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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DORA DEANE *****

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DORA DEANE

OR

THE EAST INDIA UNCLE

BY

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Author of "Tempest and Sunshine," "Meadow Brook," "Homestead on the Hillside," "The English Orphans," "Maggie Miller," etc.

DORA DEANE,

OR,

THE EAST INDIA UNCLE

CHAPTER I.

DORA AND HER MOTHER.

Poor little Dora Deane! How utterly wretched and desolate she was, as she crouched before the scanty fire, and tried to warm the little bit of worn-out flannel, with which to wrap her mother's feet; and how hard she tried to force back the tears which would burst forth afresh whenever she looked upon that pale, sick mother, and thought how soon she would be gone!

It was a small, low, scantily furnished room, high up in the third story of a crazy old building, which Dora called her home, and its one small window looked out on naught save the roofs and spires of the great city whose dull, monotonous roar was almost the only sound to which she had ever listened. Of the country, with its bright green grass, its sweet wild flowers, its running brooks, and its shady trees, she knew but little, for only once had she looked on all these things, and then her heart was very sad, for the bright green grass was broken, and the sweet wild flowers were trampled down, that a grave might be made in the dark, moist earth for her father, who had died in early manhood, leaving his wife and only child to battle with the selfish world as best they could. Since that time, life had been long and dreary to the poor widow, whose hours were well-nigh ended, for ere to-morrow's sun was risen, _she_ would have a better home than that dreary, cheerless room, while Dora, at the early age of twelve, would be an orphan.

It was a cold December night, the last one of the year, and the

wintery wind, which swept howling past the curtainless window, seemed to take a sadder tone, as if in pity for the little girl who knelt upon the hearthstone, and with the dim firelight flickering over her tear-stained face, prayed that she, too, might die, and not be left alone.

"It will be so lonely--so cold without my mother!" she murmured. "Oh, let me go with her; I cannot live alone."

"Dora, my darling," came faintly from the rude couch, and in an instant the child was at her mother's side.

Winding her arms fondly about the neck of her daughter, and pushing the soft auburn hair from off her fair, open brow, Mrs. Deane gazed long and earnestly upon her face.

"Yes, you are like me," she said at last, "and I am glad that it is so, for it may be Sarah will love you better when she sees in you a look like one who once called her sister. And should he ever return----"

She paused, while her mind went back to the years long ago--to the old yellow farmhouse among the New England hills--to the gray-haired man, who had adopted her as his own when she was written fatherless--to the dark-eyed girl, sometimes kind, and sometimes overbearing, whom she had called her sister, though there was no tie of blood between them. Then she thought of the red house just across the way, and of the three brothers, Nathaniel, Richard, and John. Very softly she repeated the name of the latter, seeming to see him again as he was on the day when, with the wreath of white apple blossoms upon her brow, she sat on the mossy bank and listened to his low spoken words of love. Again she was out in the pale starlight, and heard the autumn wind go moaning through the locust trees as Nathaniel, the strange, eccentric, woman-hating Nathaniel, but just returned from the seas, told her how madly he had loved her, and how the knowledge that she belonged to another would drive him from his fatherland forever--that in the burning clime of India he would make gold his idol, forgetting, if it were possible, the mother who had borne him! Then she recalled the angry scorn with which her adopted sister had received the news of her engagement with John, and how the conviction was at last forced upon her that Sarah herself had loved him in secret, and that in a fit of desperation she had given her hand to the rather inefficient Richard, ever after treating her rival with a cool reserve, which now came back to her with painful distinctness.

"But she will love my little Dora for John's sake, if not for mine," she thought, at last; and then, as if she had all the time been speaking to her daughter, she continued, "And you must be very dutiful to your aunt, and kind to your cousins, fulfilling their slightest wishes."

Looking up quickly, Dora asked, "Have you written to Aunt Sarah? Does she say I can come?"

"The letter is written, and Mrs. Gannis will send it as soon as I am dead," answered Mrs. Deane. "I am sure she will give you a home. I told her there was no alternative but the almshouse;" then, after a pause, she added: "I wrote to your uncle Nathaniel some months ago, when I knew that I must die. It is time for his reply, but I bade him direct to Sarah, as I did not then think to see the winter snow."

"Did you tell him of me?" eagerly asked Dora, on whom the name of Uncle Nathaniel, or "Uncle Nat," as he was more familiarly called, produced a more pleasant impression than did that of her aunt Sarah.

"Yes", answered the mother, "it was of you that I wrote, commending you to his care, should he return to America. And if you ever meet him, Dora, tell him that on my dying bed I thought of him with affection--that my mind wandered back to the years of long ago, when I was young, and ask him, for the sake of one he called his brother, and for her who grieves that ever she caused him a moment's pain, to care for you, their orphan child."

Then followed many words of love, which were very precious to Dora in the weary years which followed that sad night; and then, for a time, there was silence in that little room, broken only by the sound of the wailing tempest. The old year was going out on the wings of a fearful storm, and as the driving sleet beat against the casement, while the drifting snow found entrance through more than one wide crevice and fell upon her pillow, the dying woman murmured, "Lie up closer to me, Dora, I am growing very cold."

Alas! 'twas the chill of death; but Dora did not know it, and again on the hearthstone before the fast dying coals she knelt, trying to warm the bit of flannel, on which her burning tears fell like rain, when through the empty wood-box she sought in vain for chip or bark with which to increase the scanty fire.

"But I will not tell _her_," she softly whispered, when satisfied that her search was vain, and wrapping the flannel around the icy feet, she untied the long-sleeved apron which covered her own naked arms, and laying it over her mother's shoulders, tucked in the thin bedclothes; and then, herself all shivering and benumbed, she sat down to wait and watch, singing softly a familiar hymn, which had sometimes lulled her mother into a quiet sleep.

At last, as her little round white arms grew purple with the cold, she moved nearer to the bedside, and winding them lovingly around her mother's neck, laid her head upon the pillow and fell asleep. And to the angels, who were hovering near, waiting to bear their sister spirit home, there was given charge concerning the little

girl, so that she did not freeze, though she sat there the livelong night, calmly sleeping the sweet sleep of childhood, while the mother at her side slept the long, eternal sleep of death!

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CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST AND LAST NEW YEAR'S CALL.

It was New Year's morning, and over the great city lay the deep, untrodden snow, so soon to be trampled down by thousands of busy feet. Cheerful fires were kindled in many a luxurious home of the rich, and "Happy New Year" was echoed from lip to lip, as if on that day there were no aching hearts--no garrets where the biting cold looked in. on pinching poverty and suffering old age--no low, dark room where Dora and her pale, dead mother lay, while over them the angels kept their tireless watch until human aid should come. But one there was who did not forget--one about whose house was gathered every elegance which fashion could dictate or money procure; and now, as she sat at her bountifully-furnished breakfast table sipping her fragrant chocolate, she thought of the poor widow, Dora's mother, for whom her charity had been solicited the day before, by a woman who lived in the same block of buildings with Mrs. Deane.

"Brother," she said, glancing towards a young man who, before the glowing grate, was reading the morning paper, "suppose you make your first call with me?"

"Certainly," he answered; "and it will probably be in some dreary attic or dark, damp basement; but it is well, I suppose, to begin the New Year by remembering the poor."

Half an hour later, and the crazy stairs which led to the chamber of death were creaking to the tread of the lady and her brother, the latter of whom knocked loudly for admission. Receiving no answer from within, they at last raised the latch and entered. The fire had long since gone out, and the night wind, as it poured down the chimney, had scattered the cold ashes over the hearth and out upon the floor. Piles of snow lay on the window sill, and a tumbler in which some water had been left standing, was broken in pieces. All this the young man saw at a glance, but when his eye fell upon the bed, he started back, for there was no mistaking the rigid, stony expression of the upturned face, which lay there so white and motionless.

"But the child--the child," he exclaimed, advancing forward--"can

she, too, be dead!" and he laid his warm hand gently on Dora's brow.

The touch aroused her, and starting up, she looked around for a moment bewildered; but when at last she turned towards her mother, the dread reality was forced upon her, and in bitter tones she cried, "Mother's dead, mother's dead, and I am all alone! Oh! mother, mother, come back again to me!"

The young man's heart was touched, and taking the child's little red hands in his, he rubbed them gently, trying to soothe her grief; while his sister, summoning the inmates from the adjoining room, gave orders that the body should receive the necessary attention; then, learning as much as was possible of Dora's history, and assuring her that she should be provided for until her aunt came, she went away, promising to return next morning and be present at the humble funeral.

That evening, as Dora sat weeping by the coffin in which her mother lay, a beautiful young girl, with eyes of deepest blue, and locks of golden hair, smiled a joyous welcome to him whose _first_ New Year's call had been in the chamber of death, and whose _last_ was to her, the petted child of fashion.

"I had almost given you up, and was just going to cry," she said, laying her little snowflake of a hand upon the one which that morning had chafed the small, stiff fingers of Dora Deane, and which now tenderly pressed those of Ella Grey as the young man answered, "I have not felt like going out today, for my first call saddened me;" and then, with his arm around the fairy form of Ella, his affianced bride, he told her of the cold, dreary room, of the mother colder still, and of the noble little girl, who had divested herself of her own clothing, that her mother might be warm.

Ella Grey had heard of such scenes before--had cried over them in books; but the idea that _she_ could do anything to relieve the poor, had never entered her mind. It is true, she had once given a _party dress_ to a starving woman, and a _pound of candy_ to a ragged boy who had asked for aid, but here her charity ended; so, though she seemed to listen with interest to the sad story, her mind was wandering elsewhere, and when her companion ceased, she merely said, "_Romantic_, wasn't it."

There was a look of disappointment on the young man's face, which was quickly observed by Ella, who attributed it to its right source, and hastened to ask numberless questions about Dora--"How old was she? Did he think her pretty, and hadn't she better go to the funeral the next day and bring her home for a waiting-maid?--she wanted one sadly, and from the description, the orphan girl would just suit."

"No, Ella," answered her lover; "the child is going to live in the

country with some relatives, and will be much better off there."

"The country," repeated Ella. "_I_ would rather freeze in New York than to live in the dismal country."

Again the shadow came over the gentleman's brow, as he said, "Do you indeed object so much to a home in the country?"

Ella knew just what he wanted her to say; so she answered, "Oh, no, I can be happy anywhere with you, but do please let me spend just one winter in the city after---"

Here she paused, while the bright blushes broke over her childish face. She could not say, even to him, "after we are married," so he said it for her, drawing her closer to his side, and forgetting Dora Deane, as he painted the joyous future when Ella would be all his own. Eleven o'clock sounded from more than one high tower, and at each stroke poor Dora Deane moaned in anguish, thinking to herself, "Last night at this time _she_ was here." Eleven o'clock, said Ella Grey's diamond set watch, and pushing back her wavy hair, the young man kissed her rosy cheek, and bade her a fond good-night. As he reached the door, she called him back, while she asked him the name of the little girl who had so excited his sympathy.

"I do not know," he answered. "Strange that I forgot to inquire. But no matter. We shall never meet again;" and feeling sure that what he said was true he walked away.

* * * * *

CHAPTER III.

DORA'S RELATIVES.

There hundred miles to the westward, and the storm, which, on New Year's eve, swept so furiously over all parts of the State, was perceptible only in the dull, gray clouds which obscured the wintry sky, shutting out the glimmering starlight, and apparently making still brighter the many cheerful lights which shone forth from the handsome dwellings in the village of Dunwood. Still the night was intensely cold, and, as Mrs. Sarah Deane, in accordance with her daughter Eugenia's request, added a fresh bit of coal to the already well-filled stove, she sighed involuntarily, wishing the weather would abate, for the winter's store of fuel was already half gone, and the contents of her purse were far too scanty to meet the necessity of her household, and at the same time minister to the wants of her extravagant daughters.

"But I can economize in one way," she said, half aloud, and crossing the room she turned down the astral lamp which was burning brightly upon the table.

"Don't, pray mother, make it darker than a dungeon!" petulantly exclaimed Eugenia, herself turning back the lamp. "I do like to have rooms light enough to see one's self;" and glancing complacently at the reflection of her handsome face, in the mirror opposite, she resumed her former lounging attitude upon the sofa.

Mrs. Deane sighed again, but she had long since ceased to oppose the imperious Eugenia, who was to all intents and purposes the mistress of the house, and who oftentimes led her mother and weaker-minded sister into the commission of acts from which they would otherwise have shrunk. Possessed of a large share of romance, Eugenia had given to their place the name of "Locust Grove;" and as Mrs. Deane managed to keep up a kind of outside show by practising the most pinching economy in everything pertaining to the actual comfort of her family, they were looked upon as being quite wealthy and aristocratic by those who saw nothing of their inner life--who knew nothing of the many shifts and turns in the kitchen to save money for the decoration of the parlors, or of the frequent meager meals eaten from the pantry shelf, in order to make amends for the numerous dinner and evening parties which Eugenia and Alice insisted upon giving, and which their frequent visits to their friends rendered necessary. Extensive servant-hire was of course too expensive, and, as both Eugenia and Alice affected the utmost contempt for anything like work, their mother toiled in the kitchen from morning until night, assisted only by a young girl, whose mother constantly threatened to take her away, unless her wages were increased, a thing which seemed impossible.

It was just after this woman's weekly visit, and in the midst of preparations for a large dinner party, that Mrs. Deane received her sister's letter, to which there was added a postscript, in a strange handwriting, saying she was dead. There was a moisture in Mrs. Deane's eyes as she read the touching lines; and leaning her heated forehead against the cool window pane, she, too, thought of the years gone by--of the gentle girl, the companion of her childhood, who had never given her an unkind word--of him--the only man she had ever loved--and Dora was their child--Fanny's child and John's.

"Yes," she said, half aloud, "I will give her a home," but anon there came stealing over her the old bitterness of feeling, which she had cherished since she knew that Fanny was preferred to herself, and then the evil of her nature whispered, "No, I will not receive their child. We can hardly manage to live now, and it is not my duty to incur an additional expense. Dora must stay where she is, and if I do not answer the letter, she will naturally suppose I never received it."

Thus deciding the matter, she crushed the letter into her pocket and went back to her work; but there was an added weight upon her spirits, while continually ringing in her ears were the words, "Care for John's child and mine." "If I could only make her of any use to me," she said at last, and then as her eye fell upon Bridget, whose stay with her was so uncertain, the dark thought entered her mind, "Why could not Dora fill her place? It would be a great saving, and of course the child must expect to work."

Still, reason as she would, Mrs. Deane could not at once bring herself to the point of making a menial of one who was every way her equal; neither could she decide to pass the letter by unnoticed; so for the present she strove to dismiss the subject, which was not broached to her daughters until the evening on which we first introduced them to our readers. Then taking her seat by the brightly burning lamp, she drew the letter from her pocket and read it aloud, while Alice drummed an occasional note upon the piano and Eugenia beat a tattoo upon the carpet with her delicate French slipper.

"Of course she won't come," said Alice, as her mother finished reading. "It was preposterous in Aunt Fanny to propose such a thing!" and she glanced towards Eugenia for approbation of what she had said.

Eugenia's quick, active mind had already looked at the subject in all its bearings, and in like manner with her mother she saw how Dora's presence there would be a benefit; so to Alice's remark she replied: "It will sound well for us to have a cousin in the poorhouse, won't it? For my part, I propose that she comes, and then be made to earn her own living. We can dismiss Bridget, who is only two years older than Dora, and we shall thus avoid quarreling regularly with her vixenish mother, besides saving a dollar every week--"

"So make a drudge of Dora," interrupted Alice. "Better leave her in the poorhouse at once."

"Nobody intends to make a drudge of her," retorted Eugenia. "Mother works in the kitchen, and I wonder if it will hurt Dora to help her. Every girl ought to learn to work!"

"Except Eugenia Deane," suggested Alice, laughing, to think how little her sister's practise accorded with her theory.

At this point in the conversation, Bridget entered, bringing a letter which bore the India post-mark, together with the unmistakable handwriting of Nathaniel Deane!

"A letter from Uncle Nat, as I live!" exclaimed Eugenia. "What is going to happen? He hasn't written before in years. I do wish I knew when he expected to quit this mundane sphere, and how

much of his money he intends leaving me!"

By this time Mrs. Deane had broken the seal, uttering an exclamation of surprise as a check for \$500 fell into her lap.

"Five hundred dollars!" screamed Eugenia, catching up the check and examining it closely, to see that there was no mistake. "The old miser has really opened his heart. Now, we'll have some _genuine_ silver forks for our best company, so we shan't be in constant terror lest some one should discover that they are only plated. I'll buy that set of _pearls_ at Mercer's, too, and, Alice, you and I will have some new furs. I'd go to Rochester to-morrow, if it were not Sunday. What shall we get for you, mother? A web of cloth, or an ounce of sewing silk?" and the heartless girl turned towards her mother, whose face was white as ashes, as she said faintly: "The money is not ours. It is Dora's-- to be used for her benefit."

"Not ours! What do you mean! It can't be true!" cried Eugenia, snatching the letter, and reading therein a confirmation of her mother's words.

After a slight apology for his long silence, Undo Nat had spoken of Fanny's letter, saying he supposed she must be dead ere this, and that Dora was probably living with her aunt, as it was quite natural she should do. Then he expressed his willingness to defray all the expense which she might be, adding that though he should never see her, as he was resolved to spend his days in India, he still wished to think of her as an educated and accomplished woman.

"Accompanying this letter," he wrote, "is a check for \$500, to be used for Dora's benefit. Next year I will make another remittance, increasing the allowance as she grows older. I have more money than I need, and I know of no one on whom I would sooner expend it than the child of Fanny Moore."

"Spiteful old fool!" muttered Eugenia, "I could relieve him of any superfluous dimes he may possess."

But even Eugenia, heartless as she was, felt humbled and subdued for a moment, as she read the latter part of her uncle's letter, from which we give the following extract:

"I am thinking, to-day, of the past, Sarah, and I grow a very child again as I recall the dreary years which have gone over my head, since last I trod the shores of my fatherland. You, Sarah, know much of my history. You know that I was awkward, eccentric, uncouth, and many years older than my handsomer, more highly gifted brother; and yet with all this fearful odds against me, you know that I ventured to love the gentle, fair-haired Fanny, your adopted sister. You know this, I say, but you do not know how madly, how passionately such as I can love--did love; nor how the

memory of Fanny's ringing laugh, and the thought of the sunny smile, with which I knew she would welcome me home again, cheered me on my homeward voyage, when in the long night-watches I paced the vessel's deck, while the stars looked coldly down upon me, and there was no sound to break the deep stillness, save the heavy swell of the sea. At the village inn where I stopped for a moment ere going to my father's house, I first heard that her hand was plighted to another, and in my wild frenzy, I swore that my rival, whoever it might be, should die!

"It was my youngest brother--he, who, on the sad night when our mother died, had laid his baby head upon my bosom, and wept himself to sleep--he whose infant steps I had guided, bearing him often in my arms, lest he should 'dash his foot against a stone.' And _his_ life I had sworn to take, for had he not come between me and the only object I had ever loved? There was no one stirring about the house, for it was night, and the family had retired. But the door was unfastened, and I knew the way upstairs. I found him, as I had expected, in our old room, and all alone; for Richard was away. Had he been there, it should make no difference, I said, but he was absent, and John was calmly sleeping with his face upturned to the soft moonlight which came in through the open window. I had not seen him for two long years, and now there was about him a look so much like that of my dead mother when she lay in her coffin bed, that the demon in my heart was softened, and I seemed to hear her dying words again, 'I can trust you, Nathaniel; and to your protection, as to a second mother, I commit my little boy.'

"The little boy, whose curls were golden then, was now a brown-haired man--my brother--the son of my angel mother, whose spirit, in that dark hour of my temptation, glided into the silent room, and stood between me and her youngest born, so that _he_ was not harmed, and _I_ was saved from the curse of a brother's blood.

"'Lead us not into temptation,' came back to me, just as I had said it kneeling at my mother's side; and covering my face with my hands, I thanked God, who had kept me from so great a sin. Bending low, I whispered in his ear his name, and in a moment his arms were around my neck, while he welcomed me back to the home, which, he said, was not home without me. And then, when the moon had gone down, and the stars shone too faintly to reveal his blushes, he told me the story of his happiness, to which I listened, while the great drops of sweat rolled down my face and moistened the pillow on which my head was resting.

"But why linger over those days of anguish, which made me an old man before my time? I knew I could not stand by and see her wedded to another--neither could I look upon her after she was another's wife; so, one night, when the autumn days were come, I asked her to go with me out beneath the locust trees, which skirted my father's yard. It was there I had seen her for the first time, and

it was there I would take my final leave. Of the particulars of that interview I remember but little, for I was terribly excited. We never met again, for ere the morrow's daylight dawned, I had left my home forever--"

Then followed a few more words concerning Dora, with a request that she should write to him, as he would thus be able to judge something of her character; and there the letter ended.

For a time there was silence, which was broken at last by Eugenia, whose active mind had already come to a decision. Dora would live with them, of course--it was best that she should, and there was no longer need for dismissing Bridget. The five hundred dollars obviated that necessity, and it was theirs, too--theirs by the way of remuneration for giving Dora a home--theirs to spend as they pleased. And she still intended to have the furs, the pearls, and the silver forks, just the same as though the money had been a special gift to her!

"Suppose Uncle Nat should happen to come home, and Dora should tell him?" suggested Alice, who did not so readily fall in with her sister's views.

"He'll never do that in the world," returned Eugenia. "And even if he should, Dora will have nothing to tell, for she is not supposed to know of the money. If we feed, clothe, and educate her, it is all we are required to do."

"But would that be exactly just?" faintly interposed Mrs. Deane, whose perceptions of right and wrong were not quite so blunted as those of her daughter, who, in answer to her question, proceeded to advance many good reasons why Dora, for a time at least, should be kept in ignorance of the fact that her uncle supported her, and not her aunt.

"We can manage her better if she thinks she is dependent upon us. And then, as she grows older, she will not be continually asking what has become of the money, which, as I understand the matter, is really ours, and not hers."

Still, Mrs. Deane was not quite convinced, but she knew how useless it would be to argue the point; so she said nothing, except to ask how Dora was to get there, as she could not come alone.

"I have it," answered Eugenia. "I have long wished to spend a few days in New York, but that bane of my life, poverty, has always prevented. Now, however, as old Uncle Nat has kindly furnished us with the means, I propose that Alice and I start day after tomorrow, and return on Saturday. That will give us ample time to see the lions and get the city fashions."

"It will cost a great deal for yon both to stay at those large

hotels," said Mrs. Deane; and Eugenia replied--

"One hundred dollars will cover all the expense, and pay Dora's fare besides. What is the use of money, if we can't use it? I shall get my furs, and jewelry, and forks while I'm there, so I'd better take along three hundred and fifty dollars, for fear of any accident. We are not obliged to spend it all, of course;" she added, as she saw the look of dismay on her mother's face. "And we can bring back whatever there is left."

For nineteen years Eugenia Deane had been suffered to have her way, and her mother did not like to thwart her now, for her temper was violent, and she dreaded an outbreak; so she merely sighed in reply, and when, on Monday morning, Eugenia started for New York, her purse contained the desired three hundred and fifty dollars, which, after her arrival in the city, was spent as freely as if it really belonged to her, and not to the orphan Dora, who was now staying with Mrs. Grannis, a kind-hearted woman in the same block where her mother had died. The furs were bought, the pearls examined, the forks priced, and then Alice ventured to ask when they were going to find Dora.

"I shall leave that for the last thing," answered Eugenia. "She can't run away, and nobody wants to be bothered with a child to look after."

So for three more days little Dora looked out of the dingy window upon the dirty court below, wishing her aunt would come, and wondering if she should like her. At last, towards the close of Friday afternoon, there was a knock at the door and a haughty-looking, elegantly dressed young lady inquired if a little orphan girl lived there.

"That's her--Aunt Sarah," exclaimed Dora, springing joyfully forward; but she paused and started back, as she met the cold, scrutinizing glance of Eugenia's large black eyes.

"Are you the child I am looking for?" asked Eugenia, without deigning to notice Mrs. Grannis's request that she would walk in.

"I am Dora Deane," was the simple answer; and then, as briefly as possible, Eugenia explained that she had been sent for her, and that early the next morning she would call to take her to the depot.

"_Did_ you know mother? Are you any relation?" asked Dora, trembling with eager expectation; and Alice, who, without her sister's influence, would have been a comparatively kind-hearted girl, answered softly, "We are your cousins."

There was much native politeness and natural refinement of manner about Dora, and instinctively her little chubby hand was extended towards her newly found relative, who pressed it gently, glancing

the while at her sister, who, without one word of sympathy for the orphan girl, walked away through the winding passage, and down the narrow stairs, out into the sunlight, where, breathing more freely, she exclaimed, "What a horrid place! I hope I haven't caught anything. Didn't Dora look like a Dutch doll in that long dress and high-neck apron?"

"Her face is pretty, though," returned Alice, "and her eyes are beautiful--neither blue nor black, but a mixture of both. How I pitied her as they filled with tears when you were talking! Why didn't you speak to her?"

"Because I'd nothing to say," answered Eugenia, stepping into the carriage which had brought them there, and ordering the driver to go next to Stuart's, where she wished to look again at a velvet cloak.

"It is so cheap, and so becoming, too, that I am half tempted to get it," she exclaimed.

"Mother won't like it, I know," said Alice, who herself began to have some fears for the three hundred and fifty dollars.

"Fudge!" returned Eugenia, adding the next moment, "I wonder if she'll have to buy clothes for Dora the first thing. I hope not," and she drew around her the costly fur, for which she had paid fifty dollars.

Of course the cloak was bought, together with several other articles equally _cheap_ and becoming, and by the time the hotel bills were paid, there were found in the purse just twenty-five dollars, with which to pay their expenses back to Dunwood.

There were bitter tears shed at the parting next morning in Mrs. Grannis's humble room, for Dora felt that the friends to whom she was going were not like those she left behind; and very lovingly her arms wound themselves around the poor widow's neck as she wept her last adieu, begging Mrs. Grannis not to forget her, but to write sometimes, and tell her of the lady who had so kindly befriended her.

"We can't wait any longer," cried Eugenia, and with one more farewell kiss, Dora went out of the house where she had experienced much of happiness, and where had come to her her deepest grief.

"Forlorn. What is that old thing going for! Leave it," said Eugenia, touching with her foot a square, green trunk or chest, which stood by the side of the long, sack-like carpet-bag containing Dora's wardrobe.

"It was father's--and mother's clothes are in it," answered Dora, with quivering lips.

There was something in the words and manner of the little girl, as she laid her hand reverently on the offending trunk, that touched even Eugenia; and she said no more. An hour later, and the attention of more than one passenger in the Hudson River cars was attracted towards the two stylish-looking ladies who came in, laden with bundles, and followed by a little girl in black, for whom no seat was found save the one by the door where the wind crept in, and the unmelted frost still covered the window pane.

"Won't you be cold here?" asked Alice, stopping a moment, ere passing on to her own warm seat near the stove.

"No matter; I am used to it," was Dora's meek reply; and wrapping her thin, half-worn shawl closer about her, and drawing her feet up beneath her, she soon fell asleep, dreaming sweet dreams of the home to which she was going, and of the Aunt Sarah who would be to her a second mother!

God help thee, Dora Deane!

CHAPTER IV.

DORA'S NEW HOME.

One year has passed away since the night when, cold, weary and forlorn, Dora followed her cousins up the graveled walk which led to her new home. One whole year, and in that time she has somewhat changed. The merry-hearted girl, who, until a few weeks before her mother's death, was happier far than many a favored child of wealth, has become a sober, quiet, self-reliant child, performing without a word of complaint the many duties which have gradually been imposed upon her.

From her aunt she had received a comparatively welcome greeting, and when Eugenia displayed her purchases, which had swallowed up the entire three hundred and fifty dollars, Mrs. Deane had laid her hand on the little girl's soft, auburn hair, as if to ask forgiveness for the injustice done her by the selfish Eugenia, whose only excuse for her extravagance was, that "no one in her right mind need to think of bringing back any money from New York." And Dora, from her seat on a little stool behind the stove, understood nothing, thought of nothing, except that Eugenia looked beautifully in her velvet cloak and furs, and that her aunt must be very rich, to afford so many handsome articles of furniture as

the parlor contained.

"And I am glad that she is," she thought, "for she will not be so likely to think me in the way."

As time passed on, however, Dora, who was a close observer, began to see things in their true light, and her life was far from being happy. By her cousin Alice she was treated with a tolerable degree of kindness, while Eugenia, without any really evil intention, perhaps, seemed to take delight in annoying her sensitive cousin, constantly taunting her with her dependence upon them, and asking her sometimes how she expected to repay the debt of gratitude she owed them. Many and many a night had the orphan wept herself to sleep, in the low, scantily furnished chamber which had been assigned her; and she was glad when at last an opportunity was presented for her to be in a measure out of Eugenia's way, and at the same time feel that she doing something towards earning her living.

The oft-repeated threat of Bridget's mother that her daughter should be removed, unless her wages were increased, was finally carried into effect; and one Saturday night, Mrs. Deane was startled by the announcement that Bridget was going to leave. In a moment, Dora's resolution was taken, and coming to her aunt's side, she said:

"Don't hire another girl, Aunt Sarah. Let me help you. I can do almost as much as Bridget, and you won't have to pay me either. I shall only be paying you."

Unclasping the handsome bracelet which had been purchased with a portion of the remaining one hundred and fifty dollars, Eugenia, ere her mother had time to reply, exclaimed:

"That is a capital idea! I wonder how you happened to be so thoughtful."

And so it was decided that Dora should take Bridget's place, she thinking how much she would do, and how hard she would try to please her aunt, who quieted her own conscience by saying "it was only a temporary arrangement until she could find another servant."

But as the days went by, the temporary arrangement bid fair to become permanent, for Mrs. Deane could not be insensible to the vast difference which Bridget's absence made in her weekly expenses. Then, too, Dora was so willing to work, and so uncomplaining, never seeking a word of commendation, except once, indeed, when she timidly ventured to ask Eugenia if "what she did was enough to pay for her board?"

"Just about," was Eugenia's answer, which, indifferent as it was, cheered the heart of Dora, as, day after day, she toiled on in the

comfortless kitchen, until her hands, which, when she came to Locust Grove, were soft and white as those of an infant, became rough and brown, and her face gradually assumed the same dark hue, for she could not always stop to tie on her sunbonnet, when sent for wood or water.

With the coming of summer, arrangements had been made for sending her to school, though Mrs. Deane felt at first as if she could not be deprived of her services. Still for appearance' sake, if for nothing more, she must go; and with the earliest dawn the busy creature was up, working like a bee, that her aunt and cousins might not have so much to do in her absence. At first she went regularly, but after a time it became very convenient to detain her at home, for at least two days in every week, and this wrung from her almost the only tears she had shed since the morning, when, of her own accord, she had gone into the kitchen to perform a servant's duties.

