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FULL THIRTY.

By Miss Sedgewick.

[p. 212]

'In faith Lady, you have a merry heart.'

'Yea my Lord, I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care.'

THE first visit I paid after coming to town this winter, (this, to New York, most disastrous winter of 1836) was to Mrs. Orme, and her daughter Augusta.

Augusta I knew well and loved. She is the very impersonation of the spirit of cheerfulness, if brightness, intelligence, youth and health should be the indicated attributes of that spirit. Mrs. Orme was a stranger to me except by report. She was a southern lady by birth, and had resided with her family for many years at New Orleans, and at her house there, and her plantation in the neighborhood, some of my friends had enjoyed that hospitality which the southern members of our great family so generously and so gracefully extend to their brethren of the north. She had had several children, healthy and promising till they approached the age of maturity, when they were in turn the victims of the bilious diseases of their native climate. The anxiety consequent upon these repeated losses, induced the mother to consent to a proposal that Augusta should go to the North, where a different climate might avert the anticipated danger. Augusta came to Massachusetts, and the separation that was to have been for one year, was, by various circumstances, prolonged to five. At

[p. 213]

the expiration of that period, her mother, having in the mean time lost two younger children, and buried her husband, came to the north with impaired health and a fortune reduced, but still ample for her wants. Here, either from the change of climate or the more potent influence of the reunion with her daughter, she was in a very few months so renovated, that she determined to remain at least till time ("Time, the consoler!") should render the local association with her sorrows less vivid. She had relatives in the fashionable circles of New York, who she thought would give *éclat* to Augusta's introduction to society, and this decided her to fix her residence in this city. No two persons, of the same sex and country, and both amiable and well principled, could be more different than my laughing, singing, self-relying friend Augusta, and her timid, nervous, dependent mother. This difference, in part constitutional, was confirmed by education. Education, though it may bend the tree, does not change its nature. In any classification of the human family, the mother and daughter belong to different orders; but this will, if I mistake not, be manifest in the circumstances I am about to relate.

I found them at one of the fashionable boardinghouses at the lower end of Broadway. Mrs. Orme received me with her usual gentle courtesy, Augusta with her usual animation. My first enquiries were as to their accommodations, fellow-boarders, &c.

‘Accommodations!’ replied Mrs. Orme, shrugging her shoulders, ‘we do as well as we can — you know, of course, that I am obliged to dispense with a private drawing-room.’

‘Yes,’ said Augusta, ‘but then we have such a delightful room — see what a nice place for my piano.’

[p. 214]

‘A nice place enough,’ said the mother in a sad tone, ‘but what is the use, Augusta, when there is no one to hear you?’

‘Nobody, mama!’ she replied, laughing, and rattling her fingers over the keys, ‘when I have you and myself— where else should I find such admiring, patient listeners?’

‘Dear child!’ said her mother, ‘I believe she would be content in a prison.’

‘Your sound reasons for such faith, mama?’

Mrs. Orme turned to me, slightly blushing, as if she feared I might think she had overpraised her child. ‘I am sure,’ she said, ‘if you knew how well she bears her trials, you would not think I speak with a mother's partiality.’

‘*Trials!* mama,’ echoed Augusta.

‘Yes, my love — it certainly is a trial to be obliged to shut ourselves in our own room, or be liable to mix with any one who chooses to share the common drawing-room with us.’

‘A *trial*, mama!’

‘You may call it what you please, Augusta — I call it a trial.’

‘Well, I never once thought of it being disagreeable even.’

‘Then,’ continued the mother, still addressing me, ‘it is so very inconvenient not to have a servant of your own.’

‘It seems so to mama, because she has been accustomed to having so many; but the servants of the house, though somewhat resembling those spirits who ‘will not come when you do call them,’ yet, when they do come, they are very civil and kind.’

[p. 215]

‘But they do not belong to me,’ urged Mrs Orme.

‘But do I not belong to you, mama?’ replied Augusta, and am I not always ready

‘To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curled clouds,’ -----

‘Thou art a dainty spirit,’ thought I, as I looked on her bright face, sun-lit from the soul; and then to turn my friends’ thoughts from the evident discomforts of a boarding house, I asked if they had any agreeable inmates?

A list of them followed, by which it appeared they had the average fortune of persons so domiciliated. There were gentlemen and their wives, who had private drawing rooms — very kind they were to Augusta; but Mrs. Orme did not like to accept civilities which she could not return on equal terms. Then there were two or three pairs who were very much inclined to be sociable; but they were those sort of persons that one does not care to be intimate with.

‘Very good, kind persons, for all,’ interrupted Augusta.

‘There were some young merchants, very civil, --- but ---’

‘*But* merchants,’ said Augusta archly, ‘mama cannot divest herself of her southern prepossessions against all persons engaged in trade.’

‘That is not strange, Augusta, our prejudices are the last infirmities we get rid of.’

‘Just what Mr. Rayson said yesterday, and because, he said, not having any real foundation, you could not oppose truth to them.’

[p. 218]

‘There is a widow here,’ continued Mrs Orme, ‘a convenient sort of chronicler, who knows all the world, in all places and in all their affairs.’

‘And what she does not know,’ said Augusta, ‘she invents. Mamma, did you not overhear Mr. Rayson say to his next neighbour yesterday, when Mrs Wilson finished her long story about that poor man — I forget his name — that committed suicide, but she related every particular of the deed — not only the circumstances that preceded it, but the motives that led to it, and all that his wife said, and his father said, and his friends said, did you not hear Mr. Rayson whisper ‘founded on fact?’

‘Yes, I heard that, but I think there is no love lost between Mrs Wilson and Mr. Rayson.’

‘No, he can't like her, and of course she wont like him.’

‘There may have been some reason for her dislike — he is very satirical.’

