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Select Poetry.

AWAY WITH GLOOM.

BY JOHN YEOMAN.

Spurn the lines which sorrow traces:
Laugh the ills of life away.
They who wear the gladdest faces
Always live the longest day.

Why complain, though fortune press thee?
Why repine at lowly birth,
While contentment still may bless thee
With the joys of pealing mirth?

Art thou rich in pounds and rubles?
Dost thou sleep on beds of down?
Laugh to see how vain the baubles
Which deceive the gaping clown.

What though now thy years are many,
And thy locks are turning gray;
Hast thou not a hope of any
Joy beyond thy mortal day?

Thou hast dreamed perhaps of glory;
Fate has held thee under ban;
Still unknown to song or story
Thou canst be a merry man.

Toil not after gilded sadness;
Let not woe thy soul entice;
For the earth is full of gladness
Offered thee without a price.

Dost thou speak of cares and troubles?
Cares and troubles, what are they?
Nothing more that floating bubbles,
Which a laugh may drive away.

Laugh, and charm the Fates to listen;
Hoot all gloomy fancies down;
Thus shall TIME forget to hasten,
And e'en DEATH relax his frown.

Choice Miscellany.

THE GOLDEN THREAD! A PRIZE TALE.

BY MISS CAROLINE CHESEBRO', ...thor of "Dream-Land by Daylight," "The Children."

(From the Baltimore Weekly Sun.)

I was in a school at a convent.

...s my record to be a setting forth of creeds?—...ngels and Ministers of Grace defend us!" I ...something beside creeds to write about at ...ent—myself. My ambition is not to make ...lytes—it never was—nor am I purposing to ...the "Story of a Soul."

The Tale I have to offer will appear very like ...llection of fragments. You have heard of ...pyramids? Like them, the leading incidents ...human lives tower above the dead level of the ...s. Like them, the incidents of my life tower ...memory. What secures for vanished time a ...in my creature's recollection? The bone-...kindled—the bonefires that we kindled; the ...s of ambition, and pride, and passion, for ...tumults in which we engaged; the hun...had a climax; the feasting and revalry, ...we went wild with delight; the marriage ...nial, that particularly concerned us—it ...brief; the love which perchance was still brief in its duration; burials that were speedily per...rmed. Look back—only look back, and survey ...paths by which you have come thus far, you ...see how you also have lived by snatches—...your experience has likewise been fragmen...ry. You will understand that while making ...memorial it has been with me as though I ...looking through the "wavering vistas of a ...gazing on the phantoms of "Shadow ..."

CHAPTER I.

...related to Charlotte Winslow, I had been ...convent four years. But for all that I ...a Romanist—am not—nor ever shall be. ...came I there then? "Thereby hangs this ..."

It was a comfortable home. Could I then do ...wise than love it? A comfortable home!—What music and what meaning have those words! But—I had recollections which I had never ... with any school-mate during those four ...and some of these were sad, and some of ...were grevious, and some—how terrible!—...there were very bright and beautiful. When I first entered St. Mary's as a pupil and ... I found the scholars there assembled ad...beyond me in their studdies, and, for ...most part, so much older than I, that I did ...to the friendship, hardly to association of ...with them: I was alone—I felt alone ...not starving! I had a protector who ...to ensure my safety, if not my life. I ...happy hearts, bright faces, merry ...were all around me, and a stranger enter...would not have singled me from ...rest, as obviously not of the group ...them. This was much. But the ...ruin in my memory. Like a ruin ...creeps—while the world knows ...the ruin or the vine.

...was with me. I lived alone in my ru... But when my Charlotte came! in ...frank, careless of the opinions of those I had looked upon with most dread; capa...in turn the school-girls tyrant, if ...spoke I her or those she loved, too far.—... and, perceiving my loneliness ...spoke with me, and thought with ...loved me, I began to live a new and a ...happy life.