Possessing naturally a fondness for books, and feeling ambitious to keep up with her class, she at last conceived the idea of studying at home; and many a night, long after her aunt and cousins were asleep, she sat up alone, poring over her books, sometimes by the dim light of a lamp, and again by the light of the full moon, whose rays seemed to fall around her more brightly than elsewhere. It was on one of these occasions, when tracing upon her map the boundary lines of India, that her thoughts reverted to her uncle Nathaniel, whose name she seldom heard, and of whom she had never but once spoken. Then in the presence of her aunt and cousins she had wondered why he did not answer her mother's letter.

"Because he has nothing to write, I presume," said Eugenia, who would not trust her mother to reply.

And Dora, wholly unsuspecting, never dreamed of the five hundred dollars sent over for her benefit, and which was spent long ago-- though not for her--never dreamed of the letter which Eugenia had written in reply, thanking her uncle again and again for his generous gift, which she said "was very acceptable, for _ma_ was rather poor, and it would aid her materially in providing for the wants of Dora," who was represented as being "a queer, old-fashioned child, possessing but little affection for any one and who never spoke of her uncle Nathaniel, or manifested the least gratitude for what he was doing!"

In short, the impression left upon the mind of Uncle Nat was that Dora, aside from being cold-hearted, was uncommonly dull, and would never make much of a woman, do what they might for her! With a sigh, and a feeling of keen disappointment, he read the letter, saying to himself, as he laid it away, "Can this be true of Fanny's child?"

But this, we say, _Fanny's_ child did not know; and as her

eyes wandered over the painted map of India, she resolved to write and to tell him of her mother's dying words--tell him how much she loved him, because he was her father's brother, and how she wished he would come home, that she might know him better.

"If I only had some keepsake to send him--something he would prize," she thought, when her letter was finished. And then, as she enumerated her small store of treasures, she remembered her mother's beautiful hair, which had been cut from her head, as she lay in her coffin, and which now held a place in the large square trunk. "I will send him a lock of that," she said; and kneeling reverently by the old green trunk, the shrine where she nightly said her prayers, she separated from the mass of rich, brown hair, one long, shining tress, which she inclosed within her letter, adding, in a postscript, "It is mother's hair, and Dora's tears have often fallen upon it. 'Tis all I have to give."

Poor little Dora! Nathaniel Deane would have prized that simple gift far more than all the wealth which he called his, but it was destined never to reach him. The wily Eugenia, to whom Dora applied for an envelope, unhesitatingly showing what she had written, knew better than to send that note across the sea, and feigning the utmost astonishment, she said: "I am surprised, Dora, that after your mother's ill-success, you should think of writing to Uncle Nat. He is a suspicious, miserly old fellow, and will undoubtedly think you are after his money!"

"I wouldn't send it for the world, if I supposed he'd fancy such a thing as that," answered Dora, her eyes filling with tears.

"Of course you wouldn't," continued Eugenia, perceiving her advantage and following it up. "You can do as you like, but my advice is that you do not send it; let him write to _you_ first if he wishes to open a correspondence!"

This decided the matter, and turning sadly away, Dora went back to her chamber, hiding the letter and the lock of hair in the old green trunk.

"How can you be so utterly void of principle?" asked Alice, as Dora quitted the room; and Eugenia replied: "It isn't a lack of principle, it's only my good management. I have my plans, and I do not intend they shall be frustrated by that foolish letter, which would, of course, be followed by others of the same kind. Now I am perfectly willing that Uncle Nat should divide his fortune between us and Dora, but unfortunately he is a _one idea_ man, and should he conceive a fancy for our cousin, our hopes are blasted forever; so I don't propose letting him do any such thing. Mother has given up the correspondence to me, and I intend making the old gentleman think I am a most perfect specimen of what a young lady should be, saying, of course, an occasional good word for _you!_ I believe I understand him tolerably well, and if in the end I win, I pledge you my word that Dora shall not be

forgotten. Are you satisfied?"

Alice could not say yes, but she knew it was useless to reason with her sister, so she remained silent; while a curious train of thoughts passed through her mind, resulting at last in an increased kindness of manner on her part towards her young cousin, who was frequently relieved of duties which would otherwise have detained her from school. And Dora's step grew lighter, and her heart happier, as she thought that Alice at least cared for her welfare.

On New Year's Day there came a letter from Uncle Nat, containing the promised check, which Eugenia held up to view, while she read the following brief lines:

"Many thanks to Eugenia for her kind and welcome letter, which I may answer at some future time, when I have anything interesting to say."

"Have you written to Uncle Nat, and did you tell him of me, or of mother's letter?" exclaimed Dora, who had been sitting unobserved behind the stove, and who now sprang eagerly forward, while her cheeks glowed with excitement.

Soon recovering her composure, Eugenia answered, "Yes, I wrote to him, and of course, mentioned you with the rest of us. His answer you have heard."

"But the other paper," persisted Dora. "Doesn't that say anything?"

For a moment Eugenia hesitated, and then, deciding that no harm could come of Dora's knowing of the money, provided she was kept in ignorance of the object for which it was sent, she replied, carelessly, "Oh that's nothing but a _check_. The old gentleman was generous enough to send us a little money, which we need badly enough."

There was not one particle of selfishness in Dora's disposition, and without a thought or wish that any of the money should be expended for herself, she replied, "Oh, I am so glad, for now Aunt Sarah can have that shawl she has wanted so long, and Alice the new merino."

Dear little Dora! she did not know why Eugenia's eyes so quickly sought the floor, nor understand why her aunt's hand was laid upon her head so caressingly. Neither did she know that Alice's sudden movement towards the window was to hide the expression of her face; but when, a few days afterwards, she was herself presented with a handsome merino, which both Eugenia and Alice volunteered to make, she thought there was not in Dunwood a happier child than herself. In the little orphan's pathway there were a few sunny spots, and that night when, by the old green trunk, she knelt her

down to pray, she asked of God that he would reward her aunts and cousins according to their kindnesses done to her!

Need we say that childish prayer was answered to the letter!

CHAPTER V.

ROSE HILL.

A little way out of the village of Dunwood, and situated upon a slight eminence, was a large, handsome building, which had formerly been owned by a Frenchman, who, from the great profusion of roses growing upon his grounds, had given to the place the name of "Rose Hill." Two years before our story opens, the Frenchman died, and since that time Rose Hill had been unoccupied, but now it had another proprietor, and early in the summer Mr. Howard Hastings and lady would take possession of their new home.

Of Mr. Hastings nothing definite was known, except that he was a man of unbounded wealth and influence--"and a little peculiar withal," so said Mrs. Leah, the matron, who had come up from New York to superintend the arrangement of the house, which was fitted up in a style of elegance far surpassing what most of Dunwood's inhabitants had seen before, and was for two or three weeks thrown open to the public. Mrs. Leah, who was a servant in Mr. Hastings's family and had known her young mistress's husband from childhood, was inclined to be rather communicative, and when asked to explain what she meant by Mr. Hastings's peculiarities, replied "Oh, he's queer every way--and no wonder, with his kind of a mother. Why she is rich as a Jew, and for all that, she made her only daughter learn how to do all kinds of work. It would make her a better wife, she said, and so, because _Ella_ had rather lie on the sofa and read a nice novel than to be pokin' round in the kitchen and tending to things, as he calls it, Mr. Hastings looks blue and talks about _woman's_ duties, and all that nonsense. Recently he has taken it into his head that late hours are killing her--that it isn't healthy for her to go every night to parties, concerts, operas, and the like o' that, so he's going to bury her in the stupid country, where she'll be moped to death, for of course there's nobody here that she'll associate with."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Eugenia, who formed one of the group of listeners to this precious bit of gossip; but whether she intended this cognomen for the cruel husband, or Mrs. Leah, we do not know, as she continued to question the old lady of Mrs. Hastings herself, asking if her health were delicate and if she were pretty.

"Delicate! I guess she is," returned Mrs. Leah. "If she hasn't got

the consumption now, she will have it. Why, her face is as white as some of them lilies that used to grow on the ponds in old Connecticut; and then to think her husband won't let her take all the comfort she can, the little time she has to live! It's too bad," and the corner of Dame Leah's silk apron went up to her eyes, as she thought how her lady was aggrieved. Soon recovering her composure, she reverted to Eugenia's last question, and hastened to reply, "_pretty_", don't begin to express it. Just imagine the least little bit of a thing, with the whitest face, the bluest eyes and the yellowest curls, dressed in a light blue silk wrapper, all lined with white satin, and tied with a tassel as big as my fist; wouldn't such a creature look well in the kitchen, telling Hannah it was time to get dinner, and seeing if Tom was cleaning the vegetables!"

And Mrs. Leah's nose went up at the very idea of a blue silk wrapper being found outside of the parlor, even if the husband of said wrapper _did_ have to wait daily at least two hours for his badly cooked dinner!

"Oh, but you ought to see her dressed for a party," continued Mrs. Leah, "she looks like a queen, all sparkling with diamonds and pearls; but she'll never go to many more, poor critter!"

And as the good lady's services were just then needed in another part of the building, she bade good morning to her audience, who commented upon what they had heard, each according to their own ideas--some warmly commending Mr. Hastings for removing his delicate young wife from the unwholesome atmosphere of the city, while others, and among them Eugenia, thought he ought to let her remain in New York, if she chose. Still, while commiserating Mrs. Hastings for being obliged to live in "that _stupid village_," Eugenia expressed her pleasure that she was coming, and on her way home imparted to Alice her intention of being quite intimate with the New York lady, notwithstanding what "the spiteful old Mrs. Leah" had said about there being no one in Dunwood fit for her to associate with. In almost perfect ecstasy Dora listened to her cousin's animated description of Rose Hill, its handsome rooms and elegant furniture, and while her cheeks glowed with excitement, she exclaimed, "Oh, how I wish I could _really_ live in such a house!"

"And I shouldn't wonder if you did. Your present prospects look very much like it," was Eugenia's scornful reply, which Dora scarcely heard, for her thoughts were busy elsewhere.

She had an eye for the beautiful, and, strange to say, would at any time have preferred remaining in her aunt's pleasant parlor, to washing dishes from off the long kitchen table; but as this last seemed to be her destiny, she submitted without a murmur, contenting herself the while by building _castles_, just as many a child has done before her and will do again. Some how, too, Dora's castles, particularly the one of which she was mistress,

were always large and beautiful, just like Eugenia's description of Rose Hill, to which she had listened with wonder, it seemed so natural, so familiar, so like the realization of what she had many a time dreamed, while her hands were busy with the dish towel or the broom.

Dora was a strange child--so her mother and her aunt Sarah both had told her--so her teachers thought, and so her companions said, when she stole away by herself to _think_, preferring her own thoughts to the pastime of her schoolmates. This _thinking_ was almost the only recreation which Dora had, and as it seldom interfered with the practical duties of her life, no one was harmed if she did sometimes imagine the most improbable things; and if for a few days succeeding her cousin's visit to Rose Hill, she did seem a little inattentive, and somewhat abstracted, it was merely because she had for a time changed places with the fashionable Mrs. Hastings, whose blue silk morning-gown, while discussed in the _parlor_, was worn in fancy in the _kitchen_.

Dream on Dora Deane, dream on--but guard this, your last imagining, most carefully from the proud Eugenia, who would scarce deem you worthy to take upon your lips the name of Mrs. Hastings, much less to be even in fancy the mistress of Rose Hill.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. AND MRS. HASTINGS.

In blissful ignorance of the gossip which his movements were exciting in Dunwood, Mr. Hastings in the city went quietly on with the preparations for his removal, purchasing and storing away in divers baskets, boxes and bags, many luxuries which he knew he could not readily procure in the country, and which would be sadly missed by his young girl-wife, who sat all day in her mother's parlor, bemoaning her fate in being thus doomed to a life in the "horribly vulgar country." She had forgotten that "she could live anywhere with _him_," for the Ella Hastings of to-day is the Ella Gray of little more than a year ago, the same who had listened to the sad story of _Dora Deane_, without ever thinking that some day in the future she should meet the little girl who made such an impression upon her husband.

Howard Hastings was not the only man who, with a grand theory as to what a wife ought to be, had married from pure fancy; finding too late that she whom he took for a companion was a mere plaything--a doll to be dressed up and sent out into the fashionable world, where alone her happiness could be found. Still the disappointment to such is not the less bitter, because others, too, are suffering from the effect of a like hallucination, and

Howard Hastings felt it most keenly. He loved, or fancied he loved, Ella Grey devotedly, and when in her soft flowing robes of richly embroidered lace, with the orange blossoms resting upon her golden curls, and her long eyelashes veiling her eyes of blue, she had stood at the altar as his bride there was not in all New York a prouder or a happier man. Alas, that in the intimate relations of married life, there should never be brought to light faults whose existence was never suspected! Yet so it is, and the honeymoon had scarcely waned ere Mr. Hastings began to feel a very little disappointed, as, one after another, the peculiarities of his wife were unfolded to his view.

In all his pictures of domestic bliss, there had ever been a home of his own, a cheerful fireside, to which he could repair, when the day's toil was done, but Ella would not hear of housekeeping. To be sure, it would be very pleasant to keep up a grand establishment and give splendid dinner-parties, but she knew that Howard, with his peculiar notions, would expect her to do just as his "dear, fussy old mother did," and that, she wouldn't for a moment think of, for she really "did not know the names of one-half the queer-looking things in the kitchen."

"She will improve as she grows older--she is very young yet, but little more than eighteen," thought Mr. Hastings; and his heart softened towards her, as he remembered the kind of training she had received from her mother, who was a pure slave of fashion, and would have deemed her daughters degraded had they possessed any knowledge of work.

And still, when the aristocratic Howard Hastings had sued for Ella's hand, she felt honored, notwithstanding that both his mother and sister were known to be well skilled in everything pertaining to what she called "drudgery." To remove his wife from her mother's influence, and at the same time prolong her life, for she was really very delicate, was Mr. Hastings's aim; and as he had always fancied a home in the country, he at last purchased Rose Hill farm in spite of Ella's tears, and the frowns of her mother, who declared it impossible for her daughter to live without society, and pronounced all country people "rough, ignorant and vulgar."

All this Ella believed, and though she was far too amiable and sweet-tempered to be really angry, she came very near sulking all the way from New York to Dunwood. But when at the depot, she met the new carriage and horses which had been purchased expressly for herself, she was somewhat mollified and telling her husband "he was the best man in the world," she took the reins in her own little soft, white hands, and laughed aloud as she saw how the spirited creatures obeyed her slightest wish. From the parlor windows of Locust Grove, Eugenia and her sister looked out upon the strangers, pronouncing Mr. Hastings the most elegant-looking man they had ever seen, while his wife, the girlish Ella, was thought far too pale to be very beautiful.

Near the gate at the entrance to Rose Hill, was a clear limpid stream, where the school-children often played, and where they were now assembled. A little apart from the rest, seated upon a mossy bank, with her bare feet in the running water, and her rich auburn hair shading her brown cheeks, was Dora Deane, not dreaming this time, but watching so intently a race between two of her companions, that she did not see the carriage until it was directly opposite. Then, guessing who its occupants were she started up, coloring crimson as she saw the lady's eyes fixed upon her, and felt sure she was the subject of remark. "Look, Howard," said Ella. "I suppose that is what you call a rural sight--a barefoot girl, with a burnt face and huge sunbonnet?"

Ere Mr. Hastings could reply, Dora, wishing to redeem her character, which she was sure she had lost by having been caught with her feet in the brook, darted forward and opening the gate, held it for them to pass.

"Shall I give her some money?" softly whispered Ella, feeling for her purse.

"Hush-sh!" answered Mr. Hastings, for he knew that money would be an insult to Dora, who felt more than repaid by the pleasant smile he gave her as he said, "Thank you, miss."

"I have seen a face like his before," thought Dora, as she walked slowly down the road, while the carriage kept on its way, and soon carried Ella to her new home.

Not to be pleased with Rose Hill was impossible, and as the young wife's eye fell upon the handsome building, with its cool, vine-wreathed piazza--upon the shaded walks, the sparkling fountains and the thousands of roses which were now in full bloom, she almost cried with delight, even forgetting, for a time, that she was in the "horrid country." But she was ere long reminded of the fact by Mrs. Leah, who told of the "crowds of gaping people," who had been up to see the house. With a deprecating glance at the village where the "gaping people" were supposed to live, Ella drew nearer to her husband, expressing a wish that the good folks of Dunwood would confine their calls to the house and grounds, and not be troubling her. But in this she was destined to be disappointed, for the inhabitants of Dunwood were friendly, social people, who knew no good reason why they should not be on terms of equality with the little lady of Rose Hill; and one afternoon, about a week after her arrival at Dunwood, she was told that some ladies were waiting for her in the parlor.

"Dear me! Sophy," said she, while a frown for an instant clouded her pretty face, "tell them I'm not at home."

"But I just told them you were," answered Sophy, adding that "the ladies were well-dressed and fine-looking," and suggesting that

her young mistress should wear down something more appropriate than the soiled white muslin wrapper in which she had lounged all day, because "it was not worth her while to dress, when there was no one but her _husband_ to see her."

This, however, Ella refused to do. "It was good enough for country folks," she said, as she rather reluctantly descended to the parlor, where her first glance at her visitors made her half regret that she had not followed Sophy's advice. Mrs. Judge Howell and her daughter-in-law were refined, cultivated women, and ere Ella had conversed with them five minutes, she felt that if there was between them any point of inferiority, it rested with herself, and not with them. They had traveled much, both in the Old and New World; and though their home was in Boston, they spent almost every summer in Dunwood, which Mrs. Howell pronounced a most delightful village, assuring Ella that she could not well avoid being happy and contented. Very wonderingly the large childish blue eyes went up to the face of Mrs. Howell, who, interpreting aright their expression, casually remarked that when she was young, she fell into the foolish error of thinking there could be _nobody_ outside the walls of a city. "But the experience of sixty years has changed my mind materially," said she, "for I have met quite as many refined and cultivated people in the country as in the city."

This was a new idea to Ella, and the next visitors, who came in just after Mrs. Howell left, were obliged to wait while she made quite an elaborate toilet.

"Oh, Ella, how much better you are looking than you were an hour or two since," exclaimed Mr. Hastings, who entered the chamber just as his wife was leaving it.

"There's company in the parlor," answered Ella, tripping lightly away, while her husband walked on into the dressing-room, where he stepped first over a pair of slippers, then over a muslin wrapper, and next over a towel, which Ella in her haste had left upon the floor, her usual place for everything.

This time the visitors proved to be Eugenia and Alice, with the first of whom the impulsive Ella was perfectly delighted, she was so refined, so genteel, so richly dressed, and assumed withal such a _patronizing_ air, that the shortsighted Ella felt rather overawed, particularly when she spoke of her "uncle in India," with whom she was "_such_ a favorite." During their stay, _servants_ were introduced as a topic of conversation, and on that subject Eugenia was quite as much at home as Mrs. Hastings, descanting at large upon the many annoyances one was compelled to endure, both from the "ignorance and impertinence of hired help." Once or twice, too, the words "my waiting-maid" escaped her lips, and when at last she took her leave, she had the satisfaction of knowing that Mrs. Hastings was duly impressed with a sense of her importance.

"Such charming people I never expected to find in the country, and so elegantly dressed too," thought Ella, as from her window she watched them walking slowly down the long avenue. "That silk of Miss Eugenia's could not have cost less than two dollars a yard, and her hands, too, were as soft and white as mine. They must be wealthy--those Deanes: I wonder if they ever give any parties."

And then, as she remembered sundry gossamer fabrics which were dignified by the title of party dresses, and which, with many tears, she had folded away as something she should never need in the country, she exclaimed aloud, "Why, can't I have a party here as well as at home? The house is a great deal larger than the long narrow thing on which mama prides herself so much. And then it will be such fun to show off before the country people, who, of course, are not all as refined as the Deanes. I'll speak to Howard about it immediately."

"Speak to me about what?" asked Mr. Hastings, who had entered the parlor in time to hear the last words of his wife.

Very briefly Ella stated to him her plan of giving a large party as soon as a sufficient number of the village people had called.

"You know you wish me to be sociable with them," she continued, as she saw the slightly comical expression of her husband's face; "and how can I do it better than by inviting them to my house?"

"I am perfectly willing for the party," answered Mr. Hastings, "but I do rather wonder what has so soon changed your mind."

"Oh, nothing much," returned Ella, "only the people don't seem half as vulgar as mama said they would. I wish you could see Eugenia Deane. She's perfectly magnificent--wears a diamond ring, Valenciennes lace, and all that. Her mother is very wealthy, isn't she?"

"I have never supposed so--if you mean the widow Deane, who lives at the place called 'Locust Grove,' answered Mr. Hastings; and Ella continued, "Yes, she is, I am sure, from the way Eugenia talked. They keep servants, I know, for she spoke of a waiting-maid. Then, too, they have an old bachelor uncle in India, with a million or more, and these two young ladies will undoubtedly inherit it all at his death."

"Miss Deane must have been very communicative," said Mr. Hastings, who understood the world much better than his wife, and who readily guessed that Miss Eugenia had passed herself off for quite as much as she was.

"It was perfectly natural for her to tell me what she did," answered Ella, "and I like her so much! I mean to drive over there soon, and take her out riding."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the ringing of the door-bell, and it was not again resumed until the Monday morning following, when, at the breakfast-table, Ella asked for the carriage to be sent round, as "she was going to call at Mrs. Deane's, and take the young ladies to ride."

"But it is washing-day," suggested Mr. Hastings, wishing to tease his wife. "And nothing, I am told, mortifies a woman more than to be caught with her hair in papers, and her arms in the suds. So, if you value your friend Eugenia's feelings, you had better wait until to-morrow."

"_Suds_, Howard! What do you mean?" asked the indignant Ella. "Eugenia Deane's hands never saw a wash-tub! Why, they are almost as white as mine." And the little lady glanced rather admiringly at the small snowy fingers, which handled so gracefully the heavy knife and fork of silver.

"You have my permission to go," said Mr. Hastings, "but I am inclined to think you'll have to wait a long time for your friends to make their appearance."

Mentally resolving not to tell him if she did, Ella ran up to her room, where, leaving her morning dress in the middle of the floor, and donning a handsome plaid silk, she descended again to the parlor, and suggested to her husband the propriety of bringing the young ladies home with her to dinner, alleging, as one reason, that "there was no use of having a silver dining set and nice things, unless there was somebody to see them."

"And am not I somebody?" asked Mr. Hastings, playfully winding his arm around the little creature, who answered, "Why, yes--but mama never thought it worth her while always to have the best things and fix up when there was no one to dinner but us and father; and I don't think I need to be so particular as when I was Ella Grey and you were Mr. Hastings, for now I am your wife, and you are---"

Here she paused, while she stooped down to caress a huge Newfoundland dog, which came bounding in. Then, remembering she had not finished her sentence, she added after a moment, "And you are only Howard!_"

Silenced, if not convinced, Mr. Hastings walked away, wondering if every husband, at the expiration of fifteen months, reached the enviable position of being "only Howard!" Half an hour later, and Ella Hastings, having left orders with Mrs. Leah for a "company dinner," was riding down the shaded avenue into the highway, where she bade the coachman drive in the direction of Locust Grove.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISIT.

The plain though comfortable breakfast of dry toast, baked potatoes and black tea was over. This morning it had been eaten from the kitchen table; for, as Mr. Hastings had surmised, it was washing day, and on such occasions, wishing to save work, Mrs. Deane would not suffer the dining-room to be occupied. To this arrangement the proud Eugenia submitted the more readily, as she knew that at this hour they were not liable to calls; so she who had talked of her waiting-maid and wealthy uncle to Mrs. Hastings, sat down to breakfast with her waiting-maid eating her potatoes with a knife and cooling her tea in her saucer; two points which in the parlor she loudly denounced as positive marks of ill breeding, but which in the kitchen, where there was no one to see her, she found vastly convenient! Piles of soiled clothes were scattered over the floor, and from a tub standing near, a volume of steam was rising, almost hiding from view the form of Dora Deane, whose round red arms were diving into the suds, while she to herself was softly repeating the lesson in History, that day to be recited by her class, and which she had learned the Saturday night previous, well knowing that Monday's duties would keep her from school the entire day.

In the chamber above--her long, straight hair plaited up in braids, so as to give it the wavy appearance she had so much admired in Mrs. Hastings--her head enveloped in a black silk apron and her hands incased in buckskin gloves, was Eugenia, setting her room to rights, and complaining with every breath of her hard lot, in being thus obliged to exert herself on hot summer mornings.

"Don't you wish you were rich as Mrs. Hastings?" asked Alice, who chanced to come in.

"That I do," returned Eugenia. "I have been uncomfortable and discontented ever since I called upon her, for I can't see why there should be such a difference. She has all the money, servants and dresses which she wants, besides the handsomest and most elegant man for a husband; while I, Eugenia Deane, who am ten times smarter than she, and could appreciate these things so much better, am obliged to make all sorts of shifts, just to keep up appearances. But didn't I impress her with a sense of my greatness!" she added, after a pause, and Alice rejoined, "Particularly when you talked of your waiting-maid! I don't see, Eugenia, how you dare do such things, for of course Mrs. Hastings will eventually know that you mean Dora."

"I'm not so sure of that," returned Eugenia; "and even if she does, I fancy I have tact enough to smooth it over with her, for she is not very deep."

For a moment Alice regarded her sister intently, and then said, I wonder from whom you take your character for deception."

"I've dwelt upon that subject many a time myself," answered Eugenia, and I have at last come to the conclusion that as father was not famous for sense of any kind, I must be a second and revised edition of mother--but hark, don't you hear the roll of wheels?" And springing up, she reached the window just as Mrs. Hastings alighted from her carriage which stood before the gate.

"Great goodness!" she exclaimed, "there's Mrs. Hastings coming here to call--and _I_ in this predicament. What _shall_ I do?"

"Let her wait, of course, until we change our dresses," answered Alice, and rushing down the Stairs, Eugenia bade Dora "show the lady into the parlor," adding, "and if she asks for me, say I am suffering from a severe headache, but you presume I will see her."

Perfectly delighted at the idea of standing face to face with a person of whom she had heard so much, Dora removed her high-necked apron, and throwing it across the tub so that the sleeves trailed upon the floor, was hurrying away, when her foot becoming accidentally entangled in the apron, she fell headlong to the floor, bringing with her _tub_, _suds_, _clothes_ and all! To present herself in this drenched condition was impossible, and in a perfect tremor lest Mrs. Hastings should go away, Eugenia vibrated, brush in hand, between her own chamber and the head of the kitchen stairs, scolding Dora unmercifully in the one place, and pulling at the long braids of her hair in the other.

At last, just as Mrs. Hastings was about despairing of being heard, and was beginning to think that possibly her husband might be right and Eugenia in the _suds_ after all, a chubby, brown-faced girl appeared, and after giving her a searching, curious glance, shewed her into the parlor.

"Are the young ladies at home?" asked Mrs. Hastings; and Dora, who had never told a falsehood in her life, and had no intention of doing so now, replied that they were and would soon be down; after which, with a low courtesy she went back to the scene of her late disaster, while Mrs. Hastings busied herself awhile by looking around the room which, though small, was very handsomely furnished.

At last, beginning to grow sleepy, she took up a book and succeeded in interesting herself so far as to nod quite approvingly, when the rustle of female garments aroused her, and in a moment Eugenia and Alice swept into the room. Both were tastefully dressed, while about Eugenia there was an air of languor befitting the _severe headache_, of which Mrs. Hastings

was surprised to hear.

"Then _that girl_ didn't tell you as I bade her to do," said Eugenia; adding, that "Mrs. Hastings must have thought her very rude to keep her so long waiting."

But Mrs. Hastings was too good-natured to think anything, and, after a few commonplace remarks, she told the object of her call, saying, that "the fresh air would, undoubtedly, do Eugenia good." In this opinion the young lady fully concurred, and, half an hour later, she was slowly riding through the principal streets of Dunwood, wondering if her acquaintances did not envy her for being on such terms of intimacy with the fashionable Mrs. Hastings. Very politely were the young ladies received by Mr. Hastings, on their arrival at Rose Hill, and throughout the entire day their admiration, both for the place and its owner, increased, though Eugenia could not conceal from herself the fact, that she stood very much in fear of the latter, whose keen black eyes seemed to read her very thoughts. How such a man came to marry Ella Grey, was to her a puzzle; and if occasionally she harbored the thought that Eugenia Deane was far better suited to be the mistress of Howard Hastings's home than the childish creature he had chosen, she was only guilty of what had, in a similar manner, been done by more than one New York belle. Dinner being over, Ella led the way to an upper balcony, which opened from her chamber, and which was a cool, shaded spot. Scarcely were they seated, when remembering something she had left in the parlor, she went back for it, and, in returning, she ran up the stairs so swiftly that a sudden dizziness came over her, and with a low cry she fell half fainting into the arms of her husband, who bent tenderly over her, while Eugenia made many anxious inquiries as to what was the matter, and if she were often thus affected.

"Yes, often," answered Ella, who began to revive; then, as the perspiration gathered thickly about the white lips, she pressed her blue-veined hand upon her side, and cried, "The pain--the pain! It has come again. Country air won't do me any good. I shall die of consumption, just as mother said." And as if she saw indeed the little grave, on which the next summer's sun would shine, she hid her face in her husband's bosom, and sobbed aloud. Instantly a dark thought flashed upon Eugenia--a thought which even _she_ would not harbor, and casting it aside, she drew nearer to the weeping Ella, striving by an increased tenderness of manner to atone for having dared to think of a time when the little willow chair on the balcony would be empty, and Howard Hastings free. Soon rallying, Ella feigned to smile at her discomposure, saying that "consumption had been preached to her so much that she always felt frightened at the slightest pain in her side," thoughtlessly adding, as she glanced at her husband, "I wonder if Howard would miss me any, were I really to die."

A dark shadow settled upon Mr. Hastings's face, but he made no reply; and Eugenia, who was watching him, fancied she could read

his thoughts; but when they at last started for home, and she saw how tenderly he wrapped a warm shawl around his delicate young wife, who insisted upon going with them, she felt that however frivolous and uncompanionable Ella might be, she was Howard Hastings's wife, and, as such, he would love and cherish her to the last.

By her window in the attic sat Dora Deane, poring over to-morrow's lessons; but as the silvery voice of Ella fell upon her ear, she arose, and going to her cousin's chamber, looked out upon the party as they drew near the gate.

"How beautiful she is!" she whispered to herself, as, dropping her shawl, and flinging back her golden curls, Ella sprang up to reach a branch of locust blossoms, which grew above her head.

Then, as she saw how carefully Mr. Hastings replaced the shawl, drawing his wife's arm within his own, she stole back to her room, and, resuming her seat by the window, dreamed, as maidens of thirteen will, of a time away in the future, when she, too, might perhaps be loved even as was the gentle Ella Hastings.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE PARTY.

One pleasant July morning, the people of Dunwood were electrified by the news that on Thursday evening, Mrs. Howard Hastings would be at home to between one and two hundred of her friends. Among the first invited was Eugenia, who had been Mrs. Hastings's chief adviser, kindly enlightening her as to the somebodies and nobodies of the town, and rendering herself so generally useful, that, in a fit of gratitude, Mrs. Hastings had promised her her brother Stephen, a fast young man, who was expected to be present at the party. To appear well in his eyes was, therefore, Eugenia's ambition; and the time which was not spent in giving directions at Rose Hill, was occupied at home in scolding, because her mother would not devise a way by which she could obtain a new pink satin dress, with lace overskirt, and flowers to match.