‘I like such satire,’ said Augusta, ‘it only falls where it is provoked and deserved, for instance, this morning when those Englishmen were finding fault with every thing here, and blustering about every thing in that pattern little island of theirs, how aptly he quoted, from their own poet too — no, not theirs, ours — the world’s,

‘Hath Britain all the sun that shines? Day, night,
Are they not but in Britain— Pr’ythee, think
there’s livers out of Britain.’

‘Who is this Mr. Rayson, Augusta, that seems such a prodigious favorite,’ I asked, and added to my friend Mrs Orme, ‘you must look out — these boarding-house likings are dangerous.’

[p. 217]

Augusta laughed, as is her wont on all occasions, and then said, ‘Even Mamma will not be alarmed at that danger — why dear lady, Mr. Rayson is an old bachelor.’

‘How old, Augusta?’

‘Oh, old as the hills — full thirty.’

I know that *‘full thirty’* seems to eighteen almost the extreme limit of human life, but I had known too, stranger things happen than the approach of these distant points; and so I told my young friend.

Augusta laughed again, and said unless Mr. Clement Rayson was an illustration of the old syllogism ‘I move or I do not move; I do not move, therefore I move,’ she did not see how they were to become acquainted; for he was the only person in the house, that had not, directly or indirectly, sought an introduction to them.

This was true. Clement Rayson, though not soured to the world, (he had no acidulating tendencies in his character,) was shy of it, and particularly distrustful of the fashionable world. He had his reasons, as our chronicling widow had told the Ormes, in a long spun out fiction that had, as is usual in such romances, a substratum of truth. This short and simple truth was, that at the all-believing age he had loved, and had plighted his troth to a beautiful girl who had deserted him for a man full fifty years old, but who was rich and fashionable, neither of which, at that period, was Clement Rayson. He had since acquired a moderate fortune. His lacerated affections were much longer than is usual in such cases, in the process of healing.

In the mean time he withdrew from society, and having no family ties in the city to counteract his disposition to solitude, it grew upon him. He appeared to have

[p. 218]

the peculiarities incident to the single condition — appeared—but never was there a spirit less exclusive, and more unselfish. One class, and one alone, was excluded from his sympathies — the fashionable. He thought them all heartless *fainéants*, ‘unproductive consumers,’ cumberers of the ground. He knew that Mrs Orme belonged to this class, and he perceived that to her the world had but two phases — the one enlightened, the other unenlightened; the fashionable, and the unfashionable. Of course, his orbit could never cross hers. But with this undeniable infirmity, Mrs Orme had so much gentleness, such feminine softness, so much of the spirit, as well as of the letter of politeness, that it was difficult to sustain a sturdy dislike towards her. At first, Augusta did not impress him agreeably. He admired her Hebe freshness, her well-turned features, and the good humour and animation that almost made her beautiful, but he thought she wanted the timidity and reserve that so becomes a young creature on the threshold of an unknown world, a world veiled in shadow, and beset with danger. But he misjudged my young friend. Her boldness arose from what some philosophers, of the German school, have called the ‘unconscious.’ She did not, if we may use the expression, feel herself, nor was she looking in others' faces to see her own image reflected there. The present was to her for action and enjoyment, and if the future brought dangers, (she apprehended none,) she had resolution and strength to overcome them. Her most happy temperament seemed a sort of charm, an amulet against the principle of evil, in all its proteus shapes. ‘Miss Orme is not troubled with bashfulness,’ whispered

[p. 220]

Mrs. Wilson to Clement Rayson, as Augusta, at a first request, sat down to the piano, and played with great expression, a Spanish national air.

A similar criticism had clouded the clearer atmosphere of Rayson's mind; but there are some persons whose touch always produces discord, and Mrs. Wilson was eminently one of these. ‘Miss Orme is not bashful,’ he replied somewhat testily, ‘but bashfulness as often springs from vanity, and a craving for admiration, as from delicacy and self-distrust.’

‘Bless me! I thought you did not admire Miss Orme.’

‘I do not know her.’

‘Of course you would if you admired her. She is not of the thistle order. Every one in the house has observed your distant manner to the Ormes.’

Clement Rayson was, as we have said, reserved: he liked no intruding observers within his own little world of feelings — of likings and dislikings; and towards Mrs. Wilson he had an antipathy, resembling that which is often cherished for the feline race, to which she seemed to him to belong. He was annoyed by her remark, but he did not choose to enter into a defence, or explanation, and therefore he remained silent. The shield of silence is the most effectual defence against a thorough gossip; and if generally resorted to, their offensive weapons would rest for want of use.

‘Of all people on earth,’ said Mrs Wilson, crossing the room and seating herself next Augusta Orme, who had already forgotten her musical triumph, and was absorbed in a book she had taken from the table, ‘of all people on earth, I detest your close-mouthed ones.’

‘Do you, Mrs. Wilson?— thought we were apt to like our opposites.’

[p. 220]

‘No inuendo, I trust, Miss Orme?’

‘Certainly not, I merely meant that you were communicative.’

This was so much more flattering a term than that suggested by the lady's conscience, that she took it as a compliment, and replied that she was naturally frank, and added that she thought Miss Orme and herself much alike.

‘Heaven forefend!’ thought Augusta, and laughed, a laugh that could not have stirred a feather on the ‘fretful porcupine,’ and therefore it did not ruffle the widow Wilson's plumes. On the contrary, she gave a proof of her graciousness by whispering — ‘How strange it is that Clement Rayson is so prejudiced against you!’

‘Is he? I am sorry for it.’

‘You do not look much disturbed.’ There was something almost provoking to our touchy lady in the serenity she could not cloud.

‘Why should I, Mrs. Wilson? I have done nothing that I am conscious of to create the prejudice, and therefore can do nothing to remove it. But I do sincerely wish the good man would get rid of it, for prejudices must be uncomfortable burdens, and Mr. Rayson seems a very clever and a very agreeable person to those he likes.’

