The Black-Sealed Letter

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Tales for Canadian Homes.

THE BLACK-SEALED LETTER;

Or, The Misfortunes of a Canadian Cockney.

by

ANDREW LEARMONT SPEDON,

Author of "Canadian Summer Evening Tales," "The Canadian Minstrel," &c.

Printed for the Author, by Mitchell & Wilson, Montreal. 1872.

How slight a cause may change our life Beyond its own control,
Produce a cordial to the heart, Or canker in the soul.

The Black-Sealed Letter;

OR,

THE MISFORTUNES OF A CANADIAN COCKNEY.

CHAPTER I.

Old London!--city of cities!--whose foundations were laid when the ancient Briton in his martial glory prowled among the dense forests

whose foliage darkened the waters of the Thames, long ere the foot of the adventurous Roman had touched the shores of Albion; or the Dane and Saxon had established themselves within the strongholds of the British isles. Who has not heard of this great old city, teeming with human life, and filled with the extremes of wealth, poverty, righteousness and iniquity? Who has not heard of its eminent statesmen and its distinguished authors:--its time-honored institutions of religion, literature and jurisprudence: its antiquated buildings, themselves volumes of history written the eventful finger of time:--its massive warehouses; and also its magnificent mansions, wherein peers and princes banquet in luxury:--its club-houses; and its dens of pollution, amid whose shadows the grim spectres of degraded humanity struggle out a wretched existence. Into this great city--wonderful and complicated in itself--the modern Babylon of the world,--gentle reader, now follow me in imagination, and I will introduce you to the subject of the following story.

It is the Saturday evening of a chilly night towards the end of November, 1869, that season of the year in which the grey old buildings of London assume a more sombre aspect than during the sunny days of summer. The twilight had congealed into darkness after a somewhat foggy day, and mantling its shadows around the homes of the destitute and degraded, tinging the wretched inmates with melancholy, and even making their lives more miserable and less tenacious to the world. The dark streets have been lighted up. The great tide of human beings that have during the day thronged the thoroughfares, has partially subsided; but thousands of pedestrians are still bustling to and fro; while the din of carriages are heard on every street. The provision shops are crowded with noisy customers. The coffee-houses are steaming forth their delicious viands, where throngs of both men and women are greedily satisfying their appetites: while thousands of ale-houses and gin-hells are pouring forth their poisonous liquids, where crowds of miserably degraded wretches of both sexes in human shape are swallowing down the deadly elements and rioting in hellish revelry. Alas! how many a home has been converted into a mad-house, yea, even into a very hell, by these dens of pollution, in which dwell the accursed spirit-dealers of iniquity.

Alas! how many a fond wife, with her little ones, perhaps destitute of every domestic comfort, is at that very moment anxiously awaiting the return of her husband. Hour after hour may pass away, until the very depths of night appear to grow sad with the dreary sorrow of her heart, and at length he returns--but not as a loving and sober husband; not as a tender and home-providing father; not as a man, with all the noble attributes of the human nature; not as a Christian, with the spiritual Balm of Gilead, with which to soothe the cankering ills of his household;--no, not as either he returns, but rather as a madman escaped from the prison walls of Bedlam, or as fiend let loose from the nether kennel.

But, nevertheless, there were thousands of happy households that evening enjoying the domestic comforts of a peaceful home,--that place, the dearest of all on earth, when sanctified by the affection of a united, sober, and industrious family. Such was the home and household of Mr. Charlston.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlston, their two sons and three daughters, were on that night comfortably seated in their little sitting room after tea; the mother and her daughters engaged at needlework; the father and his eldest son, George, reading the newspapers, while Frederick, the younger, was reclining upon a sofa. An infant of a year old was sleeping in a cradle; a little kitten was nestling at its feet, and purring as if trying to soothe the dreamy slumbers of its tender companion.

Mr. Charlston was about fifty-five years of age, in physical appearance tall and nervous; with sharp, prominent features, and well-defined head, denoting energy and perception. His wife was apparently about fifty years; well proportioned in form and feature, her face expressive of sensibility and affection. The little furrows around her dark eyes, and the streaks of gray hairs, had already denoted the footmarks of elder age; nevertheless, she was still possessed of a considerable share of that beauty which in her younger years had distinguished her as the "Belle of Elton," the village in which she had formerly resided. The daughters in appearance somewhat resembled their mother, the eldest of whom was then in her twenty-first year. George, the first-born of the family,

was possessed of a robust constitution, of the middle size, and about twenty-six years of age. Frederick in appearance was the very *facsimile* of his father, with all the finer sensibilities of his mother; yet, apparently possessed of a stern determination of will, amounting to stubborness when actuated by the impulses of a nervous temperament. Mr. Charlston was a hatter by trade; and at the time referred to kept a hat factory of his own in Fleet Street. His industry had placed him in favorable circumstances. Estimating the value of labor and intellect, he had given his children a tolerably good education, and at a proper age had apprenticed his sons to become tradesmen. George followed the business of his father. Frederick was a cabinet-maker, and at the time referred to had been two years employed as a journeyman. Neither Mr. Charlston nor his sons were then addicted to intemperance. Frederick was a strict teetotaller. Occasionally a bottle of ale was partaken of by the others; or when an acquaintance visited the house, or during the Christmas holidays, an additional bottle might be set down to grace the table. They were, however, a sober and industrious family; and when the labours of the day were past, they generally gathered around the household hearth to spend their evenings pleasantly and profitably to themselves.

On the evening referred to, and whilst Mr. Charlston and family were engaged in their respective duties, as described, the door bell was rung. George attended to the signal; and in a few seconds a young man entered the room, signalizing himself in a very familiar but somewhat uncouth manner.

"Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Charlston. How are you Eliza, Amelia, and Charlotte? and you Frederick, old lad? I didn't see you at work to-day. I thought something was out of joint with you, and I have come on purpose to see. Why what's the matter with your neck? You have it swaddled up as if you were determined to defy the hangman's rope from ever getting a hold of you," ejaculated Charles Holstrom.

"Oh, I have only caught a bit of a cold in my throat," replied Frederick; "come Charlie, take a seat by my side and give us your latest news about town."

The husky voice of Holstrom awoke the infant from its peaceful slumber, and the poor thing began to bawl loudly as if startled from either surprise or fear.

Mrs. Charlston lifted it to her knee, and having hushed it into quietness she began feeding it with some cordial food.

"Well, I declare, he has grown to be a big lump of a lad," exclaimed Holstrom. "I dare say, Frederick, you feel conceited enough now to think yourself a degree above such fellows as George and I are, in having graduated as a Batchelor of Arts--I mean--Bachelor of Babies. You will, no doubt hereafter, append B. B. to your name as a title of merit; or, Bad Behavior, I should rather have said. However, the initials will stand for both. He's the very picture of yourself, and will soon need a hat as big as his grandpa's."

At this moment the bell was again rung; and shortly afterwards, a graceful looking young woman entered the room. Very politely she shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Charlston and the others present. She then took the infant, and pressed it lovingly to her bosom, imprinting a few kisses upon its tiny lips. The child in return smiled affectionately, apparently delighted with the caresses of a recognized and familiar friend.

"I say, Clara," exclaimed Holstrom, addressing the young woman, with whom he was apparently acquainted, "I think it would be charitable on your part to spare a few of those luxuriant caresses for poor Frederick; a slight sprinkling of balm from your roseate lips would work wonders as a remedy to his breathing apparatus. Just come and see how many dozen of blankets he has wrapped around his throat: enough, I am sure, to supply the beds of a whole household on a winter's night."

"Why, Frederick, how did you get such a cold in your throat?" interrogated Clara.

"By sleeping alone during the cold nights of the past week," retorted Holstrom, ere Frederick could get time to breathe out a more respectful answer.

At this moment the subject was immediately dropped through the timely interference of Mr. Charlston, reading a paragraph of interesting news from the *Times*. After an hour's conversation on various topics the young woman arose and announced her intention of leaving; whereupon Holstrom sprang up, bade them all good night and immediately departed. Clara shortly afterwards left also, promising ere long to repeat her visit. It was customary for Frederick to accompany her home; but on account of his illness that night George offered to convey her to her residence, distant about one mile.

"Thank you, George, for your kind offer," replied Clara; "but there is no necessity to do so to-night; a female acquaintance who accompanied me to a friend's house a few doors from here, is expecting me to call for her, and perhaps I may be detained for some time, therefore, dear George, excuse me."

No sooner had Clara departed than Frederick, disguised himself in his father's old hat, overcoat and muffler, and immediately started in pursuit of Clara.

CHAPTER II.

Before proceeding further it is necessary to inform the reader who Clara and Charles Holstrom were; and, also, to narrate the varied and complicated circumstances of several years preceding this eventful night.

Charles Holstrom was the youngest son of a London tradesman. He had attended school with Frederick, and was now working in the same shop and at the same business with him. He was possessed of a robust physical appearance, somewhat coarsely featured;--of a bold, but humorous disposition--at times impertinent, and even repulsive in his manner. Frederick had really never considered him as a confidential friend; but their long acquaintance with each other, and the many associations of their united course in life had induced him to consider Charles as a respected friend rather than a fellow companion; and from these circumstances alone the Charlstons had received him as an

occasional visitor to their house.

Clara Hazledon was the only daughter of a poor but respectable widow with whom the Charlston family had been long acquainted. Previous to their removal to Fleet street they were next door neighbors. Mr. Charlston and Clara's father had been early companions of each other. Their children had grown up together, and had been associates at the same school, and although now in unequal circumstances, still looked upon each other as very familiar friends. After the death of Mr. Hazledon, he having died when the family was young, his wife struggled hard against adversity to bring up her little ones. But five years after the death of her first husband she married another, who, unfortunately turned out to be only a worthless and degraded fellow. Clara, by her expertness at needlework, had procured a good situation in a millinery shop. Her brothers, all younger than herself, were also respectably employed.

Frederick and Clara had been passionately fond of each other when children, and as they grew older their affection became more matured; and at length the sympathies of their love were more firmly united by a marriage engagement, the consummation of which was purposed to take place as soon as circumstances would render it favorably convenient. But the basis of life's future prospects, however substantial it may be, is often undermined by some casual innovation; and there is no earthly hope, however bright its radiance may appear, but is liable to be darkened by some event that may suddenly loom up from the horizon of life. Such was the case amid the quietude of their affections. By some inadvertent impulse of human nature their chastity was sacrificed, and Frederick and Clara became parents before they had sanctified their affections upon the altar of matrimony.

The event threw a shadow into the homes of both families, and served as food for the tongues of idle gossips among their acquaintances.

Mrs. Charlston and her daughters paid a respectful visit to the house of Mrs. Hazledon--or Mrs. Collins as she was then named,--and with whom Clara was then staying. They carried with them presents of various sorts; and even Mr. Charlston himself, although chagrined at

the event, evinced a charitable spirit by placing twenty guineas in the hand of Clara, as a present in behalf of his grandson.

Frederick stole his visits under the secret shades of evening, and showed every expression of sympathy and affection for Clara and the little one; at the same time promising the consummation of their union as soon as circumstances would conveniently permit. A few weeks after the birth of the child, in December of 1868, Frederick made a tour into Devonshire for the purpose of visiting an uncle residing in the town of Exeter, and also discovering some thriving village or town where he might find ready employment, with the view of eventually establishing himself in business to his own advantage. He at length selected Tiverton as his place of residence, where he procured work at favorable wages. Elated with success he immediately wrote to his parents, and also penned a lengthy epistle to Clara, describing the place and people in very flattering words, flourishing off with a few epithets expressive of his undying affection for herself and the child; and hoping that in a few months he would have the pleasure of introducing her to a comfortable home, under the happy title of Mrs. Frederick Charlston.

Winter passed slowly along, during which time letters were frequently sent and received. The first day of May at length came, but no house was apparently provided for Clara and her child. Shortly afterwards Frederick returned home, and made known the intelligence that he had given up the idea of settling in Tiverton as he had decided upon making his future home in Canada, which place had been described by an emigrant agent who had lectured several nights in the town, as one of the finest countries in the world for the workingmen of England; that millions of acres of land were there to be given away, and every actual settler received 100 acres *gratis*. A river one hundred times larger than all the rivers of England put together, ran the whole length of the country, 1500 miles long. There were lakes there so large that even into the smallest of them the whole island of Great Britain might be thrown, and sink beyond recovery. In fact, said he, "it possessed all the facilities and improvements of the 19th century;--equality, independence and wealth awaiting every industrious man who went thither;--it was, indeed, the workshop of the tradesman, the emporium of the trader, and

above all, blessed be the fact, *it was the poor man's paradise upon earth*."

Frederick soon discovered that the big bubble he had blown up was likely to be blown down. His mother and sisters strongly objected to his purpose, and begged of him not to bury himself out of the world as long as he had an opportunity of living in it.

"Why, Frederick," exclaimed his father, "were you to go to Canada you would repent of it but once, and that will be as long as you live. You talk of free-lands; why, of what use would they be to you? They might be of service to those who have been long accustomed to outside labor. But for you to go into the dense forests amidst mountains of almost perpetual snow, to chop out for yourself a fortune, or even a livelihood, would be a thousand times worse than banishment to the icy deserts of Siberia. For my sake, and for the love you owe to all that are dear to you in England, I beseech of you to relinquish, at least for the present, your design. Get married at once, and settle down quietly and industriously to work, either at Tiverton or in London, and I will assist in the furnishing of a house for you and Clara."

Frederick made no satisfactory reply.

On the second evening after he had come home, Charlie Holstrom, having heard of his return, called to see him.

"A thousand welcomes back, old lad," exclaimed H., heartily shaking the hand of his old associate. "Why, my dear fellow, I've come over to bid you good bye, as I heard to-day that you are going to the Cannibal Islands."

Mr. Charlston and the others laughed heartily at the expression.

"It is only to Canada that I intend to ship myself," replied Frederick somewhat shyly.

"Worse, and worse!" retorted H. "Why, what do you expect to get there?"

