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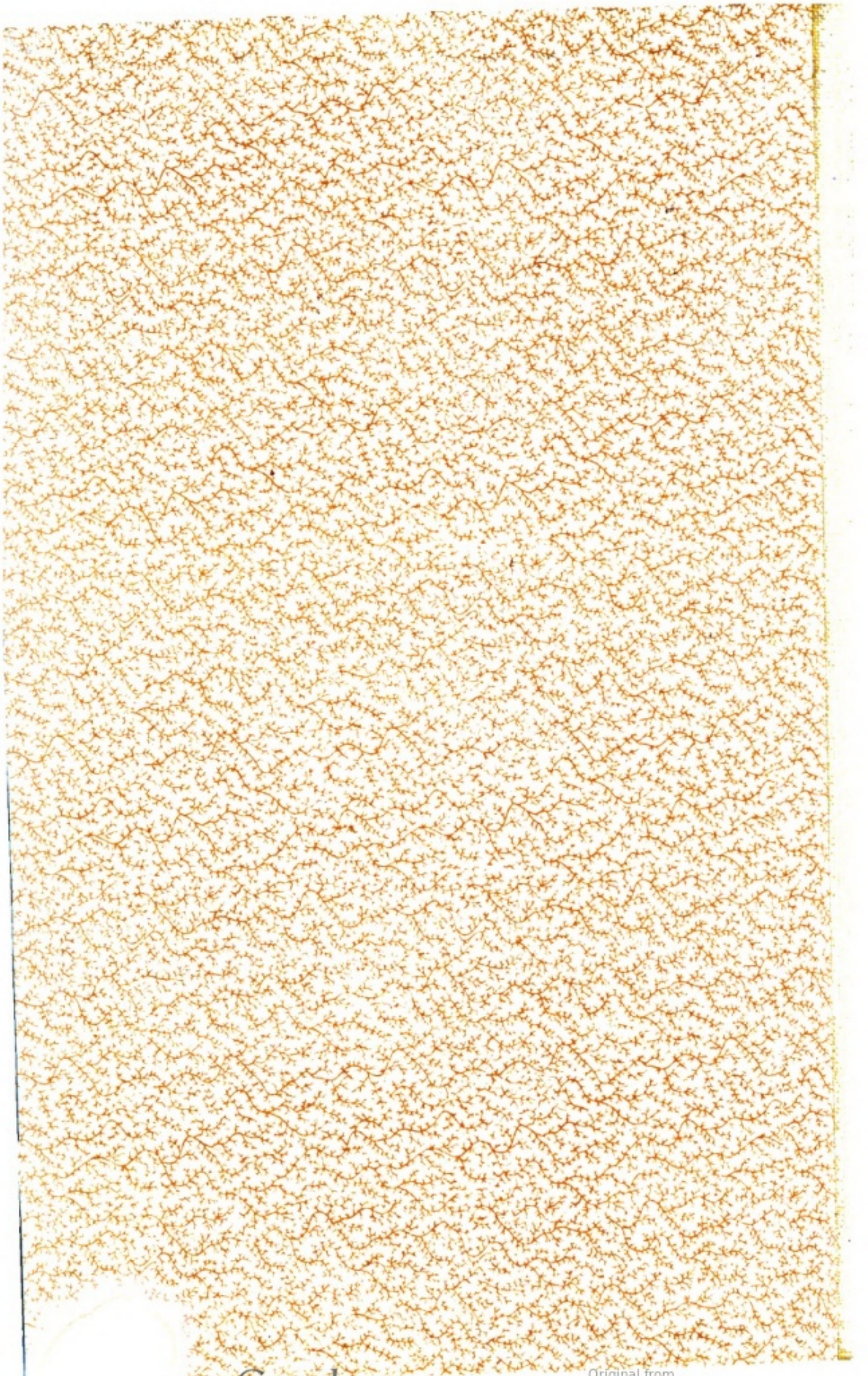

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GARTH:

A NOVEL.

BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE,

AUTHOR OF

"BRESSANT," "SAXON STUDIES," ETC.

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FRANCIS BENNOCH, Esq.,

WITH

THE HEARTY RESPECT, GRATITUDE, AND AFFECTION,

OF

THE AUTHOR.

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GARTH.

BOOK I.

URMHURST.

CHAPTER I.

A BIRD-PROLOGUE.

EVERY clear morning, for more than two hundred years past, the rising sun had thrown across the broad hip-roof of Urmhurst the shadow of its eastern chimney. The earliest beams, though fresh and pure from their ocean-bath, yet scrupled not to embrace the weather-worn old shaft, or to kiss warmly its smoke-blackened mouth.

The chimney, for its part, seldom suffered these kind greetings to pass without due recognition. In the winter months its reply was a jolly puff of blue smoke, odorous of the pungent spirit of the great pine-log which had been kindled on the hearth below. But its summer response was livelier and, perhaps, more poetical. First would be heard a mysterious, soft rumbling and twittering, as though the venerable structure were cleaning its sooty throat to say good-morning; and anon, like cheerful thoughts born of an aged heart, forth would flutter, from their abode in the cavernous interior, a rejoicing flock of chimney-swallows.

There were dozens and scores of them. Hardly in all New England, and certainly not in New Hampshire, could be found such another chimney for swifts as this eastern one of Urmhurst—so tall was it, so roomy, so full of convenient holes and crevices. Here had they builded through generations innumerable; each head of a family, at his decease, jealously transmitting the chosen ancestral cranny to the eldest son. But even the largest chimneys have a limit to their capacity for accommodating lodgers; and, during the last century or so, there must have occurred in the swift colony many sad but unavoidable family partings. Every year a certain contingent must go forth to seek their homes elsewhere. They would cluster together upon the brink of their old dwelling; and perhaps the less experienced among them would ask why they need go farther than just across the roof, where the western chimney, to all appearances the very twin of the eastern, upreared itself in silent invitation.

"Ah, my dear child," some wise old cock would reply, whetting his beak against a brick, and then tipping his head sagely to one side, "that site is not so eligible as it looks to be. Not a bird of us all has ever settled there. The air thereabouts is very feverish and unwholesome. In short, as I said before, it's not so eligible as—"

"But what makes the air unwholesome, grandpa?" the youngster would break in.

"Well, you see, it's called the kitchen-chimney; and wherever, in your future career, you come across a chimney that is called a kitchen-chimney, don't go near it. They are never wholesome; and what makes it a

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greater pity is that half the time they're the largest chimneys in the house."

"In my opinion, then, it's an outrage; and, if I live, I'll see it righted. What! are not chimneys made for chimney-swallows? Does not our very name demonstrate it? And, if so, why should not one be as good as another?"

"But men build them, you know," begins the old cock, whetting his bill apologetically; "and perhaps they may sometimes want to use them for some purposes of their own. You see there are two sides to every question; appearances are deceptive, and, at all events, we ought to allow men to plead their own cause before condemning them."

"I disagree with you. You are old and timid. For me, I hold no parley with injustice—I crush it. Men build chimneys, perhaps; but that is nothing to their credit, they are obliged to do it in order to accommodate us. Under what pretext, then, can they usurp the use of them? I say no injustice ever was more flagrant. It should be a standing heritage of indignation to the swift colony until it is righted; and, for my part, I am ready to begin the good work at once!"

"Tut, tut!" says the old one, "you are young and hot-headed; but what can you do? Do you suppose you are the first bird that ever was indignant? No, nor will you be the last; but the chimney will remain ineligible, nevertheless. At all events, don't begin your reforms with Urmhurst; for one does not meet every day, as you will by-and-by find out, with a human family so uniformly considerate as these Urmsons of ours. For example, in my younger days," continued the patriarch, beginning the story for the seven-hundredth time at least—"in my younger days, Garth Urmson and I became quite intimate. The friendship originated, you must know, in his setting a fracture of this leg—"

"Yes, yes, yes!" is the unanimous twitter of the conclave; "don't tell us that old yarn again; we know all about it, and how kind Garth always has been to us. Why shouldn't he be? Yes, yes, yes!"

"Quite so!" rejoins the patriarch, pretending not to mind the interruption, though in reality quite put off the track of his ideas by it—"quite so. Garth has always been kind to us since that time; it is out of the regard he feels for me. When I am gone you may find a difference; I hope not, but you may! Yes, and the old gentleman, Mr. Cuthbert Urmson, he is very obliging also. Often and often has he put crumbs on his study window-sill out of regard for me, you understand; and has smiled and nodded very pleasantly when I came to carry them off. A charming old gentleman; I feel a sympathy for him. I should not wonder if that book he is writing were a history of chimney-swallows; supplemented, perhaps, with allusions to his own family records, and to the vicissitudes of Urmhurst itself. Now, is it reasonable to suppose," adds the patriarch, suddenly getting his cue again, and raising his chirp (for his audience was betraying symptoms of inattention)—"is it reasonable, I say, to accuse persons, otherwise so friendly, of wantonly—*wantonly*, mark you!—infringing upon our rights in a matter so vital as this? No, a thousand times no! Depend upon it, some hidden causes are at work here. This old house is full of mysterious and sinister traditions; and who knows whether there may not be some occult connection between the dinners of our good friends below there, and this unwholesome atmosphere of the kitchen-chimney?"

"Then," twitters the irreconcilable, skimming away, "here goes for knocking soot into their broth-kettle!"

CHAPTER II.

THE LEGEND OF THE THRESHOLD.

Leaving the annals of the swifts to good Mr. Cuthbert Urmson (if such be really the subject of his labors), let us observe with how comfortable a familiarity the sunshine disposes itself upon the gray-green lichens of Urmhurst's shingled roof, and weaves golden fibres into the ponderous oaken logs wherewith the ancient house is built. Ancient—yet it seems to wax more massive and stalwart year by year. Here is no sagging of the ridge-pole, nor leaning of the uprights, nor settling of the granite founda-

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tions. This oaken framework is stanch as a mammoth's skeleton; and these log-built walls as enduring as stone courses. Perhaps the sun, during the two centuries that he has shone on Urmhurst, has imparted to it, along with his heat, something likewise of his immortality. These great, unpainted boles, that sleep so snugly one on another, have acquired a ruddy lustre suggestive of living flesh and blood; but to the frailties and infirmities of humanity they seem to own no kinship.

Urmhurst faces the south; and thus its venerable front, rich in projections and unevennesses, takes the sun's rays obliquely, and generates a carnival of shadows of all shapes, sizes, and gradations. The curt hip-roof is here modified by the addition of a steeply-shelving curb, veiling the bareness of the upper story, as though the house had pulled its hat-brim low down over its forehead. Through this curb project the hooded gables of three dormer-windows, the central one cut down so as to form a glass door, whereby access is had to a balcony surmounting the porch. The eastern, known as Eve's window, is framed in a climbing vine of small pink roses. Below, the impending eaves cast a contemplative shade over the deep-set casements of the ground-floor; the dormers project pointed shadows aslant; but the profoundest obscurity always collects beneath the porch. This is partly due to the fact that the pillars and canopy, instead of being carpenter's work, are fashioned of living trees—a couple of gnarled and stunted oaks, planted generations ago on either side the wide doorway. At the height of about twelve feet from the ground their upward growth has been arrested, and the strength of their knotted limbs spread out horizontally above the threshold stone. Thus interlocked, they appear to grapple each other like a pair of misshapen wrestlers. They support the balcony appertaining to the second floor, and their dark and sedate foliage lets fall, on whomsoever passes beneath, a transparent veil of gloom.

This gloom has been deepened by tradition. The death-grip of the two trees would seem to typify a sinister deed said to have been done on the spot, which was afterward covered by the still-existing granite threshold, but which, at the primitive epoch referred to, was the consecrated grave of a mighty Indian warrior and sachem. After his death, his tribe had migrated to a tract several hundred miles to the southward; but his descendants (in obedience to some pious superstition) were in the habit of making occasional pilgrimages to his tomb. What mystic rites they observe there we have no means of knowing, but it is believed that every year, for more than three generations, the two wisest and bravest chiefs of the tribe were chosen to make the long journey through the trackless forest; and, so great was the awe wherewith the deceased sachem was invested, not only in the eyes of his own people, but also in those of other tribes, that the pilgrims never once met with any hinderance on their sacred expedition, nor ever found the solemn privacy of the tomb disturbed.

But at length there came a year when the appointed twain arrived to find a strange company there before them. The grave-mound was situated near the centre of an opening—a natural glade in the mid-heart of the primeval forest. Around it was now assembled a troop of twenty or more white-faced personages with steel caps on their heads, and wearing bright accoutrements, which glistened in the sunshine. A number of wagons were drawn up near at hand and fresh-faced women were seated on and among the medley of household goods wherewith they were laden. Upon the consecrated mound itself a short, strongly-built man, dark-browed, and bearing in the centre of his chin a deep scar or cleft, had taken his stand and was haranguing the assemblage. Close to him sat on horseback a stately young woman, holding an infant in her arms. She listened to the man's harangue, her dark eyes fixed sadly but lovingly on his face; and when he ceased speaking she turned to the steel-clad company and uplifted before them her babe, uttering at the same time words of earnest encouragement, to which they of the steel head-pieces responded with three loud shouts and a waving of their weapons.

Up to this moment the two Indians, hid-

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den within the leafy verge of the forest, had looked on in mingled awe and amazement. These were the first white men they had seen, and they perhaps supposed them to be a kind of spirits, come from heaven to do honor to the illustrious dead. History, however, bids us recognize them as that sturdy band of pioneers whom Captain Neil Urmson, the Puritan soldier of Marston Moor and Naseby, led, about the middle of the seventeenth century, into the unknown wilderness west from Portsmouth. Captain Urmson was a man of undoubted pith and ability; and, had it not been for the singular restlessness of disposition which drove him forth from the restraints of the Portsmouth colony, he would have made a deep mark in the first pages of our New England history. Though harsh of aspect and unequal in his moods, he seems to have been possessed of a peculiar power over the wills and judgments of those with whom he came in personal contact. Wealthy, and endowed with a physical strength and energy exceptional even in those iron times, he might have risen to the highest place in almost any community. But an uneasy devil possessed him; and, after causing him to abandon the prospect of a brilliant career in England under the Protectorate (which he had helped much to establish), it haunted him even in his self-imposed exile over-seas. Scarce four months after his disembarkation at Portsmouth, he already showed symptoms of discontent. Much was done to appease him, for the little colony could ill afford to be at odds with so rich and able a member as Captain Urmson. But it was all to no purpose. Imperiously rejecting advice and reason, he packed his wagons, collected his people, and departed northwestward. Nothing more was heard of him, and he was soon given up for lost. But boldness and sagacity were his safeguard through the wild difficulties and perils of the forest. He managed either to awe or to conciliate such Indians as crossed his path; and when, some months after leaving the colony, he and his followers halted at last on the site of the sachem's grave, not a man of them all was missing, or had suffered in health or limb.

At this point, however, blood was spilt. Captain Urmson, in haranguing his retainers, had bade them look upon this forest-glade as the nucleus of their future home; and his wife Eleanor had cheered them by showing the undaunted front of little Ralph, a pioneer less than a year old—for he was born at sea. Thereupon the captain, snatching a pickaxe from the hand of one of the men standing near him—John Selwyn by name—and with the words, "Here, in this virgin soil, where are no dead bones or blood-stains of the past, will I set the threshold of our new life!"—with this singularly infelicitous exclamation, he raised the heavy pick above his head, and then drove it deep into the green turf of the unsuspected grave.

Before he could uplift it for another stroke, a wild yell broke startling on the ears of all. All recognized the Indian war-whoop, and, fancying themselves attacked by a whole tribe at once, they fell for a moment into something like confusion. Meanwhile, two dusky figures, with long black hair and brandished tomahawks, had bounded forward from the concealment of the trees. One of them sprang at Captain Urmson, and wrenched the pickaxe from his hand. The suddenness and audacity of the savage apparition increased the dismay of the white men, not one of whom stirred in defense. But on Neil Urmson's swarthy face there was at once a smile and a dark frown. Eleanor, who had seen that expression once before at a momentous epoch in their lives, turned pale and tried to restrain him as he was drawing the heavy pistol from his belt.

"Do not, husband!" she said. "Remember our wedding-day; defile not likewise this first hour of our new life with blood!"

