came back saying how glad she was to see her sleeping so finely. Other eyes looked on for a minute – kind and gentle eyes; though Mrs. Van Brunt's were kind and gentle too; once a soft kiss touched her forehead, there was no danger of waking her.

It was perfectly dark in the little bedroom, and had been so a good while, when Ellen was aroused by some noise, and then a rough voice she knew very well. Feeling faint and weak, and not more than half awake yet, she lay still and listened. She heard the outer door open and shut, and then the voice said —

"So, mother, you've got my stray sheep here, have you?"

"Ay, ay," said the voice of Mrs. Van Brunt. "Have you been looking for her? How did you know she was here?"

"Looking for her! ay, looking for her ever since sundown. She has been missing at the house since some time this forenoon. I believe her aunt got a bit scared about her; anyhow I did. She's a queer little chip as ever I see."

"She's a dear little soul, *I* know," said his mother; "you needn't say nothin' agin her, I ain't a-going to believe it."

"No more am I – I'm the best friend she's got, if she only knowed it; but don't you think," said Mr. Van Brunt, laughing, "I asked her to give me a kiss this forenoon, and if I'd been an owl she couldn't ha' been more scared; she went off like a streak, and Miss Fortune said she was as mad as she could be, and that's the last of her."

"How did you find her out?"

"I met that mischievous Vawse girl, and I made her tell me; she had no mind to at first. It'll be the worse for Ellen if she takes to that wicked thing."

"She won't. Nancy has been taking her for a walk, and worked it so as to get her into the brook, and then she brought her here, just as dripping wet as she could be. I gave her something hot and put her to bed, and she'll do, I reckon; but I tell you it gave me queer feelings to see the poor little thing just as white as ashes, and all of a tremble, and looking so sorrowful too. She's sleeping finely now; but it ain't right to see a child's face look so; it ain't right," repeated Mrs. Van Brunt thoughtfully. "You ha'n't

had supper, have you?"

"No, mother, and I must take that young one back. Ain't she awake yet?"

"I'll see directly; but she ain't going home, nor you neither, 'Brahm, till you've got your supper; it would be a sin to let her. She shall have a taste of my splitters this very night; I've been making them o' purpose for her. So you may just take off your hat and sit down."

"You mean to let her know where to come when she wants good things, mother. Well, I won't say splitters ain't worth waiting for."

Ellen heard him sit down, and then she guessed from the words that passed that Mrs. Van Brunt and her little maid were busied in making the cakes. She lay quiet.

"You're a good friend, 'Brahm," began the old lady again, "nobody knows that better than me; but I hope that poor little thing has got another one to-day that'll do more for her than you can."

"What, yourself, mother? I don't know about that."

"No, no; do you think I mean myself? There, turn it quick, Sally! Miss Alice has been here."

"How; this evening?"

"Just a little before dark, on her grey pony. She came in for a minute, and I took her – that'll burn, Sally! – I took her in to see the child while she was asleep, and I told her all you told me about her. She didn't say much, but she looked at her very sweet,

as she always does, and I guess – there – now I'll see after my little sleeper."

And presently Mrs. Van Brunt came to the bedside with a light, and her arms full of Ellen's dry clothes. Ellen felt as if she could have put her arms round her kind old friend and hugged her with all her heart; but it was not her way to show her feelings before strangers. She suffered Mrs. Van Brunt to dress her in silence, only saying with a sigh, "How kind you are to me, ma'am;" to which the old lady replied with a kiss, and telling her she mustn't say a word about that.

The kitchen was bright with firelight and candlelight; the tea-table looked beautiful with its piles of white splitters, besides plenty of other and more substantial things; and at the corner of the hearth sat Mr. Van Brunt.

"So," said he, smiling, as Ellen came in and took her stand at the opposite corner, "so I drove you away this morning? You ain't mad with me yet, I hope."

Ellen crossed directly over to him, and putting her little hand in his great rough one, said, "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Van Brunt, for taking so much trouble to come and look after me."

She said it with a look of gratitude and trust that pleased him very much.

"Trouble, indeed!" said he good-humouredly, "I'll take twice as much any day for what you wouldn't give me this forenoon. But never fear, Miss Ellen, I ain't a-goin' to ask you that again."

He shook the little hand, and from that time Ellen and her rough charioteer were firm friends.