"Get a farm for nothing, and make a fortune in five years," said Frederick.

"If the farm is to be given away for nothing I may venture to say, *it will be worth nothing*," replied H., and continued, "I had an acquaintance who went to Canada a few years ago with £500; and having lived three years upon one of those 'nothing farms' or rather, living upon his money during that time, he returned to England utterly worth *nothing*. Why, Fred! such farms may be suitable enough for men of iron muscles and wooden stomachs, and who can work whether they eat or not;--men who have nothing to lose except their life, and would even sacrifice that for a small amount. But for either you or I to go there in search of a living, or anything else, except death and horror, would be worse for us than hanging; it would eventually result in strangulation by starvation. And besides, as my acquaintance informed me, the woods are infested with wild animals; and if a fellow attempted to venture out at night very possibly his carcass would be very soon deposited in the inside of a dozen of wolves. He further told me that the trees during summer rained down myriads of mosquitoes as large as beetles, with stings like hornets and in the shape of a tube, by which means a dozen of them could suck up a fellow's blood in a night; and were by far a greater plague than the grasshoppers of Egypt. To prevent them from settling upon himself he covered his head and neck with a mask made from deer-skin, in which he cut holes to inhale air and see through; but despite of such precautions they would sometimes force their way through these orifices, and one dart, said he, into a fellow's eye was sufficient to cause a myriad of stars to fly from his winker."

"Well, but that is really horrifying," exclaimed Mrs. Charlston.

"Awful, awful!" shouted Amelia.

"'Tis really so indeed," added Eliza.

"Oh! it is all bosh," ejaculated Fred.

"*Bosh!* d'ye say!" exclaimed H. "Indeed, I have only told you the least objectionable part. I assure you, he related things that would make a

fellow's blood to curdle into vinegar, and perspire from every pore of the body. I credit everything he told me, for his word is as much to be depended upon as the 'Law of Moses.'"

"That'll do for the present," said Amelia.

"Go on," cried George.

"What did he say about the climate?" inquired Mr. C.

"He told me, sir, that it was so hot during the dog-days in summer, that the people had to lie upon deer-skins filled with water to prevent their bodies from being totally dissolved into vapor, and, that at the end of that terrible season they appeared only as living skeletons, as slender, indeed, as to be incapable of producing even a shadow."

"Oh! but that is awfully horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. C. Mr. Charlston and George laughed heartily. The girls shrugged up their shoulders, expressive of nervous twitchings.

"And in winter," continued H., "it is so intensely cold that every river to its foundation is frozen into ice. It snows sometimes for weeks without ceasing; it is then generally followed by fierce winds which drift the snow into heaps like mountains, frequently burying houses and their inhabitants a hundred feet deep."

"Horrible! horrible!" ejaculated Mrs. C.

"The air is sometimes so intensely cold that the mercury in the thermometer is congealed into ice at 150 degrees below zero; and it frequently occurs during those frosty periods that travellers, with their horses and vehicles, are found petrified into ice, so hard that they never can be thawed out again. Hundreds of such groups are preserved in the Canadian museums, and shown as curiosities to foreign travellers."

"Oh! Charlie, for pity's sake, don't horrify us so!" shouted Mrs. C.

"Do stop, Charlie, you'll frighten us to death," exclaimed the girls,

fearfully excited.

Mr. Charlston and George laughed heartily. Fred muttered out something condemnatory; while George cried out, "Go on Charlie, tell the whole story."

"I haven't told you the one-half yet; but this will do for the present;--only I might merely add,--that if Fred goes out for a free-farm he will get a free wife into the bargain. The forests are infested with a more dangerous class of animals than wolves. They are savages in human shape, and are designated by the name of Indians. Every foreigner who takes a farm is compelled to take a young squaw--a she Indian--as a wife to himself. The males in return kidnap white women for themselves; but should a man refuse to comply with their wishes, he is immediately seized upon by those savages and flayed at once. His skin is afterwards tanned, and made into tobacco-pouches. These are sold to traders and imported to England. What say you, Fred, to this? Should you go to Canada, I may yet have a pouch made out of your pelt. So good night to all," ejaculated Holstrom, and abruptly made his exit, amidst an uproar of exclamations and laughter.

CHAPTER III.

Perhaps many of my readers may think that I have thrown in the statements of Charles Holstrom as a sort of burlesque upon Canada. Such is not the case on my part. I have given expression to nothing more than the opinion held by too many persons throughout Great Britain respecting this country. Indeed, there are hundreds in England alone, who are not aware of the existence of such a place; and thousands there are who know of nothing authentic concerning Canada except the name. I speak not from hearsay alone; I can personally substantiate these facts.

Since the Confederation of these Provinces in 1867, Canada has become better known in England through the means of lecturers and emigration-agents sent thither by the Dominion Government. But, in some cases, men have been appointed as lecturers who were not really

possessed of any personal experience and practical knowledge of Canada beyond the limits of the city or town in which they had lived. Such men, in order to make the country and themselves popular, drew highly colored pictures of the New Dominion, extolling its inexhaustible physical resources, its mercantile and manufacturing advantages, its railway and river facilities, its millions of acres of new land in the shape of farms to be given away gratis to all who agreed to become settlers,--together with a thousand of other attractions, augmented 100 per cent. Such lectures were generally delivered in manufacturing towns and the great centres of population. There is always in every audience a number whose minds are rendered pliable by the speaker's tongue, particularly if their own interests are involved.

Such was generally the case at these lectures. Clerks, young professionals, and mechanics, including silk and carpet spinners and weavers would become thus unhinged from their long accustomed stand-post, and perchance, for the first time, begin to prospect their future beyond the limits of their own town, at the same time wondering what on earth had induced them to live fools so long. By these means a vast number of Englishmen during the past few years, have been persuaded to emigrate to Canada. The hardier class, comparatively few in number, flocked into the agricultural and forest districts, to hew out a home for themselves; while the more sensitive struck a bee-line to the cities, to procure easy and genteel employment at excellent wages. But in so doing the hopes of many were suddenly frustrated. Shops and counting-houses were literally crammed with employees; in fact, every genteel situation had its quota. Silk-lace and carpet weaving had scarcely a nominal existence. Every town, village, and city had more professional men than could get a comfortable livelihood. The characteristics of the country and its people appeared to them extremely coarse and terribly *'orrifying'*. Wages, they said, were no better than those in England. Many who could have got employment preferred travelling the country over in search of higher wages. Some, however, went manfully to work at once. Others preferred boarding at a hotel, living idle upon their stock of funds, waiting patiently for something upon the wheel of fortune to turn up profitably to their own interests, and every morning eagerly peering over the "*want advertisements*" of

the *Globe* and *Witness*, perhaps for months, until their means became considerably exhausted; and eventually taking a hurried departure to the *States*, or perchance returning home, utterly disgusted with Canada and everything connected with it, and carrying in their minds pictures of the country delineated in the darkest colors.

We now return to our story. Frederick on his return from Tiverton went immediately to see Clara and the child. When he had made known his design she felt awfully chagrined at the idea of his intended "foolish adventure," as she termed it, and also sadly disappointed when she discovered that all those airy fabrications she had been building up during the winter were beginning to fall.

"Why, Frederick, what do you really mean by all this?" she exclaimed. "Do you intend leaving me unmarried and unprovided for, with my child, to fret out a lonely, miserable existence in your absence?"

"Oh! I shall return in a few months to take you and the child to a happy home in Canada."

"Ah, Frederick; why again tantalize me with your promises, and false prospects. Where, I ask you, is the happy home you promised me at Tiverton? Where is the matrimonial title you promised to honor me with? Ah! Fred! Consider for a moment, what you have done and what you are now doing. By your insinuating love you riveted my affection to your heart. It still continues unbroken and as tenacious as ever. You flattered me with honied words. You excited me with false hopes. My confidence, yea, my very self I rendered submissively to your honor. But, alas! the very prospects you reared for my delight you are now trampling beneath your feet. Am I to be left with my little child, to struggle alone against the adversities of this world, while the finger of scorn is directed toward me, and also toward my child, whose innocence will neither soften the harshness of the world's tongue nor justify the errors of those who gave to it an existence."

"Why, Clara," exclaimed Fred somewhat irritated, "you are really sarcastic and condemnatory in your remarks. Is this the sort of complimentary welcome I receive from you at my return? If so, I shall

have to shorten my visit."

"Well, Fred, consider the matter judiciously, and you will not think me unreasonable in my accusations," replied Clara.

"Pooh, pooh," retorted Fred, "never allow your imagination to soar higher than your reason; curb down the irritable nerves of your temper; turn the dark side of life's picture towards the past, and keep always the bright side uppermost."

"It is easier said than done," she replied. "Had you rendered me the assistance in reality instead of broken promises, I might have been looking to-day upon the bright side of life."

"For goodness sake, Clara, do not tantalize me so unmercifully. I tell you that I have decided upon going to Canada, *and I shall go*. That country offers advantages unknown to England. Better hazard an adventure than remain forever riveted to hard labor here, and then die at last in the harness. Were I to marry you now I have no home but my father's to which I could remove you; better then to remain where you are, unmarried, than otherwise, for, I feel certain that Collins would turn you out as soon as he had discovered that I had both married and left you. But let me tell you but once and forever that I intend to become a husband to you as soon as I can find it convenient to procure a comfortable home."

"The old story again," ejaculated Clara, "and let me tell you, Fred, that if you go to Canada you will never make your circumstances convenient to fulfil your promise--no, never, never, Fred."

"I don't want to hear any more of such botheration," retorted Fred, irritably; and springing up from his seat, made his exit abruptly, leaving Clara to sigh out alone the sorrows of her heart in the solitude of her own reflections.

Mr. Collins, as I said before was a man possessed of a degraded nature, being much addicted to intemperance. Widow Hazledon had married him after a brief acquaintance. She had felt the necessity of a fatherly

assistance and protection in the rearing of her young family; but in Collins she discovered when too late that she had mistaken his character. She, however, continued to make the best of a bad bargain. He was a carver by trade, and commanded good wages; but every Saturday night, he got drunk. His Sabbaths were generally devoted to the worship of Bacchus. Sometimes he would continue drinking for several days, until every penny was exhausted. Then he would make demands at home for more money, which if refused, he was sure to abuse his wife and family. He was not only a drunkard; he was a scoffer at religion, and considered it a mark of honor to take the name of God in vain.

On the following day after Frederick's interview with Clara, Collins came home partly intoxicated, and demanded more money to help him, as he said, to finish off a spree with an old comrade whom he had not seen for several years. Mrs. Collins expostulated with him, but to no purpose. He became, at length, exasperated, and threatened to turn them all out upon the street, and burn the house down. Clara attempted to pacify him, which only made him the more outrageous. He swore every oath imaginable at her, insolently ordering her to be off with her child, and find lodgings with the villain to whom she had prostituted herself, or else he would soon pitch her and her little bratling into the Thames.

"Here, Tom, take this, 'tis the last shilling I have in the house. Now, dear Tom, like a good husband, keep quiet, and don't abuse Clara and me so much as you do," said Mrs. Collins with a pitiable sort of tone, the tears trickling down her grief furrowed cheeks.

"Well, Annie, but you're a good sort of wife after all," replied Collins, in a somewhat subdued tone. "As for Clara, I like her well enough! but I have resolved that I shall not labor any longer to support the child of that blackguard of a fellow, who, as I have been informed, has absconded to Canada. I hate him, and I detest his child--the dirty, yelping thing that it is. If it is not instantly removed from here, I shall make short work of it to-night on my return. *Mark my words, Clara*," he emphatically added, and putting the shilling into his pocket he

departed, leaving them to consider seriously over the matter.

As soon as he had gone Clara and her mother began talking over the affair, premeditating what they should do with the child. They felt suspicious of the threats made by Collins, who, it appears, for several weeks past, had used somewhat coarse language to Clara, especially since he had discovered that there was no immediate prospect of her removal.

While thus suggesting what was best to be done a rap was heard upon the door; and in the course of a few seconds Mrs. Charlston and her two eldest daughters entered. They had come on a visit to spend the afternoon and have a friendly conversation; but their object was more particularly to find out if Frederick had made known to Clara what his intentions really were, as he had given them no decided answer at home. Mrs. Collins and Clara were delighted to see them, but more especially on that occasion, as it afforded a sort of relief to their dejected hearts, and perhaps be the means of suggesting the best expedient for the adjustment of their condition under the present circumstances. Tea was being prepared, and a pleasant conversation was entered into. After having digested Fred's Canadian-bubble-scheme, as Mrs. Charlston termed it, the unhappy affair that had occured was made known by Mrs. Collins. She expressed herself, that she did not really know what to do with the child, as Collins would most assuredly put his threat into execution.

"Oh! that's easily settled," exclaimed Mrs. Charlston. "The child is now nearly eight months old; it is time it was weaned--so it will serve both purposes to send it up to our house. I assure you I will be happy to take it into my charge; and Clara can come to see it as often as she can find it convenient."

"Oh, yes, ma,--that is delightful," exclaimed Eliza.

"Yes, ma, we'll take the dear little darling along with us," said Amelia, embracing the infant more lovingly, and imprinting a kiss tenderly upon its smiling lips.

"O, but, perhaps, it will be too much trouble and inconvenience for you," said Clara.

"Not in the least, I'm sure Mr. Charlston will be perfectly delighted with the child," replied Mrs. Charlston.

"It will, perhaps, put him in remembrance of old times," said Mrs. Collins.

"Yes, and perhaps make him conceited enough to fancy himself twenty years younger than he really is," added Mrs. Charlston.

"O, yes, I'm sure pa will be infinitely happy," exclaimed Eliza.

"Yes, and so will Fred," added Amelia with a sly wink.

It was, therefore, agreed upon that little Richard, for so he was named, should go to his new home that very evening. Tea being over, he was dressed in his best clothes. A couple of carpet bags were filled with other necessary articles. All things being in readiness Mrs. Charlston and her daughters took their departure, accompanied with Clara and the child.