Tradition affirms that Urmson did hesitate for a moment, with his hand on the butt of the pistol. And then was heard the stentorian voice of the Reverend Anak Graeme, who had accompanied Urmson from England, and was rumored to have been the officiating clergyman at his marriage, "Verily, methinks it were well to parley with the heathen before slaying them!"

"Well said!" cried John Selwyn, a slen-

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derly-built man, with bold eyes and careless bearing. "Give the devil his due, captain. For aught we know, these red-skinned sinners may have better right here than we!"

But, even as he spoke, the second Indian, who was younger and presumably less steady than his companion, drew his bow and let fly an arrow. It glanced harmlessly from the captain's polished helmet, and pierced Eleanor's shoulder, and the face of little Ralph was smeared with her blood. As quick as thought Neil leveled his pistol and fired right into the heart of the first Indian, who was close in front of him. The tall savage leaped from the ground, and falling prone, his brawny arms hugged the grave of his dishonored ancestor, and his teeth bit the turf. Eleanor, though sorely wounded, clasped her child to her bosom and strove to support herself upon her frightened horse. Scarce a minute had elapsed since the first alarm of the war-whoop.

By the time the smoke of Captain Neil's pistol had cleared away, his retainers had formed to resist as best they might the expected onslaught. But they waited in vain. Only the dark trunks of the mighty oaks and hemlocks surrounded them, and there was no sound save the twittering of scared birds, and the rustle of the leaves in the summer wind. No avengers came; or, if any, not then, nor for many a year thereafter. The second Indian had fled, silently as a dream, toward the distant wigwams of his tribe, there to keep alive, as tradition would have us believe, an hereditary memory of the sacrilege and a purpose of requital. A neighboring stream, which rushes headlong over a jagged bed of rocks and empties into a lake some miles away, is still pointed out as having been traversed by the fugitive in his desperate canoe.

Having assured themselves of their safety, the colonists had leisure to take thought concerning the dead and wounded. As to the former, it was resolved, in accordance with Captain Urmson's suggestion, to bury the heathen on the spot where he had fallen, and to make his gravestone the threshold of the projected edifice. "For it is fitting," said the grim Puritan, "and an emblem of what shall surely come to pass throughout this land, that in entering our new home we plant our foot first upon the bones of the red-man."

In digging the grave, however, the relics of the ancient sachem were revealed, and the mysterious attack of the two Indians thereby explained. The grave-diggers hereupon shook their heads, and were reluctant to proceed; and John Selwyn threw down his spade, and flatly refused to have anything more to do with the business; declaring, with sundry strange oaths peculiar to him, that no good would come of stealing dead men's ground, and that, rather than live there, he would part from the colony and seek his fortune alone. Captain Urmson, then, having resolutely confronted his enemies while they were alive, was not inclined to be squeamish about them dead. Taking Selwyn's spade, and thrusting the other men aside, he finished the grave himself, and pitched into it the body of the slain, and covered up the corpse with the earth-stained skeleton of the original occupant. He stamped the earth level with his booted feet, and looking with glowing eyes into the faces of the silent group who had stood watching his ill-omened toil—"It is my deed," he said, "and thus do I trample down this blood, and all superstitious terrors!"

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERATIONS.

Such is the gloomy legend that underlies the threshold of our story. Selwyn was as good as his word, and departed with what few possessions he had; being the first of Captain Urmson's followers who had ever had the hardihood to desert him. Nevertheless, Urmhurst was built, and a huge slab of rough-hewed granite, heavy enough to have kept down the most athletic ghost, pressed its weight above the nameless remains. It so happened, however, that the frost of the ensuing winter, or some other less obvious agent, cracked the ponderous stone across its entire breadth; and this cleft, from a variety of causes, became after-

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ward so much widened that, at the epoch of which I am to write, there were two distinct thresholds instead of one, with a gap of two or three inches between them. This accident was interpreted by the sagacious as a sign that the blood which Neil Urmson had so arrogantly trodden into the earth would one day rise against him; and for many years whatever misfortune befell the family, whether or not really ascribable to the Indians, was by such sapient persons unerringly referred to a birthplace beneath the cloven threshold.

Urmhurst was built; but, at least during its builder's lifetime, it could hardly have been a cheerful dwelling-place. Eleanor never recovered from the effects of her wound. She lingered through several months; but, when the house was at last completed, she had to be carried to her chamber and laid upon the bed which she left only for the graveyard. Hints have come down to us that her death was hastened by mental disquietude; and her reference, when trying to dissuade her husband from bloodshed, to something which had happened on their wedding-day, has been quoted in support of this notion. Furthermore, attempts have been made to trace a connection between the purport of these words of hers and the sudden self-banishment of Captain Urmson from England. His family had been a prominent and powerful one; the English Urmhurst was a valuable estate; and the Cromwellian party, of which the captain was an adherent, was just establishing its supremacy when he exiled himself. Had he remained he must presumably have filled a high office under the new government. Why had he fled? Not, surely, from religious motives, since he had never been a religious bigot; and though after his emigration he was occasionally subject to violent fits of fanaticism, yet these had no root in his nature, and generally left him with a tendency toward reaction. The explanation therefore must be sought elsewhere; and, putting what was known and what was surmised together, the conclusion was reached that Captain Urmson had done some deed rendering himself alike odious to his own and the opposite party; and that his marriage with Eleanor had somehow been either the incitement to this deed or the occasion of it.

To button-hole the captain and ask him the simple question whose answer would put an end to conjecture, might seem a simple matter; but there were serious obstacles to this course. The first master of Urmhurst would certainly have knocked down whomsoever had presumed to catechise him, and possibly would not have been contented to stop even there. He had never been distinguished for affability, and after his wife's death he became uncompromisingly savage. He shut himself up in his fort (for Urmhurst was really little more than that in his lifetime), and devoted himself to the education of his son Ralph, who is said to have strongly resembled his father, even to the cleft in the chin. The captain had no near neighbors, Urmhurst standing then, as always, alone. The other members of the colony built their huts on the banks of the rapid stream to the westward, thus forming the germ of the prosperous little village of Urmsworth, which exists there to-day. This secession may have been owing to those superstitious terrors which Urmson himself had professed to despise; but it is as readily explained by the circumstance that, although the situation of Urmhurst itself is unapproachably fine, there happens to be no other site in the vicinity even tolerably eligible.

The house, as we behold it now, rises from the summit of a smooth, grassy knoll, barely half an acre in area. This knoll is itself the culminating point of a long and gradual acclivity, ascending by almost imperceptible degrees from the broad southern valley. The real loftiness of the site can be realized only by considering how wide a sweep of prospect it commands over a scene of beauty at once noble and peaceful. The wooded slopes trend majestically southward till they merge in the broad gleam of a lake some three miles away. Beyond appear at intervals the white reaches of a placid stream, winding onward through miles of level cranberry-pastures, which themselves resemble a gigantic green river, slumbering between wooded shores. The farther extremity of this valley is sentineled by a mountain—or rather a group of high hills—having the ap-

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pearance, from the point of view of Urmhurst, of a crouching lion, whose shaggy head rests ponderously on his fore-paws.

The Indian name of this mountain is Wabeno—the Juggler; perhaps in allusion to the protean changes which the seasons and the variations of the weather cause him to undergo. In spring he acquires a dark-bluish tinge, especially in the early morning, when the moist haziness of the atmosphere is supplemented by the fleecy mists which ascend from the meadows and clamber up his headlong sides. In summer his coat is shadowed purple, with greenish lights; and monster thunder-clouds sweep and burst over his crest, letting through broad, slanting bars of gauzy light. In autumn his mane grows tawny, and the clear air magnifies him, so that he appears nearer by several miles than at other seasons. In times of drought he occasionally takes fire, and lies swathed for days or weeks in mysterious clouds of shifting smoke, which by night are illumined with a dull russet glow, like that reflected upward from the profound pit of a volcano. Winter makes him gray and ghost-like; and when in long December nights the white moon hangs above him in the frosty sky, he seems in truth no more substantial than an horizon cloud. In snow-storms he vanishes quite away; but when the northern winds have cleared the valley, there he looms as before—a lion in the path! After all this phantom show of life and activity, behold! he crouches impassive and motionless, his shaggy head upon his paws. There he lies, and seems to watch the old house, that watches back from its lonely station twenty miles away.

It has been fancifully affirmed that Wabeno is in fact neither a mountain nor a lion, but an incarnation of the spirit of that incorrigible old sachem whose dust lies underneath Urmhurst's threshold-stone. And it is further stated that when Urmhurst shall step down from between the two tower-like chimneys to which it has been moored during so many generations, Wabeno will spring up and emit a roar which shall make New Hampshire tremble. If we grant the first act of this drama, we might admit the second; but the ancient mansion budges not! It has rested so long on its granite foundations that it has almost become a part of the continent itself. Like some immemorial oak-tree, it has thrown out roots far and near and on every side, so that its upheaval would tear open the ground for a quarter of a mile in circuit. It is the eye and key of the landscape, harmonizing so justly with its surroundings that any alteration would seem tantamount to the violation of a natural law.

This semblance of spontaneous growth is enhanced by the devious footpaths which lead this way and that from the doors, and journey in time-worn furrows down the slopes. We cannot call them artificial, for they were honestly worn by the footsteps of generations, and therefore fill precisely their natural places. Yonder, where it goes up the acclivity, the track is narrow but deeply worn; whereas, above, it broadens and throws off a lighter sideway parallel to itself. See again how deftly it avoids that jut of rock; and here, how sagaciously it slips beneath the shadow of the great elm. In a similar manner do the other accessories of the dwelling conspire to fix it more intimately in its place. The antique well-sweep, poised like a giant's fishing-pole, in the crotch of a tree; the barn, which looks older than the house, though in reality its junior by near a century; the great orchard in the rear toward the north, containing trees off which old Neil himself might have gathered apples—all these things are marriage-tokens.

And finally there is the graveyard, indissolublest bond of all, since it is a moral as well as a natural one. It lies about a hundred paces eastward, and takes the earliest sunshine. It is well populated, this little inclosure, for although the Urmson race has ever been a turbulent and adventurous one—many of them followers of the sea, or fighters against whomsoever there was to fight, Indian, Frenchman, or Englishman, as the case might be—it has, nevertheless, happened that most of them wandered home to die. The burial-ground was consecrated by that same Reverend Anak of whom we have already had a glimpse—he who married Eleanor to Neil, and came with them

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to the New World. This worthy man of God lived to pronounce another than the marriage service over the pair: they are buried in one grave. The imaginative moralizer will observe that, although Eleanor's epitaph is still legible, in that of her husband, who died nearly forty years later, only the single word "died" has survived obliteration.

Near at hand stands the tombstone of Ralph, who, if report be true, inherited all the bad and gloomy traits of his father, with few of his virtues. But he was gifted with the same peculiar personal influence over the minds and wills of others that Neil had possessed. It was remarked, however, that as often as the Urmsons had their way in a matter (and they seldom failed to have it), it turned to their disadvantage. Their luck, in other words, was their misfortune. Now, if there be a certain crisis in the life of every man, when a depraved or impious passion engages in final contest with better knowledge and purer instincts, could the latter's defeat be more fitly punished than by dooming the sinner to act successfully out, forever afterward, his unrestrained and unrepentant self? So may it have fared with these dark-browed, hot-hearted Urmsons, who often seemed to carry all before them at the very moment when they were being hurried to their own destruction.

We search in vain among the tombstones for the record of any daughter of the Urmson name. For it is a remarkable fact that, since the epoch of their emigration, no woman-child has been born to them — as though the family nature were too harsh and gloomy to produce a feminine flower. Not a daughter in seven generations? Yes, one there has been, and within the present century; but there is more of sorrow than of joy in the mention of her name. Eve Urmson was the daughter of Garth's grandfather—old Brian, of Revolutionary renown. She is described as having been a peculiar but fascinating child, and the old warrior is said to have taken boundless pride and delight in her. When she was ten years old, Eve disappeared, and was never afterward heard of. It was conjectured that a party of Indians, who were known to have been in the neighborhood about the time of the child's disappearance, had kidnapped her; and such of the old wives and village oracles as had kept alive a memory of the legends, maintained that the kidnappers were no other than the lineal descendants of the sachem and his murdered defender, who thus wreaked their revenge. Be that as it may, Urmhurst's greatest blessing was thus changed into its saddest misfortune.

A lack of the feminine element is noticeable about the house; its features and aspects, though for the most part picturesque, are too massive and masculine. Eve's chamber is the only exception; it has been preserved nearly as she left it, and the rose-vine, which her childish hands planted, clambers unrestrained over her window. But there is need of a living and loving woman in these great, old-fashioned, wainscoted rooms. Garth's mother died while he was in college; and latterly he and his father—who is a son of Brian Urmson by a first marriage, and half-brother to the lost Eve—have lived here pretty much by themselves, each immersed in his own chosen pursuit, and putting the maintenance of the farm in the light of a recreation. The only other member of the family known to be alive is an own brother of Eve's named Golightley — the name of his mother's family, old settlers of Virginia. Golightley was remembered in Urmsworth village as a talented and affable youth, whose delicate constitution unfitted him for the pursuit of any hard-working profession, and who went to Europe in quest of health and of that æsthetic culture which his soul craved. Apparently he must have found what he sought, for he had already been absent more than twenty years without betraying any inclination to return.

But it is time to bring this preliminary chat to a close. Urmhurst still stands in the woods, though now the primitive forest-glade has expanded into a clearing of thirty acres, chiefly comprising the profile of the southern slope. Part of this land is used as a vegetable-garden; there are corn and potato fields, and ample pasturage for cows and horses. As for the interior of the mansion, it is chiefly remarkable for an antique spa-

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ciousness of hall and staircase, a suggestive mystery of garret and cellar, and a noble extravagance of hearth and chimney-corner. But it is rather with the Urmsons than with their dwelling that we are presently concerned.

BOOK II.

THE FATHER OF THE MAN.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN.

A BROAD-BUILT young fellow, about twenty-six years of age, but looking older, stands on the cloven threshold of Urmhurst, with his feet apart and his face bent downward, as though in reverie. His eyes, however, are rather outlooking than introspective; and, considering how fair a prospect lies before him, it would be strange if they were otherwise. The sun shines level through the October oak-leaves on the eastern side of the porch, and casts a russet glow on the young fellow's swarthy cheek.

Like most Urmsons, Garth is shorter than the average of men; but, to make up for it, he is chested like a bison, and vigorous and compact all over. His dress this morning differs little from that ordinarily worn by the New Hampshire farmer. His dark, shaggy hair pokes itself through the torn crown of a battered straw hat, which he has clapped on the capacious back of his head. In his left hand is a tuft of maple-leaves, the splendid scarlet of which causes his red-flannel shirt to appear dingy by contrast. A rough sack-coat (the pockets bulging with crimson and yellow apples), and corduroy trousers tucked into cowhide boots, complete his costume. He carries, strapped to his back, a sort of shallow knapsack; and in his right hand a bundle of something neatly tied up in a linen case, like a jointed fishing-rod. From outward appearances, therefore, he might be going angling.

The famous green door of Urmhurst forms an agreeable background to this sturdy figure. It is a massive structure of six-inch oaken timbers, clamped and bolted with iron, and scarred by many an ineffectual dint of tomahawk and bullet in Indian fights of yore. On the upper part of the framework may still be deciphered the date and initials, "N. U., 1648," deeply cut in old-fashioned characters. This redoubtable door, besides enjoying its present green old age, passed a verdant youth and prime likewise. It got its latest coat of emerald so long ago as the War of 1812; but the forty years or so which have elapsed since then have so mellowed and enriched the original tint that, at a few paces' distance, we might fancy the hard surface overgrown with a thick coating of soft moss, like that which cushions tombstones in the damp churchyards of Old England.