Mrs. Van Brunt now summoned them to table, and Ellen was well feasted with the splitters, which were a kind of rich short-cake baked in irons, very thin and crisp, and then split in two and buttered, whence their name. A pleasant meal was that. Whatever an epicure might have thought of the tea, to Ellen, in her famished state, it was delicious; and no epicure could have found fault with the cold ham and the butter and the cakes; but far better than all was the spirit of kindness that was there. Ellen feasted on that more than on anything else. If her host and hostess were not very polished, they could not have been outdone in their kind care of her and kind attention to her wants. And when the supper was at length over, Mrs. Van Brunt declared a little colour had come back to the pale cheeks. The colour came back in good earnest a few minutes after, when a great tortoise-shell cat walked into the room. Ellen jumped down from her chair, and presently was bestowing the tenderest caresses upon pussy, who stretched out her head and purred as if she liked them very well.

"What a nice cat," said Ellen.

"She has five kittens," said Mrs. Van Brunt.

"Five kittens!" said Ellen. "Oh, may I come some time and see them?"

"You shall see 'em right away, dear, and come as often as you like too. Sally, just take a basket, and go fetch them kittens here."

Upon this Mr. Van Brunt began to talk about its being time to

go, if they were going. But his mother insisted that Ellen should stay where she was; she said she was not fit to go home that night, that she oughtn't to walk a step, and that 'Brahm should go and tell Miss Fortune the child was safe and well, and would be with her early in the morning. Mr. Van Brunt shook his head two or three times, but finally agreed, to Ellen's great joy. When he came back she was sitting on the floor before the fire, with all the five kittens in her lap, and the old mother cat walking around and over her and them. But she looked up with a happier face than he had ever seen her wear, and told him she was "*so* much obliged to him for taking such a long walk for her;" and Mr. Van Brunt felt that, like his oxen, he could have done a great deal more with pleasure.

# CHAPTER XIII

*It's hardly in a body's pow'r*
*To keep at times frae being sour.*

*– Burns.*

Before the sun was up the next morning, Mrs. Van Brunt came into Ellen's room and aroused her.

"It's a real shame to wake you up," she said, "when you were sleeping so finely; but 'Brahm wants to be off to his work, and won't stay for breakfast. Slept sound, did you?"

"Oh yes, indeed; as sound as a top," said Ellen, rubbing her eyes; "I am hardly awake yet."

"I declare it's too bad," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "but there's no help for it. You don't feel no headache, do you, nor pain in your bones?"

"No, ma'am, not a bit of it; I feel nicely."

"Ah! well," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "then your tumble into the brook didn't do you any mischief; I thought it wouldn't. Poor little soul!"

"I am very glad I did fall in," said Ellen, "for if I hadn't I shouldn't have come here, Mrs. Van Brunt."

The old lady instantly kissed her.

"Oh! mayn't I just take one look at the kitties?" said Ellen,

when she was ready to go.

"Indeed you shall," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "if 'Brahm's hurry was ever so much; and it ain't besides. Come here, dear."

She took Ellen back to a waste lumber-room, where in a corner, on some old pieces of carpet, lay pussy and her family. How fondly Ellen's hand was passed over each little soft back! How hard it was for her to leave them!

"Wouldn't you like to take one home with you, dear?" said Mrs. Van Brunt at length.

"Oh! may I?" said Ellen, looking up in delight; "are you in earnest? Oh, thank you, dear Mrs. Van Brunt! Oh, I shall be so glad!"

"Well, choose one, then, dear; choose the one you like best, and 'Brahm shall carry it for you."

The choice was made, and Mrs. Van Brunt and Ellen returned to the kitchen, where Mr. Van Brunt had already been waiting some time. He shook his head when he saw what was in the basket his mother handed to him.

"That won't do," said he; "I can't do that, mother. I'll undertake to see Miss Ellen safe home, but the cat 'ud be more than I could manage. I think I'd hardly get off with a whole skin 'tween the one and t'other."

"Well, now!" said Mrs. Van Brunt.

Ellen gave a longing look at her black-and-white favourite, which was uneasily endeavouring to find out the height of the basket, and mewing at the same time with a most ungratified

expression. However, though sadly disappointed, she submitted with a very good grace to what could not be helped. First setting down the little cat out of the basket it seemed to like so ill, and giving it one farewell pat and squeeze, she turned to the kind old lady who stood watching her, and throwing her arms around her neck, silently spoke her gratitude in a hearty hug and kiss.

