The Prodigal Daughter

by

Timothy Shay Arthur, 1850

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CHAPTER 1.

"If I loved a man, and father wouldn't consent to my marrying him — I'd run away with him, that I would!" said a young lady, at the mature age of *fifteen*, half in fun and half in earnest. She was one of a group of three or four lively maidens, who were spending an afternoon with Alice Melleville, at her father's house, near a pleasant village in Virginia.

"You'd do more than I would, then," remarked one of the mirthful circle. "I'd be afraid; for *runaway matches* hardly ever turn out well."

"I'd risk it," responded the first speaker.

"It's more than I would," said another, who was older, and more thoughtful. "If I were a man, I would care very little to have that woman for my wife, who could thus deceive and forsake her parents. The adage, that *a disobedient child cannot make a good wife*, has always seemed to me a true one."

"Spoken like a sensible girl, as you are, Sarah!" said Mr. Melleville, who was present. His daughter Alice had not joined in the conversation, though her manner indicated that she was by no means an uninterested listener. When Mr. Melleville made the remark last recorded, an attentive witness might have observed the color deepening on her cheek, and a shadow flitting quickly over her bright young face.

"I don't care what you all say," broke in the first speaker, gaily. The law is, that a man must *leave* father and mother and cleave to his wife; and it is a poor rule that won't work both ways."

"You jest with a serious subject, Helen," remarked the young lady whom Mr. Melleville had called Sarah. "For my part, I have always felt that no good can, but harm may, often arise from the indulgence of undue levity, and the expression of hastily formed opinions on these subjects. Someone, while we thus utter sentiments approving such a doubtful course, may be debating the momentous question; and a half-formed resolution may be strengthened and matured by our thoughtlessness."

"I hope no one here is going to run away," said Helen, casting her eye over the little circle. "But if anyone is, I would say, be sure your choice is a good one, and then die rather than be untrue to your heart's best affections!"

Helen spoke with warmth, and something of energy in her tone.

"Well, young ladies," remarked Mr. Melleville, walking backwards and forwards through the room as he spoke, "you can all run away if you like, and your parents may forgive you if they will; but as for me, my mind has long been made up to *utterly and forever renounce* that child who marries against my consent."

Alice cast her eyes upon the floor when her father commenced speaking. She did not raise them immediately after he had ceased, but her cheek was paler, and the heavings of her bosom quicker and more apparent.

"That's only said to frighten Alice, here," Helen said, gaily. "All fathers *talk* that way, and forgive their truant daughters in a week after the elopement."

"I earnestly hope that no child of mine will presume on the anticipation of such a result. Sad, sad indeed, will be her mistake!" Mr. Melleville said, seriously.

"I'd risk you, if I were your daughter," Helen responded, as mirthful as ever.

"But you would find, to your sorrow, that you had risked too much."

There was an air of seriousness about Mr. Melleville's manner that was felt by the young ladies; and Helen, among the rest, finding herself oppressed by it, did not reply, nor did any one allude further to the subject.

On the evening of the same day in which this conversation occurred, Alice stole quietly from her father's house, and passing through the garden, came to a pleasant lawn, which was concealed by a few trees, from the view of anyone in the dwelling. Here she paused timidly, and looked eagerly around.

Brightly the moonbeams fell upon her snowy garments, and sweet, innocent face. Could there be thoughts other than pure and innocent, beneath that lovely countenance? But on so sad a thought as that, we will not dwell. For more than a minute she waited just upon the edge of the lawn, looking and listening with earnest attention.

"He promised" just passed, murmuringly, her lips, when a quick step caught her ear.

“Alice, dear Alice!” said a young man, bounding to her side, and catching hold of her hand, while he pressed his lips fondly and familiarly to her cheek.

“I was afraid you would not come,” said the maiden.

“Fire and water could not have kept me away! I saw you the moment you left the house, and my eye was on you at every step. I think of only you, and am happy only in your presence. How cruel is the fate that interposes such barriers between us!”

“Cruel indeed!” sighed Alice, leaning trustingly upon the arm through which she had drawn her own.

“Is there any hope that *your* father will think more kindly of me, Alice?”

“I fear not, William,” Alice replied, sadly.

“And must we, then, be separated forever?”

Alice clung to his arm more earnestly, but did not reply.

“If this is our fate,” continued the tempter “then far better for us to meet no more; let us try to forget each other. For me, too keen a sense of pain must attend a relationship like this, when all hope is destroyed.”

Still the maiden replied not, but shrank closer to his side.

“Do you love me, Alice?” he said, in a changed and earnest tone.

Alice looked up, the bright moonbeams falling upon her face, and making perfect every line of expression.

“Forgive the question, Alice. I did not doubt you. As tender, as earnest, as confiding as is your love for me — just so tender and earnest is my love for you. We were made for each other, and separate, cannot be happy.”

“I know it, I know it!” returned Alice, in a low and trembling tone.

“Then, why should we be separated?” urged her lover.

“I would rather die than endure it, if separation is to be permanent,” she murmured.

“It *need* not be — it *shall* not be!” responded the young man, earnestly.

“It *will* be, and it *shall* be!” exclaimed Mr. Melleville, loud and angrily, laying his hand heavily upon the shoulder of Alice, and drawing her with a sudden jerk from the side of her lover.

The young man, taken thus by surprise, raised his arm to strike down the intruder, but recollecting himself in an instant — he turned from the frightened child and angry father, and strode hastily away.

No further word was spoken by Mr. Melleville, until with his *trembling truant* he reached his house.

“Now, Alice,” he said, in a calm, determined tone, and with a severe expression of countenance. “Remember what I tell you this night. If you forget it, or disbelieve, and thence disregard it — the sorrow be your own. I do not approve of *William Anderson* as the husband of my daughter, even if he moved in the same station that we do, and were a man of correct principles. But, as I know him to be a base-minded fellow, of bad morals, and bad habits — I am doubly determined not to approve him. And now, that with my own ears I have heard him *basely tempt you to forsake father and mother* — I would see you in your grave before I would *sacrifice* you willingly. I have lived longer than you have, Alice, and I know more of the world than you do; and, more than all, I can read *character* better than you can. Now, from all I have seen — and I have sought opportunities to know him — I am certain of what I say, when I pronounce William Anderson a man so *selfish* in his feelings and aims, as to be *utterly incapable of rendering any woman happy*. He does not *love* you, Alice, half so much as he loves *my property* — one farthing of which neither he nor you shall ever touch if you are so mad as to marry each other. Believe me, Alice, when I tell you,” and there was much tenderness in his voice, “that I have loved you too well, to *sacrifice* you willingly into unworthy hands. But, if into unworthy hands you throw yourself, then, as I have already told you — *we will never be reconciled!”*

And so saying, Mr. Melleville turned from the room, and left his daughter sitting in a state of mental stupefaction. The words of her father rang in her ears, but she could not realize their threatening and fearful import. In a little while she stole off to bed, but not to find that sweet sleep that had heretofore hovered around her pillow. Once she fell into a profound slumber, and *dreamed* vividly. Her lover came for her, and her father gave her up to him willingly, and she, with maiden confidence and delight, yielded to him the hand he sought. Swiftly the days seemed to pass happy and innocent days; but a

change suddenly took place in her perceptions. The body of her husband seemed to grow transparent, and she could look beyond the surface. The beauty and symmetry of his form, became lost in the horrid skeleton beneath, that seemed joined to a *mass of loathsomeness*; and every day this became more distinct to the eye, and more *revolting*. She shrank from his touch, and shut her eyes when he came near her, but she could not escape from him. Even as close as her own shadow, was he by her side. Imploringly she sought her father, but he was deaf to her petition for relief, and turned coldly away. Long, long years seemed to pass, and still the horrible skeleton was by her side, with its mass of loathsomeness, more livid and more revolting. One night, it seemed that she was lying by the side of her husband, and his hand was upon her bosom. That hand grew heavier, and heavier, until it seemed crushing in her chest. In vain she endeavored to rise--all power was gone. And she was sinking it seemed into insensibility, from a feeling of suffocation, when the door of her chamber suddenly opened, and her father came in and lifted the skeleton arm.

"Take me away, take me away, dear father!" she cried, in an agony of hope and fear, as her father, having relieved her, turned slowly to pass from the room.

The sound of her own voice, for she was uttering the words aloud, awoke her. All was dark in her chamber, and she shrank, trembling, beneath the bed-covers.

This strange and *fearful* dream haunted her imagination for days, and caused her to think of William Anderson with an affection somewhat diminished in its ardor. But the impression gradually wore off, and, in her thoughts, he was all that her fond heart could desire.

CHAPTER 2.

"How is William Anderson, tonight?" asked a young man, in a familiar tone, coming into the room of the individual he had named.

"Ah, Tom! Is that you? How are you? I am glad to see you! Come, sit down. You are the very man I want to have a talk with."

"Am I, indeed! Well, I wonder what grave matter our united wisdom can accomplish? But, as you seem to have some important matter on your mind, say on, and I will make one of the best of listeners."

"Do you know Alice Melleville?"

"No, I don't personally."

"But you understand me, Jones; you know that there is such a person?"

"It would be strange if I didn't, and you one of my cronies. But what of her?"

"The old man, her father, won't have anything to do with me."

"That is *not* very strange."

"Nonsense, Jones! I am serious tonight, and want to talk with you on a serious subject."

"Say on, then, and I'll be as grave and thoughtful as a judge on the bench."

"I love Alice — that I find a settled business."

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you, indeed? That is a good one!"

"Tom!"

"Bill!"