Mrs. Wilson, finding the daughter impracticable, transferred her efforts to the mother, who, as she found, was more facile. It was no difficult achievement to make Mrs. Orme uncomfortable on any given subject, and the next time I saw her, I found her very much puzzled in solving the riddle of ‘that Mr. Clement Rayson's dislike to her and Augusta.’ Her consolation

[p. 221]

was, that he knew nobody that they knew, and therefore she did not see how it could very well do them any injury; but still it was dangerous to have an enemy, especially for a young lady just ‘*coming out.*’

All this fabric of Mrs. Wilson's mischievous brain would have been harmless, but that it augmented Mrs. Orme's horror of the society of boarding houses; infused a double quantity of coldness into her deportment towards Mr. Rayson; heightened the barriers between herself and the cleverest and best person in the family; confirmed our friend's prejudices against all

fashionable people; and finally gratified widow Wilson's petty malignity against him. How true it is, that the lesser as well as the greater evils of life, are of our own creation!

In the mean while, Clement Rayson's eye (doubtless without the consent of his will) often turned towards Augusta's face, so bright with health and happiness. There is a peculiar charm in this sunny character, to men who have passed the zenith of youth. This may account for the devotion of sexagenarian bachelors to the youngest girls in company. We do not mean to implicate Rayson in any such foible; for, if guilty of the count in the indictment — if *'full thirty,'* he was not much more. Regarding himself as a fixture in this aforesaid boarding house, he had surrounded himself with those rare comforts in this city, where persons rather alight than abide, provisions for permanence. He had his dressing-room, his sleeping apartments, and his library. [1]* This library adjoined the room occupied by

[p. 222]

Mrs. Orme and her daughter, and here, secure from observation, Clement Rayson would lay aside his book, to listen from beginning to end, to songs that he had often wished, with a certain licensed churl, 'were impossible as well as difficult.' He even began to entertain a secret fondness for Italian music, which he had deemed all monotonous, and like a certain friend of ours, had affected to believe, and dared to say, there was but *one* Italian song. Augusta had a collection of fine old English ballads. These she occasionally sung, and he heard them, every word, for her piano was placed against the wall that separated the two rooms. Of course her face was towards him, and often did he wish that this wall, like him who enacted 'lime and and roughcast,' in Pyramus and Thisbe,

'----- having thus its part discharged so,
And being done, this wall away would go.'

that he might have a glimpse of the bright face behind. 'That face,' he said to himself, 'that is like a gleam of sunshine to every thing it looks upon.'

'I must have my library removed — I can never read a word here,' thought he, as he smiled in silent response, to the merry peals of laughter that ever and anon came from that apartment over which a 'dancing star' seemed to him to preside. And as he listened to the cheerful tones

[p. 223]

that responded to Mrs. Orme's low monotonous voice, 'how can she' thought he, 'resist such an influence! but she will soon be exposed to worse and more potent influences: to the parrotry, frivolity, and heartlessness of the world, and there this enchanting buoyancy of spirit, the mere virtue, perchance after all, of health of constitution! will soon be dimmed and lost.' Alas! Augusta's buoyancy was soon to be tried by a very different pressure from that he anticipated, and a far heavier.

The evening of the sixteenth of December I passed with Mrs. Ormie and Augusta. They were both in a state of pleasurable excitement. The floor was strewn with boxes, and the table,

sofa, and chairs were covered with dresses, caps, artificial flowers, and curious decorations just sent home in time for the gay season. Invitations had been sent out and accepted to parties and balls. Under what circumstances of overwhelming distress these invitations were soon after recalled, will long be remembered in the brilliant circles of our metropolis, where the bridal array was changed for mourning weeds.

Mrs. Orme was in all the flutter of indecision as to the dress to be selected for the *coming out* evening. She preferred the blue embroidered Seraphine crape which a friend had selected in Paris; she was certain, absolutely certain that it was perfectly *new*. There is magic in that word which may not convey its true import to the ears of our rustic reader. It does not mean simply that it is unworn, but that it is fresh from the inventive loom of a Paris milliner around whose head 'such light visions float.' While I was examining and

[p. 224]

duly admiring the blue Seraphine, Augusta put her veto upon it. She would not come out in a dress that would make her so conspicuous. In vain her mother urged the importance of the first impression — the *coup de théâtre*. Augusta laid the Seraphine crape aside, and was wavering between a silk that her mother pronounced 'the loveliest pink,' and a white muslin, when a servant entered with a Camelia Japonica directed to Miss Orme. One pure, stately white flower sat upon the stalk, between two buds, like a queen between her maids of honor. 'This decides me,' exclaimed Augusta 'my white muslin, and this Camelia in my hair.'

'Who sent it?' asked the mother. The servant did not know, and all that we could ascertain was that it had been left at the door by a man who merely said it was ordered at their green-house, but whether that green-house was Thorburn's, Smith's, or Hogg's, was uncertain, and Mrs. Orme concluded her enquiries by saying she was glad on the whole not to know, for she preferred Augusta should come out unshackled by even so slight an obligation as the gift of a flower imposed.

Augusta's curiosity, as was natural, was more excited than ours, and before the Camelia was deposited in a glass of water, she had run over the list of her gentlemen acquaintance, and in turn guessed all but — the right one.

People who are well advanced in life are prone to look upon its events and circumstances in the light of a shell enclosing a kernel, for their picking, the moral of the tale. And this kernel, like the jewel found by a certain classic bird, is apt to prove sweet or bitter, valueless or priceless, according to the character of the

[p. 225]

finder. This tendency must excuse the moralizing humor I fell into, on seeing my young friend so much engrossed and fluttered by the approach of this grand era of her life — her *coming out*.

'If Augusta,' thought I 'rational, well educated, with a mind so well balanced that all its motions are harmonious, is thus affected by her advent, what a perilous moment it must be to those who

are neither fitted by nature nor education, for the sudden transit from obscurity to notoriety. Inexperienced and unreflecting, what views must they have of the social laws, of their nature, of the objects of society, of the purposes and responsibilities of existence.'

