

BOOK V.

MISGIVINGS AND PREPARATIONS.

I.

It was long after midnight when Pierre returned to the house. He had rushed forth in that complete abandonment of soul, which, in so ardent a temperament, attends the first stages of any sudden and tremendous affliction; but now he returned in pallid composure, for the calm spirit of the night, and the then risen moon, and the late revealed stars, had all at last become as a strange subduing melody to him, which, though at first trampled and scorned, yet by degrees had stolen into the windings of his heart, and so shed abroad its own quietude in him. Now, from his height of composure, he firmly gazed abroad upon the charred landscape within him; as the timber man of Canada, forced to fly from the conflagration of his forests, comes back again when the fires have waned, and unblinkingly eyes the immeasurable fields of fire-brands that here and there glow beneath the wide canopy of smoke.

It has been said, that always when Pierre would seek solitude in its material shelter and walled isolation, then the closet communicating with his chamber was his elected haunt. So, going to his room, he took up the now dim-burning lamp he had left there, and instinctively entered that retreat, seating himself, with folded arms and bowed head, in the

accustomed dragon-footed old chair. With leaden feet, and heart now changing from iciness to a strange sort of indifference, and a numbing sensation stealing over him, he sat there awhile, till, like the resting traveler in snows, he began to struggle against this inertness as the most treacherous and deadliest of symptoms. He looked up, and found himself fronted by the no longer wholly enigmatical, but still ambiguously smiling picture of his father. Instantly all his consciousness and his anguish returned, but still without power to shake the grim tranquillity which possessed him. Yet endure the smiling portrait he could not; and obeying an irresistible nameless impulse, he rose, and without unhooking it, reversed the picture on the wall.

This brought to sight the defaced and dusty back, with some wrinkled, tattered paper over the joints, which had become loosened from the paste. "Oh, symbol of thy reversed idea in my soul," groaned Pierre; "thou shalt not hang thus. Rather cast thee utterly out, than conspicuously insult thee so. I will no more have a father." He removed the picture wholly from the wall, and the closet; and concealed it in a large chest, covered with blue chintz, and locked it up there. But still, in a square space of slightly discolored wall, the picture still left its shadowy, but vacant and desolate trace. He now strove to banish the least trace of his altered father, as fearful that at present all thoughts concerning him were not only entirely vain, but would prove fatally distracting and incapacitating to a mind, which was now loudly called upon, not only to endure a signal grief, but immediately to act upon it. Wild and cruel case, youth ever thinks; but mistakenly; for

Experience well knows, that action, though it seems an aggravation of woe, is really an alleviative; though permanently to alleviate pain, we must first dart some added pangs.

Nor now, though profoundly sensible that his whole previous moral being was overturned, and that for him the fair structure of the world must, in some then unknown way, be entirely rebuilt again, from the lowermost corner stone up; nor now did Pierre torment himself with the thought of that last desolation; and how the desolate place was to be made flourishing again. He seemed to feel that in his deepest soul, lurked an indefinite but potential faith, which could rule in the interregnum of all hereditary beliefs, and circumstantial persuasions; not wholly, he felt, was his soul in anarchy. The indefinite regent had assumed the scepter as its right; and Pierre was not entirely given up to his grief's utter pillage and sack.

To a less enthusiastic heart than Pierre's the foremost question in respect to Isabel which would have presented itself, would have been, What must I do? But such a question never presented itself to Pierre; the spontaneous responsiveness of his being left no shadow of dubiousness as to the direct point he must aim at. But if the object was plain, not so the path to it. How must I do it? was a problem for which at first there seemed no chance of solution. But without being entirely aware of it himself, Pierre was one of those spirits, which not in a determinate and sordid scrutiny of small pros and cons--but in an impulsive subservience to the god-like dictation of events themselves,

find at length the surest solution of perplexities, and the brightest prerogative of command. And as for him, What must I do? was a question already answered by the inspiration of the difficulty itself; so now he, as it were, unconsciously discharged his mind, for the present, of all distracting considerations concerning How he should do it; assured that the coming interview with Isabel could not but unerringly inspire him there. Still, the inspiration which had thus far directed him had not been entirely mute and undivulging as to many very bitter things which Pierre foresaw in the wide sea of trouble into which he was plunged.

If it be the sacred province and--by the wisest, deemed--the inestimable compensation of the heavier woes, that they both purge the soul of gay-hearted errors and replenish it with a saddened truth; that holy office is not so much accomplished by any covertly inductive reasoning process, whose original motive is received from the particular affliction; as it is the magical effect of the admission into man's inmost spirit of a before unexperienced and wholly inexplicable element, which like electricity suddenly received into any sultry atmosphere of the dark, in all directions splits itself into nimble lances of purifying light; which at one and the same instant discharge all the air of sluggishness and inform it with an illuminating property; so that objects which before, in the uncertainty of the dark, assumed shadowy and romantic outlines, now are lighted up in their substantial realities; so that in these flashing revelations of grief's wonderful fire, we see all things as they are; and though, when the electric

element is gone, the shadows once more descend, and the false outlines of objects again return; yet not with their former power to deceive; for now, even in the presence of the falsest aspects, we still retain the impressions of their immovable true ones, though, indeed, once more concealed.

Thus with Pierre. In the joyous young times, ere his great grief came upon him, all the objects which surrounded him were concealingly deceptive. Not only was the long-cherished image of his rather now transfigured before him from a green foliaged tree into a blasted trunk, but every other image in his mind attested the universality of that electrical light which had darted into his soul. Not even his lovely, immaculate mother, remained entirely untouched, unaltered by the shock. At her changed aspect, when first revealed to him, Pierre had gazed in a panic; and now, when the electrical storm had gone by, he retained in his mind, that so suddenly revealed image, with an infinite mournfulness. She, who in her less splendid but finer and more spiritual part, had ever seemed to Pierre not only as a beautiful saint before whom to offer up his daily orisons, but also as a gentle lady-counsellor and confessor, and her revered chamber as a soft satin-hung cabinet and confessional;--his mother was no longer this all-alluring thing; no more, he too keenly felt, could he go to his mother, as to one who entirely sympathized with him; as to one before whom he could almost unreservedly unbosom himself; as to one capable of pointing out to him the true path where he seemed most beset. Wonderful, indeed, was that electric insight which Fate had now given him into the vital character

of his mother. She well might have stood all ordinary tests; but when Pierre thought of the touchstone of his immense strait applied to her spirit, he felt profoundly assured that she would crumble into nothing before it.

