

CHAPTER XXXVII.

“ What, we have many goodly days to see,
The liquid drops of tears that we have shed,
Shall come again, transformed to orient pearl,
Advantaging their loan with interest,
Oftimes with double gain of happiness.”

—*Shakespeare.*

John Alden's release from the prison camp at Lecompton was the first faint glimmering of the light which heralded the dawning of a brighter day.

He joined Gen. Hale's army of defence and retaliation, but the long marches, the sanguinary skirmishes, the starvation rations, the weary nights with the bare earth for a resting place, which, with his brave comrades, he endured through the autumn and early winter, were but as the mists of the morning, soon dissipated by the glorious sun of conquered peace. Many a time, when faint with hunger, suffering with cold, fatigued in body and depressed in mind with the consciousness that their families were lacking care, they were almost constrained to give up the contest, and, folding their tents, depart northward; but a few eloquent words from Hale always brought them to their feet, and with the cry of, "Free Kansas forever!" they rose with renewed zeal to the conflict. Hale was the motive power, and Gov. Rulison the balance-wheel, and under their guidance and direction the bark of State was safely guided o'er the rapids, and went floating out on the broad sea of prosperity. By a wise alternation of self-control and determined resistance, the fires of contention were smoldered, a sudden and violent

explosion prevented, and the fierce under-current of opposing elements turned backward to find, at a later day, a more legitimate outlet.

As the winter came on, and hostile incursions became less frequent, the Free State men retired to their homes, retaining an organization, however, and ready to spring at a moment's warning again to arms.

"O that long and bitter winter!
 O that cold and cruel winter!"

the remembrance of which might make the stoutest heart quail. Disease and famine stalked like gaunt, grim specters, through the Territory. Men, worn out by the toils of defence, prevented thereby from making a proper provision for their families; and women, whose brave souls had endured the heats of summer and the frosts of autumn, perhaps on a diet of green corn ground by hand, were unable to withstand the cold blasts of winter, which penetrated every crevice of their unplastered cabins, and now lay on beds of sickness without strength to prepare and make available, the supplies sent by generous friends in the North.

Ah, it was an easy thing, from beds of down in homes of luxury, to echo back the cry "No more slave States!" but the early pioneers of Kansas with the true spirit of devotion, cast themselves before the iron wheels of the great Juggernaut of oppression, and with their own stout arms stayed his onward march.

The cry of Agnes Langtry in her bereavement had been for work.

"Give me work! that I may have no time to look back upon the joys of the past, or forward over the long dreary path which stretches out bleak and lonely into the future."

This winter encompassed her with opportunities. In forgetfulness of self, and in alleviation of the woes of others, she found a most salutary narcotic for her own grief. Many a

mother had cause to bless the sweet, sad face, whose presence at her bedside brought back the ebbing tide of hope, and recalled the vanishing resolution so necessary to recovery. With her own hands she gently bathed the fevered brow, prepared the food to tempt the feeble appetite, and fitted the clothing to the necessities of the half-clad little ones. With rare good judgment she managed the supplies sent to her hand, that there should be no waste, and that the utmost benefit might be derived from them.

Nor were her ministrations confined to Free State people alone, but, like their gentle dew from heaven, were showered upon the sick and suffering of all parties and sections, with equal graciousness.

Occasionally, during the course of these labors, she came in contact with Roderick Delaney, engaged in a like work of Christian charity. Especially was he concerned for those whom his own persuasions had induced to emigrate, and whom he found entirely unable to adjust themselves to the requirements of their new environment. Unaccustomed as they were to the rigors of a severe climate, and prevented by the slothful habits of procrastination, as well as by the political troubles, from making a proper provision for the winter, he found them quite a burden upon his hands, a willing burden many of them, without the least sense of the unmanliness of dependence.

Then too, their habits of improvidence were such, that it was almost impossible to keep them provided for.

"With your people," said he to Agnes one day, "a little goes a great ways. Give them a certain amount of good food, and they immediately calculate how many days it may be made to last by the addition of such coarser material as they have at hand; but let me give our folks a supply, and they at once proceed to 'eat, drink and be merry,' with as much extravagance, as if they had unlimited resources at com-

mand. I cannot impress upon them the necessity of economy."

"You must have patience with them," said Agnes; "that lesson requires years of 'line upon line, and precept upon precept'."