"I tell you that I am in sober earnest!"

"Well, well, I grant it. But it did sound a little ludicrous, to hear you assert so gravely, that you were entrapped at last."

"And she loves me, too — in that I cannot be mistaken. But her father will never consent."

"What will you do?"

“I will run away with her.”

“Of course. That is talking like a man. And you want my advice and assistance in the matter?”

“Exactly.”

“Then I am at your service. But, Anderson, I have no wish to help my friend into a bad scrape. You have nothing on which to support a wife, and Melleville is a hard-hearted old dog. Aren’t you afraid he will remain incorrigible?”

“Oh, no, not he. No father can utterly cast off, so sweet a child. It isn’t natural. We read of such things in novels and romances, but they never take place in real life.”

“I suppose you know best; but my advice is to *look* well before you *leap*.”

“Trust me for that, Tom.”

“Have you everything arranged?”

“No, I have *nothing* arranged, and it’s for that very purpose that I want to see you. I haven’t been able to get a sight of her for a week, but I have managed to have a letter conveyed to her, asking for an interview this very night. She will steal away from the house after the old folks are asleep, and meet me at a spot I have designated. She will be reluctant, I know, to leave her father and mother; but as they will never consent, I can easily overrule all objections.”

“Well.”

“When this is settled, and the time appointed, I shall want you to have a carriage in readiness to convey us with all speed to Richmond.”

That I will do, of course. And see here, Anderson, when you do get your fingers into the old chap’s money bags — you must not forget my urgent demands at all times for cash.”

“O, never fear for that, Jones! I can sympathize with you most warmly in that matter.”

These two young men were *clerks*, at very moderate salaries, in a small town in Virginia. Their bad habits created demands for money far beyond their income; and as neither of them had any hope of rising by individual merit, or strength of character, into the possession of even a moderate share of wealth — they laid it down as a settled principle, that for them, *rich wives* were an indispensable appendage. Fine clothes and an easy, polished exterior, were assumed, as prerequisites to the accomplishment of the end they had in view.

At a party in the village, where Alice Melleville was present, Anderson had first seen her, and by his attentions had attracted her notice, and awakened something like an interest in her bosom. Her father was known to be very wealthy, and he was also known to possess a large share of aristocratic pride. In consideration of the former — Anderson was assured enough to disregard the latter, and ventured to call upon Alice in a few days after he had met her at the party.

“Is Miss Alice at home?” he asked of Mr. Melleville, whom he met at the door of the old family mansion.

“And what do *you* want with her, please?” inquired the old gentleman, eyeing the spruce young man with a glance of haughty pride.

“I met her a few evenings ago,” Anderson said, with a bow and a smile, “and have merely come to make her a friendly call.”

“Indeed! And who are you, please?”

“My name is William Anderson.”

“It is? And who is William Anderson?”

“I am a salesman in Mr. Roster’s store,” replied the young man, a little dashed.

“Then I would advise you to go back and mind your sales,” Mr. Melleville said, sneeringly.

Anderson turned on his heel and strode off not, however, before he had obtained a glance of Alice’s glowing face at one of the windows. Its expression by no means discouraged him.

“I’ll have her yet — see if I don’t! If it’s only to spite that nasty old aristocrat,” he said to himself, as he walked hastily away.

On the very next afternoon, Alice came into the village, and William happened to meet her on the street. He at once addressed her, and, as she was then returning home, he attended her a portion of the way. He readily perceived that she was interested in him, and this gave him confidence.

During the next week, they met again, and during that which followed, twice. He now grew bolder, and ventured to speak of the pleasure her society gave him; and thus progressed from step to step, until the *heart* of Alice was fully pledged.

At length the father was informed by someone of the fact that his daughter was in company with Anderson whenever she came into the village, when he took prompt measures to check the growing intimacy. This he hoped he had accomplished effectually, when his suspicions were excited on seeing his daughter steal off from the house, on the evening before alluded to. Following her, he was maddened to find that at night, and in a lonely spot, she had dared to meet the man with whom he had *forbidden* her to hold fellowship.

CHAPTER 3.

"Dear Alice!" exclaimed William Anderson, taking her hand, and pressing it hard within his, at the same time kissing her cheek, "I was sure you would come. Oh, it has seemed like a year since I saw you. And you are not afraid to meet me at this solitary spot and lonely hour?"

"Afraid, William! oh no!" And she leaned trustingly upon him, and looked up affectionately into his face.

"You may fear others, Alice, but not me. I would rather die than harm a hair of your head, or give your innocent heart a moment's pain. But now that you are here, and as the minutes are precious, I must open to you the principal object I have in asking this interview."

Alice listened with eager attention, and in the pause that Anderson made, he could perceive that her breathing was labored.

"Your father, I fear," he resumed, "will never consent to our marriage. Have you any hope that he will?"

"None at all," replied the maiden.

"Then, Alice, what is to be done?"

There was no answer.

"Do you love me above everything else?"

Her arm, tightening within his, was the only response.

"And above everything else in the world, do I love you, Alice."

The maiden's arm again clasped his tighter to her side.

"Will you not leave all for me, Alice?" he now ventured to ask.

"You ask of me, William, a fearful sacrifice," she said, *trembling* all over. "I cannot answer the question now."

"You do not then love me *truly*."

The poor girl burst into tears, and leaning her head upon his shoulder, sobbed aloud.

"Dear Alice," he now said, tenderly. "Dear Alice! forgive me! I spoke hastily. You shall choose your own course, and I will still love you, even if we part this evening, never to meet again."

"It is a hard thing, William," she at length said, looking up, "to forsake father and mother, dearly loved, and, more than all, bear up against their anger. I shrink from such a trial."

"But this trial cannot be of long duration; they will speedily relent, and you will then be happy in the love of a husband as well as of father and mother."

"I fear not, William. My father is a stern man, and rarely changes. He solemnly declares that if I marry without his consent — that he will cut me off forever!"

“That is only to *frighten* you, Alice. It is not in human nature thus to shut up the heart.”

“You do not know my father, William.”

“I do not fear the result. Your affection for him and your mother makes you fearful. Trust me, there is no danger of the result you dread.”

“I cannot William, indeed I cannot.”

“Then we part this night, and forever! Why should we meet again? You are convinced that your father will never agree to our union, and yet will not wed without his consent. Let us then, part now, and *forget* each other!”

Anderson made a movement as if he were about to leave her, but she clung to his side.

“Then you will *forsake all* for me?”

“I will, I will,” murmured Alice, again leaning her head upon his shoulder, and again bursting into tears.

“Will you be ready to meet me here in a week, at this very hour?”

“I will,” replied the maiden, mechanically.

“Then I shall be here at the moment. Good night! good night, dearest!” And kissing her cheek fervently, he left her, and glided out of sight in a moment.

With senses shocked and bewildered, Alice stole softly back, and, entering the house silently, went up to her chamber. She scarcely retained a distinct consciousness of what she had done, so sudden and unexpected had been the result of her interview with her lover. Sleep visited not her pillow for many hours, and when she did fall into a troubled slumber, she was soon awakened in alarm by the very *dream*, so strange and fearful, that had before come, like a *warning of evil!* Again she slept — and again dreamed the same horrible dream!

So vividly did the impression of this dream remain upon her mind, that many times, through the next day, she was on the point of going to her father and confessing all. But something prevented so wise a course; and as the remembrance of the night-vision grew less and less palpable, she began to think with less of acute mental suffering of the *rash act* she had pledged herself to take.

The time passed swiftly, and the appointed hour came. True to her promise, Alice met her lover, and they were married.

CHAPTER 4.

“Alice is late, remarked Mr. Melleville, on the next morning, as the family were gathering around the breakfast-table.

“Shall I go up into her room and call her?” asked a little girl, about eleven years of age, Mr. Melleville’s next oldest child.

“Yes, run up, Mary. Perhaps she is sick.”

The child returned in a few moments, with the news that Alice was not there, and that the bed was untumbled.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Melleville startled from the table, and went hurriedly to Alice’s chamber. The child’s story was too true. She was not there, nor were there any indications that she had passed the night in her room. On examining her drawers, a large portion of her clothes, it was found, had been removed!

Mr. Melleville sat down, and remained for some time in deep self-communion, while the mother burst into tears. Of the worst, they were both assured. He loved his child with a strong and natural affection, but *pride* was an over-mastering principle in his heart. A powerful struggle agitated him as he sat thus, for many minutes, in deep, painful thought. Pride at last conquered, and, rising to his feet, he turned to the mother, and said, in a calm but resolute tone,

“Alice is our child no longer; from this hour, we cast her off. I thought her a girl of high-toned feelings, but she has proved herself unworthy of the name of Melleville. Better it is that she should change it.”

“And yet she is — “

“Tempt me not, Jane, neither deceive yourself. Alice has separated herself from us, and never again can claim a place in our hearts. Forget that you ever bore such a child. Let her name and her memory from this hour pass from us. We have other children, let them be all in all to us.”

From that day and from that hour, the poor girl’s name was not allowed to be mentioned in the presence of either parent. But neither the servants nor her younger sisters could forget her, nor was her name banished from their lips, when alone, nor were tears for her, strangers to their eyes. How far the memory of their child lingered in the parents’ hearts, how often they dreamed of her, and in these night-visions yearned towards her with unutterable tenderness — no one knew. As far as others could determine, she was forgotten or, if not forgotten, unforgiven.

And now let us leave the *heartless parents*, and turn to the poor, deluded girl — blinded and deceived by a spurious passion, under the semblance of true love.