...these earlier recollections I would spe...I had lived on the banks of the ...beautiful and blessed home. I had ...the vilest quarter, where villainy, and ...woe, can congregate. I had lived on ...plains of peace, and in a drearier abode ...words can portray. But not only poverty, ...and every degredation were around us ...staring us in the face, and mocking, and ... Oh! great Heaven! as I ponder at ...moment on the myriads helplessly borne, as ...by a resistless fate through the avenues ...down, down to the cess-pool of creation ...the human nature becomes almost of ne...brutish, and the soul to all outward seem...it appears to me most marvelous, it seems ...incredible, that the crying of those poor as...cends towards THEE, should not appal and terrify the heart of that great city—that it should not make its people to arise as one man to the rescue and salvation of the heathen in its midst.

We lived on the banks of the Hudson, in a house that was fashioned in Gothic style. It stood on a prominent height, and from the river did not look unlike pictures of castles I have seen. The grounds belonging to the place extended inland to some distance, and along the river bank nearly half a mile. Down the bank was my father's boat house, and Joseph and I had our play house close beside it. Distinctly to this day do I recollect the walks my mother and myself had on the great piazza in the mornings when we watched the steamers that went up and down the river—the white sails of the schooners, how beautifully they were! I remember how the sunlight fell upon the lawn those summer mornings when the dew was on the grass, and the trees were full of singing birds. It was on that piazza in the summer time, that we learned our lessons, Joe and I, and there we recited them to our mother—our mother who was young then, and as happy and gay-hearted as her children.

This home and all that surrounded it, filled my mind with images of beauty. The squirrels which we chased through the grove; the splendor of the autumn woods; the days we went nutting in them; the gorgeous pictures presented by the opposite banks of the Hudson, in the spring and autumn—these are things I can never forget.

My mother was a lovely and accomplished woman. She had a sweet, firm voice, full of melody. The songs she used to sing for us, accompanied her guitar, when father took us out for a sail upon the river, linger yet in my thoughts, though words and tunes are lost.

But our father was the glory of our house.—He was our old idol—we worshipped him. His word was our law—his will was our pleasure.—Our mother's devotion to him was our example. It was by love and not fear that he reigned in all our hearts.

These were our days and years of perfect happiness. They came to an end.

We removed, for what purpose Joseph and I endeavored in vain to comprehend, from our lovely home to a small house further up the river, further inland also. I do not recollect the events immediately preceding the removal, but well do I remember the day when it took place. We went in the carriage, father and mother, Ruth our nurse, and we children. It was like going to a funeral—scarcely a word was spoken, but a great many tears were shed.

In the new place we had only a bit of garden ground. No grove, no splendid flowers, no lawn, no boat, no joy. Everything we prized most in the old home was left behind us there. Not one of the pictures mother loved so well, not even those she had painted, went with us—only a few of the plainest pieces of furniture, and the dog Nero. This was Joe's little pet animal. Our birds, and the beautiful Newfoundland dog, the [illegible]—all these things we lost sight [illegible] hind us. The place, and all belongings, [illegible] been sold. We were a ruined family, driven from our Paradise, and the sword of the law excluded us.

In the new home we must have lived a year or more, when the worst of all misfortunes fell upon us. Our father was taken away from us.

What had become of him? He had not been ill—he was not dead—he went from home with other gentlemen, and after that mother was very ill for many days, and we had a dreary time sitting in the kitchen so quietly, for we had no heart for play; while Ruth was away in the sick room, attending to our mother.

We knew that he was living, for when we began to think, because mother wept so much and he did not come, that he must really have died, Joseph said to her the first morning that we were admitted to our mother's sick room, "Only tell us, *is* father dead?" and she answered, speaking very rapidly after a long hesitation, "Yes, to us he is dead." Afterwards, when, not satisfied with this reply, we began to ask again, "Isn't he dead to every body, then,—isn't *he?*" she said: "Children he is gone, and you will not see him again. If you love me—you are all that I have left—say no more about it."

She did not speak harshly, but with such a spirit that we knew we should hear no more; and if we had determined to ask further, the tears she shed were sufficient to silence us. As yet we had not become accustomed to the sight of her tears. It seemed to us terrible when she wept. When we had left her room, Joseph said to me, "Elsie, be sure that you don't say anything more, but I'll find out what it all means. Don't ask Ruth, for she would go to crying too. I know what mother went to the city for before she was sick—but don't say anything; I'll find it all out."

A short time after mother was able to leave her room we made another move, and then Ruth left us.

