

The Everglade Heroes.

A TALE OF FLORIDA.

The English Language

AMERICAN WRITERS

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

At the time General Jackson was Governor of Florida, soon after the treaty of "amity, settlement and limits" had been ratified between the United States and the Spanish governments, an officer of the American army was on his way from St. Augustine to Pensacola, with a large sum of money in his charge, which was to be placed in the government coffers, over which Jackson had superintendence.

This officer had arrived within one day's journey of his destination. It was an autumn afternoon. The atmosphere of that southern clime was laden with those odors which the famed trees and shrubs of West Florida exhale. The young man, who had never enjoyed so agreeable a treat of that character, was enchanted with the beautiful scenes on which his eye rested, and the delicious sweets on which other senses regaled.

He had traveled the King's road—at that time the only highway in Florida which deserved the title of road—from St. Augustine to St. Mary's river, and there, with an accession to his escort, had taken the most direct trail for Pensacola. The country having for some time been quiet,

the company traveled with little fear of molestation from marauding Indians or other depredators.

To enjoy fully the delights which air and scenery afforded, the officer had fallen behind his escort, and in the distance gaining a view of a wide-spread lagoon, he diverged from the trail to contemplate more immediately the wild fowl that rested on its waters, the grasses that waved within it, and the bright-colored flowers with varied hues that hung in festoons on its borders. Endeavoring to find his path back to the trail, after riding a few miles, he entered a pine barren, through which he had wound but a short time when it became evident to him that he had missed his reckoning, and would be unable to direct his course towards his company.

Night was fast coming on. Already the last rays of the sun, setting far away in the lagoon that the officer had been viewing, were gilding the tops of the tall pines beneath which he wandered; yet he had no fears for his safety, knowing that his men would encamp and wait for him. He had often *bivouaced* in the forest, and, determining to await the coming of morn to find the trail, he prepared to spend the night among the pines. Fastening his horse to a limb where he could conveniently browse—for there was nothing to graze—he took from his back the portmanteau containing the government funds, placed it upon the moss growing around the trunk of a massive pine, then gathering an armful of brush, struck a fire and prepared for repose.

When darkness enveloped the forest, he lay down to rest as calmly as if he had been in his own tent, surrounded by a numerous encampment. As he slept, the silver rays of a waning moon fell tremblingly through the pine foliage and revealed his form, wrapped in a hunter's blanket, stretched on the green moss.

Had he known that his wanderings were that day followed, he had not slept so sweetly; he had been standing guard over his treasure, or he had hid himself in some bushy glen or dale.

A few days previous, the "Everglade Heroes" had heard of his passage through the country, had ascertained the amount of treasure with which he had been entrusted, and they had determined that Jackson should never possess it, if a score of lives was the forfeit. The captain of these "Heroes," as they styled themselves, was now on the track of the officer. He was acquainted with Florida from the keys of the south-east to the bogs and rivers of the north-west. His band had been following the government soldiers for several days, and had a number of times meditated an attack, but prudence bid them be cautious, for they wished to commit the robbery without letting the robbed see by whom it was done. They had been watching for a favorable opportunity, until they knew that another day would cut off their chances entirely, and the captain had decided that the night following the day on which our story opens, should be the time of attack, at all hazard. What was his gratification when he saw the officer fall behind his company—then diverge from the trail! Leaving his "Heroes" to watch the escort, the captain followed the officer.

The hour had come when the captain's schemes were to be put into execution, but he disdained to rob and murder a sleeping man. Slipping to the place where the officer's steed was fastened, he cut the cord that made him a prisoner, and with a yell that rung among the pines, started the affrighted animal at a swift gallop through the forest. The officer was awakened and he sprang to his feet, expecting that

Indians were upon him. He reached for his trusty rifle, but it had been removed; his sword was at his side, however, and he quickly drew it. Before him appeared a man of swarthy hue, dressed in the Indian fashion; but he was neither Seminole nor Creek, as the officer expected.

“Lieutenant Bertram,” cried the outlaw, “I discovered who you are this afternoon. We have met, as I have long wished. I am the captain of the “Everglade Heroes”—the man you struck twelve years ago, for calling you a villain, when he was orderly sergeant under you. His Spanish passion then vowed revenge. He has since gratified it by plundering the government that would not give him justice; and he’ll now satisfy that revenge *fully* with your life and the funds you have with you.”

To this defiant speech the lieutenant made no reply. He was a brave man and a skillful swordsman, and, determined to die valiantly, he rushed upon his antagonist. The outlaw was prepared to meet him, and for more than ten minutes the clashing of their swords rang upon the night air. By his desperation and skillful swordsmanship the lieutenant was making the result of the contest doubtful, when by a skillful movement, the outlaw threw him off his guard and ran his sword through his body. He bent over him as he fell to see that it was a fatal wound; then tearing open his garments, traced two letters in blood on his breast, and muttering between his teeth, “*You’ll insult no more women,*” grasped the portmanteau that contained the treasure and speedily fled.

Major Bertram (for, though the outlaw called him lieutenant, and we adopted the title, he *was* major, having risen in rank during the twelve years to which his murderer re-

ferred,) survived but a few moments. He had not weltered in his blood half an hour, before a scout from his company found him. He had bivouaced within a mile of their encampment, and though every means had been taken to find him, his men had no suspicion that he was near them, until his horse galloped through their camp a few minutes after he had been liberated by the outlaw, chance or the instinct of the animal having led him to this rendezvous. The guards had raised the cry of Indians; but when the company was aroused, and it was found to be their major's steed that had caused the alarm, the officer in command dispatched scouts in every direction, fearing there had been robbery and murder. This officer found the major's body, and was startled by its appearance. He was a wicked man, and he exclaimed furiously:

“The torments of hell take them! The Everglade Heroes have done this! There are the characters traced in blood on the poor major's breast. The devil will be to pay when we get to Pensacola.”

For two years previous to the date of this chapter, maledictions of this kind had been frequent in Florida. The ominous letters, “*E. H.*,” with the sign of a cross, had been regarded with terror by many who had been robbed in their camps and cabins, and upon more than a hundred corpses had they been traced, along the trails which traversed the wilds of the peninsula. They were a watch-word of terror more dreadful than the title of the bloodiest Seminole. It was not known whether the “*Heroes*” were Americans, Spaniards or Indians, but they were supposed to belong to a secret band of Spanish banditti.

When the scout who had discovered the major had called

a couple of companions to his aid, a litter was prepared, and the body was carried to the trail and buried in a spot which, for many years, was marked by a rude stone. Wild flowers grew on his grave, and birds built their nests in the branches that hung over it; but Major Bertram, though a wicked man, had been a valuable officer, and he was not forgotten.

On the evening of the day following the occurrence of these events, the company arrived at Pensacola and reported the ill success of their expedition.

A liberal reward was immediately offered for the arrest of any *one* of the "Everglade Heroes;" and the high offense of murdering a major in the United States Army, and robbing the government of a large sum of money, was soon told along all the trails between Pensacola bay and St. John's river. But no officer, Indian or hunter, was able to claim the handsome reward. The murderer was secure at the retreat of his "Heroes," amid an extensive everglade on the south-western slope, drained by the Coloosatchee river.

Upon an island, approached by a strip of hard earth on which the grass grew scantily, three men had for several years hidden ill-gotten treasure, and retreated when danger threatened them. They were all of Spanish descent. Their leader, as we have intimated, had been a soldier in the United States Army, and had deserted. He was a bold and desperate man, and he had led his men on desperate expeditions and bold exploits, which had yielded them an immense amount of booty. They carried to their island retreat nothing but gold and silver or valuable jewels, and they had amassed enough to make three large fortunes. Every

possible means had been taken to ferret out their hiding place ; but they understood the art of disguise—the condition of the country had been favorable to their exploits, and though many times hotly pursued, they had eluded all search ; and there was no suspicion of the true situation of their headquarters among any of the people of the peninsula.

This band had been organized for two years. The period of the wicked copartnership had expired, and, having become richer than they anticipated, they were about to separate. The captain had already calculated the division of spoils, and they assembled to apportion the shares, before their rude cypress hut on the everglade island, with the tall grass waving about them, the fragrant wind rippling the waters of a pond on which swam myriads of wild fowl amid blossoms of the lily and lotus, bathing their varied plumage in the bright sunshine that came down from an almost Italian-clear sky. The chief counted out to each man the share of blood-stained booty which had been accorded him, and then the “Heroes” threw off their Indian dresses, changed in many respects the savage appearance they bore, packed their horses, and, in European costume, emerged from their everglade haunt. They traveled for a couple of days through secret paths, then boldly struck into a trail leading towards the St. John’s river, and pursued their way to St. Augustine, determined, as their conversation seemed to disclose, to separate as soon as they arrived at the city, give up their wicked course of life, invest their money in the purchase of lauds, and become agriculturists—in name, at least.

CHAPTER II.

THE PATGOE PARTY.

TWELVE years have elapsed since the cession of Florida to the United States.

The scene of our history now lies near the noble river St. Johns, within a few miles of St. Augustine—the oldest city of the United States.

Embowered in a grove of orange, lime, guava, citron, fig and palm trees, to which extended a wide avenue, lined on either side with ancient live oaks, and ornamented with bowers of roses, were, five years previous to the opening of the Seminole war, the ruins of an English mansion that had been the residence of a gentleman of the nobility, during the time the British nation considered the peninsula among its possessions.

It had been purchased by a wealthy Floridian, who, without heed of war, rumors of war, or Indian depredations, repaired all the devastations time and negligence had made, and added to its groves, gardens and walks, under the direction of a skillful gardener, such improvements as had rendered it the most enchanting residence of the St. John's district. When the odorous trees were in blossom, the luxuriant flowers in bloom, or the tropical fruits had ripened, it

was a palace which vied in delightful associations with the famed oriental villas that have been the "burden of song and verse" ever since Persian descriptions first glowed on the pages of traveled authors.

The owner of this place was Cabot Conere, a gentleman whose Spanish ancestors had been among the first emigrants to Florida. He had arrived at the meridian of an eventful life, and, while the country about him was in commotion, was settled peacefully with his family, consisting of his wife, and a daughter verging into womanhood, at a home surrounded with all the sources of ease and enjoyment that wealth, in that favorable clime, could command.

From a tributary to the St. John's that flowed across one portion of his plantation, a number of small streams had been led meandering among shade and ornamental trees, and through flowery paths and fruit walks—and from this circumstance, with the approval of its master, the mistress of the mansion had named it Rillwood.

Conere of Rillwood was a remarkable personage. He had all the fire and impetuosity of a Spaniard, tempered with the cool, calculating judgment of the plodding Englishman. He was tall of stature, commanding in bearing, and prepossessing in manner; but there was always about him an air of reserve, which chilled confidence, and his most intimate associates knew nothing of his history previous to the period when he made Rillwood his home.

His mansion, or villa, was celebrated the country round as the residence of the most daring and skillful sportsman of St. Augustine vicinage, the most accomplished woman of north-east Florida, and the loveliest girl that had visited the gay assemblages of the ancient city for many years.

Isabelle Conere was a Spanish beauty, with the vivacity and energy of an American girl. She had the translucent olive complexion, the full dark eye, fringed with languishing lashes, belonging to the Castilian blood, with the lithe limbs and roundly developed muscles that are the heritage of the maiden of North America, who loves the rough gallop before sunrise, and the hill-chase after sunset, better than needle-work or sentimental reading.

Senora Conere—as her husband persisted in calling her, although she was a Virginia lady, of English descent—was one of those mild, excellent women, who are ministers of goodness and charity, beloved by all the poverty-stricken and sorrow-laden. She had never been what the world would call beautiful; indeed, at the period when we commence her history, although there was a matronly grace of manner about her, a majority of persons, whose tastes are formed on conventional principles, would have considered her homely—and *homely* she was, in the true sense of the term.

Homely—what an abused term, taken in connection with the associations clustering around the first syllable! Richardson defines it, “Pertaining to home; having the plainness and simplicity of home;” and Milton says in *Comus*:

“It is for homely features to keep at home;
They had their name hence.”

The most cherished pleasures of the mistress of Rillwood sprang from the enjoyments of her own home, and the gratification of laboring to make other homes happy. Her pleasing, affectionate manner fitted her for charitable duties; and wherever there was poverty or suffering, she was the angel

of mercy and hope that brought relief and consolation. She was the very antipode of Conere. What a contrast between this calm-natured, fragile woman and the muscular, strong-minded Spaniard—a summer zephyr contrasted with the northern blast of midwinter; it was the mating of the dove with the eagle. Yet she loved him truly, and he appeared to return her affection; but his was that love which power may be expected to bestow upon a dependent idol.