There was a hurried, agitating flight to Richmond, a hurried and agitating ceremony, and then came a long, long pause for reflection. The party, consisting of Anderson and his bride, Jones and a young lady friend, returned to Webster, the place from which they had started on their questionable errand, and Alice was established at a private boarding-house, to await the course of events. As eager as they were to look *away* and turn away from Mr. Melleville, but a day before — were they now as eager to look *towards* him. But, although pains were taken to let him know where they were — no word, no token came to them.

On the fifth day, Alice wrote a humble letter to her mother. But day after day, she waited, in vain, for an answer. None came. And in that time, she had learned a *sad lesson*. It was that the love of her husband was not sufficient to compensate for every other love; that the affection which is borne by a daughter for her parents, cannot be set aside, even for a husband’s deeper and more passionate love. And as time passed on, and not the slightest notice was taken of them by any of her family, Anderson himself began to feel uneasy. His income was, in amount, far less than he had demands for *himself*; how, then, could he support a wife; one, too, who had been, from childhood, used to every comfort and every luxury? Such thoughts it may naturally be supposed, could not be entertained, without becoming apparent in some form. Alice perceived that, day after day, her husband grew more thoughtful and serious — and less tender in his attentions towards her.

One month from the day of their marriage — *criminal* on one side, and *thoughtless* on the other — Anderson and Alice sat alone, in gloomy self-communion; he, brooding over his disappointment and embarrassments, and she, thinking of her lost home and its dear inhabitants. At last, turning towards her, he said,

“It is strange, Alice, that no one of your family has come near you.”

Alice looked up, while her eyes filled with tears, but she did not reply.

“It is now four weeks since we were married. Surely in that time we ought to have heard from them.”

“I fear very greatly,” Alice said, “that my father will never see me again.” And she burst into tears.

“Do not distress yourself with such a thought Alice. He will, he *must* relent. Surely your mother loves you, and will overrule the anger of your father.”

“My mother cannot, and I believe never attempts to influence my father,” Alice said, looking up, with the tears flowing over her cheeks. “He told me, that if I married you, he would never forgive me or see me — and few men keep their word more strictly than he. I am sadly afraid that I have nothing to hope for there; that I am *alone with you* in the world!”

Her tender glance, and the affectionate, confiding tone in which the last sentence was uttered, touched the heart of one as *cold* and *selfish* as her husband; stooping down, he kissed her cheek, and said, with more of sincerity and true feeling than he had ever yet spoken to her,

“Dear Alice! I will try to make you as happy as I can! But you ought to know it, at once, that I have not the means to make you as comfortable, nor to provide you with the luxuries that you have been used to from childhood. But I will do my best.”

He spoke from the impulse of a sudden resolution to change his habits, for her sake, and to do all in his power to make her happy.

“I ask only to share your lot, dear husband! I forsook all for you. Love me — and I will try to be happy.”

Anderson kissed the cheek of his young wife with more of an unselfish affection than he had yet felt, and, inwardly resolving that he would, for her sake, be a man of energy and principle — he left the room, and returned to his place of business. There he was met by a police officer, with a writ against him for *debt*.

"I cannot meet this just now," Anderson said.

"I am not a collector, but an officer. I cannot call again," the officer said, half ironically.

"Well! well! I will pay this on Monday," the young man replied, quickly.

"I would advise you to come prepared to pay it then; for when judgment is rendered up, the money will have to be forthcoming. Such are our orders." And so saying, the officer turned away.

A similar process for fifty dollars was also served on him within an hour, the whole amounting to upwards of a hundred dollars. This sum would not cover over one-third of his debts in the city.

On the same night, at about nine o'clock, he returned to the store in which he was a salesman.

"I have come in to have some talk with you," Anderson said to his employer. "I am in trouble, and need your advice and assistance."

"I am sorry you did not ask that earlier, William; I might have saved you from an act of which it is now too late to repent."

"No doubt. But the past is past. I want to talk of the present and future."

"Say on."

"Two writs have been served on me today, and I have until Monday to pay them. I cannot pay them — it is of no use to even think of it."

"Well?"

"I owe a good deal besides. Debts foolishly contracted. Before I was married, no one hoped to get anything by troubling me. Now, a different game will be played."

"Well?"

"I must leave here."

"Where will you go?"

"I have, tonight, made an engagement to go to Washington, and keep bar."

"At what salary?"

"Six hundred dollars."

"Your best plan is, certainly, to go."

"But I have no money to take me there. And I have come in to know if to your many and long-continued kindnesses to one who has not always deserved them, you will add another."

"William," said his employer, in a serious tone, "if it had not been for your father, I would have fired you long ago. For his sake I have borne with your irregularities, and too frequent neglect of business. For his sake, I will now advance you fifty dollars."

"And promise to keep my secret until I am beyond the reach of the processes from the court?"

"With that, I have nothing to do, and shall therefore not speak of it. But when do you leave?"

"I must be off in two days."

"In your new home, I earnestly hope, William, you will *resolve to lead a new life*. Remember, that *another's happiness* is now connected with your actions; if indeed, anything you can do will ever make that too trusting, deluded creature, who is now your wife, happy."

"That act was a *great* and *foolish* one, yes — I will call it a *wicked* one. But it is past now, and cannot be recalled. I vainly hoped that Mr. Melleville would soon relent, and then all would have been well."

"You should have known his character better, before you *presumed* so far. Had you consulted me, I could have dissipated your error in that respect."

"But I did not. And if I had, I would not, probably, have *heeded* your warning."

"Perhaps not. Well, now that the deed is done, let me beg of you, for *her* sake, to do the best you can."

"I will, I will!" Anderson said, much moved, and then withdrew to return home and break the painful news to his wife. He found her sitting alone, and weeping.

"Dear Alice," he said, with unusual tenderness, as he sat down by her side, and took her hand within his, "what can I do to make you happy?"

"Nothing, nothing, dear husband — I am happy now!" she said, brushing away her tears, and trying to smile cheerfully as she looked up into his face.

"I have *wronged* you much, Alice. But what is past cannot be mended. Are you willing to share my lot with me?"

"I am, William, be it what it may," she said earnestly.

"Then, Alice, I must go away from this place."

"O William!" ejaculated his wife, with a look of painful surprise.

"I had better tell you the simple truth, and then leave you to decide. I will not urge you or try to influence you. You shall be free to go — or stay. Perhaps when I go away, your father may take you home again, where I am sure you will be happier than I can make you. Know, then, Alice, that I am in *debt* here several hundred dollars more than I can pay. Writs have been served on me, and if not satisfied by Monday next, I will go to prison."

Alice looked at her husband with a stupefied air, but did not reply.

"I have secured a situation in Washington, at a salary that will support us if we are frugal. Now, Alice, will you go or stay?"

"I will go with you, William. Why should I stay here? And who is there in the wide world to care for me, but you? But how soon must we go?"

"In two days."

"Then, I will make one more appeal to my father. Who knows, but that his heart will soften towards me, when he finds that I am about to go away, never perhaps to return?"

"Do, Alice, do. And I will write also."

Before retiring to her bed, Alice wrote to her mother, and through her to her father — a humble, penitent and touching epistle. Urging them to see her before she went away — just to drop her one word, saying that they *forgave* her.

Her husband also wrote, stating plainly that he went away through necessity, and urging upon Mr. Melleville to take his daughter home.

"I have not the means of supporting her," he said in his letter, "and unless you take her again, she must suffer in many ways. Will you not again receive her? Solemnly I promise, if you will take her home, that I will never come near you. I do not write this because I do not love, or am not willing to take care of Alice. I would part from her with exceeding pain. But I am sure that I cannot provide for her as she has been used to live, and I am well convinced that away from you, she never can be happy. Come for her, or send for her within two days. After that, it will be too late."

The first day passed, and there was neither word nor letter, nor token of any kind from Mr. or Mrs. Melleville to Alice. All through the next day, she looked and longed in painful, heart-sickening suspense, but in vain; and night fell gloomily around, yet no word had come.

With a feeling of hopelessness, did poor Mrs. Anderson prepare to accompany her husband on his *flight*, for such it really was, from her native village. At ten o'clock at night they took their places in the stage-coach — she silent, sad and heartless. Just as the driver was mounting the box, Alice felt a hand upon her arm, and looking up, she saw standing by the coach, an old colored servant of her father's; one who had been her nurse when an infant. She held in her hand a letter, which was eagerly seized by the unhappy girl.

"Who is it from, Nancy?" she asked, much agitated.

"From little Mary. Your parents would not write, and don't know about Mary's writing or me coming to see you. But I couldn't let you go, Miss Alice, without seeing your dear face once more. O, if *they* only loved you as I do!" And the tears streamed down the cheeks of the affectionate creature, as she stood clasping tightly the hand of her young mistress. At that moment, the driver cracked his whip, and the coach moved off.

"God bless you, Miss Alice!" fell from the lips of the servant in a fervent ejaculation. In the next moment she stood alone, looking sadly after the retiring stagecoach.

Fully two hours passed before Alice had an opportunity to read that precious letter — warm, she knew, from an affectionate and innocent heart. But for the trembling, eager desire she felt to know its contents, her feelings on thus leaving, perhaps forever, her home and dearest friends, would have been indeed terrible.