We went into New York—from the fresh and pleasant country into a narrow, crowed street.

Mother took this step because it was necessary that she should go to work in earnest; she told us this when we were on our way to the city. I remember with what manner of smile she said it. She was saying to her soul, while she looked upon her children, "Courage! courage! they must be fed and clothed!"

She went there to work indeed! To toil and meet with failure—to hope and be disappointed, to do and die! I know it all now. It was to labor against fearful odds—to fall utterly. Without friends, without patrons, without a glance of recognition, or a word of sympathy—to labor against fear, to labor desperately and vainly. To go forth from the embrace of love, and the shelter of home, to grapple single-handed with adversity. It must have been a grievous work, for it wasted her life away. Anxiety, and care, and disappointment, and grief, and want—these are potent agents. They are not long in doing their work. And still, grappling with all these, she toiled on, though fainting and afraid, until there came a climax to it all.

Shall I tell the story of exhausting labors that invariably meet with inadequate recompence; of the toiling for unjust, dishonest, and unconscionable employers; of the struggles of the mother's hands and heart; of the sacrifice offered day and night continually; of sorrow that was not suffered to give way to tears, when they might have lessened the load that bore upon the heart, because there was no time for tears, no sighs to spare; of grief that rarely found an utterance, that was made dumb for the children's sake? Shall I tell how one work was resigned for another—the artist's for the needle-woman's; of the descent we made from avenue to alley; of vain struggles with the fate that bore upon us; of wrestlings with all the coarser and brutalizing influences which are brought to bear upon the condition of the poor? Shall I touch upon the theme of temptations which beset the beggard, the disheartened, the forgotten of mercy, love and justice, I had almost said of God? Why should I speak of these things? Why will not the dreadful recollection fade away? It will not fade—it need not! I am content to retain it.

I spoke of the Paradise on the banks of the Hudson, from which we were driven away. Go you to "Paradise Square," and ask for the history of some you shall find there. You may chance to hear a story such as my mother might have told, had any come to us with intent of Charity or Christian Love, while we dwell there. For there at last did we find ourselves. There, in that centre of pollution, degradation and woe. Beyond that, unless we plunged into the waters of abomination, and suffered the waves of moral death to roll over us, we could not go. Thank God! though we stood beside those waters, our feet were never laved by them.

From the day on which we went to live in this dreadful quarter of the city; the day when we for the first time ascended those steep and filthy flights of stairs, that led through darkness, enveloped with an atmosphere which it was pollution to breathe; from the day of entrance into the room, of which I cannot now think without a shudder of horror and floods of tears, so cheerless, so vile, and so abominable was it: from that awful day our mother was as one dead. She had worked, and starved herself, and killed herself in vain—we were here at last.

She died there: In that miserable room, vile beyond description, comfortless beyond the telling our mother died:

Joseph, on our removal thither, joined the army of news-boys, and went about the streets hawking papers. Our darling little Joe! And so, here, surrounded by evil in every shape, we lived. And if my mother in her trouble did not forget to pray, this I know was the petition to which her heart gave utterance—that we might die together.

In the chamber directly underneath our own, lived another widow, and her son. The boy was older than Joseph, and had the same occupation; he was kind hearted, and manly beside, and we soon became the best friends. He was unlike all other children of the place—as with us, misfortune and not vice had brought them to that place, and there was no probability that they would remain there long, for both the mother and son [illegible] us to feel their loss as a new misfortune when they moved away. Joseph and I never played in the street, or in the square with the other children in the neighborhood. We had done with sports and games, but manp a pleasant time we had in the German woman's room, after mother was asleep, listening to the legends she would tell us, and harkening to the songs that she and Nicholas sang.

It was on a New Year's day that they went away. Joseph was in the street, and I was with the Vauchvalk's assisting them in such ways as I could. When their few chattles were ready for removal, the good woman went with us into my mother's room to chat with her for a moment, and to take her leave. I stood by the window of their den, looking into the street. There was a funeral procession moving by. It did not make my spirits lighter, watching that careless train of wretched men and women, and thinking that perhaps poor Joe and I might soon be following a body to the grave yard. Nicholas came and stood beside me, and with me looked from the window.