The daughter had her father's wild and fitful spirit, with her mother's good-heartedness. The two natures were singularly blended in Isabelle. She appeared frank and ingenuous; she *was* independent; but when she had a purpose to gain, she was crafty and secretive; and she had often wayward moods, over which her mother had long ceased to attempt a control.

It is an evening in early autumn. Breathing a "hushed and charmed air," an atmosphere redolent with the fragrance of tropical fruits and the perfume of rare flowers, upon the seat of an arbor, shaded by a pomegranate tree, and overhung with clustering vines, Isabelle Conere reclined. She awaits a trysting hour, when she expects to meet one who will assist her to persuade her father to come home on the morrow—her eighteenth birth day—which is to be commemorated by a Patgoe Party.

She is becoming impatient, when upon her attentive ear falls the melody of a familiar tune, sung sweetly in low tones. She falls in with the singer and softly follows the tune with a delicious voice, until the vocalist has approached within a few steps, then springing from her reclining position, she accosted him:

“’Tis past the hour, and if something had not detained father at the city, I should not have to thank you for aiding me in getting his consent to be with us to-morrow.”

“I was here an hour since, but knew your father had not come, and failing to find you, I wandered to the orange grove, and there I met Conere. I told him that you waited for him. His brow was dark, and he bid me tell you that he could not see you, and you must not expect him at the festivities to-morrow. Before this time he has returned to St. Augustine.”

“He gave you no explanation—no other message?”

“None.”

“There has been something preying on his mind of late. Does mother know that he will be absent to-morrow?”

“I believe she does not.”

“Let me seek her.”

The young man who held this conversation with Isabelle Conere was a native of trade-driving Connecticut—a scion of Puritan stock—attracted to this southern land by a handsome property bequeathed him by an uncle, who had been one of the early English settlers on the St. John’s river.

This property was situated within half a mile of Rillwood. Ledyard Brinton had lived at Windsor (thus named by his loyal uncle) nearly four years. His household was governed by a widowed aunt, and his plantation was controlled by a creole, who managed it in a manner that yielded profitable returns to its owner. Brinton had “southern policy” enough not to meddle with other people’s business, and he made no enemies among his neighbors, by interfering with their “peculiar institutions.” He had, probably, not made Florida his permanent home, if an acci-

dental acquaintance with Isabelle Conere, had not rendered the country one of peculiar interest. He was a frequent visitor at Rillwood, and, seemingly, a favored companion of the proprietor, as well as of his daughter.

Conere was adverse to forming intimate associations, and he did not cultivate Brinton's acquaintance without an object. On the night in which they met in the orange grove, Conere had applied to him for the loan of a large sum of money. Brinton was unable to accommodate him at the hour, but Conere attributing his refusal to unwillingness, abruptly bid him a good night, telling him to inform Isabelle that he should be absent on the morrow.

The mother and daughter were not surprised at the decision brought them, for latterly Conere had made them accustomed to sudden departures, and many times, when he returned his moods were in no wise agreeable. For six months he had been sadly in trouble about his pecuniary affairs. He had engaged in numerous speculations—the country was in an unsettled state, and he found it difficult to “keep up appearances” that would deceive his friends and the acquaintances of his family. It was to keep from foreclosure, mortgages which would have exposed his circumstances, that he was obliged to absent himself from his daughter's birth-day festival. She was grieved at his absence, because she loved her father with a wild love, which she had reason to think was sincerely returned—and she had given herself much pleasure in calculating upon his enjoyment in the festivities that would commemorate her majority.

The pleasures of the day were to spring from a Patgoe party—and what is a Patgoe party?

It was a festival common in Florida at the time of which we write, as the introduction to a dance, the popular amusement of the Floridians. A wooden bird, fixed upon a pole, was carried through the neighborhood. Each lady, to whom it was presented, made an offering of a piece of ribbon, choosing the color and style. The bird is soon decked in gaudy style, and at an hour appointed, gallanted by their beaux, bearing their rifles, the fair patrons of the Patgoe assemble at a spot selected. The bird is put up as a mark, and the sportsman who buries the first ball in its novel plumage is proclaimed king of the entertainment. He presents the Patgoe to the lady of his choice, and she is crowned queen. On Isabelle Conere's birth day, Ledyard Brinton was the fortunate marksman, and she was chosen his royal consort.

A large company had assembled at Rillwood. Upon the lawn, in front of the mansion, the festivities were proceeding—here a dancing party—there a bevy of waltzers—away, beneath the shade of an orange or pomegranate tree, were lovers engaged in “converse sweet;” and all was joy and hilarity, befitting the occasion, conducted, as it was, with regal splendor by the king and queen.

As the shades of evening began to gather, a horseman was seen urging his steed at a swift gallop up the main avenue towards the mansion. Isabelle, who had painful forebodings, fled precipitately to the house. When she arrived the messenger was already in her mother's room, and she was obliged to await his reëpearance in the hall, which she no sooner perceived than she flew to him.

“Is father harmed? Where is he, Benjamin? You

must tell me!" exclaimed the girl, with fearful energy and startling wildness of manner.

"He is at St. Augustine, and unharmed," answered the man.

"Why came you here then in such haste?"

"To get papers which it is necessary for your father to have immediately, for the settlement of some important business."

"Will he be home to-day—answer me fairly?"

"I will, Isabelle," said the messenger, trembling as she laid her hand upon his shoulder, "Your father cannot come home to-day, nor perhaps to-morrow; but by that time I hope all his difficulties will be settled. You must question me no farther, for I am forbidden to tell you."

"Then mother *shall*," cried the excited girl, hastening in quest of her parent. But she could obtain no satisfactory information. Her mother did not know what detained Conere; but from the character of the documents the messenger had demanded, she feared that he had fallen into serious trouble.

The festivities were now without the spirit of their queen—an army foraging for pleasure bereft of their commander—and the party broke up and the guests departed much earlier than had been anticipated.

Isabelle sought Brinton, to ascertain if he could enlighten her on the suspicious conduct of the messenger. He could give her no assistance, but strange surmises were aroused, and he determined to know whether these surmises were well founded.

In an hour he was galloping towards St. Augustine.

CHAPTER III.

THE FATAL MEETING.

WHEN Conere parted from Brinton, at the orange grove, he walked rapidly to a bye-path where his horse was fastened, mounted and spurred him eagerly along the road towards St. Augustine. Within a mile of the city, when it was near dark, he turned off the main road into an obscure trail. Along this he galloped speedily for several hours, and then reined up at a low uninviting palmetto hut, and forthwith entered without ceremony. He remained for more than an hour, and when he came out, appeared anxious to get beyond hearing before any one should follow him; but as he was about to mount his jaded steed, a torch-light flashed from the hut and a voice hailed him.

“Remember, at two o’clock to-morrow afternoon.”

“I’ll be there,” replied Conere with evident impatience, and the sound of his horse’s hoofs soon died away at the hut.

We will not follow the Spaniard in his wanderings that night. About noon of the following day, he slowly approached St. Augustine. He paid no heed to the burning sun, and though he was much oppressed, it was not on account of the sultry air, that had covered his tired horse with

white foam. He stopped at a mean looking house, in the suburbs of the city, flung his bridle to a negro in attendance, hastily turned a corner, and rapidly pursued his way towards the heart of the city. He proceeded to the public square, which opens on Mantanzas Sound, and striding before the monument dedicated to the constitution of the Spanish Cortez, which rears its front in the center, struck directly to what the French call a *cafe*, situated near one of the corners. Addressing a few words to the swarthy-looking attendant at the bar, Conere walked up a flight of narrow stairs. The *cafe* was a two story building, erected of coquina, (a peculiar sea-shell, employed extensively for building purposes some years ago along the Florida coast,) and in the rear of the second story was a low, dark room, to which Conere directed his steps. He entered without knocking, and throwing his sombrero on the table, surveyed the apartment. Upon a bench near the window, he espied a rough-looking man, perhaps thirty-five years of age, who gazed upon his dark brow a moment, and then very indifferently remarked:

“You’re punctual, Cabot—no doubt you’re prepared.”

“Have you the papers?” returned Conere, with ill-feigned annoyance, disdaining the seat to which his companion pointed him.

With the most unconcerned manner, the rough man answered, “If I haven’t, my pocket’s been picked since I lay down here. Ah! here they are, all right!”—producing a roll of documents from a large pocket in his coarse coat, and throwing them on the table.

“What are the sums?” said Conere, still standing, with a struggle to appear calm.

“Enough to play the devil with you, if you are not pre-

pared to cancel them. Conere, these are very different circumstances from what you and I calculated on when we did business together, some years ago. You were master then — the tide's changed."

"You will not taunt *me*, Espard. You have reason to fear me, if I *am* in your power just now. You know what I *have* been — I feel one of my old moods to-day."

"It will become you, Conere, to keep cool. I am not here unprepared, and *you* know what *I* have been," answered Espard, with the most imperturbable coolness, still reclining on the bench.

Conere, every moment falling into a deeper passion, looked wickedly at his tormentor, and replied, "*You must* not taunt me, or you shall know what I can be *now* — but are you ready to settle this business?"

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"All right, then," said Espard, slowly raising himself up and drawing the bench towards the table, when Conere arrested his movements.

"But I am here without a dollar. You must give me more time, or do your best, and abide by the consequences."

"Threats, eh? if I make you pay your honest debts, that have been due these six months. I'll have the last picayune. I'll not wait another day. Your property shall pay me, if it takes the night-cap off your beauty, and your Virginia lady has to accommodate herself to a cabin. We'll see who'll be gentleman then."

Espard had thrown off his indifference, and these words were uttered as if he gloated at the prospect of making Conere a beggar. The Spaniard saw this, and felt that all

his calmness was requisite. In the mildest tone he had used during their interview, almost in a whisper, he replied:

“No word of my family, Espard, or by heavens you die!” In a menacing attitude he approached his creditor, who sprang to his feet and drew a pistol, crying, “Beware, Conere; I know what I say, and I mean it. If your pet has to take the street, her beauty will be a good market, and you will have no more need of money-lenders who *take care of their funds.*”

These words were uttered with a peculiar bitterness, which Conere fully understood; he was livid with rage, and exclaiming, “The torments of hell take the wretch!” he dashed aside the table which stood between them, and sprang upon his insulter.

Espard instantly fired his pistol, slightly wounding Conere in his right side. The door of the room was broken open by persons from below, who had been alarmed at the noise made in the scuffle; but before they reached the combatants, Espard fell heavily upon the floor, with Conere’s dagger in his breast. A portion of the party appeared to be friends of the fallen man, for immediately they took him up and conveyed him from the *cafe*, as Conere and all the inmates supposed, dead.

Without the movement of a muscle, or an effort at concealment, Conere saw his victim borne away. He was about to follow the company, when his eye fell upon the roll of papers about which the difficulty had commenced, lying near the upturned table. He hastily grasped them, and hiding them beneath his coat, muttered, “The man who would have conspired has gone to the devil, and Isabelle and her mother are safe.”

By this time officers had arrived, and Conere was taken into custody. His Secretary happened to be in the city, and soon heard of the affray and hastened to the magistrate who had Conere in durance. He would make no effort at a release — attempt no palliation — he had calmly determined to let matters take their course and meet his fate. But he was glad to see his Secretary, because there were certain papers at Rillwood of which the peace of his family might require *him* to be possessed.

Of the Secretary's reception at Rillwood, during the Patgoe party, our history has made mention. When he returned to St. Augustine he found Conere in a strange mood. He would answer no questions satisfactorily, and had none to ask about his family. The Secretary importuned him for permission to tell his wife that night what was the cause of his absence. At length, knowing the knowledge must soon come to her, and wishing that she should communicate the sad news to Isabelle, he consented.

The wound he received had been dressed and gave him little annoyance. It was in no degree dangerous. He was not confined in the common jail, but had been provided with a room in an old fort fronting on the Mantanzas, and was provided with all the conveniences he desired. Soon after his Secretary departed for Rillwood, he called for a cigar, had it lighted, and throwing himself upon a couch, composedly drew a cloud of thin smoke around him. When the guard had retired to his place outside the door, taking from his pocket two rolls of papers, he opened them, and after looking at them a few minutes ignited them, piece by piece, and watched them slowly burn, till every particle had been

reduced to ashes ; then, in the most determined manner, he paced his room, muttering :

“ Let them do their worst now — let them hang me *if they can*. I ought to die ; I’ve lived long enough in *this* world. They cannot expose me. Espard is dead, thank God, and the only man whom I need fear is far away. Isabelle and her mother are secure ; they have the richest plantation about St. Augustine, and they can do without *me*. It is best I should die now, for there’s no telling what *may* happen when the news that I killed Espard gets abroad. I’ll wait patiently for what does come, but I have lived too long in this world not to know what will save me from an ignominious *public* death.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAUGHTER'S RESOLVE.