By the dim light of a flickering lamp, at the first stage-station, she opened and read her letter. It ran thus:

"Dear sister Alice. I happened to see your letter on mother's table today, and then I knew what father meant yesterday, when I heard him say to her *'No, no, no! I will have nothing to do with her.'* But if they don't love you, Alice, I do, and if I had dared — I would have been to see you every day. O, it is so *lonesome*, and so *sad* now that you are gone. Neither father or mother are like what they used to be. He never seems pleased, nor she happy. And you are going clear away. O, how I cry when I think of it. And what will become of you? O sister, I wish I could go with you, for your sake; I know you must feel so bad, never to see any of us, nor know anything about us. Nancy will take this to you. She doesn't forget you, nor do any of us, except mother and father, and I think it is hard work with them. Good-bye, dear sister, and don't forget, wherever you are, your sister MARY."

Alice sobbed two or three times, convulsively, as if she were struggling hard with her feelings, and then turned slowly away from the dim light by which she had read the letter, and re-entered the coach.

CHAPTER 5.

It was five years from the period at which occurred the scenes detailed in the last chapter, that Alice sat, sewing, near the hour of midnight, in a meagerly furnished room of a small house in Washington. In one corner, sleeping soundly on an old quilt, with a bundle of *rags* for a pillow, lay a little boy, about four years old. An infant slept in an old cradle, that had been bought second hand somewhere, to which ever and always, the young mother gave a slight motion with her foot.

And *Alice*, what of her? A sad, sad change had, alas! passed over her sweet young face — that was now pale and thin, and wore an expression of *sorrowful endurance*. The quality of the garment upon which she wrought with hurried industry, indicated, in comparison with her own apparent condition, that she was working for money. And such was really the case.

Through many heart-searching and heart-aching changes, the years had worn away, until the present time years, whose history was engraved in *lines of suffering and sorrow* which were too visible upon her brow and cheeks, and looked mournfully from her still bright eyes, shadowed ever, except at brief intervals, by their drooping lids. The records of those years, as indicating her *awakening to the realities* of a changed and almost hopeless life, would occupy us too long, and only add *emotions of pain* to the painful ones which must be excited in tracing onward her checkered course.

It is sufficient to say, that her young heart's ardent *promises* proved *altogether fallacious*. That soon her husband's *true character of unfeeling selfishness* stood revealed to her in a light that destroyed even a lingering hope that the estimation might be a false one. His humble condition in life would have given her little cause of unhappiness; for the young affections of her heart, luxuriant in their growth, had already entwined themselves about him. All she would have asked would have been a *tender and constant return* for the pure and fervent love she gave. But this he could not give. The end which he had in view, was not realized; and he was too *selfish* to fall back and be satisfied with the *wealth of affection* that was ready to be poured out upon him — when gross, material riches, were all he had sought after, or really cared for.

And here let us pause, and drop a word or two, in the form of *general principles*, which may not be without a good effect upon such as have minds evenly balanced, and thus capable of acting, in some degree, from the promptings of rational thought. The *end* which anyone has in view, will, of course, influence, modify, and enter into all his *actions*. It will govern him not only in the pursuit of an object, but in his enjoyment of it in possession.

This principle, we shall apply to the subject of marriage, as one of the first importance, and as naturally growing out of our story. *Happiness* in the married state results, and results only, from *mutual affection*. Just so far as this affection is not

perfectly reciprocal — just so far will unhappiness result from the union. This is an immutable law, founded in the very nature of things. Whatever then, in the motives which induce marriage, is foreign to this, is so much of an alloy to *true felicity*, and will always be felt as such. No matter in which party the base motive exists, (we call it *base* in contradistinction to the *purer* principle,) whether in the woman or the man — the result will be equally fatal to the happiness of both.

The *real motives* of anyone lie quite interior, and are not always apparent to the *individual* himself; to ascertain them, requires some degree of self-exploration. Thus, a man or a woman, in deciding to marry, may think that the *love* which is felt, is the strongest motive for the union — whereas one, or even both, may have a motive so concealed, as hardly to be self-acknowledged — that leads all other motives. This may be a love of wealth — a simple admiration of the beautiful — a desire for elevation and distinction in society — the anticipated pleasures of a high intellectual fellowship, without reference to moral perfections — or some motive of a kindred spirit.

If any of these govern, the marriage cannot be perfectly happy, because they are *base* in comparison with the high and holy affection which should rule in marriage unions, and make these subordinate. How necessary is it then, for each one to determine, for himself, what his own ends are; and also endeavor to ascertain, as far as possible, the *end* of the one he proposes to unite with.

The end which William Anderson proposed to himself, was the gaining possession of a portion of Mr. Melleville's property, for selfish gratification. Disappointed in this, the *feeble flame of affection* which had been kindled for Alice, soon expired. Had he obtained the money he sought, its possession would have been as fatal to the incipient love that was germinating in his mind, as had been his disappointment. *Thoroughly selfish*, he would have pursued the broader field of *gratification* which wealth afforded him, with but little consideration for the woman to whom he owed his elevation.

And so it will be in all the varieties of *false principles that govern in marriages*. If the real end which a woman has in view in deciding to marry a man, is to obtain a *position* in society, and enjoy the luxuries and refinements that wealth affords — it is hardly to be expected that, in case of reverses, she will share her husband's changed lot with contentment and increased affection. Nor will she, influenced by such a base and selfish principle, be satisfied to see others occupying a rank far above her. *Envy* on the one hand, and *disappointment* on the other — would both be fatal to marital love.

And again, but we need not amplify. The hints we have given are enough for the wise. We now return to our story.

Alice had not seen her husband for several months, and all the burden of providing for the needs of her children, devolved upon herself. He had become idle and debauched, and had gone off to Baltimore under the pretense of obtaining a situation, and she had not since heard of him. On the night in which she is again presented to the reader, her thoughts were more than usually occupied about her husband. Many of the first emotions of tenderness which she had felt for him, returned upon her, and *pity* for his wretched abandonment of himself, mingled with her kindling affection. As the time wore on, she would sometimes pause, involuntarily, and listen, as if for the sound of his approaching footsteps. Then she would become conscious that she was listening in vain, and resume her *wearisome duties*.

At last, the impression that he was near became so strong, that she could sew but a few minutes without pausing to listen. All at once, her heart gave a sudden bound, as her quick ear detected in the sound of hurrying footsteps, her husband's familiar tread. The sound was distant, but it neared rapidly, and soon it became apparent that others were in quick pursuit. Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and more and more agitated did the lone wife become. She laid down her work quietly, went to the door, drew back the bolt, lifted the latch, and stood with the door in her hand, her heart answering with a quick bound to every hurried footfall. The sounds came nearer and nearer still, were at the very door, which she swung open, when in bounded her husband, pale, bloody, and frightened.

"Shut the door, Alice, for Heaven's sake!" he cried.

It was closed, bolted and locked in a moment, but not an instant sooner than were his pursuers on the spot, who, finding him safely housed, vented a few loud *threats* and *curses*, and then went away.

"O, William, what is the matter?" asked his wife, in a tone of tender anxiety.

"A minute later and I would have been murdered!" he ejaculated. "How fortunate it was, that you opened the door for me when you did."

"It was Heaven's mercy, not mine," she said, meekly.

"But you are bloody, William," she continued, her pale face blanching, "are you much hurt?"

"O, no. It's only a scratch. I'm safe and sound enough. I came to the city tonight, and dropped into a *tavern* on the avenue for a little while. Some men were playing cards, and I took a hand just for amusement. I won at every game, until I broke them all, and then they tried to pick a quarrel with me. One of them called me a *cheat*, when I knocked him down. Then they all fell on me, and I barely escaped being murdered. They were so angry, that if they had got their hands on me, I am sure they would have *killed* me. But I've won fifty dollars," he added, exultingly, throwing the money upon the table, near which he had seated himself.

"And a *gambler*, too!" were the words that formed themselves in Alice's thoughts — but she uttered no reproof. Her heart sank within her at the idea, (although she had experienced enough already to know that her husband possessed little, if any *true affection* for her,) that, after an absence of months, during which he had not once heard from his family, he could return to the city, and seek first to mingle with old, corrupt associates, rather than search out the wife and little ones he had left to suffering and poverty. But she did not chide him, or in any way allude to his *selfish neglect*.

"How have you been, William?" she asked, kindly, after the first silence that followed the hurried interest of his return.

"I've not been well, Alice," he said. "I went to Baltimore in hopes of getting a good situation there in a store, but was disappointed. I didn't write to you, for I had nothing to write, and nothing to send to you. And then I was taken sick, and it was several weeks before I could get about again. At last I got a place in a store, and now I have come for you and the children. I hope we shall have better times. But how is James and little Alice? And how have you gotten along?"

"The children are not very well, William," his wife said, while her voice trembled, and the moisture gathered in her eye. "Poor little things! *James* has missed you so much! He asks every day, 'when will father come home?'"

"Well, I won't leave you any more, Alice," he said, with pretended feeling. But the *disguise* was too thin to deceive a woman's heart, yearning for a true affection. "Tomorrow we will get ready and go to Baltimore," he added.

"But have you a good situation there, William?" inquired his wife, anxiously. I am just beginning to get known here by a few kind people, who give me now as much sewing as I can do. If we go to Baltimore, and your situation should not prove a permanent one — I shall be in a strange place, and not able to get any work to do. I could not bear to hear little James begging and crying again for something to eat — and not a mouthful in the house!"

This touching allusion to former sufferings, seemed to *irritate* rather than soften William Anderson.

"O, that's all past!" he replied, impatiently waving his hand. "And let the past go! I know what I am about; and I tell you that my situation is a good one, and permanent too, and will yield us plentifully."

"You know best," Alice said, with a meek, patient look of endurance. "If you say so, I am ready to go there."