It was in vain that Mrs. Deane sought to convince her daughter how impossible it was to raise the necessary funds. Eugenia was determined; and at last, by dint of secretly selling a half-worn dress to one Irish girl, a last year's bonnet to another, and a broche shawl to another, she succeeded in obtaining enough for the desired purchase, lacking five dollars, and this last it seemed

impossible to procure. But Eugenia never despaired; and a paragraph read one evening in a city paper, suggested to her a plan which she resolved to execute immediately.

It was nearly dark: her mother and sisters were in the village; Dora was gone on an errand, and she was alone. Half reluctantly, she opened the stair door which led to Dora's room, the low room in the attic. Up the steep staircase, and through the narrow hall she went, treading softly, and holding her breath, as if she feared lest the dead, from her far-off grave in the great city, should hear her noiseless footfall, and come forth to prevent the wrong she meditated. But no, Fanny Deane slept calmly in her coffin, and Eugenia kept on her way unmolested, until the chamber was reached. Then, indeed, she hesitated, for there was, to her, something terrifying in the darkness which had gathered in the corners of the room, and settled like a pall upon the old green trunk. To reach that and secure the treasure it contained, would have been the work of a moment; but, wholly powerless to advance, Eugenia stood still, while the cold perspiration started from every pore.

"I can do anything but _that,_" she said, at last, and, as if the words had given her strength to move, she turned back, gliding again through the narrow hall, and down the steep stairway, out into the open air; and when, that night, as she often did, Dora looked for her mother's beautiful _hair,_" it lay in its accustomed place, unruffled and unharmed; and the orphan child, as she pressed it to her lips, dreamed not of the danger which had threatened it, or of the snare about to be laid for herself by Eugenia, who could not yet give up the coveted dress.

Next morning, as Dora stood before the mirror, arranging her long, luxuriant hair, which she usually wore in braids, hanging down her back, Eugenia came up, and with an unusual degree of kindness in her manner, offered to fix it for her, commenting the while on the exceeding beauty of the rich auburn tresses, and saying, that if she were in Dora's place she would have it _cut off,_" as by this means she would, when grown up, have much handsomer hair than if it were suffered to remain long. Dora remembered having heard her mother say the same; but she had a pride in her hair, which was longer and thicker than any of her companions'; so she said nothing until Eugenia, who, to serve her own purpose, would not hesitate to tell a falsehood, and who knew how much Dora admired Mrs. Hastings, spoke of that lady's beautiful curls, saying they were all the result of her having worn her hair quite short until she was sixteen years of age. Then, indeed, Dora wavered. She had recently suffered much from the headache, too, and it might relieve that; so that when Eugenia offered her a coral bracelet in exchange for her hair, she consented, and Alice entered the room just as the last shining braid dropped upon the floor.

"What upon earth!" she exclaimed, stopping short, and then bursting into a loud laugh at the comical appearance which Dora

presented; for Eugenia had cut close to the head, leaving the hair so uneven that shingling seemed the only alternative, and to this poor Dora finally submitted. When at last the performance was ended, and she glanced at herself in the mirror, she burst into a paroxysm of tears, while Alice tried to soothe her by saying that it really would eventually benefit her hair, and that she would not always look so strangely.

But Dora, who began to suspect that it was pure selfishness on Eugenia's part which had prompted the act, felt keenly the injustice done her, and refused to be comforted, keeping her room the entire day, and weeping until her eyelids were nearly blistered. Meantime, Eugenia had hurried off to the city with her ill-gotten treasure, on which the miserly old Jew, to whom it was offered, looked with eager longing eyes, taking care, however, to depreciate its value, lest his customer should expect too much. But Eugenia was fully his equal in management, and when at night she returned home, she was in possession of the satin, the lace and the flowers, together with several other articles of finery.

The next day was the party, and as Dora, besides being exceedingly tasteful, was also neat, and handy with her needle, she was kept from school, stitching the livelong day upon the dainty fabric, a portion of which had been purchased with her hair! Occasionally, as Eugenia glanced at the swollen eyelids and shorn head, bending so uncomplainingly over the cloud of lace, her conscience smote her for what she had done; but one thought of _Stephen Grey_ and the impression she should make on him, dissipated all such regrets; and when at length the hour for making her toilet arrived, her jaded cousin was literally made to perform all the offices of a waiting-maid. Three times was the tired little girl sent down to the village in quest of something which the capricious Eugenia _must_ have, and which, when brought, was not "the thing at all," and must be exchanged. Up the stairs and down the stairs she went, bringing pins to Alice and powder to Eugenia, enacting, in short, the part of a second Cinderella, except that in her case no kind old godmother with her potent wand appeared to her relief!

They were dressed at last, and very beautifully Eugenia looked in the pink satin and flowing lace, which harmonized so well with her complexion, and which had been bought with the united proceeds of a velvet bonnet, a delaine dress, a broche shawl, and Dora's hair!

"Why don't you compliment me?" she said to the weary child, who, sick with yesterday's weeping, and the close confinement of to-day, had laid her aching head upon the arm of the lounge.

Slowly unclosing her eyes, and fixing them upon her cousin, Dora answered--

"You do look beautifully. No one will excel you, I am sure, unless it be Mrs. Hastings. I wish I could see how she will dress."

"You might go up and look in at the window; or, if I'd thought of it, I could have secured you the office of door-waiter," said the thoughtless Eugenia, adding, as she held out her shawl for Dora to throw around her, "Don't you wish you could attend a party at Rose Hill?"

There was a sneer accompanying this question, which Dora felt keenly. Her little swelling heart was already full, and, with quivering lips and gushing tears, she answered, somewhat bitterly--

"I never expect to be anybody, or go any where;" then, as her services were no longer needed, she ran away to her humble room, where from her window she watched the many brilliant lights which shone from Rose Hill, and caught occasional glimpses of the airy forms which flitted before the open doors and windows. Once she was sure she saw Eugenia upon the balcony, and then, as a sense of the difference between herself and her cousins came over her, she laid her down upon the old green trunk, and covering her face with her hands, cried out, "Nobody cares for me, or loves me either. I wish I had died that winter night. Oh, mother! come to me, I am so lonely and so sad."

Softly, as if it were indeed the rustle of an angel's wings, came the evening air, through the open casement, cooling the feverish brow and drying the tears of the orphan girl, who grew strangely calm; and when at last the moon looked in upon her, she was sleeping quietly, with a placid smile upon her lips. Years after, and Dora Deane remembered that summer night, when, on the hard green trunk, she slept so soundly as not to hear the angry voice of Eugenia, who came home sadly out of humor with herself and the world at large.

At breakfast, next morning, she was hardly on speaking terms with her sister, while Stephen Grey was pronounced "a perfect bore-a baboon, with more hair than brains."

"And to that I should not suppose you would object" said Alice, mischievously. "You might find it useful in case of an emergency."

To this there was no reply, save an angry flash of the black eyes, which, it seems, had failed to interest Stephen Grey, who was far better pleased with the unassuming Alice, and who had paid the haughty Eugenia no attention whatever, except, indeed, to plant his patent leather boot upon one of her lace flounces, tearing it half off, and leaving a sad rent, which could not well be mended. This, then, was the cause of her wrath, which continued for some time; when really wishing to talk over the events of the evening, she became a little more gracious, and asked Alice how she liked Mrs. Elliott, who had unexpectedly arrived from New York.

"I was delighted with her," returned Alice; "she was such a perfect lady. And hadn't she magnificent hair! Just the color of

Dora's" she added, glancing at the little cropped head, which had been so suddenly divested of its beauty.

"It wasn't all hers, though," answered Eugenia, who invariably saw and spoke of every defect. "I heard her telling Ella that she bought a braid in Rochester as she came up. But what ails you?" she continued, speaking now to Dora, whose eyes sparkled with some unusual excitement and who replied--

"You said Mrs. Elliott, from New York. And that was the name of the lady who was so kind to me. Oh, if I only thought it were she, I'd---"

"Make yourself ridiculous, I dare say," interrupted Eugenia, adding, that "there was more than one Mrs. Elliott in the world, and she'd no idea that so elegant a lady as Mr. Hastings's sister ever troubled herself to look after folks in such a miserable old hovel as the one where Dora had lived."

This, however, did not satisfy the child, who, during the week that Mrs. Elliott remained in the neighborhood, cast many longing glances in the direction of Rose Hill, gazing oft with tearful eyes upon a female figure which sometimes walked upon the balcony, and which, perhaps, was her benefactress. One night it was told at Locust Grove that Mrs. Elliott had gone, and then, with a feeling of desolation for which she could not account, Dora again laid her face on the old green trunk and wept.

Poor Dora Deane! The path she trod was dark, indeed, but there was light ahead, and even now it was breaking upon her though she knew it not.

CHAPTER IX.

DORA AT ROSE HILL.

Summer was over. The glorious September days were gone. The hazy October had passed away, and the autumn winds had swept the withered leaves from the tall trees which grew around Rose Hill; when one cold, rainy November morning, a messenger was sent to Mrs. Deane, saying that Mrs. Hastings was sick, and wished to see her.

"Mrs. Hastings sent for mother! How funny! There must be some mistake," said Eugenia, putting her head in at the door. "Are you sure it was mother?"

"Yes, quite sure," answered the man. "Mrs. Hastings thought she would know what to do for the baby, which was born yesterday, and is a puny little thing."

This silenced Eugenia, who waited impatiently until nightfall, when her mother returned with a sad account of affairs at Rose Hill. Mrs. Hastings was sick and nervous, Mrs. Leah was lazy and cross, the servants ignorant and impertinent, the house was in disorder; while Mr. Hastings, with a cloud on his face, ill befitting a newly-made father, stalked up and down the sick-room, looking in vain for an empty chair, so filled were they with blankets, towels, baby's dresses, and the various kinds of work which Ella was always beginning and never finishing.

"Such an ignorant, helpless creature I never saw," said Mrs. Deane, "Why, she _don't know anything_--and such looking rooms! I don't wonder her servants give her so much trouble; but my heart ached for him, poor man, when I saw him putting away the things, and trying to make the room a little more comfortable"

It was even as Mrs. Deane had said. Ella, whose favorite theory was, "a big house, a lot of things, and _chairs_ enough to put them in," was wholly unprepared for sickness, which found her in a sad condition. To be sure there were quantities of French embroidery, thread lace and fine linen, while the bed, on which she lay, cost a hundred dollars, and the rosewood crib was perfect of its kind, but there was a great lack of neatness and order; and as day after day Mr. Hastings stood with folded arms, looking first from one window and then from the other, his thoughts were far from being agreeable, save when he bent over the cradle of his first-born, and then there broke over his face a look of unutterable tenderness, which was succeeded by a shade of deep anxiety as his eye rested upon his frail young wife, whose face seemed whiter even than the pillow on which it lay.

After a few weeks, during which time Ella had gained a little strength and was able to see her friends, Eugenia came regularly to Rose Hill, sitting all day by the bedside of the invalid, to whom she sometimes brought a glass of water, or some such trivial thing. Occasionally, too, she would look to see if the baby were asleep, pronouncing it "a perfect little cherub, just like its mother;" and there her services ended, for it never occurred to her that she could make the room much more cheerful by picking up and putting away the numerous articles which lay scattered around, and which were a great annoyance to the more orderly Mr. Hastings. Once, when Ella, as usual, was expatiating upon her goodness, asking her husband if she were not the best girl in the world, and saying "they must make her some handsome present in return for all she had done," he replied, "I confess, I should think more of Miss Deane, if she did you any real good, or rendered you any actual service; but, as far as I can discover, she merely sits here talking to you until you are wearied out."

"Why, what would you have her do?" asked Ella, her large blue eyes growing larger and bluer.

"I hardly know myself," answered Mr. Hastings; "but it seems to me that a genuine woman could not sit day after day in such a disorderly room as this."

"Oh, Howard!" exclaimed Ella, "you surely cannot expect Eugenia Deane to do a servant's duty. Why, she has been as delicately brought up as I, and knows quite as little of work."

"More shame for her if this is true," answered Mr. Hastings somewhat bitterly, and Ella continued.

"You've got such queer ideas, Howard, of _woman's duties._ I should suppose you would have learned, ere this, that few ladies are like your mother, who, though a blessed good soul, has the oddest notions."

"But they make a man's home mighty comfortable, those odd notions of mother's," said Mr. Hastings; then, knowing how useless it would be to argue the point, he was about changing the subject, when the new nurse, who had been there but a few days (the first one having quarreled with Mrs. Leah, and gone home), came in and announced her intention of leaving also, saying, "she would not live in the same house with old mother Leah!"

It was in vain that Mr. Hastings tried to soothe the angry girl-- she was determined, and for a second time was Ella left alone.

"Oh, what will become of me?" she groaned, as the door closed upon her late nurse. "Do, pray, Howard, go to the kitchen and get me some--some--_I don't know what,_ but get me _something!_"

With a very vague idea as to what he was to get or to do, Mr. Hastings left the room just as it was entered by Eugenia, to whom Ella detailed her grievances. "Her head ached dreadfully, Howard was cross, and her nurse gone. Oh, Eugenia!" she cried, "what shall I do? I wish I could die. Don't ever get married. What shall I do?"

And hiding her face in the pillow, poor Ella sobbed bitterly. For a time Eugenia stood, revolving the propriety of offering Dora as a substitute in the place of the girl who had just left. "Mother can work a little harder," she thought. "And Alice can help her occasionally. It will please Mr. Hastings, I know. Poor man, _I pity him!_"

So, more on account of the _pity_ she felt for Mr. Hastings, than for the _love_ she bore his wife, she said at last, "We have a little girl at our house, who is very capable for one of her years. I think she would be quite handy in a sick-room. At all events, she can rock the baby. Shall I send her up until you get

some one else?"

"Oh, if you only would," answered Ella. "I should be so glad,"

So, it was arranged that _Dora_ should come next morning, and then Eugenia, who was this time in a hurry, took her leave, having first said that Mrs. Hastings "needn't think strange if Dora called _her_ cousin and her mother _aunt,_ for she was a poor relation, whom they had taken out of charity!"

At first Mrs. Deane objected to letting her niece go, "for she was needed at home," she said; but Eugenia finally prevailed, as she generally did, and the next morning Dora, who was rather pleased with the change, started bundle in hand for Rose Hill. She had never been there before, and she walked leisurely along, admiring the beautiful house and grounds, and thinking Mrs. Hastings must be very happy to live in so fine a place. Ella was unusually nervous and low-spirited this morning, for her husband had gone to Rochester; and when Dora was shown into the room she was indulging in a fit of crying, and paid no attention whatever when Mrs. Leah said, "This is the new girl." "She'll get over it directly," muttered the housekeeper, as she went from the room, leaving Dora inexpressibly shocked at witnessing such grief in one whom she had thought so happy.

"Can I do anything for you?" she said at last, drawing near, and involuntarily laying her hand on the golden curls she had so much admired.

There was genuine sympathy in the tones of that childish voice, which touched an answering chord in Ella's heart, and lifting up her head she gazed curiously at the little brown-faced girl, who stood there neatly attired in a dress of plain dark calico, her auburn hair, which had grown rapidly, combed back from her open brow, and her dark-blue eyes full of tears. No one could mistake Dora Deane for a menial, and few could look upon her without being at once interested; for early sorrow had left a shade of sadness upon her handsome face, unusual in one so young. Then, too, there was an expression of goodness and truth shining out all over her countenance, and Ella's heart yearned towards her at once as towards a long-tried friend. Stretching out her white, wasted hand, she said, "And you are _Dora._ I am glad you have come. The sight of you makes me feel better already," and the small, rough hand she held was pressed with a fervor which showed that she was sincere in what she said. It was strange how fast they grew to liking each other--those two children--for in everything save years, Ella was younger far than Dora Deane; and it was strange, too, what a change the little girl's presence wrought in the sick-chamber. Naturally neat and orderly, she could not sit quietly down in the midst of disorder, and as far as she was able, she put things in their proper places; then, as her quick-seeing eye detected piles of dust which for days had been unmolested, she said, "Will it disturb you if I sweep?"

"Not at all. Do what you like," answered Ella, her own spirits rising in proportion as the appearance of her surroundings was improved.

Everything was in order at last. The carpet was swept, the furniture dusted, the chairs emptied, the curtains looped back, and the hearth nicely washed. Fresh, clean linen was put upon the pillows, while Ella's tangled curls were carefully brushed and tucked under her tasteful cap, and then for the first time Dora took the baby upon her lap. It was a little thing, but very beautiful to the young mother, and beautiful, too, to Dora, when she learned that its name was "Fannie."

"_Fannie!_" how it carried her back to the long ago, when her father had spoken, and her precious mother had answered to that blessed name! And how it thrilled her as she repeated it again and again, while her tears fell like rain on the face of the unconscious infant.

"Why do you cry?" asked Ella, and Dora answered, "I am thinking of mother. Her name was Fannie, and I shall love the baby for her sake."

"Has your mother long been dead? Tell me of her" said Ella; and drawing her chair close to the bedside, Dora told the sad story of her life, while Ella Hastings's tears fell fast and her eyes opened wide with wonder as she heard of the dreary room, the dead mother, the bitter cold night, and of the good lady who brought them aid.

Starting up in bed and looking earnestly at Dora, Ella said, "And _you_ are the little girl whom Howard and Mrs. Elliott found sleeping on her mother's neck that New Year's morning. But God didn't let you freeze. He saved you to live with me, which you will do always. And I will be to you a sister, for I know you must be good."

And the impulsive creature threw her arms around the neck of the astonished Dora, who for some time could not speak, so surprised and delighted was she to learn that her benefactress was indeed the sister of Mr. Hastings, After a moment, Ella continued, "And you came to live with some distant relatives--with Mrs. Deane?"

"Yes, with Aunt Sarah" answered Dora, stating briefly the comparatively double relationship that existed between herself and her cousins, and casually mentioning her uncle Nathaniel, whom she had never seen.

"Then he is _your_ uncle, too--the old East India man, whose heir Eugenia is to be. I should think he would send _you_ money."

"He never does," said Dora, in a choking voice. "He sent some to Eugenia once, but none to me," and a tear at her uncle's supposed coldness fell on the baby's head.

Ella was puzzled, but she could not doubt the truth of what Dora had said, though she wisely refrained from betraying Eugenia, in whom her confidence was slightly shaken, but was soon restored by the appearance of the young lady herself, who overwhelmed her with caresses, and went into ecstasies over the little Fannie, thus surely winning her way to the mother's heart. Owing to a severe cold from which Eugenia was suffering, she left for home about dark, and soon after her departure, Ella began to expect her husband.

"If you will tell me where to find his dressing-gown and slippers, I'll bring them out for him," said Dora, wheeling up before the glowing grate the large easy-chair which she felt almost sure was occupied by Mr. Hastings.

"His gown and slippers!" repeated Ella. "It's an age since I saw them, but I guess they are in the dressing-room, either behind the door, or in the black trunk, or on the shelf--or, stay, I shouldn't wonder if they were on the _closet floor._"

And there, under a promiscuous pile of other garments, Dora found them, sadly soiled, and looking as if they had not seen the light for many a day. Shaking out the gown, and brushing the dust from off the slippers, she laid them in the chair, and Ella, who was watching her, said, "Pray, what put that into your mind?"

"I don't know," returned Dora; "only I thought, perhaps, you did so, when you were well Ever so long ago, before pa died, mother made him a calico dressing-gown, and he used to look so pleased when he found it in his chair."

"Strange I never thought of such things," softly whispered Ella, unconsciously learning a lesson from the little domestic girl, who brushed the hearth, dropped the curtains, lighted the lamp, and then went out to the kitchen in quest of milk for Fannie.

"He will be so happy and pleased!" said Ella, as, lifting up her head, she surveyed the cheerful room.

And happy indeed he was. It was the first time he had left his wife since her illness, and with a tolerable degree of satisfaction he took his seat in the evening cars. We say _tolerable_, for though he was really anxious to see Ella and the baby, he was in no particular haste to see the room in which he had left them; and rather reluctantly he entered his handsome dwelling, starting back when he opened the door of the sick chamber, and half thinking he had mistaken another man's house for his own. But Ella's voice reassured him, and in a few moments he had heard from her the story of Dora Deane, who ere long came in,

and was duly presented. Taking her hand in his, and looking down upon her with his large black eyes, he said, "I have seen you before, I believe, but I did not then think that when we met again I should be so much indebted to you. I am glad you are here, Dora."

Once before had he held that hand in his, and now, as then, the touch sent the warm blood bounding through her veins. She had passed through much since that wintry morning, had grown partially indifferent to coldness and neglect, but the extreme kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Hastings touched her heart; and stammering out an almost inaudible reply, she turned away to hide her tears, while Mr. Hastings, advancing towards the fire, exclaimed, "My double gown! And it's so long since I saw it! To whose thoughtfulness am I indebted for this?"

"'Twas Dora," answered Ella. "She thinks of everything. She is my good angel, and I mean to keep her always, if she will stay. Will you, dear?"

"Oh, if I only could," answered Dora; "but I can't. They need me at home!"

"Why need you? They have servants enough," said Ella, who had not yet identified Eugenia's waiting-maid with the bright, intelligent child before her.

"We have no servants but _me_" answered the truthful Dora.

"We are poor, and I help Aunt Sarah to pay for my board; so, you see, I can't stay. And then, too, I must go to school."

Perfectly astonished at this fresh disclosure, Ella glanced towards her husband, whose quizzical expression kept her silent, for it seemed to say, "I told you all the time, that Miss Eugenia was not exactly what you supposed her to be."

"How could she deceive me so?" thought Ella, while Mr. Hastings was mentally resolving to befriend the child, in whom he felt such a strong interest.

Wishing to know something of her education, he questioned her during the evening concerning her studies, and the books she had read, feeling surprised and pleased to find how good a scholar she was, considering her advantages.

"There's the germ of a true, noble woman there. I wish my sister could have the training of her," he thought, as he saw how animated she became when he mentioned her favorite books, and then watched her as she hovered round the bedside of his wife.

Very swiftly and pleasantly passed the three following days, and during all that time Eugenia did not once appear; but at the close of the fourth day, a note was brought to Ella, saying that both

Eugenia and her mother were sick, and Dora must come home.

"Oh, how can I let you go?" cried Ella, while Dora crept away into a corner and wept.

But there was no alternative, and just at dark she came to say good-by. Winding her feeble arms around her neck, Ella sobbed out her adieu, and then, burying her face in her pillow, refused to be comforted. One kiss for the little Fannie--one farewell glance at the weeping Ella, and then, with a heavy heart, Dora went out from a place where she had been so happy--went back to the home where no one greeted her kindly, save the old house cat, who purred a joyous welcome, and rubbed against her side as she kindled a fire in the dark, dreary kitchen, where, on the table, were piles of dishes left for her to wash. That night, when, at a late hour, she stole up to bed, the contrast between her humble room and the cozy chamber where she had recently slept, affected her painfully, and, mingled with her nightly prayer, was the petition, that "sometime she might go back and live with _Mr. Hastings._"

Meantime at Rose Hill there was sorrowing for her, Ella refusing to be comforted unless she should return, Mr. Hastings, who had spent the day in the city, and did not come home until evening, felt that something was wrong the moment he entered the door of his chamber. The fire was nearly out, the lamp was burning dimly, and Ella was in tears.

"What is it, darling?" he asked, advancing towards her; and laying her aching head upon his bosom, she told him of her loss, and how much she missed the little brown-faced girl, who had been so kind to her.

And Howard Hastings missed her too--missed the tones of her gentle voice, the soft tread of her busy feet, and more than all, missed the sunlight of comfort she had shed over his home. The baby missed her, too; for over her Dora had acquired an almost mesmeric influence, and until midnight her wailing cry smote painfully upon the ear of the father, who, before the morning dawned, had concluded that Rose Hill was nothing without Dora Deane. "She shall come back, too," he said, and the sooner to effect this, he started immediately after breakfast for the house of Mrs. Deane. Very joyfully the deep blue eyes of Dora, who met him at the door, looked up into his, and her bright face flushed with delight when he told her why he had come. Both Eugenia and her mother were convalescent, and sitting by the parlor fire, the one in a shilling calico, and the other in a plaid silk morning gown. At first Mrs. Deane objected, when she heard Mr. Hastings's errand, saying, with a sudden flash of pride, that "it was not necessary for her niece to work out."

"And I assure you, it is not our intention to make a servant of her," answered Mr. Hastings, "We could not do otherwise than treat so near a relative of yours as an equal."

This last was well timed, and quite complacently Mrs. Deane listened, while he told her that if Dora were allowed to stay with them until his wife was better, she should be well cared for, and he himself would superintend her studies, so she should lose nothing by being out of school. "Come, Miss Eugenia," he continued, "please intercede for me, and, I assure you, both Ella and myself will be eternally grateful."

He had touched the right cord at last. Rumor said that Ella Hastings would never see another summer, and if before her death the husband was eternally grateful, what would he not be after her death? Then, too, but the day before they had received a remittance from Uncle Nat, and with that they could afford to hire a servant; so, when Eugenia spoke, it was in favor of letting "_Mr. Hastings have Dora just when he wanted her_, if it would be any satisfaction to poor dear Ella!"

A while longer Mr. Hastings remained, and when at last he arose to go, he was as sure that Dora Deane would again gladden his home as he was next morning, when from his library window he saw her come tripping up the walk, her cheeks flushed with exercise, and her eyes sparkling with joy, as, glancing upward, she saw him looking down upon her. In after years, when Howard Hastings's cup was full of blessings, he often referred to that morning, saying "he had seldom experienced a moment of deeper thankfulness than the one when he welcomed back again to his fireside and his home the orphan Dora Deane."

CHAPTER X.

ELLA.

Very pleasantly to Dora did the remainder of the winter pass away. She was appreciated at last, and nothing could exceed the kindness of both Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, the latter of whom treated her more like a sister than a servant, while even Eugenia, who came often to Rose Hill, and whose fawning manner had partially restored her to the good opinion of the fickle Ella, tried to treat her with a show of affection, when she saw how much she was respected. Regularly each day Dora went to the handsome library where she recited her lessons to Mr. Hastings, who became deeply interested in watching the development of her fine intellectual mind.

One thing, however, troubled her. Ella did not improve, and never since Dora came to Rose Hill had she sat up more than an hour, but lay all day on her bed, while her face grew white almost as the

wintry snow, save when a bright red spot burned upon her cheeks, making her, as Dora thought, even more beautiful than she had been in health. Once in the gathering twilight, when they sat together alone, she startled Dora with the question, "Is everybody afraid to die?"

"Mother was not," answered Dora, and Ella continued, "But she was good, and I am not. I have never done a worthy act in all my life. Never thought of _death_, or even looked upon it, for mother told us there was no need of harrowing up our feelings--it would come soon enough, she said; and to me, who hoped to live so long, it has come _too soon_--all too soon;" and the hot tears rained through the transparent fingers, clasped so convulsively over her face.

For many weeks Dora had felt an undefined presentiment of coming evil--had seen it in Ella's failing health--in the increased tenderness of Mr. Hastings's manner, whenever he bent over the pillow of his young wife, or bore her in his arms, as he sometimes did, to the window, that she might look out upon, the garden, and the winding walks which she would never tread again. And now Ella herself had confirmed it--had spoken of death as something very near.

"Oh, she must not die!" was Dora's mental cry of anguish, as moving nearer to the bedside she grasped the little wasted hand which lay outside the counterpane, and this was her only answer, for she could not speak. There was a numbness at her heart, a choking sensation in her throat, which prevented her utterance. But Ella understood her, and returning the warm pressure, she continued, "You, too, have seen it then, and know that I must die; but oh! you do not know how I dread the lonesome darkness of the grave, or the world which lies beyond. If somebody would go with me, or teach me the way, it wouldn't be so hard."

Poor Ella! Her life had been one round of fashionable folly, and now that the world was fading from her view, her fainting soul cried out for light to guide her through the shadowy valley her feet were soon to tread. And light came at last, through the word of God and the teachings of the faithful clergyman, who was sent for at her request, and who came daily up to see her. There was no more fear now--no more terror of the narrow tomb, for there was _One_ to go with her--one whose arm was powerful to save; and on Him Ella learned to lean, clinging still with an undying love to her husband, with whom she often talked of the time when he would be alone and she be far away.

"It is so hard to give you up," she said one day, when as usual he was sitting by her side; "so hard to say good-by forever, and know that though you will miss me at first, and mourn for me too, there _will_ come a time when another will take my place--another than Ella can call you hers; but I am willing," she continued, as she saw him about to speak, "willing that it should be so. I have

loved you, Howard, more than you can know, or I can ever tell; but I am not worthy of you. I do not satisfy the higher feelings of your heart; I am not what your wife should be, and for this I must die. Many a night, when you were sleeping at my side, have I lain awake, asking myself why I, to whom the world was so beautiful and bright, must leave it so soon; and as I thought over the events of our short married life, the answer came to me, 'I cannot make you happy as you ought to be, and for your sake I am taken away.'

"Oh, Ella, Ella!" groaned Mr. Hastings, laying his head beside hers, upon the pillow.

From his inmost soul he knew that what she said was true; but for this he would not that she should die. She had been to him a gentle, loving wife, the one he had chosen from all others to share his home; and though he had failed to find in her the companion he had sought, she was very dear to him--was the mother of his child; and the strong man's heart was full of anguish as he thought of giving her up so soon. Who would comfort him when she was gone or speak to him words of love?

Softly the chamber door unclosed, and Dora Deane looked in; but seeing them thus together she stole away into the garden, where the early spring grass was just starting into life, and there, weeping bitterly, she too prayed that Ella might not die. But neither tears nor prayers were of avail to save her. Still for weeks she lingered, and the soft June air, stealing in through the open window, had more than once lifted the golden curls from off her fading brow, and more than one bouquet of sweet wild blossoms had been laid upon her pillow, ere the midnight hour, when, with anguish at their hearts, Howard Hastings and Dora Deane watched together by her side, and knew that she was dying. There had been long, dreary nights of wakefulness, and the worn-out sufferer had asked at last that she might die--might sleep the dreamless sleep from which she would never waken. And Howard Hastings, as night after night went by, and the laughing blue eyes which had won his early love grew dim with constant waking, had felt that it would be better when his loved one was at rest. But death, however long expected, is sudden at the last, and so it was to him, when he saw the shadow creeping over her face, which cometh once to all. She would not suffer them to rouse the household, she would rather die with them alone, she said, with Dora standing near, and her husband's arms about her so that the tones of his voice should be the last sound which would fall upon her ear, and Dora's hand the last to minister to her wants.

"I have loved you so much, Howard, oh, so much!" and the white clammy fingers, so soon to be laid away beneath the summer flowers, strayed lovingly through the raven locks of her husband, who could answer only with his tears, which fell fast upon her face. "And you too, Dora," she continued, motioning the weeping girl to advance, "I have loved you too, for you have been kind to

me, and when I am gone, you will live here still and care for my child, whom we have called _Fannie_. It is a beautiful name, Dora--your mother's name, and for your sake, I would fain let her keep it--but," turning to Mr. Hastings, and laying her hand caressingly upon his head, "when I no longer live, I would rather you should call my baby _Ella Grey;_ and if my husband"-- here she paused to gather strength for what she was about to say, and after a moment continued, "if, in coming years, another sits beside you in my chair, and the voices of other children shall call you father, you will not forget your first-born, I know, but will love her better, and think, perchance, the oftener of me, if she bears my name, for, however, truly you may hereafter love, it was Ella Grey that won your first affection."