Though the sun is but half an hour out of the Atlantic, Garth has already made the rounds of the farm. His bedroom being on the ground-floor, he had only to lift the sash and swing himself out ankle-deep in the thick grass which grows just beneath the eaves. He went first to the barn, pushed up the long wooden latch, and entered. The interior was dark, but sweet and comfortable with the breath of cows and hay. The farm animals, one and all, greeted him with hearty brute courtesy, which he returned with a tender human indulgence, being on the kindest terms with them all. It is wholesome for a man whose demeanor toward the world is reserved to unmask himself to these jolly, unceremonious, soft-hearted creatures, whose regard,

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because it cannot help being sincere, is the most cordial flattery. Garth might well prize his horses and oxen, his cows and his hens; for their use was not to be measured by eggs, milk, or draft. Men are caskets compact of a score of metals, in which the cunning workmanship disguises the material; animals are the virgin ore, frank and simple, and to be loved or loathed only for their intrinsic qualities. But men would be mere outlines without them—fine bits of draughtmanship, devoid of color or substance. The material value of beasts and birds can at most be but symbolic of their actual use—or such was Garth's opinion. It was pleasant to behold what a fund of innocent playfulness was developed between the two parties: the young man had his private joke with each four-footed or feathered compatriot, and many was the humorous smile or sympathetic guffaw that they enjoyed together.

The morning compliments being over, Garth opened an eastern shutter, and let a stream of morning fall aslant the manger. The picturesque effect seemed to strike him, and he stood observing it for several moments. Presently, he bethought himself of the crimson horse-blanket which lay folded up under the seat of the old sleigh; he fetched it out and hung it over the lower rounds of the ladder which leaned against the hay-bin, half in and half out of shadow. Further consideration led him to stir up a little more dust to spin in the sharp-drawn light-beam. He was now the possessor of such a Rembrandt as might have been dreamed of, but was never painted—gloomy, rich, luminous. A human countenance would, perhaps, have been an addition; but, after all, what could be finer than the dark head of that bull, with his white horns illuminated from the window, and the hairy edges of his ears softened by the light? The human being might be left to the imagination, and improve thereby; but the bull could be omitted on no pretense whatever. The picture being arranged to his satisfaction, Garth studied it with a pithy, efficient musing, which never seemed to wander vaguely from the point, but to be determined by a constant and conscious purpose. This purpose, whatever it might be, could have had very little to do with practical farming; and, were it not that young Mr. Urmson owns a visage singularly deficient in aimlessness, he would undoubtedly have been open to the suspicion of wasting his time.

When he had done studying the Rembrandt, Garth lingered not purposelessly about; though he seemed to be never out of leisure, yet did his times and seasons fit snugly into one another, without either gaps or crowdings. He passed from the barn westward to the vegetable-garden. The Indian-corn had been harvested, but the stalks, bound together in eccentric pyramids, stood in dry, rustling rows along the dusty field. Adjoining this was the potato-district, many of its hills already despoiled of their ill-complexioned treasures, and the greenery of the rest withered and drooping. Next came the pumpkin and squash plantation, and here again the farmer made thoughtful pause. The yellow squashes, with their long, twisted necks seemed to be alive and striving, in a ridiculous panic of would-be modesty, to hide their glaring nakedness beneath their shriveled leaves. Meanwhile the mighty pumpkins reposed serene and complete, with a broad, golden smile of full content, each one swelling his yellow sides at the sun, and looking at least as big and solid as that luminary. Garth put himself to some trouble to select the goldenest and snakiest of the squashes—as though the curves and color of the great vegetable were of more importance to him than its succulence—and, carrying it back to the house, conveyed it heedfully through the pantry-window. Then he bethought himself of the orchard, and proceeded thither forthwith, whistling as he went.

In its prime, a few generations ago, this had been accounted the finest orchard in New Hampshire—no small renown in that American garden of the Hesperides. Most delectable fruit, in eight or nine varieties, could still be eaten there; and of late years an attempt had been made, by dint of pruning, grafting, and setting out, to bring back again the ancient repute. The present season's crop was a fine one; and Garth, strolling about beneath the trees, his hands thrust in his sacque-pockets and his hat on the

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back of his head, rejoiced in the tall scarlet and yellow heaps which were gathered together beneath the low branches. Fascinating, likewise, were the grotesque contortions of the trees themselves. Apple-bearing, one would suppose, must be the painfulest of all vegetable processes. Some of the old limbs were the incarnation of twisted agony; and there were few trees but had eaten their ancient hearts out in voiceless torment, and now harbored blue-jays and woodpeckers in their hollow bosoms. Nevertheless, the sweetest fruit often grew on the ungainliest boughs; and, in spring, Garth had not failed to admire how well beauty and fragrance and freshness assimilated with old age, deformity, and decay.

Having stuffed his pockets with lusty crimson baldwins and firm-fleshed russets, he turned homeward. An elderly crow, which had been contemplating the sunrise from the top of a lofty hemlock, accosted him with a single taunting, "Caw!" as much as to say, "I would much rather be what I am than what you are!" Garth picked up a worm-eaten pippin, and flung it at the contemptuous fowl with so true an aim that, had not the latter been wary, there might have been a catastrophe. But it was not unacquainted with the red-shirted man and his ways, and, entering at once into the spirit of the thing, it pretended to be seriously alarmed, and pitched flapping from its perch with a volley of hoarse objurgations. The cry was straightway taken up by the whole indigenous community of crows, and in another moment thirty or forty of these sable humorists were wheeling their black bodies aloft and clamoring their harshest ostensibly in vast consternation, but really for their own and Garth's amusement.

A little on the hither verge of the pine-forest grew a large sugar-maple, its autumnal foliage showing against that gloomy background like a bonfire. Halting here in his pursuit of the crows, our transcendental farmer gathered himself a great bunch of flaming leaves. With them he returned to the house; and, finding that neither his father nor old Nikomis, the cook, was yet stirring, he clambered in by the window as quietly as he had come out. Ten minutes afterward he reissued through the front-door, and paused a moment within the porch, where we first caught sight of him. Anon he stepped briskly forth from shadow to sunshine, casting aside his preoccupation, and appearing so alert that it would have been difficult to believe his proper mood a contemplative one. Action seemed the truer sphere for him, so soon as he became active.

He followed the grass-bordered path that clung to the eastward declivity, enjoying the morning clouds, while his shadow undulated long and slim behind him. Arriving presently at the little graveyard, squared within its compact stone fence, he went in and paused beside the latest grave, now several years old. Here lay buried the mortality of Martha Urmson, Garth's mother, and daughter of old Parson Graeme, who was still above-ground after near a century of earthly existence. The little flower-bed which crowned the grave had ceased to bloom, and Garth plucked away the withered leaves and stalks, and emblazoned the brown strip of earth with his splendid maple-leaves. No breeze was astir as yet, and they lay motionless there, though seemingly aglow with life. But to the young man's mind the life of autumn was of a kind to harmonize well with tombstones. There was more heart-break in her deep-toned sunshine than in the gloom of conventional mourning, and her gayest painting could but make the seer thoughtful and often sad. For her pomps presaged decay; and the strand of pathos was subtilely inwoven with hers as with all mortal beauty.

But, however alive to these perceptions, Garth would have been guilty of an affectation alien to his temperament, could he have faced the rich phantasmagoria of the valley otherwise than delightedly. Surely, thought he, it looked its best to-day. The thin-spread mists were dissolving like a happy dream, and mellow ranges of red and yellow awakened to vividness near at hand, and lapsed in violet cadences far away. Autumn was the holiday—the Sunday of the year. She reclined at ease, ripe, voluptuous, sweet-breathed with new-mown hay, robed in crimson and crowned with gold. She

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was more tender than the working seasons—with a pensive tenderness infinitely winning. Cheerful in her embrace could no one be; but she wooed her love far below the trifling surface-ripple of emotion, and taught him the neglected wisdom of repose.

Garth had so loving an eye for color, and had so often brooded over the autumnal aspects of his native woods, that it would be wronging him to suppress all allusion to such matters. And he was a man endowed with deep susceptibilities, which yet were seldom able to find utterance in speech. If he indulged in soliloquies, therefore, they were of a kind not immediately quotable on a printed page. But this solitary walk of his (which should be taken as a type of many similar walks, and indeed of one complete phase of his life at this epoch) possessed a sort of significance which it would not do entirely to neglect.

CHAPTER V.

AN OCTOBER VIOLET.

After leaving the graveyard, the path continued its unobtrusive journey down the slope, Garth striding downward with it, eating a cool apple as he went, and rejoicing in the dew which abundantly glossed his cowhide boots. In a few minutes he had entered the forest which infringed upon the southern extremity of the long pasture. The trees grew thickly, but shadow there was none. A golden glow lingered in the densest coverts, for the density was itself an illumination. The black trunks and branches appeared overstrong for their ethereal sunshiny burdens. The greenness which had not yet forsaken the grass in sheltered situations—the greenness which summer cheapens—now seemed rare and strange, the superfluity of pomp giving a new worth to simplicity.

It is well, after all, that the autumn glories of New England should be so transitory. These sunset tints of foliage exalt the beholder's spirit to a pitch which could not long be sustained. Green is the color that lies nearest to human sympathies, and no diviner one could be suffered permanently to usurp its place in Nature. Indeed, it is remarkable that Yankees accept the magic transformations of their October so philosophically as they do—that they are not startled or even incredulous, as they doubtless would be were the matter one of hearsay. But throughout this apparently reckless splendor there runs ever a saving element of economy; the reds and yellows are all variations of one theme, and differ among themselves not more than do the greens of summer. There is no gaudiness; and thus no one remembers to be astonished at the display until it is over.

The footpath, beyond the pasture limits, merged into a forest lane: in the centre a narrow channel, worn by horses' feet, flanked on both sides by deep wheel-ruts, while thin ridges of green turf intervened. From its work-a-day, business-like aspect, this lane might have been supposed, by the unwary, to be the introduction to some country road, and, becoming more and more public-spirited and practical as it proceeded, finally to attain the dignity and social position of a turnpike or highway. As a matter of fact, however, it had no more end than beginning, and could properly be said to exist only as to its centre. New England woods are full of such deceptive lanes, beginning without apparent reason, and fading out of sight just when the lost traveler is expecting to arrive at something. They are, in truth, created and used by the wood-cutters, whose carts and sledges have worn these ruts; and since the ends of wood-cutters differ from those of other men, though their means are the same, we must not wonder at their leading us to a pine-stump when we had made up our mouths for a village.

As for Garth, he numbered wood-cutting among his own accomplishments, and was rather pleased than disconcerted when the path ran up a tree and the forest grew trackless before him. Had he lived in colonial times he would have plunged into the primeval wilderness with all the boldness and fervor of the original Captain Neil; not, like him, from a morbid distaste for society, but with masculine zest for the charms of virgin

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Nature—savage and hard to tame. His spirits dilated as he left civilized boundaries behind him, until at length even his dilapidated hat grew irksome, and he pulled it off, and threw back the broad collar of his shirt. The woods were almost utterly silent; cold nights had chilled the loquacity of insects, and the birds seemed to have sung all their songs for that year, and to be meditating what next. Now and then a chattering squirrel darted from apparent non-existence into intensest life, and after a noisy minute departed into nothingness once more. Far off somewhere sounded the drumming of a partridge, or close at hand one suddenly whizzed from its covert. But the Midas's touch which had transmuted the trees to gold seemed to have stricken existence almost dumb.

Presently, however, Garth began to whistle, mellowly as an Arcadian flute-player. The sound melted sweetly into the forest distances, like a bird-note; and he pursued it along the glowing vistas with a grave jocundity of step and countenance. The land tended by long gradients downward, and occasionally his foot sank in swampy ground; the vegetation became more untrammeled, and carmine sumach-leaves burned here and there in the jungle. Anon approached the silver gurgle of a brook, new-born from some hidden source, babbling its transparent secrets beside the pathway, and continuing to gossip even when its wayward course had taken it temporarily out of hearing. Great painted toadstools, generated overnight from the fruitful union of vegetable decay and dampness, clustered in fantastic groups beneath the yellow shade; and not a few dandelions and asters foolhardily tempted the frost. All these things Garth felt by a kind of sympathy rather than saw in detail; he was not of the quick-eyed breed of men; his glance was leisurely, but comprehensive and penetrating.

This faculty of observation, at once enjoying and effortless, marked him as one who was not only accustomed to meet Nature in private and alone, but content to let her monopolize him during the interview. Yet I would not have you infer that a young man of his aspect, who must have known the vicissitudes of at least five-and-twenty years, had missed all acquaintance with that finer solitude which is attainable only through rare human companionship. There was nothing of the ascetic in Garth's face or figure that he should be deemed insensible to the love of woman. And though there might be neither nymphs nor hamadryads in the New Hampshire woods, and though the young farmer's dress and habits might seem to raise a barrier between him and fashionable society, yet something there was in his look and bearing that indicated a wider culture than that of the farm and forest.

Indeed, the more narrowly you observed him, the greater would have been your doubt whether the agricultural element was really vital in him at all. His hands were certainly not those of a farmer; their form was at once powerful and elegant, and the texture of the skin was fine and soft. And where did he acquire that firm carriage of the shoulders and that easy precision of tread? Not surely from the plough and the scythe. And though his features seemed at the first glance rugged and almost harsh, they were in fact moulded with singular force and meaning, every part responded sensitively to his thought. In spite, therefore, of his rough garb, early hours, and familiarity with barn-yard stock, it would have been rash to write him down a country bumpkin. There was an indescribable flavor of distinction about him, such as is only given by travel, thought, and conversation with the world. Admitting this, his quiet assumption (or resumption) of rusticity argued a freshness and independence of nature unusual in traveled youth nowadays.

But what was his present destination? for a man, especially a young gentleman of culture, does not plunge into pathless forests before breakfast for nothing. Would it be allowable, in the absence of any trustworthy information on the subject, to indulge in a little fanciful conjecture? Let us suppose, then, that, while Garth was traveling in Europe, he met a noble and lovely lady, who, like himself, was a stranger there. In the rich heart of the Old World they met, and

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neither knew the other, nor was it granted them ever to speak together, or to exchange a pressure of the hand; but once, in a strange room full of antique jewels and precious works of art, their glances had met in a crystal mirror, and had read in one another a mutual revelation. For one deep moment they gazed, and knew they loved; then time and space rolled between and parted them. But for years thereafter, as they moved along their separate paths, visions would rise before them of that unforgotten moment, until at length, by much dreaming over it, the event itself began to take on the semblance of a dream; and Garth, returning home, pledged himself to another woman; and the lady promised, against her better instincts, to become the wife of another man. Shall our romance end here, or shall that picturesque providence, which watches over lovers only, bring them once more together, ere the last irrevocable steps that fix their destinies be taken? Yes, let them meet, since all is imagination! And, by way of accounting for Garth's early presence in these woodland solitudes, be this the morning of the meeting, and the place, the shores of the little lake whither his steps now tend. Of course the encounter must be accidental on both sides—a genuine providential interference. We need not indulge our fancy further. If, being met, they do not succeed in freeing themselves from their entanglements, and living together happily ever afterward, they are not the romantic lovers we take them to be.

Truly, for so extravagant a flight of imagination as this, the splendid witchery of the autumnal trees is hardly valid excuse. And yet there was about Garth that which might lay a strong grasp on a woman's heart, though little were said on either side. Perhaps he inherited something of that peculiar power which tradition ascribed to his forefathers, and on the other hand there was a glow in his eyes which indicated ardent receptivity and keen appreciation, qualities which render shallow people what is called "susceptible." We might imagine Garth beguiled by a beautiful face into postulating a beautiful soul to it; but sooner or later he would know whether he were mistaken, and then the issue might be tragical. Intensity of belief has always a germ of pathos in it; and, if its trust be betrayed, the flower of tragedy is at once full blown.

But, to prolong these hap-hazard speculations regarding a man who has thus far given us no practical evidence of a specially wayward or portentous disposition, would really be doing him injustice. It is probably his very undemonstrativeness that gives such loose rein to our conjecture. The world is apt to put a tongue of its own into the heads of those who do not speak for themselves. To an indifferent eye Garth would appear simply as a young countryman who had risen betimes in order to enjoy a quiet angle for perch and pickerel in the pond. It was a likely enough sheet of water for such sport, and, as its gleam reached him through the belt of dark pines that bordered its northern shore, Garth stopped whistling and hastened his step a bit, as though anxious to be at work.