"Very well. We will pack up our things tomorrow, and put them on board ship, and then go off in the coach."

"But what will we *do* when we get there, William?"

"Board, of course, until our things arrive," was the dogmatic answer.

On the next morning, sure enough, Anderson commenced packing up his things for the purpose of removing to Baltimore. Alice assisted with an air of *patient resignation*. Her manner, and the expression of her eyes and face, showed plainly that she was looking up for *sustaining power*. *Earthly hope* and *promised happiness* had failed; and now, desiring to live for her children, she turned, in her feebleness of spirit, to the *Strong One* to sustain her in her duties.

In two days they were on their way to Baltimore, where Alice met again, the *suffering stranger's lonely heart*, as her portion.

CHAPTER 6.

"Shall I read to you, mother?" asked little Alice, now six years old.

"Yes, dear. Draw a chair up to the table, and while I sit here in bed and sew, you can read for me."

Thus do we again introduce Mrs. Anderson, five years from the day she moved, with her husband, from Washington to Baltimore. The store in which her husband had engaged, was a *liquor* store, or *cheap tavern*, where he spent most of his time, becoming more and more dissipated and brutalized in his feelings every day. For a short time, he provided scantily for his wife and children, but soon he neglected them again, cruelly. The burden of almost their entire maintenance fell, of

course, upon his wife, in whose delicate frame, disease had begun to make painful inroads. Her nervous system had become much shattered, and there were, besides, too apparent symptoms of a pulmonary disease, but not of the worst kind. Still, she was a daily sufferer, and much of her time she was unable to sit up in her chair, but had to prop herself up in bed with pillows, where, half seated, half reclining, she would ply her needle all day, and frequently for half the night.

James, her eldest boy, who was nine years old, had, with sympathies and right thoughts developed at that tender age, sought and obtained a job in a cigar factory, and was earning a dollar and a half, and sometimes two dollars, a week. He had been taught to read well, and write a little, by her for whom he was now devoting his young years, cheerfully, to daily and often nightly toil.

Little Alice has numbered six summers, and has also learned to feel for and sympathize with her mother. She, too, has been taught to read. As directed in the opening of this chapter, she brought a book and laid it upon the table, which had been drawn up to the bed, on which reclined her mother. She then sat down, and opening the book, commenced reading. It was the book she most loved herself to read, and which her mother most liked to have read — the *Bible*. Turning to the book of Psalms, the little girl read slowly.

"The Lord is my shepherd I shall not lack. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

A sound like that of a sob caught the ear of the child, and she paused and looked anxiously up into her mother's face. But her mother's eyes were bent as usual on her work, and her hand that held the needle was moving regularly. Alice again read, and continued reading thus for nearly an hour, when she became wearied and closed the book.

"Mother," said the child, looking up into her mother's face, as a sudden thought occurred to her, "Haven't I got a *grandmother*, too? Mary Ellis has a grandmother."

"Yes, dear," Mrs. Anderson replied, after a moment's thought, while her heart trembled.

"Where is she, mother? I'd like to see her," pursued Alice, leaning on the side of the bed, and looking up with a countenance full of newly awakened interest.

"She lives a good way from here, Alice."

"Well, I would like to see her. Won't she love me as well as Mary Ellis' grandmother loves her?"

This was *probing a wound* which time could not heal. But the mother endeavored to bear the pain.

"If she saw you, Alice," she replied, "I am sure she would love you very much."

"Why don't she come here, mother?"

"She lives a great way off, dear."

"Well, I wish she would come, for I would love her so much," the child said, half musingly, and then remained silent.

"You love to read in the *good book*, do you not, dear?" asked Mrs. Anderson, partly because she felt inclined to ask the question, and partly to suggest other thoughts for the child, than those which were occupying her mind.

"O yes, I love to read in the Bible."

"And why do you love to read in the Bible, Alice?"

"Because, I always feel good when I am reading it. I don't know what the reason is, but no book makes me feel like the *good book* does."

"How does it make you feel, dear?"

"It makes me feel kind of warmer here," the child replied, laying her hand upon her bosom. "And just as if I could love everybody."

Mrs. Anderson mused upon the answer of the child, and mentally ejaculated, "Blessed book!"

Thus, amid pain, and wrong, and exile, and privation, were the *consolations* flowing from a genuine religious principle, beginning to dawn upon the troubled heart of Alice Melleville, or rather Mrs. Anderson.

Towards nine o'clock, James came in. He was a delicate looking boy, with his mother's fair face and dark bright eyes.

“I am afraid you work too late, James,” said his mother, as he came in.

“Who works longest, Mother? and who is best able — you or I?” he asked, with earnest tenderness, and with a tone and manner that were meant evidently to settle the question at once.

Mrs. Anderson smiled affectionately upon her noble-spirited boy, and said,

“You are very considerate of your mother, James.”

“Not more considerate than she is of me,” he replied, smiling in turn. “But come, mother, put up your work; I know your head aches badly, and the pain in your chest must be bad, for you look paler than usual. I’ll work harder tomorrow to make up for it.”

The *tears* came into Mrs. Anderson’s eyes, in spite of an effort to keep them back.

“I have promised this shirt tomorrow,” she said, “and if I don’t get pretty well on with it now, I shall not have it done in time. You know I always feel faint and sick in the morning, and can’t do much until towards the middle of the day.”

“And that is because you always work so late at night.”

“That may have some effect. But I cannot change tonight. Mrs. Mansfield is very kind in getting me work, and giving me a good deal from her own family. I know she wants the half-dozen shirts, of which this is the last, tomorrow, by the middle of the day. Her husband is going away on the day after, and she must have them in time, to do up.”

The boy saw the force of what his mother said, and was silent. He now read for his mother a chapter or two in the Bible; and then, as he had to rise very early in the morning, retired to his *bed*, which was in one corner of the room, on the floor, with a curtain drawn before it, prepared and arranged by the hands of his mother.

Mr. Anderson rarely came home, and little Alice therefore slept with her mother. Both of the children were soon fast asleep, while their mother continued her wearisome task until the hour of midnight, and then, after lifting her heart upwards to God, resigned herself to slumber, which was now becoming sounder and sweeter than it had been for years, notwithstanding her fast failing health.

CHAPTER 7.

Three years more passed away, during which no change for the better occurred in Mrs. Anderson’s health. She had still to toil, in weariness, beyond her strength, and with all her toil, could but scantily supply the needs of her two children. What added seriously to her burden, was the fact that her *husband* had grown so debauched and idle, that no one would employ him, and he had now fallen back for support on the feeble arm of the woman he had so *cruelly wronged* from the beginning.

While he was *away*, and stayed away from his little family, they were as happy as they possibly could be under the circumstances which surrounded them; but now, the *constant presence of their debased father*, and his ill-nature and frequent authoritative, arbitrary manner — robbed them of that pleasure which they once enjoyed. Whenever he could get liquor, he would drink until intoxicated — and then come home to *sicken* the hearts of his wife and children, not only by his revolting appearance, but by his crossness and interference in almost everything.

James, now twelve years old, could earn his mother three dollars, and sometimes more than that, every week.

Little Alice was growing every day dearer to the heart of her mother. Amid poverty and distress, she had labored to sow in her young mind, the seeds of pure thought and gentle emotions. Every Sunday, and frequently in the evenings when her father was out, would she read to her mother from the *Holy Book*. It was a touching sight, to see that child, not nine years old, tracing with her tiny fingers, the lines of the Holy Record, and to note the pale countenance of the sick mother, over which would pass the quick flashes of pious emotion, when the low sweet voice of the child lingered on *passages of comfort to the afflicted*.

And it was a sight to make an angel weep, when the drunken father would come in, and sometimes with wicked curses and blows, drive that trembling child from her little seat by her mother’s side, and fling the sacred book with a curse to the floor. Thus were even the new sources of comfort springing up for her, turned into active causes of pain.

One morning *little Alice* drooped about, and, after breakfast drew a small stool up to a chair, and laying her head upon her arms, and her arms down upon the chair, was soon fast asleep. Much occupied, her mother did not notice that anything ailed the child, until late in the afternoon, when casting her eyes more particularly upon the face of Alice, who still slept, she thought that it looked very red, and placing her hand upon her cheek, found it hot with fever. She roused her immediately, when she complained of a sore throat, and a burning all over her. In great concern, Mrs. Anderson waited until dark, when her husband came in.

"I wish you would go for the doctor, William!" she said. "Alice is very sick, and I feel a good deal alarmed about her!"

"What's the matter with her?"

"She has a high fever, and complains of a sore throat."

"Well, I don't think it worth while to send for a doctor. She's been eating too much, I suppose, and will be better by morning."

"Indeed, William, she has eaten hardly anything today. Do go for the doctor. You do not realize how very ill she is!"

"I shall not go for the doctor — for I don't see any use," he replied, angrily.

"Well, never mind, then," his wife replied, soothingly, for she dreaded his becoming angry. "James will be home by eight or nine o'clock, and he can go."

"No he won't!" was the drunken father's reply. "No doctor shall come into the house this night. There is no need of one."

Mrs. Anderson said not another word. She knew that it would be useless to waste words with her husband, who had as usual been drinking. With excited and alarmed feelings, she made use of all the means in her power, to allay the fever that was burning through every vein of her beloved child. Though so feeble herself as to be scarcely able to move about, she was buoyed up with an artificial strength, and spent most of the evening in bathing Alice's feet, preparing her hot drinks, and using every means that suggested itself, for breaking the fever and restoring moisture to the skin. But all her efforts were vain.