When they arrived home Mr. Charlston and the others of his family were at tea, Mrs. C. entered carrying Richard in her arms, followed by the others.

"Look here, old lad, and guess what I have got, as a present for my good behavior this afternoon," exclaimed Mrs. Charlston.

"Only a baby," said Mr. C. "You seem as much excited as if you had found a purse of gold."

"Just look at the sweet, little, silvery-mouthed hazle-eyed, rosy-cheeked cherub," said Mrs. C.

'"Tis little Richard, I declare," shouted Charlotte, springing forth to see him. "What a sweet little fellow he is. Just come, pa, and see the little darling." "O, Fred come and see him, he is your very picture, what a

dear lovely angel he is," &c.

After the excitement had abated, they all removed to the sitting-room. Every one had to kiss and fondle little Richard; and even Frederick, whose heart had become softened by the touch of tender humanity, took the child into his arms, and with a parent's affection bestowed a dozen of fond kisses upon its ruby lips, feeling at the same time as if he could have similarly complimented Clara, as an expression of his affection, and a recompense for the abrupt manner in which he had treated her at their previous interview. Mrs. Charlston then told them that Richard had come to stay with them until he was weaned. Mr. Charlston felt apparently well pleased with the idea; it seemed to him as a happy acquisition to his household.

Clara at length prepared herself to depart, and before leaving bestowed a dozen of fond kisses on the dear little fellow, and with a lingering look bade them all good night, promising to return on the following evening.

Frederick put on his hat and quietly followed her to the door, and in a sort of undertone interrogated, "May I have the pleasure of seeing you home to-night, Clara?"

"If you please," she replied. Fred very courteously complied therewith. The character of their conversation on the way that night may be guessed from the fact, that Fred and Clara became more lovingly attached to each other than ever they had been.

Next day Fred hurried away to the house of his old master; and on the following morning was at his former place as a journeyman and an associate of his old companion and fellow-workman, Charles Holstrom. Clara also found immediate employment. The Charlstons were once more rendered happy at seeing Fred so spirited and reconciled; and also the presence of little Richard gave a relish to their happiness.

Even old Collins was so well pleased with the change of affairs in his own household that he gave expression to his joyous feelings by getting pleasantly drunk every day for a whole week.

The beautiful days of summer glided smoothly along. The nights were calm and refreshing. Under the exhilarating rays of the evening moonlight, Fred and Clara frequently strolled out pleasantly together. Feelings were reciprocated. Ideas of future prospects towered higher than the moon. A happy home, brightened by the golden beams of the honeymoon was seen peeping through the sylvan avenues of imagination. A few months, perchance only a few weeks had only to pass by, and their souls were to be pressed so closely together by the legal stamp of matrimony that nothing but the chisel of death could be able to separate them.

What a delightful picture of future life is often sketched by the artistic fancy of the soul. What beautiful delineations of all that is exquisitely pleasing and profitable! The scenes are of the grandest descriptions: the coloring, of the richest hues, admirably shaded and intermingled. Even the darkest spots are glistening by the surrounding beauty. All appears as an enchanted dream; a glimpse of fairyland, or as a primeval paradise modernized, and rendered suitable in every part to gratify the desires of the mind.

But, alas! too frequently these prospects of ideality are built only upon corner pillars, and tower to so great an altitude above their slender bases, that their summits, like the top of Babel become mystified by the clouds; and when the first storm of adversity, or the breath of insidious circumstances are blown against them, they totter, and eventually fall crashing to the earth, and lie scattered in shapeless ruins around their basis.

But, perhaps, it is cruel to predict, or even to suggest, such ruinous consequences to the moonlit dreams of that happy pair. Time alone can unfold the mysterious realities of life. I will, therefore, pursue the windings of their course, and note down the various incidents and events as they are struck out, like the sparks from the heated iron under the blacksmith's hammer.

CHAPTER IV.

We now come to that eventful evening referred to in chapter first, of which a part of the proceedings is described. We shall now continue our narration, and make known the consequences of that unfortunate meeting.

No sooner had Clara departed from the house of Mr. Charlston than Frederick, from some impulsive motive, glided out of the room; and having hastily disguised himself in his father's great coat, hat and muffler, hurried out, and followed in pursuit of Clara. In the vicinity of the house at which she had left her acquaintance, he observed a young man sauntering around. This person Fred discovered to be none other than Charles Holstrom. So passing hurriedly onward without being recognized he crossed over at the first corner to the other side of the street and walked back. When nearly opposite the house referred to the door opened and a young woman, alone, whom he knew to be Clara, came out. She hurried forward only a few steps when Holstrom wheeled around and addressed her; and having received her hand on his arm they glided hastily along the street. Frederick was startled at the reality. His blood flooded in tidal waves to his heart. His nerves quivered. His soul became exasperated. He inwardly threatened immediate violence to both parties. But having hastily checked the outpourings of his resentment he secretly followed them, yet still breathing volumes of deprecations which rose in steaming vapor from his phrenzied brain.

"Can it be possible?" he soliloquised, "that Clara has been practising deception upon my faithful affection? I have discovered when too late that she has flattered my fond heart with her insidious wiles. I loved her once, I despise her now. She has got rid of her child, and she is now trying to dispose of me also. Ah! the syren that she is! No longer shall I breathe her name but with feelings of hatred and disgust. Ah! that villain too, who is leading her headlong to her own ruin! I hate him also. His affection towards me as a friend and companion has only served as a mantle to cover his deceitful heart. He is a serpent more subtle and venomous than that which entered the Garden of Eden. Ah! the vile wretch that he is! The deed is too base to forgive. I spurn the debased villain. I shall humble his proud heart. I shall crush him to the earth. I

shall have revenge upon his guilty head. Revenge, revenge I must have!"

In this excited state of feelings poor Frederick followed them unperceived to the very doorsteps of her home. His impulses had made him recklessly desperate. His savage nature was aroused. He was, indeed, no longer himself. Like a wild beast he was ready to spring upon them, and would have done so had not the uprisings of his moral nature suggested to him not to do so.

He heard for a while the lively chit-chat within--the humorous joke--the joy-excited laughter, all of which only aroused his indignation to greater fierceness. But at that moment, when ready to put his threats into execution the right hand of his soul arrested suddenly the uplifted weapon of his evil heart. He wheeled about as if it were instinctively, fled from the house, and directed his course homeward with hasty steps.

Having quietly slipped himself into his bedroom he retired to his couch; but there was no rest there for his unhappy soul, which, even during a few moments of slumber was distracted with dreams of the most hideous character imaginable.

Next morning Fred was not astir as usual. His mother, at length, dreading increased illness as the cause, entered his room. Fred looked up with a woe-begone countenance, which of itself was sufficient to verify her apprehensions.

"Are you worse, Fred?" his mother interrogated. "I don't feel quite as well, mother," he replied.

"Ah, Fred, I thought you would get more cold by going out last evening," said she. "Why Fred, my son, you are quite feverish," she exclaimed resting her hand upon his forehead. "I shall get father to go for Dr. Guernsey immediately."

"Mother, I beg of you not to do so, my throat is not worse. The want of sufficient sleep last night has had a tendency to make me feel debilated.

Rather bring me a cup of coffee than send for the doctor."

Mrs. Charlston at once hurried to the kitchen and told Amelia to prepare a strong cup of coffee and a slice of toast as quickly as possible. Shortly afterwards Mrs. C. entered Frederick's room with the coffee and toast, followed by his father and sisters.

Fred strengthened himself for the occasion. He rose up on the bed quite vigorously, and took breakfast with an apparently good appetite. His mother having cooled his face with a wet towel he laid himself down to repose, and the others withdrew from the room. Ere long the tender finger of nature closed his weary eyelids, and during nearly all the rest of the day poor Fred lay calmly enlocked in the arms of sleep.

On the following morning Fred was considerably better, and continued in a convalescent state.

However, he kept himself closely confined to his room for several days. On the second evening Clara called to see the child; and on the following, Charlie also made a visit, as he said, to see Fred; but neither of them saw him as his room-door was locked, and he was supposed to be fast asleep. In less than a week afterwards Clara again called. Fred was in the sitting-room when she entered; but, on seeing her, he instantly sprang from his seat, and without opening his lips, abruptly left the room.

Clara at once discovered in his appearance and actions that something of a serious nature had effected these results. However, she endeavored as well as she could to restrain her feelings. The others of the family also noticed the abrupt mariner in which Fred absconded; but excused his doing so by attributing it to the bashfulness of his bad looks rendered so by his illness.

"Why, Fred," said Eliza after Clara was gone, "what caused you to make such a runaway as that?"

"Why, Fred," cried Amelia, "you sprang up as if you had been startled by a shock of electricity?"

"I thought, Fred," exclaimed Charlotte, "was going to play 'hide-and-go-seek', with Clara, when I saw him jump up and run off so fast."

"Perhaps he intended that to be the play," said Mrs. Charlston, with a sly wink looking to Fred.

"Ah, the deceiver that she is!" exclaimed Fred irritably. "She is a vile woman."

"Why, Fred, Fred, why all this! are you really going mad?"

"No, mother, I am not mad, although I have been bitten deeply enough to have made me as mad as a raving maniac."

"Why, Fred," said she, "do tell us what is the matter with you then--the why and wherefore also."

"Well, mother, had you not asked of me to do so I would not of my own accord; but since you demand an explanation, I will give you my reasons, and then leave you to judge seriously whether I have acted right or wrong."

Fred then related all that he had seen and heard respecting Clara and Charlie Holstrom.

"But are you sure 'twas really them?" said his mother, when he had finished telling them.

"Mother, do you for a moment attempt to doubt my word?" exclaimed Fred.

"My dear son, I do not; but I thought you might be mistaken in them, especially at night. However, the next time that Clara comes here, I will question her plainly about it. I shall then hear her version of the story, and will be enabled to judge more correctly. If I find out that she has been keeping company with Charlie I shall forbid her to enter my house again."

"Do as you please, mother; but I have resolved never to speak to her again," said Fred, and walked off to his room, leaving his mother and sisters to talk over the matter.

On the third evening afterwards Clara made her appearance at Mr. Charlston's. After the usual preliminaries of courtesy were disposed of, Mrs. C. requested Clara to walk into the library room as she desired to speak a few minutes to her, alone. Fred had snugly enclosed himself in his bed-chamber. The others of the family were in the parlor.

Having seated themselves Mrs. Charlston addressed Clara, and related all the particulars she knew relative to the unfortunate circumstances alluded to.

"My dear Mrs. Charlston," exclaimed Clara, excitedly, "since I have patiently listened to your narration, will you now, as a favor I ask, have patience until I render an explanation?"

"By all means I shall," replied Mrs. C.

"But before that I do so," said Clara, "I desire that Fred should be present."

"That is impossible to-night," replied Mrs. C. "I shall, however, find an opportunity of bringing the matter before Fred, in the manner in which you represent it."

"On that unfortunate night, as I may term it," said Clara, "I left home accompanied with Emma Harrison, an acquaintance of my own, and came here, as usual, to see my child. When we had come as far as Mrs. Josleyn's, she said to me, 'I have to call here, so you had better go on to Charlston's, and you can call for me on your return.' I agreed therewith,--and on my way home stepped in for Emma; but Mrs. Josleyn informed me that she had gone out with her own daughters to spend the evening with an acquaintance; and, perhaps, added she, they may not return for an hour or two. Unwilling to wait so long I took my departure; but had not gone far when Charlie Holstrom stepped forth, and requested the privilege of seeing me home. The night being dark,

and somewhat unpleasant for a woman to be out alone I embraced the opportunity, and with him went directly home. After having chatted a short time with us all he left the house and I have not seen him since. I knew not that the jealous eyes of Fred were staring upon us that night. He was able to follow me, why was he not also able to accompany me home?

"For years my fond heart has invariably responded to his own; and I have done nothing to either insult his honor or tarnish the fidelity of my affection for him. He has falsely accused me. He has treated me disrespectfully; and now manifests a determination to dissolve our union. Since the moment that I yielded up the chastity of my affection to his desires he has treated me too frequently with indifference. He promised to rectify, or, rather, ameliorate the error we committed, by an immediate union for life. His promises at intervals were again and again repeated; and when I suggested the adequate necessity of having them fulfilled he treated me with contempt. Where, I ask, is the happy home he promised me at Tiverton. Where, also, are the half dozen of homes he has since reared for me in London. He also promised me a home in Canada; an unjustifiable plea, as I may term it, to smoothe down his intention of deserting me and my dear child, leaving us to be subjected to the biting scorn of the uncharitable world, and without even the nominal existence of a home that we could call our own. Again, the evil spirit of his soul has been aroused from its lair; and without a reasonable cause he pierces the very nerves of my affections with the stings of a jealous heart. A soul so sensitive as mine feels deeply the wounds he has afflicted. *Oh! unfortunate woman that I am! Wherefore am I consigned to the torments of impending fate.* Have I committed crimes so incurable that there is no remedy for them! My heart is ready to burst! I shall die under the horror of my calamity! Oh! merciful heavens, have pity upon me!--*poor wretched creature that I am.*

"Oh! Mrs. Charlston what shall I do? What shall I do?" she hysterically exclaimed, the tears gushing out from her eyes.

"My dear Clara," ejaculated Mrs. Charlston, grasping her affectionately

by the hand, tears dimming her eyes also, "I shall have pity upon you; and although your friends should become enemies to you, I shall adhere to you, my dear child, like an affectionate mother and a faithful friend."

"Thank you, thank you," exclaimed Clara, "but my heart is unable to express its gratitude."

"Try to compose your feelings, my dear, with the assurance I have given you of my fidelity."

"Yes, my dearest of friends, I shall endeavor to do so," said Clara.

Then grasping each other more firmly and affectionately by the hand they sat together until they had sobbed out the sorrowful uprisings of their hearts.

CHAPTER V.

On the following morning, Mrs. Charlston found an opportunity of speaking privately to Fred about the unfortunate affair. She told him all that Clara had said, at the same time endeavoring to make as favorable impression in her behalf as the circumstances of the case would allow; and also earnestly beseeching him to come into good terms at once with Clara.