She was a noble creature, but formed chiefly for the gilded prosperities of life, and hitherto mostly used to its unruffled serenities; bred and expanded, in all developments, under the sole influence of hereditary forms and world-usages. Not his refined, courtly, loving, equable mother, Pierre felt, could unreservedly, and like a heaven's heroine, meet the shock of his extraordinary emergency, and applaud, to his heart's echo, a sublime resolve, whose execution should call down the astonishment and the jeers of the world.

My mother!--dearest mother!--God hath given me a sister, and unto thee a daughter, and covered her with the world's extremest infamy and scorn, that so I and thou--thou, my mother, mightest gloriously own her, and acknowledge her, and,---- Nay, nay, groaned Pierre, never, never, could such syllables be one instant tolerated by her. Then, high-up, and towering, and all-forbidding before Pierre grew the before unthought of wonderful edifice of his mother's immense pride;--her pride of birth, her pride of affluence, her pride of purity, and all the pride of high-born, refined, and wealthy Life, and all the Semiramian pride of woman. Then he staggered back upon himself, and only found support in himself. Then Pierre felt that deep in him lurked a divine unidentifiableness, that owned no earthly kith or kin. Yet was this

feeling entirely lonesome, and orphan-like. Fain, then, for one moment, would he have recalled the thousand sweet illusions of Life; tho' purchased at the price of Life's Truth; so that once more he might not feel himself driven out an infant Ishmael into the desert, with no maternal Hagar to accompany and comfort him.

Still, were these emotions without prejudice to his own love for his mother, and without the slightest bitterness respecting her; and, least of all, there was no shallow disdain toward her of superior virtue. He too plainly saw, that not his mother had made his mother; but the Infinite Haughtiness had first fashioned her; and then the haughty world had further molded her; nor had a haughty Ritual omitted to finish her.

Wonderful, indeed, we repeat it, was the electrical insight which Pierre now had into the character of his mother, for not even the vivid recalling of her lavish love for him could suffice to gainsay his sudden persuasion. Love me she doth, thought Pierre, but how? Loveth she me with the love past all understanding? that love, which in the loved one's behalf, would still calmly confront all hate? whose most triumphing hymn, triumphs only by swelling above all opposing taunts and despite?--Loving mother, here have I a loved, but world-infamous sister to own;--and if thou lovest me, mother, thy love will love her, too, and in the proudest drawing-room take her so much the more proudly by the hand.--And as Pierre thus in fancy led Isabel before his mother; and in fancy led her away, and felt his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, with her transfixing look of incredulous, scornful horror; then Pierre's

enthusiastic heart sunk in and in, and caved clean away in him, as he so poignantly felt his first feeling of the dreary heart-vacancies of the conventional life. Oh heartless, proud, ice-gilded world, how I hate thee, he thought, that thy tyrannous, insatiate grasp, thus now in my bitterest need--thus doth rob me even of my mother; thus doth make me now doubly an orphan, without a green grave to bedew. My tears,--could I weep them,--must now be wept in the desolate places; now to me is it, as though both father and mother had gone on distant voyages, and, returning, died in unknown seas.

She loveth me, ay;--but why? Had I been cast in a cripple's mold, how then? Now, do I remember that in her most caressing love, there ever gleamed some scaly, glittering folds of pride. Me she loveth with pride's love; in me she thinks she seeth her own curled and haughty beauty; before my glass she stands,--pride's priestess--and to her mirrored image, not to me, she offers up her offerings of kisses. Oh, small thanks I owe thee, Favorable Goddess, that didst clothe this form with all the beauty of a man, that so thou mightest hide from me all the truth of a man. Now I see that in his beauty a man is snared, and made stone-blind, as the worm within its silk. Welcome then be Ugliness and Poverty and Infamy, and all ye other crafty ministers of Truth, that beneath the hoods and rags of beggars hide yet the belts and crowns of kings. And dimmed be all beauty that must own the clay; and dimmed be all wealth, and all delight, and all the annual prosperities of earth, that but gild the links, and stud with diamonds the base rivets and the chains of Lies. Oh, now methinks I a little see why of old the men of

Truth went barefoot, girded with a rope, and ever moving under mournfulness as underneath a canopy. I remember now those first wise words, wherewith our Savior Christ first spoke in his first speech to men:--'Blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed they that mourn.' Oh, hitherto I have but piled up words; bought books, and bought some small experiences, and builded me in libraries; now I sit down and read. Oh, now I know the night, and comprehend the sorceries of the moon, and all the dark persuadings that have their birth in storms and winds. Oh, not long will Joy abide, when Truth doth come; nor Grief her laggard be. Well may this head hang on my breast--it holds too much; well may my heart knock at my ribs,--prisoner impatient of his iron bars. Oh, men are jailers all; jailers of themselves; and in Opinion's world ignorantly hold their noblest part a captive to their vilest; as disguised royal Charles when caught by peasants. The heart! the heart! 'tis God's anointed; let me pursue the heart!

II.

But if the presentiment in Pierre of his mother's pride, as bigotedly hostile to the noble design he cherished; if this feeling was so wretched to him; far more so was the thought of another and a deeper hostility, arising from her more spiritual part. For her pride would not be so scornful, as her wedded memories reject with horror, the unmentionable imputation involved in the mere fact of Isabel's existence. In what galleries of conjecture, among what horrible haunting

toads and scorpions, would such a revelation lead her? When Pierre thought of this, the idea of at all divulging his secret to his mother, not only was made repelling by its hopelessness, as an infirm attack upon her citadel of pride, but was made in the last degree inhuman, as torturing her in her tenderest recollections, and desecrating the whitest altar in her sanctuary.