"Good-bye, ma'am," said she; "I may come and see them some time again, and see you, mayn't I?"

"Indeed you shall, my darling," said the old woman, "just as often as you like; – just as often as you can get away. I'll make 'Brahm bring you home sometimes. 'Brahm, you'll bring her, won't you?"

"There's two words to that bargain, mother, I can tell you; but if I don't, I'll know the reason on't."

And away they went. Ellen drew two or three sighs at first, but she could not help brightening up soon. It was early – not sunrise; the cool freshness of the air was enough to give one new life and spirit; the sky was fair and bright; and Mr. Van Brunt marched along at a quick pace. Enlivened by the exercise, Ellen speedily forgot everything disagreeable; and her little head was filled with pleasant things. She watched where the silver light in the east foretold the sun's coming. She watched the silver changed to gold, till a rich yellow tint was flung over the whole landscape; and then broke the first rays of light upon the tops of the western hills – the sun was up. It was a new sight to Ellen.

"How beautiful! Oh, how beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Mr. Van Brunt, in his slow way, "it'll be a fine day for the field. I guess I'll go with the oxen over to that 'ere big meadow."

"Just look," said Ellen, "how the light comes creeping down the side of the mountain – now it has got to the wood – Oh, do look at the tops of the trees! Oh! I wish mamma was here."

Mr. Van Brunt didn't know what to say to this. He rather wished so too for her sake.

"There," said Ellen, "now the sunshine is on the fence, and the road, and everything. I wonder what is the reason that the sun shines first upon the top of the mountain, and then comes so slowly down the side; why don't it shine on the whole at once?"

Mr. Van Brunt shook his head in ignorance. "He guessed it always did so," he said.

"Yes," said Ellen, "I suppose it does, but that's the very thing – I want to know the reason why. And I noticed just now, it shone in my face before it touched my hands. Isn't it queer?"

"Humph! – there's a great many queer things, if you come to that," said Mr. Van Brunt philosophically.

But Ellen's head ran on from one thing to another, and her next question was not so wide of the subject as her companion might have thought.

"Mr. Van Brunt, are there any schools about here?"

"Schools?" said the person addressed. "Yes, there's plenty of schools."

"Good ones?" said Ellen.

"Well, I don't exactly know about that. There's Captain Conklin's. That had ought to be a good 'un. He's a regular smart man, they say."

"Whereabouts is that?" said Ellen.

"His school? It's a mile or so the other side of my house."

"And how far is it from your house to Aunt Fortune's?"

"A good deal better than two mile, but we'll be there before long. You ain't tired, be you?"

"No," said Ellen. But this reminder gave a new turn to her thoughts, and her spirits were suddenly checked. Her former brisk and springing step changed to so slow and lagging a one that Mr. Van Brunt more than once repeated his remark that he saw she was tired.

If it was that, Ellen grew tired very fast. She lagged more and more as they neared the house, and at last quite fell behind, and allowed Mr. Van Brunt to go in first.

Miss Fortune was busy about the breakfast, and as Mr. Van Brunt afterwards described it, "looking as if she could have bitten off a tenpenny nail," and indeed as if the operation would have been rather gratifying than otherwise. She gave them no notice at first, bustling to and fro with great energy, but all of a sudden she brought up directly in front of Ellen, and said —

"Why didn't you come home last night?"

The words were jerked out rather than spoken.

"I got wet in the brook," said Ellen, "and Mrs. Van Brunt was so kind as to keep me."

"Which way did you go out of the house yesterday?"

"Through the front door."

"The front door was locked."

"I unlocked it."

"What did you go out that way for?"

"I didn't want to come this way."

"Why not?" Ellen hesitated.

"Why not?" demanded Miss Fortune, still more emphatically than before.

"I didn't want to see you, ma'am," said Ellen, flushing.

"If ever you do so again!" said Miss Fortune in a kind of cold fury. "I've a great mind to whip you for this, as ever I had to eat."

The flush faded on Ellen's cheek, and a shiver visibly passed over her – not from fear. She stood with downcast eyes and compressed lips, a certain instinct of childish dignity warning her to be silent. Mr. Van Brunt put himself in between.

"Come, come!" said he, "this is getting to be too much of a good thing. Beat your cream, ma'am, as much as you like, or if you want to try your hand on something else you'll have to take me first, I promise you."