On the hither verge of the pine-belt was planted a lichen-covered rock, girdled with a crimson growth of huckleberry-bushes. Beneath the bushes, amid a cluster of round green leaves, lurked a meditative little flower—retired enough, one would think, to elude all ordinary eyesight. Nevertheless, Garth saw it as he was passing by, and, stopping, threw himself at full length on the ground to examine it at his leisure. It was a violet—a rarity in that month, and the sweeter for its strangeness. Garth lifted up its dewy downcast little visage with the tip of his forefinger, and looked—not botanically but lovingly—into its tiny golden eye. Perhaps from conscientious scruples, he did not pluck the flower, but was content to gain only the better part of it. By-and-by he gently withdrew his finger, rose to his feet, and walked on. No violet could have desired a more considerate admirer.

But, before he had gone far, this chivalric lover turned abruptly back and deliberately plucked the poor violet after all, together with one of its green leaves. Was the act merely wanton? or was there something so much more worshipful in his eyes than an October violet as to justify him in making a sacrificial offering of the flower?

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It is a pregnant question, but we must be content to let time give it answer. Garth carefully disposed the offering, if such it was to be, in his hat-band, and then, continuing on through the pines, he shortly brought his three-mile walk to an end on the sandy beach of a little cove which commanded an outlook over the greater part of the lake.

About a quarter of a mile southward, in the mouth of the bay, rose a small island densely tufted with red and yellow foliage. Far beyond, between the island and the western promontory of the shore, towered the misty shape of Wabeno, glowing in the sunlight like a dim heap of jewels. The water of the lake was perfectly still and pellucid, and reflected each painted leaf of the myriad trees that pressed to the margin, as if to behold their own magnificence in the clear mirror. And the reflection was better even than the reality—it had a charm like that belonging to an idealized remembrance. The sky, pale and cool at this hour, set off the sumptuous coloring of the earth. The sun was not yet too high to throw tall shadows of the eastern trees across the quiet mystery of the liquid surface. The charm of the scene was so complete as to warrant the belief that it must have been less beautiful a moment ago and would begin to deteriorate a moment hence. There needed only a poet or a painter, cunning of hand and loving of heart, to collect these points of loveliness and recast them in the symmetrical mould of some noble and profound idea.

Judging by appearances, Garth has come here with the intention of remaining some hours, and, perhaps, during this interval of enforced leisure, we cannot do better than angle in the waters of the past for whatever stray facts concerning him and his may chance within our reach.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHILD.

Captain Brian Urmson, the old warrior of the Revolution, had nearly completed his seventieth year when Garth began the world. His little daughter Eve had then been lost some ten or twelve years, during which time the captain had led a sombre and lonely life; lonely—despite the fact that Golightley, the son of his second marriage, was living with him. The grim soldier had never understood this young man's æsthetic aspirations, nor sympathized with them; and he, moreover, had what he chose to consider reasons for positively disliking the young man himself. As for his favorite, Cuthbert, the only child of his first love, he had gone abroad the year of Eve's disappearance, and he staid away an unconscionably long while.

However, he came back at last, safe and sound, and then the captain's gloom began to lighten. The sky was further cleared by Golightley's departure, which took place a month or two later; but the crowning gratification was Cuthbert's marriage with Parson Graeme's daughter. And when, in due time, sweet young Mrs. Urmson began to grow indolent and languid, and her husband consulted her lightest wish with anxious solicitude; and when, finally, a strange female made her appearance in the house, with noiseless step and despotic authority; then did Captain Brian become as cheerful and good-humored an old gentleman as any in the county. He would sit for hours beneath the porch in his high-backed armchair, his stern visage softened with flitting smiles, and his wrinkled eyes half closed in pleasant reverie. Anon he would arouse himself and beckon Cuthbert and the strange female mysteriously aside, and question them in hoarse whispers;

"How soon may we expect—eh, ma'am? I'll bet ten to one it'll be a girl, Cuthbert! —Ay, by God, a little girl—like Eve, boy—like my little Eve, eh?" This with a half-appealing intonation, accompanied by a gruff, nervous little laugh that sometimes brought tears to Cuthbert's kind gray eyes.

Doubtless these last weeks were the happiest of Captain Brian's life, which had been a violent and irregular one, and not altogether above suspicions of something worse than irregularity. Happily, too, he died before knowing that his anticipations of a granddaughter were not destined to fulfill-

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ment. For one night, after a long talk with Cuthbert, in the course of which the old man had opened his heart on many subjects more than he had ever done before, and had spoken at some length regarding his two marriages, and about the lost Eve; after this, and after bidding his son an affectionate good-night, he shut his door, and was found the next day on the floor, by the bedside, in a kneeling position, dead. So far as was known, it had never been his custom to pray, but it is to be hoped that death came up with him in a first effort heavenward, being mercifully desirous not to let so rare an opportunity pass unimproved.

In the same hour that the dead body was discovered, Garth first saw the light. The nurse looked at him, prepared, as usual, to pronounce him the image either of his father or of his mother, as it might happen; but the formula stumbled on her lips, and, after a pause, she declared in a tone weighty with conviction:

"Ef the child ain't the living image of his dead grandpa!"

This verdict was subsequently confirmed by that of other persons esteemed wise in such matters, but most of all by Garth himself; who, as he advanced from infant jellydom to the solid flesh of babyhood, showed ever more and more unmistakably the miniature form and features of the deceased warrior.

Parson Graeme, the gigantic minister and patriarch of the parish, was a frequent caller at Urmhurst, where he sat in council with the young father and mother, giving them the benefit of his vast experience and enormous wisdom on all subjects, but generally with special reference to the character and education of little Garth. Young fathers and mothers do not as a rule take this kind of interference in very good part; but, if any counselor could claim justification for counseling, Parson Graeme was surely he. Not only was he the descendant of the Puritan divine who accompanied Neil Urmson from England, but he had officiated at both of Captain Brian's weddings, as well as at his funeral. Not only this, but he was Mrs. Urmson's father, and, by dint of marrying her to Cuthbert, had constituted himself the latter's father-in-law; and if anything more were wanted, he had performed the rite of baptism upon that most important of personages, Garth himself! With such an array of credentials as this, a man of far less personal charm than the venerable parson possessed might have obtained a hearing. But the best of it was, that the Reverend Mr. Graeme was at least as entertaining as he was wise; and, come when or wherefore he might, he was sure to be, not only tolerated but welcomed.

"Genuine old Urmson—no mistake about that!" the old gentleman would bellow forth in his big bass voice, after a chuckling inspection of the small, red-faced bundle reposing in Mrs. Urmson's lap. "Not a bit like you, son-in-law! I recollect, when you were born, folks said the Urmson type was dying out—that Captain Brian had been the last of them. But not a bit of it! Your younger brother, Golightley, some folks thought, was going to be one of 'em; well, he had the cleft in the chin, to be sure, but not the eye, not the head, and not a bone of the figure! Ay, the captain should have seen this little chap before he died; just a few hours more would have done it—think of that now! But the Lord knows best, of course; and maybe the old man would have been mad because the lad wasn't a girl! Ay, the Lord knows best—no mistake about that!"

"Do you think Garth so very much like his grandfather?" inquired gentle Mrs. Urmson.

"There was jealousy in that question," said Cuthbert, smiling. "She wants him to resemble me, with my sharp nose and bald forehead and consumptive tendency—don't you, Cotton?" (Her name was Martha; but her husband, in recognition of her skill and diligence with darning and knitting needles, and also out of compliment to the memory of the distinguished colonial divine, had dubbed her Cotton Martha, and diminutively Cotton.)

"I would like him to have your eyes, at any rate," returned she.

Cuthbert had the pleasantest, kindest gray eyes in the world, and his other features kept them well in countenance; for

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his slightly aquiline nose was beautifully shaped, the point being particularly delicate; and his mouth (although there was sometimes a touch of satire in its fine curves) was in sympathy with his eyes.

"Like him? he's the image of him!" rumbled in the ponderous tones of the gigantic pastor, ignoring this minor prattle of the young people, and taking up the original question; "and of his great-great-grandfather, and of his great-great-grandfather's father before him—and that's Captain Neil himself. Why, Mattie, girl, I recollect my father (he died only thirty years ago, at over a hundred) — well, I recollect his telling Brian, in my hearing (we were both lads at the time), often and often he told us that Brian's grandfather, Ralph, was as like Brian as two hymn-books. My father knew Ralph Urmson well in his younger days, a hundred and twenty years back; and it used to be said at that time, 'Ralph's his father's own son!' Well, Ralph was a sad dog; he was more feared than Captain Neil had been, and liked less. He had but one friend, 'twas said, and him he killed in some mad quarrel or other. And, for that matter, the saying is, that every true Urmson will kill the man he loves best."

"Father!" exclaimed Martha, horror-stricken.

"Hand me down the old pistol from above the fireplace, my dear," said Cuthbert, in a tone of quiet determination. "I will shoot both your father and Garth, for fear of making a mistake between them."

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed the stentorian pastor. "No, no, son-in-law, you're not the sort of Urmson the saying applies to; but as for your boy there, I wouldn't like to answer for him!—You must look sharp after him, Mattie, girl—ha, ha, ha! Well, but there's something in it after all. There was Neil, you know, to begin with; then Ralph; and after Ralph—let's see—well, the next out-and-out Urmson after Ralph was Captain Brian, and it would be hard to say who his best friend was. But there, forgive me, boy! No one loved your father better than I did, and I'm sure he didn't kill me!"

Cuthbert's face had become graver, and he presently said: "I have heard the saying before; and, Cotton, it was with that same old pistol up there that these several tragedies were accomplished. Captain Neil brought it over from England, and my father carried it through the Revolution. I wonder whether it's loaded now?"

Sweet Cotton Martha shuddered and clasped Master Garth impulsively to her bosom, thereby awakening him from the nap which he had been enjoying for the past half-hour. In his philosophy, to be awake was to be hungry; and he began to seek, with imperious cries, the bounteous source of food and happiness. That attained, he relapsed into the enjoyment of his sensations; and the talk went on.

"Don't you fret your little heart, Mattie," said the Reverend Mr. Graeme, noting the disturbed expression which still dwelt on his daughter's naturally serene face. "It was but a jest, my lass. If the babe looked twice the Urmson he is, the Lord has given him a soul of his own; and a good mother, though I say it!"

"Cotton, don't suffer your just anxiety to be cajoled by any such sophistry," Cuthbert interposed. "When I was a little boy your father taught me my lessons, and I had a good opportunity to find him out. Although not a bad man, socially and humanly speaking, his philosophy is defective. In those early days I often argued with him, and exposed his fallacies; but as fast as I converted him at one end he would relapse at the other. I suppose there's no hope of producing an impression on a man seven feet high, and weighing twenty stone!"

"Haw! haw! haw! and what has that to do with it, I'd like to know?" demanded the venerable stentor.

"You hear, Cotton, that your father doesn't know what that has to do with it. He has never read Dr. Combe's 'Phrenology,' but pronounces it humbug at a venture. He fancies that body and soul have no necessary and intimate connection, but have come together in an entirely accidental and illogical manner; in short, that any soul may pop into any body it happens to fall in with, in the same way that the body may afterward go to a tailor's shop and

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jump into a ready-made suit of clothes, which, ten to one, would have fitted somebody else better.

"Pooh! a great way you have of putting an argument!" growled the parson.

"He thinks," continued Cuthbert, with a mischievous lifting of one eyebrow, "that spirit and matter, having through some ill luck run foul of each other, are making an awkward job of their enforced companionship. That is the reason why he sees no connection between his twenty stone and his rejection of rational arguments; and that is why he tells you that the fact of Garth's looking like his ancestors need not imply his being like them."

Martha, who had been watching her baby's face with all a mother's rapt enthusiasm, until she had forgotten the existence of anything else, here stooped down and kissed it, and whispered: "O–o mother's pet!" The two men smiled apart to themselves, and Cuthbert continued:

"For my part I rejoice that the Urmson soil has lain fallow in my generation, if it therefore produces a full-flavored crop in this. I not only think that Garth resembles Brian and Neil, but I hope and believe that his leading traits of character resemble theirs; that he has the same imperious will, the same pugnacity and vehement temper." Cuthbert had spoken these words with more than his usual earnestness, and after a pause he added, "I hope he has in him every evil trait of the Urmsons in its strongest form."

Both his hearers were startled. Martha, always reticent and undemonstrative, only fixed her eyes upon him with a gentle consternation; but the parson wheeled round in his chair and bellowed out: "What d'ye mean, Cuthbert? Are you crazy?"

"Why, no," replied he. "A family is a man of larger growth and more complex character, but of individuality as distinct as yours or mine. It is young; it grows up, prospers, and dies; its years are generations; each one inevitably moulding the next. At last comes a year when all its evil is arrayed against all its good. Then must the great battle be lost and won."

"You've been a heretic ever since you could speak," grumbled the old gentleman; "but it's a new heresy to wish evil to one's children."

"Well, let me have my heresy out. When a man has the making of a thorough devil in him, he has the possibility of an angel in him too—for angels are bare survivors from the deadly struggle of man with his inherent devilishness. In that struggle, both sides use the same weapons; and the stronger the weapons the greater the final victory or defeat."

"What weapons do you mean, dear?" asked gentle Martha.

"I mean the powers and passions of the mind and heart, which may be used either for good or for evil. Now, in our own family history, the Urmsons have generally been worsted by their old Adam; yet no one of them was ever utterly wicked, and hence I infer that the decisive battle has not yet come off, and that there is still a chance to vindicate the angel. He in whom the struggle culminates must be thoroughly Urmson—a compendium of the race—no diluted alien like myself. The more stubborn the devil in him the better worth the victory, should that fall to the angel. Am I an unnatural father, my little Cotton, if I pray that Garth may turn out our champion? The loftiest good can exist only on the overthrow of the deepest evil."

Martha smiled forgivingly upon her husband, while two tears rolled down her comely cheeks, and fell upon the plump visage of the unconscious babe. But the large pastor scratched his head (whereon white hair grew as thickly as the brown had done in the heyday of youth), knitted his brows, and growled:

"You're a queer chap, son-in-law! Humph! takes a devil to make an angel, is that it? Maybe it does; but, though you're as poor a show for a devil as any man I know, if all Urmsons had been like you, it might have been better for them!"

With this ambiguous utterance the Reverend Mr. Graeme uplifted his towering figure from the bench in the porch, where the discussion had taken place, and having resoundingly kissed the mother and child, and grasped the father's hand, he swung off through the late August afternoon, carrying

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well his seventy years. The little family stood watching him till he was hidden within the westward forest, and then, with a lingering glance at hazy Wabeno, they entered the house in great tranquillity of spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BIRCH-ROD.

Despite the presages of a momentous destiny, the infant Garth acted as though eating and sleeping were the chief ends of man, and he grew strong and wholesome accordingly. One of his earlier exploits was to cry for the American flag which Captain Brian had brought home from the wars, and which was festooned over the nursery fireplace. For a long time his wishes were not understood; but as day after day he persisted in his inarticulate demands, with many explosions of resentful wrath, his mother, being at her wits' end, finally pulled down the historic bunting more in despair than in hope; and having shaken the dust of thirty years out of its folds, she surrendered it to the despot. He graciously received it, and wanted no better plaything, clutching at the bright colors with his little fists, and emitting guttural exclamations of approval. The flag was afterward draped over the hood of his crib, and appeared to soothe both his dreams and his temper.

Mrs. Urmson maintained that his pleasure in it was based upon a refined love of beauty. But the parson, whose interest in the young compendium of his race looked forward to different issues, explained it otherwise.

"Love of beauty? Ho! ho! ho! Do you take Garth for a young lady, to be tickled by a scarlet ribbon? Tut! he's no such molly-coddle. Garth has his grandfather's spirit—the spirit of Seventy-six, that smote the oppressor hip and thigh, and made us the greatest nation on earth. Patriotism!—that's it. He loves the Stars and Stripes because they're his country's flag."

"In my opinion," remarked Cuthbert, "you both of you misapprehend the matter, and do injustice to the profundity of Garth's meaning. He recognizes in the Stars and Stripes an allegory of the philosophy of existence. He would intimate to us his belief that the higher ends of life are never to be attained, unless by enduring the stripes of adversity."

"That is to say, you'll flog him to make him a good boy?" rejoined grandfather Graeme.

"Oh!" deprecated Martha.

"Why, if he asked my help in that direction, I shouldn't feel justified in withholding it," said Cuthbert, arching his eyebrow. "Being his father, I am bound to serve him until he is able to serve himself."