"I wonder where we shall all be next New Year," he said. The bare suggestion made me weep.

"See," he went on to say more cheerfully, for whenever others were sad his spirits always seemed to lighten. He was a happy boy, as bold and as dauntless as any hero, and always ready to sing and laugh, especially if the day was gloomy, and his mother, who was nearly as cheerful as himself in disposition, seemed inclined to fret a little.. "See," he said, "I'm going to made you a present, Elsie, that you must always keep.—Give me your finger."

I put forth my hand mechanically; ashamed of my tears, for whenever he spoke I always began immediately to think and believe that there was really nothing in the world to cry about.

He had in his fingers a bit of golden cord or thread, which he had picked up somewhere in his last journey as a newsboy; and this he began to wind about my finger, and tie closely and securely in a double knot. I watched him, uttering not a ward. When it was done, he looked up into my face, and said, "Now, remember Elsie, as long as you live you're to keep that ring, and when you look at it you must think that you have nothing to cry for—that it's a very good world to live in, after all. You must remember what I told you about the fairy who leads people along by a golden thread, and no matter whether they walk in rough roads or smooth, it's all the same; they don't know the difference as long as she leads 'em. So keep fast to the thread.—Nobody will steal it, for nobody besides you and me knows what its worth. Will you keep it?"

I promised him faithfully that I would, and I felt richer from that moment. I know the fairy began that instant to lead me along, and I have never lost my trust in her to this day.

Before Joseph returned home they had gone. I stood upon the door step when they went away, Nicholas bending under the load of goods which he carried on his back, his cheerful voice sounding in my ear almost as long as I could see them, when they went up the street. Almost as long? Did I *ever* forget it? And though I knew how much we should miss them day and night, and that we were now truly more alone in that savage place than we had been heretofore, still I had no inclination to weep, or groan, as I climbed the stairway to my mother. Encircling my finger was the GOLDEN THREAD! I would think of nothing beside.

CHAPTER II.

It was a stormy New Year's day, and early in the afternoon it became so dark in our room that I was obliged to light the candle, in order that I might finish the work which mother had secured of a down town merchant before she fell ill.

At seven o'clock Joseph came home, but the candle had long before that time burned to its socket. It was too late for me to go into the street in search for another, so I sat there in total darkness, and in silence, supposing that mother slept.

I was impatient to finish my work, and waited with eager listening until Joseph should come. But when he came, I had the story of the Vaunchvalk's sudden move to tell him, and he seemed so weary when he flung himself upon the floor beside me, and laid his head upon my lap, and I was so interested in my own story, that I entirely forgot about my work, and the candle, and everything but that which I was saying.

While I was thus whispering to him in the lowest tone of voice, we heard mother also whispering but hoarsely, and urgently, like one in haste, "Elsie! Elsie! Joseph!"

In an instant we were beside her, answering her, and waiting to hear what she would say.—Often had we laid beside her on that lowly bed, and her dear arms had enfolded us, but now there was no emotion, and no further words. It was so dark that we could not see her or each other, but when I crept close to her side, and said,—"Here we are mother, Joe and I," her silence stifled the laugh with which I spoke, and when Joseph, groping for her hand, said, "You were asleep when I came in, mother. I've not been here long, have I Elsie? But it's the awfulest night!" and still she did not answer, a great fear possessed me.

I leaped from the floor. I tried to re-light the wick that was left of the candle. While making this fain effort, Joseph cried out, "Quick, quick! Elsie! Elsie!" I knew well what that shriek meant. I ran from the room, and in an instant more was back again. By that fading, flickering light we looked on our dead mother!

In all that house—that enormous building—where the wretched of every grade and hue had found a shelter, one room alone, that darkened chamber which death had entered, was the only room where quiet reigned that night. Elsewhere, through its length and breadth, were drunkeness and riot. Thus surrounded, and with fear and anguish in our hearts, did we strive—until we had need to tell each other that the work was [illegible] our exertion, and convinced, in spite of ourselves, of the vanity of such Labors, we threw ourselves beside her [illegible] daylight when I waked—sleep! [illegible] brighter ray was streaming through our chamber than ever found its way through the tiny window panes when the sun was rising. The gleam was only momentary, yet as it flashed over my closed eyelids it thoroughly roused me. Not a second could have passed before I was groping for the door latch in the total darkness that succeeded that flash of light. There was a suffocating smoke in the chamber. I heard the shouts of men and women—they were laughing, and cursing, and shrieking, like so many demons let loose from hell. Eternity seemed crowded into that moment when I groped for the door, but as my hand was upon the latch, lifting it—the door flew open before me, and a dense cloud of smoke rolled in.