"Now don't *you* meddle, Van Brunt," said the lady sharply, "with what ain't no business o' yourn."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Van Brunt. "Maybe it is my business; but meddle or no meddle, Miss Fortune, it is time for me to be in the field, and if you ha'n't no better breakfast for Miss Ellen and me than all this here, we'll just go right away

hum again; but there's something in your kettle there that smells uncommonly nice, and I wish you'd just let us have it and no more words."

No more words did Miss Fortune waste on any one that morning. She went on with her work and dished up the breakfast in silence, and with a face that Ellen did not quite understand, only she thought she had never in her life seen one so disagreeable. The meal was a very solemn and uncomfortable one. Ellen could scarcely swallow, and her aunt was near in the same condition. Mr. Van Brunt and the old lady alone despatched their breakfast as usual, with no other attempts at conversation than the common mumbling on the part of the latter, which nobody minded, and one or two strange grunts from the former, the meaning of which, if they had any, nobody tried to find out.

There was a breach now between Ellen and her aunt that neither could make any effort to mend. Miss Fortune did not renew the disagreeable conversation that Mr. Van Brunt had broken off. She left Ellen entirely to herself, scarcely speaking to her, or seeming to know when she went out or came in. And this lasted day after day. Wearily they passed. After one or two, Mr. Van Brunt seemed to stand just where he did before in Miss Fortune's good graces, but not Ellen. To her, when others were not by, her face wore constantly something of the same cold, hard, disagreeable expression it had put on after Mr. Van Brunt's interference – a look that Ellen came to regard with absolute abhorrence. She kept away by herself as much as she could; but

she did not know what to do with her time, and for want of something better often spent it in tears. She went to bed cheerless night after night, and arose spiritless morning after morning, and this lasted till Mr. Van Brunt more than once told his mother that "that poor little thing was going wandering about like a ghost, and growing thinner and paler every day, and he didn't know what she would come to if she went on so."

Ellen longed now for a letter with unspeakable longing, but none came. Day after day brought new disappointment, each day more hard to bear. Of her only friend, Mr. Van Brunt, she saw little. He was much away in the fields during the fine weather, and when it rained Ellen herself was prisoner at home, whither he never came but at meal times. The old grandmother was very much disposed to make much of her; but Ellen shrank, she hardly knew why, from her fond caresses, and never found herself alone with her if she could help it, for then she was regularly called to the old lady's side and obliged to go through a course of kissing, fondling, and praising she would gladly have escaped. In her aunt's presence this was seldom attempted, and never permitted to go on. Miss Fortune was sure to pull Ellen away and bid her mother "stop that palavering," avowing that "it made her sick." Ellen had one faint hope that her aunt would think of sending her to school, as she employed her in nothing at home, and certainly took small delight in her company; but no hint of the kind dropped from Miss Fortune's lips, and Ellen's longing look for this as well as for a word from her mother was daily doomed

to be ungratified and to grow more keen by delay.

One pleasure only remained to Ellen in the course of the day, and that one she enjoyed with the carefulness of a miser. It was seeing the cows milked, morning and evening. For this she got up very early, and watched till the men came for the pails; and then away she bounded out of the house and to the barn-yard. There were the milky mothers, five in number, standing about, each in her own corner of the yard or cow-house, waiting to be relieved of their burden of milk. They were fine gentle animals, in excellent condition, and looking every way happy and comfortable; nothing living under Mr. Van Brunt's care was ever suffered to look otherwise. He was always in the barn or barn-yard at milking time, and under his protection Ellen felt safe and looked on at her ease. It was a very pretty scene – at least she thought so. The gentle cows standing quietly to be milked as if they enjoyed it, and munching the cud; and the white stream of milk foaming into the pails; then there was the interest of seeing whether Sam or Johnny would get through first; and how near Jane or Dolly would come to rivalling Streaky's fine pailful; and at last Ellen allowed Mr. Van Brunt to teach herself how to milk. She began with trembling, but learnt fast enough; and more than one pailful of milk that Miss Fortune strained had been, unknown to her, drawn by Ellen's fingers. These minutes in the farm-yard were the pleasantest in Ellen's day. While they lasted every care was forgotten, and her little face was as bright as the morning; but the milking was quickly over, and the cloud

gathered on Ellen's brow almost as soon as the shadow of the house fell upon it.

"Where is the post-office, Mr. Van Brunt?" she asked one morning, as she stood watching the sharpening of an axe upon the grindstone. The axe was in that gentleman's hand, and its edge carefully laid to the whirling stone, which one of the farm boys was turning.