Again she paused, and there was no sound heard in the chamber of death, save the sobs of those about to be bereaved, and the faint rustling of the leaves without, which were gently moved by the night wind.

"Bring me my baby," she said at last; and Dora laid the sleeping child in the arms of the young mother, who, clasping it fondly to her bosom, breathed over it a dying mother's blessing, and with a dying mother's tears baptized it Ella Grey.

There was a long, deep silence then, and when at last Howard Hastings lifted up his head from the pillow where it had been resting, and Dora Deane came timidly to his side, they gazed together on the face of the sweetly sleeping dead.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

Ella Hastings was dead. The deep-toned bell proclaimed it to the people of Dunwood, who, counting the nineteen strokes, sighed that one so young should die. The telegraphic wires carried it to her childhood's home, in the far-off city; and while her tears were dropping fast for the first dead of her children, the fashionable mother did not forget to have her mourning in the most expensive and becoming style. The servants in the kitchen whispered it one to the other, treading softly and speaking low, as if aught could disturb the slumber of her who lay so motionless and still, unmindful of the balmy summer air which kissed her marble cheek. The grief-stricken husband repeated it again and again as he sat by her side in the darkened room; and only they who have felt it, can know with what a crushing weight they fell upon his heart, the three words--"She is dead!"

Yes, Ella was dead, and Eugenia Deane, with hypocritical tears, upon her cheek, gathered fresh, white rosebuds, and twining them in the golden curls which shaded the face of the beautiful dead, dared even there to think that _Howard Hastings was free_; and as she saw the silent grief of the stricken man, who, with his head upon the table, sat hour after hour, unmindful of the many who came to look on what had been his wife, her lip curled with scorn, and she marveled that one so frivolous as Ella should be so deeply mourned. Once she ventured to speak, asking him some trivial thing concerning the arrangement of affairs, and without looking up, he answered, "Do as you like, until her mother comes. She will be here to-morrow."

So, for the remainder of the day, Eugenia flitted from the parlor to the chamber of death, from the chamber of death to the kitchen, and from the kitchen back again to the parlor, ordering the servants, admitting visitors, and between times scolding Dora for "being so foolish as to cry herself sick for a person who, of course, cared nothing for her, except as a waiter!"

Since the night of her mother's death, Dora's heart had not been half so sore with pain. The girlish Ella had been very dear to her, and the tears she shed were genuine. To no one else would the baby go, and after dinner was over, the dinner at which Eugenia presided, and of which Mr. Hastings could not be induced to partake, she went into the garden with her little charge, seating herself in a pleasant summer-house, which had been Ella's favorite resort. It was a warm, drowsy afternoon, and at last, worn out with weeping, and the fatigue of the last night's watching, she fell asleep, as the baby had done before. Not long had she sat thus, when Mr. Hastings, too, came down the graveled walk, and stood at the arbor door. The constant bustling in and out of Eugenia annoyed him, and wishing to be alone, he had come out into the open air, which he felt would do him good. When his eye fell on Dora, who was too soundly sleeping to be easily aroused, he murmured, "Poor child! she is wearied with so many wakeful nights;" then fearing lest the slender arms should relax their hold and drop the babe, he took it gently from her, and folding it to his bosom, sat down by her side, so that her drooping head could rest upon his shoulder.

For two long hours she slept, and it was not until the baby's waxen fingers gave a vigorous pull to her short thick hair, that she awoke, feeling greatly surprised when she saw Mr. Hastings sitting near.

"I found you asleep," he said, by way of explanation, "and knowing how tired you were, I gave you my arm for a pillow;" then, as the baby wished to go to her, he gave it up, himself going slowly back to the lonesome house, from which Ella was gone forever.

The next morning, the mother and her three youngest daughters, all

draped in deepest black, arrived at Rose Hill prepared to find fault with everything which savored at all of the "horrid country." Even Eugenia sank into nonentity in the presence of the cold city-bred woman, who ignored her existence entirely, notwithstanding that she loudly and repeatedly expressed so much affection for the deceased.

"Perhaps your daughter wrote to you of me (Miss Deane); we were great friends," she said, when they stood together in the presence of the dead, and Mrs. Grey's emotions had somewhat subsided.

"Possibly; but I never remember names," returned the haughty lady, without raising her eyes.

"There are so few people here with whom she could be intimate," continued Eugenia, "that I saw a great deal of her."

But to this Mrs. Grey made no reply, except to ask, "Whose idea was it dressing Ella in this plain muslin wrapper, when she had so many handsome dresses? But it don't matter," she continued, as Eugenia was about to disclaim all participation in that affair.

"It don't matter, for no one here appreciates anything better, I dare say. Where's the baby? I haven't seen that yet," she asked as they were descending the stairs.

"She's with Dora, I presume," answered Eugenia; and Mrs. Grey continued--

"Oh, the nurse girl, whom Ella wrote so much, about. Send her in."

But Eugenia was not one to obey orders so peremptorily given, and, for a long time, Madam Grey and her three daughters waited the appearance of the nurse girl, who, not knowing that they were in the parlor, entered it at last, of her own accord, and stood before them with such a quiet, self-possessed dignity, that even Mrs. Grey treated her with far more respect than she had the assuming Eugenia, whose rule, for the time being, was at an end. Everything had been done wrong; and when Mr. Hastings spoke of having Ella buried at the foot of the spacious garden, in a quiet, grassy spot, where trees of evergreen were growing, she held up her hands in amazement at the idea that her daughter should rest elsewhere than in the fashionable precincts of Greenwood. So Mr. Hastings yielded, and on the morning of the third day, Dora watched with blinding tears the long procession winding slowly down the avenue, and out into the highway towards the village depot, where the shrieking of the engine, and the rattling of the car bell would be the only requiem tolled for Ella Hastings, as she was borne rapidly away from a spot which had been her home for one brief year.

The little Ella was in Dora's arms, and as she, too, saw the handsome steeds and moving carriages, she laughed aloud, and patted the window-pane with her tiny baby hands. Dear little one!

she did not know--would never know, how much she was bereaved; but Dora knew, and her tears fell all the faster when she thought that she, too, must leave her, for her aunt had said to Mr. Hastings, that after the funeral Dora must go home, adding, that Mrs. Leah would take care of Ella until his return. So, when the hum of voices and the tread of feet had ceased, when the shutters were closed and the curtains dropped, Eugenia came for her to go, while Mrs. Leah came to take the child, who refused to leave Dora, clinging so obstinately to her neck, and crying so pitifully, that even Eugenia was touched, and bade her cousin remain until Mr. Hastings came home. So Dora stayed, and the timid servants, as they sat together in the shadowy twilight, felt not half so lonely when they heard her gentle voice singing the motherless babe to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

WAYS AND MEANS.

With all the showy parade and empty pomp of a fashionable city funeral, Ella was laid to rest in Greenwood, and, in their darkened parlor, arrayed in the latest style of mourning, the mother and sisters received the sympathy of their friends, who hoped they would try to be reconciled, and were so sorry they could not now go to the Springs, as usual. In another parlor, too, far more elegant but less showy than that of Mrs. Grey, another mother wept for her only son, speaking to him blessed words of comfort in his bereavement, and telling him of the better world, where again he would meet the loved and lost. Once she ventured to hope that he would come back again to her fireside, now that his was desolate, but he refused. Rose Hill henceforth would be his home, and though it was lonely and drear, he must in a few days go back to it; for the sake of the little one, doubly dear to him now that its mother was gone. Oh, how sad was that journey back, and what a sense of desolation came over him, as he drew near his home, and knew that Ella was not there!--that never more would she come forth to meet him--never again would her little feet stray through the winding walks, or her fairy fingers pluck the flowers she had loved so well.

It was near the first of July. The day had been rainy and the evening was dark and cold. Wet, chilly, and forlorn, he entered the hall and ascended the stairs, but he could not that night go to the old room and find it empty; and he was passing on to his library, when the sound of some one singing made him pause, while a thrill of joy ran through his veins, for he knew that childish voice, knew it was Dora Deane singing to his child. Another moment and he stood within the room where Ella had died. All traces of sickness and death had been removed, and everything was in perfect

order. Vases of flowers adorned the mantel and the stands, seeming little out of place with the rain which beat against the window, and the fire which burned within the grate. In her crib lay Fannie, and sitting near was Dora Deane, her rich auburn hair combed smoothly back, and the great kindness of her heart shining out from the depths of her clear blue eyes.

There are people whose very presence brings with it a feeling of comfort, and such a one was Dora. Mr. Hastings had not expected to find her there; and the sight of her bright face, though it did not remove the heavy pain from his heart, took from him the sense of utter desolation, the feeling of being alone in his sorrow.

"Dora," he exclaimed, coming to her side, "I did not expect this! How happened you to stay?"

"The baby cried so hard," answered Dora, "that Eugenia told me I might remain until your return."

"It was very kind and thoughtful in her, and I thank her very much. Will you tell her so?" he said, involuntarily laying his hand on Dora's head.

Divesting himself at last of his damp overcoat, and donning the warm dressing gown, which Dora brought him, he sat down before the fire, and listened while she told him how she had stayed in that room and kept it in order for him, because she thought it would not seem half so bad to him if he came into it at once and found it comparatively pleasant.

"You are a very thoughtful girl," he said, when she had finished, "and I hope I shall some time repay you for your kindness to myself and Ella."

But Dora did not wish for any pay, and at the mention of Ella's name her tears burst forth afresh. The next morning, when news of Mr. Hastings's return was received at Locust Grove, Eugenia at once suggested that Dora be sent for immediately. "It did not look well," she said, "for a good sized girl, fourteen and a half years of age, to be staying in the same house with a widower. Folks would talk!"

And growing suddenly very careful of her cousin's reputation, she dispatched a note to Rose Hill requesting her immediate return. Not that she really thought there would be any impropriety in Dora's staying with Mr. Hastings, but because she had a plan by which she hoped herself to see him every day. And in this plan she succeeded. As she had expected, her note brought down Mr. Hastings himself, who, on his child's account, objected to parting with Dora, unless it were absolutely necessary.

"She is as well off there as here," said he; "and why can't she stay?"

"I am perfectly willing she should take care of little Ella," answered the previously instructed Mrs. Deane, who, in a measure, shared her daughter's ambitious designs; "but it must be done here, if at all. I can't suffer her to remain alone with those gossiping servants."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Eugenia, speaking as if this were the first she had heard of it. "That is a good idea. It will be delightful to have the dear little creature here, and so much better for her too in case of _croup_, or anything like that, to be with an experienced person like mother!"

"But," said Mr. Hastings, "this would keep Dora entirely from her studies, and that ought not to be."

"It need not," hastily interrupted Eugenia. "She can go to school every day, for nothing will give me greater pleasure than to take care of our dear Ella's child;" and the pocket-handkerchief went up to her face to conceal the tears which might have been there, but probably were not.

It was finally arranged, and in the course of a few days the parlor of Locust Grove was echoing sometimes to the laughter, and sometimes to the screaming, of little Ella Grey, who, from some unaccountable freak of babyhood, conceived a violent fancy for Eugenia, to whom she would go quite as readily as to Dora, whose daily absence at school she at last did not mind. Regularly each day, and sometimes twice a day, Mr. Hastings came down to Locust Grove, and his manner was very kind toward Eugenia, when he found her, as he often did, with his baby sleeping in her arms. He did not know how many times, at his approach, it was snatched from the cradle by Eugenia, who, in reality, was not remarkably fond of baby-tending, and who, in the absence of the father, left the child almost wholly to the care of her mother and sister. Management, however, was everything, and fancying she had found the shortest avenue to Mr. Hastings's heart, she, in his presence, fondled, and petted and played with his child, taking care occasionally to hint of neglect on the part of Dora, whom he now seldom saw as, at the hour of his calling, she was generally in school. It was by such means as this that Eugenia sought to increase Mr. Hastings's regard for herself, and in a measure she succeeded; for though his respect for Dora was undiminished, he could not conceal from himself the fact that Eugenia was very agreeable, very interesting and very _kind to his daughter_!

As the autumn advanced, and the cold rainy weather precluded outdoor exercise, it was but natural that he should spend much of his time at Locust Grove, where his tastes were carefully studied, his favorite books read, and his favorite authors discussed, while Eugenia's handsome black eyes smiled a welcome when he came, and drooped pensively beneath her long eyelashes when he went away. Thus the autumn and the winter passed, and when the spring had

come, the village of Dunwood was rife with rumors concerning the attraction which drew Mr. Hastings so often to Locust Grove; some sincerely pitying him if, indeed, he entertained a serious thought of making Eugenia Deane his wife, while others severely censured him for having so soon forgotten one whose grave had not been made a twelvemonth. But he had not forgotten, and almost every hour of his life was her loved name upon his lips, and the long golden tress his own hand had severed from her head was guarded as his choicest treasure, while the dark hours of the night bore witness to his lonely grief. And it was to escape this loneliness--to forget for a brief time the sad memories of the past--that he went so often to Locust Grove, where as yet his child was the greater attraction, though he could not be insensible to the charms of Eugenia who spared no pains to interest him in herself.

He was passionately fond of music, and many an hour she sat patiently at the piano, seeking to perfect herself in a difficult piece, with which she thought to surprise him. But nothing, however admirably executed, could sound well upon her old-fashioned instrument, and how to procure a new one was the daily subject of her meditations. Occasionally, as she remembered the beautiful rosewood piano standing useless and untouched in the parlors of Rose Hill, something whispered her to wait "and it would yet be hers." But this did not satisfy her present desire, for aside from the sweet sounds, with which she hoped to entrance Mr. Hastings, was the wish to make him think them much wealthier than they were. From one or two circumstances, she had gathered the impression that he thought them poor, and, judging him by herself, she fancied her chances for becoming Mrs. Hastings 2d, would be greatly increased if by any means he could be made to believe her comparatively rich. As one means of effecting this, she must and would have a new piano, costing not less than four hundred dollars. But how to procure the money was the question; the remittance from Uncle Nat, which had come on the first day of January, was already half gone, and she could not, as she had once done before, make Dora's _head_ keep her out of the difficulty. At last, a new idea suggested itself, and springing to her feet she exclaimed aloud, for she was alone, "I have it; strange I didn't think of that before. I'll write to the old man, and tell him that as Dora is now fifteen, we would gladly send her away to school, if we had the means, but our expenses are so great it is impossible, unless the money comes from him. And he'll do it too, the old miser!--for in his first letter he said he would increase the allowance as Dora grew older."

Suiting the action to the word, she drew out her writing-desk, and commenced a letter to her "dearest Uncle Nathaniel," feelingly describing to him their straitened circumstances, and the efforts of herself and her sister to keep the family in _necessaries_, which they were enabled to do very comfortably with the addition of the allowance he so generously sent them every year. But they wished now to send Dora to school, to see if anything could be made of her! She had improved latterly, and they

really hoped a change of scene would benefit her. For Dora's sake, then, would "her dear uncle be so kind as to send them, on the receipt of that letter, such a sum as he thought best. If so, he would greatly oblige his loving niece."

"There! That will do," she said, leaning back in her chair, and laughing as she thought what her mother and Alice would say, if they knew what she had done. "But they needn't know it," she continued aloud, "until the money comes, and then they can't help themselves."

Then it occurred to her that if Dora herself were to send some message, the coming of the money might be surer; and calling her cousin into the room, she said:

"I am about writing to old Uncle Nat--have you any word or anything to send him?"

"Oh, yes," answered Dora. "Give him my love, and tell him how much I wish he would come home--and stay!" she added, leaving the room, and soon returning with a lock of soft brown hair, which she laid upon the table. "Give him that, and tell him it was mother's."

Had a serpent started suddenly into life before Eugenia, she could not have turned whiter than she did at the sight of that hair. It brought vividly to mind the shadowy twilight, the darkness in the corners, and the terror which came over her on that memorable night, when she had thought to steal Dora's treasure. Soon recovering her composure, however, she motioned her cousin from the room, and, resuming her pen, said to herself, "I shan't write all that nonsense about his coming home, for nobody wants him here; but the love and the hair may as well go."

Then, as she saw how much of the latter Dora had brought, she continued, "There's no need of sending all this. It would make beautiful hair ornaments, and I mean to keep a part of it; Dora won't care, of course, and I shall tell her."

Dividing off a portion of the hair for her own use, she laid it aside, and then in a postscript wrote, "Dora sends"--here she paused; and thinking that "Dora's _love_" would please the old man too much, and possibly give him too favorable an opinion of his niece, she crossed out the "sends," and wrote, "Dora wishes to be remembered to you, and sends for your acceptance a lock of her mother's hair."

Thus was the letter finished, and the next mail which left Dunwood bore it on its way to India, Eugenia little thinking how much it would influence her whole future life.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNCLE NAT.

IT was a glorious moonlight night, and, like gleams of burnished silver, the moonbeams flashed from the lofty domes and minarets of Calcutta, or shone like sparkling gems on the sleeping waters of the bay. It was a night when the Hindoo lover told his tale to the dusky maiden at his side, and the soldier, wearing the scarlet uniform, talked to his blue-eyed bride of the home across the waters, which she had left to be with him.

On this night, too, an old man in his silent room, sat thinking of _his_ home far beyond the shores of "Merrie England." Near him lay a letter, Eugenia's letter, which was just received. He had not opened it yet, for the sight of it had carried him back across the Atlantic wave, and again he saw, in fancy, the granite hills which had girded his childhood's home--the rock where he had played--the tree where he had carved his name, and the rushing mountain stream, which ran so swiftly past the red house in the valley--the home where he was born, and where had come to him the heart grief which had made him the strange, eccentric being he was. Thoughts of the dead were with him, too, to-night, and with his face buried in his broad, rough hands, he thought of, _her_, whose winsome smile and gentle ways had woven around his heart a mighty and undying love, such as few men ever felt. Of Dora, too, he thought--Dora, whom he had never seen--and his heart yearned towards her with a deep tenderness, because his Fannie had been her mother.

"I should love her, I know," he said, "even though she were cold-hearted and stupid as they say;" then, as he remembered the letter, he continued, "I will open it, for it may have tidings of the child."

The seal was broken, the letter unfolded, and a tress of shining hair dropped on the old man's hand, clinging lovingly, as it were, about his fingers, while a low, deep cry broke the stillness of the room. He knew it in a moment--knew it was _Fannie's hair_--the same he had so oft caressed when she was but a little girl and he a grown-up man. It was Fannie's hair, come to him over land and sea, and his eyes grew dim with tears, which rained over his thin, dark face as he kissed again and again the precious boon, dearer far to him than the golden ore of India. "Fannie's hair!" very softly he repeated the words, holding it up to the moonlight, and then turning it toward the lamp, as if to assure himself that he really had it in his possession. "Why was it never sent before?" he said at last, "or why was it sent at all?" and taking up the letter, he read it through, lingering long

over the postscript, and grieving that Dora's message, the first he had ever received, should be comparatively so cold.

"Why couldn't she have sent her love to her poor old uncle, who has nothing in the wide, wide world to love save this one lock of hair! God bless you, Dora Deane, for sending that," and again he raised it to his lips, saying as he did so, "And she shall have the money, too, aye, more than Eugenia asked; one golden dollar for every golden hair, will be a meet return!" And the old man laughed aloud at the novel idea, which no one but himself would have conceived. It was a long, weary task, the counting of those hairs; for more than once, when he paused in his work to think of her whose head they once adorned, he forgot how many had been told, and patiently began again, watching carefully, through blinding tears, to see that none were lost, for he would not that one should escape him. It was strange how childish the strong man became, counting those threads of hair; and when at last the labor was completed, he wept because there were no more. Fifteen hundred dollars seemed too small a sum to pay for what would give him so much joy; and he mourned that the tress had not been larger, quite as much as did Eugenia, when she heard of his odd fancy.

The moon had long since ceased to shine on the sleeping city, and day was breaking in the east, ere Nathaniel Deane arose from the table where he had sat the livelong night, gloating over his treasure, and writing a letter which now lay upon the table. It was addressed to Dora, and in it he told her what he had done, blessing her for sending him that lock of hair, and saying that the sight of it made his withered heart grow young and green again, as it was in the happy days when he so madly loved her mother. Then he told her how he yearned to behold her, to look upon her face and see which she was like, her father or her mother. Both were very dear to him, and for their sake he loved their child.

"No one will ever call me father," he wrote, "and I am lonely in my Indian home, lined all over, as it is, with gold, and sometimes, Dora, since I have heard of you, orphaned thus early, I have thought I would return to America, and seeking out some pleasant spot, would build a home for you and me. And this I would do, were I sure that I was wanted there--that you would be happier with me than with your aunt and cousins. Are they kind to you, my child? Sometimes, in my reveries, I have fancied they were not--have dreamed of a girlish face, with locks like that against which my old heart is beating, and eyes of deep dark blue, looking wistfully at me, across the waste of waters, and telling me of cruel neglect and indifference. Were this indeed so, not all India would keep me a moment from your side.

"Write to me, Dora, and tell me of yourself, that I may judge something of your character. Tell me, too, if you ever think of the lonesome old man, who, each night of his life, remembers you in his prayers, asking that if on earth he may never look on

Fannie's child, he may at last meet and know her in the better land. And now farewell, my _daughter_, mine by adoption, if from no other cause.

"Write to me soon, and tell me if at home there is one who would kindly welcome back.

"Your rough old UNCLE NAT."

"She'll answer that," the old man said, as he read it over.

"She'll tell me to come home," and, like a very child, his heart bounded with joy as he thought of breathing again the air of the western world.

The letter was sent, and with it we, too, will return to America, and going backward for a little, take up our story at a period three months subsequent to the time when Eugenia wrote to Uncle Nat.

CHAPTER XIV

MANAGEMENT.

One year had passed away since the night when Ella Hastings died, and alone in his chamber the husband was musing of the past, and holding, as it were, communion with the departed, who seemed this night to be so near that once he said aloud, "Ella, are you with me now?" But to his call there came no answer, save the falling of the summer rain; and again, with his face upon the pillow, just as it had lain one year ago, he asked himself if to the memory of the dead he had thus long been faithful; if no thought of another had mingled with his love for her; and was it to ascertain this that she had come back to him to-night, for he felt that she was there, and again he spoke aloud, "I have not forgotten you, darling; but I am lonesome, oh, so lonesome, and the world looks dark and drear. Lay your hand upon my heart, dear Ella, and you will feel its weight of pain."

But why that sudden lifting of the head, as if a spirit hand had indeed touched him with its icy fingers? Howard Hastings was not afraid of the dead, and it was not this which made him start so nervously to his feet. His ear had caught the sound of a light footstep in the hall below, and coming at that hour of a stormy night, it startled him, for he remembered that the outer door had been left unlocked. Nearer and nearer it came, up the winding stairs, and on through the silent hall, tin til it readied the threshold of his chamber, where it ceased, while a low voice spoke

his name.

In an instant he was at the door, standing face to face with Dora Deane, whose head was uncovered, and whose hair was drenched with the rain.

"Dora," he exclaimed, "how came you here and wherefore have you come?"

"Your child!" was her only answer, and in another moment he, too, was cut in the storm with Dora Deane, whose hand he involuntarily took in his, as if to shield her from the darkness.

In a few words she told him how she had been aroused from her sleep by her aunt, who said the baby was dying with the croup; that the servant was timid and refused to go either for him or the physician, and so she had come herself.

"And were you not afraid?" he asked; and the heroic girl answered, "No; I fancied Ella was with me, cheering me on, and I felt no fear."

Mr. Hastings made no reply, but, when he reached the house, and saw the white, waxen lace of the child, he felt that Ella had indeed been near to him that night; that she had come for her little one, who, with a faint, moaning cry, stretched its hands towards Dora, as she entered the room. And Dora took it in her arms, holding it lovingly there, until the last, painful struggle was over, and the father, standing near, knew that wife and child had met together in heaven.

At the foot of the garden, beneath the evergreens, where he had wished to lay his other Ella, they buried the little girl, and then Howard Hastings was, indeed, alone in the world--alone in his great house, which seemed doubly desolate now that all were gone. For many weeks he did not go to Locust Grove, but remained in his quiet rooms, brooding over his grief, and going often to the little grave beneath the evergreens. There, once, at the hour of sunset, he found Eugenia Deane planting flowers above his sleeping child! She had marveled much that he stayed so long away, and learning that the sunset hour was always spent in the garden, she had devised a plan for meeting him. It succeeded, and with well-feigned embarrassment she was hurrying away, when he detained her, bidding her tarry while he told her how much he thanked her for her kindness to his child.

"I have wished to come to Locust Grove," he said, "and thank you all, but I could not, for there is now no baby face to greet me."

"But there are those there still who would welcome you with pleasure," softly answered Eugenia; and then with her dark eyes sometimes on the ground and sometimes looking very pityingly on him, she acted the art of a consoler, telling him how much better

it was for the child to be at rest with its mother.

And while she talked, darkness fell upon them, so that Howard Hastings could not see the look of triumph which the dark eyes wore when he said, "You must not go home alone, Miss Deane. Let me accompany you."

So the two went together very slowly down the long avenue, and when over an _imaginary_ stone the fair Eugenia stumbled, the arm of Howard Hastings was offered for her support, and then more slowly still they continued on their way. From that time Mr. Hastings was often at Eugenia's side, and before the autumn was gone, he had more than once been told she was to be his wife. And each time that he heard it, it affected him less painfully, until at last he himself began to wonder how it were possible for him ever to have disliked and distrusted a person so amiable, so intelligent and so agreeable as Eugenia Deane! Still he could never quite satisfy himself that he loved her, for there was something which always came up before him whenever he seriously thought of making her his wife. This something he could not define, but when, as he sometimes did, he fancied Eugenia the mistress of his house, there was always in the background the form of Dora Deane, gliding noiselessly about him, as she did that night when first she came to Rose Hill. He saw but little of her now, for whenever he called, Eugenia managed to keep from the room both mother, sister and cousin, choosing to be alone with the handsome widower, who lingered late and lingered long dreading a return to his lonely home.

Eugenia was now daily expecting an answer to her letter and feeling sure that it would bring the money, she began to talk to Mr. Hastings of her new piano. playfully remarking, that as he was a connoisseur in such matters, she believed she should call on him to aid in her selection; and this he promised to do, thinking the while of the unused instrument in his deserted parlor, and feeling strongly tempted to offer her its use. Thus the weeks passed on, while Eugenia became more and more impatient for the letter.

"It is an age since I had anything from the post-office I wish you'd call and inquire," she said to Dora one afternoon, as she saw her preparing to go out.

Scarcely was she gone, however, when, remembering something which she wanted, and, thinking she might possibly meet with Mr. Hastings, she started for the village herself reaching the office door just as Dora, accompanied by Mr. Hastings, was crossing the street in the, same direction.

"I shan't have to go in now," said Dora; and fancying her companion would prefer waiting for her cousin to walking with her, she passed on, all unconscious of what she had lost by being a minute too late.

"A letter from Uncle Nat--directed to Dora, too!" and Eugenia grew alternately red and white, as, crushing the missive into her pocket, she went out into the street, where she was joined by Mr. Hastings.

"Dora left me rather unceremoniously," said he, as he bade her good evening," and so I waited to walk with you."

But Eugenia could not appear natural, so anxious was she to know what the letter contained. Up to the very gate Mr. Hastings went, but for once she did not ask him to stop; and he turned away, wondering at her manner, and feeling a little piqued at her unusual coolness. Hastening to her chamber, and crouching near the window, Eugenia tore open Dora's letter, and clutching eagerly at the draft, almost screamed with delight when she saw the amount. FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS! She could scarcely believe her senses: and drawing still nearer the window, for the daylight was fading fast, she sought for the reason of this unexpected generosity. But the old man's childish fancy, which would have touched a heart less hard than hers, aroused only her deepest ire--not because he had counted out the hairs, but because there had not been more to count. Jumping to her feet in her wrath, she exclaimed, "Fool that I was, to have withheld one, when the old dotard would have paid for it so richly. But it cannot now be helped," she continued, and resuming her seat, she read the letter through, exploding, but once more, and that at the point where Uncle Nat had spoken of returning asking if there was one who would welcome him home.

"Gracious heavens!" she exclaimed, growing a little faint.

"Wouldn't I be in a predicament? But it shall never be, if I can prevent, it, and I fancy I can. As Dora will not read this letter, it is not reasonably to be expected that she will answer it, and it will be some time, I imagine, before _I_ invite him to come and see if we are kind to her! What a childish old thing he must be, to pay so much for one little lock of hair! I'd send him all of mine, if I thought it would bring me fifteen hundred dollars."

It did seem a large sum to her, that fifteen hundred dollars, more than she dared to appropriate to herself; but the piano she was determined to have, and, as she dreaded what her mother might say, she resolved upon keeping the letter a secret until the purchase was made, and then Mrs. Deane could not do otherwise than indorse the draft, and let her have the money.

They had been talking of going to Rochester for some time past, and if she could manage to have Mr. Hastings go with her, she could leave her mother at the hotel, or dispose of her elsewhere, while she went with him to the music rooms, and made the selection. As if fortune were, indeed, favoring her, Mr. Hastings called the next, night and they were, as usual, left together alone. She was looking uncommonly well this evening; and as she saw how often and how admiringly his eyes rested upon her, hope

whispered that the prize was nearly won. After conversing awhile on different subjects, she spoke of her new piano, asking him if he remembered his promise of assisting her in a selection, and saying she thought of going to the city some day that week. Again Mr. Hastings remembered the beautiful rosewood instrument, whose tones had been so long unheard in his silent home, and he said, "Do you not like Ella's piano?" while a feeling, shadowy and undefined, stole over him, that possibly it might, some day, be hers; and Eugenia, divining his thoughts, answered artfully, "Oh, very much. I used to enjoy hearing dear Ella play, but that don't do me any good. It isn't mine, you know."

Very softly and tenderly the beautiful black eyes looked into his, and the voice was low and gentle, as it breathed the sacred name of Ella. It was the hour of Howard Hastings's temptation; and, scarce knowing what he did, he essayed to speak--to offer _her_ the piano, whose keys had been so often touched by the fairy fingers, now folded away beneath the winter snow. But his lips refused to move; there was a pressure upon them, as if a little hand were laid upon his mouth to prevent the utterance of words he had better far not speak. Thus was he saved, and when Eugenia, impatient at his delay, cast towards him an anxious glance, she saw that his thoughts were not of her, and, biting her lips with vexation, she half petulantly asked, "if he had any intention of going to the city that week?"

"Yes--no--certainly," said he, starting up as if from a deep reverie. Then, as he understood what was wanted of him, he continued, "Excuse me, Miss Deane. I was thinking of Ella, and the night when she died. What were you saying of Rochester? I have business there to-morrow, and if you go down, I will aid you all I can. By the way," he continued, "that is the night of ----'s grand concert. How would you like to attend it?"

"Oh, so much!" answered Eugenia, her fine eyes sparkling with delight.