"And of course he'll always be begging you not to spare the rod," threw in the ironic parson; "it's a way boys have!"

"Seriously, I shall take pains to explain the matter to him. Once let him know that naughtiness is the parent of punishment, and the great end is gained. Despotism would be of no use with a boy of his make; he must bring himself to bear against himself; he must be delivered over to the jailership of his own conscience. I shall encourage him to apply to me only in extreme cases; but, whenever he does tell me that he wants a whipping, I shall lay aside all personal considerations, and drub him soundly!"

"He'll be no such fool, depend upon it!" said Mr. Graeme, nodding his white head at Martha and chuckling.

"I hope otherwise," returned Cuthbert. "Look at his head. Cerebellum large, and great bumps behind the ears; but well-arched crown, and square, solid forehead. He will have reverence for law, as well as for his own free-will."

But the parson always threw ridicule upon any allusion to phrenology; and even Mrs. Urmson was secretly pleased to hear that her beloved son was to be his own disciplinarian. She argued from her own tenderness, which denied the use of suffering, and ever aimed to enlarge the boundaries of mercy. And, so far as she was concerned, Garth was spoiled as long as she lived.

Nevertheless, Cuthbert's plan was not unsuccessful. Garth was violent, passionate, and headstrong, long before he was rea-

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sonable; but his nature was essentially reverential, and, when he found that his liberty was respected, he began to take an interest in the progress of his moral emancipation, and to listen to such quiet hints regarding the best ways of fighting the old Adam as Cuthbert from time to time let fall. It was a triumph for the father when Garth made his first spontaneous request to be put in the corner; and by degrees the small warrior found out that there were no pangs like those of conscience, which were sure to become worse the longer the antidote was withheld. As he grew older the penitential corner gave way to other prescriptions, proportioned to his deeper needs. At last came the turn of the rod. This grim instrument of regeneration had been confided to Garth's care by his father, when the former was five years old, the gift being accompanied by a grave explanation of its use and properties; and the little man was further enjoined not to allow any mistaken tenderness for the parental feelings to hinder a demand for its application, whenever necessary.

"It will hurt us both, Garth," concluded Mr. Urmson, "but we must not forget that the wrong would hurt us more."

Garth listened in solemn silence, and was evidently much impressed; but the day of execution did not arrive until nearly two years afterward. Some grievous sin—history does not specify what it was—had been committed, and straightway a dreadful struggle began between Garth and his conscience. Conscience declared that the delinquent ought to be whipped; the delinquent rebelled, and the contest prolonged its awful length from the morning of one day to the afternoon of the next; Cuthbert, Martha, and the parson, all looking on in silent suspense. At last Old Adam got the worst of it. Obedient to an appalling summons, Cuthbert repaired to the nursery, leaving Martha in tears and the parson puzzled and silent; nor was his own composure by any means unruffled. He found Garth standing in the centre of the floor, excited, flushed, ashamed, but resolute, holding forth the rod. It was a trying moment, and the father's heart almost faltered. Nevertheless, the thing must be done; and, inwardly resolving to do it as gently as he dared, he was making the few simple preparations for the ceremony, when the victim said, breathing quick through his clinched teeth:

"Hard! papa—do it hard!"

Abashed at what seemed a rebuke of his faint-heartedness, the unhappy executioner obeyed. The pain was much sharper than Garth anticipated, but though he gnashed his teeth and curled his little toes and fingers in anguish, he made no attempt to escape, or to curtail the proceedings. When all was over, the father, with an irrepressibly guilty feeling, helped the little man to adjust his toilet, amid a silence broken only by the spasmodic sighs of yet tumultuous emotion. But, as they were leaving the scene of the tragedy, Cuthbert felt his sleeve pulled, and looked sorrowfully down at the crimson little phiz upturned to him.

"Papa," said the smaller sufferer, in such broken accents as his mental and physical disorder permitted, "I'm—sorry you—had to do it!"

"So am I, Garth—"

"Yes, papa; and—it isn't fair—you should have to do it; I didn't—know how to do it—before; but now I—know, I'll—do it for you next time, papa!" And with this the heroic tension gave way in a flood of tears.

Cuthbert had not expected this, and at first failed to grasp the full significance of the matter. But in a moment he comprehended the chivalrous truth, and stooping down he kissed the boy's hot cheek with a feeling akin to reverence, though, at the same time, his irrepressible sense of the humorous came near making him laugh.

"You are a fine old boy!" said he. "Let's see what grandpapa will say to that! and mamma may spoil you now if she can!"

It is pleasant to be able to record that Garth's ingenuity and constancy were never called upon to compass a self-inflicted flogging. The birch-rod hung for many years in the closet where he kept his playthings, as a sort of *memento mori;* but no sufficient occasion for using it ever again arose. Cuthbert, indeed, was wont to lay it, in a

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figurative sense, across the parson's shoulders, whenever the latter criticised his theory of education. The parson could only scratch his head and grumble out that Garth's letting himself be imposed upon was no argument in favor of phrenology; to which Cuthbert's answer was an arch lifting of the eyebrow, and a general air of irritating complacency.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FAËRIE QUEENE.

However, there were still many wry strands in the composition of the youngest Urmson. In spite of a sensitive conscience, and a fine sense of honor, the bugbear of study darkened his sunshine, and the habit of taciturnity grew upon him. The open sky attracted him like a magnet; he knew the woods far better than his lessons. In summer, he loved to lie on his back upon the grass, with the torrid sun pouring its light and heat straight down upon him. He had a gift of laziness, a talent for preoccupation, and a genius for wonder. In short, he caused his grandfather continual anxiety.

"Teach him the deaf-and-dumb alphabet," growled the old gentleman. "He's quicker with his fingers than with his tongue, any day."

"Garth has sense, father, I'm sure," said Martha, quietly darning.

"Why can't he talk, then? A little nonsense would do him no harm, to set his sense going."

"Perhaps he's silent from policy," was Cuthbert's suave suggestion, "as negroes say that monkeys won't talk lest they be forced to work. He values the few ideas he has too highly to betray their whereabouts by speech. Only those who imbibe the world readily find much to say."

Martha glanced covertly at her husband's mischievous mouth, and continued her darning, with a smile. The simple pastor answered:

"Wrong principle, son-in-law! Good talking never spoiled an idea. I'm eighty last birthday, and I guess I've done as much talking as most folks, and I'm none the worse for it that I know of. Hold your tongue for fear of losing your ideas? haw! haw! haw! Might as well stop planting grape-vines for fear of spoiling the grapes."

"I only give Garth's probable argument. But, to tell the truth, I'm afraid Garth's silence is nothing but pretense."

"Ha! well, now you're beyond me," said the parson, shaking his head.

"Why, for instance, there are people who talk from morning till night, and yet actually say less than Garth does. That sort of silence is really silence, but merely to abstain from uttering words is silence only in appearance. Garth, in my hearing, has often held his tongue in such a way that I thought he was talking to good purpose."

"Send him to school!" exclaimed the parson, as briskly as if he had never given the advice before.

"I dare not assume the responsibility; he would corrupt the scholars. You don't half know him. Why, last Sunday afternoon he disappeared, wearing the new clothes that Cotton had just made him. About sunset I found him on his back in a swamp, with his head underneath a rhodora-bush. He said the flowers looked prettier from that point of view; and he wouldn't pluck any, for fear they'd be homesick. You can't send a boy like that to school."

"Humph! very odd," muttered the parson, gravely.

"That is a trifle. But the other morning I woke up about four o'clock with one of my toothaches, and went into his room for the medicine-chest. There he was in his night-gown, his head out of the open window, and so absorbed as not to notice me till I went up and asked him what had happened. He pointed to the eastern horizon. It was near sunrise, and the sky was covered with yellow, red, and purple clouds. He had got out of bed on a cold May morning just to see that."

"Well, now, think of that! doesn't sound much like an Urmson—eh?"

"You know that kaleidoscope of his," continued Cuthbert, delighted with the effect he was producing; "he never was without it until quite lately. I supposed he had broken it; but yesterday I missed one of the

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glass prisms from the old candlestick, and this morning I found Garth sitting in the sun, throwing the seven colors on a blank leaf of the 'Faërie Queene.' He was delighted with the thing, and thought it was a discovery of his own."

"The 'Faërie Queene'—what's that?"

"A book of antiquated poetry, which I believe the boy knows by heart. But what could our schoolmaster make out of a fellow like that?"

The good pastor sighed, and rubbed his bewildered brow. "Well, trust in the Lord, son-in-law; maybe he'll outgrow it. I'm glad to see you don't lose heart about him, although seeing his faults as clearly as a stranger might. He's a stout, broad-shouldered lad, anyway, and as sweet a disposition as any I know of."

Upon this Martha arose and kissed her father; and Garth coming in at the moment, with his dark tangled hair and his scarlet boating-shirt, even the unsympathetic Cuthbert looked at him with a certain tolerance, notwithstanding the prism and the "Faërie Queene."

The "Faërie Queene" had first revealed herself to Garth about a year before, and he was now completely under the spell of her enchantment. The sway and music of the verse and rhyme charmed him, he knew not why; he lived in every champion, from the Redcross Knight to Sir Calidore, engaging with tragic sympathy in each adventure, putting his whole heart into each sword-stroke and lance-thrust, and trembling over the fate of every wronged and lovely lady. The fable was to him more real than the actual circumstances amid which he lived; and he saw giants and enchanted castles in his rocks and trees, and followed the steps of nymphs and satyrs through the woods. He never left the house, but with the expectation of encountering such perils and achieving such knightly deeds as would take a week to recount and a regiment of Arthurs and Arthegalls to rival. No event of his daily life so trifling, but a touch of imagination lifted it into the region of romance and chivalry. Every true boy is a Don Quixote at heart, and acts out the character according to his capacity and opportunity.

Garth happened to be well furnished in both respects. He could imagine anything; his time was more his own than any one except his parents thought good for him; and in the vast garret which extended all over the top of the house there was enough old armor to equip half a dozen knightly Garths. Here were the steel caps, breastplates, and battle-axes, which had glanced so brightly in the sunshine of two hundred years ago, when Captain Neil Urmson and his band first stood on the site of Urmhurst. They were rusty now, but enough of the original brightness remained to show how resplendent they must formèrly have been. The dusty sunbeams which slanted through the cobwebs of the garret-windows tried with ill-success to reflect themselves from the corroded surface of the steel. Garth had at first mistaken this red rust for blood, and lost himself in awful imaginings, till grim spectres in mortal combat peopled every corner of the dark garret.

But in process of time he took courage, and set to work furbishing up the ancient harness, with a view to entering the profession of knight-errantry forthwith. For a time the forest and the sky knew him no more, and it was several days before even his father found him out. Cuthbert, too, in his boyish days, had spent many an hour in the old garret, being attracted thither not by the armor, but by a great mountain of quaint and dusty literature, the heedless accumulation of unknown Urmson generations: from which the studious youth had extracted more information concerning the past history of his race than was possessed by any other person then alive. But Garth, who was at once more matter-of-fact and more imaginative than his father, deemed a helmet and buckler to be worth all the musty parchments in the world. He scrubbed away, therefore, and the faded arms shone once more, reviving under the influence of a chivalric spirit. Garth, in the purified armor of his forefathers, his young fervent face glowing boyishly heroic beneath the steel head-piece, the battle-axe heavy in his guiltless grasp, must have been a fair sight, which it had been churlish of the old garret to keep to itself. Among many

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secrets it had known none pleasanter than this.

Had the secret been left to Garth to reveal, it might have remained hidden to this day; for within the boundaries of his ideal realm he was shy of human presence and criticism, mankind being less amenable to the transforming wand of his imagination than anything besides. But his father, who divined the boy's condition, climbed the garret-stairs in the character of Sir Guyon, and plunged with such zest into enchanted lore that taciturn Garth was soon in arrears. None the less was he gladdened by the revelation of a kindred spirit—one who not only honored his knights and ladies and shared his high hostility against magicians and giants, but who was learned in the laws of chivalry and the etiquette of knighthood—matters whereof Garth knew little. That was a happy afternoon that the two passed together in the garret; Garth told himself that he had never known his father till now. A whole new vein of companionship was opened up betwéen them. The universe was deeper and wider than of yore, with glimpses of harmonious meanings underneath. And when Cuthbert, trusting to the innate symbolism of the boy's mind, ventured to raise a little the veil of the faërie allegory, Garth's eyes glowed, and he lifted his head. The best that he had dreamed was true—and more than the best. What a noble, valiant world was this that men lived in!

Thus encouraged, Garth had little hesitation in following his father down-stairs and making knightly obeisance at his mother's footstool. But gentle Cotton Martha, with her feminine timidity, was half dismayed at so warlike an apparition, and could scarcely divest herself of a misgiving that it foreboded some peril to the beloved boy himself. In time, however, maternal pride and admiration got the better of alarm; and soon she could notice that, though his helmet fitted well, his breastplate was too big for him; and could devise and make such alterations as at last turned him out a well-appointed hero.

"But there's one thing you have forgotten, Sir Garth," observed his father. "You have no lady-love!"

"Mamma is my lady-love," answered the champion, with a sort of indignation that there should even be a question on the subject, and throwing his arm around her waist.

"I would do battle with you for her, were I younger," said Cuthbert after a pause. "As it is, I suppose I must resign her with what grace I may. Cotton, my dear, accept your new knight! Bind your favor upon his crest, and bid him be right faithful, brave, and true in deed and word, in his campaign against the powers of darkness. Garth, you have chosen your lady well; but take warning by the Redcross Knight, and let no false Duessa lead you astray!"

Garth looked proudly in his mother's eyes, while she fastened on his steel cap the blue kerchief from her throat. That ceremony over, he kissed—not her hand, as the etiquette of chivalry demanded, but her lips heartily. And then he sallied forth, for the first time since donning his accoutrements, into the open air and sunshine.

"The old boy makes quite a fine appearance, doesn't he?" remarked Cuthbert, smiling. "His arms, like St. George's, bear the cruel marks of many a bloody field, though arms till this time did he never wield. God bless him!"

"Is it wise, husband," questioned the mother, smiling but sighing too, "to train him to love such things? His forefathers were violent men, and he has so much of their adventurous and warlike spirit—does it need fostering?"

"It's the old story of the birch-rod again. Garth has those warlike traits, and the best thing to do is to enlist them on the right side. He understands the allegory of self-conquest—that Garth the unregenerate must be his sole enemy. I bade him lay on and spare not—to kill himself fifty times a day if necessary; and if this old Puritan armor, which has stood the brunt of Prince Rupert's Cavaliers, helps him feel the reality of the battle, it will be well worth the furbishing he has given it; not to speak of other good results."

Martha retired in-doors, but Cuthbert staid in the porch, watching the shadow of a great white cloud travel southward down the valley; now crossing the pasture,

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now the wood beyond; presently darkening the bright surface of the lake; anon sweeping slowly along the meadowed river-basin, and finally mottling the distant flank of slumbering Wabeno. All at once a flash of reflected sunlight fell on his eyes, and caused him to look round.

"Here goes your champion, Lady Martha," he called to his wife. "He has mounted old Dobbin, and is riding off to slay the dragon with a lance made out of the handle of the hay-rake. You ought to mount the castle-turret, dishevel your hair, and pray that the dragon does not eat him up!"

Sir Garth, riding slowly (for old Dobbin had abated much of his original fire), passed gleaming beneath the shadow of the trees and was lost to view; and his father resumed his meditations. Nearly an hour went by; then the sound of hoofs attracted his eyes once more westward.

"Cotton, come quickly!" he exclaimed. "Your champion returns victorious; he has rescued a fair lady from thraldom, and she rides behind him with her arms about his waist. The giant, the owner of the castle, now vanquished and a prisoner, is forced to accompany them on foot, and assist the lady in keeping her seat. Do come out and look! My poor Cotton, you have a rival already! no Duessa though, let us hope."

"Oh, it's father; and who is that little girl? it must be Madge Danver. Some more medicine for her poor mother, I suppose."