"Where is the post-office? Why, over to Thirlwall, to be sure," replied Mr. Van Brunt, glancing up at her from his work. "Faster, Johnny."

"And how often do letters come here?" said Ellen.

"Take care, Johnny! – some more water – mind your business, will you! – Just as often as I go to fetch 'em, Miss Ellen, and no oftener."

"And how often do you go, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Only when I've some other errand, Miss Ellen; my grain would never be in the barn if I was running to post-office every other thing, and for what ain't there too. I don't get a letter but two or three times a year, I s'pose, though I call, I guess, half-a-dozen times."

"Ah, but there's one there now, or soon will be, I know, for me," said Ellen. "When do you think you'll go again, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Now if I'd ha' knowed that I'd ha' gone to Thirlwall yesterday – I was within a mile of it. I don't see as I can go this week anyhow in the world; but I'll make some errand there the first day I can,

Miss Ellen, that you may depend on. You shan't wait for your letter a bit longer than I can help."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Van Brunt, you are very kind. Then the letters never come except when you go after them?"

"No – yes, they do come once in a while by old Mr. Swaim, but he ha'n't been here this great while."

"And who's he?" said Ellen.

"Oh, he's a queer old chip that goes round the country on all sorts of errands; he comes along once in a while. That'll do, Johnny. I believe this here tool is as sharp as I have any occasion for."

"What's the use of pouring water upon the grindstone?" said Ellen; "why wouldn't it do as well dry?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," replied Mr. Van Brunt, who was slowly drawing his thumb over the edge of the axe; "your questions are a good deal too sharp for me, Miss Ellen; I only know it would spoil the axe, or the grindstone, or both most likely."

"It's very odd," said Ellen thoughtfully; "I wish I knew everything. But, oh dear! I am not likely to know anything," said she, her countenance suddenly changing from its pleased inquisitive look to a cloud of disappointment and sorrow. Mr. Van Brunt noticed the change.

"Ain't your aunt going to send you to school, then?" said he.

"I don't know," said Ellen, sighing; "she never speaks about it, nor about anything else. But I declare I'll make her!" she exclaimed, changing again. "I'll go right in and ask her, and then

she'll have to tell me. I will! I am tired of living so. I'll know what she means to do, and then I can tell you what *I* must do."

Mr. Van Brunt, seemingly dubious about the success of this line of conduct, stroked his chin and his axe alternately two or three times in silence, and finally walked off. Ellen, without waiting for her courage to cool, went directly into the house.

Miss Fortune, however, was not in the kitchen; to follow her into her secret haunts, the dairy, cellar, or lower kitchen, was not to be thought of. Ellen waited awhile, but her aunt did not come, and the excitement of the moment cooled down. She was not quite so ready to enter upon the business as she had felt at first; she had even some qualms about it.

"But I'll do it," said Ellen to herself; "it will be hard, but I'll do it!"

# CHAPTER XIV

*For my part, he keeps me here rustically*
*At home, or, to speak more properly, stays*
*Me here at home unkept.*

*– As You Like It.*

The next morning after breakfast Ellen found the chance she rather dreaded than wished for. Mr. Van Brunt had gone out; the old lady had not left her room, and Miss Fortune was quietly seated by the fire, busied with some mysteries of cooking. Like a true coward, Ellen could not make up her mind to bolt at once into the thick of the matter, but thought to come to it gradually – always a bad way.

"What is that, Aunt Fortune?" said she, after she had watched her with a beating heart for about five minutes.

"What is what?"

"I mean, what is that you are straining through the colander into that jar?"

"Hop-water."

"What is it for?"

"I'm scalding this meal with it to make turnpikes."

"Turnpikes!" said Ellen; "I thought turnpikes were high, smooth roads with toll-gates every now and then – that's what

mamma told me they were."

"That's all the kind of turnpikes your mamma knew anything about, I reckon," said Miss Fortune, in a tone that conveyed the notion that Mrs. Montgomery's education had been very incomplete. "And indeed," she added immediately after, "if she had made more turnpikes and paid fewer tolls, it would have been just as well, I'm thinking."

Ellen felt the tone, if she did not thoroughly understand the words. She was silent a moment; then remembering her purpose, she began again. "What are these, then, Aunt Fortune?"

"Cakes, child, cakes! turnpike cakes – what I raise the bread with."