"But stop," said he, "now I think of it, I have an engagement which may possibly prevent me from attending it, as I would like to do with you, for I know you would enjoy it. Still, it may be that I can, and if so, I'll call for you at the hotel. We can come home on the eleven o'clock train."

So, ere Mr. Hastings departed, it was arranged that Eugenia and her mother should next morning go down with him to the city, and that in the evening he would, perhaps, accompany them to the concert.

"I am progressing fast," thought Eugenia, as she sat alone in her chamber that night, after Alice had retired, "but still I wish he'd come to the point, and not keep me in such suspense. I thought once he was going to, and I believe now he would if he hadn't gone to thinking of Ella, and all that nonsense; but never

mind, he's worth waiting for, with his fine house and immense wealth; I shan't care so much about Uncle Nat's money then, though goodness knows I don't want him turning up here some day and exposing me, as I dare say the meddling old thing would do."

This reminded her of the letter, and, as Alice was asleep, she thought this as favorable an opportunity for answering it as she would probably have. Opening her writing-desk, and taking her pen, she framed a reply, the substance of which was, that _ma, Alice_ and _herself_ were very, very thankful to her dear uncle for his generous gift to Dora, who, strange to say, manifested no feeling whatever!

"If she is grateful," wrote Eugenia, "she does not show it in the least. I hardly know what to make of her, she's so queer. Sometime, perhaps, she will appreciate your goodness, and meanwhile, rest assured that I will see that your gift is used to the best advantage."

Not a word of coming home to the expectant old man, whose heart each day grew lighter as he thought of the letter which _Dora_ would write bidding him to come to the friends who would welcome him back. Not one line from Dora to the kind uncle who, when he read the cruel lines, laid his weary head upon his pillow and wept bitterly that this, his last fond hope, was crushed!

There is such a thing as Retribution, and Eugenia Deane, sitting there alone that night, shuddered as the word seemed whispered in her ear. But it could not deter her from her purpose. Howard Hastings must be won. "The object to be gained was worthy of the means used to gain it," she thought, as she sealed the letter; then, placing the draft for the \$1,500 safely in her purse, she crept softly to bed, sleeping ere long as soundly as if the weight of a guilty conscience had never rested upon her.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEW PIANO.

The next morning, at the appointed time, Mr. Hastings, Mrs. Deane and her daughter stood together in the Dunwood Depot, awaiting the arrival of the train. Eugenia was in high spirits, chatting gaily with Mr. Hastings, whose manner was so unusually lover-like, that more than one looker-on smiled meaningly, as they saw how very attentive he was. On reaching the city he parted from the ladies for a time, telling Eugenia, as he bade her good morning, that he should probably not see her again until about three o'clock in the afternoon, when he would meet her at the music-rooms.

"Meet you at the music-rooms for what?" asked Mrs. Deane, who, though she had frequently heard her daughter talking of a new piano, had never for a moment believed her to be in earnest.

"What do you suppose he would meet me for, unless it were to look at pianos?" answered Eugenia, and her mother replied, "Look at pianos! A great deal of good that will do, I imagine, when both of us together have but twenty-five dollars in the world!"

A curious smile flitted over Eugenia's face, as she thought of the draft, but she merely replied, "And suppose we haven't any money, can't I _make believe_, and by looking at expensive instruments induce Mr. Hastings to think we are richer than we are?"

I don't accuse him of being at all mercenary, but I do think he would have proposed ere this, if he hadn't thought us so wretchedly poor."

Mrs. Deane could not understand how merely looking at a costly piano indicated wealth; but feeling herself considerable interest in her daughter's success, she concluded to let her pursue her own course, and the subject was not resumed again until afternoon, when, having finished their shopping, they sat alone in a private room, opening from the public hall, and opposite the ladies' parlor in the hotel. They had taken this room, because in case she attended the concert, Eugenia would wish to rearrange her hair, and make some little change in her personal appearance. "Then, too, when Mr. Hastings came," she said, "they would be by themselves, and not have everybody listening to what they said. By the way, mother," she continued, as she stood before the glass, "if Mr. Hastings can attend the concert, suppose you go home at half-past six. You don't care for singing, you know, and besides that, you stumble so in the dark, that it will be so much pleasanter for Mr. Hastings to have but one in charge."

"And much pleasanter for you, too, to be alone with him," suggested Mrs. Deane, who really cared but little for music, and was the more willing to accede to Eugenia's proposal.

"Why, yes," answered the young lady. "I think it would be pleasanter--so if he says he can accompany me, you go home, like a dear good old woman as you are." And tying on her bonnet, Eugenia went out to keep her appointment, finding Mr. Hastings there before her, as she had expected.

Several expensive pianos were examined, and a selection at last made of a very handsome one, whose cost was \$450. "I care but little what price I pay, if it only suits me," said Eugenia, with the air of one who had the wealth of the Indies at her disposal. "You will see that it is carefully boxed and sent to Dunwood, will you not?" she continued, turning to the man in attendance, who bowed respectfully, and stood waiting for the money, while Mr. Hastings, too, it may be, wondered a very little if it would be forthcoming. "I did not know certainly as I should make a

purchase," continued Eugenia, "so I left the money with mother at the hotel: I will bring it directly;" and she tripped gracefully out of the store, followed by Mr. Hastings, who felt almost as if he had done wrong in suffering her to buy a new piano, when _Ella's_ would have suited her quite as well, and the name upon it, "E. Hastings," would make no difference!

Once, in the street, he thought to say something like this to her and prevent the purchase, but again an unseen hand, as it were, sealed his lips; and when he spoke, it was to tell her that he could probably escort her to the concert, and would see her again about dark. Here having reached the hotel, he left her, and walked on a short distance, when, remembering something concerning the concert, which he wished to tell her, he turned back, and, entering the hotel, went to the parlor, where he expected to find her. But she was not there, and thinking she had gone out for a moment and would soon return, he stepped into the hall, and as the day was rather cold, stood over the register, which was very near Eugenia's room. He had been there but an instant, when he caught the sound of his own name, and looking up, he saw that the ventilator over the door opposite was turned back, so that everything said within, though spoken in a low tone, could be distinctly heard without. It was Eugenia who was speaking, and not wishing to listen, he was about turning away, when the words she uttered aroused his curiosity and chained him to the spot.

They were, "And what if Mr. Hastings _did_ give it to me? If he marries me, and I intend that he shall, 'twill make no difference whether the piano was bought afterward or a little in advance. He knows, or ought to know, that I would not use Ella's old one."

"But has he ever said a word to you on the subject of marriage?" queried Mrs. Deane, and Eugenia answered, "Not directly, perhaps, but he has had it in his mind a hundred times, I dare say. But pray don't look so distressed. I never knew before that scheming mothers objected to their daughters receiving costly presents from the gentlemen to whom they were engaged."

"You are not engaged," said Mrs. Deane, and Eugenia replied, "But expect to be, which is the same thing;" then after a pause, she continued, "but, jesting aside, Mr. Hastings did not buy the piano. I bought it myself and expect to pay for it, too, that is, if you will indorse this draft. Look!" and she held to view the draft, of which Mrs. Deane was, until that moment, wholly ignorant.

Wiping from his white brow the heavy drops of perspiration which had gathered thickly upon it, Mr. Hastings attempted to leave the place, but the same hand which twice before had sealed his lips, was interposed to keep him there, and he stood silent and immovable, while his surprise and indignation increased as the conversation proceeded.

In great astonishment Mrs. Deane examined the draft, and then questioned her daughter as to how she came by it. Very briefly Eugenia told of the letter she had sent her Uncle Nat. "I knew there was no surer way of gaining his goodwill," said she, "than by thrusting Dora in his face, so I asked her if she had any message, and she sent her love, together with a lock of her mother's hair, which I verily believe turned the old fellow's heart. I have not the letter with me which he wrote in reply and directed to Dora, but it was a sickish, sentimental thing, prating about his love for her mother, and how much he prized that lock which he said he would pay for at the rate of one dollar a hair! And, don't you believe, the silly old fool sat up all night, crying over and counting the hairs, which amounted to fifteen hundred! 'Twould have been more if I hadn't foolishly kept back some for hair ornaments. I was so provoked, I could have thrown them in the fire."

"But if the letter was directed to Dora, how came you by it?" asked Mrs. Deane, who, knowing Eugenia as well as she did, was still wholly unprepared for anything like this.

"'Twas the merest chance in the world," answered Eugenia, stating the circumstances by which the letter came into her possession, and adding that "Mr. Hastings must have thought her manner that night very strange; but come," she continued, "do sign your name quick, so I can get the money before the bank closes."

But this Mrs. Deane at first refused to do, saying it was not theirs, and Dora should no longer be defrauded; at the same time, she expressed her displeasure at Eugenia's utter want of principle.

"Grown suddenly very conscientious haven't you!" scornfully laughed the young lady, reminding her of the remittances annually sent to them for Dora's benefit, but which had been unjustly withheld; "very conscientious indeed; but I am thankful I parted company with that commodity long ago."

Then followed a series of angry words, and bitter recriminations, by which the entire history of Eugenia's selfish treatment of her cousin, even to the cutting off her hair more than two years before, was disclosed to Mr. Hastings, who, immeasurably shocked and sick at heart, turned away just as Mrs. Deane, to avoid further altercation, expressed her readiness to indorse the draft, on condition that the balance, after paying for the piano, should be set aside for Dora.

"And haven't I told you repeatedly that the piano was all I wanted? and I shouldn't be so particularly anxious about that, if I did not think it would aid me in securing Mr. Hastings."

"Which you never shall, so help me Heaven!" exclaimed the

indignant man, as he strode noiselessly down the hall, and out into the open air, where he breathed more freely, as if just escaping from the poisonous atmosphere of the deadly upas.

It would be impossible to describe his emotion, as he walked on through one street after another. Astonishment, rage, horror, and disgust each in turn predominated, and were at last succeeded by a deep feeling of thankfulness that the veil had been removed, and he had escaped from the toils of one, who, slowly but surely, had been winding herself around his fancy--he would not say affections, for he knew he had never loved her. "But she might have duped me," he said, "for I am but human;" and then as he thought what a hardened, unprincipled woman she was, he shuddered and grew faint at the mere idea of taking such a one to fill the place of his gentle, loving Ella. "I cannot meet her to-night," he continued, as he remembered the concert. "I could not endure the sound of her voice, for I should say that to her which had better not be said. I will go home--back to Dunwood, leaving her to wait for me as long as she chooses."

With him, to will was to do, and having finished his business, he started for the depot, whither Mrs. Deane had preceded him, having been coaxed by Eugenia to return at half-past six, and thus leave her the pleasure of Mr. Hastings's company alone. The piano had been paid for, and as it was quite dark, and beginning to rain, the now amiable young lady accompanied her mother to the depot, and having seen her safely in the cars, which would not start in some minutes, was on her way back to the hotel, her mind too intently occupied with thoughts of coming pleasure to heed the man who, with dark lowering brow, and hat drawn over his face, met her on the sidewalk, and who at sight of her started suddenly as if she had been a crawling serpent.

"Will the Deanes always cross my path?" he exclaimed, as, opening the car door, he saw near the stove the brown satin hat and black plumes of the mother, who was sitting with her back towards him, and consequently was not aware of his presence.

To find a seat in another car was an easy matter, and while Eugenia, at the hotel, was alternately admiring herself in the glass, and peering out into the hall to see if he were coming, he was on his way to Dunwood, breathing more and more freely, as the distance between them increased.

"Yes, I have escaped her," he thought, and mingled with thankfulness for this, was a deep feeling of sympathy for Dora, to whom such injustice had been done.

He understood perfectly her position--knew exactly the course of treatment, which, from the first, she had received, and while trembling with anger, he resolved that it should not continue. "I _can_ help her, and I _will_," he said emphatically; though how, or by what means he could not, in his present state of

excitement, decide. Arrived at Dunwood, he stepped hastily from the car and walked rapidly down the street until he came opposite Locust Grove. Then, indeed, he paused, while an involuntary shudder ran through his frame as he thought of the many hours he had spent within those walls with one who had proved herself unworthy even of the name of woman.

"But it is over now," he said, "and when I cross that threshold again, may----"

The sentence was unfinished, for a light flashed suddenly out upon him, and a scene met his view which arrested his footsteps at once, and, raining as it was, he leaned back against the fence and gazed at the picture before him. The shutters were thrown open, and through the window was plainly discernible the form of Dora Deane, seated at a table on which lay a book which she seemed to be reading. There was nothing elegant about her dress, nor did Howard Hastings think of this; his mind was intent upon her who had been so cruelly wronged, and whose young face, seen through the window on that winter night, looked very fair, so fair that he wondered he had never thought before how beautiful was Dora Deane.

At this point, Mrs. Deane, who had been slower in her movements, reached the gate, and, resigning his post near the fence, Mr. Hastings walked slowly home, bearing in his mind that picture of Dora Deane as he saw her through the window, with no shadows on her brow, save those left there by early grief, and which rendered her face still more attractive than it would otherwise have been. That night, all through the silent hours, there shone a glimmering light from the room where Howard Hastings sat, brooding upon what he had heard, and meditating upon the best means for removing Dora from the influence of her heartless cousin. Slowly over him, too, came memories of the little brown-faced girl who, when his home was cheerless, had come to him with her kindly acts and gentle ways, diffusing over all an air of comfort and filling his home with sunlight. Then he remembered that darkest hour of his desolation--that first coming home from burying his dead; and, now as then he felt creeping over him the icy chill which had lain upon his heart when he approached the house whence they had borne his fair girl wife. But he had found her there--Dora Deane--folding his motherless baby to her bosom, and again in imagination he met the soft glance of her eye as she welcomed him back to Ella's room which seemed not half so lonely with Dora sitting by his side. Again he was with her in the storm which she had braved on that night when his child lay dying--the child whom she had loved so much, and who had died upon her lap. Anon, this picture faded too, and he saw her as he had seen her but a few hours before--almost a woman now, but retaining still the same fair, open brow, and sunny smile which had characterized her as a child. And this was the girl whom Eugenia would trample down--would misrepresent to the fond old uncle, far away. "But it shall never be," he said aloud; "I will remove her Iron them by

force if need be." But "where would she go?" he asked. Then as he remembered Ella's wish that he should care for her--a wish which his foolish fancy for Eugenia had for a time driven from his mind, he felt an intense longing to have her there with him; there, in his home, where he could see her every day--not as his wife, for at that time Howard Hastings had never thought it possible for him to call her by that name, she seemed so much a child; but she should be his sister, and his manly heart throbbed with delight, as he thought how he would watch over and protect her from all harm. He would teach her and she would learn, sitting at his feet as she sat two years before; and life would seem no longer sad and dreary, for he would have a pleasant home and in it _Dora Deane!_ Ere long, however, his better judgment told him that the censorious, curious world would never suffer this to be; _she couldn't come as his sister--she couldn't come at all_-- and again there came over him a sense of desolation, as if he were a second time bereaved.

Slowly and steadily the raindrops pattered against the window pane, while the lamp upon the table burned lower and lower, and still Mr. Hastings sat there, pondering another plan, to which he could see no possible objection, provided Mrs. Deane's consent could be obtained: "and she shall consent," he said, "or an exposure of her daughter will be the consequence."

Then, it occurred to him that, in order to succeed, he must for a time at least appear perfectly natural--must continue to visit at Locust Grove, just as he had been in the habit of doing--must meet Eugenia face to face, and even school himself to listen to the sound of her piano, which he felt would grate so harshly on his ear. And all this he could do if in the end Dora would be benefited.

For the more immediate accomplishment of his purpose, it seemed necessary that he should visit New York, and as in his present excitement, he could not rest at home, he determined upon going that very morning, in the early train. Pushing back the heavy drapery which shaded the window he saw that daylight was already breaking in the east, and, after a few hurried preparations, he knocked at Mrs. Leah's door, and telling her that important business required his presence in New York, whither he should be gone a few days, he started for the depot, just as the sun was rising; and, that night, Mrs. Elliott, his sister, was surprised to hear that he was in the parlor, and wished to see her.

"Why, Howard!" she exclaimed, as she entered the room and saw how pale and haggard he was, "what is the matter, and why have you come upon me so suddenly?"

"I have come, Louise, for aid," he answered, advancing towards her, and drawing her to his side. "Aid for an injured orphan. Do you remember Dora Deane?"

"Perfectly well," answered Mrs. Elliott. "I was too much interested in her to forget her soon. Ella wrote me that she was living in Dunwood, and when next I visited you, I intended seeking her out. But what of her, and how can I befriend her?"

In as few words as possible, Mr. Hastings told what he knew of her history since his sister saw her last, withholding not even the story of his own strange fancy for Eugenia. "But that is over, thank Heaven," he continued; "and now, Louise, you must take Dora to live with you. You have no child, no sister, and she will be to you both of these. You must love her, educate her, make her just such a woman as you are yourself; make her, in short, what that noble-hearted old man in India will wish her to be when he returns, as he shall do, if my life is spared; and Louise," he added, growing more and more earnest, "she will well repay you for your trouble. She brought sunshine to my home; she will bring it to yours. She is naturally refined and intelligent. She is amiable, ingenuous, open-hearted, and will one day be beautiful."

"And you, my brother, love her?" queried Mrs. Elliott, looking him steadily in his face, and parting the thick, black hair from off his high, white forehead.

"Love her", Louise!" he answered, "I love Dora Deane! Why, no. Ella loved her, the baby loved her, and for this I will befriend her, but to love her, I never thought of such a thing!" and walking to the window, he looked out upon the night, repeating to himself, "Love Dora Deane. I wonder what put that idea into Louise's brain?" Returning ere long to his seat, he resumed the conversation, which resulted at last in Mrs. Elliott's expressing her perfect willingness to give Dora a home, and a mother's care, to see that she had every possible advantage, to watch over and make her not only what Uncle Nat would wish to find her, but what Howard Hastings himself desired that she should be. Of Mrs. Elliott, we have said but little, neither is it necessary that we should dwell upon her character at large. She was a noble, true-hearted woman, finding her greatest happiness in doing others good. Widowed in the second year of her married life, her home was comparatively lonely, for no second love had ever moved her heart. In Dora Deane, of whom Ella had written so enthusiastically, she felt a deep interest, and when her brother came to her with the story of her wrongs, she gladly consented to be to her a mother, nay, possibly a sister, for, with woman's ready tact, she read what Mr. Hastings did not even suspect, and she bade him bring her at once.

A short call upon his mother, to whom he talked of Dora Deane; a hasty visit to Ella's grave, on which the winter snow was lying; a civil bow across the street to Mrs. Grey, who had never quite forgiven him for having killed her daughter; and he started back to Dunwood bearing with him a happier, healthier, frame of mind, than he had experienced for many a day. There was something now worth living for--the watching Dora Deane grow up into a

woman, whose husband would delight to honor her, and whose children would rise up and call her blessed. This picture, however, was not altogether pleasing, though why the thoughts of Dora's future husband should affect him unpleasantly, he could not tell. Still it did, and mentally hoping she would never marry, he reached Dunwood at the time and took his departure from it. And here we leave him while, in another chapter, we look in upon Eugenia, whom we left waiting for him at the hotel.

CHAPTER XVI.

FAILURE AND SUCCESS.

In a state of great anxiety, which increased each moment, Eugenia looked for the twentieth time into the long hall, and seeing no one, went back again to the glass, wondering if her new hat, which, without her mother's knowledge, had that afternoon been purchased, and now adorned her head, were as becoming as the milliner had said, and if fifteen dollars were not a great price for one in her circumstances to pay for a bonnet. Then she thought if Mr. Hastings proposed soon, as she believed he would, she should never again feel troubled about the trivial matter of money, of which she would have an abundance. But where was he and why did he not come? she asked herself repeatedly, caring less, however, for the delay, when she considered that if they were late, more people would see her in company with the elegant Mr. Hastings, who was well known in the city.

"Eight o'clock as I live," she exclaimed at last, consulting her watch, "and the concert was to commence at half-past seven. What can it mean?" and with another glance at her bonnet, she walked the length of the hall, and leaning far over the balustrade looked anxiously down into the office below, to see if by any chance he were there.

But he was not, and returning to her room, she waited another half hour, when, grown more fidgety and anxious, she descended to the office, inquiring if Mr. Hastings had been there that evening. Some one thought they had seen him in the ladies' parlor that afternoon, but further information than that she could not obtain, and the discomfited young lady went back to her room in no very enviable frame of mind, particularly as she heard the falling of the rain and thought how dark it was without.

"What can have kept him?" she said, half crying with vexation. "And how I wish I had gone home with mother!"

Wishing, however, was of no avail, and when that night at half-past ten, the hotel omnibus as usual went to the depot, it carried

a very cross young lady, who, little heeding what she did, and caring less, sat down beneath a crevice in the roof, through which the rain crept in, lodging upon the satin bows and drooping plumes of her fifteen-dollar hat, which, in her disappointment, she had forgotten to exchange for the older one, safely stowed away in the bandbox she held upon her lap. Arrived at Dunwood station, she found, as she had expected, no omnibus in waiting, nor any one whose services she could claim as an escort, so, borrowing an umbrella, and holding up her dress as best she could, she started, band-box in hand, for home, stepping once into a pool of water, and falling once upon the dirty sidewalk, from which the mud and snow were wiped by her rich velvet cloak, to say nothing of the frightful pinch made in her other bonnet by her having crushed the band-box in her fall.

In a most forlorn condition, she at last reached home, where to her dismay she found the door was locked and the fire gone out, her mother not having expected her to return on such a night as this. To rouse up Dora, and scold her unmercifully, though for what she scarcely knew, was under the circumstances quite natural, and while Mr. Hastings at Rose Hill was devising the best means of removing Dora from her power, she at Locust Grove was venting the entire weight of her pent-up wrath upon the head of the devoted girl, who bore it uncomplainingly. Removing at last her bonnet, she discovered the marks of the omnibus leak, and then her ire was turned towards him as having been the cause of all her disasters.

"I'll never speak to him again, never," she exclaimed, as she crept shivering to bed.

But a few hours' quiet slumber dissipated in a measure her wrath, and during the next day she many times looked out to see him coming, as she surely thought he would, laden with apologies for his seeming neglect. But nothing appeared except the huge box containing the piano, and in superintending the opening of that her mind was for a time diverted. Greatly Alice and Dora marveled whence came the money with which the purchase had been made, and both with one consent settled upon Mr. Hastings as having been the donor. To this suggestion Eugenia made no reply, and feeling sure that it was so, Dora turned away and walking to the window sighed as she wondered what Ella would say if she could know who was to take her place in the heart of Howard Hastings.

The instrument was finely toned, and Eugenia spent the remainder of the day in practising a very difficult piece, which she knew Mr. Hastings admired, and with which she intended to surprise and charm him. But he did not come, either that day or the next, and on the morning of the next, which was Saturday, feigning some trivial errand to Mrs. Leah, she went herself to Rose Hill, casting anxious glances towards the windows of his room to see if he were in sight. Dame Leah was a shrewd old woman, and readily guessing that Eugenia's visit was prompted from a desire to see her master, rather than herself, she determined to tantalize her

by saying nothing of him unless she were questioned. Continually hoping he would appear, Eugenia lingered until there was no longer a shadow of excuse for tarrying, and then she arose to go, saying as she reached the door, "Oh, now I think of it, Mr. Hastings has a book in his library which I very much wish to borrow. Is he at home?"

"No," answered Mrs. Leah, "he went to New York, Thursday morning, on the early train."

"To New York!" repeated Eugenia, "for what? and when will he be home?"

"He said he had important business," returned Mrs. Leah, adding that "maybe he'd be home that night."

Eugenia had heard all she wished to know, and forgetting entirely the book, bade Mrs. Leah good-morning, and walked away, feeling in a measure relieved, for the business which took him so suddenly to New York, had undoubtedly some connection with his failing to call at the hotel for her! He had never called upon Sunday evening, but thinking that after so long an absence he might do so now, she sat in state from six o'clock till nine, starting nervously at every sound, and once, when sure she heard him, running from the room, so he would not find her there, and think she had been waiting for him. But he did not come, and the next day, feeling exceedingly anxious to know if he had returned, and remembering the book, which she had failed to get, and must have, she towards night sent Dora to Rose Hill, bidding her if she saw Mr. Hastings tell him that her piano had come and she wished him to hear it.

In the long kitchen by a glowing stove, Dame Leah sat, busy with her knitting, which she quickly suspended when she saw Dora, who was with her a favorite.

"So Eugenia sent you for that book?" she said, when told of Dora's errand. "I'll see if he will lend it."

Mr. Hastings was alone in his library. All that day he had been making up his mind to call at Locust Grove, where he knew Eugenia was impatiently expecting him, for Mrs. Leah had told him of her call, winking slyly as she spoke of the forgotten book!

"Yes, I will go and have it over," he thought, just as Mrs. Leah entered, telling him that "Miss Deane wanted that book."

Thinking that Eugenia was in the house, he answered hastily. "Take it to her, and pray don't let her in here."

"It's Dora, not Eugenia," said Mrs. Leah, and instantly the whole expression of his countenance changed.

"_Dora!_" he exclaimed. "It's a long time since I saw her in this room. Tell her to come up."

Very gladly Dora obeyed the summons, and in a moment she stood in the presence of Mr. Hastings.

"I am glad to see you," he said, motioning her to the little stool, on which she had often sat when reciting to him her lessons, and when she now sat down, it was so near to him that, had he chosen, his hand could have rested on her beautiful hair, for she held her hood upon her lap.

Two months before and he would not have hesitated to smooth these shining tresses, but the question of his sister, "Do you love her?" had produced upon him a curious effect, making him half afraid of the child-woman who sat before him, and who, after waiting a time for him to speak, looked up into his face, and said, "Do you want me for anything in particular, Mr. Hastings?"

"Want you, Dora? Want you?" he said, abstractedly, as if that question, too, had puzzled him; then remembering himself, and why he had sent for her, he answered, "I want to talk with you, Dora-- to tell you something. Do you remember my sister Mrs. Elliott?"

The eager, upward glance of Dora's eyes, was a sufficient answer, and he continued, "I saw her last week and talked with her of you. She wishes you to come and live with her. Will you go?"

Dora could never tell why she cried, but the thought of living with Mrs. Elliott, whom she regarded as an almost superior being, overcame her, and she burst into tears, while Mr. Hastings looked at her, quite uncertain as to what, under the circumstances, it was proper for him to do. If his sister had never bothered him with that strange question, he would have known exactly how to act; but now in a state of perplexity, he sat motionless, until, thinking he must do something, he said gently, "_Dora, my child_" The last word removed his embarrassment entirely. She _was a child_, and as such he would treat her. So he said again, "Dora, my child, why do you cry?" and Dora answered impulsively, "It makes me so glad to think of living with Mrs. Elliott, for you do not know how unhappy I have been since she found me four years ago."

"I know more than you suppose. But it is over now," he said; and stretching out his arm, he drew her nearer to him, and resting her head upon his knee, he soothed her as if she were indeed the child he tried to believe she was, and he her gray-haired sire, instead of a young man of twenty-seven!

And Dora grew very calm sitting there with Mr. Hastings's hand upon her head, and when he told her it was all arranged, and she should surely go, she sprang to her feet, and while her cheeks glowed with excitement, exclaimed, "It is too good to come true."

Something will happen, Aunt Sarah will not let me go."

"Yes, she will," said Mr. Hastings decidedly. "I am going there to-night to talk with her."

Then, as it was already growing dark, he rose to accompany Dora home, both of them forgetting the book, which Eugenia seemed destined never to receive. But she did not think to ask for it in her joy at meeting Mr. Hastings, who succeeded in appearing natural far better than he had expected, telling her not that he was sorry for having failed to keep his appointment, but that it was not consistent for him to do so, and adding that he hoped she was not very much disappointed.

"Oh, no," she said, "I know of course that business detained you;"--then, as she saw him looking at her piano, she advanced towards it, and seating herself upon the stool, asked, "if he would like to hear her play?"

He could not conscientiously answer "yes," for he felt that the sound would sicken him; but he stood at her side and turned the leaves of her music as usual, while she dashed through the piece she had practised with so much care.

"How do you like it?" she said, when she had finished; and he answered, "I always admired your playing, you know, but the tone of the instrument does not quite suit me. It seems rather muffled, _as if the wires were made of hair!_" and his large black eyes were bent searchingly upon her.

Coloring crimson, she thought, "Can he have learned my secret?" then, as she remembered how impossible it was for him to know aught of the money, she answered, "Quite an original idea," at the same time seating herself upon the sofa. Sitting down beside her as he had been in the habit of doing, he commenced at once upon the object of his visit, asking if her mother were at home, and saying he wished to see her on a matter of some importance; then, knowing who was really the ruling power there, he added, as Eugenia arose to leave the room in quest of her mother, "perhaps I had better speak of my business first to you!"

Feeling sure now of a proposal, the young lady resumed her seat, involuntarily pulling at her fourth finger, and mentally hoping the _engagement ring_ would be a diamond one. What then was her surprise when she found that not herself, but Dora was the subject of his remarks! After telling her of his visit to his sister, and of her wishes with regard to Dora, he said, "since the death of my wife and baby, I have felt a deep interest in your family for the kindness shown to me in my affliction. I promised Ella that I would befriend Dora, and by placing her with Louise, I shall not only fulfil my word, but shall also be relieved of all care concerning her. Do you think I can persuade your mother to let her go?"

Eugenia did not know. She would speak to her about it after he was gone, and tell him on the morrow.

"I shall rely upon you to plead my cause," he continued; "Louise's heart is quite set upon it, and I do not wish to disappoint her."

"I will do my best," answered Eugenia, never suspecting that Mr. Hastings was quite as anxious as his sister, who, she presumed, intended making a half companion, half waiting-maid of her cousin.

"But it will be a good place for her, and somewhat of a relief to us," she thought, after Mr. Hastings had gone. She is getting to be a young lady now, and growing each year more and more expensive, I presume Mrs. Elliott will send her to school for a time at least, and in case our families should be connected, it is well for her to do so. I wrote to Uncle Nat that we wished to send her away to school, and this is the very thing. Mother won't of course insist upon her having all that money, for she will be well enough off without it, and if Mr. Hastings ever does propose, I can have a handsome outfit! Fortune does favor me certainly."

Thus Eugenia mused, and thus did she talk to her mother and she was the more easily persuaded when she saw how eager Dora was to go."

"I shall be sorry to leave you, Aunt Sarah," said Dora, coming to her side, and resting her hand upon her shoulder, "but I shall be so happy with Mrs. Elliott, that I am sure you'll let me go."

Mrs. Deane was naturally a cold, selfish woman, but the quiet, unassuming Dora had found a place in her heart, and she would be very lonely without her; still it was better for her, and better for them all that she should go; so she at last gave her consent, and when the next day Mr. Hastings called he was told that Dora could go as soon as he thought best.

"Let it be immediately, then," he said. "I will write to Louise to-night, and tell her we shall come next week."

"I wish I could go to New York with her," said Eugenia. "It's so long since I was there."

"You had better wait till some other time, for I could not now show you over the city," answered Mr. Hastings, who had no idea of being burdened with Eugenia.

"He expects me to go with him sometime, or he would never have said that," thought Eugenia, and this belief kept her good-natured during all the bustle and hurry of preparing Dora for her journey.