ISABELLE CONERE passed a restless night, and when the soft air of early morn breathed into her apartment, she arose from her couch and sat down by a window overlooking the orange grove. The fragrance of those trees, exhaling deliciously from the dew drops which trembled on their leaves and blossoms, hung in the pure air about her. Sometimes she leaned her head on the window sill, as if in deep revery; then she watched the faint streaks of dawn appear in the eastern sky, as the sun neared the verge of the horizon, and again she cast her eyes confidently up to

“The blue eye of God, which is above us.”

Near one of the rills that murmured around the mansion,

“A mocking bird, wildest of singers,
Swinging aloft on a willow spray that hung over the water,
Shook from his little throat such floods of delicious music,
That the whole air, and the woods, and the waves, seemed silent to listen.
Plaintive at first were the tones, and sad; then soaring to madness,
Seemed they to follow or guide the revel of frenzied Bacchantes.
Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low lamentation;
Till, having gathered them all, he flung them abroad in derision.”

The restless girl listened, enraptured, feeling that, in the natural eloquence of sympathy, the wild singer expressed her emotions.

She had determined that the day should not pass without bringing full knowledge to her of what had befallen her father, and of the troubles she foreboded that were to fall upon their house.

As soon as the servants were stirring, leaving untouched the morning meal that her maid had brought her, she sent a request that her mother would meet her in the parlor, and walked out on the lawn. She had heard the Secretary return to the mansion in the night, and knew that he had called for her mother, and she hoped to meet him in some of the walks; but in this she was disappointed, and she returned to the house with the fears of the night in no degree allayed. When she entered the parlor, her mother awaited her. Her first salutation was:

“Mother, *will* father be home to-day?”—taking her parent by the hands, and looking, through fast flowing tears, into her face. Her mother was moved, and answered, with much feeling:

“I fear, daughter, you will not see your father *at home* for many days — perhaps for years.”

“What has happened to him?” said Isabelle, wildly.

“I cannot tell you now, child. I will see you when you are more calm.”

And the mother’s overflowing heart revealed its deep emotion in scalding tears and suppressed sobs, for Conere did not tell the Secretary that he had not committed premeditated murder. Under this impression his wife suffered, and she ended this painful conference by abruptly withdrawing from

the parlor, leaving Isabelle in an anxiety of mind which impelled her to fathom the mystery at any hazard.

This mother, with all her good-heartedness, was one of those women who never can freely communicate with their children upon afflictions that may befall the family — counsel them on the stern duties of life, or instruct them fully upon its cares and griefs — and Isabelle had grown to womanhood as unsophisticated in all these matters as the child of the forest.

No sooner had the door closed behind her mother, than Isabelle was out on the lawn again. The fresh air was pleasant upon her fevered brow, and she became somewhat calmed in her ramble, before she found the Secretary; but yet, with a profusion of dark ringlets hanging disheveled about her fair neck — her face pale with watching, and her eyes sparkling with the lustre of anxiety, her appearance startled him, when he met her in a garden path, back of the mansion. With an arch grace of manner, she accosted him:

“You had a pleasant ride this morning?”

“Rather,” was the laconic reply.

“Is not the air sweet and pure?”

The Secretary was embarrassed. He had expected a storm when he saw Isabelle approach him. She was now so strangely calm, he feared she might have heard of her father's arrest, and become partially deranged, and he was considering how to answer her, when her expression changed, and she drove his speculations all out of his head, by inquiring:

“Did father send me anything?”

“Nothing,” replied the wondering servant.

“Where did you leave him, Benjamin?”

“At the city.”

“I know *that*, Benjamin, and you cannot evade me. I *will* know where he is, and you *shall* tell me!”

“I dare not, Miss Isabelle.”

“But I have said you *shall*,” replied the girl, with a wild energy which made the Secretary quake.

“It’s dreadful, and you would curse me.”

“I’ll thank you—I’ll like you, Benjamin. If it’s dreadful, so much the more should I know all about it—*will you tell me*, Benjamin?”

As if forced from him with a great effort, the Secretary uttered the words:

“He’s in prison.”

“In prison!” echoed Isabelle. As upon the wings of the wind, she flew along the garden paths, and in a few minutes burst into her mother’s room.

“Why is my father imprisoned?” were her first words.

“Imprisoned, daughter, who told you?”

“Benjamin; I forced it from him. But, mother, quick—I must know—my brain’s on fire!”

In broken sentences, and with frequent interruptions, by the repressing of deep emotion, the mother revealed to her daughter what the Secretary had related at their interview during the night. When Isabelle had learned the dangerous circumstances under which her father was placed, she walked backwards and forwards for some minutes, with her hands pressed on her brow, then stopping before her mother, she cried:

“It is false—it is a conspiracy. I don’t believe a word of it. The man who is dead was a bad man, and if father killed him, he had cause for it. He shall not die. He *shall* be liberated!”

“My daughter, be calm,” interposed the weeping mother.
“You do not know what you are doing.”

“But I *do*, mother—I am in earnest—it shall *not* be so!”
And with impotent passion the afflicted daughter clasped her hands and wept scalding tears upon her mother’s neck; then in a moment sank by her side, and rested her head upon the ottoman on which the mother sat.

Suddenly a violent storm had come up, and the rain began to fall heavily upon the roof. Its dull, regular music seemed to soothe the stricken mother and daughter. Isabelle raised her head—

“Mother, I read in that French history Benjamin lent me, of a young girl, who left her home, in devotion to her country, and went to Paris, determined to deliver the land of her birth from the mad passions of a man who, she believed, was the great cause of the social evils that oppressed the people. She killed him, mother—*killed* the bad man. It is nobler to *save* a father. I shall never rest till my father is saved. I know he is not a murderer—I will never believe it.”

The mother had no power to restrain her daughter; she had been unaccustomed to maternal restraint in her childish sports;—what influence could the parent now have over the wild frenzy which distracted the young girl’s mind? She could only say, mildly:

“You must go to rest, Isabelle. You do not know what you talk about. Sleep would compose you.”

“Sleep, mother!—I’ll go to my room, but not to rest.”

Isabelle retired. She loved her mother, and would always obey her implicitly, when her wild passions were not stirred. She threw herself upon a couch, and lay with her eyes fixed

on the ceiling, as if she would count the rain-drops as they pattered upon the roof.

Isabelle Conere had taste, if she had not meekness. She loved flowers—she loved the birds—she loved nature in its calmest as well as wildest aspects; and, hanging about her room, were representatives of all these tastes, that would not have discredited a much more pretending boudoir.

In an hour, the mother called to see if her daughter rested. She found her, as it were, in a trance; but the parent's foot-fall aroused her, and springing to her feet, she exclaimed:

“The storm is past, mother. I shall see father this afternoon.”

“Not calm yet, my child?”

“Not calm? No! Mother, I wonder how you can be so calm; but you are older—you have had more experience—you can control your feelings.”

“And you must learn to do so, Isabelle, or you will find this a sad world.”

“It is a lesson I cannot learn now, mother. I know this is a sad world. What a proof I now have—my father in prison! Mother, I will go with you to see him to-day.”

The mother knew that it would be useless to deny Isabelle this privilege, and perforce she answered:

“If you wish it.”

“You know I *do*, mother. I made Benjamin promise, this morning, if you would go, to take us to the city this afternoon; and if he had not consented, I should have sent for Brinton.”

Before five o'clock that afternoon, under the escort of Benjamin, Isabelle and her mother applied for permission to see Conere. Their request was cheerfully granted. Isabelle

was pressed to her father's heart. She looked up fondly into his face ; it was careworn.

"You grieve, father, that wicked men persecute you, but you shall be liberated," she remarked, affectionately, half soliloquizing.

"I fear not, my daughter," was his reply, in a tone which chilled her.

Isabelle glanced around the dreary room, so different from that to which she had been accustomed, and through dripping eyelashes gazed at her father.

"But you are innocent, father. You *must* be rescued."

The father had practiced deception all his life, but he dare not deceive Isabelle. He was thinking, and did not answer her promptly.

"Tell me you are innocent, father. Say they have persecuted you. What made them do it?"

"I would not deceive *you*, Isabelle. I do not feel myself guilty, but I did kill Espard."

"Was it premeditated? Did you do it without cause?" eagerly asked the daughter, tightening her grasp on her father's hand.

"Neither," he replied coolly. "He insulted me basely. I threatened him—he fired his pistol at me, and I stabbed him."

"I knew it—I knew it. Thank God, you *shall* be rescued."

"But this I cannot prove, my daughter. My dagger was found in his breast."

"I care not," she answered thoughtfully. "A way will come ; a way *must* come."

At this moment Benjamin entered, and told them that

the hour of their privilege had expired, and the guard demanded his prisoner. Conere took a tender leave of his wife and daughter, and Benjamin escorted them back to Billwood.

This Benjamin was a New England boy who had followed Brinton to Florida. He had been a school-mate, and his father having been an old friend of the Brinton family, Ledyard took the boy south with him, to enable him to get a "start in the world." At first he had a great "notion" of fighting the Indians, but Brinton convinced him that this business would be poor "pay," and he gave up the idea, to become the secretary of Conere, and a sort of "general help" about his family. He had determined on "making his fortune" before he returned to New England.

He had not yet proceeded very far towards the "goal of his ambition," but perhaps brighter days are in store for him. He was working like a man who means to "rise in the world." He had a respectable quantum of Yankee economy, and every odd picayune he could spare, went towards the purchase of some rare book. Conere and Brinton both had large libraries, but Benjamin had, long since, made himself acquainted with all the congenial lore they contained; and with a *carte blanche* to all the lawyers' and doctors' offices of St. Augustine, as well as to a number of private libraries, he was reaping all the advantages of book learning, which the times and his circumstances allowed. He was a fellow of rough manners, from early association, but naturally quite a gentleman in his address. He took great pains to give himself the air of a well bred citizen, and it had begun to be apparent that communion with men and books was giving his manners a polish and his conversation

a point ; and about the time of which we write, it was whispered that Benjamin had enough of the genuine Yankee in his composition to make a stir in the world some day. He was now about twenty years of age, was tall and sinewy, had dark hair that hung in graceful wavelets, and a bold black eye that possessed a general-observation expression, which gave his countenance quite the look of a man of the world. He had labored diligently and watchfully to conquer New England mannerisms, but he could never so remodel the outward character, stamped upon him by nature and education, that he would not at first "guess" have been "reckoned" a Yankee, by all who had the slightest familiarity with the habits, manners and peculiarities of that class of the *genus homo*.

CHAPTER V.

THE POSEY DANCE.

HAD Isabelle Conere been called to follow to the grave the remains of a father who had died in honor, though the affliction had set heavily upon her, she could have borne up against it without palor of cheek, dimming of eye, or decline in the elasticity of her step; but to see him whom she had loved, with that trusting affection that believes its object can do no wrong, buried within the thick walls of a dismal cell,—if she did feel that he deserved not the punishment which the laws put upon him,—was the germ of a grief that immediately began to sap the buoyant spirits that had blessed her girlhood. She had not given up the strong determination, taken hastily in an hour of violent passion, that her father should be liberated. She had formed no idea how this deliverance was to be effected—she reflected not *of* the means—she determined, with all the power of an uncurbed will, *upon the end*.

Conere had been a prisoner in the castle of St. Mark, now called Fort Marion, nearly six months. This castle, commanding the approach to St. Augustine, between Anastasia Island and the main shore, was, at the time of which we write, used as a civil and military prison.

It is the oldest fort in the United States, having been built in 1756. With its grass-grown walls, lofty turrets and massive battlements, which give it an air of antique romance,—with the stories told of some of its dungeons, that they were at one time used for the purposes of the Spanish Inquisition, it forms a great attraction to the “sight seekers” who visit the Peninsula. The casemate in which Conere was confined was that from which, some years subsequently, the Indian Coacoochee, youngest son of the renowned and subtle chief Philip, escaped through an embrasure; and many curiosity-lovers have walked over its damp floors, who had no thought of the bitter tears shed profusely upon them, by a devoted daughter.

The Spaniard had been arraigned before an inferior court, and remanded to prison to await his trial, before the proper tribunal, for the amazing crime of murder in the first degree. He had employed no counsel; he made no explanation, attempted no palliation. Brinton had used every effort possible, in his behalf, but Conere would second no scheme for his release.

It is strange that he made no full confession of all his circumstances to his family; but when the thought was suggested, or it came up in his mind, his universal soliloquy was, “Ashes are not mortgages.” And when Brinton urged him to make preparation for his approaching trial, he answered:

“I cannot, *would* not tell *you* why; but it is best they should do their worst. I shall be prepared.”