Man has been justly called an imitative animal. Here we are, a young nation, set apart from the families of the old world, with every incitement to, and facility for making a new experiment in the economy of human life, and like the Chinese, who made the new shoes *slipshod*, after the pattern, we copy the forms of European society, bad enough where they exist, but as ill adapted to our use as the slipshod shoes to the wearer — as fantastical for us as a fan for an Iceland belle.

For example, in this working country, where the gentlemen must be at their offices and counting-houses by nine o'clock — where the domestic machine must stop, or the springs be set in motion by the mistress of the family before that hour, — with the pressure of this necessity upon us, we assemble at our evening parties at ten and eleven, because forsooth the *fainéants* of Europe do so! And for the same sufficient reason, our young ladies must have their *comings out!*

But what is to be done? How are their school-days and society compatible? The processes of nature are to be imitated. The dawn preludes the day: the bud slowly unfolds to the sun, gathering strength with every expanding leaf to bear its rays.

We are aware that there are no Quixotes more extravagant than those who preach revolutions in manners and customs; but where, as in our case, they are not the natural result of the condition of the people, may we not hope for modifications and ameliorations? for the dawn of a millennium on our social world, when the drawing-room shall no longer be an arena, where there is a short contest for a single prize, (what are the modes of that contest, and what the prize so obtained ?) but shall become the social ground where *men* and *women* shall be players, as well as spectators, — where rational christian people may meet without a sacrifice of health or duty; and where young people and children shall come for the formation of their social character, and where all may enjoy on equal terms the very highest pleasure of our gregarious natures ? — But we beg pardon, our tale is becoming a homily.

Before the evening closed, I perceived, and with secret satisfaction, that Augusta manifested some weariness at her mother's endless anxieties upon the details of the coming evening, such as 'whether they should go at ten or a quarter past ? — whether, in case Augusta were asked, she had best sing ? — whether there could be any objection to her waltzing, with her *cousin* ? — she waltzed so well! and sundry other momentous questions. When the field of vision is narrow, the objects are magnified. 'Dear mamma,' said Augusta, 'pray leave these trifles to fate.'

[p. 227]

'Life is made up of such trifles, my child.'

'Mine shall not be,' replied Augusta. Little did she think what a seal was soon to be set to this lightly uttered resolution.

The mercury was below zero, and as I walked briskly home I heard the first stroke of the bell that sounded the alarm of that fire which before morning laid so rich a portion of our city in ruins.

The bells rang at first, for the most part, unheeded, for as the Turk moves tranquilly amidst the plague, hardened by use, so we, familiarised to the every-day tocsin, pursue our usual avocations when it sounds throughout the city. But there were some who, on that memorable night, answered from the first with quickened pulses to the boding sound. They knew the firemen were exhausted by a severe labor of the preceding night, that their hose were frozen, and that there was no supply of water in the city. They reflected that the fire had broken out amidst packed warehouses, filled with combustibles; that the perfect dryness of the atmosphere and the extreme cold must accelerate its progress; but reason, fear, imagination, all fell far short in their anticipations of the horrid reality.

We have no intention to perpetrate such a presumption as an attempt to describe the scene would imply; we can only note the particulars — the spreading of the fire, quicker than thought, windward and leeward from house to house, and from street to street — the pillar of flame that shot up from the lofty dome of the Exchange — the crash of its falling — the calmness, though sublime courage of the men, who, with their casks of gunpowder proceeded through showers of sparks

[p. 228]

to the edifices marked for explosion — the momentary wavering of those edifices when the match was fired — the explosion — and at the very instant the stately pile was a prostrate mass of ruins — the consternation of the citizens— the firemen, the very men who had so often seemed the chartered masters of the devouring element, looking on, mute, paralyzed, impotent spectators — the piles and masses of merchandise moved twice and thrice, and finally consumed. Merchants hurrying from their up-town residences to the scene of action, and coaches bearing ladies to the spectacle!

The appearance to the more distant observer, to whom the flames looked like a solid wall against the clear blue sky, and the gems of Heaven, like celestial witnesses, calmly gazing on this mortal coil — all this will not be forgotten, and cannot be described. But there were instances of self-command, generosity, and heroism, the moral phœnixes which rose from the gross elemental fire that may be recorded by the humblest pen, and will at least live longer on the pages of an annual than in the columns of a forgotten newspaper.

One anecdote was given in the journals of the city, the day after the fire, which we have since heard from unquestionable witnesses, and which we shall repeat unvarnished. Who would try, by coloring, to add beauty or grace to such truth?

A gallant young man belonging to our navy, who a few days before, for some slight misdemeanor had been ejected from it, was busied with thousands in removing merchandise, when he heard piercing shrieks from a woman. He made his way to her. In the general distress she was little heeded. She seemed like a maniac.

[p. 229]

In answer to his demand of ‘what is the matter?’ she pointed to one of the burning houses and said, ‘my child is there!’ ‘In what part of the house?’ She was calmed by his interposition, and described the room in the third story. He darted towards the house. As he placed his foot on the threshold, the firemen adjured him to come back, and told him if he went on he could not return. They were attempting to force him back, but he sprang beyond their grasp, and unchecked by the flames that were crackling along the beams, he mounted to the apartment and entered it — the fire was glancing around the cornice of the room. — The child, a sturdy infant of some six or seven months, was awake, and holding up its hand before its eyes, and twining it around, delighted with the reflection of the flame, that in another moment would have reduced its little frame to ashes. His preserver caught the boy in his arms, and descended to the last landing place. The bannister was on fire. He hesitated—he had passed an open window — should he return and leap from that? — he might crush the child. So pressing against the wall, he rushed down uninjured, save the scorching of his coat — a scorch that will make it a precious relic.