"Haw, haw, haw!" bellowed the patriarch, as the group came up; "so you're really alive? Madge and I lost our way after leaving the village, and strayed into the century before last; and I was looking out for my grandfather—ho, ho, ho! We met Captain Neil Urmson, here, instead, and he was kind enough to let the third-cousin of his great-great-great-grandson ride behind him. If there wasn't a couple of centuries or so difference in ages, I should be anxious about the old chap's heart—eh, son-in-law? Oh, ho, ho, ho!—eh, Mattie, girl?—ha, ha, haw, haw, ho! There, jump down, my little dear—that's right! Yes, Mrs. Danver has her hip again, Mattie—wants your bryonia. —Well, Captain Urmson," he added to Garth, "when you come back from the stables, your remote posterity will be glad of a chat with you!" And with a final roar the jolly parson led the way into the house.

CHAPTER IX.

CALF-LOVE.

Since the world grew old she has taken to making fun of some things which formerly she reverenced; and, among other things, of children. The deeds, thoughts, and emotions, of that part of the community, so far as they affect us at all, amuse us; we find them transient, and therefore laugh at them. Yet the logic of the case seems defective; if it be true that the aroma of heaven abides with us but a few years, and that afterward we come to smell of the earth, would it not be wiser to grieve than to grin?

To a humane mind, one would suppose, nothing could be more touching than the spectacle of that fresh, wondering, purely passionate homage of a boy for a girl—that self-devotion of the new man, who obscurely feels that human nature is twofold, for the opposite side of the tender mystery, the lovelier, diviner Eve—which the world has agreed to call calf-love! It is a sentiment refined beyond the scope of our common expression; something too delicate to be deliberately recalled and described. In finer moments—in a happy strain of music or a sudden insight into nature—we may catch an echo or a glimpse of it; but the moment after, it has vanished, ere we can say with the memory of a memory, "Lo, there!"

There is a mute pathos about it. Your boy is your only true sighing lover; he must sigh whether his suit prosper or not. The reason is, that boys know nothing of the soul; soul and body are in them so soundly united that they confound spiritual longings with physical ones. At the same time, the very refinement of those spiritual longings inculcates the impossibility of their earthly gratification; the gross body lies in the way, yet the boy's philosophy declares the body to be all. His love feeds perforce on dreams and visions; even the beloved one herself

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must not come too near. An actual embrace would degrade the imaginary one; it would be too much, because proving that there could never be enough. Later on in life we may temper such failures with gossip of immortality; but boys live only in the present, and regard death as the final annihilation of existence.

That Garth should be a victim to this melancholy passion was only what was to be expected from a boy of his character; and the grave intensity of his nature promised to render the attack a more than ordinarily prolonged one. Moreover, Madge Danver was a very fascinating little creature; quite able, on her own merits, to impose constancy upon a colder lover than Garth was likely to prove. Yet the growth of the sentiment in him proceeded slowly, and for a time without his even being conscious of its existence. From that afternoon when the dark-eyed little maiden clung to his steel-clad waist, the great horse bearing her and him onward to a common destination, while the reverend giant strode beside them, lending to their union the support of the church; from that hour to the one in which Garth finally realized that he loved her, was a period of more than three years. And, even then, the realization was brought about by an accident.

He had been acquainted with Madge, childishly speaking, as long as he could remember; and his earliest feeling with regard to her had been a slight boyish aversion. Her confident, self-possessed vivacity had jarred against his constitutional reserve, and, in a general way, he preferred her room to her company. But, after their woodland adventure, his attitude toward her suffered a change. The change troubled him, and his first impulse (as it often happens) was to misinterpret it. He persuaded himself that instead of passively objecting to her, as heretofore, he now actively disliked her—nor was this persuasion entirely without arguments to justify it. The beginnings of a powerful emotion—one destined vitally to influence the nature—are apt to be painful; and pain, in a child's estimation, is synonymous with evil. When Garth, therefore, found that the thought of Madge disturbed him, and that her presence threw him into a state of tremor and distress, and that the sound of her voice or the touch of her hand made him positively uncomfortable, it is not surprising that he should have looked upon her as an enemy. He could no longer be himself because of her; she interfered with his freedom, she had cast a spell over him; she was a witch—a malicious enchantress! She deserved to have her head cut off; but, alas! the executioner's arm was powerless against her, and the more she merited punishment the less heart had he to inflict it.

But, by-and-by, Garth began to ask himself whether, after all, Madge was really responsible for his disquietude. Was he not tormenting himself, and then laying the blame on her? Had he any reason to suppose that she was even aware of his sufferings? Was it her fault that when he fled from her he seemed to take her with him in his flight, insomuch that the remotest solitude was peopled with her? Could she help it that he met her eye in every flower, and heard her tones in every bird-note, or that all he thought and did had reference to her? It was unjust to assume as much without proof, and what proof had he? Was any proof obtainable? Well, it might be worth while to try. What if, instead of shunning her altogether, he were to watch her secretly, so that, if she were really a witch, he might some day surprise her in the very act of brewing her spell? The more Garth considered this plan the better it pleased him, and it was not long before he put it in practice. He climbed trees beneath which Madge was to pass, and peeped fearfully down at her from between the branches; he slipped behind rocks, and, with a beating heart, listened to her approaching and departing steps; or, from some distant coign of vantage, he would feverishly observe her playing about in her cottage-garden. But all this espionage failed to provide him with evidence in support of his injurious suspicions. Madge was not a witch; what, then, was she? If she was not something very bad, might she not possibly be something very good? It had by this time become a question of extremes one way or the other. If she were very good, how was it that he disliked her? Did he dislike her?

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When once that question had been asked, of course it could be answered in only one way. Madge was an angel, and Garth adored her; not she, but his own blindness had been at fault. By the light of his present revelation, he reviewed his past experiences, and fancied that he understood them thoroughly. Nevertheless, it is open to doubt whether he saw his mistress, at this juncture, so clearly as either before or afterward. He endowed her with graces filched from the fairies. There had thus far been no actual intimacy between the two, such as might mould into definite shape the lover's fantastic hyperboles. Garth loved, but he loved an ideal; not, as yet, a creature of flesh and blood, and it is not improbable that, had he been left to himself, he might have gone on loving the ideal Madge until the real one had been quite outgrown. He was very shy, and, in the absence of any outside agency forcing him to identify the shadow with the substance, he might easily have suffered them to diverge beyond the point of reconcilement. It was a critical moment in the affair. Madge was prevented from influencing the issue simply by her ignorance of there being any issue to influence. Garth was the last boy in the neighborhood whom she would have expected to be in love with her; and he was the only boy of her acquaintance in whose presence she had ever felt embarrassment. She did not understand him, and was a little afraid of him; she saw that he was not ill-looking, but she was sure that he was disagreeable. It was evident, therefore, that the *dénoûment* would depend upon some accidental turn of events for which neither Garth nor Madge would be consciously responsible.

CHAPTER X.

MADGE.

Garth's great-grandfather had been a farmer, and, during the second quarter of the last century, he had dealings with a certain M. d'Anver, an Acadian, who was likewise a farmer, and wealthy in land and herds. Afterward, when the expatriation of the Acadians took place, the D'Anver family directed their steps to New Hampshire, and finally arrived in a pretty destitute condition at the little village of Urmsworth. The villagers, with Mr. Urmson at their head, received the exiles hospitably, and presented them with a small grant of land on the outskirts of the town. In the course of the ensuing five-and-twenty years, the family managed to acquire a tolerable competence, and, as they took kindly to their new surroundings, no one had cause to regret their advent.

At the outbreak of the Revolution, Pierre Danver, son of the first settler, eagerly took sides against the English; and he and Brian Urmson (then a youth of nineteen) marched with Ethan Allen to Ticonderoga. A few months later, Pierre was permanently disabled by a gunshot-wound. His young companion-in-arms brought him home, and, before leaving again, was betrothed to Pierre's sister Marie. With her kiss upon his lips he returned to the war, and, after a series of wild adventures on land, he took service on board a privateersman, of which he subsequently became commander. When peace was declared, he reappeared at Urmhurst with the title of captain, and with a goodly sum of prize-money in his purse. His father having died meanwhile, Captain Brian took possession of the estate, which he considerably enriched by judicious investments. Marie Danver had remained true to him throughout the seven weary years of their betrothment, and he now married her in spite of certain obscure rumors as to some entanglement of his with a lady in Virginia. He lived happily with his wife for twelve years, when she died, having borne him one child—the Cuthbert of this story.

Captain Brian remained a widower seven years, and, for all that his neighbors expected, he would have remained one to the end of his days; but, one winter's morning, a mysterious stranger suddenly made her appearance in Urmsworth. No one knew who she was or whence she came. Though somewhat past the prime of life, she was still handsome, and had the air of a lady accustomed to luxury and refinement. She engaged lodgings in the village, and then

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sent a messenger to Urmhurst with a note for Captain Brian Urmson. The note was delivered, and, half an hour afterward, the captain presented himself at her parlor-door. His call was prolonged until late in the afternoon, and, on leaving, he repaired directly to the parsonage, and had a private interview with the Reverend Mr. Graeme. Two days afterward it was known that Mrs. Golightley and Captain Urmson were to be married, and, before the end of another week, the wedding had actually taken place.

The village was fain to deal with its astonishment and curiosity as best it might, for the captain never vouchsafed any explanation of this singular proceeding. He was passionately devoted to his new wife, and she to him; but their union was not destined to last long. She survived her marriage only three years, during which time she gave birth to two children—Eve and Golightley—dying in childbed when the latter was about three months old. Her husband, as we know, took her death very much to heart; but he had his little Eve to comfort him; and, though poor Golightley was never in much favor, Cuthbert, who was by this time approaching his twentieth year, was admitted by his father to a friendly, rather than a merely filial, footing. One reason of this distinction probably was that Cuthbert never showed any fear of the savage and morose old warrior, but answered him always with a respectful firmness that commanded equally his affection and respect. Among the villagers, however, Golightley was more popular than his half-brother, the latter being considered self-opinionated and satirical. Cuthbert graduated at Bowdoin, and then, in the same year that Eve was lost, set out on his travels, and did not come back till he was over thirty.

Meantime, the Danvers had been suffering reverses. Captain Urmson, after his first wife's death, had not been at much pains to keep up an intimacy with her family; and his second marriage widened the gap between him and them. Pierre's son was a man of some mechanical genius, and of an inventive turn of intellect. He sank a great deal of money in experimenting with his inventions, and gradually contracted the habit of solacing his disappointments with drink. To add to his misfortunes, he was of an uncomfortably sensitive temperament, and chose to take umbrage at the captain's neglect; and, when adversity came, his pride would not allow him to apply to Urmhurst for assistance. Shortly before the captain's decease, however, he married a young woman who was something of an invalid and a good deal of a shrew, but who brought him a dowry of several thousand dollars. The only offspring of this marriage was little dark-eyed Madge, who came into the world a few years after Garth. By this time, thanks to the kindly overtures of Cuthbert and his gentle wife, the old relations between the two families had been reëstablished on a friendlier footing than ever, and, the Danvers being again in a needy condition, the Urmsons were able to exercise their benevolent ingenuity in devising expedients for relieving them without offending their susceptibilities.

As for Madge, she was both mentally and physically precocious; she always led her class at school, and, though not a large child, was active and skillful in dancing, skating, and such-like exercises. She was the first of her race to be baptized into the Protestant Church; Parson Graeme officiated at the ceremony, and ever afterward took the little convert into his especial favor and protection. But Madge was almost universally popular among grown-up people. She possessed a charming vivacity and confidence of manner, tempered by a subtile tact which enabled her to steer clear of the vulgar conceit and self-assertion of most so-called clever children. Her face was rather French in type; long and dark, with large oval eyes and vivid scarlet lips; and in her earlier years she had a tendency to the use of French idioms in her speech. For the rest, she was good-humored, cheerful, neat, and possessed a flavor and accent of her own. Her very dress, without being conspicuous, could only have been worn by herself, and she attracted a half-amused, half-pleased attention wherever she went. Such attention never disconcerted her; she was not born for seclusion, and the eye of the world had no terrors for her. There was a touch

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of worldly wisdom in her composition, which, as often as it came to the surface, had an indescribably piquant effect. Her voice was endowed with a certain soothing or caressing intonation, employed only upon occasion, but which might have flattered an icicle or coaxed a flint.

But she was not quite so popular with the boys and girls as with the grown folks. In fact, most girls of her own age disliked her. Madge never was guilty of any of those intimate, effusive, mysterious, whispering, anti-masculine, girl friendships, which are less rare a sight than might be expected, in view of the wealth of sentiment pervading them. She could afford to do without them because of her undeniable ability to beguile the heart of any boy in Urmsworth. A boy might distrust her when he was not in her company; he might say bitter things of her behind her back; he might even warn other boys that she was a flirt; nevertheless, to spend half an hour at her side was to forget all his doubts and to abjure all his hard speeches. She was so *naïve*, so frank, so confiding, and so entertaining, that it was not in ordinary boyhood to resist her. If she were a coquette, coquetry was as natural to her as plain faces or slow wits are to other young ladies, and perhaps she was no more to blame for her failing than they for theirs.

Concerning this side of Madge's life, Garth knew nothing. He regarded her as a thing apart; and without a bit of self-conceit it had never occurred to him that any third person could come between them two. The sacredness which invested her in his eyes must impress itself upon others as well; but he alone could ever be privileged to do her homage. Unworthy of her though he might be, Providence had made her no other mate; the mystic thread of destiny had united her star to his earth, and not to another's. The trifling circumstance that he had never exchanged a single unconventional or sentimental word with the mistress of his soul could have, of course, no influence on his convictions. Like all visionaries, he liked his dreams better than facts; for facts are apt to make fun of visionaries. Madge was a palpable little fact, and no doubt she would have made fun of Garth, if she could have peeped into his mind at this epoch. But, fortunately for the loves and friendships of mankind, such insights are seldom possible. The friend cannot read his friend's heart, even when the latter desires to open it to his perusal; nor can the lover reveal himself to his mistress, however great their mutual good-will. We are mysteries to ourselves and to one another; the last secret of our natures is still withheld from us, lest we abuse it.

It had for many years been the practice of the Urmsworth school-children to picnic every Michaelmas in a certain woodland tract some three miles up the mill-stream. It was a romantic spot—a natural landscape garden, beautifully diversified. The journey thither was made in farm-wagons, hay-carts, on foot or on horseback, with laughter, singing, and jollity; the day was spent as happily as are most fête-days, and the home return as much resembled the allegoric pictures of the "Triumph of Autumn" as real life can be expected to resemble unreal.

Old Parson Graeme had been the originator of these junketings, and was wont to be the most uproarious of the junketers; his stentorian "Haw, haw, haw!" being always the nucleus of the fun; and the picnic without the parson would have been like autumn stripped of its autumnal leaves. No such deprivation had yet occurred, and the reverend patriarch, though now in his eighty-fifth year, was almost as hearty and full as jolly as at any time during the last quarter of a century. Much as he enjoyed the diversion, however, one thing was yet wanting to complete his satisfaction, and that was Garth's presence at the picnic along with the rest. To be brought face to face with boys and girls of his own age was, in the good gentleman's opinion, the only cure for his grandson's shyness, indolence, taciturnity, and other failings. But Garth had thus far steadily declined to join himself with the revelers, and, Cuthbert refusing to interfere, the parson had year after year been fain to digest his disappointment. But year after year he renewed the attack, not so much, at last, in expectation of success, as from a conscientious resolve to do his duty in the matter. Accordingly, when the present Mich-

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selmas-tide came round, he found an opportunity to collar Garth in the barn-yard, where he was feeding the hens, and addressed him as follows:

"Grandson, now listen to me. You're fifteen years old now, or pretty near it. Well, that's a pretty good age for a boy. But I'm nearly six times as old as you, and I ought to know what's best for you."

Here the parson made a sort of oratorical pause, clearing his throat and raising his finger to begin his exordium in earnest. But Garth looked up from his hens and asked:

"Do you want me to go to the picnic this year, grandpapa?"

"Ay, lad, that I do. What—will you go?"

"Yes," replied Garth, looking down at his hens again, "I am going."

The parson could scarcely believe his ears, so wholly unexpected was this spontaneous compliance. After a pause of astonishment, he laid his mighty hand on the boy's shoulder and bellowed out:

"Recollect—you've promised it. No backing out! Well, you're a good lad, and in future years you'll look back on next Saturday as the date of your first real start in life. You've only been playing till now. You're a good lad, and I hope to see you graduate at Bowdoin College, as I saw your father before you. But mind you, now—no backing out, eh? You'll keep your word?"