The people believed that Conere was a base murderer. They knew him to be a man of dark passions, with a Spaniard’s disregard of the life of an enemy; and there were

those who, notwithstanding all that Madam Conere had done, as an angel of mercy and charity, circulated base rumors, and alienated many friends.

Though the blight of crime had fallen on the master of Rillwood, in what were his wife and daughter changed? Nothing but devotion. But the purblind world cannot recognize nice distinctions unless they happen to be in a desired favor; and there were few of Isabelle Conere's friends who regarded her the more tenderly because she appeared prepared to sacrifice her life at her father's order, to save him from his impending fate.

Madam Conere, tender-hearted, mild-natured, grieved sorely at the coldness of former intimate acquaintances; and she was dying, as the tropical plant dies in a chill clime, for the want of that life-giving nourishment necessary to bind her closely to earth—sympathy in the rendering of good deeds—that had made her life blessed. Isabelle said of all who grew distant:

“Let them go, mother, they are not worth having.”

But the mother could not find in her heart a shade of feeling akin to her daughter's cynicism; and every day her cheek grew paler, her form became more attenuated, and at the return from each sad visit to her imprisoned husband, it was evident another of the ties that bound her to earth had been broken. There were true friends among the poor and lowly minded, who were welcomed to her household, and their anxious concern did much to soothe her sorrows; but they could not bring back her waning strength, nor restore the lustre to her listless eye.

But it must not be said that all the influential, who, in prosperity, had been friends of the Rillwood family, now

deserted them. There were those who did not vanish when adversity fell upon Rillwood, as the early blossom vanishes when the cold mountain air comes upon it, as,

“Winter still lingering on the verge of Spring,
Retires reluctant, and from time to time
Looks back.”

Foremost among the true ones, should be mentioned Brinton and Benjamin.

Isabelle had counseled with Brinton. She had declared her determination that at all hazard her father should be released from prison, before the threatening vengeance of the law fell upon him, hoping to gain the aid of his strong mind and worldly experience, in devising the means by which her object was to be accomplished ; but when she had revealed all to him, with amazement he exclaimed :

“It cannot be, Isabelle, honorably, except by means of a pardon, and of that you know there can be no hope.”

“It shall be, Ledyard Brinton,” returned Isabelle, in a tone which made him shudder, “with or without a pardon ; and if *you* now desert me, I must seek aid where I can place my confidence.”

“I *will* aid you, Isabelle—will do all an honorable man can do ; but my self-respect requires me to tell you that your project is a mad one.”

“I am resolved, Ledyard. I know you too well to believe you could now give me your confidence ; and the counsel I expected from you, I must seek from a stranger. But do not plead with me ; it will avail nothing.”

These words were uttered by Isabelle with deep emotion,

as she walked with Brinton along the avenue leading from the Augustine road to Rillwood mansion. They were unanswered for some moments. Brinton had absented himself from festivities proceeding at his house, under the direction of his aunt and her daughter, to spend half an hour with Isabelle, and they had been walking some time when the conversation we have detailed, occurred. We will not describe their parting that night, but let the conduct of Brinton reveal his feelings, when, an hour afterwards, he returned to Windsor.

The Posey Dance had opened with spirit, and a "merrie companie" were whirling its giddy mazes with general delight. Benjamin appeared to be master of ceremonies. We shall see how it happened.

The Posey Dance, not like the Patgoe, is a favorite, particularly of west Florida. The ladies of a household, wishing to gather their friends, erect an altar, decorated with bouquets and festoons of flowers, which is understood by the gentlemen as an invitation to call and admire the taste and skill of the fair architects. The lady of the house, culling a rare bouquet, presents it to the gentleman of her choice, and if he accept the honor, he becomes master of the festivities, chooses the lady as queen of the ball, and then follow Spanish dances and whirling waltzes.

Brinton's English cousin had chosen Benjamin as the gentleman with whom she was best acquainted, and the aspiring New Englander felt his consequence as much as if he had been king of all the Spaniards, instead of superintendent of Spanish dances for a few hours.

Brinton had no heart to join the gay assemblage of dancers, and he wandered towards a bower in the garden,

from which, on the calm night air, floated sounds of delicious music.

His aunt was a passionate lover of music, and she had inspired him with much of her enthusiasm. She had an exquisite ear and a finely cultivated voice, and, from the families in the neighborhood, she had collected half a dozen young girls and several gentlemen, who often, under her direction, made vocal with enrapturing strains the orange groves about Windsor. Brinton delighted in these parties, but he could have no pleasure in this one. Isabelle should have been there to sing with him wild and melancholy songs. He stood beside his friends in the arbor, and followed the tunes they sang, but he could not sing *with* them. His aunt observed his change of manner, and when the singers were prepared to join the dancers in the mansion, she took his arm, and they wandered along a garden walk.

The aunt wept over the nephew's growing attachment for Isabelle Conere, because her notions of happiness, in married life, were formed upon a much different standard from that generally regarded in Florida, and feeling that Brinton's impulses were with hers, she warned him, that if Isabelle Conere became his wife, he would never have a home, and counseled him tenderly, not to allow himself to be *entrapped*, as she considered it.

Brinton felt that his aunt did not understand Isabelle, and he did not heed her warnings, though he received her counsels kindly. On the night of which we now speak, she knew from Brinton's manner, that something of no trivial character had disturbed him, and she suspected that it concerned Isabelle. When they had walked where their con-

versation would not be overheard, after referring to Isabelle's absence, and the sad cause, she inquired:

"But, Ledyard, is the girl as wild as ever?"

"Wild!" he returned, speaking as if his thoughts had been echoed. "If you had seen her to-night, you had not asked me; but it is over now — all over."

"What is over, Ledyard?"

"Our intimacy — we have separated."

"Then you have taken my counsel — you believe that she should never be your wife?" said the aunt, eagerly.

"No, aunt. No. You do not understand Isabelle. I am rejected."

"Rejected!" repeated the lady.

"Yes, rejected," said Brinton, bitterly.

"Has she been a coquette — has she deceived you?"

"Not deceived *me*, aunt, but she deceives herself. She confessed that she loved me — that were it not for her father's ill fate, I would be her choice. But she is mad, aunt. She says her father shall be liberated — that his prison doors shall be opened. I told her it was impossible, except by force; but she would not hear me, and when I said she should have some one to counsel with her — to be her true friend, in the troubles that had fallen upon her house, and begged her to let me be her protector, she answered wildly, 'You are not the man, Ledyard.' I told her, all that an honorable man could do I was ready to perform. But it would not answer. She declared that marriage must be subservient to the object, for the attainment of which she had devoted her life, and she would have no man for a husband who would not consecrate himself to that work, at all risk. Oh, she is mad! I pleaded with her a few minutes,

then the expression of her dark eye grew terrible—I shall never forget it—and she fiercely bid me never dare to mention marriage to her again. I cannot see her destroy herself. What shall I do? What a woman she would be, if her powers were directed in the proper channel.”

And the young man looked up confidently to his aunt, as if expecting that she would propose a scheme that would banish all his painful thoughts; but if he had a thought of this character, it vanished when the stern woman replied:

“I am sorry for her, Ledyard, but I rejoice for you. It is strange you are not convinced that my counsel is for your good.”

“You do not know how I love her, aunt. I would do anything but sacrifice my honor to her, and this she would not have me do. She is mad. Hers is the purpose of a crazy woman, and I must save her from it.” Saying these words, Brinton turned, as if to go back towards the mansion.

“You would not go to her again, Ledyard?” said the aunt.

“I must walk alone,” he returned, sadly. “I am half distracted—perhaps I have madly loved this girl, but I cannot see her madly destroy herself.” With these words, as they approached company, Brinton disappeared from his aunt’s side. She whispered as he left:

“Go not now, Brinton, or I shall think you as mad as Isabelle.”

But her words were unheeded. High in the heavens rode the full moon, but Brinton knew not whether he walked in sunlight or moonlight. He emerged from an orange grove near Rillwood, just as a party of revelers, returning home from Windsor, passed along a neighboring path, and not

wishing to be observed, and knowing that he would not now be missed at home, he sat down beneath one of the trees and endeavored to reflect; but his thoughts were not at his command, and he sat gazing towards the spot where he supposed the object of his anxiety to be, when a dark form appeared on the front steps, and was admitted by Isabelle. Feelings which he could not explain, gave him an impulse to speak one word to her, at least, before she reflected for the night, on the strange conversation they had held together in the early part of the evening.

He appeared at the entrance to the main hall. Isabelle was in the parlor, and answered his summons alone. Her manner startled him.

“To what,” she said formally, “am I indebted, Mr. Brinton, for this visit? I thought we had parted.”

“I come to talk to you, Isabelle.”

“I’ll listen to you here, then; but our conference must be brief.”

“I have a great deal to say, Isabelle. You know not what I have suffered in the last hour. Let me counsel you.”

“You mistake me, Mr. Brinton. Did I not tell you that I was resolved. The command of one from the grave could not change me. Above us swings the cage of a parrot, which you taught to speak four words—it repeats them unceasingly, as long as the light of each day lasts. Go near it when you will, it is crying ‘*Polly wants to fly;*’ and it has never uttered any other words. There is one confined, for whose release I shall labor as unceasingly as that parrot begs, and unless he fly from his prison, never, until the light of life goes out, will I relinquish my task. When you would talk to me, think of that parrot. You made your choice.

Until you can tell me you would alter it, I command you, speak to me no more of love. Good night."

Isabelle disappeared, leaving Brinton in a state of mind which he alone could describe, who experienced its peculiar perplexity and embarrassment. He walked slowly from the mansion, and sat down in an arbor on the main avenue. He continued with his thoughts for an hour or more, when voices disturbed him. He looked towards the hall door, and by the broad moonlight which streamed into it, he recognized two persons whom he had little expected to see thus together. He cursed himself for having stopped in that place; then he reflected:

"All is over—it's no matter now."

In a moment, the gentleman had passed him; he could not be deceived. It was Benjamin, and he had kissed Isabelle's hand at parting. Conjecture and speculation were at fault entirely, in divining the object of this meeting; and Brinton was more in wonder than ever at the strangeness of Isabelle's conduct.

A great change had come over this man Benjamin in the period intervening between this time and his first introduction in our history. He was no longer secretary to Conere. He was regarded, at St. Augustine, as a shrewd Northerner, who had recently taken the license to peddle pills and feel pulses. Benjamin possessed that sly way of getting along through this world which gives men the reputation of being "smart fellows." It is not exactly on the principle by which a miller or a chimney-sweep gets through a crowd, but it is by making shrewd use of the faculty of reading other men's characters and dispositions. It is a faculty of incalculable advantage to the demagogue—he knows all men truly,

while they think him anything but the man he really is. This power enables the "wire-puller" to prosecute his "cunningly devised schemes;" it is, too, of great benefit, many times, to the orator; and by it the lawyer is enabled to make out a "hard case" and let his client go "scot free." In all business relations it is available, and, to a great extent, is the secret of most men's success; and although it may not be always employed with a view to the maxim that "honesty is the best policy," we have no doubt it is frequently the "policy" of dignitaries whose position should be above trickery. The Scottish bard thought it of no inconsiderable importance, when he gave the following advice:

"Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection,
But keek through ivery ither man
Wi' sharpened slie inspection."

CHAPTER VI.

RESULTS.

SPRING had departed — that season when Florida puts forth the vernal display, from which Ponce de Leon, the Spanish adventurer, in 1512, gave it its name, when, pursuing the fiction of a Carib girl, he sought a fountain whose waters would rejuvenate the man of hoary brow, and restore the beauty of maidenhood to the careworn matron.

Ledyard Brinton was extensively popular among the young and active men of the district. He was well versed in matters of state polity, and though he did not often appear in courts, was deeply learned in the law. He had entered the arena of politics, to some extent, at the earnest solicitation of influential friends, who admired his liberality and independence, and, consistent with his views, among the people by whom he was surrounded, his course had been such as to secure him the confidence of the mass. He was a reformer, but he was not one of those Hotspurs, who cannot live but in the heat of angry agitation; and though he would have had changed, in one day, many social evils which oppressed a people in the State of his adoption, he knew that to hope for such a revolution was vain, and he chose not to make enemies by bitter upbraidings and ascetic censures upon his

neighbors. His object was to conciliate friends, and when he had gained their confidence, cautiously put before them such facts as would demonstrate what was practical and profitable.

He had been selected as a candidate for a seat in the Legislature, and the election was to be held in a few months.