The morning came at last on which Dora was to leave, and with feelings of regret Mrs. Deane and Alice bade her good-by, while

Eugenia accompanied her to the depot, where she knew she should see Mr. Hastings.

"I've half a mind to go with you as far as Rochester," she said to Dora, in his presence, as the cars came up, but he made no reply, and the project was abandoned.

Kissing her cousin good-by, she stood upon the platform until the train had moved away, and then walked slowly back to the house, which even to her seemed lonesome.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE QUESTION ANSWERED.

It was late in the evening when our travelers reached the city, which loomed up before Dora like an old familiar friend. They found Mrs. Elliott waiting to receive them, together with Mr. Hastings's mother, who, having heard so much of Dora Deane, had come over to see her. Very affectionately did Mrs. Elliott greet the weary girl, and after divesting her of her wrappings, she led her to her mother, whose keen eyes scrutinized her closely, but found no fault in the fair childish face which looked so timidly up to her. Half bewildered, Dora gazed about her, and then, with her eyes swimming in tears, whispered softly to Mr. Hastings, "I am so afraid it will prove to be a dream."

"I will see that it does not," said Mrs. Elliott, who had overheard her, and who, as time passed on, became more and more interested in the orphan girl.

For several days Mr. Hastings lingered, showing her all over the city, and going once with her to visit the room where he had found her. But the elements had preceded them--fire and water--and not a trace of the old building remained. At the expiration of a week, Mr. Hastings started for home, half wishing he could take Dora with him, and wondering if his sister were in earnest, when she asked him if he loved her?

A new world now seemed open to Dora, who never thought it possible for her to be so happy. The ablest instructors were hired to teach her, and the utmost care bestowed upon her education, while nothing could exceed the kindness both of Mrs. Elliott and Mrs. Hastings, the latter of whom treated her as she would have done a young and favorite daughter. One evening when Mrs. Elliott was dressing for a party, Dora asked permission to arrange her soft glossy hair, which she greatly admired.

"It's not all my own," said Mrs. Elliott, taking off a heavy braid

and laying it upon the table. "I bought it in Rochester, nearly two years ago, on the day of Ella's party. I have often wished I knew whose it was," she continued, "for to me there is something disagreeable in wearing other people's hair, but the man of whom I purchased it, assured me that it was cut from the head of a young, healthy girl."

For a moment Dora stood thinking--then catching up the beautiful braid and comparing it with her own she exclaimed, "_It was mine! It was mine!_ Eugenia cut it off, and sold it the day before the party. Oh, I am so glad," she added, "though I was sorry then, for I did not know it would come to you, the dearest friend I ever had," and she smoothed caressingly the shining hair, now a shade lighter than her own.

Mrs. Elliott had heard from her brother the story of Dora's shorn locks, and the braid of hair was far more valuable to her, now that she knew upon whose head it had grown. In her next letter to her brother, she spoke of the discovery, and he could not forbear mentioning the circumstances to Eugenia, who, not suspecting how much he knew of the matter, answered indifferently, "Isn't it funny how things do come round? Dora had so much of the headache that we thought it best to cut off her hair, which she wished me to sell for her in Rochester, I think she was always a little penurious!"

Wholly disgusted with this fresh proof of her duplicity, Mr. Hastings could scarcely refrain from upbraiding her for her perfidy, but thinking the time had not yet come, he restrained his wrath, and when, next he spoke, it was to tell her of a _foreign tour_ which he intended making.

"I have long wished to visit the old world," said he, "and as there is nothing in particular to prevent my doing so, I shall probably start the first of June. I should go sooner, but I prefer being on the ocean in the summer season."

For a moment Eugenia grew faint, fancying she saw an end of all her hopes, but soon rallying, she expatiated largely upon the pleasure and advantages to be derived from a tour through Europe, saying, "it was a happiness she had herself greatly desired, but should probably never realize."

"Not if you depend upon me for an escort," thought Mr. Hastings, who, soon after, took his leave.

Much Eugenia wondered whether he would ask the important question, and take her with him, and concluding at last that he would, she secretly made some preparations for the expected journey! But alas for her hopes! The spring went by the summer came, and she was still Eugenia Deane, when one evening towards the middle of June, Mr. Hastings came over to say good-by, as he was intending to start next morning for New York, or rather for his sister's

country seat on the Hudson, where she was now spending the summer. This was a death-blow to Eugenia, who could scarcely appear natural. Tears came to her eyes, and once when she attempted to tell him how lonely Rose Hill would be without him, she failed entirely for want of voice.

"How hoarse you are. Have you a cold," said Mr. Hastings, and that was all the notice he took of her emotion.

Fearing lest he should suspect her real feelings, she tried to compose herself, and after a time said, jokingly, "I shouldn't wonder if you were going to take you a wife from some of the city belles."

"Oh, no," he answered lightly. "Time enough to think of that when I return."

This gave her hope, and she bore the parting better than she could otherwise have done.

"You will not forget me entirely, I trust," she said, as she gave him her hand.

"Oh, no," he answered. "That would be impossible. I have many reasons which you do not perhaps suspect, for remembering you! By the way," he continued, "have you any message for Dora! I shall probably see her as she is with my sister."

"Give her my love," answered Eugenia, "and tell her to write more definitely of her situation. She never particularizes, but merely says she is very happy. I do hope Mrs. Elliott will make something of her!"

The next moment Mr. Hastings's good-by was ringing in her ears, and he was gone. Seating herself upon the stairs, and covering her face with her hands, Eugenia wept bitterly, and this was their parting.

One week later and at the same hour in the evening, Mr. Hastings sat in his sister's pleasant parlor, looking out upon the blue waters of the Hudson, and wondering why, as the time for his departure drew near, his heart should cling so fondly to the friends he was to leave behind. "I shall see them again if I live," he said, "and why this dread of bidding them farewell?"

At this moment his sister entered the room, bringing to him a letter from a rich old Texan bachelor, who was spending the summer with some friends in the vicinity of her home. It was directed to the "Guardians of Dora Deane," and asked permission to address her! He had seen her occasionally at Mrs. Elliott's house, had met her frequently in his morning rambles, and the heart which for forty-five years had withstood the charms of northern beauties and southern belles, was won by the modest little country girl, and he

would make her his wife, would bear her to his luxurious home, where her slightest wish should be his law. With a curious smile upon her lip, Mrs. Elliott read this letter through, and then without a word to Dora, carried it to her brother, watching him while he read it, and smiling still more when she saw the flush upon his brow, and the unnatural light in his eye.

"Have you talked with Dora?" he said, when he had finished reading.

"No, I have not," answered his sister. "I thought I would leave that to you, for in case she should ask my advice, my fear of losing her might influence me too much."

"_Louise_" he exclaimed, leaning forward so that his hot breath touched her cheek, "you surely do not believe that Dora Deane cares aught for that old man. She is nothing but a child."

"She is seventeen next November," said Mrs. Elliott, "almost as old as Ella was when first you were engaged, and how can we tell how often she has thought of matrimony? Mr. _Trevors_ is a man of unexceptionable character, and though old enough to be her father, he is immensely wealthy, and this, you know, makes a vast difference with some girls."

"But not with her--not with Dora Deane, I'm sure," he said. "Where is she? Send her to me, and I will see."

Dora's governess, who had accompanied them to the country, was sometimes very exacting, and this day she had been unusually cross, on account of her pupil's having failed in one or two lessons.

"I'll report you to Mr. Hastings, and see what he can do," she had said as she hurled the French Grammar back upon the table.

This threat Dora had forgotten, until told that Mr. Hastings had sent for her; then, fancying he wished to reprimand her, she entered the parlor reluctantly, and rather timidly took a seat upon an ottoman near the window, where he was sitting.

During Dora's residence with Mrs. Elliott, she had improved much, both in manner and personal appearance, and others than the Texan planter called her beautiful. The brownish hue, which her skin had acquired from frequent exposure, was giving way to a clearer and more brilliant complexion, while the peculiarly sweet expression of her deep blue eyes would have made a plain face handsome. But Dora's chief point of beauty lay in her _hair_--her beautiful hair of reddish brown. It had grown rapidly, fully verifying Alice's prediction, and in heavy shining braids was worn around her classically shaped head. And Dora sat there very still--demurely waiting for Mr. Hastings to speak, wondering if he would be severe, and at last laughing aloud when, in place of the

expected rebuke, he asked if she knew Mr. Trevors.

"Excuse me," she said, as she saw his look of surprise, "Miss Johnson threatened to report me for indolence, and I thought you were going to scold me. Yes, I know Mr. Trevors. I rode horseback with him last week."

A pang shot through Mr. Hastings's heart, but he continued, holding up the letter, "He has sued for your hand. He asks you to be his wife. Will you answer yes?"

And trembling with excitement, he awaited her reply, while the revelation of a new light was faintly dawning upon him.

"Mr. Trevors wish me to be his wife--that old man?" she exclaimed, turning slightly pale. "It cannot be; let me read the letter." And taking it from his hand, she stood beneath the chandelier, and read it through, while Mr. Hastings scanned her face to see if he could detect aught to verify his fears.

But there was nothing, and breathing more freely, he said, as she returned to him the letter, "Sit down here, Dora, and tell me what I shall say to him. But first consider well, Mr. Trevors is rich, and if money can make you happy, you will be so as his wife."

Dora did not know why it was, but she could not endure to hear him talk in such a calm, unconcerned manner of what was so revolting. It grieved her, and laying her head upon the broad window seat, she began to cry. Mr. Hastings did not this time say "Dora, my child," for Louise had told him she was not a child, and he began to think so, too. Drawing his chair nearer to her, and laying his hand upon her hair, he said gently, "will you answer me?"

"Yes," she replied, somewhat bitterly. "If Mrs. Elliott is tired of me, I will go away, but not with Mr. Trevors. I would rather die than marry a man I did not love, because of his gold."

"Noble girl!" was Mr. Hastings's involuntary exclamation, but Dora did not hear it, and looking him in his face, she said, "do you wish me to marry him?"

"Never, never," he answered, "him, nor any one else!"

"Then tell him so," said she, unmindful of the latter part of the remark. "Tell him I respect him, but I cannot be his wife."

And rising to her feet she left the room, to wash away in another fit of tears the excitement produced by her first offer.

Very still sat Mr. Hastings when she was gone, thought after thought crowding fast upon him, and half bewildering him by their intensity. He could answer Louise's question now! It had come to him at last, sitting there with Mr. Trevor's letter in his hand,

and Dora at his feet. _Dora_ who was so dear to him, and his first impulse was to hasten to her side, and sue for the love she could not give the gray-haired Texan.

"And she will not tell me nay," he said. "It will come to her as it has to me--the love we have unconsciously borne each other."

He arose to leave the room, but meeting his sister in the door, he turned back, and seating himself with her in the deep recess of the window, he told her of the mighty love which had been so long maturing, and of whose existence he did not dream until another essayed to come between him and the object of his affection.

"And, Louise," he said, "Dora Deane must be mine. Are you willing--will you call her sister, and treat her as my wife?"

And Mrs. Elliott answered, "I know, my brother, that you love Dora Deane. I knew it when I asked you that question, and if to-night I tried to tease you by making you believe it possible that she cared for Mr. Trevors, it was to show you the nature of your feelings for her. And I am willing that it should be so--but not yet. You must not speak to her of love, until you return. Hear me out," she continued, as she saw in him a gesture of impatience, "Dora is no longer a child--but she is too young to be trammelled with an engagement. And it must not be. You must leave her free till she has seen more of the world, and her mind is more mature."

"Free till another wins her from me," interrupted Mr. Hastings, somewhat bitterly; and his sister answered, "I am sure that will never be, though were you now to startle her with your love she probably would refuse you."

"_Never_" he said emphatically; and Mrs. Elliott replied, "I think she would. She respects and admires you, but as you have looked upon her as a child, so in like manner has she regarded you as a father, or, at least the husband of Ella, and such impressions must have time to wear away. You would not take her with you, and it is better to leave her as she is. I will watch over her and seek to make her what your wife ought to be, and when you return she will be older, will be capable of judging for herself, and she will not tell you no. Do you not think my reasoning good?"

"I suppose it is," he replied, "though it is sadly at variance with my wishes. Were I sure no one would come between us, I could more easily follow your advice, and were it not that I go for _her_ I would give up my journey at once, and stay where I could watch and see that no one came near."

"This I will do," said Mrs. Elliott, "and I fancy I can keep her safe for you."

Awhile longer they talked together, and their conversation was at

last interrupted by the appearance of Dora herself who came to say good night.

"Come and sit by me, Dora," said Mr. Hastings, unmindful of his sister's warning glance. "Let me tell you what I wish you to do while I am gone," and moving along upon the sofa, he left a place for her at his side.

Scarcely was she seated when a servant appeared, wishing to speak with Mrs. Elliott, and Mr. Hastings was left alone with Dora, with whom he merely talked of what he hoped to find her when he returned. Once, indeed, he told her how often he should think of her, when he was far away, and asked as a keepsake a lock of her soft hair.

Three days afterwards he went to New York accompanied by Mrs. Elliott and Dora. He was to sail next morning, and wishing to see as much of the latter as possible, he felt somewhat chagrined when, soon after their arrival, his sister insisted upon taking her out for a time, and forbade him to follow. For this brief separation, however, he was amply repaid when, on the morrow, his sister, who went with him on board the vessel, placed in his hand at parting a daguerreotype, which she told him not to open till she was gone. He obeyed, and while Dora in his sister's home was weeping that he had left them, he in his state-room was gazing rapturously on a fair young face, which, looking out from its handsome casing, would speak to him many a word of comfort when he was afar on the lonely sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. HASTINGS IN INDIA.

It was night again in Calcutta, and in the same room where we first found him was Nathaniel Deane--not alone this time, for standing before him was a stranger--"an American," he called himself, and the old East Indiaman, when he heard that word, grasped again the hand of his unknown guest, whose face he curiously scanned to see if before he had looked upon it. But he had not, and pointing him to a chair, he too sat down to hear his errand. Wishing to know something of the character of the individual he had come so far to see, Mr. Hastings, for he it was, conversed awhile upon a variety of subjects, until, feeling sure that 'twas a noble, upright man, with whom he had to deal, he said, "I told you, sir, that I came from New York, and so I did; but my home is in Dunwood."

One year ago, and Uncle Nat would have started with delight at the mention of a place so fraught with remembrances of Dora,

but Eugenia's last cruel letter had chilled his love, and now, when he thought of Dora, it was as one incapable of either affection or gratitude. So, for a moment he was silent, and Mr. Hastings, thinking he had not been understood, was about to repeat his remark, when Uncle Nat replied, "My brother's widow lives in Dunwood--Mrs. Richard Deane--possibly you may have seen her!" And with a slight degree of awakened interest, the little keen black eyes looked out from under their thick shaggy eyebrows at Mr. Hastings, who answered, "I know the family well. Dora is not now at home, but is living with my sister."

Many and many a time had Uncle Nat repeated to himself the name of Dora, but never before had he heard it from other lips, and the sound thrilled him strangely, bringing back in a moment all his olden love for one whose mother had been so dear. In the jet black eyes there was a dewy softness now, and in the tones of his voice a deep tenderness, as, drawing nearer to his guest, he said in a half whisper,

"Tell me of her--of Dora--for though I never saw her, I knew her mother."

"And loved her too," rejoined Mr. Hastings, on purpose to rouse up the old man, who, starting to his feet exclaimed, "How knew you that? You, whom I never saw until to-night! Who told you that I loved Fannie Deane? Yes, it is true, young man--true, though love does not express what I felt for her; she was my all--my very life, and when I lost her the world was a dreary blank. But go on--tell me of the child, and if she is like her mother. Though how should you know? You, who never saw my Fannie?"

"I have seen her," returned Mr. Hastings, "but death was there before me, and had marred the beauty of a face which once must have been lovely. Five years ago last January I found her dead, and at her side was Dora, sweetly sleeping with her arms around her mother's neck."

"You--you," gasped the old man, drawing near to Mr. Hastings--"you found them thus! I could kneel at your feet, whoever you may be, and bless you for coming here to tell me this; I never knew before how Fannie died. They never wrote me that, but go on and tell me all you know. Did Fannie freeze to death while in India I counted my gold by hundreds of thousands?"

Briefly Mr. Hastings told what he knew of Mrs. Deane's sad death, while the broad chest of Uncle Nat heaved with broken sobs, and the big tears rolled down his sunken cheeks.

"Heaven forgive me for tarrying here, while she was suffering so much!" he cried; "but what of Dora She did not die. I have written to her," and sent her many messages, but never a word has she replied, save once"--here Uncle Nat's voice grew tremulous as

he added, "and then she sent me this--look--'twas Fannie's hair," and he held to view a silken tress much like the one which lay next Howard Hastings's heart! "Oh, what a child it made of me, the first sight of this soft hair," he continued, carefully returning it to its hiding-place, without a word of the generous manner in which it had been paid for.

"Shall I tell him now?" thought Mr. Hastings, but Uncle Nathaniel spoke before him, and as if talking with himself, said softly, "Oh, how I loved her, and what a wreck that love has made of me. But I might have known it. Twenty-one years' difference in our ages was too great a disparity, even had my face been fair as John's. She was seventeen, and I was almost forty; I am _sixty_ now, and with every year added to my useless life, my love for her has strengthened."

"Could you not transfer that love to her daughter? It might make you happier," suggested Mr. Hastings, and mournfully shaking his head, Uncle Nat replied, "No, no, I've tried to win her love so hard. Have even thought of going home, and taking her to my bosom as my own darling child--but to all my advances, she has turned a deaf ear. I could not make the mother love me--I cannot make the child. It isn't in me, the way how, and I must live here all alone. I wouldn't mind that so much, for I'm used to it now, but when I come to die, there will be nobody to hold my head, or to speak to me a word of comfort, unless God sends Fannie back to me in the dark hour, and who knows but He will?"

Covering his face with his hands, Uncle Nathaniel cried aloud, while Mr. Hastings, touched by his grief, and growing each moment more and more indignant, at the deception practised upon the lonesome old man, said slowly and distinctly: "_Dora Deane never received your letter--never dreamed how much you loved her--never knew that you had sent her money, She has been duped--abused--and you most treacherously cheated by a base, designing woman! To tell you this, sir, I have come over land and sea! I might have written it, but I would rather meet you face to face--would know if you were worthy to be the uncle of Dora Deane!_"

Every tear was dried, and bolt upright, his keen eyes flashing gleams of fire, and his glittering teeth ground firmly together, Nathaniel Deane sat, rigid and immovable, listening to the foul story of Dora's wrongs, till Mr. Hastings came to the withholding of the letter, and the money paid for Fannie's hair. Then, indeed, his clenched fists struck fiercely at the empty air, as if Eugenia had been there, and springing half way across the room, he exclaimed, "_The wretch! The fiend! The beast! The Devil!_ What _shall_ I call her? Help me to some name which will be appropriate."

"You are doing very well, I think," said Mr. Hastings, smiling in spite of himself at this new phase in the character of the excited man, who, foaming with rage, continued to stalk up and down the

room, setting his feet upon the floor with vengeance, and with every breath denouncing Eugenia's perfidy.

"Curse her!" he muttered, "for daring thus to maltreat Fannie's child, and for making me to believe her so ungrateful and unkind. And she once cut off her hair to buy a party dress with, you say," he continued, stopping in front of Mr. Hastings, who nodded in the affirmative, while Uncle Nat, as if fancying that the few thin locks, which grew upon his own bald head, were Eugenia's long, black tresses, clutched at them savagely, exclaiming, "The selfish jade! But I will be avenged, and Madam Eugenia shall rue the day that she dared thus deceive me. That mother, too, had not, it seems, been wholly guiltless. She was jealous of my Fannie--she has been cruel to my child. I'll remember that, too!" and a bitter laugh echoed through the room, as the wrathful old man thought of revenge.

But as the wildest storm expends its fury, so Uncle Nat at last grew calm, though on his dark face there were still traces of the fierce passion which had swept over it. Resuming his seat and looking across the table at Mr. Hastings, he said, "It is not often that _old Nat Deane_ is moved as you have seen him moved to-night; but the story you told me set me on fire, and for a moment, I felt that I was going mad. But I am now myself again, and would hear how you learned all this."

In a few words, Mr. Hastings told of his foolish fancy for Eugenia, and related the circumstance of his having overheard her conversation at the hotel in Rochester.

"And Dora, you say, is beautiful and good," said Uncle Nat; "and I shall one day know her and see if there is in her aught like her angel mother, whose features are as perfect to me now as when last I looked upon them beneath the locust trees."

Bending low his head, he seemed to be thinking of the past, while Mr. Hastings, kissing fondly the picture of Dora Deane, laid it softly upon the table, and then anxiously awaited the result. Uncle Nathaniel did not see it at first, but his eye ere long fell upon it, and, with a cry like that which broke from his lips when first he looked on his dead Fannie's hair, he caught it up, exclaiming, "'Tis _her_--'tis Fannie--my long-lost darling, come back to me from the other world. Oh, Fannie, Fannie!" he cried, as if his reason were indeed unsettled, "I've been so lonesome here without you. Why didn't you come before?"

Again, for a time, he was silent, and Mr. Hastings could see the tears dropping upon the face of Dora Deane, who little dreamed of the part she was acting, far off in Hindostan. Slowly the reality dawned upon Uncle Nat, and speaking to Mr. Hastings, he said, "Who are you that moves me thus from one extreme to another, making me first a _fury_ and then a _child_?"

"I have told you I am Howard Hastings," answered the young man, adding that the picture was not that of Fannie, but her child.

"I know--I know it," returned Uncle Nat, "but the first sight of it drove me from my senses, it is so like her. The same open brow, the same blue eyes, the same ripe lips, and more than all, the same sweet smile which shone on me so often 'mid the granite hills of New Hampshire. And it is mine," he continued, making a movement to put it away. "You brought it to me, and in return, if you have need for gold, name the sum, and it shall be yours, even to half a million."

Money could not buy that picture from Howard Hastings, and though it grieved him to do so, he said, very gently, "I cannot part with the likeness, Mr. Deane, but we will share it together until the original is gained."

Leaning upon his elbows and looking steadily at his visitor, Uncle Nathaniel said, "You have been married once?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Hastings, while his countenance flushed, for he readily understood the nature of the questioning to which he was to be subjected.

"What was the name of your wife?" was the next query, and Mr. Hastings replied, "Ella Grey."

"Will you describe her?" said Uncle Nat, and almost as vividly as the features of Dora Deane were delineated by the artist's power, did Mr. Hastings portray by word the laughing blue eyes, the pale, childish face, the golden curls, and little airy form of her who had once slept upon his bosom as his wife.

"And did you love her, this Ella Grey?" asked Uncle Nat.

"Love her? Yes. But she is dead," answered Mr. Hastings, while Uncle Nat continued:

"And now if I mistake not, you love Dora Deane?"

"_ Yes, better than my life,_" said Mr. Hastings, firmly.

"Have you any objections?"

"None whatever," answered Uncle Nat, "for, though you are a stranger to me, there is that in your face which tells me you would make my darling happy. But it puzzles me to know how, loving one as you say you did, you can forget and love another."

"I have not forgotten," said Mr. Hastings, sadly; "God forbid that I should e'er forget my Ella; but, Mr. Deane, though she was good and gentle, she was not suited to me. Our minds were wholly unlike; for what I most appreciated, was utterly distasteful to her. She was a fair, beautiful little creature, but she did not

satisfy the higher, nobler feelings of my heart; and she, too, knew it. She told me so before she died, and spoke of a coming time when I would love another. She did not mention _Dora_, who then seemed like a child, but could she now come back to me, she would approve my choice, for she, too, loved Dora Deane."

"Have you told her this?" asked Uncle Nat--"told Dora how much you loved her?"

"I have not," was Mr. Hastings reply. "My sister would not suffer it until my return, when Dora will be more mature. At first I would not listen to this; but I yielded at last, consenting the more willingly to the long separation, when I considered that with Louise she was at least safe from Eugenia, and I hope, safe from any who might seek either to harm her, or win her from me."

"You spoke of having stopped in Europe on your way hither," said Uncle Nat. "How long is it since you left New York?"

"I sailed from there the latter part of June, almost ten months ago," was Mr. Hastings's answer, adding that, as he wished to visit some parts of Europe, and left home with the ostensible purpose of doing so, he had thought it advisable to stop there on his way, for he well knew that Mr. Deane, after learning why he had come, would be impatient to return immediately.

"Yes, yes; you are right," answered the old man. "I would go tomorrow if possible; but I shall probably never return to India, and I must make some arrangements for leaving my business in the hands of others. Were Dora still in Eugenia's power, I would not tarry a moment, I would sacrifice everything to save her, but as you say she is safe with your sister, and a few weeks' delay, though annoying to me, will make no difference with her. Do they know aught of this--those _wretches_ in Dunwood?" he continued, beginning to grow excited.

"They suppose me to be in Europe, for to no one save my mother and sister, did I breathe a word of India," Mr. Hastings replied; and Uncle Nat rejoined, "Let them continue to think so, then. I would rather they should not suspect my presence in America until I meet them face to face and taunt them with their treachery. It shall not be long, either, before I do it. In less than a month, we are homeward bound--and then, Miss Eugenia Deane--_we'll see!_" and his hard fist came down upon the table, as he thought of her dismay when told that he stood before her.

But alas for Uncle Nat! The time was farther in the distance than he anticipated. The excitement of what he had heard, told upon a frame already weakened by constant toil and exposure in the sultry climate of India, and one week from the night of Mr. Hastings's arrival, the old man lay burning with fever, which was greatly augmented by the constant chafing at the delay this unexpected illness would cause. Equally impatient, Mr. Hastings watched over

him, while his heart grew faint with hope deferred, as weeks, and even months, glided by; while vessel after vessel sailed away, leaving Uncle Nat prostrate and powerless to move. He had never been sick before in all his life, and his shattered frame was long in rallying, so that the summer, and the autumn and a part of the winter passed away, ere, leaning heavily on Mr. Hastings's arm, he went on board the ship which was to take him home--take him to Dora Deane, who had listened wonderingly to the story of her wrongs, told her by Mrs. Elliott at Mr. Hastings's request.

Indignant as she was at Eugenia, she felt more than repaid for all she had suffered, by the knowledge that Uncle Nat had always loved her; and many a cheering letter from her found its way to the bedside of the invalid, who laid each one beneath his pillow, beside the picture which Mr. Hastings suffered him to keep. More than once, too, had Dora written to Mr. Hastings _kind, sisterly notes_, with which he tried to be satisfied, for he saw that she was the same frank, ingenuous girl he had left, and from one or two things which she wrote, he fancied he was not indifferent to her. "She did not, at least, care for another," so Louise assured him. There was comfort in that, and during the weary days when their floating home lay, sometimes becalmed and sometimes tossed by adverse winds, he and Uncle Nat whiled away the tedious hours, by talking of the happiness which awaited them when home was reached at last.

During Mr. Deane's illness, Mr. Hastings had suggested that the annual remittance be sent to Dunwood, as usual, lest they should suspect that something was wrong, if it were withheld, and to this Uncle Nat reluctantly consented saying, as he did so, "It's the last dime they'll ever receive from me. I'll see her starve before my eyes, that girl Eugenia."

Still, as the distance between himself and the young lady diminished, he felt a degree of satisfaction in knowing that the draft had as usual been sent, thus lulling her into a state of security with regard to himself. Rapturously he talked of the meeting with Dora, but his eye was fiery in its expression when he spoke of that other meeting, when Eugenia would be the accused and he the wrathful accuser. The invigorating sea breeze did him good, and when at last the Cape was doubled and he knew that the waves which clashed against the ship, bore the same name with those which kissed the shores of America, he stood forth upon the deck, tall and erect as ever, with an eager, expectant look in his eye, which increased as he each day felt that he drew nearer and Bearer to his home--and _Dora Deane_.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MEETING.

One bright, beautiful summer morning, a noble vessel was sailing slowly into the harbor of New York. Groups of passengers stood upon her deck, and a little apart from the rest were Uncle Nat and Howard Hastings, the former gazing eagerly towards the city, which had more than doubled its population since last he looked upon it.

"We are almost home," he said to his companion, joyfully, for though the roof that sheltered his childhood was further to the northward, among the granite hills, he knew that it was America, the land of his birth, which lay before him, and as a child returns to its mother after a long and weary absence, So did his heart yearn towards the shore they were fast approaching.

A crowd of memories came rushing over him, and when, at last, the plank was lowered, he was obliged to lean upon the stronger arm of Howard Hastings, who, procuring a carriage, bade the hackman drive them at once to his sister's. For some time Mrs. Elliott and Dora had been looking for the travelers, whose voyage was unusually long, and they had felt many misgivings lest the treacherous sea had not been faithful to its trust; but this morning they were not expecting them, and wishing to make some arrangements for removing to her country seat on the Hudson, Mrs. Elliott had gone out there and taken Dora with her. Mr. Hastings's first impulse was to follow them, but knowing that they would surely be home that night, and remembering how weary Uncle Nathaniel was, he wisely concluded to remain in the city and surprise them on their return.

Like one in a dream, Uncle Nat walked from room to room, asking every half hour if it were not almost time for the train, and wondering if Dora would recognize him if no one told her who he was. Scarcely less excited, Mr. Hastings, too, waited and watched; and when, just at dark, he heard the door unclose, and Dora's voice in the hall without, the rapid beating of his heart was distinctly audible.

"That's her--that's Dora. I'll go to her at once," said Uncle Nat; but Mr. Hastings kept him back, and Dora passed on to her room, from which she soon returned, and they could hear the sound of her footsteps upon the stairs, as she drew near.

With his face of a deathlike whiteness, his lips apart, and the perspiration standing thickly about them, Uncle Nat sat leaning forward, his eyes fixed upon the door through which she would enter. In a moment she stood before them--Dora Deane--but far more lovely than Mr. Hastings had thought or dreamed. Nearly two years before, he had left her a school girl, as it were, and now he found her a beautiful woman, bearing about her an unmistakable air of refinement and high breeding. She knew him in an instant, and with an exclamation of surprised delight, was hastening forward, when a low, moaning cry, from another part of the room, arrested

her ear, causing her to pause ere Mr. Hastings was reached. Uncle Nat had recognized her--knew that she was Dora and attempted to rise, but his strength utterly failed him and stretching out his trembling arms towards her, he said supplicatingly, "_Me first, Dora me first._"

It was sufficient, and Dora passed on with a welcoming glance at Mr. Hastings, who feeling that it was not for him to witness that meeting, glided noiselessly from the room in quest of his sister. Fondly the old man clasped the young girl to his bosom, and Dora could hear the whispered blessings which he breathed over her, and felt the hot tears dropping on her cheek.

"Speak to me, darling," he said at last; "let me hear your own voice assuring me that never again shall we be parted until your mother calls for me to come and be with her."

Looking lovingly up in to his face, Dora answered, "I will never leave nor forsake you, my father, but wherever your home may be there will mine be also."

Clasping her still closer in his arms, he said, "God bless you, my child, for so I will call you, and never, I am sure, did earthly parent love more fondly an only daughter than I love you, my precious Dora. I have yearned so often to behold you, to look into your eyes and hear you say that I was loved, and now that it has come to me, I am willing, almost, to die."