"*Never! never!*" ejaculated Fred.

"Why should you talk so determinately, Fred, I'm sure that Clara has given sufficient reasons to justify the circumstances of an unpremeditated act, apparently so innocent, as to be undeserving of censure."

"Were it only the first innocent act, as you consider it, I would not have attached any importance to it," said he.

"Have you really been made aware of a previous intercourse between Charles and Clara?"

"Why, yes, I have heard of it a dozen times--I was informed by letter when at Tiverton that Clara was flirting with Charlie, or as the writer expressed it: 'In your absence your old friend, Charlie Holstrom, is playing at "*catch the beau*" with your affectionate Clara.'"

"Now Fred, you must tell me who was the writer of that letter."

"It was Harry Walton."

"I just thought so. I'm sure, Fred, you are aware that Harry is noted for manufacturing falsehoods. If you believe him you are the only person in London who does so."

"But I have heard it from others, and they cannot all be liars. There is Mrs. Tennyson, for instance, an old respected friend of your own. One day she hinted sufficient to make me feel suspicious. Fernando Jones squirted a few dry jokes in that way. Sylvester Kennelworth termed me a hen-pecked bachelor. Even Julia Marks, Sylvina Oldham, and Sarah Silverstone bothered me almost to death one evening recently about Clara's intention of presenting me shortly with a 'ticket of leave.'"

"Wherefore, dear Fred, would you for even one moment direct your attention to the malicious falsehoods of such idle gossips as those you have referred to. They are a thousand times worse than the starving thieves that lurk around the dark lanes of the city, who steal only what is practically useful to themselves; while those others go about robbing the youthful and virtuous of their reputation, scattering the seeds of dissension, and fluttering in the sunshine of their folly like butterflies tasting of the sweets of every flower, but collecting no honey, therefore, my son, discard the venom of such villainous tongues."

"My confidence in Clara was so deep rooted that even all that I heard had scarcely any effect; but when I beheld personally that night their manner and appearance, and considered the coincident circumstances connected therewith, all that I had previously heard came rushing in upon my soul like an overwhelming flood and swallowed up every ounce of love that was in my heart."

"But I wish you to have an interview with Clara the next time she comes; it will restore the affection you have lost."

"It never will; nor do I desire to see her. I feel certain that she has been duping me with the flattery of a false affection, and then laughing at my simplicity in my absence. Even Charlie's actions towards me of late have also led me to feel suspicious of him. But my eyes are now awakened to the fact, therefore, I will never again speak to Clara, nor have anything whatever to do with her."

"Oh! Fred, you are too hasty in your assertions. Remember, my dear son, the circumstances and associations by which you are morally bound to each other. Remember the vows which you have consecrated upon the altar of your heart. Remember the condition to which you have brought her by your folly. Bear in mind that if you forsake her under the present circumstances that an indelible stain will remain for ever upon your character; but above all, my dear son, remember the link which binds you inevitably together,--a link of living humanity, akin to you both. Remember then that you are a father, and that she is a mother,--titles that were conferred upon you both by the birth of that little angel who now sheds a radiance over our household by his endearing presence. Then think of him, think of what I say, and you will outlive your imaginary ills and all the jealous flickerings of your heart; therefore, I again ask you, Fred, to comply with my request."

"I tell you again, mother, that I cannot. You need not think you can bait me with honied words. The insidious bee that fluttered around the flowers of my once happy affections has left its sting-wound within my heart."

"But love is its own physician. It alone can cure the ills it makes."

"But where there is no mutual love in the heart the wound is incurable."

"Why, Fred! do you for a moment doubt the veracity of Clara's love for you?"

"She has fooled me," he exclaimed. "She has forsaken me. She has

made me reckless and desperate. I have ceased to love. I hate society. I even despise my very self. I shall seek for happiness in foreign lands as a substitute for what I have lost. I have decided upon going to Canada."

"Are you again really determined to leave us, Fred?"

"Yes, mother, I am more than determined. I am ready to leave to-morrow if I choose to go."

"If you go, my son, you will go against the wishes of your parents and every relative you have; and if you go in such a manner and under the present circumstances you cannot carry along with you '*a mother's blessing*'."

"I don't care!" replied Fred haughtily. "Mother, you have no love for me. You have vindicated the guilty actions of Clara in opposition to my opinions. You have tantalised my soul by so doing. I shall no longer bear the insults, you heap upon me,"--and therewith Fred arose and made his exit abruptly from the room.

It appears that for several weeks past Fred had been ruminating upon going to Canada, reviving as it were his former intentions. His sore throat had originated from sudden exposure to the raw air of night on coming out from a crowded hall where he had been listening to a highly-colored lecture upon Canada and the Clerkenwell-Emigration-Scheme. The recent occurrence had made him still more determined, and also, afforded, as he considered, a sufficient plea to justify his purpose. That same evening, immediately after tea, his father being made aware of the design, took him aside and began to expostulate with him.

"Father, I have determined upon leaving and therefore your influence can have no effect," exclaimed Fred.

"But remember, my son, that text of Scripture which saith, 'Children obey your parents in all things.'"

"And let me add," cried Fred, "the following, from the same author,

'Fathers provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged.'"

"Ah, Fred! that sentence is not applicable to my case. As a duty of parental affection I only counsel you for your own good. Remember, my son, what Solomon says: 'A fool despiseth his father's instructions, but he who regardeth reproof is prudent. Correction is grievous to him who forsaketh the way, and he who hateth reproof *shall die*.'"

"I am no *fool*," ejaculated Fred, "I am of age. I shall, therefore, do as I please."

"Ah! Fred, Fred, I'm afraid your conduct will yet bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Perchance you may yet remember my words in a foreign land, without a kind friend to pity you in your distress. Ah, Fred! I hope, however, that you will not play the prodigal. Let me, therefore, read you the 15th chapter of Luke."

Without replying Fred abruptly left the room before his father had time to bring forth the Bible.

"Well, well, but this is really annoying," said Fred to himself after he had gone to his room. "Do they think that I have no mind of my own; so that I am to be mechanically guided by theirs. They favor Clara, and disrespect me because I do not favor her also. They say she loves me; if she does, my absence will test it. However, I will not allow myself to be treated as a captive. I shall and must have liberty, or else I die. I shall leave London this very night. I shall leave without shedding a tear or bidding a friend good bye. They will perhaps learn to love me better when I am gone." So saying, he began to prepare. Having filled two large carpet bags with such articles as were most necessary he moved quietly out of the house and by a back stairway reached the street. Having placed himself in a Hansom-cab stationed near by he was quickly conveyed to the station and in time for the night train to Liverpool.

On the following morning he embarked upon the Moravian, belonging to the Allan Line of Steamships, plying at that time of the season between Liverpool and Portland, in Maine, U.S.

The steam is up; anchors are weighed; and the vessel is soon riding out from the harbor towards mid-ocean. Although the air is cold, the deck is crowded with persons, among whom is Frederick Charlston, viewing the receding objects, and at length taking their farewell view of the dimly distant shores of their native land.

Day passed,--and the shadows of the night came down. The vessel was dashing over the foaming billows. The winds were whistling dolefully amid the sails. A feeling of loneliness crept over the soul of poor Fred, and he retired to his hammock. Visions of the past and future floated across his mind, and under the poetic mantle of inspiration he gave vent to his feelings in the following verses:

Farewell to thee, England, the land of my birth, The dearest, the fairest of countries on earth, I love thee, yet leave thee, perhaps to deplore, Alas, it may be to behold thee no more.

If at home I've a friend, yet true friends are but few, In duty to friendship I breathe him adieu, But joy to this bosom no friends can restore. I love them, yet leave them, I may see them no more.

Old London, farewell,--my birth-place and home, Far distant from thee I am destined to roam, On the home I once loved a fond wish too I'll pour, Tho' its household and hearth I may visit no more.

Sweet child of my love! Ah! the thought breaks my heart, To know that thy mother hath caused us to part, I love thee, yet leave thee, nor can she restore A joy to this soul that may see thee no more.

To the land of the stranger I go--yes--I go, In search of those blessings which it can bestow, Its forests, its lakes, I shall proudly explore, Far, far from that home I may visit no more.

Thus sang the young poet. But before morning had dawned upon the billows of the ocean all the poetic fancy that was flickering in his half-phrenzied brain was driven out by a serious attack of sea-sickness. His emanations were then of a much grosser sort of material than the etherial-essence of poetic sentiment. During three long and wearied

nights he continued in a most pitiable condition; his thoughts bewildered and fluctuating; at times, half regretting the course he had taken. The weather was tempestuous during the voyage; but, at length, in the afternoon of the twelfth day the vessel and all the passengers were safely landed at Portland. That evening Fred went on board the train for Montreal, but did not reach his destination until late in the afternoon of the second day, the journey having been prolonged by a severe snow storm. The cold was very intense. It was then that the words of Charles Holstrom occurred to his mind about the Canadian mountains of snow and the cold at 150 degrees of temperature below zero. He, however, arrived safely at Montreal, yet, cold, hungry and exhausted, and immediately engaged lodgings at the *St. James' Hotel*, where after a warm and hearty meal he soon experienced a more comfortable state of feelings.

Night's shadows had settled down over the fair city. The great bell of the cathedral of Notre Dame was scattering its solemn tones over the dim air. The city-lamps were sending forth their mellow radiance. Throngs of pedestrians were moving to and fro. Sleigh after sleigh was hurrying along, filled with joyous souls, and drawn by sprightly steeds dancing as if it were to the sounds of the merry-tinkling sleigh-bells. Fred looked out upon the gay panorama of Canadian city life. It was a new and attractive sight to him, and he felt an itching desire to try the novel experiment of taking a sleigh ride; but his spirit recoiled within itself when the fact was brought forcibly to his mind that it was "*Christmas' Night*." He thought of the many happy Christmas evenings which he had enjoyed amid the society of his friends in the good old city of London. A thousand associations flashed across his memory, filling his solitary mind with sadness and regrets. Around him everywhere he beheld gay crowds flickering with joyous excitement. More keenly than ever he then felt that he was only a stranger in a strange land, isolated from congenial society, and far removed from his friends and his once happy home. Conscience awakened his mind to the reality of his past folly, and his heart was wounded by its own stings. A heavy weight of sorrow pressed deeply upon his bosom. A deep sigh rolled out heavily upon his lips. Tears glistened in his eyes; and alas, poor Frederick Charlston again wished himself back to London.

CHAPTER VI.

The holidays having passed, Fred sought out and found immediate employment in Montreal. The sad impressions that were engraven upon his mind at first began and continued gradually to wear off. New friendships were formed. Things became more and more familiar to him, and at length he experienced a much happier state of mind. At first he purposed writing immediately to his friends in London, but after a few postponements, resolved not to do so, as he considered it would show an effeminency on his part, and that a few month's silence would perhaps season their affection for him.

Two of his fellow-workmen, who belonged to a company of volunteers, persuaded Fred to join their ranks. He was tolerably well acquainted with military discipline, having practically served in a company during his residence at Tiverton; and he had also studied considerably the tactics of war, therefore he found no difficulty in getting himself initiated as a Canadian volunteer; but in so doing it ultimately proved to be another unfortunate step. The circle of his acquaintances was thus increased tenfold. Military glory unfolded its social charms. Friendly meetings with jovial comrades became more frequent. The foaming glass sparkled brightly with fascination. Temptation unmasked itself. Again and again his companions of the evenings had recourse to expedients to induce him to drink with them. He was willing to pass an evening and smoke a cigar, but sternly refused to even moisten his lips with the poisonous liquid, which showed a manly independence in principle, a dignity of honor; and it would have been well for him had he always continued as invincible.

"I say, Fred, you must have something to drink with us to-night," said Billa Haveril one evening as Fred and a few of his comrades were walking along Craig Street. "Here's the '*Royal Arms*,' come in, boys--come in Fred, and I'll introduce you to Mr. Stone, a jolly good old Englishman. He knows how to warm up a fellow when the cold is 30 degrees below zero."

They entered, and became seated in a room adjoining the bar.

"Well, Fred, what's your choice," said Haveril.

"A glass of cold water," replied Fred.

"Horrible! horrible!" ejaculated Haveril. "Are you really going to commit an arctic outrage upon your sensibilities? That will never do if you intend living in Canada."

"Perhaps he wants to convert himself into an ice-house," exclaimed Harry Jenkins.

"Gentlemen," said Fred, "I previously informed you that I belong to the Sons of Temperance; you will therefore confer a favor by not pressing your kindness further upon me."

"Take it as a medicine, then; a glass will neither awaken your conscience nor injure your stomach," said Haveril.

"Do as St. Paul advised Timothy to do--take a little for your stomach's sake and your often infirmities," said Nichol Henderson.

"Come, Fred, *one glass* will never ruffle a feather in your conscience," said Ernest Stevens.

"Come, boys! tip up your bumpers!" exclaimed Haveril, and then singing aloud, followed by the others in chorus,

"*For Fred's a jolly good fellow*," &c.

Frederick having declined was again pressed to drink, to which he replied--"I am willing to condescend to the wishes of the company in which I may be placed; but when principle is at stake I must necessarily decline sacrificing my honor to the demands of others, even those of my best friends, as I am a pledge-bound total abstainer."

"Pooh! pooh!" ejaculated Jenkins, "that's enough of your sophisticated balderdash. Do you not know that a London pledge is not valid in Canada?"

"Why, what's the difference," exclaimed Fred, "the principle is the same throughout."

"Well, sir, the difference is just this," said Jenkins, "every country has its own laws, and every subject therein is commanded to obey them, and to do so only while he is a resident. The laws of the temperance cause are based upon the same principle."

"Philosophically speaking, you cannot assimilate them," replied Fred.