Brinton was what may be properly termed an independent man — not one whose independence consists in a mulish obstinacy, but one who thinks and acts for himself, as an honest man should—one who is not trammelled by prejudice—who does not travel in the *beaten track* because he was so educated, but who has no fear of breaking from conventional customs, when he would follow the right because of the right. He is the independent man, who comports himself as circumstances justify, according to the highest standard of right and justice, whether before the world, or in his closet—

“ Whose armor is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill.”

Conere had been tried. The testimony was positive, and there was no escape, in the common course of events, from the fate of a murderer. To his friends, Conere's conduct was inexplicable. He met the verdict, condemning him to death, with stolid indifference; and, except that his manner was reserved, nothing about him betokened the least concern at the anxiety of his friends, the grief of his family, or the dreadful end which awaited him.

Brinton had been a regular visitor at Rillwood since the evening of the Posey dance, but, though Isabelle received him kindly, her manner gave him to understand, unmistakably, that her determination was unchanged.

Her conduct was an enigma to him, as much as that of her father. He could not but feel that, to all outward semblance, for one who loved a parent wildly as she loved her father, she bore bravely the troubles he had brought upon his household, yet he could not consider hers that noble struggle against adversity, which meets trials sternly, but meekly, and prepares to profit by their lessons. She did not give him her confidence, and he misunderstood her, while her heart's emotions breathed, towards her father, Moore's impassioned words—

“Oh what was love made for if 'tis not the same
Thro' joy and thro' sorrow, thro' glory and shame?”

It was the Sabbath following the conviction of Conere. Gloom, like a pall, settled over Rillwood. Like the fading away of a sweet odor, had gone out the life of its mistress, sadly, but almost imperceptibly. She was buried with simple ceremony, at the foot of a cypress tree in the garden, beneath which she had loved to sit. The spot was marked only by flowers that “poured out their souls in odors,” but it was dear, as no sculptured urn could have made it, to the sad hearts of those whose afflictions Madame Conere had softened by her charities, and whose griefs she had assuaged by well-timed kindness. *Her* virtues had not been written in water, and *her* good deeds did not die with her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOCTOR.

SINCE the death of Madame Conere, Benjamin, by his cunning and intrigue, upon the profession of sincerest friendship, had become a confidential visitor at Rillwood.

After her mother's death, in looking over some papers in a secret drawer of her father's *escritoire*, Isabelle found a letter, the persual of which caused her to exclaim:

“My God! Why had I not found this sooner? Now my father *shall* be liberated. I feel that there can be no doubt. It is strange father had not told me something of this.”

Rising, she rang for a servant. The summons was promptly answered by a trusty negro, and she said to him:

“Go to St. Augustine immediately, and tell Doctor Benjamin that I wish to see him at Rillwood as soon as he can conveniently come.”

The servant hastened away, and in an hour had properly delivered his message. Benjamin gladly received it. He had that day been informed that the time of Conere's execution had been fixed for the 20th of the following month; and suspecting that Isabelle had received the terrible news and wished to counsel with him, hoping that something would

occur to further the designs he entertained, before the hour had come, when

—“Twilight lets her curtain down
And pins it with a star,”

he was on his way swiftly to Rillwood. He found Isabelle beneath an airy veranda extending east from the mansion, rose-wreathed and vine-encircled. She received him rather affectionately, remarking:

“We have good news, Doctor. The scheme which I partly revealed to you, must succeed.”

“Then you have not heard”——

“What, Doctor?”

“I had best be plain — you must expect it. It has been fixed that the execution shall take place on the 20th of next month.”

“Before that time, my father shall have a pardon. His release will be honorable, and then we can show that he stabbed Espard in self-defense. To consult you in the selection of a legal adviser, I sent for you to-day.”

“But how is this to be done?” inquired Benjamin, with a perplexed manner.

“We will walk into the house, and I’ll show you,” answered Isabelle.

When they were seated by a lamp, which threw a soft light over the richly furnished apartment, Isabelle handed the doctor a letter, remarking:

“You know that, for important reasons, the Government is anxious to discover the man who murdered Major Bertram, some years ago, near Pensacola, and carried off certain state

papers, which, in the prosecution of the Seminole war, have become of much moment."

"Yes," answered Benjamin, "I read it all in the Augustine paper yesterday."

"That letter will tell you that Cabot Conere, in some way, knows who this murderer was. It must be the man whose name is signed there," returned Isabelle.

Benjamin read the document, examined the name, and exclaimed.

"Eureka! This *must* be the fellow. He is fighting with the Indians, against our forces. If Conere can give testimony that will convict him, I know the Governor will grant him a pardon. Brinton has influence with the Governor—shall I not see him to-morrow?"

"Speak not to me of him, Benjamin—him on whom I depended—he deceived me—I would not now be beholden to him."

A gleam of light burst upon the doctor, as Isabelle spoke these words, which almost made him utter an exclamation of delight; but suddenly his natural cunning came to his aid, and he said, mildly:

"It can be done without him. I have influential friends."

Emotions had been awakened, which almost rendered Isabelle forgetful of the immediate business with the doctor, and she walked several times rapidly across the room, and then, stopping at the window, pressed her hot brow on the cold glass.

The doctor gazed at her strangely for a few moments, and then approaching her, rested his arm on the window sill. She did not know that he was so near her until he whispered,

"Isabelle."

She turned her weeping eyes upon him, wondering what brought him so near, and perplexed at the peculiarity of his look.

“Isabelle, you have not been scornful lately; you sent for me to-day; you have confided in me. I know your secret. You would get your father from prison; let me help you.”

“I expect you to do so, Benjamin—what mean you?”

“Isabelle, I have dared to love you. I loved you when you were a little girl. I knew it was madness then. I have worked, Isabelle, to be worthy of you. I am not what I once was. I’ll devote my life to you.”

The doctor’s tones were eloquent—his looks were impassioned. He endeavored to take Isabelle’s hand, but she lifted both to her forehead, and, as was her wont when wild thoughts surged in her brain, pressed them over her eyes, and sinking upon a low seat, she said:

“Benjamin,” in a tone that made him tremble, “are you sincere, or would you only be lord of this mansion? I know you are ambitious. Have you considered that I am a convict’s daughter—that I have been exiled from society?”

“All—all,” he answered, impetuously, “but you are not the less beloved. I love you the more for your devotion to your father, the man who first helped me. Were it not for what you described, I should never have dared to address you. As I expect to be judged, believe me honest.”

Isabelle was silent for a few moments, while the tears flowed fast from her downcast eyes, then she rose to her feet, and presenting her hand to the doctor, said firmly:

“Give me a trial — rescue my father, and this hand is yours.”

The doctor pressed her hand passionately between both of his, and answered:

“Your father was a friend to me, for his sake I would do much; but for your sake, I swear that I am at your command—that I will be your slave.”

Without attempting to release her hand, Isabelle looked into Benjamin’s eyes and answered:

“I have only to ask that you will shrink from nothing to liberate my father from prison — *mind* nothing. Can you swear it?”

“As I hope for Heaven, I can,” said Benjamin.

“Then understand me. Remember, I have not loved you — I know not that I ever can love you; but if you rescue my father, I *will try* to love you. I sacrifice my love and fortune for that purpose. If you deceive me, it will be terrible for you.”

The doctor quailed beneath the look Isabelle gave him, as she spoke these words, but he answered instantly:

“May it be terrible for me if I deceive you.”

“The work should commence to-night. I would be alone. Go now, Benjamin, and to-morrow bring me word of whom you have chosen for a legal adviser.”

The doctor kissed her hand, and was in a few minutes on the road to Augustine. He traveled it in such exultation as he had never before experienced.

Isabelle Conere’s emotions were the very antipode of her lover’s, in all except hope that her father’s prison doors would soon be opened, and the dread execution, thought of which chilled her heart’s blood, averted.

When the doctor reached the city, he proceeded to a hotel, where a political club met, and was soon breathing an atmosphere redolent of liquors and tobacco fumes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LEGAL ADVISER.

It was the eve of an election, which, at this time, though the country was filled with soldiers, and the Indians were every day committing depredations, was an era in the history of St. Augustine; one, too, that contrasted strangely with many customs that had been observed when the Spaniards ruled over the ancient city. The happy constitution of our government puts all men on a level at these periods, and often those who have the least real consequence, feel the most importance.

In a drinking saloon closely filled with such characters, Benjamin appeared, when we parted from him in the last chapter. It was not exactly a caucus, or a club, or a cabal, but an irregular gathering, at which politics was the theme. The discussion was on the candidates, and one of the "crowd," whose face like that of Shakspeare's Bardolph, it had cost many a copper to keep in color, was answering one of his party, in this wise:

"You're right; this feller as is up for the Legislater, aint the chap what we wotes for. He'd make us give up licker. He can't stand among folks as likes liberty."

"That he can't, stand 'mong us," returned another of the

party, who was only able to keep his feet by leaning against his friends, or holding by the tables. "We're goin to exercise the right of suffrage for independence; if we can't, what's the use in the Declaration?"

"It's the doctor's treat," exclaimed a toper who then had been treated till he scarcely knew anything but the way to the bar.

"So it is," chimed in half a dozen voices, and the doctor could do nothing else than make a sudden retreat, or attend to the call on his "patriotism." A dozen or more arranged themselves where they could be served with their drinks, and the doctor addressed them:

"It's a fact, boys, Brinton aint just the chap we want for a legislator. He's a clever fellow in some things, but I don't think all his notions just agree with this country. You're right on liberty, boys. Such notions whipped the old British—got this land from the Spanish—and they will put the Seminoles where they can't molest us any more. Here's a health to Squire Lifty—he'll beat Brinton, slick."

The party tossed off their glasses, when a man, sitting at one end of the tables, who had yet taken no part in the conversation or drinking, quietly observed:

"A d——n pretty fellow you are, Doctor, to desert a man who brought you here, and made you all you can boast of. It's not a week since you were electioneering for him."

"Turn him out!" exclaimed several of the "voters" who had drank the doctor's liquor; but his shrewdness was not at fault, and he very deliberately replied, although he was much nettled:

"No, no, boys. Let him go it. Because I'm independent, I expect to be abused. If I saw I was on the wrong

side, I had a right to wheel about. In politics, a man can't always be with his personal friends."

"Right, Doctor—right again. We honor you for your independence. We'll stand by you, too, till you're a candidate some day," said the spokesman of the drinking party. In the meantime, the individual who had thrown "the fire-brand" disappeared, and Benjamin, finding it not necessary to keep up further intercourse with the "sovereigns," said to the man who sold them drink:

"Give the boys another round, at my expense. I have an appointment in the next room, and you will excuse me till I have seen Squire Lifty."

He stepped out as the party drank his health, and in a moment was among a company that was concocting plans for the defeat of Brinton's party on the morrow.

"Good evening, Doctor," said one of the schemers, "we were just counting upon you."

At this, the nominee of the company, Brinton's opponent, came forward, and shaking the doctor's hand vigorously, said:

"Your conversion to our cause, has given us great pleasure. If it had been sooner, we had been surer of success. But you know our plans; are they right?"

"I think they're the best you could invent," returned Benjamin, stepping aside. "But, mind you, Brinton has conducted himself so carefully that people won't believe much against him. They know, at least, he will do only what he thinks best for them, all things considered; and he is popular among the liberalists, and you know there are plenty of them. But, Squire, d——n politics, to night—I am here on other business. I want to defeat Brinton in another way.

I have a chance for you to make a handsome fee. Excuse yourself to the club, and meet me, in half an hour, at the *cafe*, near the Barracks. I'll have things right there."

Benjamin hastened to prepare for the squire, and the would-be legislator immediately excused himself to his followers present, on the plea that there were other friends to counsel with, and he must be stirring about. He had drunk deeply, but he could bear up against a big load, and he was not yet too dull for a scheme, out of which there might come a prospect of money.

Over a bottle of wine and a cigar, Benjamin revealed to Squire Lifty, Isabelle's plan for the rescue of her father, and telling him all about the important letter, and offering a liberal fee if he would manage it successfully, inquired what he thought the hope of success.

"It can be done as easily as I shall beat Brinton to-morrow, and when I am elected, I'll have influence with the Governor. I'll undertake it, any how," returned the lawyer.

"Then," said Benjamin, "you must see Isabelle as soon as the election's over. I'll tell her, to-morrow morning, that you are engaged. She'll give you all the documents."

The new friends separated, the squire pleased with the prospect of a good office and a fat fee, Benjamin with the prospect of an accomplished and beautiful wife, a large fortune, and the getting of Brinton out of his way, in his design of making a stir in the world some time.

The election took place, with many a dispute, many a squabble, much drunkenness, intrigue and misrepresentation; but the candidate popular among the dram-drinkers, one of that class of politicians who can "wire in and wire out," as expressed by a well known, homely couplet, was signally

defeated, and Brinton received official notice that he had been honored with a seat in the Legislative Council of his adopted State.