"What, those little brown cakes I have seen you melt in water and mix in the flour when you make bread?"

"Mercy on us! yes! you've seen hundreds of 'em since you've been here, if you never saw one before."

"I never did," said Ellen. "But what are they called turnpikes for?"

"The land knows! I don't. For mercy's sake stop asking me questions, Ellen; I don't know what's got into you; you'll drive me crazy."

"But there's one more question I want to ask very much," said Ellen, with her heart beating.

"Well, ask it then quick, and have done, and take yourself off. I have other fish to fry than to answer all your questions."

Miss Fortune, however, was still quietly seated by the fire

stirring her meal and hop-water, and Ellen could not be quick; the words stuck in her throat – came out at last.

"Aunt Fortune, I wanted to ask you if I may go to school?"

"Yes."

Ellen's heart sprang with a feeling of joy, a little qualified by the peculiar dry tone in which the word was uttered.

"When may I go?"

"As soon as you like."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am. To which school shall I go, Aunt Fortune?"

"To whichever you like."

"But I don't know anything about them," said Ellen; "how can I tell which is best?"

Miss Fortune was silent.

"What schools are there near here?" said Ellen.

"There's Captain Conklin's down at the Cross, and Miss Emerson's at Thirlwall."

Ellen hesitated. The name was against her, but nevertheless she concluded on the whole that the lady's school would be the pleasantest.

"Is Miss Emerson any relation of yours?" she asked.

"No."

"I think I should like to go to her school the best. I will go there if you will let me – may I?"

"Yes."

"And I will begin next Monday – may I?"

"Yes."

Ellen wished exceedingly that her aunt would speak in some other tone of voice; it was a continual damper to her rising hopes.

"I'll get my books ready," said she; "and look 'em over a little too, I guess. But what will be the best way for me to go, Aunt Fortune?"

"I don't know."

"I couldn't walk so far, could I?"

"You know best."

"I couldn't, I am sure," said Ellen; "it's four miles to Thirlwall, Mr. Van Brunt said; that would be too much for me to walk twice a day; and I should be afraid besides."

A dead silence.

"But, Aunt Fortune, do please tell me what I am to do. How can I know unless you tell me? What way is there that I can go to school?"

"It is unfortunate that I don't keep a carriage," said Miss Fortune; "but Mr. Van Brunt can go for you morning and evening in the ox-cart, if that will answer."

"The ox-cart! But, dear me! it would take him all day, Aunt Fortune. It takes hours and hours to go and come with the oxen; Mr. Van Brunt wouldn't have time to do anything but carry me to school and bring me home."

"Of course; but that's of no consequence," said Miss Fortune, in the same dry tone.

"Then I can't go – there's no help for it," said Ellen

despondingly. "Why didn't you say so before. When you said yes I thought you meant yes."

She covered her face. Miss Fortune rose with a half smile and carried her jar of scalded meal into the pantry. She then came back and commenced the operation of washing-up the breakfast things.

"Ah, if I only had a little pony," said Ellen, "that would carry me there and back, and go trotting about with me everywhere – how nice that would be!"

"Yes, that would be very nice! And who do you think would go trotting about after the pony? I suppose you would leave that to Mr. Van Brunt; and I should have to go trotting about after you, to pick you up in case you broke your neck in some ditch or gully; it would be a very nice affair altogether, I think."

Ellen was silent. Her hopes had fallen to the ground, and her disappointment was unsoothed by one word of kindness or sympathy. With all her old grievances fresh in her mind, she sat thinking her aunt was the very most disagreeable person she ever had the misfortune to meet with. No amiable feelings were working within her; and the cloud on her brow was of displeasure and disgust, as well as sadness and sorrow. Her aunt saw it.

"What are you thinking of?" said she rather sharply.

"I am thinking," said Ellen, "I am very sorry I cannot go to school."

"Why, what do you want to learn so much? You know how to read and write and cipher, don't you?"

"Read and write and cipher?" said Ellen: "to be sure I do; but that's nothing – that's only the beginning."

"Well, what do you want to learn besides?"

"Oh, a great many things."

"Well, what?"

"Oh, a great many things," said Ellen; "French, and Italian, and Latin, and music, and arithmetic, and chemistry, and all about animals and plants and insects – I forget what it's called – and – oh, I can't recollect; a great many things. Every now and then I think of something I want to learn; I can't remember them now. But I'm doing nothing," said Ellen sadly; "learning nothing – I am not studying and improving myself as I meant to; mamma will be disappointed when she comes back, and I meant to please her so much!" The tears were fast coming; she put her hand upon her eyes to force them back.