Though the conviction that he must never disclose his secret to his mother was originally an unmeditated, and as it were, an inspired one; yet now he was almost pains-taking in scrutinizing the entire circumstances of the matter, in order that nothing might be overlooked. For already he vaguely felt, that upon the concealment, or the disclosure of this thing, with reference to his mother, hinged his whole future course of conduct, his whole earthly weal, and Isabel's. But the more and the more that he pondered upon it, the more and the more fixed became his original conviction. He considered that in the case of a disclosure, all human probability pointed to his mother's scornful rejection of his suit as a pleader for Isabel's honorable admission into the honorable mansion of the Glendinnings. Then in that case, unconsciously thought Pierre, I shall have given the deep poison of a miserable truth to my mother, without benefit to any, and positive harm to all. And through Pierre's mind there then darted a baleful thought; how that the truth should not always be paraded; how that sometimes a lie is heavenly, and truth infernal. Filially infernal, truly, thought Pierre, if I should by one vile breath of truth, blast my father's blessed memory in the bosom of my mother, and plant the sharpest dagger

of grief in her soul. I will not do it!

But as this resolution in him opened up so dark and wretched a background to his view, he strove to think no more of it now, but postpone it until the interview with Isabel should have in some way more definitely shaped his purposes. For, when suddenly encountering the shock of new and unanswerable revelations, which he feels must revolutionize all the circumstances of his life, man, at first, ever seeks to shun all conscious definitiveness in his thoughts and purposes; as assured, that the lines that shall precisely define his present misery, and thereby lay out his future path; these can only be defined by sharp stakes that cut into his heart.

III.

Most melancholy of all the hours of earth, is that one long, gray hour, which to the watcher by the lamp intervenes between the night and day; when both lamp and watcher, over-tasked, grow sickly in the pallid light; and the watcher, seeking for no gladness in the dawn, sees naught but garish vapors there; and almost invokes a curse upon the public day, that shall invade his lonely night of sufferance.

The one small window of his closet looked forth upon the meadow, and across the river, and far away to the distant heights, storied with the great deeds of the Glendinnings. Many a time had Pierre sought this

window before sunrise, to behold the blood-red, out-flinging dawn, that would wrap those purple hills as with a banner. But now the morning dawned in mist and rain, and came drizzingly upon his heart. Yet as the day advanced, and once more showed to him the accustomed features of his room by that natural light, which, till this very moment, had never lighted him but to his joy; now that the day, and not the night, was witness to his woe; now first the dread reality came appallingly upon him. A sense of horrible forlornness, feebleness, impotence, and infinite, eternal desolation possessed him. It was not merely mental, but corporeal also. He could not stand; and when he tried to sit, his arms fell floorwards as tied to leaden weights. Dragging his ball and chain, he fell upon his bed; for when the mind is cast down, only in sympathetic proneness can the body rest; whence the bed is often Grief's first refuge. Half stupefied, as with opium, he fell into the profoundest sleep.

In an hour he awoke, instantly recalling all the previous night; and now finding himself a little strengthened, and lying so quietly and silently there, almost without bodily consciousness, but his soul unobtrusively alert; careful not to break the spell by the least movement of a limb, or the least turning of his head. Pierre steadfastly faced his grief, and looked deep down into its eyes; and thoroughly, and calmly, and summarily comprehended it now--so at least he thought--and what it demanded from him; and what he must quickly do in its more immediate sequences; and what that course of conduct was, which he must pursue in the coming unevadable breakfast interview with his mother; and what, for

the present must be his plan with Lucy. His time of thought was brief. Rising from his bed, he steadied himself upright a moment; and then going to his writing-desk, in a few at first faltering, but at length unlagging lines, traced the following note:

"I must ask pardon of you, Lucy, for so strangely absenting myself last night. But you know me well enough to be very sure that I would not have done so without important cause. I was in the street approaching your cottage, when a message reached me, imperatively calling me away. It is a matter which will take up all my time and attention for, possibly, two or three days. I tell you this, now, that you may be prepared for it. And I know that however unwelcome this may be to you, you will yet bear with it for my sake; for, indeed, and indeed, Lucy dear, I would not dream of staying from you so long, unless irresistibly coerced to it. Do not come to the mansion until I come to you; and do not manifest any curiosity or anxiety about me, should you chance in the interval to see my mother in any other place. Keep just as cheerful as if I were by you all the time. Do this, now, I conjure you; and so farewell!"

He folded the note, and was about sealing it, when he hesitated a moment, and instantly unfolding it, read it to himself. But he could not adequately comprehend his own writing, for a sudden cloud came over him. This passed; and taking his pen hurriedly again, he added the following postscript:

"Lucy, this note may seem mysterious; but if it shall, I did not mean to make it so; nor do I know that I could have helped it. But the only reason is this, Lucy: the matter which I have alluded to, is of such a nature, that, for the present I stand virtually pledged not to disclose it to any person but those more directly involved in it. But where one can not reveal the thing itself, it only makes it the more mysterious to write round it this way. So merely know me entirely unmenaced in person, and eternally faithful to you; and so be at rest till I see you."

Then sealing the note, and ringing the bell, he gave it in strict charge to a servant, with directions to deliver it at the earliest practicable moment, and not wait for any answer. But as the messenger was departing the chamber, he called him back, and taking the sealed note again, and hollowing it in his hand, scrawled inside of it in pencil the following words: "Don't write me; don't inquire for me;" and then returned it to the man, who quitted him, leaving Pierre rooted in thought in the middle of the room.

But he soon roused himself, and left the mansion; and seeking the cool, refreshing meadow stream, where it formed a deep and shady pool, he bathed; and returning invigorated to his chamber, changed his entire dress; in the little trifling concernments of his toilette, striving utterly to banish all thought of that weight upon his soul. Never did he array himself with more solicitude for effect. It was one of his fond mother's whims to perfume the lighter contents of his wardrobe; and it

was one of his own little femininences--of the sort sometimes curiously observable in very robust-bodied and big-souled men, as Mohammed, for example--to be very partial to all pleasant essences. So that when once more he left the mansion in order to freshen his cheek anew to meet the keen glance of his mother--to whom the secret of his possible pallor could not be divulged; Pierre went forth all redolent; but alas! his body only the embalming cerements of his buried dead within.