"Civil laws differ according to the government of a country, the characteristics of a people, their intellectual, moral and spiritual condition, etc. Whereas, the temperance cause, in its strictest sense, is everywhere identical, and its laws universal; the essence of which in the abstract is simply '*to abstain*' and '*to obey*.' But suppose, for the sake of argument, that you are right in your opinion, I ask then, is there sufficient reason in the act of having withdrawn myself from the country in which I took the pledge, to disannul my responsibility, when I have not withdrawn my name from the Society's list of membership. And again, I ask you, if I desire to remain a total abstainer, wherefore should I compel myself unnecessarily, in order to please others, to sacrifice my liberty to the 'king of evils,' even should I feel no longer bound to obey the laws of the Society."

"I say, Fred, for goodness' sake stop," exclaimed Sandie Johnstone, "or else you will sink us so deeply into the ruts of philosophy that our friends will never be able to discover us."

"Go on, Fred, go on, you're a brick," cried Haveril. "Give Jenkins another dig with your philosophical pick."

"Fair play," shouted Jenkins, "'tis my turn to bait the trap."

"Bait it with a bottle of brandy," cried Haveril, "and we'll see who'll bite at it first."

"If Jenkins wont, I'll bet you a dollar you will," ejaculated Johnstone.

"Yes, Haveril would bite at the very devil if his Satanical Majesty was filled to the teeth with brandy," exclaimed Jenkins, the others chorusing with a series of discordant laughs.

"Well, well, gentlemen," exclaimed Fred, "if you desire the continuance of my friendship, and if you wish to respect the dignity of morality and the English language, you must refrain from using such insinuating balderdash and bar-room-slang."

"You're right, Fred, stick to your subject and make them all your subjects," said Ernest Stevens.

"Why, Fred, if you would only take a gentle sipling of the nectar you would know how to appreciate and enjoy our company," said Henderson.

"True friendship and true happiness are based upon more *solid* material than *liquids*," replied Frederick.

"Well, Fred, as you are a sort of philosopher, allow me to ask you, if the true destiny of man, both here and hereafter, is not the enjoyment of life?" interrogated Henderson.

"Certainly, sir," replied Fred; "but I further believe that our Maker designed that man should use the proper means for the promotion of both terrestrial and celestial happiness."

"Our opinions are identical, then," exclaimed Henderson. "We are both of the same mind and yet cannot agree; and the reason is simply this--that I occasionally partake of a social glass with my friends as a means to awaken and promote enjoyment; whereas you teetotally reject the means. This delicious nectar sparkling before me has the inherent virtues of making me truly happy; I, therefore, use it for its medicinal qualities. So here is my best respects to you all, boys,--not forgetting you, Fred," added Henderson, raising the tumbler to his lips and draining the liquor to its very dregs.

"Ha! ha! ha!" ejaculated Jenkins, "I say, Fred, you are completely

cornered up, Henderson's as good a philosopher as yourself."

"That may be so," replied Fred, "but I wish you, and Henderson also, to bear in mind that reason may be twisted into sophistry. He must first prove the premises of his arguments to be correct, namely, 'that spirituous liquors are conducive to the happiness of mankind'--otherwise, the syllogism must be false. To attempt such an undertaking would be a more fool-hardy task than that of Hercules to carry the globe upon his back. My dear sir, you would soon find that the universal evidence of the world would be against you. The horrid shrieks of suffering humanity would denounce the falsity of your arguments, while myriads of skeletons would startle from their graves with horrid indignation!"

"Hold on, hold on, I say, Fred," shouted Henderson, "you are firing away your balls at random and never look at the target."

"I think he has made a good many bull-eyes in your head," exclaimed Stevens.

"Come, come, boys, we'll have a *horn* on the *head* of the subject," cried Jenkins.

"Yes, yes, that's the talk," responded some of the others.

"Hold on, hold on, gentlemen," exclaimed Henderson, slightly irritated. "I must have fair play in the game."

"By all means," said Fred, "I shall see that you shall."

"Well, sir," said H., "allow me to inform you, that in your arguments you deviated from the proposition I made, namely--that liquor as a means is conducive to human happiness. I mean the proper use of it; but you immediately darted off to the furthest extremity of the subject, and by a sort of superlative sophistry of your own, you attempted to conjure up a horrid array of evils arising from the abuse of that spiritual gift, which is the very essence of those cereals designed by the Author of Creation as the principal sustainer of animal life."

"You accuse me, sir, of doing injustice to your proposition, by representing the consequences of abusing that spiritual gift, as you very improperly term it," said Fred. "Your proposition, let me tell you, embraces only the germs; but I look forward to the fruits thereof. He would be but a very foolish farmer indeed, who would sow tares or imperfect seed for the mere pleasure of seeing his fields adorned with verdure, without looking forward to the consequences. Every good farmer anticipates an abundant harvest and accordingly sows the best seed. So should every man who desires to reap a harvest of happiness. He should look well to the seed, and sow only that which will eventually produce the best results. Again, you say that liquor when used in moderation, is a means of producing human happiness, and therefore should be used. I beg to differ with you; happiness arises not from the animal impulses of human nature stimulated by intoxicating liquor. Use it moderately you say. Alas, how many millions have been ruined forever by the taking of only one single glass at first, *only one glass*! Think of it! It is the magnet that attracts material akin to itself; alas, what a world of wretchedness and crime is reflected from that nucleus of Intemperance."

"Hold on, hold on, Fred," ejaculated Jenkins, "that'll do for the present."

"Go on, Fred, your illustrations are beautiful and impressive," cried Stevens, "go on, you are hitting the target at every shot."

"For goodness sake, Fred, do stop; or you will convert us all into a company of 'cold water-boys,'" cried Jenkins.

"Come! come, my lads," exclaimed Haveril, "we'll wind up for the present with a bumper of 'hot Scotch' and I'll pay for the drinks."

"Hot Scotch! hot Scotch!" shouted a half dozen of voices--and having partaken of a rousing bumper they called upon Fred to favor them with a song, to which he responded in the following Temperance Song, entitled "One Glass More."

Behold yon wretch at the tavern-bar: His matted hair hangs over his

brow; The manly form and the noble soul Are wrecked and lost in the drunkard now. He shivering stands in his dirty rags, With bloated face and his blood-shot eyes; With quivering lips and a fever'd breath For one glass more how he pleading cries.

Chorus.--O give me, sir, but a single glass; O pity me now when my cash is done; The night is cold and my blood runs chill, And all I ask is a single one.

Away from here, you miserable wretch; I want no more of your blubbering gas, Be off at once! or I'll kick you out; You'll get none here--not a single glass, What brought you here in your filthy rags, To disgrace my house in this drunken way. At once, begone! for you'll get no drink, No, not a glass, when you've nothing to pay.

Chorus.--O give me, sir, &c.

O, wherefore, sir, would you kick me out! Why so unjust to thy friend art thou; You gave me drink and you took my cash, You made me, sir, as you see me now. You scorn me too, as a drunken wretch, Debased and steep't in the dregs of sin; And when I ask but a single glass, You'll kick me out tho' you took me in.

Chorus.--O give me, sir, &c.

Thro' ten long years while I labored hard, You gave me drink, and you drain'd my purse, I was your friend, and your blessings then, Have proved at length but a demon's curse. My loving wife and my children dear, Have often sigh'd with a hungry soul, While I was here with my social friends And drinking deep from your mad'ning bowl.

Chorus.--O give me, sir, &c.

My health and youth I have wasted here; To thee, for drink, my money I gave; I'm now a wreck of what I was once, And sinking fast to a drunkard's grave; All wasted here in my reckless course, Which neither thou nor time can restore; Then pity me now for old friendship's sake, And give one glass and I'll ask no more.

Chorus.--"Begone from here, you miserable wretch!" The landlord cried, and he stamp't and swore, Then kick't him out to the cold night storm, And curs'd the wretch as he closed his door.

Frederick Charlston continued to step into a saloon occasionally to pass an evening with his comrades. Every expedient was tried to persuade him to taste with them; but with a manly spirit of independence he remained for several weeks invincible to their attacks. At length he was induced to take a tumbler with hot water, sweetened with sugar, and flavored with nutmeg and peppermint. But Jenkins one night gave the innkeeper a wink to put a few drops of Scotch whiskey into Fred's tumbler. A few drops were sufficient to slightly stimulate his brain, and produce a flow of social feeling within his heart; and thus, when too late, he discovered that he had tasted of the evil spirit. Having once tasted, he felt a less restriction of duty; and on subsequent occasions allowed a few drops to be added to the mixture. *Only a few drops!* how insignificant in number! how innocent they appear within themselves! But, alas, a few drops were added to the few, until they became *a great number*; and before winter had thrown off its fleecy covering, Frederick Charlston could empty a tumbler of hot punch as readily as any of his comrades. Thus, he who had once nobly defended the cause of Temperance, and had remained so long invincible, at length dishonored that pledge which, even under the most trying circumstances, he had hitherto never violated. "*Only a few drops*" at first--yes, *only a few drops*, and therewith poor Frederick Charlston became the votary of intemperance. His Saturday nights were afterwards too frequently spent, or rather misspent, in deep carousals with his comrades. His Sabbaths were also often desecrated; and instead of appearing in his accustomed seat in Church, he was either sleeping away the sacred hours of the day, or, perhaps, polluting his mind with the filthy contents of some sensational novel. For a few weeks at first his moral feelings were occasionally awakened by the stings of conscience; but gradually they became less susceptible and less unwilling to recognize or respect the laws of moral responsibility.

CHAPTER VII.

April came, and with it came the alarm of an intended invasion of Canada by the Fenians. All the volunteers were ordered to be in immediate readiness, and several companies were stationed at different places along the Province Line, south of the River St. Lawrence. Every precautionary preparation was being made by the Canadian government, and also by the inhabitants. Great excitement prevailed during several days; and a series of appalling rumors were daily in circulation. But April passed away, and none of the Verdants made their appearance on the north side of the Line 45. There was apparently a lull in the Fenian camp.

But on the morning of the 23rd of May following, the bugle again sounded the alarm. Gen. O'Neill had again stirred up the "Circles" to their very "Centres," and there was a fearful rattling among the dry bones. Every telegram brought additional intelligence confirming the affair. The march had in reality begun; and 50,000 men, as rumored, were marching towards Canada, in a direct line to Montreal. All the volunteers in the Province of Quebec were again called to arms, and every available company forwarded at once to the chief stations at St. Johns, Hemmingford, and Huntingdon. The 69th regiment of British regulars, then stationed at Quebec, was ordered to the front immediately. The loyal Canadian farmers in the vicinity of the Border line turned out at once; and with rifle in hand, distributed themselves in detached parties to watch and await the avowed enemies of their country; and defend their hearths and households in the hour of danger.

The company to which Frederick Charlston belonged, had been ordered to St. Johns. Fred was delightfully excited by the occurrence, which afforded him an opportunity of realizing what he termed "*a novel and romantic adventure*."

On the morning of the 25th of May, 1870, a detachment of Fenians, headed by Gen. O'Neill, crossed over the Line in the vicinity of Eccles' Hill. A company of farmers who had stationed themselves behind the rocks of the hill, adjacent to the high-way, observed the approach of the enemy sneaking along the road. When the Fenians had arrived within reach of gun-shot, the farmers, unperceived, fired upon them, killing

two or more, and wounding several. The astonished Verdants at once replied by a volley, but becoming disorderly bewildered by the incessant stream of smoke and bullets from among the rocks, they hastily retreated to an adjacent hill; and for several hours the opposing parties in ambush kept up a continuous but ineffectual fire at each other. At length a few detachments of Montreal volunteers and others arrived; and in conjunction with the farmers, took part in the action. The Fenians imagining that a formidable army had arrived, became panic-stricken and fled, headed by their leaders, at quick march over the Border Line, where the "Fenian Tragedy" was magnificently concluded by the ludicrous farce of the Great O'Neill making a hasty exit as a "State prisoner," under the confidential protection of Marshal Foster.

Simultaneously with this event, another squad of Green Jackets, headed by Gen. Starr, intruded upon Canadian soil, twelve miles beyond Huntingdon, and intrenched themselves about three-quarters of a mile from the Border Line. There they remained until the morning of the 27th, when they were speedily routed from their intrenchments and driven back beyond the Line by the Huntingdon Borderers and the 69th British Regiment.

The Battalions in this District, and upon whom the inhabitants had chiefly to depend, were the "*Huntingdon Borderers*" and the "*Hemmingford Rangers*," under their gallant commanders, Cols. McEachren and Rogers, and to whose valorous energy and that of the heroic officers and men under their charge, is the country in general deeply indebted.

Thus ended the Fenian invasion of 1870. Providentially not one of the Canadian party received even the slightest injury. The volunteers were immediately recalled, and peace was restored to the country.

Among those who took part in the action at Eccles' Hill was Fred Charlston. He returned to Montreal, bearing along with him as trophies of war, a Fenian coat, knapsack and rifle. So elated was he on the night of his return by his fortunate and glorious adventure, that he with several of his comrades got mortally drunk, so much so that he and two

others had to be taken to the police station for safe keeping, where they remained until they became sobered off.

Frederick being somewhat of a poet, composed the following song in honor of those Canadian Volunteers who were brought into action along the Border.

OUR BORDER VOLUNTEERS.

All hail! our Border Volunteers, All loyal, true and brave, Who boldly faced the Fenian foe, And spurn'd a coward's grave. All hail to all those gallant chiefs, Who stood the trying hour, And bravely led their heroes forth To crush the Fenians' power.

Chorus.--Our country's foe we need not dread, When danger's hour appears, While guarded by those gallant braves, Our Border Volunteers.

No menial soldier fills our ranks, Nor yet a martial slave; O'er free and independent men Our banners proudly wave. They are our country's stalwart sons, Who love their home and hearth, Who honour still their Fatherland, And this which gave them birth.

Chorus.--Our country's foe, &c.

'Tis not the savage thirst for blood Which makes our heroes brave, 'Tis not for conquest and renown Their banners proudly wave. Their voice proclaims the love of peace, To all an equal right, But mercy spurn'd by reckless foes Empowers their sword of might.

Chorus.--Our country's foes, &c.