The doctor, at the time appointed, duly advised Isabelle of the selection of the squire, as legal adviser; and knowing nothing of the man, and having confidence that Benjamin would exercise his best judgment, she had no reason to be dissatisfied.

On the day after the result of the election had been announced, the doctor conducted the squire to Rillwood, and introduced him to Isabelle.

He was not in quite as good spirits as he would have been, had he been able to consider himself a law maker, as well as a law mystifier; but he had a little revenge to gratify, and having been informed of Brinton's former relation to Isabelle, and the doctor's hopes, his crafty nature was well pleased with the scheme of which he had been advised, and the handsome reward its execution promised.

He had a long conference with Isabelle—examined the important letter, and, assuring her that there could be no doubt of a pardon, on the ground she proposed asking it, prepared the form of the necessary papers, and left her, with the advice that she forthwith see her father, acquaint him with her intentions, get what information he could give, visit the Governor, and in person sue for the pardon.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INTERVIEW AND THE PARDON.

It was a refreshing morning in early winter, when Isabelle Conere left Rillwood, attended by Doctor Benjamin, for the castle of St. Mark's.

The foliage of the orange groves, the majestic palms, the lime, the pomegranate and the fig, deepened, not embrowned, as the frosts of a Northern clime change the summer green, gently stirred by breezes balmy as those that "blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle," almost burthened the atmosphere with delicious fragrance. Flowers by the wayside, of varied hue and conformation, with their leaves and petals drooping, gave out, ere their decay, sweetest perfume; and bright plumaged birds twittered and sung in the branches of all the trees; but Isabelle was not awakened from the thoughtful revery by the invigorating air, the prospect of the groves, nor the charms of the fields. Winter was in her mind, and its desolateness resembled more the condition of Northern landscapes, bleak and drear, beneath chilling winds, than the luxuriance of that Southern clime. But she did not despair, for hope presented a spring time, near at hand, in which her joys would bloom afresh in the delights of home associations. In all, there was but one object, around which did

not gather affections in keeping with the scene, and that object presented itself whenever Doctor Benjamin, or his service, was suggested.

Conere was always glad to receive visits from Isabelle, but he had seemed peculiarly so since the death of Madame Conere. He welcomed her with more than wonted affection on this morning. She had fear to open the object of her visit, which she could not account for; but the devotion of a life was cast on this hour, and she must proceed. When they were alone, without explanation, she presented Conere the papers Squire Lifty had prepared. He read them with evident emotion—his breathing grew quick, his eyes flashed strangely, and he exclaimed wildly, grasping her hand:

“My daughter, where, in the name of God, did you get this information?”

“From this letter, father; but why are you so agitated?”

He snatched the letter she handed him (that found in his *escritoire*), and after looking at it a moment, he became more calm, and asked her:

“Do you know who this man is, and where he is?”

“Benjamin says he is the Indian called Halkwa-nunto-kay, who leads a party of Mickasukies in the cypress swamp.”

“How does Benjamin know this?”

“He says an officer of the army told him that this chief was a white man who was suspected of having been engaged in depredations before the Americans possessed Florida. He lived a short time in Augustine, and he was then known as Herpez. Mr. Lifty says he has seen him, and knows that he was a bad man,” answered Isabelle, wondering why her father put such questions; but she had been accustomed to

moods that no present circumstances could explain, and she dare not interrogate him in regard to them.

“He *is* a bad man, daughter—that’s what the Indian name he has chosen means—but I believed the man Herpez was in another country. He told me he would go; yet if he *is* here, and finds that Espard is killed”——

As Conere spoke these words, he stood before his daughter, and taking both her hands, gazed intently upon her a few moments, then thoughtfully continued:

“You can save me from an awful death, child. You can make my life, which has been a burden for many years, from constant fears, peaceful and happy, if, by love or money, you can have this Indian leader arrested.”

Isabelle did not understand her father fully, but she answered with determination—

“I *will* save you, father, and I know the Indian can be arrested. Benjamin will seek him, and he has the promised aid of the Indian Agent.”

“You have planned well. I’ll sign these papers, and you will hasten, to-morrow, in person, to present them to the Governor. Let them be seen by no one else.” With these words, Conere was about to part from his daughter, when she affectionately said:

“What had you to do with this Indian white man, father? How came he to send you the letter? He confesses a knowledge of the crime of murdering Major Bertram, but he does not confess himself the murderer.”

“But he *was* the murderer,” interrupted Conere. “You must not now ask me what I had to do with him. You shall know all, another time.”

“There are many things I wish to know, father, and I

have heard things which, when I think of them, frighten me; but this land is full of wicked men, and, when I have saved you, we will leave it."

"Yes, daughter, we *will* leave it. But go now—my guard is coming."

"In a few days, Benjamin shall bring you word that I have your pardon." Isabelle took tender leave of her father, and, conducted by the guard, joined Benjamin in the outer court.

When Conere was alone, he soliloquized —

"Yes, we *will* leave this land. Oh, what a land it has been to me. Why did I have a family? I might defy them, but all must be deceived now. The Americans would like to get this Indian. What do I care whether he is Herpez or not? Prejudice is against him. I can invent a story that will fix him—but I believe it *is* him—if it is, how I shall triumph! Espard dead—Herpez hung. It was lucky Isabelle found that letter—but when she showed me the papers, I thought she might know too much. She's a brave girl, and she'll get the pardon. I shall be free—no fear of man's tongue shall haunt me hereafter. Would that Brinton had stood by us. I rather suspect secrets have been told to him; but Benjamin will work hard, and if he arrests that infernal Indian, Isabelle and her fortune—that fortune Espard would have had—shall be his. I'll wait—patiently, *if I can*—to hear from him."

Isabelle Conere, escorted by the aspiring doctor, lost no time in visiting Tallahassee. The Governor happened to be at home. She waited upon him, and plead, as only a daughter can, for the life of a father. Her papers had been judiciously prepared, and when she laid them before his Excel-

lency, after he had heard her story, he assured her that he would take the matter into immediate consideration, and send word of his determination, at her hotel, on the following evening.

Tediously dragged the hours, until the period appointed for the Governor's report. Isabelle was alone in her room—she paced it slowly, and as the dim shadows, thrown in gigantic shapes from her person by a flickering lamp that sat on a low stool, flitted to and fro, she fixed her eyes upon them, and exclaimed :

“ Can it be that now my hopes are fleeting, unsubstantial as these shadows—that in a dim light I have been groping, and all my visions, for the future, are but dreams, shadowy dreams? If it prove so, I shall go mad. But I did not plead well with the Governor, perhaps. I told him my father confessed that he had killed the man Espard, but I knew he did it in self-defense. I did not ask a pardon out of pity—my father wants no man's pity—but I asked it because he could render the government valuable aid. I demanded it as the price of service rendered. I have heard that to great criminals pardons have been rendered, for testimony that would convict greater criminals. The Governor said he would grant the pardon, if my father could do what he promises—I know he can—the Governor was gracious to me—the pardon will come—hark! I hear a summons below—some one comes up the stairs. I know the step—it is Benjamin.”

The almost frantic girl hastened to the door of her room, hastily opened it, and met the doctor. He handed her a package of papers. She said to him:

“Leave me alone for an hour, Benjamin, and I will summon you.”

As he retired, she threw herself upon a lounge, and nervously broke the seal of the papers. A letter bearing the Governor's signet, met her view; she opened it, and read:

“MY DEAR MADAME:—I return you the papers which you entrusted to me, with the assurance that it is consistent with my duty to the nation, and a proper regard to the laws, to say to you, under my official seal, that your friends shall have every aid I can render; and if the Indian Hulkwa-nuntokay can be arrested, and your father, Cabot Conere, shall present before the proper tribunal, such evidence as will convict him of the murder of Major Bertram, an unconditional pardon shall be granted him.

“I shall countermand the order fixing the execution for the 20th inst.

“I remain, with sentiments of high respect, your obedient servant,

 “Governor of the Territory of Florida.”

When Isabelle had read this letter, without stopping a moment for reflection, she summoned Benjamin, acquainted him with the purport of the Governor's communication, and said to him:

“All rests with you now, Benjamin—you have a dangerous task, but you chose it without solicitation. The Governor will order men to escort you. I will leave you here to-morrow. Proceed immediately to arrest this Indian—you must accomplish it by stratagem. Take trusty guides and brave men. Bring him to Tallahassee, and when the trial is had, this hand is yours. I will carry the news of pardon to father, myself.”

Benjamin kissed the hand she offered him, and vowed that he would never return to St. Augustine alive without Hulkwa-nuntokay.

On the morrow, the doctor prepared to visit the cypress swamps, and Isabelle returned to Rillwood in company with

a party of Augustine acquaintances. They little suspected the object of her visit to Tallahassee.

At the earliest possible hour, Conere had the privilege of reading the letter, securing him pardon, on the conditions we have described. Loading his daughter with thanks and caresses, he assured her, that on the day of trial he should vindicate himself.

He was a dark minded and dangerously deceitful man. His daughter loved him too blindly to understand his true character.

CHAPTER X.

THE ARREST AND THE DISCOVERY.

DOCTOR BENJAMIN, with a faithful escort and experienced guides, had journeyed three days from Tallahassee. He began seriously to reflect, that following Indian trails, through swamps and thick woods, was not as pleasant as rolling pills in St. Augustine. It was not the *way* he proposed walking to distinction in this world. In his solitary hours he grew desponding many times, but love and fortune cheered him on, and before his men he maintained a brave exterior.

From a friendly Indian, the commander of the escort had learned that Hulkwa-nuntokay, as the leader of a small party of Mickasukie Indians, had a camp near the southern boundary of the Big Cypress swamp, which was subsequently the rendezvous of many parties of hostile savages, who retreated thither during the Seminole war, and defied the American soldiers.

Hulkwa-nuntokay's band had been in the practice of marauding on the weaker planters along the rivers, and in the smaller towns; and the chief, as he was considered, was much feared as a daring and blood-thirsty savage. He had no regular connection with any band of Indians, and it was well understood that the only way to entrap him would be

by stratagem. The doctor was directed by a party of six men, besides the guides and three friendly Indians, who knew the country, and the dangers they might expect to encounter.

Herpez was one of those singular, misanthropic men, who appear to despise comfort, and delight in crime—who exile themselves from society, and seek the deep forest. He had been in Florida, under different names, many years; and, from threats which he had thrown out, it was suspected that he had been always a foe to the Americans; and, from expressions that had escaped him while at one time in St. Augustine, it was surmised that he had in his possession important secrets. These things were known to the Governor, and for this reason he readily believed Cabot Conere's story, and promised him pardon, on the conviction of the Indian Spaniard. There was no Indian blood in his veins, but he had so long followed the habits of the red man, and worn his costume, that, except by the few who knew his history, he was supposed to be a Seminole, as his name indicated, giving, at the same time, his character, Hulkwa-nuntokay, as intimated by Conere, in his conversation with Isabelle, signifying *bad man*. Herpez was a man of great muscular power and agility, and a renowned marksman. His men were desperate Indians, who had scattered from different parties of that tribe, who, according to Indian tradition, murdered the first white man that was ever seen in Florida, believing him to have sprung from the foam of the ocean, thrown upon the beach. They discovered his trail on the shore of Lake Okeechobee, and, struck by the peculiar print of his shoe, followed it until they overtook him, and were led, by their natural thirst for blood, to take his life, though he besought peace.

When the party approached the swamp, they were very nearly surprised by a band of Creek Indians, and this admonished them to proceed watchfully, taking every precaution not to alarm the enemy.

One night, when the escort was encamped on the border of a pond covered with water-lilies, and from which proceeded the bellowing of alligators, so loudly as to interfere, very uncomfortably, with Doctor Benjamin's design of having a good night's rest, after a hard day's march, one of the Indian scouts, who had been sent out in the afternoon, returned with a pony, which, he declared, belonged to the Indians they were seeking. He had taken the animal near a settlement, at which, he believed, the band was now gathered.

On the following morning, various plans were proposed for the capture, and much speculation was had on the most feasible methods; but at length it was decided that they should first ascertain if Hulkwa-nuntokay was at the settlement — if so, they would that night attack it from various quarters, awe the Indians by surprise, disperse them, and so guard Herpez's hut that escape would be impossible. Dr. Benjamin had command of the squad that was to be relied upon to make the capture. There was but one man in the party who could identify Herpez, or Hulkwa-nuntokay. In the afternoon, he reported that he had seen the victim, and knew which was his hut.