Releasing her after a moment, and holding her off at a little distance, he looked earnestly upon her, saying, as he did so, "Yes, you _are_ like her--like your mother, Dora. Some, perhaps, would call you even more beautiful, but to me there is not in all the world a face more fair than hers."

In his delight at seeing her, he forgot for the time being how deeply she had been injured, and it was well that he did, for now nothing marred the happiness of this meeting, and for half an hour longer he sat with her alone, talking but little, but looking ever at the face so much like her whom he had loved and lost. At last, as if suddenly remembering himself, he said, "Excuse me, Dora; the sight of you drove every other thought from my mind, and I have kept you too long from one who loves you equally well with myself, and who must be impatient at the delay. He is worthy of you, too, my child," he continued, without observing how the color faded from Dora's cheek. "He is a noble young man, and no son was ever kinder to a father than he has been to me, since the night when I welcomed him to my home in India. Go to him, then, my daughter, and ask him to forgive my selfishness."

From several little occurrences, Dora had received the impression that a marriage between herself and Mr. Hastings would not be distasteful to his sister, but she had treated the subject lightly as something impossible. Still the thought of his loving another

was fraught with pain, and when at last she knew that he was on the stormy sea, and felt that danger might befall him--when the faces of his mother and sister wore an anxious, troubled look as days went by, bringing them no tidings--when she thought it just possible that he would never return to them again, it came to her just as two years before it had come to him, and sitting alone in her pleasant chamber, she, more than once had wept bitterly, as she thought how much she loved him, and how improbable it was that he should care for her, whom he had found almost a beggar girl.

In the first surprise of meeting him she had forgotten everything, save that he had returned to them in safety, and her manner towards him then was perfectly natural; but now when Uncle Nat, after telling what he did, bade her go to him, she quitted the room reluctantly, and much as she wished to see him, she would undoubtedly have run away upstairs, had she not met him in the hall, together with Mrs. Elliott, who was going to pay her respects to Uncle Nat.

"I have not spoken with you yet, Dora," he said, taking her hand between both his. "Go in there," motioning to the room he had just left, "and wait until I present Louise to your uncle."

It was a habit of Dora's always to cry just when she wished to least, and now entering the little music room, she threw herself upon the sofa and burst into tears. Thus Mr. Hastings found her on his return, and sitting down by her side, he said gently, "Are you, then, so glad that I have come home?"

Dora would not, for the world, let him know her real feelings, and she answered, "Yes, I am glad, but I am crying at what Uncle Nat said to me."

Mr. Hastings bit his lip, for this was not exactly the kind of meeting he had anticipated, and after sitting an awkward moment, during which he was wishing that she had not answered him as she did, he said: "Will you not look up, Dora, and tell me how you have passed the time of my absence? I am sure you have improved it both from your own appearance and what Louise has told me."

This was a subject on which Dora felt that she could trust herself, and drying her tears, she became very animated as she told him of the books she had read, and the studies she had pursued. "I have taken music lessons, too," she added. "Would you like to hear me play?"

Mr. Hastings would far rather have sat there, watching her bright face, with his arm thrown lightly around her waist, but it was this very act, this touch of his arm, which prompted her proposal, and gracefully disengaging herself she crossed over to the piano, which was standing in the room, and commenced singing the old, and on that occasion very appropriate, song of "Home again, home again, from a foreign shore." The tones of her voice were rich and

full, and they reached the ear of Uncle Nat, who in his eagerness to listen, forgot everything, until Mrs. Elliott said, "It is Dora singing to my brother. Shall we join them?"

Leading the way she ushered him into the music room, where, standing at Dora's side, he listened rapturously to her singing, occasionally wiping away a tear, called forth by the memories that song had awakened. The sight of the piano reminded him of Eugenia, and when Dora had finished playing, he laid his broad hand upon her shoulder and said, "Do you ever hear from them--the villains?"

Dora knew to whom he referred, and half laughing at his excited manner, she replied, as she stole a mischievous glance towards Mr. Hastings, "I received a letter from Eugenia not long since, and she seemed very anxious to know in what part of Europe Mr. Hastings was now traveling, and if he were ever coming home!"

"Much good his coming home will do _her_, the _trollop!_" muttered Uncle Nat, whispering incoherently to himself as he generally did, when Eugenia was the subject of his thoughts. "Don't answer the letter," he said at last, "or, if you do, say nothing of me; I wish to meet them first as a stranger."

Near the window Mr. Hastings was standing, revolving in his own mind a double surprise which he knew would mortify Eugenia more than anything else. But in order to effect this, Uncle Nat must remain _incog._ for some time yet, while Dora herself must be won, and this, with the jealous fears of a lover, he fancied might be harder to accomplish than the keeping Uncle Nat silent when in the presence of Eugenia.

"To-morrow I will see her alone, and know the worst," he thought and glancing at Dora, he felt a thrill of fear lest she, in all the freshness of her youth, should refuse her heart to one, who had called another than herself his wife.

But Ella Grey had never awakened a love as deep and absorbing as that which he now felt for Dora Deane, and all that night he lay awake, wondering how he should approach her, and fancying sometimes that he saw the cold surprise with which she would listen to him, and again that he read in her dark blue eyes the answer which he sought. The morrow came, but throughout the entire day, he found no opportunity of speaking to her alone, for Uncle Nat hovered near her side, gazing at her as if he would never tire of looking at her beautiful face. And Dora, too, had much to say to the old man, on this the first day after his return. With his head resting upon her lap, and her soft white hand upon his wrinkled brow, she told him of her mother, and the message she had left for him on the sad night when she died. Then she spoke of her Aunt Sarah, of Eugenia and Alice, and the wrath of Uncle Nat was somewhat abated, when he heard _her_ pleading with him not to be so angry and unforgiving--

"I can treat Alice well, perhaps," he said, "for she, it seems, was never particularly unkind. And for your sake, _I_ may forgive the mother. But Eugenia _never!_--not even if Fannie herself should ask me!"

Thus passed that day, and when the next one came, Uncle Nat still stayed at Dora's side, following her from room to room, and never for a moment leaving Mr. Hastings with her alone. In this manner nearly a week went by, and the latter was beginning to despair, when one evening as the three were together in the little music room, and Mrs. Elliott was with her mother, who was ill, it suddenly occurred to Uncle Nat that he had appropriated Dora entirely to himself, not giving Mr. Hastings a single opportunity for seeing her alone.

"I have wondered that he did not tell me he was engaged," he thought, "but how could he when I haven't given him a chance to speak to her, unless he did it before me; strange, I should be so selfish: but I'll make amends now--though I do hope he'll be quick!"

Rising up, he walked to the door, when thinking that Mr. Hastings might possibly expect him to return every moment, and so keep silent, he said, "I've been in the way of you young folks long enough, and I feel just as if something might happen if I left you together! Call me when you want me?" so saying he shut the door, and Mr. Hastings was alone at last with Dora Deane!

Both knew to what Uncle Nat referred, and while Dora fidgeted from one thing to another, looking at a book of prints wrong side up, and admiring the pictures, Mr. Hastings sat perfectly still, wondering why he was so much afraid of her. Two years before he felt no fear; but a refusal at that time would not have affected him as it would do now, for he did not then know how much he loved her. Greatly he desired that she should speak to him--look at him--or do something to break the embarrassing silence; but this Dora had no intention of doing, and she was just meditating the propriety of _running away_, when he found voice enough to say, "Will you come and sit by me, Dora?"

She had always obeyed him, and she did so now, taking a seat, however, as far from him as possible, on the end of the sofa. Still, when he moved up closely to her side, and wound his arm about her, she did not object, though her face burned with blushes, and she thought it quite likely that her next act would be to cry! And this she did do, when he said to her, "Dora, do you remember the night when Ella died?"

He did not expect any answer yet, and he continued, "She told me, you know, of a time when, though not forgetting her, I should love another--should seek to call another my wife. And, Dora, she was right, for I do love another, better, if it be possible, than I did my lost Ella. 'Tis four years since she left me, and now that

I would have a second wife, will the one whom I have chosen from all the world to be that wife, answer me _yes?_ Will she go back with me in the autumn to my long deserted home, where her presence always brought sunlight and joy?"

There was no coquetry about Dora Deane, and she could not have practised it now, if there had been. She knew Mr. Hastings was in earnest--knew that he meant what he said--and the little hand, which at first had stolen partly under her dress, lest he should touch it, came back from its hiding-place, and crept slowly along until his was reached, and there she let it lay! _This_ was her answer, and he was satisfied!

For a long long time they sat together, while Mr. Hastings talked, not wholly of the future when she would be his wife, but of the New Year's morning, years ago, when he found her sleeping in the chamber of death--of the bright June afternoon, when she sat with her bare feet in the running brook--of the time when she first brought comfort to his home--of the dark, rainy evening, when the sight of her sitting in Ella's room, with Ella's baby on her lap, had cheered his aching heart--of the storm she had braved to tell him his baby was dying--of the winter night when he watched her through the window--of the dusky twilight when she sat at his feet in the little library at Rose Hill--and again in his sister's home on the Hudson, when he first knew how much he loved her. Of all these pictures so indelibly stamped upon his memory, he told her, and of the many, many times his thoughts had been of her when afar on a foreign shore.

And Dora, listening to him, did not care to answer, her heart was so full of happiness, to know that she should be thus loved by one like Howard Hastings. From a tower not far distant, a city clock struck _twelve_, and then, starting up, she exclaimed, "_So late!_ I thought 'twas only ten! We have kept Uncle Nat too long. Will you go with me to him?" and with his arms still around her, Mr. Hastings arose to accompany her.

For half an hour after leaving the music-room Uncle Nat had walked up and down the long parlors, with his hands in his pockets, hoping Mr. Hastings _would_ be brief, and expecting each moment to hear Dora calling him back! In this manner an hour or more went by, and then grown very nervous and cold (for it was a damp, chilly night, such as often occurs in our latitude, even in summer) he began to think that if _Dora_ were not coming, a fire would be acceptable, and he drew his chair near to the register, which was closed. Wholly unaccustomed to furnaces, he did not think to open it, and for a time longer he sat wondering why he didn't grow warm, and if it took everybody as long to propose as it did Mr. Hastings.

It "didn't take me long to tell my love to Fanny," he said, "but then she refused, and when they accept, as Dora will, it's always a longer process, I reckon!"

This point satisfactorily settled, he began to wish the atmosphere of the room would moderate, and hitching in his chair, he at last sat directly over the register! but even this failed to warm him, and mentally concluding that although furnaces might do very well for New Yorkers, they were of no account whatever to an East India man," he fell asleep. In this situation, Dora found him.

"Poor old man," said she, "'twas thoughtless in me to leave him so long," and kissing his brow, she cried, "Wake up, Uncle Nat--wake up!" and Uncle Nat, rubbing his eyes with his red stiff fingers, and looking in her glowing face, thought "that something had happened!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE SPRINGS.

Mr. Hastings and Dora were engaged. Mrs. Hastings, the mother, and Mrs. Elliott, the sister, had signified their entire approbation, while Uncle Nat, with a hand placed on either head of the young people, had blessed them as his children, hinting the while that few brides e'er went forth as richly dowered as should Dora Deane. The marriage was not to take place until the following October, as Mr. Hastings wished to make some improvements at Rose Hill, which was still to be his home proper, though Uncle Nat insisted upon buying a very elegant house in the city for a winter residence, whenever they chose thus to use it. To this proposal Mr. Hastings made no objection, for though he felt that his greatest happiness would be in having Dora all to himself in Dunwood, he knew that society in the city would never have the effect upon her which it did upon Ella, for her tastes, like his own, were domestic, and on almost every subject she felt and thought as he did.

Immediately after his engagement he imparted to Uncle Nat a knowledge of the double surprise he had planned for Eugenia, and the old gentleman at last consented, saying though, that "'twas doubtful whether he could hold himself together when first he met the young lady. Still with Mr. Hastings's presence as a check, he would try."

So it was arranged that in Dunwood, where Mr. Hastings's return was still unknown, Uncle Nat should pass as a Mr. Hamilton, whom Mr. Hastings had picked up in his travels. Four years of his earlier life had been spent in South America, and whenever he spoke of any particular place of abode it was to be of Buenos Ayres, where he had once resided. By this means he could the more easily learn for himself the character and disposition of his relatives, and feeling now more eager than ever to meet them, he

here started with Mr. Hastings for Dunwood. It was morning when they reached there, and with a dark, lowering brow, he looked curiously at the house which his companion designated as _Locust Grove_. It was a pleasant spot, and it seemed almost impossible that it should be the home of a woman as artful and designing as Eugenia. About it now, however, there was an air of desertion. The doors were shut and the blinds closed, as if the inmates were absent.

On reaching Rose Hill, where he found his servants overwhelmed with delight at his unexpected return, Mr. Hastings casually inquired of Mrs. Leah if the Deanes were at home. A shadow passed over the old lady's face, and folding her arms, she leaned against the door and began: "I wonder now, if you're askin' after them the first thing! I don't know but they are well enough, all but Eugenia, I believe I never disliked anybody as I do her, and no wonder, the way she's gone on. At first she used to come up here almost every week on purpose to ask about you, though she pretended to tumble over your books, and mark 'em all up with her pencil. But when that scapegrace _Stephen Grey_ came, she took another _tack_, and the way she and he went on was scandalous. She was a runnin' up here the whole time that he wasn't a streakin' it down there."

"_Stephen Grey been here?_ When and what for?" interrupted Mr. Hastings, who, as his father-in-law, during his absence, had removed to Philadelphia, knew nothing of the family.

"You may well ask that," returned Mrs. Leah, growing very much excited as she remembered the trouble the fast young man had made her. "Last fall in shootin' time, he came here, bag, baggage, gun, dogs and all--said it didn't make a speck of difference, you being away--'twas all in the family, and so you'd a' thought, the way he went on, drinkin', swearin', shootin', and carousin' with a lot of fellers who stayed with him here a spell, and then, when they were gone, he took a flirtin' with Eugenia Deane, who told him, I'll bet, more'n five hundred lies about an old uncle that, she says, is rich as a Jew, and has willed his property to her and Alice."

"The viper!" muttered Uncle Nat to himself; and Mrs. Leah continued, "I shouldn't wonder if old Mr. Grey was gettin' poor, and Steve, I guess, would marry anybody who had money; but Lord knows I don't want him to have her, for though he he ain't an atom too good, I used to live in the family and took care of him when he was little. I should a' written about his carryin's on to Mrs. Elliott, only I knew she didn't think any too much of the Greys, and 'twould only trouble her for nothin'."

"But where are they now--Mrs. Deane and her daughters?" asked Mr. Hastings; and Mrs. Leah replied. "Gone to Avon Springs: and folks do say they've done their own work, and ate cold victuals off the pantry shelf ever since last November, so as to save money, to cut a swell. I guess Eugenia'll be mighty glad if that old uncle ever

dies. For my part, I hope he won't! or, if he does, I hope he won't leave her a dollar."

"_Not a dime!_" thought Uncle Nat, who, not being supposed to feel interested in Eugenia Deane, had tried to appear indifferent, holding hard the while upon the rounds of his chair "to keep himself together."

Alone with Mr. Hastings, his wrath burst forth, but after a few tremendous explosions, he grew calm, and proposed that they too should go at once to Avon. "We shall then see the lady in all her glory," said he, "and maybe hear something about her old uncle, though you'll have to keep your eye on me, or I shall go off on a sudden, and shake her as a dog would a snake! We'll send for Mrs. Elliott and Dora to join us there," he continued; "it will be fun to bring them together, and see what Eugenia will do."

"I am afraid you could not restrain yourself," said Mr. Hastings; but Uncle Nat was sure he could, and after a few days they started for Avon, where "Miss Eugenia Deane, the heiress," was quite a belle.

For a long time after Mr. Hastings's departure for Europe, she had remained true to him, feeding on the remembrance of his parting words, that "he had more reasons for remembering her than she supposed;" but when, as months went by, he sent her neither letter, paper nor message, she began to think that possibly he had never entertained a serious thought concerning her, and when Stephen Grey came, she was the more ready to receive his attentions, and forgive his former neglect. He was a reckless, unprincipled fellow, and feeling this time rather pleased with the bold dashing manner of Eugenia, backed as it was by the supposed will of Uncle Nat, he made some advances, which she readily met, making herself and him, as Mrs. Leah had said, "perfectly ridiculous." When he left Dunwood he went west, telling her playfully, that, "if he found no one there who suited him better than she, he would the next summer meet her at Avon, and perhaps propose! He was disgusted with Saratoga, Newport, Nahant, and all those stupid places," he said, "and wished to try something new."

To spend several weeks at Avon, therefore, was now Eugenia's object. She had succeeded in coaxing her mother to withhold from Dora the thousand dollars, a part of which was safely invested for their own benefit, but this alone would not cover all their expenses, for Mrs. Deane, growing gay and foolish as she grew older, declared her intention of going to Avon also. "The water would do her good," she said, "and 'twas time she saw a little of society."

To this plan Eugenia did not particularly object, for it would indicate wealth, she thought, for the whole family to spend the summer at a watering place. Still it would cost a great deal, and though Uncle Nat's remittance came at the usual time, they did not

dare to depend wholly upon that, lest on their return there should be nothing left with which to buy their bread. In this emergency, they hit upon the expedient of dismissing their servant, and starving themselves through the winter and spring, for the purpose of making a display in the summer; and this last they were now doing. Eugenia fluttered like a butterfly, sometimes in white satin, sometimes in pink, and again in embroidered muslin; while her mother, a very little disgusted with *_society_*, but still determined to brave it through, held aside her cambric wrapper and made faces over *_three glasses_* of spring water in the morning, drowned herself in a hot bath every other day, rode twice a day in crowded omnibuses to and from the springs, through banks of sand and clouds of dust, and sat every evening in the heated parlors with a very red face, and a very tight dress, wondering if everybody enjoyed themselves as little in society as she did, and thinking ten dollars per week a great deal to pay for being as uncomfortable as she was!

For her disquietude, however, she felt in a measure repaid when she saw that Eugenia was the most showy young lady present, and managed to keep about her a cross-eyed widower, a near-sighted-bachelor, a medical student of nineteen, a broken-down merchant, a lame officer, a spiritualist, and Stephen Grey! This completed the list of her admirers, if we except a gouty old man, who praised her dancing, and would perhaps have called her beautiful, but for his better half, who could see nothing agreeable or pleasing in the dashing belle. True to his promise, Stephen Grey had met her there, and they were in the midst of quite a flirtation, when Mr. Hastings and Uncle Nat arrived; the latter registering his name as *_Mr. Hamilton_*; and taking care soon after to speak of *_Buenos Ayres_*, as a place where he formerly lived. The ruse was successful, and in less than half an hour, it was known through the house, that "the singular looking old gentleman was a South American, a bachelor, and rich undoubtedly, as such men always were!"

The Deanes were that afternoon riding with Stephen Grey, and did not return until after supper, a circumstance which Eugenia greatly lamented when she learned that their numbers had been increased by the arrival of an elegant looking stranger from New York, together with an old South American, whose name was Hamilton. The name of the other Eugenia's informant did not know, for he had not registered it, but "he was a splendid looking man," she said, and with more than usual care, Eugenia dressed herself for the evening, and between the hours of eight and nine, sailed into the parlor with the air of a queen.

From his window in an upper chamber Uncle Nat had seen the ladies, as they returned from their ride; and when Mr. Hastings, who at that time was absent from the room, came back to it, he found the old gentleman hurriedly pacing the floor and evidently much excited.

"I've seen her," said he, "the very one herself-- Eugenia Deane! I knew her mother in a moment, and I knew her too, by her evil eyes. I could hardly refrain from pouncing upon her, and I believe I did shake my fist at her! But it's over now," he continued, "and I am glad I have seen her, for I can meet her and not betray myself; though, Hastings, if at any time I am missing, you may know that I've come up here to let myself off, for my wrath must evaporate somehow."

Feeling confident that he could trust him, Mr. Hastings ere long accompanied him to the parlor, where his gentlemanly manners, and rather peculiar looks procured for him immediate attention; and when Eugenia entered the room, he was conversing familiarly with some gentlemen whose notice she had in vain tried to attract. At a little distance from him and nearer the door was Mr. Hastings, talking to Stephen Grey. Eugenia did not observe him until she was directly at his side, then, turning pale, she altered an exclamation of surprise, while he, in his usual polite, easy manner, offered his hand, first to her mother, and then to herself and Alice, saying, in reply to their many inquiries as to when he returned, that he reached Dunwood a few days before, and finding they were all at Avon, had concluded to follow. At this remark the pallor left Eugenia's cheek, and was succeeded by a bright glow, for "Mr. Hastings must feel interested in her, or he would not have followed her there;" and the black eyes, which a few hours before had smiled so bewitchingly upon Stephen Grey, now shone with a brighter lustre, as she talked with Mr. Hastings of his European tour, asking him why he had stayed so long, and telling him how natural it seemed to have him home once more.

"By the way," she continued, "they say there is an old South American here--a queer old fellow--did he come with you?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Hastings, glancing towards Uncle Nat, whose eyes had never for a moment lost sight of Eugenia; "I found him in my travels, and liking him very much, brought him home with me. Allow me to introduce you, for though rather eccentric, he's a fine man, and quite wealthy, too."

"Wealth is nothing! I wouldn't think any more of him for that," returned Eugenia, taking Mr. Hastings's arm, and advancing toward Uncle Nat, whose left hand grasped tightly one side of his blue coat, while the other was offered to Eugenia.

With a slight shudder, he dropped her hand as soon as it was touched; then, pressing his fingers together so firmly, that his long nails left marks in his flesh, he looked curiously down upon her, eyeing her furtively as if she had been a wild beast. Nothing of all this escaped Eugenia, who, feeling greatly amused at what she thought to be his embarrassment, and fancying he had never before conversed with so fine a lady as herself, she commenced quizzing him in a manner excessively provoking to one of his excitable temperaments. Lifting up first one foot, and then the

other, he felt his patience fast giving way, and at last, as her ridicule became more and more marked, he could endure it no longer, but returned it with a kind of sarcasm far more scathing than anything she could say. Deeply chagrined, and feeling that she had been beaten with her own weapons, she was about to leave the "old bear" as she mentally styled him, when remembering that he was Mr. Hastings's friend, and, as such worthy of more respect than she had paid him, she said playfully, "I have a mother and sister here, whom you may like better than you do me. I'll introduce them," and tripping across the room, she made known her wishes to her mother, adding that "there was a chance for her, as he was an old bachelor."

Long and searchingly the old man looked in the face of the widow, thinking of the time when she had called Fannie her sister; but of this Mrs. Deane did not know; and remembering what Eugenia had said, she blushed crimson, and as soon as possible, stole away, leaving him alone with Alice, with whom he was better pleased, talking with her so long that Eugenia, who was hovering near Mr. Hastings, began to laugh at what she called her sister's conquest. Nothing had escaped Mr. Hastings, and thinking this a good opportunity for rebuking the young lady, he spoke of Mr. Hamilton in the highest terms, saying that, "he should consider any disrespect paid to his friend a slight to himself." This hint was sufficient, and wishing to make amends for her rudeness, Eugenia ere long sought the stranger, and tried to be very agreeable; but there was no affinity between them, and to Mr. Hastings, who was watching them, they seemed much like a fierce mastiff, and a spiteful cat, impatient to pounce upon each other!

During the evening the three were standing together, and Eugenia suddenly remembering Dora, asked Mr. Hastings how she was, saying she seldom wrote to them, and when she did, her letters amounted to nothing. With a warning glance at Uncle Nat, whose face grew very dark, Mr. Hastings replied that she was well, and had, he thought, improved under his sister's care.

"I am glad," said she, "for there was need enough of improvement. She was so unrefined, always preferring the kitchen to the parlor, that we couldn't make anything of her."

A sudden "Ugh!" from Uncle Nat stopped her, and she asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing, nothing," said he, wiping his face, "only I am getting pretty warm, and must cool off."

The next moment he was gone, and when, at a late hour, Mr. Hastings repaired to his room, he knew by the chairs, boots, brushes, and books scattered over the floor, that Uncle Nat, snoring so loudly in bed, had cooled off!

"I had to hold on, to keep from falling to pieces right before her," he said, next morning, in speaking of the last night's adventure; "but I shall do better next time. I am getting a little accustomed to it."

And he was right, for only twice during the entire day and evening did he disappear from the room. Once when Eugenia sat down to play, and once when he heard her telling Stephen Grey, who asked her to ride again, that, "he really must excuse her, as she had a letter to write to _Uncle Nat_, who undoubtedly wondered why she was so tardy. And you know," she said, "it won't do to neglect him!"

Uncle Nat knew it was a farce to get rid of Stephen Grey, who was nothing compared with his brother-in-law, but his indignation was not the less; and Mr. Hastings, when he saw the long blue coat flying up the stairs, smiled quietly, though he pitied the poor old man, who was thus kept vibrating between his chamber and the parlor.

In this manner several days passed away, during which time Uncle Nat's temper was severely tested, both by Eugenia's remarks concerning Dora, and by what she said of himself, for he more than once heard her speaking of _"Old Uncle Nat,"_ who sent her money to buy the various articles of jewelry which she wore. On such occasions it seemed almost impossible for him to restrain his anger, and he often wished he had never promised to keep silent; but by frequent visits to his chamber, which witnessed many a terrific storm, he managed to be quiet, so that Eugenia had no suspicion whatever, though she disliked him greatly, and wished he had never come there. Mr. Hastings troubled her, too, for she felt very uncertain as to the nature of his feelings towards her. He treated her politely, but that was all, and no management on her part could draw from him any particular attention.

"Maybe he's jealous of Stephen Grey," she thought, and then she became so cold towards the latter individual, that had he not remembered _Uncle Nat's will_, in which he firmly believed, he would have packed his trunk at once, and left her in disgust.

But Stephen's necessities were great. There was standing against him a long list of bills, which his father refused to pay, and he was ready to marry the first purse which was offered. Had Eugenia been altogether agreeable to him, he would have proposed ere this, but without knowing why, he felt afraid of her. Added to this was the memory of his mother's threat, that his father should disinherit him if he disgraced them by marrying _that Deane girl_, in whose expected fortune she did not believe. So halting between two opinions, he allowed himself to be taken up and cast off whenever the capricious Eugenia chose.

In the meantime, Uncle Nat had cultivated the acquaintance of Mrs. Deane and Alice, finding the latter quite a pleasant girl, and

feeling disposed to think more favorably of the former when he heard her speak kindly of Dora, as she always did. Matters were in this state, when, one afternoon, in compliance with her brother's written request, Mrs. Elliott arrived, together with Dora. Most of the visitors were at the springs, and as Eugenia never let an opportunity pass for showing herself to the guests of the different houses, she too was there, and thus failed to see how tenderly Dora was greeted by Mr. Hastings, and how fondly Uncle Nat clasped her in his arms, holding her hand all the way up the stairs, and only releasing her when she reached the door of the room, which had been previously engaged for them by Mr. Hastings. Feeling slightly indisposed, Mrs. Elliott did not go down to supper, and as Dora chose to remain with her, neither of them were seen until evening. Eugenia had heard of the arrival of two aristocratic looking ladies, one of whom was young and very beautiful, and this aroused her fears at once. Hitherto she had reigned without a rival, for aside from her beauty, the generally believed rumor of her being an heiress, procured for her attention for many who otherwise would have been disgusted with her overbearing manner and boisterous conduct; for, like many others, she had fallen into the error of thinking that to be fashionable, she must be bold and noisy, and no voice in the drawing-room ever reached so high a note as hers. Still she was tolerated and flattered, and when the friend, who told her of the new arrivals, and who had caught a view of Dora's face, laughingly bade her beware lest her star should begin to wane, she curled her lip in scorn, as if anything in Avon could compete with her, who "had spent so many seasons at Saratoga and Newport, and who would have gone there this summer, only she wanted a change, and then it was more quiet for Ma!"

This was one of her stereotyped remarks until Mr. Hastings came, but he knew her, and in his presence she was less assuming. She had heard that the new arrivals were his friends, and thinking they must of course be somebody, she arrayed herself for the evening with unusual care, wearing her white satin and lace bertha, the most becoming and at the same time the most expensive dress she had.

"I wish I had some pearls," she said, glancing at her raven hair; "they would look so much richer than these flowers."

"I should think an heiress like you would have everything she wanted," suggested Alice, mischievously, and Eugenia replied, "Oh, pshaw! We shall never get more than five hundred a year from Uncle Nat, but I don't much care. Old Mr. Grey is wealthy, and if Mr. Hastings don't manifest any more interest in me than he has since he came here, I shall let that foolish Steve propose, much as I dislike him."

So saying, she clasped upon her arm a heavy bracelet, for which the sum of forty dollars had been paid, and descended with her mother and sister to the parlor. Mrs. Elliott and Dora were there

before her--the former leaning on Mr. Hastings's arm, while the latter was already surrounded by a group of admirers, a few of whom had met her before. She was standing with her back towards Eugenia, who singled her out in a moment, as her rival, noticing first her magnificent hair, in which an ornament of any kind would have been out of place, and which was confined at the back of the head by a small and elegantly wrought gold comb. Her dress was perfectly plain, consisting simply of white India muslin, which fitted her admirably and seemed well adapted to her youthful form.

"Who is she?" inquired Eugenia of Uncle Nat, who had stationed himself near the door, on purpose to see how the first sight of Dora would affect her.

"Who is she!" he replied. "Strange you don't know your own cousin _Dora Deane_," and a look of intense satisfaction danced in his keen eyes, as he saw the expression of astonishment which passed over Eugenia's face.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed, while a pang of envy shot through her heart. "That stylish looking girl can't be Dora! Why, I always supposed Mrs. Elliott made a half servant, half companion of her. She never told us any different;" and with a vague hope that the old South American might be mistaken, she took a step or two forward just as Dora turned round, disclosing to view her face.

There was no longer any doubt, and with mingled feelings of surprise, mortification, jealousy, and rage, Eugenia advanced to meet her, wisely resolving as she did so to make the best of it, and never let her cousin know how much annoyed she was. Both Mrs. Deane and Alice were greeted kindly by Dora, who could scarcely be more than polite to Eugenia, and when the latter made a movement to kiss her, she involuntarily drew back, feeling that she could not suffer it.

"Grown suddenly very proud," muttered Eugenia, at the same time determining that her mother should insist upon taking Dora home with them, and secretly exulting as she thought how she should again work in the dark kitchen at Locust Grove, as she had done before. "That'll remove some of her fine airs, I reckon," she thought, as, with bitter hatred at her heart, she watched her young cousin, who, throughout the entire evening, continued to be the center of attraction.

Everybody asked who she was; everybody pronounced her beautiful, and everybody neglected Eugenia Deane, who, greatly enraged, retired early, and vented her wrath in tears, to think that the once despised Dora should now be so far above her.

"But it shall not be," she said, and then to her mother she unfolded her plan of having Dora go home with them immediately. "I'd as soon be in Joppa as to stay here with her for a rival," she said. "Mr. Hastings don't care for me, I know, and I hate that

old codger of a Hamilton, with his sarcastic remarks and prying eyes. I've been here long enough, and I mean to go home."