Trout River's banks and Eccles' Hill, Shall echo forth their fame, And thousands yet unborn will rise, To shout our heroes' name. They form the martial battlements Of Canada's frontiers, Those guardians of our household hearths, THE BORDER VOUNTEERS.

Chorus.--Our country's foes we need not dread, When danger's hour

appears, While guarded by these gallant braves, *Our Border Volunteers*.

The disturbance at Red River in the North-Western Territory, by the revolt of Riel and his accomplices was also at this time attracting the attention of the Canadian government. A force, consisting of regulars and volunteers, had already been organized; and was to be despatched immediately to Red River for the purpose of suppressing the Riel-Rebellion.

The glory of warfare had aroused within the mind of Frederick Charlston a love for adventure and a spirit of Canadian patriotism: and feeling a desire to enlist as a roving soldier, he immediately, after his return to Montreal, departed for Toronto, head-quarters for the Battalions designed for Red River. A few healthy and well-disciplined volunteers were still wanted; and Fred, having passed an examination, was initiated into the ranks as a volunteer for Red River.

On the evening previous to his departure he retired to his room; and having emptied a tumbler full of hot brandy punch, he sat down gloriously happy, and penned the following letter to his parents.

"Toronto, June 7th, 1870.

"Dear Father and Mother,--As you may feel somewhat disposed by this time to relish a bit of my history in Canada, I now, for the first time, since I left home, lift my pen to address you. I shipped in the S. S. Moravian from Liverpool, to Portland, U.S., and during the voyage had to undergo the terrible ordeal of sea-sickness. However, I arrived at Montreal on the evening of Christmas last, as sound as a church bell. I found immediate employment in the city at six shillings per day. I am partially fond of this country and the inhabitants in general, with the exception of a sort of people named French Kanucks; but they are as harmless as a flock of sheep; and stand as mere cyphers in the ranks of society. Last winter I joined a company of city volunteers; and was present at an engagement with the Fenians at a place known as Eccles Hill, on the 25th ultimo, of which affair you will have heard by the London papers. I went up boldly to the Front, and fought the Fenians

like a tiger. I don't know how many I killed; but I feel certain that I must have annihilated quite a large number, as I fired away every cartridge I had. I brought back with me to Montreal a Fenian-coat, knapsack and rifle, &c. Since my return I have been lionized by my officers and comrades for my daring exploits. The sun of fortune has already begun to shine upon me; and I have determined that my progress shall be in the ascendancy, until I arise to the very zenith of my glory. I have just enlisted myself as a volunteer to go over 2000 miles into the dense forests of Canada to fight the savages of the North-West at Red River. I leave to-morrow. The undertaking is gigantic, but the glory that shall arise therefrom shall be immeasurably greater. Be not surprised should you hear of me ere long being gazetted as commander of a battalion in the North-Western Territory. On my return, to England, if ever, I shall take my Fenian trophies along with me, and perhaps a few hundred of Indian scalps, &c., as curiosities for my friends and old acquaintances.

"Give my respects to none but those who inquire kindly about me. My love to the little '*chick*.' He may live to be yet proud of his father. I shall write again as soon as I get the savages disposed of."

"Father, mother, sisters and brother, accept the expression of my love. Farewell, farewell."

"Fred. Charlston."

The volunteers for Red River were forwarded from Toronto to Collingwood; where they embarked on the steamers Algoma and Chigora; and proceeded 300 miles to Thunder Bay, on Lake Superior; thence by land and water through a dense wilderness, several hundred miles, to Fort Garry, at Red River. A prodigious undertaking, indeed, involving a vast amount of labor and privation; nevertheless the majority of the troops endured it tolerably well. During the first two or three weeks Fred Charlston stood the hardships and inconveniences with a brave spirit, and enjoyed with good relish the rough life of the military pioneer; so much so that he gave expression to his patriotic feelings in the following song, which he and his associates frequently sung with great gusto:--

Come now, my lads, we'll march along, And wave our banners high, The savage herds in forest wilds Shall hear our battle-cry. The distant realm before us lies, The road is rough and drear, O'er lake and stream thro' mountain wild Our martial course we'll steer.

Chorus.--Then march along, my hearty lads, And cheer your hearts with song, The nation cheers the Volunteers Who bravely march along.

No scorching sun, no torrent shower, No toil, nor want of rest, Has power to check that British pluck Which warms each loyal breast. No savage of the woods we dread, Nor death, nor danger near, We are a nation's loyal sons Who spurn a coward's fear.

Chorus.--Then march along, &c.

That savage wretch with bloody hands, Usurping in his might, Shall keenly feel a nation's steel That justifies its right. "*Revenge*" shall be our battle-cry, Revenge the bloody foe: Fort Garry's walls with tongues of blood, Shall echo back the blow.

Chorus.--Come march along, "my hearty lads," And shout the martial song. The nation cheers the Volunteers Who bravely march along.

CHAPTER VIII.

I will now silently pass over the space of three months, and leave the reader to follow in imagination the adventures of our hero in the Red River Expedition;--and as an essential character in the sequel of this story I will now take the liberty of introducing myself.

* * * * *

On a fine afternoon about the middle of September, 1870, I arrived at Kingston, Ontario, and took lodgings at the "City Hotel," where I intended to remain for a few days. I was then on a tour selling a poetical work which I had written, entitled: "The Canadian Minstrel." After tea, that evening, I stepped up stairs to the sitting-room, and sat down to write a letter to my friends at home. Shortly afterwards, and

while seated there alone, a young man entered the room.

"I beg pardon, sir; I hope I'm not intruding," he exclaimed very politely as he entered.

"No, not in the least, sir," said I. He then walked over to the sofa, and pulling out a newspaper from his pocket, sat down and began to peruse it. I resumed my pen; and when finished with my letter, I addressed him somewhat familiarly, and we entered into conversation, chiefly about the war which was then being carried on between France and Prussia. He was apparently intelligent; and although slightly reticent at first, became gradually more conversive and familiar.

He appeared to be about 25 years of age, tall, and somewhat slender in figure; of keen a nervous temperament; with hair and moustache of a brownish color: features slightly prominent and very expressive. He was courteous in manners, and in general appearance, genteel and good-looking. His style of conversing was agreeable; his arguments pointed and logical; and his remarks, full of sympathetic sentiment, apparently the breathings of an impulsive moral nature. His countenance, although naturally expressive of energy, appeared slightly shadowed by an expression of sadness. Even in his manner and conversation there was a peculiar indication of deep thoughtfulness, tinged with melancholy. Respecting his own history he said nothing, nor did he ask anything about mine. I was however much interested in his company, and although strangers to each other, we passed a very pleasant evening together.

At breakfast on the following morning he sat directly opposite to me. We saluted each other in a friendly manner, and occasionally exchanged a few sentences. Shortly after we had retired from the table he came forward and addressed me.

"I shall bid you good bye, friend, for the present," said he, apparently in readiness to depart.

"And so you are going to leave," said I. "I'm sorry I had not the pleasure of a longer acquaintance with you."

"I leave for Toronto, where I shall remain a week or two. Should you be there shortly, please call at the 'Metropolitan Hotel,' and ask for me, I shall be happy to see you," said he, handing me a card with his name thereon.

"Thank you, sir, I will be happy to do so," said I: and having heartily shaken hands together as a mutual token of courtesy and good-will, he departed.

As I was desirous of attending the Annual Provincial Show, to be held at Toronto during the first week of October following, I passed all the intermediate towns on the line of railway, and arrived in that city a few days previous.

The evening after my arrival I strolled over to the Metropolitan to see the stranger referred to. He recognized me at once, and was apparently happy to see me. Although our previous acquaintance had been incidental and but of short duration, we felt on meeting again as if we had been old friends. He invited me to the sitting room; and we passed a few very agreeable hours together. On leaving I requested him to spend the following evening with me at the hotel at which I was staying. He complied therewith; and during his further stay of one week in the city our interviews were of daily occurrence.

During the following week the city was crowded to its utmost capacity; and the streets presented a gay and lively appearance, owing to the great influx of visitors to the Exhibition. In company with my friend I visited the "Show Grounds." Every department of the Arts and Agriculture, &c., were well represented, showing the vast progress and developments of the Province of Ontario.

The day of the closing of the Exhibition my friend specially invited me to his room to spend the evening. During our previous interviews he had said but little respecting himself. I noticed, however, that something was deeply affecting his mind; and that he was apparently desirous of making it known to me. But it was not until this evening that he, in compliance with my wishes, gave me the history of his past career: the greater part of which is narrated in the foregoing chapters of

this story: the remainder I will now give in his own words; for, gentle reader, be it known that this person was none other than Frederick Charlston, with whom you are already acquainted.

"During the first part of the journey to Red River," said he, "I endured the hardships and fatigues tolerably well; but the encamping out every night upon the cold earth: the incessant labor; the hard marches over a rough road, and under a broiling sun, at length became too oppressive. Oftentimes I felt, as it were, unable to proceed a step further; but my proud spirit with a stern determination of will, exerted every possible energy, and I continued day after day to plod along with my foot-sore and way-worn companions. Our fatigues were however occasionally relieved by a general rest for a few days. But before one third of the journey had been completed I was seized one night with a severe attack of illness.

"The day had been excessively hot; the commander wishing to get forward that evening to certain grounds favorable for one week's encampment had recourse to what might be termed a forced march. Many of the soldiers suffered from the effects thereof; I was prostrated at once by a severe billious attack, accompanied with chills and fever, and also diarrhea; and when the companies resumed their march, I was unable to proceed with them.

"The evening previous to the general move the doctor made a special visit to my tent.

"'My young friend,' said he, as he entered, 'I have come to leave you some medicine as I must move with the army at an early hour to-morrow morning. Your health, although progressing rapidly, will not permit you to undertake the journey, at least for one week. However, you will be provided with necessaries, &c. The Captain has appointed a couple of honest Indians to remain and take care of you: and who will serve as guides when you are ready to depart. But my special injunction is--"*Take good care of yourself*," otherwise you will never reach Red River.'

"'Indeed, doctor, I'm afraid I shall never be able to resume the journey,'

said I.

"'It would have been much better for you had you not undertaken it at first.'

"'Experience teaches fools,' I exclaimed.

"'Yes, and the wisest of wise men too,' added the doctor, with a sly wink.

"'I regret very much the course I have taken,' said I; 'I am now suffering the experience of my reckless folly. Were it possible to have an opportunity of living my past years over again agreeably to my wishes, I assure you, doctor, I would never make a second journey to Canada, nor go to Red River either; I would make England my home for ever. However, since I have undertaken this exodus, I hope I shall be able to complete it.'

"'It is my opinion,' said the doctor, 'that your physical constitution, inexperienced as it has been to a life like this, will not be able to stand the fatigues; and even after a month's rest, I dread the consequences, as the hardships yet to be endured are tenfold greater than those you have undergone.'

"'Then what shall I do, doctor? Must I live and die alone in this wilderness?' said I.

"'Under the present circumstances, I think,' said he, 'your resignation will be immediately accepted. If so remain here for the present under charge of your attendants. In the course of a week or so, a gang of Indians will pass here on their way to Thunder Bay for provisions. They can convey you a great portion of the way by canoe; thence you can effect your course back to Toronto, or to England if you choose, much easier indeed than going the remainder of the journey to Red River.'

"'Well doctor,' said I, 'I shall comply with your orders.'

"'Then I shall attend to the matter at once,' said the doctor, and immediately withdrew. In about an hour afterwards he returned, accompanied with several officers. The doctor's request was acquiesced with, and I received my discharge. The commander on leaving placed $30 in my hand, wishing me better health and a safe journey back to Toronto. No sooner had they left than I began to breathe more freely the air of liberty. I felt like a prisoner when liberated from his shackled bonds. I was no longer a mercenary. I was indeed exalted above the ranks, *and felt myself once more as a man*:--And wherefore, may I ask? Let my spirit echo the answer.

"The novelty and the romance of adventure had lost their charms. Military glory had faded under the stern reality of circumstances. Sickness had dimmed the ardor of my soul. Home-longings had clustered around my heart: and I then felt as it were for the time being a happiness in disappointment, and an independence in my liberty.

"My companions were indeed sorry to part with me: and before leaving presented me with many tokens of their affections. I felt the loneliness of a saddened heart when they were gone. The Indians were however kind, and faithful in their duties towards me. Under their care my health and vigor improved rapidly; so much so, that I felt sufficiently able to go with the returning Indians to Thunder Bay. I stood the travel much better than I anticipated. On the 27th day of August I arrived safely in this city, but much exhausted by the fatigues of the journey.

"Alas! thought I. What a change of prospects! What a revulsion in circumstances! I left here as a proud follower of Mars, clothed in scarlet and fine linen like the Kings of Babylon, and blowing up the tinsel'd bubble of military glory, amid the beating of drums, the blowing of trumpets, and the cheers of an excited populace. But alas! I returned in silence, as a simple man of experience, covered in sackcloth, exhausted in body, disappointed in mind, without friends, without a home, and with comparatively meagre funds. It was then that the last words of my dear father to me came rushing upon my soul, and adding sorrow to the feelings of my heart. Humiliating as my circumstances were, more deeply affecting to my mind was the ever-present

remembrance of a dream which I dreamt on the night previous to my departure from Chipenega, the place where I remained during my illness. I dreamt that I was again residing in Montreal, that I had retired to my room for the night, and was projecting the design of going to the Rocky Mountains to dig for gold: and felt excited by the idea that when I had accumulated a million I would return to England a gentleman of fortune. But my night visions, like my day dreams, were doomed to vanish in disappointment: for at that moment when my soul was elated with the prospect, and my heart throbbing big with joy, I was startled by a light suddenly shining around me; and on looking about I beheld a woman entering the room and approaching where I lay. Her countenance, though pale, shone with a peculiar brightness. A long robe, white as the snow, hung loosely around her, and sandals were upon her feet. I was amazed at the appearance at first sight: but after a momentary gaze I recognized in her features the expression of my own mother.