Oh Angel of Darkness and Death! But it is not for me to make a lamentation on this day. For me the waters of the flood have been divided, though I have trodden the path prepared for me, *alone!*

I shrieked to Joseph, but he did not hear. I called to our mother—but the dead hear not!—Frantic, I threw my arms about my brother, and dragged him from the bed. Had I but known for what I was waking him! Poor fellow, it was only to save me, and to die a hero's death.

When he was finally awakened, he stood for an instant bewildered—then he dashed towards the doorway, to recoil again, crying, "the stairs are on fire. Oh, Elise!"

And there we stood, speechless, gazing on each other.

Another moment and he was hurrying me to the window, and together we looked down upon the scene. In the squre a group of idle people was gathered—the flames was a gay sight for them. The boys were shouting and dancing about—men kindling their pipes by the blazing brands, and women laughing, cursing and jesting with the men. No one thought of us—no one among them knew that two orphan children were choosing then between the chances that were presented before them, standing in the chamber of death, and contemplating death together there.

The sight of all these wretches—their manifest indifference, maddened Joseph. He cried aloud to them, beseeching their aid, but the roaring of the flames and the crash of timber, had a sound more mighty than the terrified shrieks of a child. Perceiving this, he turned towards me.

"You are not going to roast alive here, Elsie. We must leap for it!" And before I could speak, act or think, he had me in his arms and we were dashing earthward from the flame-compassed casement. They saw us *then*.

With that leap, trouble, want and sorrow were at an end for him—my little, darling Joe! Another New Year's gift had been offered beside the Golden Thread—a life my brother had sacrificed for me.

In the Hospital to which we were carried he died, and ere I knew my loss he was buried.

To what a loss did I awaken! Mother and brother—gone!

Mighty sorrows sometimes prostrate us. We yield to them, are overcome of them. But it is not always so. Desperation sometimes give us strength. We rise up, as in defiance of the ills of life, and think and act as if all that we had lost might be regained, or more, anew. And thus did I, though I knew that my mother's grave place was in the ruins of that burning habitation—though Joseph, who had purchased my worthless life with his own, was buried, I could not tell where.

"What will you do? Where will you go?—Who are your friends?" were the questions of the nurse who attended me in the Hospital; and to all she asked I could only answer, "I do not know." And I did not know, until thought began to connect with thought, and recollection with recollection. And from a contemplation of the New Year's gift, which still circled a finger of my left hand, and which she told me she had herself prevented the physician from removing when he dressed the wounds of that hand, because she fancied it might be a keepsake, I was suddenly hurried, by the recollection of the letter that had been secured in my dress by mother's hand before we went into the neighborhood of Paradise Square. It was that day on which our last landlord made a seizure of all the funiture we had, excepting the bed, and a few other articles, which, for his pity's sake, he allowed us to take away to our next abiding place. After he had left us, my mother went from the room, bidding us remain there together until she returned. It was long ere she came back again, and when she came her face had that death-like pallor, and her eyes that startling glare that never left them from that day. In her hand she brought a letter, and this she gave to me and said, "I have been doing a good thing for you, Elsie. Take this letter and keep it—a day may come when you can use it. Be sure that you do not lose it." So earnestly did she speak, so impressed was I with the importance of the letter, that I secured it in my dress in such a way that it would be safe as long as the garment itself lasted.

Another week found me no longer an inmate of the New York Hospital, but a resident in a convent—a pupil at St. Mary's.

My letter was addressed to the Superior. The nurse at the Hospital was a Sister of Charity (richly she merited the name!) She had herself been educated by this Superior, or under the charge of her whose protection I was now seeking. It was this nurse and sister who had brought me to this place, and here I had found a home and a friend.