IV.

His stroll was longer than he meant; and when he returned up the Linden walk leading to the breakfast-room, and ascended the piazza steps, and glanced into the wide window there, he saw his mother seated not far from the table; her face turned toward his own; and heard her gay voice, and peculiarly light and buoyant laugh, accusing him, and not her, of being the morning's laggard now. Dates was busy among some spoons and napkins at a side-stand.

Summoning all possible cheerfulness to his face, Pierre entered the room. Remembering his carefulness in bathing and dressing; and knowing that there is no air so calculated to give bloom to the cheek as that of a damply fresh, cool, and misty morning, Pierre persuaded himself that small trace would now be found on him of his long night of watching.

'Good morning, sister;--Such a famous stroll! I have been all the way to---- '

'Where? good heavens! where? for such a look as that!--why, Pierre, Pierre? what ails thee? Dates, I will touch the bell presently.'

As the good servitor fumbled for a moment among the napkins, as if unwilling to stir so summarily from his accustomed duty, and not without some of a well and long-tried old domestic's vague, intermitted murmuring, at being wholly excluded from a matter of family interest; Mrs. Glendinning kept her fixed eye on Pierre, who, unmindful that the breakfast was not yet entirely ready, seating himself at the table, began helping himself--though but nervously enough--to the cream and sugar. The moment the door closed on Dates, the mother sprang to her feet, and threw her arms around her son; but in that embrace, Pierre miserably felt that their two hearts beat not together in such unison as before.

'What haggard thing possesses thee, my son? Speak, this is incomprehensible! Lucy;--fiel!--not she?--no love-quarrel there;--speak, speak, my darling boy!

'My dear sister,' began Pierre.

'Sister me not, now, Pierre;--I am thy mother.'

'Well, then, dear mother, thou art quite as incomprehensible to me as I to---- '

'Talk faster, Pierre--this calmness freezes me. Tell me; for, by my soul, something most wonderful must have happened to thee. Thou art my son, and I command thee. It is not Lucy; it is something else. Tell me.'

'My dear mother,' said Pierre, impulsively moving his chair backward from the table, 'if thou wouldst only believe me when I say it, I have really nothing to tell thee. Thou knowest that sometimes, when I happen to feel very foolishly studious and philosophical, I sit up late in my chamber; and then, regardless of the hour, foolishly run out into the air, for a long stroll across the meadows. I took such a stroll last night; and had but little time left for napping afterward; and what nap I had I was none the better for. But I won't be so silly again, soon; so do, dearest mother, stop looking at me, and let us to breakfast.--Dates! Touch the bell there, sister.'

'Stay, Pierre!--There is a heaviness in this hour. I feel, I know, that thou art deceiving me;--perhaps I erred in seeking to wrest thy secret from thee; but believe me, my son, I never thought thou hadst any secret thing from me, except thy first love for Lucy--and that, my own womanhood tells me, was most pardonable and right. But now, what can it be? Pierre, Pierre! consider well before thou determinest upon withholding confidence from me. I am thy mother. It may prove a fatal thing. Can that be good and virtuous, Pierre, which shrinks from a

mother's knowledge? Let us not loose hands so, Pierre; thy confidence from me, mine goes from thee. Now, shall I touch the bell?'

Pierre, who had thus far been vainly seeking to occupy his hands with his cap and spoon; he now paused, and unconsciously fastened a speechless glance of mournfulness upon his mother. Again he felt presentiments of his mother's newly-revealed character. He foresaw the supposed indignation of her wounded pride; her gradually estranged affections thereupon; he knew her firmness, and her exaggerated ideas of the inalienable allegiance of a son. He trembled to think, that now indeed was come the first initial moment of his heavy trial. But though he knew all the significance of his mother's attitude, as she stood before him, intently eyeing him, with one hand upon the bell-cord; and though he felt that the same opening of the door that should now admit Dates, could not but give eternal exit to all confidence between him and his mother; and though he felt, too, that this was his mother's latent thought; nevertheless, he was girded up in his well-considered resolution.

"Pierre, Pierre! shall I touch the bell?"

"Mother, stay!--yes do, sister."

The bell was rung; and at the summons Dates entered; and looking with some significance at Mrs. Glendinning, said,--"His Reverence has come, my mistress, and is now in the west parlor."

"Show Mr. Falsgrave in here immediately; and bring up the coffee; did I not tell you I expected him to breakfast this morning?"

"Yes, my mistress; but I thought that--that--just then"--glancing alarmedly from mother to son.

"Oh, my good Dates, nothing has happened," cried Mrs. Glendinning, lightly, and with a bitter smile, looking toward her son,--"show Mr. Falsgrave in. Pierre, I did not see thee, to tell thee, last night; but Mr. Falsgrave breakfasts with us by invitation. I was at the parsonage yesterday, to see him about that wretched affair of Delly, and we are finally to settle upon what is to be done this morning. But my mind is made up concerning Ned; no such profligate shall pollute this place; nor shall the disgraceful Delly."

Fortunately, the abrupt entrance of the clergyman, here turned away attention from the sudden pallor of Pierre's countenance, and afforded him time to rally.

"Good morning, madam; good morning, sir;" said Mr. Falsgrave, in a singularly mild, flute-like voice, turning to Mrs. Glendinning and her son; the lady receiving him with answering cordiality, but Pierre too embarrassed just then to be equally polite. As for one brief moment Mr. Falsgrave stood before the pair, ere taking the offered chair from Dates, his aspect was eminently attractive.