"'Oh, mother! my dear mother!' I shouted as she approached, quickly raising myself up from my couch.

"'Frederick, my son Frederick,' she exclaimed taking hold of my hand in her own, and kissing me affectionately. 'I have come to take my farewell of you, my dear son, as I am ready to depart on a long journey and will not again see you on earth. Around my poor body your father, brother, sisters, and other relatives are at this very moment sobbing in tears, while in spirit I am here present with you. My time on earth is limited to seconds. My words are therefore few. My injunctions are these,--I hope you will comply with them. Repent of your wickedness and folly. Abstain from intoxicating liquors and evil company. Live a righteous life. Return at once to England, and seal those bonds of a life-union with Clara, whom you have unjustly wronged. Promise me, my son, to do these things and I shall depart in peace.'

"I was so overcome and bewildered at that moment that I could say nothing more than simply to whisper,--'*Mother, I shall try to do so*.' She then kissed me; bade me good-bye; and on wings of light instantly soared out of the room, leaving it in darkness again. I was so awfully

impressed at this moment that I awoke suddenly. It appeared to me to be more of a waking reality than a dream. From that time until the present moment it has preyed heavily upon my feelings. Again and again have I tried to eradicate the impression, but every effort has only had a tendency to rivet it the more firmly to my mind, until it has at length assumed the aspect of a reality. I fear my apprehensions are too true; however I trust to Providence that my dream was nothing more than a baseless emanation of fancy. The evening after my arrival in Toronto from the Red River expedition I wrote a letter to my parents, and also one to a cousin of my own residing in London. I stated the circumstances which compelled me to return from the expedition; that the doctor had advised me to go back to England, as the Canadian climate was not suitable for my constitution; and that I purposed being in London to spend the Christmas holidays with my friends. Neither did I forget to mention the anxiety I felt about my child; nor did I neglect to express my intention of paying an affectionate compliment to its mother on my return. I desired my friends to reply immediately on receiving my letters. Nearly five weeks have elapsed since I wrote, but no answer has been received yet. I however expect something by the next English mail. I am living in suspense; a dreadful feeling indeed to endure. Had my health and means permitted, I would have gone directly to England on my return from the expedition. Instead thereof I sent the letters referred to, and having rested in this city a couple of weeks, I went down to Kingston to visit an old acquaintance who had emigrated thither a few years ago; but when I arrived there I discovered with disappointment that he had recently removed to the State of Minnesota. It was then, sir, that I had the pleasure of meeting with you. Your kindness and familiarity on that occasion, and also since, have been as medicine to my soul. I have considered you as a genial and sympathetic friend. I have told you the history of my past career. I trust to God that my future will be characterised with less unfortunate events, but with deeds more worthy of being told. I feel, and I know that I have been the author of my own wretchedness and folly. I have wasted my time, my money, and my energies in dissipation. I have feasted my conceited fancies upon glory as light and transient as the flying gossamer: and besides all this, I have done injustice to my parents--to my child--and to her who gave it birth. I have wronged her with cruel

heart, a heart that has recoiled upon itself, and now stings its own affections in the madness of remorse. But worse than all, I have done injustice to my Maker. I have mocked at His mercy. I have insulted His dignity. I have trampled upon His laws. *Oh! miserable wretch that I have been!* However, I have resolved to live a better life. I trust to God that through His divine power I shall be enabled to abstain from intoxicating liquor and evil company."

"I intend returning to England in December next," continued Frederick, after a few moments silence. "Yesterday I met with a gentleman who formerly belonged to London, and with whom I was somewhat acquainted. He is now a resident of Hamilton, some 50 miles from here, and does a large business as an upholsterer. He offered me immediate employment, at $1.50 per day. I have engaged with him for two months, at the expiration of which time, if health permit, I will ship myself for England. So that no time may be lost I shall leave for Hamilton to-morrow morning, to be ready to commence work on Monday.

"Now, sir, as you intend remaining in Toronto for a week or two you will indeed favor me by calling at the Post-Office, especially when the next English Mail arrives, and any letters or newspapers addressed to me, please forward immediately."

I promised faithfully to do so:--and having thanked him for his favors I bade him good-bye for the present, expressing a wish that I would find him in a happier state of feelings at our next interview.

CHAPTER IX.

Having returned to the hotel at which I was staying I retired immediately to bed. I slept but little during the night, my fancy having been kept awake by the expressive interview of the preceding evening. The eventful narrative of Frederick Charlston's career was ever present to my mind, producing feelings akin to those of an experienced reality. But the most striking characteristic was the singular dream to which I have alluded. Dreams in general are nothing more than the echoes of the soul, or the breathings of imagination when the consciousness of

the mind is in a latent state. Some dreams however, may be the productions of a spiritual agency photographing as it were through the electric telegraph of the soul the impressions of the real event upon the mind of the person who is absent, causing strange forebodings to loom up in the horizon of imagination. Be this as it may, it is a well known fact, that dreams have been occasionally verified. Thousands of them, however, are by the dreamer construed to suit circumstances. But the millions of these visions that arise nightly from the bed-chambers of the world are nothing more than the flickerings of the mind, at random, and like vapor, arising into the atmosphere of the soul, frequently assuming a variety of fantastic forms as a metamorphoses of preconceived ideas.

Immediately on hearing of the arrival of the English Mail I hurried down to the Post-Office, and inquired of the gentleman in attendance if there were anything for Frederick Charlston. Shuffling over a pile of letters he drew one out and handed it to me. It was mounted with deep mourning, and heavily sealed with black sealing wax. I was startled at the appearance thereof. I took but a momentary gaze and requested him to forward it by the next mail to Hamilton. I felt an anxious curiosity to know the contents of the Black-Sealed Letter. I felt certain that some of Frederick's relatives had recently died. The aspect of his dream more forcibly impressed itself upon my mind. But let a few days more pass away, and the mystery will be solved.

At the end of the second week after this occurrence I went up to Hamilton: and shortly after my arrival called upon the Upholsterer. He told me that Frederick had not been at the workshop during the past few days, owing to an attack of illness. He directed me to the hotel at which Frederick was boarding. I went there, and was by the innkeeper shown into a bedroom, in which he was reclining upon a couch reading a newspaper. On seeing me he sprang forward and grasped my hand affectionately in his own, and began sobbing aloud, the tears gushing from his eyes. For a few seconds I stood motionless in sad bewilderment of mind, feeling assured that something of a serious nature had occurred. At length I ventured to express a desire to know what had happened. He then drew from his pocket a letter, and handed

it to me. I recognized it at once as the "*Black-Sealed-Letter*." I opened it with trembling hand, and read as follows:

"London, England, Sept. 20th, 1870.

"Dear Cousin Frederick.--I received your letter of the 28th ultimo on the 18th inst., and was sorry indeed to hear of your illness, from which I hope you have completely recovered. It gives me pleasure however to know that you will again be amongst us. No doubt you will feel happy to see your old friends again. But short as the time has been since you left, you will find on your return that eventful changes have taken place. Our life on earth is only a struggle with itself, too frequently surrounded with adverse circumstances, that are prolific with sad events, and gloomy with suffering and disappointment. And were it not that the Star of Bethlehem still shines in the firmament of Heaven the glory of this world would transmit but a dim light upon the soul of the Christian life. Then be prepared, my dear friend, to endure the ills of adversity with a noble heart. Although a dark shadow may fall suddenly upon your earthly vision, at once direct your eyes in faith towards the Star of Celestial Glory; and the light of Heaven will dispel the darkness, even, were it the shadow of Death.

"You desired of me to give particular information respecting Clara Hazeldon. In accordance with your request I suppose I must do so. Through disappointment, in hoping against hope, she became low spirited, and failed considerably in health; and, on hearing of your intended adventure in the Red River expedition, relinquished every hope of your return, and shortly afterwards became the wife of Charles Holstrom.

"Your child is still in your father's family, and is a bright-eyed-healthy-looking boy, resembling you very much indeed. At the request of your relatives, but with considerable reluctance on my part, I now undertake to inform you of an event which has recently occurred in your own family. They consider it better to make it known to you by letter than allow the reality unexpectedly to force itself upon your mind at your return.

"On the 20th day of July last, your mother, by a fall down the stairway, unfortunately got one of her limbs broken. It was considered necessary to have it amputated. Mortification set in shortly afterwards, eventually proving fatal. At an early hour on the morning of the 25th, only five days after the occurrence, your dear mother breathed her last, surrounded by her weeping relatives. She was sensible to within a few hours of her death. Her dying words conferred a blessing upon you. She died happy, and with full assurance of a blessed immortality.

"Striking as this announcement must be to your mind, I trust that with the help of God you will be enabled to bear up under the severe affliction. Sooner or later we must all die; and by what means we know not. Then let this event be another warning to us to prepare effectually for our exit to eternity. May God bless you, my dear friend. May Christ be your spiritual Physician, to pour the Balm of Gilead upon your troubled soul; and through Divine power may you ere long be conducted back in health and safety to your old home.

"Your friends join in expressing their love to you.

"I remain, dear Frederick, your affectionate cousin.

"William A. Thornton."

Appended to the above letter was the following note from Eliza, Frederick's eldest sister:

"London, Sept. 20th, 1870.

"My Dear Brother,--The sad events that have occurred since your departure have thrown a deep gloom over our household. The death of our dear mother has almost broken our hearts. I hope in God you will be enabled to endure the severe affliction. Call upon Christ, and he will assist you to bear up your weight of sorrow. It is some comfort however to know that mother died the happy death of a Christian. I trust her spirit is now reaping the heavenly harvest of her spiritual labors upon earth. Father is terribly changed since her death. I thought he would assuredly die under the heavy affliction. No doubt your

absence has had a tendency to augment his grief. He has become fearfully melancholy, and of late has had recourse to drinking. I dread the consequences; therefore I intreat you to come home as soon as possible. Perhaps your influence may have a soothing effect upon his mind; and prevent him from further indulgence.

"Oh, how glad we shall all feel, even in our sorrow, to see you again, dear brother. Richard has turned out to be a fine boy; you will be happy to see him. Cousin William has acquainted you with other facts. Trust to God for the consolation of your mind. We all join in love to you. With a heavy heart and in tears I have written these few lines. I am, dear brother, your affectionate sister.

"Eliza Charlston."

"These are sad news indeed," said I, returning the letter to Frederick.

"Very, very sad, indeed, almost insufferable!" said he.

Having paused for a few moments he continued. "My dream has been forcibly verified. How overwhelming is the reality that my poor mother is no more. Had I been present when she died it would have given some consolation to my soul. But, oh! to think of the manner in which I fled from her presence, and also from my happy home: to think of the sufferings both mentally and physically she must have endured: to think of the unfortunate circumstances of her death; to think that I, her favorite son, was absent in her dying hours, without an opportunity of confessing my errors and asking her forgiveness: to think of these alone, is sufficient to break my very heart. Nor is this all. She to whose loving heart I pledged my affections as a bond of an eternal union, has become the life-companion of another. But I reproach her not for so doing. She was faithful; I alone was false. She had hoped against hope; and not until she had despaired of my return did she seek out a help-mate and home for herself. It is only another unfortunate circumstance of my life. I feel deeply the wound it has inflicted; but I will not avenge it. My life is apparently a life of troubles, and like Job of old I am ready to curse the day of my birth. I, myself, may be the author of it all; but it seems to me that some demon, like the evil spirit of King Saul, has taken

possession of life's-citadel, and strews my pathway with pandoric ills."

"My dear sir, I do really sympathise with you in your affliction," said I. "But under such trying circumstances confide in God and he will be your friend indeed."

"But for me there is no Balm in Gilead: there is no physician there," he exclaimed. "As a fallen sinner I again sought for balm in the Vineyard of Satan. I had recourse to the demon-wizard of intoxication, and drank from his enchanted bowl. It was impossible to live and do otherwise; for elsewhere I could find no consolation for my grief. I drank deeply for two days and two nights after having received the letter. I then resumed my work: and with a saddened heart and a weakened constitution, labored until three days ago, when, I again broke the bonds of my resolutions. To-day I am sobering off myself: and when my bottle is emptied of its contents, *I shall drink no more*."

Saying this, he took from his trunk a bottle half-full with liquor.

"Look here," said he. "You see how short a distance is now between me and total-abstinence. But, my dear friend, I will not insult your feelings by tasting of it in your presence."

Therewith he returned the bottle to its place. In answer to my enquiries he stated that he still intended to return to England in December, and for that purpose had resolved to economise his time and means, and never taste of liquor again.

"Ah," said he, "liquor and evil company have been my ruin. Through the influence of bad companions I first broke the pledge when at Tiverton: and by doing so at that time, I upset all my projected designs. I have been re-building and upsetting ever since; but somehow my superstructure appears to have no solid basis. However, I am determined to try once more and make amends for the past."

I told him that I intended in the course of a few days to go on as far as New London, and would be absent at least a month. I would then return by way of Hamilton, and accompany him as far as Montreal, on my

way home: it being about the time he purposed leaving for England. He appeared to be delighted with the idea of so doing, and heartily thanked me for the kindness I shewed towards him.

On the following morning he resumed his work apparently with renewed cheerfulness and vigor; and during the ten days I remained in Hamilton he improved rapidly in both body and spirit. We met together every evening and passed an hour or two very pleasantly, and I may add, profitably. He never once tasted of liquor during that time; but seemed more determined than ever to resist its temptation. I advised him to remove to some private boarding house; where he would be less exposed to the influence of liquor and evil company: but he seemed unwilling to comply therewith on account of his intended removal in so short a time. On the morning of that day on which I left Hamilton I called at the shop, where he was vigorously at work. On bidding him good-bye, I expressed a wish that he would remain true to the principle of total-abstinence, entreating him to supplicate Divine aid to enable him to do so.

"There may be some breakers ahead" said he, "but I think I can steer in the right course now."

Then bidding each other good bye, we parted--*never to meet again on earth*.

On my return to Hamilton I called at the hotel and requested to see Frederick Charlston.

"O, he's gone, sir," abruptly ejaculated the innkeeper.