"I shall always keep my word, grandpapa," said Garth, gravely; and walked dignifiedly away, his hens following him.

The parson, however, was much gratified at the lad's conversion, which he ascribed to his own eloquence and perseverance. But the truth of the matter was this: he had consented to go to the picnic because Madge had previously asked him to do so. They had met in the forest-path that very morning; Garth had been too much agitated to attempt escape, and even she was so much taken aback as to say the first thing which came into her head:

"Are you coming to the picnic next Saturday, Mr. Garth?"

"I didn't— If you tell me to!"

Mr. Garth's heart was beating hard; but no knight that he could remember had ever refused a boon to his lady-love.

"Oh, yes, you must come!" exclaimed she, with a sparkling smile.

She thought this strong-looking young Urmson boy, with his flushed cheeks, wild hair, and glowing eyes, was altogether as nice as anybody she knew.

"But how strange he is!" she murmured to herself, as Garth bowed his head and hurried away to ponder his incredible adventure in deepest solitude. "Sam Kineo would not so have run away from me—I am sure of it. Garth looks like him a little; only Sam's hair is straighter, and his forehead less high. And Sam is more polite. But I like Garth; I will be kind to him at the picnic; and then Sam will be fierce, but Garth can be fierce too, I think."

This Sam Kineo was a half-breed Indian—a black-haired, swarthy, active fellow, with a quick, shining eye. He was accounted the best runner, skater, and hunter, in the neighborhood. He was about a year older than Garth, and tall of his age. He had first appeared at Urmsworth ten years before, when an Indian woman, who had carried him through the wintry wilderness on her back, sank down at the parson's door, exhausted with the weary anguish of a broken knee. She told a romantic story about the seduction of a daughter by a faithless white man, of a consequent tragedy, and of her own flight northward with the child. She was kindly cared for by the hospitable minister, and the child was taken in charge and taught the catechism, and afterward put to school. He was bright enough, but averse from steady work; or, as the schoolmaster put it, he was "deficient in application rather than in native intelligence."

The Indian woman, who was known as Nikomis, took up her abode in a wigwam on the borders of the forest, where she practised medicine and popular necromancy, and was esteemed one of the lions of the place. Sam, who lived with her, was at the age of thirteen apprenticed to a gunsmith. He accommodated himself to the social life of the village with a facility that belonged

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to certain aspects of his character, and soon became popular at dances, sleighing-parties, and such-like amusements. He was a handsome fellow, and his half-tamed cleverness, physical powers, and mysterious origin, combined to lend him a good deal of prestige in some people's eyes—Madge's among others. She was not indifferent to physical attractions, and liked romantic irregularity.

Garth and Sam were acquainted, after a rough fashion of their own. They knew each other's names, had certain similarities of taste and knowledge, communicated with each other mainly by signs, and often went on hunting expeditions together. Sam surpassed Garth in the instinct and sagacity due to his Indian strain; yet Garth, with the higher part of his nature omitted, might have rivaled Sam more nearly than was the case as things stood. The intimacy of the two boys never got beyond a superficial companionship; any attempts to push it further would only have brought about a mutual repulsion. Sam, however, had sharper eyes than Garth, and was accustomed to study the latter much more keenly than Garth studied him. Whether he gained anything from his scrutiny is open to question; at all events, he probably fancied that he understood his companion more thoroughly than in reality he did. But, taking into consideration the character of these two boys, their respective attitudes toward Madge, and her disposition toward each of them, it is easy to see that a meeting between the three might have interesting results.

CHAPTER XI.

UP A TREE.

On picnic morning Garth was up early, though he had slept ill during the night. Fantastic visions of the morrow had flitted through his brain, and tossed him in flushed discomfort from one side of his bed to the other. He had pursued a phantom Garth through all manner of grotesque adventures, and was distressed to observe that the spectre always contrived to fail, by an inch or a moment, of creditably acquitting himself.

Wishing that Garth incarnate might do better, the boy let himself quietly out of his bedroom-window at sunrise, and struck off through the awakening woods toward the picnic-grounds. He knew that some hours must elapse before the party would arrive, but he meant to employ this spare time in thoroughly reconnoitring the scene of the coming festival, and trying to accustom himself to the idea of facing so many people; for, although he might know every individual in the company, Garth dreaded confronting them in mass. Assuming, as he did, that every one would make a point of observing his slightest manifestation, and taking it for granted that he must appear to other eyes at least as transparent as he did to his own, it was not strange that his courage sometimes misgave him. On the other hand, there was Madge—or Miss Danver, as he must begin to call her, since their acquaintance was about to emerge from fairy-land into the every-day world—whom to meet he knew not whether he most rejoiced or feared. To meet her, to be near her, perhaps to converse with her—oh, to think of it! After all, was not the real world a yet more marvelous place than fairy-land?

As he walked on, however, brushed by the leaves which had scarcely begun to be autumnal, and cheered by the lusty enthusiasm of the morning sunshine, his fears dwindled, and he felt brave enough to look his joys in the face. They were all Madge! The vistas of the wood, the glimpses of heaven overhead, the tonic breath of the pines, the stirring of the breeze, were beautiful because of her. He so delighted in these reflections and reminders of his mistress that the way did not seem long nor the time wearisome ere she should appear in her proper person. An older or more experienced lover would have found everything irksome save the actual beloved presence, but Garth knew as yet neither the sweetness nor the disappointment of living hands and lips. He looked back, nevertheless, with long-drawn breaths and reddenings of the cheek, at his several encounters with Madge thus far, and especially to that memorable evening when she had sat behind him on horseback, her small arm round his waist,

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and her face so near, that, when he turned to answer his grandfather, stalking beside them, he could feel her warm breath on his cheek. Ah! sighed Garth, would they ever ride thus again? At all events, he was resolved on making unheard-of advances today. He would go up to her as soon as she arrived, and take her by the hand in bidding her good-morning. He would sit near her at dinner-time, and persuade her to share the contents of his luncheon-basket. He would pluck off the burs from the chestnuts for her; and in the games and trials of strength and skill which were to occupy the forenoon, he would win every prize for her sake; even Sam Kineo should not prevail against him.

After proceeding a mile or two on his way, he came to a spot where the path branched off in two directions. Here, amid a cluster of moist and mossy stones, a spring bubbled up and flowed across the track and onward through the roots of the trees into the forest. The spring was overshadowed by a young rock-maple, whose foliage had forced the season, most of it being already yellow, and branches here and there clustered with clear red leaves which seemed adrip with living blood. The boy threw himself down to drink of the cold water, staring the while at the mysterious bubbling commotion at the sandy bottom of the spring, as seen through the reflection of his own brown face. Some time, he thought, in pursuance of the custom of pious knights of old, when they had had their fill of bloodshed, it would be well to erect on this spot a sort of temple or shrine consecrated to lovely Madge Danver, and affording her and him a place of meeting, or of refuge, if need were. Love and peace should reign here; all deeds and thoughts should be as pure and kindly as this beneficent spring. Urmhurst had been built upon a grave, and its foundation had been laid in strife and blood; but Garth would raise his edifice on innocent ground, and so keep his life blameless. The plan so took his fancy that, by way of securing the site against foreign appropriation, he pulled out his knife and cut his own and Madge's initials deep in the bark of the rock-maple, and drew a line round them. Pleased with the conceit, which was as original with him as with the forefather of all lovers, Garth put his knife in his pocket, and resumed his way to the picnic-ground.

As he neared it, and finally looked upon the place where this assemblage of living and palpable human beings was actually to appear within an hour or two, the boy's apprehensions in a measure returned, and he was glad he had allowed himself space to compose his mind and fortify his resolution for the ordeal. He rambled hither and thither about the rocky and wildly picturesque glen, peopling it with imaginary picnickers, and endeavoring to make himself at home with them; while a shadowy Madge seemed ever at his side. At length he came to an enormous chestnut-tree, standing near the upper verge of the tract, and stretching its mighty limbs over a diameter of one hundred feet. The ground beneath was strewed with clusters of the burred nuts, and thousands more hung between the thick leaves overhead. After trying his teeth for a while upon the former, Garth began to turn his eyes upward, and consider the practicability of a climb.

Swarming was out of the question; the chestnut was eighteen feet in girth; but there were twigs sprouting here and there from the lower trunk, and a few promising knots and clefts which might be of use. Once ten feet from the ground and the lowest of the main limbs could be reached, and thence was a broad, winding staircase to the tiptop. It was a very tall tree, and no doubt commanded a large view: perhaps he could see the picnic-party on their way hither from the village. This last thought bound him to the attempt, and forgetting that enough time had already passed to allow of their being very near, he forthwith set about it. It was a slow and arduous job, and after working hard for ten minutes, and ascending about eight feet, it became necessary either to trust his weight to a certain dead twig, or to come down again. Garth paused to deliberate. In the midst of his pause a strange sound fell upon his ear—a throbbing, reduplicating, long-drawn note, dying away in a cadence, which would have sounded melancholy to one ignorant (as Garth was not) that

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it was the stentorian laughter of Parson Graeme echoing afar through the woods.

The party must be close at hand, and the climber, following his first and most natural impulse, committed himself to the twig, which cracked, indeed, but did not break, and helped him to a main limb of the tree. He rapidly clambered upward, and before the vanguard of the revelers had come in sight, he was safe among the topmost branches, whence he could overlook the whole ground, excepting only the space immediately beneath him, but was himself invisible from all points.

By the time he had recovered his breath and wiped the perspiration from his face, the picnickers were defiling with jollity into the glen, the gigantic parson in front, with Madge's hand in his, Sam Kineo not far off, upward of a score of grown people and children following on behind, and, last of all, an old hay-cart drawn by a venerable white steed, that had retired from active life and reserved himself for festive occasions like the present. The cart was beladen with provision-baskets, in charge of three or four elderly ladies, whose years entitled them to a ride, though it is doubtful whether the jolting they got was not a sharper trial of endurance than a three-mile walk would have been.

Garth had climbed his tree involuntarily, so to speak; but it now occurred to him that the opportunity of overlooking his company and familiarizing himself with their individual and aggregate aspect, before descending and mixing with them on an equal footing, was worth improving. He kept his perch accordingly, and held his peace, and enjoyed the aroma of affairs like a superior being, without having his appreciation dulled by a personal share in them.

The cart was drawn up beneath Garth's very chestnut, and the venerable steed was relieved of his harness and turned out to amuse himself, while the elderly ladies were severally lifted down by the gallant parson, who was provided with a flattering witticism for each one of them. The next thing was to take out the provision-baskets and select a site for the table.

"Why not have it here beneath the tree?" demanded the ponderous tones of the reverend Titan.

But somebody objected that the chestnut burs would render sitting down impossible; and therefore, after some discussion and much mirth, the place was fixed a few rods off, under the southern side of a lichened rock: entirely with Garth's approval, since he could now see all that went on, without overhearing conversation perhaps not intended for his ears. Whatever his grandfather said he must, indeed, make up his mind to be privy to; the old gentleman would have been audible at the top of a mimosa. But then his grandfather never talked secrets.

"Now, boys and girls," bellowed he, having left the elderly ladies to unpack the baskets and make dilatory preparations for the feast—"now, then, we must have our games. What shall we begin with? Speak up, somebody. Boys, you ought to give the ladies the first choice. Or what do you say to a boy and a girl being chosen to decide it, between themselves, for all of us? Very well; who shall they be? What do you say to—let me see—to Madge Danver and Garth Urmson?"

Garth started, and dropped a chestnut. Was he discovered? and did he hear his name coupled with hers? Oh, he must come down!

But hark again! "Why, where is Garth? —not here? no one seen him? That's odd —that's odd. He told me he'd be here. Well!—however, it's early still; he'll come yet, depend upon it.—What did you say, my dear?" to Madge. Garth did not catch her rejoinder, but it seemed to tickle the minister, whose mood changed from solicitude to mirth. "Ho! ho! ho! Oh, very well, if that's the case, we needn't feel anxious about him; he'll come sooner or later. I thought it was all on *my* account—ha! ha! ha!—Well, boys and girls, we can't wait for him, so whom shall we choose in his place? Let me see—what do you say to Sam Kineo?"

It was a foible of the good minister to be most autocratic under the guise of deferring to the opinion of others; so now, while appearing to choose Madge and Sam by appeal to the popular will, he in reality (though

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unawares) pleased no one except himself and his nominees. The girls were affronted that the "Frenchified little thing" should be put over them, while the boys were as little flattered to play second fiddle to an Indian half-breed. However, there was no disputing the minister's vote, and Sam and Madge were chosen, if not unanimously, at least without a dissentient voice. They walked apart mysteriously, and consulted. There was not much to consult about; but still Garth's eyes followed the pair with singular anxiety, and he was continually wondering how Sam felt, and imagining how he himself would feel in Sam's place, and berating himself for having been out of the way at the critical moment. Not but Sam carried it off well enough: indeed, Garth could not help acknowledging that the half-breed's behavior was more easy and gallant than his own would have dared to be in the circumstances. And Madge—Miss Danver—seemed charmingly affable. For a moment Garth questioned whether she would have been so affable to him!

Nevertheless, he was not jealous: he had too much refinement and too little experience for that. Madge was gracious as a queen might be; and Sam's self-possession was that of a courtier who knows his place. With Garth it would be different; he must meet the queen only as her destined lover; and on those high terms it was no marvel if the dapper forms of society should hitch and stammer a little at first. He was not jealous, for the idea that Madge would receive the advances of any one but himself, or that any one except himself would venture to make advances to her, never entered his head. But he could not with equanimity behold so much sweetness thrown away on Sam Kineo—sweetness from which only this unlucky chestnut debarred him. What had possessed him to expend so much pains in climbing out of the reach of his own happiness? Why had he not been content to remain on the same footing with the rest of the world, and take his equal chances? Solitude and seclusion are good in their way, but a body among the clouds while the soul languishes on earth Garth found a most unprofitable predicament.

Meanwhile the committee had decided upon their programme, and the games began. Garth, sitting disconsolate like a deserted idol in his niche, was astonished to see what a good time boys and girls had together. He had always taken it for granted that enjoyment was in a direct ratio to isolation; but here numbers seemed to be the very zest of the fun. How they laughed, shouted, ran about, and laughed again! What a delightful game blindman's-buff was, and hunt-the-slipper, and kitchen-furniture, and pass-the-ring! Garth joined in every laugh, and nearly fell out of his tree in the heedless sympathy with which he followed the movements of the players. How lovely Madge looked! how handy and clever was Sam Kineo! A sigh surprised Garth in the midst of his enjoyment. What right had he to laugh? he was not playing. He was like a forlorn ghost vainly attempting to partake of earthly pleasures. He was resolved, if once he got his foot on solid earth again, to give up tree-climbing. Meanwhile it was plain that he must stay where he was so long as the picnic lasted. To come down now would be indeed a come-down, and Garth's dignity and sense of the ludicrous alike forbade it.

By-and-by the girls were tired, and there was a pause. The minister, who had contributed more noise to the games than any of the players, now revived the topic of Garth's absence, observing that he the more regretted it since, in the trials of strength and skill which were to come off between the boys, he was certain that his grandson would have borne a distinguished part. But at this Sam Kineo ventured to turn up his nose, intimating that it might be just as well for Garth's reputation to keep out of the way. Sam, in fact, was generally admitted to be a formidable athlete; he was a year older than the minister's grandson, and, had the two been matched against each other, the odds must have been in the Indian's favor. Garth, nevertheless, cramped and impatient in his tree, would gladly have descended to try his strength, had Sam's prowess been double what it was. In Madge's presence, too, he could scarcely have failed of success—so he fancied; and

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now he was to lose this signal opportunity of proving himself worthy of her favor. Oh for a bout at wrestling with Sam Kineo!

Perhaps, to own the truth, something more than ordinary rivalry was at the bottom of that wish. Sam seemed to be eating Garth's cake and his own too. How easy it would be quietly to drop down in the midst! and yet how much harder it was to climb down against moral obstacles than up against material ones, and what a different kind of agility was requisite!