There are certain ever-to-be-cherished moments in the life of almost any man, when a variety of little foregoing circumstances all unite to make him temporarily oblivious of whatever may be hard and bitter in his life, and also to make him most amiably and ruddily disposed; when the scene and company immediately before him are highly agreeable; and if at such a time he chance involuntarily to put himself into a scenically favorable bodily posture; then, in that posture, however transient, thou shalt catch the noble stature of his Better Angel; catch a heavenly glimpse of the latent heavenliness of man. It was so with Mr. Falsgrave now. Not a house within a circuit of fifty miles that he preferred entering before the mansion-house of Saddle Meadows; and though the business upon which he had that morning come, was any thing but relishable to him, yet that subject was not in his memory then. Before him stood united in one person, the most exalted lady and the most storied beauty of all the country round; and the finest, most intellectual, and most congenial youth he knew. Before him also, stood the generous foundress and the untiring patroness of the beautiful little marble church, consecrated by the good Bishop, not four years gone by. Before him also, stood--though in polite disguise--the same untiring benefactress, from whose purse, he could not help suspecting, came a great part of his salary, nominally supplied by the rental of the pews. He had been invited to breakfast; a meal, which, in a well-appointed country family, is the most cheerful circumstance of daily life; he smelt all Java's spices in the aroma from the silver coffee-urn; and well he knew, what liquid deliciousness would soon come

from it. Besides all this, and many more minutenesses of the kind, he was conscious that Mrs. Glendinning entertained a particular partiality for him (though not enough to marry him, as he ten times knew by very bitter experience), and that Pierre was not behindhand in his esteem.

And the clergyman was well worthy of it. Nature had been royally bountiful to him in his person. In his happier moments, as the present, his face was radiant with a courtly, but mild benevolence; his person was nobly robust and dignified; while the remarkable smallness of his feet, and the almost infantile delicacy, and vivid whiteness and purity of his hands, strikingly contrasted with his fine girth and stature. For in countries like America, where there is no distinct hereditary caste of gentlemen, whose order is factitiously perpetuated as race-horses and lords are in kingly lands; and especially, in those agricultural districts, where, of a hundred hands, that drop a ballot for the Presidency, ninety-nine shall be of the brownest and the brawniest; in such districts, this daintiness of the fingers, when united with a generally manly aspect, assumes a remarkableness unknown in European nations.

This most prepossessing form of the clergyman lost nothing by the character of his manners, which were polished and unobtrusive, but peculiarly insinuating, without the least appearance of craftiness or affectation. Heaven had given him his fine, silver-keyed person for a flute to play on in this world; and he was nearly the perfect master of it. His graceful motions had the undulatoriness of melodious sounds.

You almost thought you heard, not saw him. So much the wonderful, yet natural gentleman he seemed, that more than once Mrs. Glendinning had held him up to Pierre as a splendid example of the polishing and gentlemanizing influences of Christianity upon the mind and manners; declaring, that extravagant as it might seem, she had always been of his father's fancy,--that no man could be a complete gentleman, and preside with dignity at his own table, unless he partook of the church's sacraments. Nor in Mr. Falsgrave's case was this maxim entirely absurd. The child of a poor northern farmer who had wedded a pretty sempstress, the clergyman had no heraldic line of ancestry to show, as warrant and explanation of his handsome person and gentle manners; the first, being the willful partiality of nature; and the second, the consequence of a scholastic life, attempered by a taste for the choicest female society, however small, which he had always regarded as the best relish of existence. If now his manners thus responded to his person, his mind answered to them both, and was their finest illustration. Besides his eloquent persuasiveness in the pulpit, various fugitive papers upon subjects of nature, art, and literature, attested not only his refined affinity to all beautiful things, visible or invisible; but likewise that he possessed a genius for celebrating such things, which in a less indolent and more ambitious nature, would have been sure to have gained a fair poet's name ere now. For this Mr. Falsgrave was just hovering upon his prime of years; a period which, in such a man, is the sweetest, and, to a mature woman, by far the most attractive of manly life. Youth has not yet completely gone with its beauty, grace, and strength; nor has age at all come with its decrepitudes; though the finest undressed

parts of it--its mildness and its wisdom--have gone on before, as decorous chamberlains precede the sedan of some crutched king.

Such was this Mr. Falsgrave, who now sat at Mrs. Glendinning's breakfast table, a corner of one of that lady's generous napkins so inserted into his snowy bosom, that its folds almost invested him as far down as the table's edge; and he seemed a sacred priest, indeed, breakfasting in his surplice.

"Pray, Mr. Falsgrave," said Mrs. Glendinning, "break me off a bit of that roll."

Whether or not his sacerdotal experiences had strangely refined and spiritualized so simple a process as breaking bread; or whether it was from the spotless aspect of his hands: certain it is that Mr. Falsgrave acquitted himself on this little occasion, in a manner that beheld of old by Leonardo, might have given that artist no despicable hint touching his celestial painting. As Pierre regarded him, sitting there so mild and meek; such an image of white-browed and white-handed, and napkined immaculateness; and as he felt the gentle humane radiations which came from the clergyman's manly and rounded beautifulness; and as he remembered all the good that he knew of this man, and all the good that he had heard of him, and could recall no blemish in his character; and as in his own concealed misery and forlornness, he contemplated the open benevolence, and beaming excellent-heartedness of Mr. Falsgrave, the thought darted through his mind, that if any living being was

capable of giving him worthy counsel in his strait; and if to any one he could go with Christian propriety and some small hopefulness, that person was the one before him.

"Pray, Mr. Glendinning," said the clergyman, pleasantly, as Pierre was silently offering to help him to some tongue--"don't let me rob you of it--pardon me, but you seem to have very little yourself this morning, I think. An execrable pun, I know: but"--turning toward Mrs. Glendinning--"when one is made to feel very happy, one is somehow apt to say very silly things. Happiness and silliness--ah, it's a suspicious coincidence."

"Mr. Falsgrave," said the hostess--"Your cup is empty. Dates!--We were talking yesterday, Mr. Falsgrave, concerning that vile fellow, Ned."

"Well, Madam," responded the gentleman, a very little uneasily.

"He shall not stay on any ground of mine; my mind is made up, sir. Infamous man!--did he not have a wife as virtuous and beautiful now, as when I first gave her away at your altar?--It was the sheerest and most gratuitous profligacy."