About eight o'clock, James came home. The father had gone out an hour before.

"What is the matter with *little Alice*, mother? "he asked, alarmed at her ill looks, and his mother's distressed countenance.

"She is very sick, James, and is getting worse all the while."

"Then I will go at once for the doctor."

"No, James, you needn't go after him tonight."

"Why mother? she is very sick."

"I know that. But she will no doubt be better by the morning."

"But suppose she is worse? See how much time would be lost?"

"True, true. But your *father* says we must not send for the doctor tonight."

"Why?"

"He does not think Alice is very sick."

The boy's lip curled. But a single steady glance from his mother, made him hide the thoughts that were in his mind.

"But she *is* very sick now," he said, after a few moment's pause, "and surely he would rather have you send for the doctor, did he know how bad she was."

"You cannot go tonight," his mother replied, mildly.

By nine o'clock, the fever had increased greatly, and Alice now tossed herself about and moaned as if in much suffering. Still the father came not; and the two who loved the child and sister with an affection increased ten fold, at the sight of her danger and misery, stood by the bedside in *silent agony*. At length James, whose thoughts had been busy and excited, started from the bedside, saying passionately,

“I don’t care what father says! I will go for the doctor!”

“James! James!”

But the excited boy heard not, or regarded not, for he passed out swiftly, and was soon at the office of a physician.

Fortunately the doctor was in, and seeing the *alarm* depicted in the boy’s countenance, instantly attended the summons.

The father, the son, and the physician, all entered the room where lay the sick child, together. The former just *drunk* enough to be cross, unreasonable, and tyrannical.

“Didn’t I tell you *not* to send for the doctor?” were his first angry words, regardless of the presence of the physician. “There’s nothing the matter with Alice. *Come, get up, you little fake!”* addressing the sick child, and making an effort to pull her up from the bed.

Quick as thought James was by his side, and with a force and decision beyond his years, pushed his father, who, staggering away from the bed, fell over a chair upon the floor. Recovering himself, Anderson made towards the boy, who kept out of the way until the physician, who was a stout strong man, took hold of the *inebriate*, and placing him by main strength upon a chair, told him in a stern voice, that it he were not at once quiet, he would call in a policeman, and have him removed. This threat had the desired effect.

While this was passing, a grey-headed old man, stood just outside of the half-opened door, looking in upon the excited group. He seemed moved by the scene, for he dashed off a tear which fell unbidden to his cheek. The mother stood near the bed, with her face, expressive of the keenest anguish, turned partly towards the door. There were no tears in her eyes. Her hands were firmly locked together, and she was glancing steadily upwards, as if earthly hope had utterly failed. The sick child had raised herself in alarm, and was staring wildly around. All this the eye of the old man took in. A moment or two he gazed, as if horror-stricken, and then turned and passed hastily out. The slight noise which this movement occasioned, attracted the attention of those within the room, and broke the *spell* which bound them.

The humane physician proceeded immediately to examine into the real condition of the child. The mother eagerly watched his countenance, again all alive with interest for the little sufferer. But she gathered no consolation from his countenance which seemed to express much concern and anxiety, as he felt the pulse long, and thought longer before he made any remark.

“What do you think of her, doctor?” at length inquired the mother, in an earnest, trembling voice her nervous agitation increasing her anxiety and alarm tenfold.

“She is a *very sick* child, madam. But her disease will no doubt yield to active treatment. Send your son to my office in a few minutes for medicine.” Then turning to the *father*, he said, sternly:

“The life of your child depends upon her being kept perfectly quiet. If you make any more disturbance, you may consider yourself, if she dies — her murderer!”

This nearly sobered him; and he remained quiet, and showed much interest in the condition of little Alice.

CHAPTER 8.

On the next morning, when the physician came, he found the child worse, instead of better. The medicine he had prescribed, *failed* entirely in the effect he had anticipated. Her fever was still high, her throat very sore and inflamed, and her skin, in many places, as red as scarlet. Whether the disease were small pox, measles, or scarlet fever, he could not tell, and was much perplexed what course to pursue. The child labored much in breathing, and complained of great oppression in the chest. He prescribed, and called again in the evening to find his patient a great deal worse. Her throat had become exceedingly painful; and on looking into it, he found it not only highly inflamed, but in many places beginning to *ulcerate* and *turn black.* The mother was greatly distressed, and even the father was beginning to exhibit the existence of some few remains of humanity.

On the next day hope began to fail in the mother’s heart, and the physician saw little to encourage her. Up to this time, every symptom had continued hourly, more and more aggravated. The action of medicine had produced not a single favorable result. It was with great difficulty that the sufferer could swallow even a drop of water. Her throat and tongue were black and putrid, and her skin continued to be of a scarlet hue.

On the evening of the eighth day after she was taken sick, the father, and mother, and brother, were gathered around *little Alice* to see her *die*. Though suffering greatly, she was perfectly sensible; but the disease had rendered her so *completely blind*, that she could distinguish no one by sight.

Mrs. Anderson's mind had been gradually more and more convinced, as the disease grew worse, that her child must die soon. And the stronger this conviction took hold of her mind, the less she could conceive how she would possibly be able to bear the loss. Still, she had endeavored to *school her mind to resignation*, and to look upward to God for strength. On this evening, while sitting beside the bed, she sobbed out, unable to restrain her feelings.

"O mother, don't cry about me!" said the dying child, turning her face towards her parent, in which was an expression of deep sympathy and concern.

The mother answered not; but there was a struggle within, a violent struggle, when the expression of her countenance grew calmer, but fixed and almost vacant. She had resolved, for the sake of her child, to give no *audible token of grief*. Suddenly, little Alice startled forward, stretched out her hands, and rolled her vacant eyes staringly about the room — then she fell back in a slight convulsion upon the bed. The mother knew that the hour was come, and she knelt by the bedside of her dying child, as still as death — while the large tears trickled through the fingers that concealed her face.

"Mother," said the sufferer, "I can't see you, but if you can see me, kiss me."

A sudden, but quickly stifled, convulsive sob agitated the mother's bosom, as she bent over to kiss the dear lips of her child, who was just falling beneath the *sickle* of the "reaper Death." The slender white arms of Alice were thrown about her mother's neck and firmly clasped for a few moments — then slowly withdrawn, when, with a long sigh, she turned her face away.

For nearly half an hour, she lay with her face turned to the wall, the mother, the while kneeling by the bedside, the father standing near, much agitated, and James seated upon the foot of the bed, making no effort to conceal, or wipe away the tears which were rolling down his young cheeks.

"Mother, mother — what makes my *heart* jump about so?" suddenly cried the dying one, rolling her sightless eyes wildly. "O I shall die, if I can't get breath? Open the windows! Fan me! take off the sheets! oh! oh! oh!"

While Alice in an alarmed tone was uttering rapidly these words, which passed like electricity through the nerves of father, mother, and brother — the door of the room softly opened, and an old man, the same who had lingered near the door on the evening Alice was discovered to be so ill, stole quietly in, accompanied by an elderly woman, respectably attired. Mrs. Anderson did not observe them — she was too much absorbed in the one dear object before her.

The paroxysm that had seized Alice soon subsided, and she again lay motionless, almost *gasping for breath*. The strangers and intruders, seated themselves in a far corner of the room, as if unwilling to break the *spell* that enrapt the senses of all. In the course of a little while, Alice again roused up.

"Mother," she said, in an altered voice, "let me kiss you before I go to sleep. I am going to sleep, mother, and I am sure it will be a good sleep; and then I shall be well again." As her mother bent over her, the tears fell fast upon the face of the child, who resumed, in a fainter tone:

"O mother, why do you cry so? But I know you are sick — sick and in pain, and father scolds so, and calls you such ugly names; and you have got no mother with you like I have, to be good to you, and help you when you are sick. But don't cry, mother! It won't be always so sick — I am going to sleep now, good night."

And she did sleep — a sweeter sleep than had ever before locked her senses in forgetfulness. The *death-struggle* was slight, and quickly over.

At this moment, the female stranger, yet unnoticed by Mrs. Anderson, came eagerly forward, and catching her in her arms as she was about to sink to the floor, whispered a single word in her ear.

How the poor, bereaved, heart-broken mother listened eagerly.

"Alice!" murmured the stranger again.

"My *mother*, my own dear mother!" she almost shrieked, turning and hiding her face in that bosom which had so often pillowed it, before a breath of life had blown roughly upon her.

Half staggering forward, came the old man, the tears streaming down his cheeks. "Alice! Alice! my long lost child! Alice, speak to me — or my heart will break."

Mrs. Anderson looked up, there was a placid, heavenly smile upon her countenance.

“Dear father! you have sought your *erring child* at last,” she said in a subdued tone, and again hid her face in her mother’s bosom.

And thus were they reconciled, after long years of estrangement and sorrow.

CHAPTER 9.

About six months previous to the occurrence of the exciting incident detailed in the preceding chapter, Mr. Melleville came home from an absence of a few days and found, greatly to his alarm, that all of his children, three sons and two daughters, all nearly grown, had been taken dangerously ill with a malignant fever, then raging throughout the neighborhood. A physician had been in attendance already, for two days; but thus far, he had not been able to make the slightest impression on the disease, which continued to increase in violence until the tenth day. Then came *the crisis*.

“Doctor,” said the father, with a pale, anxious face, as he met the physician at the door on the tenth morning, “I want the very truth from you. Look at my children, and then tell me if there is *any hope*.”