Those who have never heard the spontaneous gushings from that holy fountain which is never quite dried in any heart, should have heard the shoutings and clappings of hands when the young man reappeared and placed the boy in his mother's arms — they should have seen how, for a moment, every other interest was suspended in admiration, and how the young hero, finishing his generous act with the only grace that could be added to

[p. 230]

it, modestly shrank from the tribute he had so well earned, and disappeared. [2 *]

The morning of the 17th found the city in indescribable anxiety, dismay, and bewilderment. No one could calculate the extent of the loss — the direct loss — no one dared to anticipate the loss from the bankruptcy of merchants, the failure of monied institutions, and the suspension of business and payments. All sympathy was directed to the merchants, for to few had it then occurred that the ruin would pass over the palace, and prostrate the cottage.

The first intimation I had of such a result was from a gentleman who said to me, ‘I fear your friend Mrs. Orme has lost every thing. I am told her agent Robert Smith invested all her property in fire insurance stock.’ I knew such ill news as this must have flown to her ears, and I determined immediately to go to her.

The streets were a wild exhibition of the horrible and the ludicrous — the strange motley that human affairs so often wear. Here were militiamen called out as guards, bustling along in all the mock importance of their brief authority, and there were firemen dragging themselves to their homes — looking like ghosts who had overstayed their time.

Here was timid, shivering poverty, stealing stealthily along, amid bales of blankets, and stacks of woolen goods, eyeing them wishfully from beneath the half lifted lid — and there, (a timely admonition!) were

[p. 231]

police-men dragging detected pilferers to justice. Here the merchant on whose face was written 'sudden calamity has overtaken me,' and beside him the bold beggar, her shoulders laden with piles of half consumed blankets, ends of shawls, and bits of silk that yesterday made a part of his countless wealth!

'Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st spare the superflux to them
And show the Heavens more just.'

I crossed a street, making my way through carts, wagons, and coaches laden with boxes and cases of the richest merchandise, and turned out of my course to a point of view where a group of amateur spectators were gazing at the ruins — not with tearless eyes. We all stood for a few moments in profound silence looking at the standing fragments of walls — the smouldering piles of brick that covered thousands (millions?) of unconsumed and inaccessible property — at the fire still burning unresisted, because irresistible, towards the water's edge — at the ashes of to-day — the millions of yesterday. 'This' said a gentleman next me, 'is the levelling system with a vengeance!'

'Yes, but it is a levelling to teach levellers,' replied another, 'those ignorant and corrupt persons who would construct barriers between the rich and poor, out of their evil passions, must now acknowledge their mutual dependence — the demonstrated identity of their interests. The working men will realise that the enterprise and industry of the wealthy merchant feeds the channels of their prosperity. Heaven grant they may not long feel it from a loss of the supply.'

[p. 232]

'The rascals! it's a good lesson for them.' This bitter exclamation was made by one of those who look upon themselves as having a chartered right to their accidental prosperity, and who, as far as they can oppose the laws of Providence, obstruct those supplies of Heaven-directed bounty to the poor.

I turned from the idlers and pursued my course, winding as well as I might, along the walks encumbered with the various merchandise that comes from every explored corner of our globe to this great commercial mart; bales of cotton, piles of domestic goods — hard ware and porcelain — English woolens and Dutch toys — French silks and stacks of German baskets, &c, &c.— a volume might be filled with the specifications indicated by these et cetéras, but I have already abused the curiosity of my readers, if perchance they have any, in the fate of my heroine.

I found my friend Mrs. Orme, as I had feared, plunged into the depths of despair. She was pacing up and down her room. As I entered, she clasped her hands, exclaiming, 'ruined ! — totally ruined!'

'But my dear friend, your property was not surely all invested in fire insurance stock?'

‘Yes, all. At least, I have no reason to doubt it. — Of course you know, being totally unacquainted with business myself, [3]* I leave my affairs entirely to the discretion of my agent, and Mrs Wilson says she heard him say only last week that he had vested my money — *all* of it — in six different companies, so that I should be quite safe. I remember, too, he asked me about fire stock, and I told him it would make me uncomfortable

[p. 233]

whenever the bell rung. But he said something about the companies always making good dividends; and I have not thought of it since, till Mrs. Wilson came into my room at two o'clock, to prepare my mind, as she said. Mrs. Wilson blames Mr. Smith, and so do I.’

‘I did not controvert this position, for I know it is the most common solace of undisciplined minds, to impute the blame to another. ‘Where,’ I asked, ‘was Augusta?’

Her mother did not know. She believed she had gone out — ‘Strange that she could go out, and leave me, at such a moment. She is a dear child, but she has one defect — it is a natural one, and she can not cure it. I do not blame her, but I often feel it. She wants sensibility. I dont mean to complain of her, but think how I must have felt to see her go, just as usual, about her ordinary avocations *this morning*. She even, once or twice, while she was putting away the things you saw here last night, sang! I suppose it was involuntary — but it is so strange — so unlike me!’

Mrs. Orme is not the only person that measures the qualities of others by her own, as if that were an infallible standard. I ventured to intimate that it was very fortunate for Augusta if she could meet such a reverse with firmness.

‘Firmness — oh, yes! but then do you know she has been- trying to convince me that it is not a calamity to weep for? that, I think, as Mrs. Wilson says, is carrying *firmness* a little too far; but she is a dear child, and, except in this blemish, every thing I could wish. And this perhaps spares her a great deal of suffering.’

[p. 234]

‘Useless suffering,’ thought I, ‘suffering never designed by him who chasteneth because he loveth.’

‘But where,’ continued the mother, ‘can Augusta stay! It is *not* considerate of her, as Mrs. Wilson says, to leave me this morning.’

Her perplexities were ended by Augusta's entrance. Her face was beaming. ‘Good news, mama! she cried, ‘the last ten thousand remitted from New Orleans, is safe.’ She kissed her mother, and wiped the tears that flowed afresh at this unexpected intelligence.

‘These shall be the last tears this business costs you, mama; then turning round, she saw me, apologized for having overlooked me, and instinctively sought a shelter for the undue grief she knew her mother must have exhibited to me.

‘This horrid fire,’ she said, ‘has kept mama up all night, and made her so nervous!’