The clergyman mournfully and assentingly moved his head.

"Such men," continued the lady, flushing with the sincerest indignation--"are to my way of thinking more detestable than murderers."

"That is being a little hard upon them, my dear Madam," said Mr. Falsgrave, mildly.

"Do you not think so, Pierre"--now, said the lady, turning earnestly upon her son--"is not the man, who has sinned like that Ned, worse than a murderer? Has he not sacrificed one woman completely, and given infamy to another--to both of them--for their portion. If his own legitimate boy should now hate him, I could hardly blame him."

"My dear Madam," said the clergyman, whose eyes having followed Mrs. Glendinning's to her son's countenance, and marking a strange trepidation there, had thus far been earnestly scrutinizing Pierre's not wholly repressible emotion;--"My dear Madam," he said, slightly bending over his stately episcopal-looking person--"Virtue has, perhaps, an over-ardent champion in you; you grow too warm; but Mr. Glendinning, here, he seems to grow too cold. Pray, favor us with your views, Mr. Glendinning?"

"I will not think now of the man," said Pierre, slowly, and looking away from both his auditors--"let us speak of Delly and her infant--she has, or had one, I have loosely heard;--their case is miserable indeed."

"The mother deserves it," said the lady, inflexibly--"and the child--Reverend sir, what are the words of the Bible?"

"The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children to the third generation," said Mr. Falsgrave, with some slight reluctance in his tones. "But Madam, that does not mean, that the community is in any way to take the infamy of the children into their own voluntary hands, as the conscious delegated stewards of God's inscrutable dispensations. Because it is declared that the infamous consequences of sin shall be hereditary, it does not follow that our personal and active loathing of sin, should descend from the sinful sinner to his sinless child."

"I understand you, sir," said Mrs. Glendinning, coloring slightly, "you think me too censorious. But if we entirely forget the parentage of the child, and every way receive the child as we would any other, feel for it in all respects the same, and attach no sign of ignominy to it--how then is the Bible dispensation to be fulfilled? Do we not then put ourselves in the way of its fulfilment, and is that wholly free from impiety?"

Here it was the clergyman's turn to color a little, and there was a just perceptible tremor of the under lip.

"Pardon me," continued the lady, courteously, "but if there is any one blemish in the character of the Reverend Mr. Falsgrave, it is that the benevolence of his heart, too much warps in him the holy rigor of our Church's doctrines. For my part, as I loathe the man, I loathe the woman, and never desire to behold the child."

A pause ensued, during which it was fortunate for Pierre, that by the social sorcery of such occasions as the present, the eyes of all three were intent upon the cloth; all three for the moment, giving loose to their own distressful meditations upon the subject in debate, and Mr. Falsgrave vexedly thinking that the scene was becoming a little embarrassing.

Pierre was the first who spoke; as before, he steadfastly kept his eyes away from both his auditors; but though he did not designate his mother, something in the tone of his voice showed that what he said was addressed more particularly to her.

"Since we seem to have been strangely drawn into the ethical aspect of this melancholy matter," said he, "suppose we go further in it; and let me ask, how it should be between the legitimate and the illegitimate child--children of one father--when they shall have passed their childhood?"

Here the clergyman quickly raising his eyes, looked as surprised and searchingly at Pierre, as his politeness would permit.

"Upon my word"--said Mrs. Glendinning, hardly less surprised, and making no attempt at disguising it--"this is an odd question you put; you have been more attentive to the subject than I had fancied. But what do you mean, Pierre? I did not entirely understand you."

"Should the legitimate child shun the illegitimate, when one father is father to both?" rejoined Pierre, bending his head still further over his plate.

The clergyman looked a little down again, and was silent; but still turned his head slightly sideways toward his hostess, as if awaiting some reply to Pierre from her.

"Ask the world, Pierre"--said Mrs. Glendinning warmly--"and ask your own heart."

"My own heart? I will, Madam"--said Pierre, now looking up steadfastly; "but what do you think, Mr. Falsgrave?" letting his glance drop again--"should the one shun the other; should the one refuse his highest sympathy and perfect love for the other, especially if that other be deserted by all the rest of the world? What think you would have been our blessed Savior's thoughts on such a matter? And what was that he so mildly said to the adulteress?"

A swift color passed over the clergyman's countenance, suffusing even his expanded brow; he slightly moved in his chair, and looked uncertainly from Pierre to his mother. He seemed as a shrewd, benevolent-minded man, placed between opposite opinions--merely opinions--who, with a full, and doubly-differing persuasion in himself, still refrains from uttering it, because of an irresistible dislike to manifesting an absolute dissent from the honest convictions of any

person, whom he both socially and morally esteems.

"Well, what do you reply to my son?"--said Mrs. Glendinning at last.

"Madam and sir"--said the clergyman, now regaining his entire self-possession. "It is one of the social disadvantages which we of the pulpit labor under, that we are supposed to know more of the moral obligations of humanity than other people. And it is a still more serious disadvantage to the world, that our unconsidered, conversational opinions on the most complex problems of ethics, are too apt to be considered authoritative, as indirectly proceeding from the church itself. Now, nothing can be more erroneous than such notions; and nothing so embarrasses me, and deprives me of that entire serenity, which is indispensable to the delivery of a careful opinion on moral subjects, than when sudden questions of this sort are put to me in company. Pardon this long preamble, for I have little more to say. It is not every question, however direct, Mr. Glendinning, which can be conscientiously answered with a yes or no. Millions of circumstances modify all moral questions; so that though conscience may possibly dictate freely in any known special case; yet, by one universal maxim, to embrace all moral contingencies,--this is not only impossible, but the attempt, to me, seems foolish."

At this instant, the surplice-like napkin dropped from the clergyman's bosom, showing a minute but exquisitely cut cameo brooch, representing the allegorical union of the serpent and dove. It had been the gift of

an appreciative friend, and was sometimes worn on secular occasions like the present.