The doctor passed into the sick rooms without replying. He first went to the bed of a young girl, about fifteen, and examined all her symptoms with much care. A heavy sigh escaped him, as he turned away to another bed. Here he found still less to encourage him. An examination of all showed the painful fact, that in each one the disease had assumed its most malignant type, and that recovery would be little less than a miracle. He then gave a few directions to the attendants, and went out.

“Well, Doctor?” And Mr. Melleville placed his hand upon the physician’s arm heavily, and stood looking him in the face, in pale suspense.

“There is but *little hope*, Mr. Melleville.”

A quick shudder passed through the father’s frame.

“I have done my best,” resumed the physician. “Your children are in the hands of a merciful God.”

Mr. Melleville clasped his hands upon his forehead and staggered back a few paces, as if from a heavy blow. But rallying himself with a strong effort, he said:

“Doctor I have often known people to recover after all hope was gone. You do not mean to say that my children will *certainly* die?”

“No, no Mr. Melleville. I mean to say no such thing. You asked me for the *truth*. That I have given you. He only can restore them, who, after all, is the physician who heals, even in the remedies that we prescribe. Leave them, then, in his hands and do so with the assurance, that, whether taken or not — their greatest good will be the end secured.”

“But, sir,” the agitated father said, again catching hold of the physician’s arm, and looking him eagerly in the face, “I cannot give them up! They are my children! Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! Save them for me, and name your reward. Let it be the half of all my worldly goods. But save my children!”

“I could do no more than I have done, were my own children at stake,” replied the physician, with solemn earnestness. “They are in the hands of Him with whom are the issues of life. Look up to Him.”

The physician turned away, but Mr. Melleville would not let him go.

“Doctor! Is there nothing that I can offer you to save my children?”

The physician was deeply moved.

“Mr. Melleville,” he again said, “they are in God’s hands, not mine. I have no power to cure — but what I receive from Him who has given to medicine its virtue. All that I can do — I have done.”

“But you will not leave us, Doctor,” urged the father, in a tremulous voice. “Some change for the better may take place — a change that will require to be immediately attended by your skill.”

“I will return in an hour,” he replied. “I have two other patients in like peril with your children. I must see them.”

"Doctor, do not leave us!" begged the distracted father.

"My other patients are children, loved as tenderly as you love your children. Today is the most critical period in their disease. I must see them."

"I will send for another physician to attend them. Do not go away, Doctor."

"My duty is plain, Mr. Melleville, and I cannot neglect it. I must see my other patients. But I will return in an hour."

And he moved towards the door.

Again the father urged and implored, but to no purpose. The *selfishness of his affliction* could not bend the inflexible physician from the *course of duty*. He went away, leaving Mr. Melleville half stupefied under the appalling sense of his children's danger. The mother was much calmer, though no less really appalled at the thought of the impending danger which threatened her offspring.

In an hour the physician returned, and again examined the sick children. There had been a change in their symptoms even in that short period — a change for the *worse*. This his quick eye at once detected.

"How are they now, Doctor?" This was asked by Mr. Melleville, in a husky whisper.

"There is no change for the better," was the reluctant reply.

The father sank upon a chair and groaned heavily. His head fell upon his bosom, his hands were tightly clenched, and his brows wrinkled. The strong, stern man was broken in spirit, and as weak as a woman.

"For the love of Heaven, Doctor," he at length said, low and mournfully, lifting his head, and looking at the physician with a sad, imploring face, "try and save me my children, for I cannot give them up. If they die — my life has no more charms for me. Take them away, and you leave me nothing."

The Doctor sat down by his side, and taking hold of his hand, said,

"Let me again urge you to look to the Great Physician. Whom he will — he sets up; and whom he will — he casts down. He *gives* us life — and, at his own good pleasure, *takes* back the blessing. I am but *an instrument in his hands* when he restores the sick to health. When he wishes to recall any of his creatures — my skill is unavailing."

But Mr. Melleville could look to any *other* source for aid, rather than to the one pointed out. He had no confidence in, and nothing to hope for from God. He had ever been more inclined to turn away from him, and set at nothing his precepts, to follow out the leadings of his own selfish heart. When life went smoothly — he had forgotten God. Now he felt that to look to him would be all in vain.

The well-skilled eye of the physician had not deceived him. *Death* speedily claimed, first one, and then another of the children for his own — until four of them slept calmly the everlasting sleep to earthly things.

One yet lingered, *Mary*, the eldest of the five. Though *flickering* in its socket, the *slender flame of life* still burned feebly on. Upon her were now centered all the parents' anxiety and hope. Those that had died, were beyond the reach of human hope. They could only be mourned for — but Mary still lived on. How eagerly did their shattered and aching affections cling to her. Others rendered to the dead the last sad offices — but their thoughts were all for the *living*, whose side they left not for a moment, except to join, for a short period, in the funeral train. While they stood by the graves of their dead children, their thoughts were with the living one. It was this which saved them. Nature could not have borne the agony they must have endured, in parting so suddenly with their *household idols*, if there had not been in their minds an all-absorbing anxiety for the one that yet remained.

One more day of agonizing suspense, and then there was a dawn of light. The wasting disease which had clung to the vitals of their child, relinquished its hold, and left her as weak as a newborn infant. Gradually, a healthy action supervened; and under the constant judicious care of the physician, she slowly, but surely recovered.

Lonely, sad, and desolate was the household of Mr. Melleville, after this afflictive dispensation. The father wandered about with drooping head, and his eyes turned dreamily inward. The mother hovered around the bed of Mary with trembling interest, fearful lest *the destroyer* had not passed over. But death had fulfilled his mission. One *jewel* was spared to them now, in their estimation, of princely value.

In about two weeks, Mary had so far recovered as to be able to sit up. The silence and desolation which reigned around oppressed her heart, which mourned over its lost ones with a grief that could not be comforted.

One morning, three weeks after the *shadow of death* had fallen darkly over them, Mary, who was able to sit up for a few hours at a time, was leaning back upon the pillows that a careful hand had arranged around her, with her eyes closed. Her father and mother held, each, a hand, and were gazing upon her face. They spoke not, for she seemed sleeping. But no, she slept not; for her eyelids quivered, and seemed tightly pressed together. In a little while, a *tear* stole quietly forth, and rested upon her cheek. The hearts of both father and mother were touched. That drop they knew was for the *lost ones* she had loved so tenderly. Their own eyes grew dim.

"Mother," said the invalid, in a little while, before closing her eyes, which were swimming in tears, "I had a *strange dream* last night. May I tell it to you?"

"Yes, my love. Let us hear your dream."

"I *dreamed*," said Mary, her voice trembling with suppressed feeling, while tears came slowly from her eyes and rolled over her face, "that I was well enough to walk out. It was a calm summer evening, and the air was sweet with the odor of May blossoms. I wandered out, I thought not where, but I soon came into a little enclosure, where were four newly made graves. I knew them to be the graves of my sister and brothers. I sat down beside them and cried bitterly. I wished that I had died also, that I might still be with them. I had been weeping there, it seemed to me, a long time, when I heard my name called, and turning around, saw *Ellen* standing near me, all dressed in white garments — her face radiant of heavenly beauty. She held by the hand a pale, wasted, sad-looking creature, in tattered garments and with a lank body. It was *Alice!* My own, long lost sister Alice!

"'There is *one left* to you,' Ellen said. 'Do not forget the living, while mourning over the dead!' All vanished from my eyes, and I awoke."

A deep groan, half repressed, escaped Mr. Melleville, as he arose and left the room, in an agitated manner. For more than three hours he paced the floor of his own chamber, his mind in an agony. He was suddenly self-convicted of the most *unnatural* and *cruel* conduct towards his cast-off child, whose condition, if living, he had too good reasons for believing, was in all respects as bad, if not worse than that of the apparition in Mary's dream. During all this time, the mother, with whom Mary had been pleading for her sister, did not go near him.

At length, however, she left the room and joined her husband. Mary's tears and entreaties had not been needed. Long, long before would Alice have been received into her bosom, but Mr. Melleville was *proud* and *inexorable*. Now, she thought it best to leave him to his own thoughts, and she did so for the period we have named. When she, at length, entered their chamber, where he had retired, she found him seated with his face buried in his hands and his head resting upon a table. He did not move at the sound of her footsteps.

"Let us *forgive* her — as we hope for God's forgiveness," Mrs. Melleville said, in a low, quivering voice, touching the hand of her husband with her own.

A quick *shudder* passed through his frame. Then he lifted his head and looked at his wife with a countenance greatly changed. It was sad, subdued, and full of remorse.

"I have been *worse than a beast!*" he said, with bitter emphasis. "My poor, poor child! Who can tell to what *depths of wretchedness and misery* your father's *hard heart* has doomed you!"

"Let us search her out, and bring her back," said Mrs. Melleville.

"If she yet lives, I will find her," was the firm reply to this. "Tomorrow I will begin the search. May God, in mercy, give me success!"

With anxious feelings on the morrow, Mr. Melleville commenced his search. The last news of Alice was the news that she had gone to Washington with her husband. Learning from Anderson's old employer that the young man had been offered the situation of a bar-keeper in that city, Mr. Melleville set out upon his errand, trembling lest his hard heart had relented too late. Arriving in Washington, his first inquiries were made at Brown's and Gadsby's, but without success. No person answering his description had ever been employed by the keeper of either of these taverns. He then commenced the descending scale, prosecuting his inquiries from tavern to tavern, until he had gone through nearly the whole series of drinking houses with which the city abounded,

"Did a young man, named William Anderson, ever keep bar for you?" he asked for the fortieth time, going up to a bloated wretch who stood behind the counter of a bar, and looked as if he might be the best customer of his own wares.