And then, as the spring came on, with all the joyous awakening of nature from her slumbers, as the river was unlocked from icy chains, and the little creek swept by with gurgling sound, and the birds came again with merry songs to warble in the branches through which the uprising sap was coursing with new life, and bursting forth in tiny leaves and buds, the Free State men again essayed to woo sustenance and prosperity from the soil. Then Roderick Delaney came once more to Agnes with troubled brow.

"What shall I do with these people?" said he. "While the wise and active have already conquered all difficulties by daring to attempt them, they shrink at the thought of toil, and sit basking in the sunshine, as free from care as if they had never known a winter's cold. I wish they could imbibe even a small portion of the industry which is abroad in the air."

"I think," Agnes replied thoughtfully, "that example would be better than precept."

"Well, they have enough of that, I'm sure. There are examples on every side of them, but they will not see, they will not heed."

"Ah, yes!" said she. "But I mean that if you were to settle down among them yourself, and endeavor to develop the agricultural interests of the country, it might have a good effect. We are more willing to take lessons from our friends than from our enemies, and your people, to put it in its mildest form, have no affection for, and no desire to imitate us in any way. But they would with alacrity, 'do as Captain Delaney does.'"

Roderick shook his head. "You are a hard taskmaster,

Mrs. Langtry, and if I succeeded no better in carrying out this last suggestion, than I did in the work you bade me attempt nearly two years ago, would it be worth while to try the experiment?"

"If we do the work set before us with our might, Mr. Delaney, it is all that is asked of us. We may not live to see the result, we may not measure its benefits," and here her eyes filled with tears, "but the world will—humanity will."

And so it turned out that Roderick Delaney became her neighbor. He purchased an additional tract of land in the vicinity of Charleston, and began the experiment which has since proved so successful, of farming on a large scale; and as Agnes had prophesied, those South Carolinians who would not till their own claims with any degree of diligence, because the reward of the autumn's crop was so far distant from the spring's toil, that to them the connection was not sufficiently obvious, learned their first lessons of industry in working for the Captain by the day or week, for the daily or weekly stipend, becoming in time self-supporting.

At Agnes' suggestion after a time he formed a neighborhood Agricultural Society, whose weekly meetings for the discussion of farming interests proved quite a stimulus to them. He induced her to visit among the women, and in her kind way, suggest improvements in their method of cookery and housekeeping, and also later, in their attire and manners. No other woman could have done this, but Agnes Langtry possessed rare tact, and besides, so unusual had been her deeds of kindness, so untiring her efforts in their behalf in sickness and in want, that she represented to them rather the spirit of charity than a true flesh and blood Yankee woman.

And now it became apparent, so near is a mutual purpose and a sympathy of aims to the boundaries of that mysterious region—love, that if Agnes desired she might have the hand and fortune of Roderick Delaney laid at her feet.

But now, the fountain of love whose inner depths had stirred to meet the ennobling affection of Edward Langtry, was forever sealed to the advances of another. For the alleviation of the woes of others, for the welfare of humanity, and the development of a higher life in those around her, her sympathies went out to him. But there was that in her manner which said plainly, in reply to the slightest manifestation of warmth of personal feeling: "Thus far shalt thou go and no further! My dream of love is over."

As soon as it became evident that they might live in peace and safety in the cabin on the *Areposa*, Amy and John Alden returned thither, not perhaps in so joyous and so expectant a mood as when they had first taken possession of it, but with an enhanced appreciation, gained from deprivation, of its homely joys. Like themselves, it had seen hard usage. The doors were off their hinges, and the windows boasted not an unfractured pane of glass. The shed attached for cooking purposes was gone, and the winds had free course through the apertures in the walls from whence the greater part of the chinking had been jured; the weight and solidity of the logs had alone prevented their being carried off. But, as we bind up the wounds of a friend, so did they with willing hands remodel and repair this humble home. They hung the doors, and glazed the windows anew; they mended the walls and replanted the vines outside, which had been ruthlessly trodden under foot. The fences, hewn out with so much time and toil, had been carried off to be used as fuel, but they were in time enabled to replace them. The fruit trees, so carefully planted and watered, and left in such a thriving condition, had been wantonly destroyed, and it was impossible to obtain others this year, as the more urgent needs must first be supplied; yet they were only too happy to be allowed to work out their plans in peace, and too busy to spend much time in useless regrets.