We arrived at the convent early in the evening, my guide and myself. My letter was delivered by my guide. An hour after I was shown into the Superior's presence. She welcomed me in Christ's name; assured me of her sympathy; bade me confide in her. Had she not been beautiful, and noble, and gracious, gentle of speech, and tender of manner, as she was, my heart had not failed to obey her, when she said again, after I had concluded the brief tale that I had to tell, "My daughter, you are welcome.—Trust in me as I shall trust in you. Love me as I shall love you. [illegible]"

She kissed me, and she wept, and seemed deeply moved. I looked upon the Golden Thread. I thought of the fairy of which Nicholas had told me, and I fancied that the ring looked brigher and purer than usual, and my confidence in the potency of the fairy's efforts was never stronger than at that happy moment.

CHAPTER III.

I had lived in this convent four years when Charlotte first came to St. Mary's, I said.

Early one morning, shortly after her arrival, I was on my knees before one of the windows of the chamber where we slept. Not absorbed in my devotions, but watching the approach of a great cloud of snow, that advanced through the valley from the south, leaving on the earth, forest and river, tokens of its progress as it moved along.

The river was frozen; the ground hard as rock. The sky, excepting toward the west and south, clear, and bright as steel. It was late in December, yet this was the first snow that had fallen, and it was a sight welcome to our eyes as we looked from the convent windows.

Charlotte Winslow was beside me, scratching her name with a pin on the frost-covered glass, and writing another underneath her own, which she breathed upon ere it was finished, assuring me that if she only dared to do it she could grave her name indellibly upon the pane with the diamond which she wore when she came to the convent, but which since that day had been laid out of sight, for no baubles were worn at St. Mary's.

While I dreamily watched the rapid spread of the clouds, and the advance of the storm, Charlotte continued working busily with the pin.—Finally she said:

"What's this like, darling?"

I looked, but seeing only divers and sundry marks, which bore about as much resemblance to the signs of the dead language as they did to any other thing, asked in turn:

"Is it short hand?"

"You want imagination sadly, don't you Elsie?"

"Very likely," I replied. "Especially if what you have done means anything. I see nothing but scratches."

"Nothing but scratches! Just observe. *This* is the surface of the ground—a broad field in the midst of hills. Here is an immense hole. Down below is a great pit of darkness. *These* are lamps, you stupid! The side of the cave you perceive are hard as rock—see how they glisten! Those are men—they work here—and as good as live here under ground. Just think of it! Now! do you understand?"

"I see no more than I did at first. Perhaps you are telling about a mine, or a well. But for all that I see nothing."

"It is a mine. If I had you here—this is the surface of the rock you see—I would place you in that great tub, and the man standing here by the windlass should let you down in the twinkling of an eye."

"In the name of wonder, what put such an idea into you head?" I exclaimed.

"Oh," answered Charlotte with not the slightest hesitation, "I am imaginative, you know. I shall make a better artist than you. Ask Miss Judd, sister Anna, I mean, she is a judge."

I had it in my mind to make a little speech, taking this word "Artist" for my text, but before I could begin it she said, "Elsie tell me about that ring of golden thread you wear—is it a charm or an amulet? 'Thereby hangs a tale,' I know, and I am curious to hear it."

"Draw on you imagination," answed I.

"I have, a thousand times at least. Have you a lover outside the convent walls? I wonder the Superior lets you wear it, though to be sure it's not much of an ornament. Not much of a pomp and vanity.'"

I had no opportunity to answer again, for just then the chapel bell interrupted our talk, and drove away all thoughts save those associated with the duties awaiting us.

A few days later Charlotte and I were walking with certain of the teachers and pupils of St. Mary's, in an avenue recently opened through the convent lands. As we came in sight of a great excavation made for the new railway, I thought of Charlotte's etching and said:

"Have you exercised that wonderful imagination of yours any further on the subject of mines since your sketch saw the light? Tell me a story about it, do."

"Ah, then you'll know as much about mines as I do."

"Why should'nt I? I shall freeze, I believe, we poke along at such a snail's pace. I'd give anything for a race this morning. Do tell me some horrible story about those mines."