‘But are you certain you are rightly informed, Augusta?’ asked the mother, ‘Mrs. Wilson was so sure!’

‘Oh, Mrs. Wilson! I was sure from the moment that trumpety woman said it, it could not be so. Her reports, like dreams, go by contraries. But I was afraid, mama, of inspiring any false hope, so I resolved to go at once to Mr. Smith.’

‘And that was what you went out for? — Dear child!’

I ventured to say, for I could not help it, ‘there are other manifestations of sensibility than passiveness and tears.’

‘I went first,’ continued Augusta, ‘to Mr. Smith's house, but, as I ought to have foreseen, he was not at home.’

[p. 235]

‘But surely, my child, you did not go alone down Wall street.’

‘No; fortunately, just as I was turning into Wall street, and thinking what a piece of work I should have to make my way, I met Mr. Clement Rayson. He stopped, and asked me where I was going, and begged leave to attend me. It was very kind of him, and amusing too, after we had sat opposite for three weeks, without speaking. Well, I found Mr. Smith with a face as long as my arm; but he seemed quite relieved, when I told him it was so much better than we expected, and assured him, mama, you would not care for the loss, since we had enough left.’

‘Enough!’ sighed the mother, who already began to shift her unhappiness from the total loss of their finances to their reduction.

Augusta did not hear her mother, or else, to turn the current of her thoughts, she said, ‘Oh, mama, Mr. Rayson has told me such a sad piece of news — quite enough to put the loss of property out of one's head. That beautiful, lovely woman, Mrs. Moreson, whom we saw at Dr. Hayward's, is dead. She died without a moment's warning, while her sister was dressing for her cousin's wedding.’

After the usual exclamations of sympathy and sorrow, Mrs. Orme said she supposed the parties, then, would be given up.

‘Yes, of course,’ replied Augusta, ‘and there is my beautiful Camelia must fade unseen.’

‘Your fit emblem, I fear, my child; for now, you cannot come out.’

‘But I can *stay in*, mama, without drooping. There

[p. 236]

are some hardy plants that do not need sunshine — I think I am one of those.’

And so it proved. A few days after, I was again with my friends, anxious to know what their arrangements were to be, for I was well aware that the income of ten thousand dollars could not maintain them in their present style of living — would not even pay their board. I found Mrs. Orme troubled and undecided — Augusta, strong and cheerful in her self-reliance.

‘You have come,’ she said, receiving me affectionately, ‘just in time to aid our deliberations. We find that we can live independently and pleasantly in the country on our present income.’

‘It comes very hard upon me, though,’ said Mrs. Orme, ‘for I have an antipathy to a country life.’

‘And therefore,’ continued Augusta, ‘I wish mama not to think of it. Her income is quite sufficient to secure her an agreeable town residence, and I should be ashamed of myself if I could not earn my own support. I have a double object in this. Mama has grown so nervous about losses, that she is afraid of being stripped of what remains; and I want to convince her, that even in that event we should do well enough.’

‘But how, my dear girl, can you earn your living?’

‘Oh, in twenty ways. I can turn governess.’

‘I utterly object to that,’ said the mother, ‘I have seen too many of them, and I know what dog's lives they lead.’

I ventured to suggest that I had seen some very happy ones.

‘I should have no fears on that score,’ said Augusta, ‘for I believe our own happiness is in our own hands;

[p. 237]

but then any employment that will separate me from mama, is objectionable. I can give music lessons; combine music and singing lessons, which would be very profitable.’

‘Dear child, dont use such words — they make me so nervous. I cannot consent to your giving music lessons, there is something so degrading in running from house to house, and selling your time to other people.’

‘This is what ninety-nine hundredths of the world do, mama, and I do not wish to be among the exempts. I would,’ she continued, addressing me, ‘open a school, but I am afraid I am too young to have children confided to my care.’

‘Pity you are not *‘full thirty,’* said I.

‘Ah,’ replied Augusta, ‘that reminds me of Clement Rayson. Last night I was speaking of that beautiful camelia, and I do suspect he knows where it came from, but he will not give me the least clew. He merely said it must be from some very young man, for they were addicted to such fooleries! That was a saying, was it not, that marked the sayer *‘full thirty?’* — But what were we talking of— my occupation; it is not, like Othello's ‘gone’ — would that it were come!’

‘I have an excellent plan,’ interposed the mother, ‘if we can only persuade Augusta to adopt it. When summer comes, I shall be quite willing to make an experiment of country life. In the mean time, a very slight addition to our income would pay our expenses here without intrenching on our capital. Perhaps you do not know it, but Augusta excels in all sorts of ingenious, lady-like manufactures — worsted work in particu-

[p. 238]

lar. And she is so quick! she net the loveliest purse for Clement Rayson — all of it yesterday.’

‘I trust, Augusta,’ said I, ‘you marked it *‘full thirty,’* for ladies' favors are sometimes misinterpreted.’

‘Clement Rayson is past the danger of such coxcomberies,’ replied Augusta.

‘Now,’ resumed the mother, ‘Augusta could dispose of her work at the ‘Ladies' Depository,’ without the slightest exposure. The utmost delicacy is observed there, Mrs. Wilson tells me. By the way, Augusta, it just occurs to me that Mrs. Wilson must work for the Depository, how else could she afford to wear blond capes? — but, as I was saying, she tells me that the names of those who deposite articles there, are religiously kept secret. Your orders are referred to numbers, not names.’

‘And why all this reserve?’ I innocently asked.

‘My dear friend, the institution is designed for ladies of reduced fortune, to enable them to dispose of their work without it ever being known that they work for their living.’ [4]*

I smiled, and Augusta said, ‘you think as I do, I am sure of it.’

‘And how is that, Augusta?’

‘Why, that these same reduced ladies might as well

[p. 239]

be ashamed of giving bread to their children, as of earning it for them; and that this very labor of which they are ashamed, is most creditable — perchance the most honorable act of their whole lives.’