Again the strong oxen turn the furrow, and once more they plant the seed in field and garden, and watch the tiny shoots with eager eyes. But through all, and with all their renewed happiness, was mingled a vein of deepest sadness. Everything around and about was so imbued with remembrances of the dearly-loved son and friend for whom fate had decreed the martyr's crown, that nature's brightest tints wore, for a time, a somber hue. And in all the subsequent years of patient toil, made necessary by their conditions and surroundings, the settlers of Walnut Grove have not ceased to feel the inspiration which, during that short and troubled period, flowed from those strong and noble souls. To have communed with them in the intimate relations of close friendship, was to have breathed the pure air that nourishes the ambitions of lofty spirits.

Mrs. Hardiker had returned to Missouri on the death of her son, and the Aldens heard of her but once, and that was on the occasion of her marriage with the Hon. Dr. Benjamin Cornello, whose broken political fortunes she no doubt temporarily mended with her plantation and negroes. Zeke Fagin betook himself to the far Southwest, and afterward became noted as a raider during the War of the Rebellion.

In June—the month of roses and of balmy breezes—the restoration of happiness to the prairie home of the Aldens, was made complete by the return of their bonny, bonny Grace, lovely as ever, but with an added charm of dignity and self-poised womanliness. The years of absence, though quiet ones, had not been cheerless, and she had gained much in culture and habits of thought.

"How strangely scenes answer to our moods, mamma," said she, one day soon after her return. "Everything seemed so gloomy to me when I first went back to Cleveland. The houses, the trees, the plants, even the dear old familiar faces

appeared to have been dyed in somber colors, which gradually moderated and then wore away; but never, I think, quite took on the hues which they wore when I gazed upon them with childish eyes, and basked in their brightness with the thoughtlessness of the butterfly."

Capt. Delaney she met with an easy manner, which showed her to be free from any embarrassing remembrances. On his part there was apparent somewhat of surprise at the chameleon-like character of this maiden, who two years before had awakened his passionate admiration by her artless and winning childish graces, and who now challenged his respect by her responsive sympathy with all the higher and more cultured elements of his own better nature. He sought her presence frequently, and thus there came to pass what might have been expected, the light sparkled in her eye, and the rosy blush mantled her fair cheek at his coming.

Like draws to like.

"How can I tell the signals and the signs,
 By which one heart another heart divines;
 How can I tell the many thousand ways
 By which it keeps the secret it betrays."

Oh, mystery of love! Oh, strange romance! Again its enchanted pages were turned o'er beneath the silvery moon, adown the rustic path, and by the winding stream. Low voices in earnest tones repeated the old, old story: "I love you!" "I love you!" The wild flowers whispered it, the birds sang it, and the low winds breathed it in soft music, to which their heartstrings answered back without one discordant note.

How swiftly that summer glided by on radiant wings, bringing a rich reward to the husbandman, and full fruition to the lovers' hopes, and at its close a fair bride went with the blessing of fond parents to grace the home of a proud and happy bridegroom.

Mabel Delaney came from St. Louis to gladden the wedding party with her presence, before returning to her home in South Carolina; and during her visit, Benty, our blonde Bostonian, won from her a promise, which she was only able to redeem when the passing years had freed her from her duty to her father, who fell at the head of his troops bravely fighting for slavery and secession.

And in the years which, since then, have come and gone, John Alden's brightest anticipations of material prosperity have been more than realized. Nature with lavish hand has responded to the "open sesame" of patient toil, and graced the undulating prairies here and there with majestic trees. She has given him grain, and fruits, and herbs, an abundance for use, for storage, and for exchange. Each autumn, rosy apples peep from beneath green foliage, purple grapes cluster on the vines, and yellow pears hang gracefully from heavily-laden boughs. The golden corn waves its silken tassels, and the breeze is fragrant with the scent of the new made hay, and resonant with the click, clack of the giant mower of the prairie and the hum of the steam-thresher, as it magically separates the wheat from the chaff.

John and Amy Alden sit at evening, on the veranda of a large and commodious farm house, their faces bearing an unmistakable impress of content—content material and spiritual—beautifying and glorifying all the lines left by toil and care, by sacrifice and subordination of things selfish, to the higher motives of patriotism and humanity.

Their home is made glad by the happy voices of children—their grandchildren—dark eyed and fair-faced; the toning down of whose imperious natures, with each added year of culture and experience, bespeaks the mingling of Northern and Southern blood.

But most, these children love to follow grandpa down the steps, over the velvety lawn, beyond the garden, and

through the orchard, where, on a little knoll, surrounded by tall trees, and overgrown with vines, stands the old cabin, like its owner, grown grey with age. And as in youth, John Alden's thoughts dwelt much in the future, so now the past enchants him, and the young Delaneys listen with eager interest to his oft-repeated tales of the days of "Squatter Sovereignty."