"What mines? There's no getting clear of you. There isn't another such a tease in the school as you—poor little daub of an artist, Elsie Culverton! I do wonder that I came to take such a fancy to you. The girls who are kept at a distance by your haughty temper, are well off—if they did but know it. They should bless their stars for that same."

"I am not haughty," I said in quick resentment, "but I will always keep at a distance from girls who know how to do just one thing, and only one—to ask impertinent questions. You may depend on that."

"Tut—tut! why Elsie, for shame! I'll tell you a *story*, though you are in a *comfortable* heat just now, that makes one guess you wont freeze immediately. Come nearer—take my arm—there! Now do *your* best to keep alive. You shall hear a story, never fear. And so the girls ask impertinent questions do they? Tell me what about, some time, and I'll silence them.

"Away down in the depths of a great mine worked an old man, who had labored there for twenty years. He had a son, and a son's son, and daughter. And the children were twins. These were all his family: the wives of the two men, the old and the young, were dead. The old man's hair was white as snow; the young man's black as night; the children had golden locks that gleamed like sunshine in the gloomy place. It may not have seemed like sunshine to others; but you [illegible] Elsie, that affection always awakens poetic, such is the fact. To the old man and his son the children's curling locks, their very selves, were like sungleams. They were merry children; they grew like weeds in the mine. They worked a little, but they played a great deal, and they loved each other, and life, and every one loved them. One morning"—here Charlotte paused, and looked long and earnestly upon the excavation the laborers were making for the railway, though the work had not advanced perceptibly since we last walked that way. Twice I said "Well?" before it pleased her to resume the story.

"One morning the little girl had gone off with one of the miners whom the children always called 'uncle,' although there was really no connection between them. For a long time she played about the chamber in which he was at work, but at last she became weary, and began to tease the old fellow to lead her back to the place where her father and brother were. This he could not do at once, so he gave her some of the smaller and duller tools employed in his work, that she might amuse herself until he could attend her. At last he was ready to go; he stooped to lift her in his arms, but just then there was a loud crash, and a report that echoed and re-echoed with mighty sound through all those vaulted chambers. The child and the man when they heard it, stood stock still, as if turned into pillars of salt, and the man's face was pale from fright. Then he grasped the little one's hand, and with not a word, they ran off together towards her grandfather's field.

"There had been a dreadful catastrophe—an explosion—and who were killed or wounded it was at first impossible to say. But the men looked with terror on each other, so many of their comrades were missing. They left the little girl standing by herself alone, hour after hour, the men working without pause, now and then bringing out from the ruin the body of some comrade, dead, or dying, or horribly crushed. Can you fancy her feeling? You cannot. You have no imagination, I remember, poor child! But, if you only *could* guess at her feeling as she saw the old man whose hair was as white as snow, and the younger man with the black locks, and her little golden-haired brother. It's a great pity, Elsie, that you have no imagination, for really if you could bring the scene before you as it actually was, you would not sleep again for a week to come. What sort of creature though, do you suppose that child might prove to be in the course of time, after such an early experience?"

I looked at Charlotte. She was not smiling as though her speech was made in jest. Her eyes were fixed upon the path before her with a grave, peculiar look, and her motion as she went forward was strictly mechanical. Evidently her every thought was away in the dark cave of which she had spoken. She was commiserating the fate of the bereaved child. I could not resist asking—

"Where did you read it?" And as I asked it I thought that there was no great necessity of my drawing on imagination for scenes both horrible and strange—had not my memory an abundance of such recollections? Alas my little, darling brother!

I drew closer to Charlotte as I asked the question. She seemed nearer to me, and dearer, since I knew that she had dreamed of sorrows the like of which I had passed through.

She answered me, "I read it in a true book, Elsie."

"What became of the girl?"

"Oh," replied she in an altogether different tone, as if well pleased that she had beguiled her listener into belief, "that remains to be made as Sister Anna would say. But I've half a mind to make you finish the fiction for yourself. Give me a proper and natural finale."

"When the child saw the three lying before her dead, she fell down at their feet without a word or cry, and immediately gave up the ghost."

Charlotte laughed at the abrupt termination I had given the tale.