‘Pity,’ I ventured to add, ‘it does not occur to them, that *working for their living*, places’ them in the same category with the first in the land — the lawyer, the clergyman, the merchant, &c., — and rescues them from the helplessness and dependence into which misfortune usually casts females of their class.’

Those little understand the country they live in, who, by such an institution, virtually pronounce labor degrading, and virtually insult those of their sex, who professedly work for their living.’ [5]*

‘As you agree with me,’ resumed Augusta, ‘I hope you will persuade mama to let me do something more productive than *lady-like* work. I have three projects — pray dont laugh at me— if one fails, another may succeed, you know. When I was at school in Boston, I made some translations from the French and Spanish, for a work a friend of ours was publishing there. He paid me compliments on my success, which, making due allowance for his partiality, and gratitude, &c, allow me to aspire to the place of a hack translator to the Harpers, or some other publishing house here.’

I knew my young friend understood French and Spanish well, and wrote her own language with correctness and freedom. I gave my hearty concurrence to the plan.

[p. 240]

‘When I can't get work from a publisher, continued Augusta, ‘I can copy music — I can do that very rapidly. I have often copied songs for poor Stefani to sell to her scholars.’

‘Now for your third project, Augusta.’

‘You will think me a great braggart — but you know I must give an inventory of my commodities. When I was staying at Mr. Johnson's, he had an accumulation of law papers to be copied. Grace Johnson and I assisted him, and he gave me the credit of doing mine in right clerkly style. Mama herself taught me to write, and now, dear mama, I may pay you for the pains you took in forming my hand.’

‘It is the only thing, my child, I ever taught you.’

‘But, my dear Mrs. Orme, you have given her a firstrate education, and she is now going to prove to you that this is the safest investment of capital.’

My friend, propitiated by these agreeable truths, was evidently leaning our way, when a new difficulty occurred to her.

‘But how,’ she asked, ‘is Augusta to get this work? I had rather starve than she should go bustling about to book stores, music shops, and lawyers' offices.’

‘I have thought of all that, mama, and I mean to get Mr. Rayson to make inquiries for me. I shall ask the favor of him as freely as if he were my father.’

‘Your acquaintance, Augusta,’ said I, ‘with Clement Rayson, has made astonishing progress since the fire.’

‘Yes, our walk down Wall street, that morning, put us on a friendly footing at once, and ever since, he has been as kind to mama and me as possible. He has a very fine library, and he lends us his books, and obliges us in every possible way.’

[p. 241]

‘I knew,’ said I, ‘his library occupied the apartment next yours, and to tell you the truth, I was afraid your piano might annoy him — he is not fond of music.’

‘Oh pardon me ! indeed he is, for he has asked me again and again to play the songs I had unconsciously sung to him through the wall. I am sure you are wrong, no one seems to relish them as he does.’

I believed I was right, but I had the grace not to persist in saying so, while I admired the rare happiness of Augusta's mind, in being unsusceptible to small as well as great evils. Mrs. Orme, after a good deal of persuasion, more availing with her than reason, came into our plans, and I was deputed to engage Clement Rayson's friendly offices.

At my request, I was admitted to his library, where I unfolded my errand. I spoke of Augusta as I felt, and I am sure his heart responded, for never did I see his fine face so lit with animation, till I chanced to quote, as a sort of apology for the trouble we were giving him, the reason Augusta had assigned for the freedom she felt in applying to him. His countenance changed — he repeated my words with a vexed accent, ‘as soon as if I were *her father!* would she?’ At that moment, fortunately, Augusta commenced one of his favorite songs, and exorcised the evil spirit. He was all ear till she finished, and then reverting to our last words, ‘tell me,’ he asked, ‘honestly, do I look so desperately old?’

‘Oh no! two minutes ago, you might have passed for a gallant lover, who indited sonnets to his mistress' eye brow, and secretly sent her those orthodox love-tributes — *bouquets!*’ He blushed, and knocked down half a dozen books by a sudden movement of his arm. While

[p. 232]

he was replacing them, I added, ‘when my friends first came to this house, I confess you looked to me careworn— I might have taken you for *full thirty.*’

I am thirty-one precisely. That, however, is not quite old enough for Miss Augusta's *father*. However he added, wisely shifting the subject to a better point of view, 'I am content to make any impression that affords me an opportunity of serving her. An admirable creature she is, and most fortunate!'

'Admirable she certainly is, but I should not select this moment of her life to call her fortunate.'

'Is she not plucked from the brink of fashionable life, and an opportunity afforded her of using her fine faculties to some purpose?'

Every man has his mania. I was aware of Clement Rayson's and forbore to oppose it.

Nothing could be more zealous, than was Rayson in procuring employment for Augusta. His zeal might have been stimulated by the certainty that if her earnings were intermitted, she and her mother must seek less expensive lodgings. So never a day passed over her head that she had not that prime blessing — plenty of work; and time to read, to sew, to walk, (how, in spite of the snow-storms, ice, sloop, and avalanches of this worse than polar winter, has she daily achieved a two or three mile walk!) to play, and sing, and be agreeable; in short, to do every thing, even '*lady-like work*.' Best of all was it, in her mother's opinion, that she found time to accept the civilities of certain fashionable people, whose attentions to her were no wise abated, by their knowledge of the fact that *she worked for her living*. Superior people are not superior to

[p. 243]

prejudices, but if truth can be fairly brought to bear upon them, it dissolves them as the direct rays of the sun melt away the ice. As a fashionable equipage that had brought visitors to the Ormes, drove away from the door, 'there are exceptions to my rule,' thought Clement Rayson. 'I was wrong to involve a whole class in the opinion I had conceived of individuals of that class.' For the first time it occurred to him, that the inconstancy of his early love might have been rather owing to some inherent defect in her, than to the influence of her fashionable associates. 'After all,' thus he concluded his mental reverie, 'there is no character to be relied on but that which, instead of being subdued by circumstances, resists and controls them — a character like Augusta Orme's.'