After a sufficient rest, the minister, abandoning all hopes of his young relative's appearance, gave orders for the athletic sports to begin. Madge was probably the only person who (for her own private reasons) shared the old gentleman's disappointment at Master Urmson's defection. She had laid plans which promised to bring about an exciting little episode or two; but Garth and Sam were both involved in the scheme, and its consequent failure made Madge rather captious. She was piqued at the former's implicit slight, but this did not prevent her taking his part against the latter, who probably found her less disposed to encourage his attentions than had Garth been on the ground.

Thus, when Sam jumped higher, ran faster, leaped farther, and wrestled better than any of his opponents, Madge only shrugged her little shoulders, and would have him to understand that matters would have fallen out otherwise if Garth Urmson had been there. Poor Sam could only scowl and secretly wish to tear his rival limb from limb; but then Madge would look so irresistible that wrath was perforce merged in adulation.

As for Garth, he would have been glad to be free of his leafy prison at the risk of being tomahawked and scalped as soon as he reached the earth. Mental irritation apart, his physical discomfort was most dolorous; he had tried every practicable position again and again, and not one was tolerable. The forenoon dragged past; there was a contra-dance, in which Madge and Sam were partners; then dinner was announced by the elderly ladies, and interminably eaten, under favor of a stentorian grace from Parson Graeme; and it was Sam, not Garth, who kept Madge supplied with delicacies. After dinner the minister leaned back against the rock and went fast asleep; and the elderly ladies, when they had finished replacing the knives and forks and table-ware in the baskets, crawled under the hay-cart, and followed his example.

The younger part of the company, being thus left to their own devices, paired off and strolled away, each couple toward a different point of the compass, and at length only Sam and Madge remained. Between these two there seemed to be some misunderstanding, a state of things which Garth accepted more philosophically than his rival. The latter, after several ineffectual attempts to persuade Madge to accompany him, loitered moodily off by himself, and was presently lost to sight behind a clump of sombre hemlocks.

Madge sat still for a while, looking up into the chestnut-tree, apparently lost in thought; once or twice Garth could almost believe that their glances met. But before he could decide upon the propriety of then and there discovering himself to the mistress of his heart, she abruptly arose, tied on her broad-brimmed straw hat beneath her soft little chin, and walked demurely away, with her short steps and erect little figure. The direction she took, though not exactly opposite to Sam's, was at a considerable angle from it. Garth, having satisfied himself that whoever was not asleep was out of the way, descended his tree as fast as his stiffened legs would let him, and dropped to the ground with almost a shout of relief.

At last he was once more his own master, the owner of his own limbs, motions, and volitions; he had learned more than one wise lesson up yonder among the chestnut-burs; he had pricked his fingers, but it was his fault if he had not profited by a few solid kernels. The first use he made of his wisdom was to determine on pursuing Madge; but, looking about him, he found the aspect of the country so much altered from his new point of view as to put him in some doubt which way she had gone. He paused a moment to listen. It was a silent

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afternoon, the loudest noise being the snoring of his grandfather, which was reëchoed in a fainter key from beneath the hay-cart. Far off somewhere a boy was whistling a tune that sounded like "Yankee Doodle." A cat-bird piped from an alder-thicket near at hand. From another direction came a distant murmur of laughter. But there was nothing that told of Madge; so, having reconsidered his bearings as accurately as possible, the sturdy young lover set forth, and was quickly swallowed up in the inscrutable mazes of the forest.

CHAPTER XII.

FIGHTING.

About six hours later, weary in body and dejected in mind, ragged, hungry, and thirsty, Garth emerged at the cool bubbling spring amid the stones, at the meeting of the ways; and once more he threw himself at length beneath the crimson maple and drank a refreshing draught. He had not found Madge, neither had he seen a human being since leaving the picnic-ground; he had wandered on preoccupied, he knew not where; ever surrounded by a twilight of trees; sometimes fancying he heard a voice or caught a glimpse of a broad-brimmed straw hat, which would change to a festoon of moss or a bird-note as he approached. He made a vast *détour* of loneliness, and it was not till he came upon the fountain, and saw in the moss the imprint he had made in the morning, that he realized in what part of the world he was. He drank, and then seated himself upon a stone to meditate over his first picnic.

Hark! was not that the minister's laugh? some faint echo of it seeming to come from the direction of the village. The picnickers, then, must newly have passed by; a few minutes earlier, and Garth would have fallen in with them. He rose to his feet, resolved to pursue them, and put to the proof his late-learned doctrine of the value of society; at all events, to clear his character with his grandfather and Madge—Miss Danver; to show them that he had kept his promise in being at the festival, albeit veiled in the invisibility of a chestnut-tree. But before he had advanced two steps toward putting these good resolutions in execution he heard a foot-tramp from behind, and, turning, beheld Sam Kineo hastening toward him as if from the picnic-ground. Sam looked elate and excited, but on seeing Garth he stopped in surprise.

"Hallo, hallo!" said he, in his rapid way, eying the other all over, and finally fixing a sharp look on his face. "Where ha' you been, Garth? Been lost? Ha, ha!"

"Didn't you meet her either?" demanded Garth.

"Meet who? What d'you know about it? 'Meet her either?' what are you talkin' about, Garth? You weren't at th' picnic; you know nothin'."

"I was in the chestnut-tree," said Garth, reddening a little. "I saw Ma—Miss Danver—"

Here Sam interrupted him with a laugh, the undisguised offensiveness of which made Garth redden still more. Ha, ha! Up in a tree like a chipmunk! "Ha, ha! 'Fraid to come down, fear you'd be beaten runnin', wrestlin', jumpin'. Ha! very sensible. We didn't want you! Madge 'nd I rather be alone together. Ha, ha!"

"Sam!" exclaimed the reverential Garth, too much shocked at the other's light mention of the adored name to remember that he ought to be angry.

"Well, well!" rejoined the half-breed, coming forward a step, with a hectoring air. He threw the black straight hair from his face, and met the other's eyes with a keen, shining glance. He was certainly a handsome lad, as well as an active and well-grown one; but there was the hardness and superficiality of the Indian in his expression, and just now a savage suggestiveness in the gleam of his white teeth.

"D'you think she likes you, eh?" he continued, rapidly; "think she likes you, Garth Urmson? I tell you what, she likes nobody but me. She loves me, Madge does. She's my girl. You better not interfere."

"Stop!" said Garth, in a low tone. "You have no right—"

There was a tremor in his voice, which

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caught Sam's ear, and caused him to make a grave mistake. He had been inclined to pick a quarrel from the first, and Garth's behavior thus far had rather fostered the inclination. But the quaver in these last words appeared to Sam to be due to fear, and determined him to proceed to extremities at once. He believed himself able to give Garth a thrashing, and there was more than one reason why it was desirable he should do so. He threw off all disguise.

"You hold your tongue—you Garth! Tell me I have no right? Ha! ha! I kiss her often as I please; she gives me half a dozen kisses, puts her arms round my neck, lets me carry her over th' brook! Guess I have a right. . . . Halio! hallo!"

Garth had waked up at last, though this unexpected torrent of blasphemy (such he considered it) had made him powerless for a few moments. The words stung and rankled, and seemed to blacken the day. There could be no adequate punishment for them. Since they were spoken, all innocence and freshness were parched and blighted out of life. Had he believed them true, he would have wished to live no longer.

But he held them falsest of the false, and he felt that it rested with him to inflict whatever punishment was possible. That Madge was innocent, that her lips and heart were pure, was to him as certain as that she existed. Sam had lied as no one ever lied before. To be so wicked must bring a punishment of its own, but it was none the less Garth's duty to vindicate Madge's honor to the uttermost. He took Sam by the throat in the midst of his blasphemies, and pushed him backward to a level bit of turf beside the maple-tree. Here the half-breed wrenched himself loose, and the boys faced each other in silence for nearly a minute. Something there was in the moulding and play of their features at this juncture which almost amounted to a resemblance, each to each. The lines of passion are much alike in all faces.

"You don't deserve to live," said Garth, at length, drawing a deep breath, and with an air of profound solemnity.

In fact, there was a sternness and an absence of flourish in Garth's demeanor which a little dashed Sam's spirits. It made him feel the need of bending his every physical and mental faculty to the work before him. He was puzzled, perhaps, at the sudden change in Garth's attitude from shrinking to aggressive; he lacked the refined insight which might sympathetically have fathomed the cause of it. He could easily understand jealousy on his rival's part; but of such wrath kindled at mere wantonness of speech he had no comprehension. It was to his disadvantage that he had not, since the loftier passion is ever the more potent and enduring.

"Now, then, what do you want?" blustered he, raising his voice.

"Fight!" whispered Garth, glowing, and doubling his fists; and the very atmosphere seemed to grow murky and heavy with the word.

"What for?" demanded Sam, hesitating.

Garth, whose every bone yearned for battle, could hardly command his voice to speak. "Was it a lie?" he asked, tremulously.

"D'ye mean about the kissing? You ask her—"

"Fight! or I'll kill you," hissed Garth; and the fight began on the instant.

It was a breathless, fierce, desperate fight enough, though the fighters were boys fresh in their teens. Not a scientific fight on either side: there were no rounds, no rules, no courtesies. There was no noise either, except the sound of the blows, and the quick gasping for breath, and the soft trampling on the turf. There is a concentration and an economy about affairs of this kind which are lacking in most other business transactions; waste, diffuseness, is suicidal.

A blackbird happened to perch on the top of the maple at the moment the fight began, and was its sole witness. At first the shorter boy got the worst of it; he was knocked down three times within as many minutes. Whoever has been knocked down once can tell what this means. But Garth was not beaten. He started up as if the touch of earth refreshed him. Such stamina a little disheartened his adversary, to whom, indeed, the other's deliberate fury was quite unaccountable, and gradually became

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appalling. Sam fought with his strength, but Garth put the annihilation of all evil into every blow. He got more and more terribly in a rage each moment, but it was rage that calmed and cooled the faculties, not blinded them. No enemy is so unpleasant to meet as one of this kind; only killing can beat him, and, if not killed, he is very apt to kill. Garth's face was fixed in a singular expression—a compound of a smile and a frown. He was bleeding from a blow on the chin. Two hundred years before, an ancestor of his, on his wedding-day, had looked precisely thus.

When Sam stopped knocking his opponent down, the blackbird noted a change in the aspect of the fray. The larger boy was now defending himself. He was tiring, and was lacking in the unquenchable passion which should take the place of strength. He was fighting for his life, yet showed less vigor than the attacking party, who, it must be inferred, was doing battle for something to which life was a secondary consideration. It was an ugly sight now; even a bird, one would think, might have felt the ugliness of it. Both the faces were bleeding and disfigured, the leaves of the maple looked dabbled with blood, the setting sun was swathed in a bloody mist, and the black plumage of the bird was dashed here and there with red. All of a sudden the larger boy fell heavily and loosely backward, and lay inert. It was the other's first knock-down blow; with the force of it he, too, fell on his enemy's body.

The blackbird flew away. Garth, with an effort, staggered to his feet, and set his foot on Sam's breast, gasping out, after the custom of the knights in the "Faërie Queene," "Do you yield?"

Sam neither answered nor made sign of surrender, but lay exactly as he had fallen. In truth, the boy was stunned by the blow and the fall. But Garth, who was well read in details of mortal engagements, straightway took him for dead. He snatched back his foot, and stared at the motionless body, with a strange feeling curdling round his heart. He had fought fair—ay, with the odds against him; he could plead justice, truth, honor, and all, on his side; barely had he won the victory; he could reproach himself in nothing; and yet there lay Sam, who so lately had lived and breathed, dead by Garth's hand, and the deadness of him seemed somehow to have filled the world and the sky, and even to have communicated itself to the springs of his slayer's life, and made the better part of him dead too.

Garth raised his eyes, and they fell upon the trunk of the maple-tree just beyond, on which were cut his own and Madge Danver's initials. This was the spot which, twelve hours before, he had consecrated to the genius of love, and to peace and innocence, and such pretty things—had consecrated it at sunrise in order to pollute it at sunset, or rather to consecrate it anew to bloodshed, strife, and hate. Had he done wrong or right in this matter? He could reproach himself in nothing; and Sam, there, could not accuse him—alas! no—could only lie still and accuse by not accusing. All was a puzzle and a mystery except that awful unmoving thing that was, and yet was not, Sam.

Kneeling down beside the spring, Garth washed the blood from his own face and hands, hastily bethinking himself the while what was to be done. The deadly earnestness and reality of the situation purged his mind of the fantastic vapors and visions which had beset him heretofore. He was in fairy-land no longer; Sam and he were not knights, but two boys, one of whom had killed the other. Madge—yes, even she was disenchanted—was no longer Gloriana, or Una, or Belphœbe, but a little girl, in defense of whose innocent reputation Garth had compromised his own innocence and his life. For the boy knew that murder was punished by hanging, and, not being acquainted with the various gradations of manslaughter and justifiable homicide, he made no doubt that hanging was his due. Mindful of his early discipline, therefore—of that self-invited discipline of the rod—he considered it incumbent upon himself not only to be hanged, but to lose no time in putting his head into the noose.

Had it occurred to him to spend a few minutes in applying to Sam the ordinary methods for restoring suspended animation, he would have been spared half an hour or

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so of very tragic anguish. But Garth had a natural bent to tragedy—a tendency to regard the saddest aspect of a thing as the most likely to be true. That Sam appeared dead, accordingly, was reason enough for believing that he was so: it would perhaps have seemed disrespectful to the awful majesty of fate to believe otherwise. He did not look at the body any more, though he was conscious of it as it lay there, with one knee bent, and one arm thrown over its head. He resolutely concentrated his thoughts on the two or three questions which demanded an immediate answer. Must he set off for Haverhill at once, and deliver himself up to justice without bidding farewell to his relatives, or would it be allowable first to go home? and might he not see Madge before he went, and have the consolation of telling her that he was to die in her cause?

He answered the last question first, and said no to it. He was blood-stained; he carried a death-scent about him; and though the stain had been incurred for Madge's sake, it was not fitting that he should invade her pure presence with it. If she wished to see him, she would visit him in prison, and he could receive her there. As to his father and mother, he was in doubt. He felt that he belonged to them, and might approach them, stained as he was, without offense; but when he thought of his mother's agony at hearing that he was to be hanged, he hesitated and held back. Yet, on the other hand, it was scarcely practicable for him to get to Haverhill and tell his story there entirely unsupported. In the midst of his doubts he suddenly remembered his grandfather. He was the man for the emergency—wise, influential, energetic, and not too tender-nerved. He could give the advice and assistance needed, and to him Garth would go.

It was already twilight in the solemn woods as the boy rose to act upon this decision. He walked hurriedly away without a sidewise or backward glance. The burden of his deed was heavy upon him, and he could not rest until the penalty was paid. He had done what seemed to him right; but was any right right enough to warrant his taking a life? Garth feared not. He was ready to be hanged; and yet he would rather have been hanged innocent than in requital of this questionable crime. His soul was very heavy; and when he had left the polluted ground behind him he was presently seized with a nervous horror, and began to run; and then the misery of his plight overcame him, and he sobbed dolefully, still running and stumbling along the darkening pathway.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVING.

When he had gone about a mile, an abrupt turning brought him close upon a small figure seated on an old stump. It rose as he approached, and he saw that it was Madge. The encounter did not surprise him—he was too unhappy for surprise; yet it was strange that she should be there so late alone. She seemed to have been expecting some one—not Garth certainly. She must have mistaken him at first for another person, for on recognizing him she gave a start and an exclamation:

"Ah! it is not— It is Garth Urmson."

Garth, unready of tongue, stood silent, an unlovely object. Hatless, bloody, distraught, he looked anything but a squire of dames. But Madge, apparently embarrassed on her own account, did not immediately remark his disorder.

"The others have gone on," she observed, in an airy tone, smoothing out the strings of her hat and tying them again. "I—missed something, and had come back to look for it. Then it grew dark. O Mr. Garth," she continued, archly uplifting her small finger, "you were unkind not to come as you promised me. I was very unhappy. You forgot all about me!"

"Oh!" groaned Garth. Then, finding himself unequal to any protestations, "You must not talk so. I have just killed him. Will you say good-by to me?"

The little woman stared, laughed, checked herself, scrutinized the boy's face keenly, and finally began to whimper:

"Wh-what do you mean? Oh, don't look so—you fr-frighten me so!"

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