"I agree with you, sir"--said Pierre, bowing. "I fully agree with you. And now, madam, let us talk of something else."

"You madam me very punctiliously this morning, Mr. Glendinning"--said his mother, half-bitterly smiling, and half-openly offended, but still more surprised at Pierre's frigid demeanor.

"Honor thy father and mother;" said Pierre--"both father and mother," he unconsciously added. "And now that it strikes me, Mr. Falsgrave, and now that we have become so strangely polemical this morning, let me say, that as that command is justly said to be the only one with a promise, so it seems to be without any contingency in the application. It would seem--would it not, sir?--that the most deceitful and hypocritical of fathers should be equally honored by the son, as the purest."

"So it would certainly seem, according to the strict letter of the Decalogue--certainly."

"And do you think, sir, that it should be so held, and so applied in actual life? For instance, should I honor my father, if I knew him to be a seducer?"

"Pierre! Pierre!" said his mother, profoundly coloring, and half rising;
"there is no need of these argumentative assumptions. You very immensely
forget yourself this morning."

"It is merely the interest of the general question, Madam," returned
Pierre, coldly. "I am sorry. If your former objection does not apply
here, Mr. Falsgrave, will you favor me with an answer to my question?"

"There you are again, Mr. Glendinning," said the clergyman, thankful for
Pierre's hint; "that is another question in morals absolutely incapable
of a definite answer, which shall be universally applicable." Again the
surplice-like napkin chanced to drop.

"I am tacitly rebuked again then, sir," said Pierre, slowly; "but I
admit that perhaps you are again in the right. And now, Madam, since Mr.
Falsgrave and yourself have a little business together, to which my
presence is not necessary, and may possibly prove quite dispensable,
permit me to leave you. I am going off on a long ramble, so you need not
wait dinner for me. Good morning, Mr. Falsgrave; good morning, Madam,"
looking toward his mother.

As the door closed upon him, Mr. Falsgrave spoke--"Mr. Glendinning looks
a little pale to-day: has he been ill?"

"Not that I know of," answered the lady, indifferently, "but did you
ever see young gentleman so stately as he was! Extraordinary!" she

murmured; "what can this mean--Madam--Madam? But your cup is empty again, sir"--reaching forth her hand.

"No more, no more, Madam," said the clergyman.

"Madam? pray don't Madam me any more, Mr. Falsgrave; I have taken a sudden hatred to that title."

"Shall it be Your Majesty, then?" said the clergyman, gallantly; "the May Queens are so styled, and so should be the Queens of October."

Here the lady laughed. "Come," said she, "let us go into another room, and settle the affair of that infamous Ned and that miserable Delly."

V.

The swiftness and unrepellableness of the billow which, with its first shock, had so profoundly whelmed Pierre, had not only poured into his soul a tumult of entirely new images and emotions, but, for the time, it almost entirely drove out of him all previous ones. The things that any way bore directly upon the pregnant fact of Isabel, these things were all animate and vividly present to him; but the things which bore more upon himself, and his own personal condition, as now forever involved with his sister's, these things were not so animate and present to him. The conjectured past of Isabel took mysterious hold of his father;

therefore, the idea of his father tyrannized over his imagination; and the possible future of Isabel, as so essentially though indirectly compromisable by whatever course of conduct his mother might hereafter ignorantly pursue with regard to himself, as henceforth, through Isabel, forever altered to her; these considerations brought his mother with blazing prominence before him.

Heaven, after all, hath been a little merciful to the miserable man; not entirely untempered to human nature are the most direful blasts of Fate. When on all sides assailed by prospects of disaster, whose final ends are in terror hidden from it, the soul of man--either, as instinctively convinced that it can not battle with the whole host at once; or else, benevolently blinded to the larger arc of the circle which menacingly hems it in;--whichever be the truth, the soul of man, thus surrounded, can not, and does never intelligently confront the totality of its wretchedness. The bitter drug is divided into separate draughts for him: to-day he takes one part of his woe; to-morrow he takes more; and so on, till the last drop is drunk.

Not that in the despotism of other things, the thought of Lucy, and the un conjecturable suffering into which she might so soon be plunged, owing to the threatening uncertainty of the state of his own future, as now in great part and at all hazards dedicated to Isabel; not that this thought had thus far been alien to him. Icy-cold, and serpent-like, it had overlayingly crawled in upon his other shuddering imaginings; but those other thoughts would as often upheave again, and absorb it into

themselves, so that it would in that way soon disappear from his cotemporary apprehension. The prevailing thoughts connected with Isabel he now could front with prepared and open eyes; but the occasional thought of Lucy, when that started up before him, he could only cover his bewildered eyes with his bewildered hands. Nor was this the cowardice of selfishness, but the infinite sensitiveness of his soul. He could bear the agonizing thought of Isabel, because he was immediately resolved to help her, and to assuage a fellow-being's grief; but, as yet, he could not bear the thought of Lucy, because the very resolution that promised balm to Isabel obscurely involved the everlasting peace of Lucy, and therefore aggravatingly threatened a far more than fellow-being's happiness.

Well for Pierre it was, that the penciling presentiments of his mind concerning Lucy as quickly erased as painted their tormenting images. Standing half-befogged upon the mountain of his Fate, all that part of the wide panorama was wrapped in clouds to him; but anon those concealings slid aside, or rather, a quick rent was made in them; disclosing far below, half-veiled in the lower mist, the winding tranquil vale and stream of Lucy's previous happy life; through the swift cloud-rent he caught one glimpse of her expectant and angelic face peeping from the honey-suckled window of her cottage; and the next instant the stormy pinions of the clouds locked themselves over it again; and all was hidden as before; and all went confused in whirling rack and vapor as before. Only by unconscious inspiration, caught from the agencies invisible to man, had he been enabled to write that first

obscurely announcing note to Lucy; wherein the collectedness, and the mildness, and the calmness, were but the natural though insidious precursors of the stunning bolts on bolts to follow.