When a man — be he full thirty — begins to make a young lady his standard of ideal perfection, the next act of his drama may be anticipated.

I knew my friends were getting on well, that Augusta was turning her industry to good account, often earning by mere copying three dollars a day, [6]* and that Mrs. Orme was enjoying the sense of independence and security naturally inspired by the exercise of her daughter's power, and satisfied they were happy, and being otherwise occupied, I had not seen them for more than a month when, one fine morning, a ring at the street door was followed by Augusta's appearance in my room. Her face was full of meaning. I could not guess what

[p. 244]

it meant. She was embarrassed too, the first time I had ever seen her so.

She untied and retied her bonnet, sat down, rose, and sat down again—then after a vain struggle burst into tears, the first I had ever seen flow from her bright eyes; and finally, throwing a letter into my lap exclaimed, ‘what a fool I am!’ and laughed.

‘That laugh at any rate, proves you are yourself,’ I said, ‘which I very much doubted.’

I read the letter. It was from Clement Rayson—the very ‘quotidian of love’ was upon him.

‘You find it hard to say no to so ardent a lover.’ No reply. ‘There is no evidence here,’ I continued, ‘that the climate of full thirty has chilled his heart.’

‘How can you always remind me of that foolish speech?’

‘Then you do not mean to say no?’

‘I mean to do just what you advise me—if ’ she added archly, and in her natural vein, ‘you advise me as I wish. Here is another letter, and this it is that perplexes me.’ The second letter was brief, and like its precursor, unfit for quite sane readers. Therefore we copy it.

‘The enclosed I wrote two days ago, but had not the courage to send it to you. Necessity now makes me bold. Within the last hour I have received intelligence that obliges me to go to Europe—for two years! – perhaps longer—I must sail next week. I cast all on a single die—happiness or misery is before me. If I go alone, I go the most wretched outcast on earth.’

‘If you invest me with the right, I shall beg Mrs. Orme to go with us. *Us!* Am I not presumptuous?’

[p. 245]

My pencil was in my hand. ‘Shall I cross out this *us*, Augusta?’

‘First tell me, do you not think it is quite too hasty?’

‘Why, let us see, your acquaintance began on the morning of the 17th of December. January, February, March — three months under the same roof, beginning with paternal protection on the one part, and filial confidence on the other—’

‘Pray — if you love me, pray do not again advert to that, but tell me honestly, do you not think it is quite too short a time to have matured a sentiment to be relied on for life?’

‘Some fruits ripen wonderfully fast in some soils, and under certain influences.’

‘But you do think — I am sure of it from your repeated hints--’ now there was a tremulousness in her voice, as in the patient's when he discloses his worst symptom to his physician, ‘you do think the difference of age an objection?’

‘An inferior objection to thousands that are every day surmounted.’

Her face brightened. ‘And you think it possible perfectly to recover from a first love — from an attachment so strong as that which Clement confesses in his first foolish letter he long cherished for that jilt?’

‘Possible! every day's experience proves it to be very easy.’

‘There is no use’ she said, her pretty lips curling into their natural smile, ‘in urging any more objections, for you will certainly obviate them.’

‘Yes, Augusta, just as long as I see you urge them to be obviated. That decides the affair in my opinion.’

[p. 246]

This affection which is the staple of life springs up and is matured under every variety of circumstances, character and condition. The only point to be settled, is that it exists in its purity and perfection. In this case, I am quite sure as to that point, so are you, my dear ; now run home and write a fit answer to this ‘foolish’ letter.’ She threw her arms around my neck. Love, like a fire kindled for a specific purpose, imparts its warmth to whatever approaches it. One propriety occurred to me that my young friend seemed to have overlooked. ‘Is mama propitious?’ I asked.

‘Not yet consulted, because I feared to tell her while there was the least uncertainty as to which way the scale would turn — Clement is such a prodigious favorite with her nowadays.’

‘Then all is well.’ A few days after, in obedience to a previous summons from Augusta, I joined a male friend, and we, with her mother, were the only witnesses of her marriage vows before the altar of Grace Church. She was dressed in the white muslin she had selected for her coming out, and a white camelia in her hair, so like the one presented to her for that occasion, that I at once came to the right conclusion — it was the gift of the same donor.

My friends had secured the best boon of human life, and therefore I resigned without a sigh the expectation that Augusta Orme would have gone on to illustrate my favorite theory — that a good education, and a well principled and happily balanced mind, will render a woman independent of the vicissitudes of fortune.

[*Notes]

[1]* Many persons suppose that a library is not a natural appurtenance for a merchant. This is a mistake. Our merchants constitute a cultivated class, and many among them indulge in the refined luxury of books, to an extent that would be incredible to those who have formed their

opinion of the body from some of the impotent members. We happen to know that one of our merchants has a fine library at his house, and another, for his leisure *moments* at his counting house, where there are duplicates of books of reference — expensive editions of such works as Boyle's Dictionary. This is indeed the luxury of fortune — if that can be called luxury, which, as the political economists say, is reproduced by its consumption.

[2]* We have just heard that the President has fitly rewarded his heroism by a restoration to his place in the navy. An opportunity thus offered him, his promotion may be safely left in his own hands.

[3]* So are most women. Should they be so?

[4]* It is but justice to state that this institution, though originally set on foot for the purpose specified in the text, is no longer limited to that. With the exception of this one very objectionable feature, viz: the facility afforded for the indulgence of a false pride, and sickly sensibility, it is a most creditable institution, and, from the character of the ladies who manage it, we may hope that this imperfection will not long be permitted in deference to prejudices that should be exploded.

[5]* I once heard a young lady say of a gentleman, — a teacher of the learned languages — that he was 'a charming person, but not in society.' 'Why not?' 'Oh, he works for his living, you know.' 'Straws show,' &c.

[6]* Lest the example of our favorite should be impotent for want of credibility, we inform our young lady readers that we have known this amount of labour performed in six hours out of the twenty four, day after day, by a girl minus fifteen.