To this proposition Mrs. Deane assented willingly; but she expressed her doubts concerning her ability to make Dora accompany them.

"Of course she'll go," said Eugenia. "Her mother placed her under your control, and she is bound to obey."

Yielding at last, as she generally did, Mrs. Deane promised to see what she could do, and the next day she announced to Mrs. Elliott her intention of taking Dora home with her. "I am grateful for all you have done for her," said she; "but we need her, and cannot spare her any longer, so, Dora dear," turning to her niece, "pack up your things, and we will start to-morrow morning."

Had Uncle Nat been there, he would, undoubtedly, have exploded at once; but he was not present, neither was Mr. Hastings, and it remained for Mrs. Elliott alone to reply, which she did firmly and decidedly. "No, Mrs. Deane, Dora cannot go. She was committed to your care, I know, but you gave her up to me, and I shall not part with her unless I am legally compelled to do so, or she wishes to go. She can answer this last for herself," and she turned towards Dora, who, drawing nearer to her, replied, "I am sorry to disobey you, Aunt Sarah, but I cannot leave Mrs. Elliott."

Mrs. Deane was not very courageous, and unwilling to press her claim, she turned away and reported her ill-success to Eugenia, who heaped a torrent of abuse upon both Mrs. Elliott, Dora, the old South American, and Mr. Hastings, who, she declared, were all leagued against them.

"But I don't care," said she, "old Mr. Grey is quite as wealthy as Mr. Hastings, and by saying the word, I can marry Steve at any time; and I will do it, too," she continued, "and that proud Mrs. Elliott shall yet be obliged to meet me on terms of equality, for she will not dare to neglect the Greys!"

Somewhat comforted by this thought, she dried her tears, and signified her willingness to start for home on the morrow, even if Dora did not accompany her. As yet, she had no suspicion whatever of the engagement existing between Mr. Hastings and her cousin. There was nothing in the manner of either to betray it, and when, next morning, attired in her traveling dress, she stood with them upon the piazza, she little thought how and where she would next meet them. At her side was Stephen Grey. He had been won over by her gracious smiles the night previous, and was now going with her as far as Rochester, where, if a favorable opportunity were presented, he intended offering himself for her acceptance. Uncle Nat was not present, and Eugenia was glad that it was so, for there was something about him exceedingly annoying to her, and she always felt relieved at his absence.

"Why do you go so soon? I thought you were intending to spend the summer," said one of her old admirers; and with a scornful toss of her head, she replied, "It is getting so insufferably dull here, that I can't endure it any longer."

Just then the omnibus was announced, and with a hurried good-by, she followed her baggage down the stairs, and amid a cloud of dust was driven rapidly away, while Uncle Nat, from his chamber window, sent after her a not very complimentary or affectionate adieu. Arrived at the hotel in Rochester, where Eugenia had once waited in vain for Mr. Hastings, Stephen Grey managed to hear from her again, that she had well founded hopes of being one of the heirs of Nathaniel Deane, who, she said, sent them annually a sum of money varying from five to fifteen hundred dollars. This was quite a consideration for one whose finances were low, and whose father, while threatening to disinherit him, was himself on the verge of bankruptcy, and thinking the annual remittance worth securing, even if the will should fail, Stephen found an opportunity to go down on his knees before her after the most approved fashion, telling her that "she alone could make him happy, and that without her he should be wretched;" and she, knowing just how much in earnest he was, promised to be his wife, intending the while to break that promise if she saw in Mr. Hastings any signs of renewed interest. So when Stephen pressed her to name an early day, she put him off, telling him she could not think of being married until near the middle of autumn, and at the same time requesting him to keep their engagement a secret, for she did not wish it to be a subject of remark, as engaged people always were. To this, Stephen consented willingly, as he would thus escape, for a time, his mother's anger. And so when, tired, jaded, cross and dusty, Eugenia Deane reached Locust Grove, she had the satisfaction of knowing that her trip to the Springs had been successful, inasmuch as it procured for her "a husband such as he was."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DOUBLE SURPRISE.

The Deanes had been home about two weeks when Mr. Hastings returned to Rose Hill, accompanied by the "Old South American," who seemed to have taken up his abode there. Being naturally rather reserved, the latter visited but little in the village, while at Locust Grove he never called, and seldom saw Eugenia when he met her in the street.

Mr. Hastings, too, was unusually cool in his manner towards her, and this she imputed wholly to the fact of her having been rude to his friend on the night of her introduction. "He was never so

before," she thought, and she redoubled her efforts to be agreeable, to no effect, as he was simply polite to her and nothing more. So after a series of tears and headaches, she gave him up, comforting herself with the belief that he would never marry anybody. After this, she smiled more graciously upon Stephen Grey, who, pretending to be a lawyer, had, greatly to her annoyance, hung out his sign in Dunwood, where his office proper seemed to be in the bar-room, or drinking-saloon, as in one of these he was always to be found, when not at Locust Grove.

One evening, towards the last of September, when he came as usual to see her, he startled her with the news, that there was ere long to be a new bride at Rose Hill! Starting involuntarily, Eugenia exclaimed, "A new bride! It can't be possible! Who is it?"

It was months since Stephen had been in New York, and he knew nothing, except that the lady was from the city, and he mentioned a Miss Morton, with whom he had several times seen Mr. Hastings walking, and who was very intimate with Mrs. Elliott. At first Eugenia refused to believe it, but when she had remembered how extensively Mr. Hastings was repairing his place, and heard that the house was being entirely refurnished, and fitted up in a princely style, she wept again over her ruined hopes, and experienced many a sharp pang of envy, when from time to time she saw go by loads of elegant furniture, and knew that it was not for herself, but another. The old South American, too, it was said, was very lavish of his money, purchasing many costly ornaments, and furnishing entirely the chamber of the bride. For this the fair Eugenia styled him "a silly old fool," wondering "what business it was to him," and "why he need be so much interested in one who, if she had any sense, would, in less than two weeks, turn him from the house, with his heathenish ways." Still, fret as she would, she could not in the least retard the progress of matters, and one morning towards the last of October, she heard from Mrs. Leah, whom she met at a store in the village, that the wedding was to take place at the house of the bride on Tuesday of the next week, and that on Thursday evening following, there was to be a grand party at Rose Hill, far exceeding in splendor and elegance the one given there some years before.

"Crowds of folks," she said, "are coming from the city with the bridal pair, who would start on Wednesday, stay in Syracuse all night, and reach Dunwood about three o'clock on Thursday afternoon. The invitations for the village people," she added, "were already written and were left with her to distribute on Wednesday morning."

Eugenia would have given much to know if she were invited, but she was too proud to ask, and assuming an air of indifference she casually inquired the name of the bride.

With the manner of one in a deep study, Mrs. Leah replied, "Let me see! It's a very common name. Strange I don't speak it!"

"_Morton?_" suggested Eugenia, but Mrs. Leah affected not to hear her, and, having completed her purchases, she left the store and walked slowly homeward, dropping more than one tear on the brown paper parcel she held in her hand.

Crying, however, was of no avail, and mentally chiding herself for her weakness, she resolved to brave it through, comforting herself again with the thought that _the Greys_ were as aristocratic as the _Hastings_, and as Stephen's wife she should yet shine in the best society, for in case she married him she was resolved that he should take her at once to Philadelphia, where she would compel his proud mother to notice her. This helped to divert her mind, and in the course of the day she was talking gaily of the party, and wondering if she should be as intimate with the second Mrs. Hastings as she had been with the first!

That night, Alice went down to the post-office, from which she soon returned, evidently much excited; and rushing into the room where her mother and sister were sitting, she said, as she threw a letter into the lap of the latter, "It's from _Uncle Nat_, and postmarked _New York_."

Turning whiter than ever she was before, Eugenia could scarcely command herself to break the seal, and read the few brief lines which told her that Uncle Nat had, at last, concluded to come home, that a matter of some importance would keep him from Locust Grove for a few days; but if nothing occurred, he would be with them on Saturday evening of next week! In the postscript, he added, that "he should expect to find Dora with them, and he hoped her going away to school had been a benefit to her."

So great was their consternation that for some minutes neither of them uttered a word, but each waited for the other to suggest some way of acting in the present emergency. As Eugenia's mind was the most active of the three she was the first to speak. After venting her indignation upon Uncle Nat, for intruding himself where he was not wanted, she continued: "We are in a sad dilemma, but we must make the best of it, and inasmuch as he is coming, I am glad that Dora is what she is. We can tell him how rapidly she has improved, and how rejoiced we are that it is so. I am glad I have said nothing about her for the last two years, except that she was away at school. I'll write to her to-night, and tell her to meet him here, and come immediately. You know, she is good-natured, and on my bended knees I'll confess what I have done, and beg of her not to betray me to him, or let him know that we did not pay for her education, and if she refuses, you, mother, must go down on your knees, too, and we'll get up between us such a scene that she will consent, I know--if not, why, we must abide the consequence"--and with the look of one about to be martyred, Eugenia sat down and wrote to Dora, beseeching her to "come without delay, as there was something they must tell her before meeting Uncle Nat!"

This was Friday night, and very impatiently she awaited an answer, which, though written on Monday, did not come until the Wednesday following.

"What does she say?" cried Mrs. Deane and Alice, crowding around her, while with a rueful face she read that Dora would be delighted to meet Uncle Nat at Locust Grove, but could not come quite so soon as they wished to have her.

"You have undoubtedly heard," she wrote, "of Mr. Hastings's approaching marriage, at which I wish to be present. Mrs. Elliott will accompany the bridal party to Rose Hill on Thursday, and she thinks I had better wait and come with her. I shall probably see you at the party.

"Yours in haste, "DORA DEANE."

On Eugenia's mind there was not a shadow of suspicion that _Dora Deane_, appended to that letter, had ere this ceased to be her cousin's name--that Mr. Hastings, who, together with Uncle Nat, had the Saturday previous gone down to New York, had bent fondly over her as she wrote it for the last time, playfully suggesting that she add to it an H, by way of making a commencement, nor yet that Uncle Nat, with an immense degree of satisfaction in his face, had read the short note, saying as he did so, "We'll cheat 'em, darling, won't we?"

Neither did she dream that last night's moon shone down on Dora Deane, a beautiful, blushing bride, who, with orange blossoms in her shining hair, and the deep love-light in her eye, stood by Mr. Hastings's side and called him her husband. Nothing of all this she knew, and hastily reading the letter, she exclaimed, "Plague on her! a vast deal of difference _her_ being at the wedding would make. But no matter, the old codger will not be here until Saturday night, and there'll be time enough to coax her."

Just then the cards of invitation were left at the door, and in the delightful certainty of knowing that she was really invited, she forgot in a measure everything else. In the evening she was annoyed as usual with a call from Stephen Grey. He had that day received news from home that his father's failure could not long be deferred, and judging Eugenia by himself, he fancied she would sooner marry him now, than after he was the son of a bankrupt. Accordingly he urged her to consent to a private marriage at her mother's on Friday evening, the night following the party.

"There was nothing to be gained by waiting," he said--an opinion in which Eugenia herself concurred, for she feared lest in some way her treachery should be betrayed, and she should lose Stephen Grey, as well as Mr. Hastings.

Still she could hardly bring herself to consent until she had seen Dora, and she replied that she would think of it, and answer him

at the party. Thursday morning came, and passed, and about half-past two, Eugenia saw Mr. Hastings's carriage pass on its way to the depot, together with two more, which had been hired to convey the guests to Rose Hill. Seating herself by her chamber window, she waited impatiently for the cars, which came at last, and in a few moments the roll of wheels announced the approach of the bridal party. Very eagerly Eugenia, Alice, and their mother gazed out through the half closed shutters upon the carriage in front, which they knew was Mr. Hastings's.

"There's Mrs. Elliott looking this way. Don't let her see us," whispered Alice, while her mother singled out old Mrs. Hastings for Dora, wondering why she didn't turn that way.

But Eugenia had no eye for any one, save the figure seated next to Mr. Hastings, and so closely veiled as entirely to hide her features.

"I wouldn't keep that old brown thing on my face, unless it was so homely I was afraid of having it seen," she said; and hoping the bride of Howard Hastings might prove to be exceedingly ugly, she repaired to Dora's room, and from the same window where Dora once had watched the many lights which shone from Rose Hill, she now watched the travelers until they disappeared within the house. Then, rejoining her mother and sister she said, "I don't see why Dora can't come over here a little while before the party. There's plenty of time and I do want to have it off my mind. Besides that, I might coax her to assist me in dressing, for she has good taste, if nothing more; I mean to write her a few lines asking her to come."

The note was accordingly written, and despatched by the Irish girl, who soon returned, bearing another tiny note, which read as follows:

"I cannot possibly come, as I have promised to be present at the dressing of the bride. "DORA."

Forgetting her recent remark, Eugenia muttered something about, "folks thinking a great deal of her taste," then turning to the servant girl, she asked "how Dora looked, and what she said?"

"Sure, I didn't see her," returned the girl; "Mistress Leah carried your letter to her, and brought hers to me. Not a ha'p'orth of anybody else did I see." And this was all the information which Eugenia could elicit concerning the people of Rose Hill.

The time for making their toilet came at last, and while Eugenia was missing the little _cropped head_ girl, who, on a similar occasion, had obeyed so meekly her commands, a fair young bride was thinking also of that night, when she had lain upon her mother's old green trunk, and wept herself to sleep. Wishing to be

fashionable, Eugenia and her party were the last to arrive. They found the parlors crowded, and the dressing-room vacant, so that neither of them received the slightest intimation of the surprise which awaited them. In removing her veil, Eugenia displaced one of the flowers in her hair, and muttering about Alice's awkwardness, she wished she could see Dora just a minute, and have her arrange the flowers!

But Dora was busy elsewhere, and pronouncing herself ready, Eugenia, took the arm of Stephen Grey, and followed her mother and sister downstairs. At a little distance from the door was Mr. Hastings, and at his side was Dora, wondrously beautiful in her costly bridal robes. She had gracefully received the congratulations of her Dunwood friends, who, while expressing their surprise, had also expressed their delight at finding in the new mistress of Ross Hill, the girl who had ever been a favorite in the village. Near her was Uncle Nat, his face wearing an expression of perfect happiness, and his eye almost constantly upon the door, through which Eugenia must pass. There was a rustle of silk upon the stairs, and drawing nearer to Dora, he awaited the result with breathless interest.

Mrs. Deane came first, but scarcely had she crossed the threshold, ere she started back, petrified with astonishment, and clutching Alice's dress, whispered softly, "am I deceived, or _is it Dora?_"

And Alice, with wild staring eyes, could only answer "_Dora_;" while Eugenia, wondering at their conduct, strove to push them aside. Failing in this, she raised herself on tiptoe, and looking over their heads, saw what for an instant chilled her blood, and stopped the pulsations of her heart. It was the _bride_, and fiercely grasping the arm of Stephen Grey to keep herself from falling, she said, in a hoarse, unnatural voice, "_Great Heaven--it is Dora!_ DORA DEANE!"

Fruitful as she had hitherto been in expedients, she was now utterly powerless to act, and knowing that in her present state of excitement, she could not meet her cousin, she turned back and fleeing up the stairs, threw herself upon a chair in the dressing-room, where, with her hands clasped firmly together, she sat rigid as marble until the storm of passion had somewhat abated.

"And _she_ has won him--_Dora Deane_, whom I have so ill treated," she said at last, starting at the sound of her voice, it was so hollow and strange. Then, as she remembered the coming of Uncle Nat and the exposure she so much dreaded, she buried her face in her hands, and in the bitterness of her humiliation cried out, "It is more than I can bear!"

Growing ere long more calm, she thought the matter over carefully, and decided at last to brave it through--to greet the bride as if nothing had occurred, and never to let Mr. Hastings know how sharp

a wound he had inflicted. "It is useless now," she thought, "to throw myself upon the mercy of Dora. She would not, of course, withhold my secret from her husband, and I cannot be despised by him. I have loved him too well for that. And perhaps he'll never know it," she continued, beginning to look upon the brighter side. "Uncle Nat may not prove very inquisitive--may not stay with us long; or if he does, as the wife of Stephen Grey, I can bear his displeasure better," and determining that ere another twenty-four hours were gone, she would cease to be Eugenia Deane, she arose and stood before the mirror, preparatory to going down.

The sight of her white haggard face startled her, and for a moment she felt that she could not mingle with the gay throng below, who would wonder at her appearance. But the ordeal must be passed, and summoning all her courage, she descended to the parlor, just as her mother and Alice, alarmed at her very long absence, were coming in quest of her. Crossing the room mechanically she offered her hand to Dora, saying, while a sickly smile played around her bloodless lips, "You have really taken us by surprise, but I congratulate you; and you too," bowing rather stiffly to Mr. Hastings, who returned her greeting so pleasantly, that she began to feel more at ease, and after a little, was chatting familiarly with Dora, telling her she must be sure and meet, "Uncle Nat," on Saturday evening, and adding in a low tone, "If I've ever treated you badly, I hope you won't tell him." "I shall tell him nothing," answered Dora, and comforted with this answer, Eugenia moved away.

"You are looking very pale and bad to-night. What is the matter?" said Uncle Nat, when once he was standing near her.

"Nothing but a bad headache," she replied, while her black eyes flashed angrily upon him, for she fancied he saw the painful throbbings of her heart, and wished to taunt her with it.

Supper being over, Stephen Grey led her into a little side room, where he claimed the answer to his question. It was in the affirmative, and soon after, complaining of the intense pain in her head, she begged to go home. Alone in her room, with no one present but her mother and Alice, her pent-up feelings gave away, and throwing herself upon the floor she wished that she had died ere she had come to this humiliation.

"That Dora, a beggar as it were, should be preferred to me is nothing," she cried, "compared to the way which the whole thing was planned. That old wretch of a Hamilton had something to do with it, I know. How I hate him, with his sneering face!"

Becoming at length a little more composed, she told her mother of her expected marriage with Stephen Grey.

"But why so much haste?" asked Mrs. Deane, who a little proud of the alliance, would rather have given a large wedding.

Sitting upright upon the floor, with her long loose hair falling around her white face, Eugenia answered bitterly, "Stephen Grey has no more love for me than I have for him. He believes that we are rich, or we will be when Uncle Nat is dead. For _money_ he marries me, for money I marry him. I know old Grey is wealthy, and as the wife of his son, I will yet ride over Dora's head. But I must be quick, or I lose him, for if after Uncle Nat's arrival our real situation should chance to be disclosed, Steve would not hesitate to leave me.

'So to-morrow or never
a bride I shall be,"

she sang with a gaiety of manner wholly at variance with the worn, suffering expression of her countenance. Eugenia was terribly expiating her sins, and when the next night, in the presence of a few friends, she stood by Stephen Grey, and was made his wife, she felt that her own hands had poured the last drop in the brimming bucket, for, as she had paid, there was not in her heart a particle of esteem or love for him who was now her husband.

"It's my destiny," she thought; "I'll make the best of it," and her unnatural laugh rang out loud and clear, as she tried to appear gay and happy.

Striking contrast between the gentle bride at Rose Hill, who felt that in all the world, there was not a happier being than herself--and the one at Locust Grove, who with bloodshot eyes and livid lips gazed out upon the starry sky, almost cursing the day that she was born, and the fate which had made her what she was. Ever and anon, too, there came stealing on her ear the fearful word _retribution_, and the wretched girl shuddered as she thought for how much she had to atone.

Marveling much at the strange mood of his bride, Stephen Grey, on the morning succeeding his marriage, left her and went down to the village, where he found a letter from his father, telling him the crisis had come, leaving him more than one hundred thousand dollars in debt! Stephen was not surprised--he had expected it, and it affected him less painfully when he considered that his wife would inherit a portion of Uncle Nathaniel's wealth.

"I won't tell her yet," he thought, as he walked back to Locust Grove, where, with an undefined presentiment of approaching evil, Eugenia moved listlessly from room to room, counting the hours which dragged heavily, and half wishing that Uncle Nat would hasten his coming, and have it over!

* * * * *

The sun went down, and as darkness settled o'er the earth, a heavy load seemed pressing upon Eugenia's spirits. It wanted now but a

few minutes of the time when the train was due, and trembling, she scarcely knew why, she sat alone in her chamber, wondering how she should meet her uncle, or what excuse she should render, if her perfidy were revealed. The door bell rang, and in the hall below she heard the voices of Mr. Hastings and Dora.

"I must go down, now," she said, and forcing a smile to her face, she descended to the parlor, as the shrill whistle of the engine sounded in the distance.

She had just time to greet her visitors and enjoy their surprise at the announcement of her marriage, when her ear caught the sound of heavy, tramping footsteps, coming up the walk, and a violent ringing of the bell announced another arrival.

"You go to the door, Stephen," she whispered, while an icy coldness crept over her.

He obeyed, and bending forward in a listening attitude she heard him say, "Good evening, Mr. Hamilton."

Just then, a telegraphic look between Mr. Hastings and Dora caught her eye, and springing to her feet, she exclaimed, "_Mr. Hamilton!_" while a suspicion of the truth flashed like lightning upon her. The next moment he stood before them, Uncle Nat, his glittering black eyes fixed upon Eugenia, who quailed beneath that withering glance.

"_I promised you I would come to-night_" he said, "_and I am here, Nathaniel Deane! Are you glad to see me?_" and his eyes never moved from Eugenia, who sat like one petrified, as did her mother and sister. "Have you no word of welcome??" he continued. "Your letters were wont to be kind and affectionate. I have brought them with me, as a passport to your friendship. Shall I show them to you?"

His manner was perfectly cool and collected, but Eugenia felt the sting each word implied, and, starting up, she glared defiantly at him, exclaiming, "Insolent wretch! What mean you by this? And what business had you thus to deceive us?"

"The fair Eugenia does not believe in _deceit_, it seems. Pity her theory and practise do not better accord," he answered, while a scornful smile curled his lips.

"What proof have you, sir, for what you say?" demanded Eugenia; and with the same cold, scornful smile, he replied, "Far better proof than you imagine, fair lady. Would you like to hear it?"

Not suspecting how much he knew, and goaded to madness by his calm, quiet manner, Eugenia replied, "I defy you, old man, to prove aught against me."

"First, then," said he, "let me ask you what use you made of that fifteen hundred dollars sent to Dora nearly three years ago? Was not this piano," laying his hand upon the instrument, "bought with a part of that money? Did Dora ever see it, or the five hundred dollars sent annually by me?"

Eugenia was confounded. He did know it all, but how had she been betrayed? It must be through Dora's agency, she thought, and turning fiercely towards her, she heaped upon her such a torrent of abuse, that, in thunder-like tones, Uncle Nat, now really excited, bade her keep silent; while Howard Hastings arose, and confronting the angry woman, explained briefly what he had done, and why he had done it.

"Then you, too, have acted a traitor's part?" she hissed; "but it shall not avail, I will not be trampled down by either you, or this gray-haired--"

"Hold!" cried Uncle Nat, laying his broad palm heavily upon her shoulder. "I am too old to hear such language from you, young lady. I do not wish to upbraid you farther with what you have done. 'Tis sufficient that I know it all, that henceforth we are strangers;" and he turned to leave the room, when Mrs. Deane, advancing towards him said pleadingly, "Is it thus, Nathaniel, that you return to us, after so many years? Eugenia may have been tempted to do wrong, but will you not forgive her for her father's sake?"

"_Never!_" he answered fiercely, shaking off the hand she had lain upon his arm. "Towards Alice I bear no ill will; and you, madam, who suffered this wrong to be done, I may, in time, forgive, but _that woman_, " pointing towards Eugenia, "_Never!_" And he left the room, while Eugenia, completely overwhelmed with a sense of her detected guilt, burst into a passionate fit of tears, sobbing so bitterly that Dora, touched by her grief, stole softly to her side, and was about to speak, when, thrusting her away, Eugenia exclaimed, "Leave me, Dora Deane, and never come here again. The sight of you mocking my wretchedness is hateful and more than I can bear!"

There were tears in Dora's eyes, as she turned away, and offering her hand to her aunt and cousin, she took her husband's arm, and "went out of a house, where she had suffered so much, and which, while Eugenia remained, she would never enter again."

Like one in a dream sat Stephen Grey. He had been a silent spectator of the exciting scene, but thought had been busy, and ere it was half over, his own position was clearly defined, and he knew that, even as he had cheated Eugenia Deane, so Eugenia Deane had cheated him. It was an even thing, and unprincipled and selfish as he was, he felt that he had no cause for complaint. Still the disappointment was not the less severe, and when the bride of a day, looking reproachfully at him through her tears,

asked, "why he didn't say to her a word of comfort?" he coolly replied, "because I have nothing to say. You have got yourself into a deuced mean scrape, and so have I!"

Eugenia did not then understand what he meant, and, when, an hour or two later, she dried her tears, and began to speak of an immediate removal to Philadelphia, where she would be more effectually out of Uncle Nat's way, she was surprised at his asking her, "what she proposed doing in the city, and if she had any means of support."

"Means of support!" she repeated. "Why do you ask that question, when your father is worth half a million, and you are his only son?"

With a prolonged whistle, he answered, "Father worth a copper cent and I a precious fool comes nearer the truth!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, in unfeigned astonishment; and he replied, "I mean that three days ago father _failed_, to the tune of one hundred thousand dollars, and if you or I have any bread to eat hereafter, one or the other of us must earn it!"

Eugenia had borne much to-day, and this last announcement was the one straw too many. Utterly crushed, she buried her face in her hands, and remained silent. She could not reproach her husband, for the deception had been equal, and now, when this last hope had been swept away, the world indeed seemed dreary and dark.

"What shall we do?" she groaned at last, in a voice so full of despair, that with a feeling akin to pity, Stephen, who had been pacing up and down the room, came to her side, saying, "Why can't we stay as we are? I can average a pettyfogging suit a month, and that'll be better than nothing."

"I wouldn't remain here on any account after what has happened," said Eugenia; "and besides that, we couldn't stay, if we would, for now that Uncle Nat's remittance is withdrawn, mother has nothing in the world to live on."

"Couldn't you take in _sewing_, " suggested Stephen, "or _washing_, or _mopping_?"

To the sewing and the washing Eugenia was too indignant to reply, but when it came to the _mopping_, she lifted up her hands in astonishment, calling him "a fool and a simpleton."

"Hang me, if I know anything about woman's work," said Stephen, resuming his walk, and wondering why the taking in of _mopping_ should be more difficult than anything else. "I have it," he said at length, running his fingers over the keys of the piano. "Can't you teach music? The piano got you into a fix, and if I were you, I'd make it help me out."

"I'll use it for kindling-wood first," was her answer, and Stephen resumed his cogitations, which resulted finally in his telling her, that on the prairies of Illinois there were a few acres of land, of which he was the rightful owner. There was a house on it, too, he said, though in what condition he did not know, and if they only had a little money with which to start, it would be best for them to go out there at once. This plan struck Eugenia more favorably than any which he had proposed.

Humbled as she was, she felt that the further she were from Dunwood, the happier she would be, and after a consultation with Mrs. Deane, it was decided that the beautiful rosewood piano should be sold, and that with the proceeds, Stephen and Eugenia should bury themselves for a time at the West. Two weeks more found them on their way to their distant home, and when that winter, Dora Hastings, at Rose Hill, pushed aside the heavy damask which shaded her pleasant window, and looked out upon the snow-covered lawn and spacious garden beyond, Eugenia Grey, in her humble cabin, looked through her paper-curtained window upon the snow-clad prairie, which stretched away as far as eye could reach, and shed many bitter tears, as she heard the wind go wailing past her door, and thought of her home far to the east, towards the rising sun.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

Three years have passed away, and twice the wintry storms have swept over the two graves, which, on the prairies of Illinois, were made when the glorious Indian summer sun was shining o'er the earth, and the withered leaves of autumn were strewn upon the ground. Stephen and Eugenia are dead--he, dying as a drunkard dies--she, as a drunkard's wife. Uncle Nat had been to visit the western world, and on his return to Rose Hill, there was a softened light in his eye, and a sadness in the tones of his voice, as, drawing Dora to his side, he whispered, "I have forgiven her--forgiven Eugenia Deane."

Then he told her how an old man in his wanderings came one day to a lonely cabin, where a wild-eyed woman was raving in delirium, and tearing out handfuls of the long black hair which floated over her shoulders. This she was counting one by one, just as the old East India man had counted the silken tress which was sent to him over the sea, and she laughed with maniacal glee as she said the numbering of all her hairs would atone for the sin she had done. At intervals, too, rocking to and fro, she sang of the fearful night when she had thought to steal the auburn locks concealed

within the old green trunk; on which the darkness lay so heavy and so black, that she had turned away in terror, and glided from the room. In the old man's heart there was much of bitterness towards that erring woman for the wrong she had done to him and his, but when he found her thus, when he looked on the new-made grave beneath the buckeye tree, and felt that she was dying of starvation and neglect, when he saw how the autumn rains, dripping from a crevice in the roof, had drenched her scanty pillows through and through--when he sought in the empty cupboard for food or drink in vain, his heart softened towards her, and for many weary days he watched her with the tenderest care, administering to all her wants, and soothing her in her frenzied moods, as he would a little child, and when at last a ray of reason shone for a moment on her darkened mind, and she told him how much she had suffered from the hands of one who now slept just without the door, and asked him to forgive her ere she died, he laid upon his bosom her aching head, from which in places the long hair had been torn, leaving it spotted and bald, and bending gently over her, he whispered in her ear, "As freely as I hope to be forgiven of Heaven, so freely forgive I you."

With a look of deep gratitude, the dark eyes glanced at him for a moment, then closed forever, and he was alone with the dead.

Some women, whose homes were distant two or three miles, had occasionally shared his vigils, and from many a log cabin the people gathered themselves together, and made for the departed a grave, and when the sun was high in the heavens, and not a cloud dimmed the canopy of blue, they buried her beside her husband, where the prairie flowers and the tall rank grass would wave above her head.

This was the story he told, and Dora listening to it, wept bitterly over the ill-fated Eugenia, whose mother and sister never knew exactly how she died, for Uncle Nathaniel would not tell them, but from the time of his return from the West his manner towards them was changed, and when the New Year came round, one hundred golden guineas found entrance at their door, accompanied with a promise that when the day returned again, the gift should be repeated.

* * * * *

On the vine-wreathed pillars, and winding walks of Rose Hill, the softened light of the setting sun is shining. April showers have wakened to life the fair spring blossoms, whose delicate perfume, mingling with the evening air, steals through the open casement, and kisses the bright face of Dora, beautiful now as when she first called him her husband who sits beside her, and who each day blesses her as his choicest treasure.

On the balcony without, in a large-armed willow chair, is seated

an old man, and as the fading sunlight falls around him, a bright-haired little girl, not yet two years of age, climbs upon his knee, and winding her chubby arms around his neck lisps the name of "Grandpa," and the old man, folding her to his bosom, sings to her softly and low of _another Fannie_, whose eyes of blue were much like those which look so lovingly into his face. Anon darkness steals over all but the new moon, "hanging like a silver thread in the western sky," shows us where Howard Hastings is sitting, still with Dora at his side.

On the balcony, all is silent; the tremulous voice has ceased; the blue-eyed child no longer listens; old age and infancy sleep sweetly now together; the song is ended; the story is done.

THE END.

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