But, while thus, for the most part wrapped from his consciousness and vision, still, the condition of his Lucy, as so deeply affected now, was still more and more disentangling and defining itself from out its nearer mist, and even beneath the general upper fog. For when unfathomably stirred, the subtler elements of man do not always reveal themselves in the concocting act; but, as with all other potencies, show themselves chiefly in their ultimate resolvings and results. Strange wild work, and awfully symmetrical and reciprocal, was that now going on within the self-apparently chaotic breast of Pierre. As in his own conscious determinations, the mournful Isabel was being snatched from her captivity of world-wide abandonment; so, deeper down in the more secret chambers of his unsuspecting soul, the smiling Lucy, now as dead and ashy pale, was being bound a ransom for Isabel's salvation. Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. Eternally inexorable and unconcerned is Fate, a mere heartless trader in men's joys and woes.

Nor was this general and spontaneous self-concealment of all the most momentous interests of his love, as irretrievably involved with Isabel and his resolution respecting her; nor was this unbidden thing in him unseconded by the prompting of his own conscious judgment, when in the tyranny of the master-event itself, that judgment was permitted some infrequent play. He could not but be aware, that all meditation on Lucy

now was worse than useless. How could he now map out his and her young life-chart, when all was yet misty-white with creamy breakers! Still more: divinely dedicated as he felt himself to be; with divine commands upon him to befriend and champion Isabel, through all conceivable contingencies of Time and Chance; how could he insure himself against the insidious inroads of self-interest, and hold intact all his unselfish magnanimities, if once he should permit the distracting thought of Lucy to dispute with Isabel's the pervading possession of his soul?

And if--though but unconsciously as yet--he was almost superhumanly prepared to make a sacrifice of all objects dearest to him, and cut himself away from his last hopes of common happiness, should they cross his grand enthusiast resolution;--if this was so with him; then, how light as gossamer, and thinner and more impalpable than airiest threads of gauze, did he hold all common conventional regardings;--his hereditary duty to his mother, his pledged worldly faith and honor to the hand and seal of his affiancement?

Not that at present all these things did thus present themselves to Pierre; but these things were foetally forming in him. Impregnations from high enthusiasms he had received; and the now incipient offspring which so stirred, with such painful, vague vibrations in his soul; this, in its mature development, when it should at last come forth in living deeds, would scorn all personal relationship with Pierre, and hold his heart's dearest interests for naught.

Thus, in the Enthusiast to Duty, the heaven-begotten Christ is born; and will not own a mortal parent, and spurns and rends all mortal bonds.

VI.

One night, one day, and a small part of the one ensuing evening had been given to Pierre to prepare for the momentous interview with Isabel.

Now, thank God, thought Pierre, the night is past,--the night of Chaos and of Doom; the day only, and the skirt of evening now remain. May heaven new-string my soul, and confirm me in the Christ-like feeling I first felt. May I, in all my least shapeful thoughts still square myself by the inflexible rule of holy right. Let no unmanly, mean temptation cross my path this day; let no base stone lie in it. This day I will forsake the censuses of men, and seek the suffrages of the god-like population of the trees, which now seem to me a nobler race than man. Their high foliage shall drop heavenliness upon me; my feet in contact with their mighty roots, immortal vigor shall so steal into me. Guide me, gird me, guard me, this day, ye sovereign powers! Bind me in bonds I can not break; remove all sinister allurings from me; eternally this day deface in me the detested and distorted images of all the convenient lies and duty-subterfuges of the diving and ducking moralities of this earth. Fill me with consuming fire for them; to my life's muzzle, cram me with your own intent. Let no world-siren come to sing to me this day,

and wheedle from me my undauntedness. I cast my eternal die this day, ye powers. On my strong faith in ye Invisibles, I stake three whole felicities, and three whole lives this day. If ye forsake me now,--farewell to Faith, farewell to Truth, farewell to God; exiled for aye from God and man, I shall declare myself an equal power with both; free to make war on Night and Day, and all thoughts and things of mind and matter, which the upper and the nether firmaments do clasp!

VII.

But Pierre, though, charged with the fire of all divineness, his containing thing was made of clay. Ah, muskets the gods have made to carry infinite combustions, and yet made them of clay!

Save me from being bound to Truth, liege lord, as I am now. How shall I steal yet further into Pierre, and show how this heavenly fire was helped to be contained in him, by mere contingent things, and things that he knew not. But I shall follow the endless, winding way,--the flowing river in the cave of man; careless whither I be led, reckless where I land.

Was not the face--though mutely mournful--beautiful, bewitchingly? How unfathomable those most wondrous eyes of supernatural light! In those charmed depths, Grief and Beauty plunged and dived together. So beautiful, so mystical, so bewilderingly alluring; speaking of a

mournfulness infinitely sweeter and more attractive than all mirthfulness; that face of glorious suffering; that face of touching loveliness; that face was Pierre's own sister's; that face was Isabel's; that face Pierre had visibly seen; into those same supernatural eyes our Pierre had looked. Thus, already, and ere the proposed encounter, he was assured that, in a transcendent degree, womanly beauty, and not womanly ugliness, invited him to champion the right. Be naught concealed in this book of sacred truth. How, if accosted in some squalid lane, a humped, and crippled, hideous girl should have snatched his garment's hem, with--"Save me, Pierre--love me, own me, brother; I am thy sister!"--Ah, if man were wholly made in heaven, why catch we hell-glimpses? Why in the noblest marble pillar that stands beneath the all-comprising vault, ever should we descry the sinister vein? We lie in nature very close to God; and though, further on, the stream may be corrupted by the banks it flows through; yet at the fountain's rim, where mankind stand, there the stream infallibly bespeaks the fountain.

So let no censorious word be here hinted of mortal Pierre. Easy for me to slyly hide these things, and always put him before the eye as perfect as immaculate; unsusceptible to the inevitable nature and the lot of common men. I am more frank with Pierre than the best men are with themselves. I am all unguarded and magnanimous with Pierre; therefore you see his weakness, and therefore only. In reserves men build imposing characters; not in revelations. He who shall be wholly honest, though nobler than Ethan Allen; that man shall stand in danger of the meanest mortal's scorn.