"If you are so tired of being idle," said Miss Fortune, "I'll warrant I'll give you something to do; and something to learn too, that you want enough more than all those crinkumcrankums; I wonder what good they'd ever do you! That's the way your mother was brought up, I suppose. If she had been trained to use her hands and do something useful instead of thinking herself above it, maybe she wouldn't have had to go to sea for her health just now; it doesn't do for women to be bookworms."

"Mamma isn't a bookworm!" said Ellen indignantly; "I don't know what you mean; and she never thinks herself above being useful; it's very strange you should say so when you don't know

anything about her."

"I know she ha'n't brought you up to know manners, anyhow," said Miss Fortune. "Look here, I'll give you something to do – just you put those plates and dishes together ready for washing, while I am downstairs."

Ellen obeyed, unwillingly enough. She had neither knowledge of the business nor any liking for it; so it is no wonder Miss Fortune at her return was not well pleased.

"But I never did such a thing before," said Ellen.

"There it is now!" said Miss Fortune. "I wonder where your eyes have been every single time that I have done it since you have been here. I should think your own sense might have told you! But you're too busy learning of Mr. Van Brunt to know what's going on in the house. Is that what you call made ready for washing? Now just have the goodness to scrape every plate clean off and put them nicely in a pile here; and turn out the slops out of the tea-cups and saucers and set them by themselves. Well! what makes you handle them so? Are you afraid they'll burn you?"

"I don't like to take hold of things people have drunk out of," said Ellen, who was indeed touching the cups and saucers very delicately with the tips of her fingers.

"Look here," said Miss Fortune, "don't you let me hear no more of that, or I vow I'll give you something to do you won't like. Now put the spoons here, and the knives and forks together here; and carry the salt-cellar and the pepper-box and the butter and the sugar into the buttery."

"I don't know where to put them," said Ellen.

"Come along, then, and I'll show you; it's time you did. I reckon you'll feel better when you've something to do, and you shall have plenty. There – put them in that cupboard, and set the butter up here, and put the bread in this box, do you see? now don't let me have to show you twice over."

This was Ellen's first introduction to the buttery; she had never dared to go in there before. It was a long, light closet or pantry, lined on the left side, and at the further end, with wide shelves up to the ceiling. On these shelves stood many capacious pans and basins of tin and earthenware, filled with milk, and most of them coated with superb yellow cream. Midway was the window, before which Miss Fortune was accustomed to skim her milk, and at the side of it was the mouth of a wooden pipe, or covered trough, which conveyed the refuse milk down to an enormous hogshead standing at the lower kitchen door, whence it was drawn as wanted for the use of the pigs. Beyond the window in the buttery, and on the higher shelves, were rows of yellow cheeses; forty or fifty were there at least. On the right hand of the door was the cupboard, and a short range of shelves, which held in ordinary all sorts of matters for the table, both dishes and eatables. Floor and shelves were well painted with thick yellow paint, hard and shining, and clean as could be; and there was a faint pleasant smell of dairy things.

Ellen did not find out all this at once, but in the course of a day or two, during which her visits to the buttery were many.

Miss Fortune kept her word, and found her plenty to do; Ellen's life soon became a pretty busy one. She did not like this at all; it was a kind of work she had no love for; yet no doubt it was a good exchange for the miserable moping life she had lately led. Anything was better than that. One concern, however, lay upon poor Ellen's mind with pressing weight – her neglected studies and wasted time; for no better than wasted she counted it. "What shall I do?" she said to herself after several of these busy days had passed; "I am doing nothing – I am learning nothing – I shall forget all I have learnt, directly. At this rate I shall not know any more than all these people around me; and what *will* mamma say? – Well, if I can't go to school I know what I will do," she said, taking a sudden resolve, "I'll study by myself! I'll see what I can do; it will be better than nothing, any way. I'll begin this very day!"

With new life Ellen sprang upstairs to her room, and forthwith began pulling all the things out of her trunk to get at her books. They were at the very bottom; and by the time she had reached them half the floor was strewn with the various articles of her wardrobe; without minding them in her first eagerness, Ellen pounced at the books.

"Here you are, my dear Numa Pompilius," said she, drawing out a little French book she had just begun to read, "and here *you*

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