The settlement was hid by tenebrous boughs and trailing mosses, in a dense cypress hammock. The attack was so well planned, and so cautiously managed, that the Indians were completely surprised, but they fought with desperation. Three men belonging to the escort were killed, and several

received severe wounds. How many of the Mickasukies were slain, could not be ascertained. One of the men belonging to the escort was killed by a blow from the knife of Hulkwa-nuntokay. When the war-cry was given, the chief sprang to the door of his hut, and was met by the Indian guide, who gave a concerted signal, and attacked him. The chief was too skillful and muscular a warrior for his foe, who fell at his feet before assistance reached him, but Benjamin and his men were near at hand, and closing around the chief, they soon overmastered him, although he fought desperately with his knife, wounding a number, and among them the doctor.

As soon as the party could be rallied, after the defeat of the Indians, it was decided that rapid flight from the scene of the battle, was the policy they should adopt. They proceeded through the swamp in hasty marches, without molestation, except from a small band of Spanish Indians, who were soon routed. The second day they struck the trail for Tallahassee. About the time they began to fear pursuit, fortunately they fell in with a party of friendly Indians, who had been at war with the Mickasukies, and rejoiced to see their terror, Hulkawa-nuntokay, a prisoner. They now advanced in more easy marches, and allowed the men to recruit.

Herpez had maintained a dogged silence, and did not yet know that he had been taken prisoner on a particular charge. He supposed his numerous depredations on the whites, to have instigated the attack on his men. He knew his fate under such circumstances, and was prepared to meet it with Indian fortitude. Benjamin endeavored, several times, to

engage him in conversation, without success, until one evening, when he stood by him in the camp, he said:

“Herpez!”

And at this sound, one which he had not heard for years, and which sent a torrent of wild thoughts through his brain, the disguised Indian started to his feet, and gave the doctor a look that caused him to step back a pace, but he continued,

“Did you ever know or hear of a Major Bertram, murdered some years ago, near Pensacola?”

“Who are you, that calls me this name, and asks me these questions?” demanded Herpez authoritatively.

“I am known as Doctor Benjamin, of St. Augustine—but you have not answered me.”

“You have no business to question me. It’s none of your business what I know, but I’ll answer you. I did know Major or Lieutenant Bertram, and I know who murdered him, but the United States shall never know. The inquisitors could not make *me* tell.”

“It is not expected that you will tell—but I am surprised to hear an Indian speak so good English,” returned the doctor, provokingly. He could not move the Spaniard, who said, coolly:

“I followed another life than this, once—but what has my arrest to do with Major Bertram?”

“You shall know when we reach Tallahassee,” answered the doctor, and the conversation was closed by the appearance of the commander of the escort, who had a duty for the doctor to perform, in the care of one of the wounded men, who had not yet recovered. Herpez held no more conversation with any of the party during the journey. When he was lodged safely at the capital, he was fully ac-

quainted with the charge against him, and was ordered to prepare for his trial, which had been set for the following week. When inquired of if he desired counsel, he asked:

“What for?”

“To defend you,” was the reply.

“Defend me? The devil could only do that. I’ll have no defense. The Americans are determined to kill me—let them do it by hanging. A hundred lives shall pay the forfeit of mine. My Indians will avenge their chief—they will burn dwellings and pillage towns. But who is my accuser?”

“Cabot Conere, of Rillwood, who is in the fort at St. Augustine, for the murder of one Espard,” answered the civil officer, who had visited him to learn his wishes in regard to counsel, for it had become known that he was far from being an Indian in early, if he had been in late education.

“Cabot Conere, of Rillwood,” said Herpez—“I knew him once by a name not quite as high sounding. He killed Espard; to get his neck out of a halter, he would kill me. Well, if he chooses, he can do so—I shall be legally murdered, for if he could not make me guilty of this murder, he could tell enough against me besides to hang a small army—but my men shall have word, and they shall avenge my blood terribly.”

The day appointed for the trial of Herpez would dawn on the morrow. Cabot Conere, released from his casemate at Castle Marco, but under a watchful guard, was at Tallahassee, with his daughter, in quarters where he was less constrained than he had been for a few months past. Squire Lifty was his adviser, and was to aid the Government in the prosecution of Herpez. Conere had so prepared himself, that he had no fear of the result of the trial.

* * * * *

In company with a number of friends, Ledyard Brinton journeyed from Augustine to Tallahassee. They expected to reach the capital on the evening before the trial. It was late in the afternoon. Brinton, reflecting on the causes which had led him to Tallahassee—on the probable result of Conere's release—on Doctor Benjamin's hopes—was in no mood for gay company, and had fallen some rods behind his party. He knew that Isabelle did not love the doctor—knew that she was sacrificing herself for his aid in the rescue of her father, because her old lover had disappointed her in his honest expression that there was no hope of honorable release for Conere. Had Brinton entertained a suspicion of the course events had taken, no man could or would eagerly have done more than he to bring to justice the murderer of Bertram, and rescue Conere; but the accident, that gave Isabelle the knowledge upon which she had acted, came when he was estranged, and no opportunity had been given him to lend his aid or influence. Such reflections engaging him, he rode without perceiving how far his companions were in advance, when, as he passed a grove of undergrowth orange trees, a man in Indian garb, "armed to the teeth," sprang from a clump of bushes at the road-side, and, before Brinton saw his intention, grasped his horse by the bridle-bits, and exclaimed in good English:

"Ledyard Brinton, I have business with you."

Brinton was unarmed, excepting a brace of pocket pistols, and he knew resistance at this time would be vain. Though staggered at the man's strange and violent salutation, he did not lose his presence of mind, but answered promptly:

"You have chosen a novel manner of introducing yourself. Perhaps your business is with my purse."

“D——n your money,” answered the outlaw. “I have a bigger scheme than taking money, on hand, and you must help me work it.”

“*Must*,” said Brinton, “then you possess more power than I think you do; but I have no time to bandy words. What is your business?”

“You are going to Tallahassee to see one Herpez tried for a murder that took place some years ago.”

“How do you know this?”

“No matter. This Herpez was taken on the information of Cabot Conere, who would get his neck out of a halter for the murder of one Espard. Conere has a daughter—you love her.”

“Are you a wizard?” thought Brinton, aloud.

“Not quite—nor an Indian, as you may be convinced, but a Spaniard, who knows all about both these murders—who knows that Herpez did not kill Major Bertram, and that Conere stabbed Espard in self-defense.”

“And what do you propose doing with this information?” said Brinton.

“If you will help me, I mean to show who the murderer of Major Bertram was, and clear Conere and Herpez from the charges against them.”

“Can I trust you?”

“It can do no harm to try me.”

“And what do you expect me to do?”

“Take this piece of coin,” answered the Spaniard, giving Brinton an old Spanish dollar, on which were stamped the letters “E. H.” “Go to the place where Herpez is confined, give it to him, tell him you got it from Don B., who will be

in court to-morrow, and you must be his counsel—you are a lawyer.”

“I cannot appear against Conere.”

“Not to save him, and rescue his name from infamy?”

“But I have my suspicions that all is not right. Why do you tell these things to me? Why do you not let the Government know them?”

“Because I do not choose to. I alone have the information that will make all right. I chose to make it known in court to-morrow, through you. If you will not aid me, Herpez will suffer for a crime he is not guilty of, and Conere will be forever cursed as a murderer.”

“Does not Conere think Herpez the murderer?”

“How can I tell what Conere thinks? But will you aid me?”

“What do you wish me to do in court?”

“The trial must not be had,” answered the Spaniard. “When all is ready for the witnesses, I want you to say to the court that there is a man present who can clear up all the mystery about these murders, and give positive testimony as to who the murderer of Bertram was, as well as show that Conere is not a murderer. Will you do it?”

“I fear it is a mad proceeding, but I will take the risk.”

“You are a man of honor, Ledyard Brinton. You will see me beside the prisoner to-morrow.”

The Spaniard darted into the bushes, and was out of sight in a moment.

Brinton, called to himself by the deepening twilight that had began to gather while he parleyed with the Spaniard, spurred his horse, and, with indescribable emotions, galloped swiftly towards the capital. When he had proceeded a few

miles, he met two of his traveling companions returning to seek him, having become alarmed at his absence. They inquired anxiously as to the cause of his detention, but he gave them no satisfactory answers.

When he reached Tallahassee, after calling on Isabelle to congratulate her on the expected happy events of the morrow, he lost no time in seeking Herpez's place of confinement. When he announced himself as counsel for the prisoner, he was admitted without delay, and the guard informed Herpez that his lawyer wished to see him.

"I want no lawyer," was his dogged answer; but Brinton, not to be daunted, walked into the cell, when the wicked man looked up and exclaimed:

"Damnation take the man who would force himself on me, to learn my secrets!"

"You mistake me, sir," said Brinton, mildly; "I had that from a man who wished me to see you to-night," handing him the stamped dollar.

"Great God! Where is he?" cried the prisoner, wildly, "and who are *you*?"

"My name is Ledyard Brinton. I promised Don B., as he called himself, that I would appear in your behalf to-morrow."

"I don't want you without him. Will *he* be there?"

"He declared that he would."

"He'll do it—he'll do it. We may die, but not unavenged," said Herpez, clenching his fists and grinding his teeth.

"Why this rage?" said Brinton.

"You look like an honest man, but my experience has taught me to trust no man. I could tell you secrets—you would then understand my rage; but I won't tell you.

You'll hear them at the trial. You will give Don B. a chance, at court, in my behalf."

"I have so promised, but I fear it was done rashly."

"Not so—you will expose great villains. But I would think alone. My thoughts must be spoken, and no man shall hear them."

Brinton retired, and walked to his hotel in great perplexity, but determined, at all hazard, to fulfill the promises he had made, and wait patiently for the morrow to solve the singular mystery which seemed to hang around the prisoner, and the man who had stopped him on the Augustine road.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIAL.

At the opening of the Seminole war, Tallahassee had become a town of considerable importance, although the first house was erected as late as the spring of 1824. A handsome building for the capitol was nearly completed—various religious societies had been established, and other associations, calculated to give the city importance, were rapidly progressing. During the winter of which we write, a respectable body of troops was quartered near it, and as the Legislative Council was to sit in a few days, the regular population had been much increased about the time fixed for the trial of Hulkwa-nuntokay.

Major Bertram had been generally respected in the army, and a number of officers at Tallahassee remembered him as a brave soldier and a true friend, although, in youth, he had sustained an unenviable character for *intrigue*, as the French use this word. His death and the Government robbery had been talked about a great deal, and much speculation had been indulged in regard to the Everglade Heroes. To ferret them out, had long been a strife among the civil as well as military officers of the Territory; but prior to Isabelle Conere's appeal before the Governor, no reliable information

had ever been received in regard to any one of them. It was generally supposed that Herpez must have been an important man among the Heroes, and a general exposure of the band, and their operations, being expected through the investigations at his trial, it had awakened intense excitement throughout the city and adjacent settlements.

On the morning appointed for the commencement of the investigation, the building, in which the court, was held was completely crowded with a body of men of varied grades and stamp, all eager to hear the details of the secret and terrible crimes.

Conere, with Isabelle by his side, sat within the bar, near Squire Lifty. Brinton occupied an obscure seat at the foot of a long table, on which lawyers' books were so piled as to exclude him entirely from Isabelle's view. He was not yet prepared to be known in the case, and he did not wish to be observed by Conere or his daughter until he knew surely whether Don B. would make his appearance.

The prisoner bore himself like a man who had no concern in what agitated the mass about him. Excepting a peculiar compression of the lip, there was nothing to be remarked upon in the expression of his countenance. He endeavored many times to catch Conere's eye, but the witness had no intention that he should do so, and his gaze was directed everywhere but toward the prisoner.

Conere was not the same hale man who had left Rillwood on the day of the fatal meeting. Reminiscence and reflection, in confinement, had changed him much, but had served only to increase that peculiarity of look, which seemed ever to regard all on whom it rested, with suspicion. His bearing was that of a man who fears that every gesture, each change

of position, every direction of his eye, or quiver of his lip, may militate against him in a cause wherein he has deep interest.

When the formalities of the court had been observed, Squire Lifty stated briefly what the prosecution expected to accomplish through the witness Conere, with corroborating testimony that he had directed, and proposed that the oath be administered to him.

Ledyard Brinton now arose, and appearing from behind the legal shield that had protected him as he desired, while Isabelle was amazed and alarmed, and Conere fixed on him a most crushing look, remarked :

“May it please the court, I appear as counsel for the prisoner. I am prepared to show that he is not guilty of the crime charged. It is a proceeding without precedent, but as the circumstances are peculiar, and as there is now within this court room a man who can not only clear the prisoner at the bar, but show that Cabot Conere is not guilty of the crime for which he has been condemned, and point out also, clearly, the true murderer of Major Bertram, I move you that he be now heard.”