"This is the way you waste such material!—No, the child ought to live, and come up out of the mines like a wonderful elf, and she should run a remarkable career among people who are in the habit of living by day-light. She should have a lover, and all sorts of trouble on his account.—You would put an end to her at once! What an idea; but the best thing for herself perhaps that could be done."

"Do you ever dream about mines, Charlotte?"

"Certainly I dream about them. I have just been doing that same for your amusement. I dream of them o'nights too sometimes." She looked at me with piercing curiosity, as she said this. "I had last night a vision almost as terrible as this of which I've been speaking. I was crying when I awakened."

"Yes," I said, "I know you were. I thought you had some fright. You were talking about mines too."

"Elsie, I want to ask you some 'impertinent questions'—you say the rest of the girls do."

"Say on Charlotte."

"How long have you been at St Mary's, did you tell me?"

"Four years."

"Where did you live before?"

"In New York."

"I've had the promise, and shall go there sometime. It's a great place to live in, isn't it? I've a presentment something odd will happen there to me, some day."

"Great? Yes—very. A very great place indeed."

"Are you going to remain here?"

"What—always do you mean?"

"Yes."

"I think not."

"You have friends besides these in the convent, of course."

"Why of course?"

"Everybody has. *I have.*"

"Then if everybody has, I have too. You will please to ask me no more just now."

"And you must tell me how that ring came on your finger."

"It belongs to the fairies—it's none of mine."

"You have some imagination after all! Well Elsie, let me just tell you one thing, I fell in love at first sight, when I came to the convent."

"With whom Charlotte?"

"Yourself Elsie. I am glad we set beside each other in the school room, and I'd stand up you. Such a set of girls was never got together before I'll be sworn. Above all I'm so glad that we have both a taste for the fine arts. We will be rivals, and between us both Sister Anna will be put into the shade before we leave, I'm thinking. Now, Elsie, I've made my declaration, what do you think of me?"

"I bless the day you came! I thought I should die after Lydia Warner went home; and I believe I should have done so if you hadn't come. But you *did* come, and so I'm alive."

"Don't you long for her sister's appearing?"

"I did till this morning; but I don't care a fig about it now."

"Consider yourself hugged in the warmest possible embrace for that confession. I kiss you with my spirit, Elsie, it would be a heinous offence if I gave the outward and visible sign here in the open thoroughfare."

That was a memorable walk.

CHAPTER IV.

It may have been a fortnight after this walk and conversation, that a package came from New York, a gift to the convent from Lydia Warner's mother, which consisted of two paintings, purchased by her at a recent sale.

I was studying in the school room until a late hour; for when I heard that the present had arrived, I became so much excited about the pictures that I forgot my books; consequently when called upon to recite I knew not a word of my lesson—therefore having no mentionable excuse, I was obliged to commit it to my memory after school was dismissed, and then recite it by myself.

By the time this penalty was paid, it was nearly dark, and, as I went from the school room I perceived that the girls had all returned from the afternoon exercise. Charlotte Winslow met me in the corridor; she had come in search of me.

"Come, I have leave for you," she exclaimed. "I want to show you the strangest picture you ever laid eyes on, before it gets darker."

She took my hand, and we hurried into the refectory, where this painting was placed on the wall opposite the three windows which opened on the garden. Late as it was, the light that fell upon the picture was quite favorable, and the shadows gathering in the great room served but to heighten the effect.

The instant I comprehended the picture, that faintness and dizziness came over me, which I had experienced once in my life before, on that awful night when Joseph leaped with me in his arms from the burning house, and died for me. But I did not faint. Charlotte saw not my sensation; she had gone back to shut the door in the passage-way, that we might be alone. Glad was I that she did not observe it. When she returned, she passed me rapidly, saying—

"Come nearer! Here is just the thing to please you. It pleases me wonderfully. So you *must* like it. But did you ever see anything so queer? the name of it is THE MIDNIGHT SUN. They have such things in the North, the Superior says; she was explaining it to us just now. Look at those waves, what a dismal tone! and those monstrous white bears, how they growl!—Good Heavens! I'm thinking I could make a horrible story about a man who [illegible] to a region like that to live alone [illegible]—a sort of companion piece to the [illegible] the mines, which I told you the other day."

Charlotte did not laugh as she spoke, [illegible] danced.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)