"*Gone, sir!*" said I. "Where, and when did he go?"

"Well, all I can say about him, is that he went off to his grave about a week ago," he replied.

"Do you mean to say that Frederick Charlston is dead?" said I.

"Why, yes, sir," said he, "the fellow's as flat as a board now."

"What was the cause of his death?" I inquired.

"Drinking more whiskey than he was able to hold, so he sprang a leak and sank, cargo and all," he replied, jokingly, with a humorous grin, endeavouring to be witty at the expense of his victim.

This unexpected intelligence struck me so forcibly that for several seconds I stood motionless and bewildered. I then walked away with a sorrowful heart indeed. I could scarcely give credence to the announcement until it was confirmed by the upholsterer whom I called upon, and who related the following circumstances connected with the death of poor unfortunate Frederick Charlston.

"Two weeks ago last Thursday night," said he, "a couple of fast youths who were carousing merrily at the hotel, persuaded Frederick to take a sip with them. But one taste was sufficient to rouse up the evil spirit again within his bosom. He drank deeply that night and for two days continued his carousal; but was at length turned out upon the street by the innkeeper for disturbing the necessitated quietness of the Saturday night. He found his way to the woodshed, where he laid himself down and fell asleep. In about two hours he awoke shivering with cold; and was ultimately admitted into the hotel. Next morning he was in a feverish state, and confined to bed. Towards evening his condition became more alarming, and a messenger was sent for me. I hurried thither, and procured a doctor immediately. Had it been prudent to do so, I would have removed him at once to my own house; however, I did all for him that I possibly could do! My wife and I in turn sat by his bedside and watched over him with tender care. But all was in vain. His fever continued to increase and he became delirious. At times he would startle up wildly from his couch, shouting frantically as if in the agonies of horror, frequently calling and in pitiable and heart-rending tones upon his mother to forgive him: and to come and help him out of the horrible pit into which he had fallen, &c. &c. But the scene during those moments was too appalling to admit of further description. Finally he became calm, and sank into a peaceful slumber from which he never awoke on earth. On the morning of the fifth day of his illness, November 30th, he breathed his last, and his spirit passed away forever

into the regions of eternity.

"Poor Frederick, he is gone. My heart is saddened by his death!" continued he, apparently much affected. "With all his faults he had a noble soul. Poor fellow! he is gone now. I gave him a decent burial. I wrote to his father informing him of his son's death; but modified the circumstances connected therewith; however, it will be sad intelligence indeed."

* * * * *

The history of Frederick Charlston is now told. His career was brief. It is however pregnant with unfortunate events, and contains excellent material for moral reflection. It is in itself a lesson for the young and the inexperienced, showing the sad results of a self-willed confidence, the love of vain-glory in adventure, the yielding of moral principles to gratify the desire of either oneself or that of others:--and worse than all, the sacrificing of the nobler attributes of human nature to the insidious wiles of evil society and intoxicating liquor. Millions of young men, as moral and as self-confident as Frederick Charlston, have been physically and morally ruined as he was. Once yielding a little to immoral influence gives the first impetus to a downward tendency. Continue to repeat it, and the inertia becomes stronger, and the descent more easy.

"I see no harm in a social glass with a friend," cries one.

"Let cold-water-fanatics preach until doomsday and hurl their anathemas against inebriates," exclaims another, "but they never shall prevent me from taking my occasional glass."

"Nor I," says a third. "An occasional glass with a companion is the very life-spring of social nature. It assimilates one mind with another. It dispels sadness, and invigorates both soul and body. It opens up the fountains of the heart, and joy gushes out, sparkling with wit and melody. Wherefore then should I deprive myself of those blessings, on purpose to gratify the whims of some cold-water quack? Wherefore then should I bind my liberties with a pledge as a safe-guard to prevent

me from becoming a drunkard? If other men have been foolish enough to allow themselves to become drunkards by abusing one of the precious gifts of nature, is that sufficient reason that I should not drink? I think not. I am no drunkard, nor shall I become one; therefore I will do as I please with my own liberty and independence."

Such is indeed the false philosophy of too many moderate drinkers. No man is a confirmed drunkard at once. It is by degrees that men generally become inebriates. "Take but a glass," says the recruiting sergeant of Bacchus, "it will do you no harm." But one glass is but the starting point. It is the magnet that attracts material akin to itself. What a world of degradation has been generated by this nucleus of intemperance.

Intoxicating liquor is indeed the most prolific source of wretchedness and crime. It has been and still is the greatest curse to humanity. It is the curse of curses. The grave is filled with its wrecks. The fire of hell is fed by its fuel. Millions upon millions of human beings has it hurled down to the blackest regions of eternity. How daring then must that man be;--how utterly lost to every principle of morality, who would hazard an assertion in favor of intoxicating drinks as a source of benefit to mankind. The universal evidence of all ages would be against him. The horrid shrieks of suffering humanity would denounce his arguments. Millions of grinning skeletons, blackened with every crime (if permitted) would startle forth from their infernal dungeons; and in myriads of drunkards' graves the rattling of dry bones would be heard: Yea, even hell, its very self, bloated with the souls of inebriates, would groan with indignation. Nay, call it not happiness that sparkles in the eye of the rum-drinker and softens his heart and tongue into kindred sympathy with each other. Happiness arises not from the flickerings of the brain when heated by the reeking fumes of the liquor glass. Nor does it arise from the fervid impulses of the heart when excited by the steaming vapors of the rum bowl. Neither does it exist in the fluctuating feelings of animal nature when stimulated into action by the demon-spirit of the brandy bottle. Nor does happiness consist in the wild revelry of human beings, like madmen, recklessly sporting their fantastic tricks around the unhallowed altar of Bacchus. Nay, term it

not happiness, call it rather by the name of insanity.

In conclusion, if any of my readers are addicted to intemperance, or take only an occasional glass, with a friend, let me entreat of you to consider this momentous subject: to crush the bottle-serpent ere its fangs have pierced you fatally to the heart; and at once and forever, to dash the accursed bowl to the earth.

Once more, I earnestly entreat of you to pause and reflect. Think of the countless millions of human beings who have been utterly ruined soul and body forever by intemperance; think of the immeasurable mass of wretchedness and crime arising therefrom. Think of your present condition and your eternal future; and remember also that *every man*, even in his greatest strength is but a fallable creature; and finally my dear readers I ask of you to consider seriously the life, career and death of poor unfortunate Frederick Charlston.

Finis.

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The foregoing story is the first of a series entitled--"Tales for Canadian Homes;" the others will appear in serial form in the columns of the *Canadian Garland*, a Weekly Newspaper, which the author intends to establish shortly, in the Village of Durham, Ormstown, County of Chateauguay, P. Q.

ANDREW L. SPEDON, St. Jean Chrysostom, Chateauguay Co., P.Q.

* * * * *

The Poetic Wreath.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

LIFE'S STRUGGLE.

Our life is but a struggle here, 'Mid good and ill, 'twixt hope and fear, Thro' dang'rous channels oft we steer, With reckless force; But self-made ills make life's career A rougher course.

The world is but a human hive; To keep the varied swarm alive, Its working bees must toil and strive, While others feast. The lazy drones appear to thrive, Yet work the least.

The world appears a battle-field, The stronger rule, the weaker yield, The golden nerves too often wield The power which leads, While justice' scales are oft conceal'd By selfish deeds.

Yet still we strive midst hopes and fears, With pleasure's smiles and sorrow's tears, And tho' our bustling life appears A transient breath, It seems possess'd of endless years 'Twixt us and death.

The poor man toils for daily bread; By him the rich are clothed and fed, Yet life's to them a greater dread, Or idle pest, Their downy couch too oft a bed Of sleepless rest.

How many a life's an idle waste, Its destined glory seems disgraced, Its vile possessor has defaced The man divine, That not a single mark is traced Of God's design.

Man's but a child, a restless boy, His life a game, the world his toy, He strives for something to enjoy Unjoy'd before, Tho' vicious tastes and passions cloy He longs for more.

The lust for gold, the love of fame, The baser passions oft inflame, And blindly masks the honest name Of moral worth, When life exceeds no higher aim Than this vile earth.

Our souls the golden god inspires, And feeds the life-destroying fires, Until the fevered heart desires With selfish greed, More than it actually requires For nature's need.

Life's hardest ills its spirit braves, O'er mountain-crags and ocean-waves, Then make ourselves the worst of slaves, A slave to self, To satisfy the thirst that craves For yellow pelf.

The golden wand with magic art Throws out the power to charm the heart, But ah, we feel its bitter smart When selfish greed Has robb'd from life that better part We so much need.

Alas, when gold absorbs our cares Life's wheels get dry, the axle wears, And heavier grows the load it bears, And faster driven, Its very dust defiles the prayers We send to heaven.

Life's chariot wheels revolve with speed, Yet faster still we urge our steed, And scarcely slack the reins to feed Or ease its breath, The journey seems but short indeed, When closed in death.

We haste it on with worldly care, Oppressive toil, and meagre fare, While sin and self-indulgence wear Our chariot wheels Increasing still the load they bear, With countless ills.

How discontented life appears, By every wind its compass veers, Our hopes are tarnish'd by the fears Of fancied ill, Even tho' the sun of Fortune cheers, We grumble still.

But why complain for everything That gives our life a random sting; Altho' we shift our tether-string To please our will, We'll always find the change will bring Both good and ill.

Then why should we contract our sight When life turns down the side that's bright The blast that blows us ills to-night, With cankering sorrow. May cheer the clouds which shade the light That shines to-morrow.

'Tis better then to be content, Altho' we are not worth a cent; Our precious hours when wisely spent Are still the best, For nature's ills are never sent To be a pest.

And let it never be our creed, That when we do an evil deed, To think that penance can succeed, To cancel sin; We pluck the fruit, but still the

seed Remains within.

But may we daily strive to win That happy world which knows no sin, 'Tis on the heaven we form within Our bliss depends, Where life celestial shall begin, Which never ends.

INDIAN SUMMER.

While winter in the dreary North Lies crouching ready to leap forth, In "*Indian Summer*" doth appear The gentle seasons of the year.

As if they came to shed their bloom Around their excavated tomb, To hold their parting interview, And bid their native world adieu.

The leaves that linger on the trees Are smiling in the sunny breeze, And chanting forth with holy breath The mournful requiem of their death.

The desert-fields, tho' bleak and bare, Seem lovely through the sun-lit air; The very shades are glowing bright Beneath the golden mellow light.

Rejoicing in their freedom still, On cultured field and pastur'd hill, The cattle crops the fading grass, And bless the moments as they pass.

The ploughman and his trusty team More happy and contented seem, From golden rays the furrow'd field A golden harvest yet may yield.

From bough to bough in yonder wood The squirrel frisks in happy mood, While searching round in hopes to find That some few nuts are left behind.

The summer-birds that yearly fly To yonder Southern sunny sky, Are hovering round on lingering wing, And fancy 'tis returning Spring.

While these sweet hours are gliding by, How calmly smiles the solemn sky, With golden hues of radiance bright, As if it were the cream of light.

It seems as if an angel's wing Had wafted back the breath of Spring, To animate the ling'ring breath Of Autumn on the bed of death.

Or from the rays of heavenly dews Had gilt the earth in rainbow hues, And o'er the sky so gently flung The air that once o'er Eden hung.

'Tis but the calm before the storm; The flush of earth's consumptive form; The hopeful smile, the fever'd breath, Before the stern approach of death.

THE SHADOW OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

There is a sympathy in love We bear for those who mourn, Whose shadows of departed joys With every thought return. 'Tis hard to stem the stream of grief That floods the parents' heart When death unvails embosom'd hopes, And throws its fatal dart.

The nursling of a mother's love, That nestles on her breast, Is but a life, celestial gift, By God's own seal impress'd. And when its prattling lips rejoice In innocent delight The parents' love and cherish'd hope, With tenfold power unite.

Anticipated prospects rise From hope's enchanted dreams, Converting life's prospective skies From shade to sunny beams, But oft, alas, those fancied hopes Are in the bud destroy'd; The cherished gift is pluckt away And leaves a lonely void.

Its lovely form returns to earth, Its spirit soars to bliss; Tho' destin'd to a happy world It oft may visit this. Perchance around the household hearth When prayer's sweet incense rise, It may return as messenger To waft it to the skies.

'Tis sweet to cherish such a thought, Even tho' it were untrue, That spirit-friends are hovering round Tho' absent from our view. But, oh! such dreams however sweet, A solace to impart, Can never fill the vacant seat, Nor yet the parents' heart.

The silent toys, the empty clothes, Those vestiges of death; Are full of mournful memories, Which spring from every breath, The active form the smiling face, In every thought appear; The prattling voice so cheering once Still lingers in the ear.

The future casts a shadow now, And hopes give place to grief, And all these things so pleasing once Can give no real relief. 'Tis only from a heavenly source That happiness can flow; There only can the heart procure A balm for every woe.

Then ye who mourn your absent ones, Those gifts by nature given, Remember tho' 'tis loss to you, 'Tis gain to Christ in Heaven, But still the wounded bosom bleeds, And cankers with its grief, For things have not their former charms To lend the soul relief.

There is no solid base on earth, On which our hopes are sure; The Rock of Heaven alone can make Our faith and hope secure. This life is full of varied ills, With pain in every breath; And everything, however pure, Contains the germs of death.

How feeble is that vital thread, Which holds us to the earth; It may be snapt at hoary age, Or at the infants' birth. We see it break in every clime, At every age and hour, And still we live as if its strength, Could match our Maker's power.

The curse of sin like Cain's mark Is stampt on every brow; And to the idols of the earth We in submission bow. Earth's things may seem as tangible To life's short-sighted eyes, But from the magic touch of death The cherish'd vision flies.

The soul itself, like Noah's dove, But flutters out its strength Around the earth, its safety ark, Then flies away at length. Perchance it may, while hovering here, Some olive-leaf procure, An emblem of a spirit-world, Whose solid base is sure.

END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BLACK-SEALED LETTER

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