There was a sensation produced by this speech, throughout the court room, that cannot be described. A strange fire glowed in the prisoner's eye. Cabot Conere's countenance was “ashen and sober” as the sky of a damp morning ere sunrise, and Isabelle, from some unaccountable dread, was as pallid as if her life had suddenly gone out.

The judge said :

“This is a remarkable announcement, Mr. Brinton. Let the witness be called; we shall then determine whether to hear him at this stage of the trial.”

A tall man, painted and dressed as a Seminole Indian, appeared on the witness stand.

"Is it an Indian you would thus informally introduce?" demanded Squire Lifty, prompted by Doctor Benjamin, who sat trembling at his side.

"Ask him," replied Brinton, quietly.

"Your name, sir?" demanded the clerk of the court, while the spectators were crowding, deeply excited, around the bar and the prisoner's box.

"The Indians call me Chitta, or Snake—but I was not known by this title, when, many months ago, I was carried out of St. Augustine to be buried."

"Explain, sir!" cried the presiding judge. Conere started to his feet, and would have advanced toward the Indian, had not Isabelle clung to him.

"More than a year ago," said the Indian, speaking as good English as most men do, "I was engaged in a fight in a *cafe* in St. Augustine. I was stabbed, and left for dead. Some friends conveyed me to a dwelling, and when all had abandoned me, a trusty servant prepared to give me a burial. He discovered signs of life, and using what restoratives he could command, I became enabled to speak. I told him I wished terrible revenge on my opponent—begged him to remove me secretly where he could take care of me, but let no one know that I had not been buried. The plot succeeded. I recovered. *The servant died a few days after I was able to dispense with his care*, and my secret was safe. My murderer was tried and condemned. I have been an Indian since. Before, I was known as Manuel Espard, and Cabot Conere was my murderer."

At these words, Isabelle uttered a piercing shriek, and

Conere sank powerless on the seat from which he had risen when the witness began to speak.

"This has nothing to do with the cause in question," said the prosecutor.

"I come to it," returned Espard. "The captain of the Everglade Heroes murdered Major Bertram; the band shared the Government money. *They are all now in this court room.* The hour has come—justice shall be done. That band, terrible in all this country, consisted of but *three men.* Here are the men—the *prisoner* and the *witness.* There is the CAPTAIN!" He made a significant gesture. All eyes were fixed in the direction Espard pointed. The report of a pistol rang through the court room. Cabot Conere fell dead upon the floor—a groan of agony was heard, and Doctor Benjamin weltered in his blood. All was consternation for a moment, and then the cry went up:

"*The Indians have escaped?*"

Espard had shot Conere—Herpez had stabbed Benjamin; and then they sped like lightning, while attention was directed to their victims.

Isabelle Conere had swooned—attention was given her by her immediate friends, while numbers went in pursuit of the murderers. They had some distance the start, and were fleet runners. As they approached the stream that winds along the eastern border of the city, many musket balls whistled after them, but none reached the mark. The "Heroes" soon disappeared where the stream leaps into a gulf, whence, taking the woods, their pursuers were baffled. But "the race is not always to the swift." A few hours after these wicked men leaped from the court room at Tallahassee, as they skulked through the forest, a company of soldiers, re-

turning from a hunting party, taking them to be marauding Indians, fired upon them, and both fell mortally wounded. Herpez never spoke, but Espard, as he writhed on the ground, cried out:

“Tell the people of Tallahassee you have finished the Everglade Heroes.”

Thus perished three men, whose lives had been eventful of terror and bloodshed—who had been hardened in crime—who had amassed fortunes in the shedding of innocent blood—who had followed chosen pursuits many years unsuspected, but upon whom, at length, as upon all the unrepentant wicked, sooner or later, it must come, fell retributive justice; and society was avenged, as far as their *death* could atone for their infamous *lives*.

CHAPTER XII.

DESOLATION AT RILLWOOD.

THE season when "bursting buds look up" had returned again, but it was that spring time succeeding the coldest winter ever known in East Florida, and the vernal ray had no power to call the groves or the gardens from gloom. In the last winter month, a "withering frost" threw over the rivers and lakes a thin curtain of ice—affording a most novel spectacle for that tropical clime—and beneath the cutting influence of a driving northwest wind, the fruit trees were stripped of their foliage, and their life-currents so congealed that a midsummer sun shone powerless on leafless branches. The groves and gardens of Rillwood were as desolate as the heart of its mistress—drear as a Siberian forest. Where beautiful flowers had attracted the humming-bird and the bee, rising from terrace and lawn, were strewn withered stalks and sere leaves; and where had hung clustering boughs of dark and golden fruit, beneath whose shade and from whose fragrance lovers imbibed pleasure, and invalids drank in strength, unsightly poles, with rugged bark, were seen. Where the red-bird built his nest—the mocking-bird sung his ever changeful notes, and the gay-plumaged paraquet had caroled and flitted, the melancholy owl "greeted the moon

with demoniac laughter," while sterile winds whistled around him.

In keeping with the unusual season had been the life of Isabelle Conere. For many weeks after the death of her father, she raved in a delirious fever, and it was months before she left her room. When, late in the spring, she walked through the paths of Rillwood, saw the ravages of winter as she had never before witnessed them, and thought of the struggles nature was everywhere making to recover from her forbidding aspect, a lesson of resignation was taught her; but she could not feel otherwise than that the snows of sorrow that had fallen on her heart, had left it as the frosts of the winter had left the tenderest fruit trees, never to have life and beauty again, that would be sweet to look in upon, imparting joy to others.

She had but one token of her father, which, in connection with his dreadful death, left her the slightest consolation. That was a letter, found on his person by those who prepared the body for the tomb:

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER:—When you get this note, your father will be beyond the reach of human laws or enemies. I formed a determination when I was first arrested, that I should never go upon the gallows, let what would be the result of my trial; and when your project for my deliverance was about to succeed, I had no reason to change a determination that would quiet fears with which, to me, this world is filled. A fatal poison, known to the Indians, I have long kept secretly upon my person, has done its work.

"My life has been almost one continued deceit. I cannot die without making a frank confession to you of all the circumstances which rendered me a villain—for when I was young I was not more wicked than other men.

"I was the captain of the 'Everglade Heroes,' and I murdered Major Bertram. I was at one time a soldier under him. He became acquainted

with my sister—made honorable proposals to her, and seduced her. I challenged him to meet me. He spurned me—struck me. I returned the blow, and deserted, to escape court martial. I vowed revenge; I took that revenge; but not until I had long been an outlaw, associated with men whom I could only trust in villainy. But what led to the circumstances which impelled me to revenge? what made me then associate with outlaws? I answer with the deepest contrition—love for a social glass of wine, which grew to be a passion for strong drink.

“My acquaintance with Major Bertram was formed at drinking parties in our camp. When intoxicated, I introduced him to my sister. I encouraged their acquaintance, because I was indebted to him for money borrowed at the gaming table, when I was not myself on account of wine. His intimacy with my sister, and his friendship to me (as I then considered it), was flattering to my pride, because he was much my superior in rank.

“That friendship—the friendship of the bottle—has been the curse of my life, and not to your father as himself, but to your father under the influence of strong drink, may you ascribe the sorrows which carried your mother to a premature grave, and which will sadden the last months of your life. When you remember your father, have charity for his wickedness.

“When I joined the band of outlaws, which for so many years was the terror of Florida, I was so deeply intoxicated I could not sign my name to the compact, and was obliged to make my mark. I say it not to extenuate, but in explanation. When the period of the compact had passed, I broke up the band. Then I was sober. Long before would I have done so; but by the fear of that which the law has now declared against me, I was restrained. A review of the horrors of my dark career only showed me how vain it would be to seek new society, and hope for peace and safety—and then, drinking deeply to drown remorse, I pursued my villainous course, seeking by energy of purpose to quiet the clamors of a conscience which, in sober hours, has always been active. Oh! that I had hearkened unto those clamors, and met whatever fate was in store for me.

“If you have any influence in this world, exert it in behalf of the victims of that vice which degraded me in my youth—made my manhood a period of crime, and has rendered my last days more bitter than the torments of the damned, unless their punishment bears with it vivid recollections of their ill-spent lives.

“I have been rich in gold, but poverty-stricken in all things else, except

yours and your mother's love and devotion, which I did not merit. I had been happy at Rillwood, but for the recollections of deep guilt.

"Who will forgive me for abusing your mother's confidence—for entailing upon you the curse of being the daughter of the captain of the Everglade Heroes?

, "God forbid that you should curse me, my daughter. May God bless you. I can write no more. Your mother taught you to pray—pray for your wicked father.

CONERE."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST SCENE AT RILLWOOD.

LEDYARD BRINTON had come back from legislative labors at the capital, to his quiet English home, with "blushing honors thick upon him." He had been a "progressive" in the councils and debates, but so adroitly had he managed his movements, that, though the rigid conservatists opposed him, they admired his tact, and honored his devotion. He laid the foundation for a number of educational and internal improvement enterprises, which have since done much towards giving character and wealth to the Peninsular State. His prospects were flattering for the highest office within the gift of that people, but it was not his destiny to receive the reward of his well-earned popularity, through political honors.

His love for Isabelle Conere had suffered no abatement during the trials through which she passed, and he was now ready to offer his heart and his fortune. His visits to Rillwood while she was confined to her room, and ever since she had become able to see company, had afforded him little encouragement that she still reciprocated the affection which had once been his pride. After a critical review of her whole conduct since the period of her father's arrest, the numerous lectures of his considerate aunt had no influence

upon him, and he determined to ascertain, definitely, if Isabelle had changed in her regards toward him as much as she had in appearance, and in estimation of the world around her.

Brushing from his feet the dews that had gathered, on a bright morning, along the avenue leading from the Augustine road to the front porch of Rillwood mansion, we see him proceeding, with determined step, to learn, surely, from the mistress of the fair grounds about him, whether he shall ever be their master. He was received by Isabelle, in a manner that gave him encouragement, and he soon brought about a conversation which called up scenes in happier days. They sat near a window commanding a view of a grove of orange trees, which, one year previous, were loaded with the promise of golden fruit, and were the haunt of beautiful and sweetly singing birds, but in which were now to be seen only a few stunted blossoms and meager clusters of leaves, attractive neither to the humming-bird nor to the "housewife-bee." In reply to a remark by Brinton, Isabelle said:

"You remember that grove, when we walked through it last spring. Its desolation is not more striking than that of my heart. I am changed, Brinton, as words cannot tell."

"Not to me, Isabelle. It needs but one word from you to make you all to me, yea, even more than you were on the evening we danced together, when your birth day was celebrated by that Patgoe party, about which so many painful recollections cluster."

"You forget that my name is a reproach—that we were separated. What a volume of painful thoughts crowds upon my mind!" And Isabelle walked away from the window, to a sofa at the opposite side of the room. Hot tears

fell upon her attenuated fingers, as she pressed them over her eyes, as if to shut out the visions that Brinton's reference had called up. He followed her, and answered:

"Yes, Isabelle, I *have* forgotten all these things—would that *you* could."

"Would that I could," she repeated, when he continued,

"But I have not forgotten vows breathed in yonder grove, at a season like this, when all was bursting to bloom about us. Can Isabelle think of the luxuriance of that time, and in its recollections forget the winter of sorrows she has passed, and believe that to her mind a spring-time will come, crowned with joys and beauties, as surely as one day, these drear groves around the mansion will 'blossom and bear fruit in due season'?"

"I cannot answer you, Brinton, for I know not what the future has in store for me. But can you command forgiveness as well as forgetfulness? It becomes me to ask it of you."

"Most freely—most freely. You *will* be mine, Isabelle."

"I am desolate hearted and poverty stricken—unworthy of you," she answered.

"What mean you, Isabelle?"

"That the property on which I live will never be improved under my hand. It was bought with crime and blood. I must go far from it—it has a curse upon it."

"Leave it, then, Isabelle. Have not I a fortune, ample, and without incumbrance of *any* kind?"

"And Rillwood must be like it, let my fate be what it may. It was purchased by wrong doing—it shall be spent in doing good. It is my design that the negroes upon it shall all be manumitted, and it shall be sold to provide homes for them, as they choose—in Africa or America—and if

then there is a dollar left, it shall go to endow an Orphans' Institute in St. Augustine."

"Nobly spoken—like your beloved mother," cried Brinton. "Let me be your agent for this pleasant business."

Isabelle placed her hand within that of her suitor, and he said to himself—

"We are betrothed."

When the summer was ended, a noble ship crossed Mantanzas bar, bound for "the classic shores of Italie." Its most richly furnished and most commodious state-room was occupied by Ledyard and Isabelle Brinton.