"No," was the gruff reply.

As he was turning away, a customer, several degrees lower in the scale of sensual degradation than the landlord, got up from a bench, and staggering forward, said,

"Did you ask for William Anderson?"

"Yes, I did," quickly replied Mr. Melleville, turning towards the speaker, "Do you know him?"

"I did know him several years ago. But haven't seen him for a long time."

"Do you know where he is?"

"He went to *Baltimore* seven or eight years ago."

"Was his wife with him?" asked Mr. Melleville, in an eager voice.

"His wife? O yes. He took her along, and his two children, also poor things!"

"Was he very poor?"

"Poor! Yes, as Job's turkey. Poor as a drunk! Just such a poor sot as I am now. Look at me and imagine that I am William Anderson."

"Did you ever see his wife?" Mr. Melleville ventured to ask.

"Did I! O yes. Many a time have I seen her with her poor, half clothed little boy by the hand, going to the shops for work. They said her *father* was a rich old fellow in Virginia, and that he had cast her off for marrying against his will. I don't know about that. If it was so, and he really did leave her to drag about after such a debauched man as her husband, he must have been the hardest hearted wretch in creation!"

"They went to Baltimore?" Mr. Melleville said, as soon as he could venture to speak, and not betray his real feelings.

"Yes about seven or eight years ago."

"Do you know for what purpose he went there?"

"To tend bar, he told me."

"For whom?"

"That I don't know. But it was for some base tavern keeper, no doubt."

Mr. Melleville would have inquired farther about Alice, but he dreaded to hear more. She had gone to Baltimore with her husband. That much he had learned. To Baltimore, he at once proceeded and commenced his search for Anderson amid the basest haunts of dissipation. Weeks passed, and he heard nothing about him. He was about abandoning the pursuit in that way, and resorting to advertisement, when in passing along a narrow street one evening, he saw a man staggering into the door of a poor tenement, followed immediately by a well-dressed man and a boy. A sudden impulse prompted him to follow. The scene he witnessed, has already been described.

Once more he looked upon the *face* of his child. But O, how changed! The bright young *cheek*, rich in its hue as the summer blossom, had lost its glow, and was now pale and thin. Her *eye*, that had shone with a happy sparkling luster, he saw but once lifted from its drooping position, and then it was wild for a moment with agony, and then fixed almost in despair. Her whole face beaming, the last time he saw it, with youth, health and beauty — was now molded into a cast of heart-touching sorrow, and marred with the lines of suffering!

For a few moments he gazed with the tears upon his cheeks, and then turning away, sick and faint, he was, in the next hour, hastening back to his home.

When he arrived back to Baltimore with Mrs. Melleville, they were just in time to witness the closing scene of *little Alice's* life.

The sad duties required were paid to all that was left of the sweet, innocent child, and then Mr. Melleville went back to his home, with Alice and her boy. The father was left by the old man to die in an almshouse, or lead an honest industrious life — just as he might choose. He had *no sympathy* for him.

CHAPTER 10.

"Dear sister!" ejaculated Mary, now recovered from her illness, folding the weakened form of Alice in her arms.

Alice laid her head upon Mary's shoulder and wept for a moment or two; and then lifting her face, asked for Ellen, and George, and William and Thomas.

"They have all been taken away from us, Alice!" her father said, with a strong effort at composure.

"Not dead!"

"Yes, my child, all dead," the tears gushing from his eyes. "We have but you and Mary left."

It were needless to picture, or attempt to picture the *wordless grief* of Mrs. Anderson's heart, when she found that the dear little ones she had so loved, years before, and whose bright young faces and glad voices she had so often yearned to see and hear, had all passed away like the figures in a dream. Sadly did she mourn for them many, many days. How often in her lonely exile, had she *thought* of these dear ones! How often had she *dreamed* or them! How often had her heart fluttered like a caged bird, eager to fly back to the parent tree, and gather those little ones again in her arms.

During her journey homeward, with her father and mother, she had not once asked for them. She had feared to do so. *Thirteen years* had rolled away, and she dared scarcely hope that changes had not been wrought in her father's house — that death had not been there. As the carriage that conveyed her back to her old home rolled up the broad avenue which led to the family mansion, her whole frame became agitated. She bent eagerly out of the window, and took in at a glance the old familiar objects and places which were dearer to her than any other upon the whole earth.

But only one of the dear ones she had left behind stood amid the group of servants that crowded around the door. It was *Mary*. She was soon in her arms. Her heart foreboded an evil answer, as she lifted her head from the bosom of her sister, and asked for those whom her eyes would no more see upon the earth. That answer confirmed all she had most dreaded to hear. They were sleeping their last, long, dreamless sleep! How silent and desolate, the *old mansion* seemed to her, as her footsteps echoed along its walls! She was *home again*. The long banished one had returned, but she found not all as she had left it. There were, alas! too many vacant seats at the table.

Thirteen years, spent in *exile, sorrow, pain and cruel neglect* — had wrought a great change on Alice. She did not seem to be herself; as she really was not the same being who had left her father's house a long time before, fondly confiding in one who had *basely wronged he*r. To her father and mother, it appeared almost impossible that the pale, bent, emaciated, careworn creature they had brought home — could be the sunny child once loved with such deep tenderness. Not less changed, was everything to the eye of Alice. Home, in all her day dreams, and night visions — home, the *Paradise* for which she ever sighed — was a spot invested with all that was lovely. The old mansion, the tall trees that clustered majestically around, and spread their leaf-laden branches as if in benediction over it — no spot on earth was so lovely as this.

But now, when her eyes had been blessed with the long-desired vision of home — now, when she again trod the halls and familiar rooms of the old homestead, and looked out upon the tall trees, green lawn, vine-clad arbors, and fragrant garden walks — a change was visible. The trees were the same old forest monarchs, and their arms depended with the same protecting grace — but the brightness and beauty with which her fond imagination had invested them, were gone. She wandered from room to room of the spacious mansion. All was *familiar* — and yet all was *changed*. Why was it? Alas*! the change was in her own heart!* She saw with *different eyes*. The deep, heart-searching trials of thirteen years of banishment, had taken off the *charm* from external things. They had no longer the power to delight which they had possessed, when life was fresh and young.

"I am not the same being I was — or else things have greatly changed," she said to Mary, a few days after her arrival at home. "Nothing looks to me as it did before I went away."

"And yet, all is as it then was. I see no difference," Mary replied.

"The change is no doubt *here*," Alice said, in a mournful voice, laying her hand upon her *heart* as she spoke. "I see with *different eyes*. But I wish it were not so. I wish it were to me as I had fondly hoped it would be — bright and beautiful as before."

“But why is it not so, dear sister?” Mary said, entwining her arms fondly about her neck, and pressing her lips to her cheek. “This is home — your own home. And we love you as tenderly — yes, far more tenderly and purely than we ever loved you.”

“I can hardly tell, Mary. Perhaps it is because there are so few to love me. Dear little *Willie!* How often have I dreamed of him! How often have I folded, involuntarily, my arms tightly across my bosom, when thinking of the sweet child, fondly imagining that he was in them, bending my face to lay it upon his downy cheek. Dear child! I shall see him no more! And sprightly *Ellen* — she, too, is gone — and *George*, and *Thomas!* All, all gone! And my own innocent child is numbered, too, with the lost ones!”

As Mrs. Anderson said this, her feelings gave way, and she wept for a long time. Mary’s tears were mingled with hers.

Gradually, however, Mrs. Anderson became more cheerful; and this, with the fact of her restoration to them, helped to buoy up the spirits of her father and mother, deeply depressed on account of the great affliction they had sustained in the loss of their children.

It was not long before Alice and their grandchild filled a large place in the aching void that had been left in their hearts. A *light* began to fall here and there in mellowed spots through the household, gradually diffusing itself, until, even to the eye of Mrs. Anderson, home wore something of its former charm.

One day, while the sisters were alone in their chamber, Alice drew a soiled and crumpled paper from her trunk, and holding it up, said: “Mary, you don’t know how often my heart has blessed you for this letter. It has remained the *one dear link* that has bound me to my home, telling me, that if all the rest had forgotten me, there was one heart whose love, no circumstances could change. I cannot tell how often I have read and wept over this pledge of your young and pure affection. *‘One heart is true to me still! One heart bears faithfully my image!’* I have often said, when thinking of home.”

Mary did not reply. Words, though forming on her tongue — her tongue refused to utter. But she silently threw her arms around her sister’s neck, and with hearts full of tenderness that separation and change had only rendered more fervent, they embraced each other.

In reclaiming his child, Mr. Melleville had acted with entire disregard to her husband, as much so as if he had not been living. Against him, his heart felt a *strong resentment*. As for Alice, as cruelly as he had abused her — he bore still the relation of a *husband* to her, and she could not think of him without some movement of that *tenderness* she had once felt. Months passed away, and she heard nothing of him. At length a letter came. It was from the keeper of the Alms-house at Baltimore. The news it brought was, that her husband had died there a few days before. A few natural tears were shed, and then her spirits rose as if reacting from a heavy pressure. He had lived to be the *loathsome skeleton* of which she had *dreamed* — and from whose disgusting and horrible presence she could not get free, until, as in her dream, her father had lifted the bony, putrid hand from her bosom.

And now we must *drop the curtain* on the history of Alice Melleville, or rather Mrs. Anderson. The stream that has long been fettered and wasted amid rocks, and tossed over precipices — has found at last a *peaceful valley*, where it moves along in stillness and purity.

THE END.