



THE VOICE OF HOME.

A SONNET.

<p><b>W</b>HEN first the fledgeling leaves the parent nest, And, faltering, its unaided course essays</p>	<p>Through briar and thicket, or through flowery ways: When first the daughter whom her sire loves best</p>
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Leaves home and all its tender care in quest  
 Of Life's stern work—what wonder hearts are  
 weak,  
 And, full of sadness, find few words to speak,  
 While trembling lips tell out Love's last behest?  
 And yet withal that loving parting word,

Wrung from the depths of a fond parent's woe,  
 Is full of living power and loudest heard  
 When Conscience' lamp is dull and tempests  
 blow ;  
 And, though the world may tempt with lurid light,  
 The voice of God and home will guide aright.  
 G. W.

### A RICH WOMAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CRUST AND THE CAKE," "LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD," ETC.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Thy fate is the common fate of all,  
 Into each life some rain must fall."

LONGFELLOW.

ALL was darkness in the Deerham road when Chrystal started down it on her homeward journey. She had hastened through Deerham town, resisting all inclination to knock at Sophy's door, though she knew that jovial woman would have gladly risen from her bed to welcome her. But if she went straight on she would reach Winds' Haven about an hour before midnight. She knew that her father, though not likely to be nervous at her prolonged absence, would not go to rest till she came back. He would sit poring over his herbarium, with his candle winking on the window sill—the star which had often guided her home from her errands of mercy on the darksome ways, though seldom, indeed, at such an untimely hour as this.

And so she plodded on, through the bare upland part of the road nearest Deerham, till the banks began to rise on either side, and the blacker darkness of the over-arching trees made the gloom through which she had already passed seem lightsome. The dew lay heavy on every leaf and blade of grass, and struck a sense of chill on Chrystal's heart even amid the heat of the sultry night. Among the sodden vegetation the glowworms were giving forth their tiny illumination. The petulant, exacting cry of the hedgehog made Chrystal pause and listen. Her father's daughter was too familiar with the origin of all such sounds even to start when she heard them. But she would not go on till she made quite sure the sound did come from a hedgehog.

"For if simple folks have run from that, thinking it was a ghost's scream," said she to herself, "over-sharp ones might pass a lost child, and mistake its wail for a hedgehog's. That's what I think about learning in general. It takes a deal of wisdom to keep from being too clever. I don't despise ghost stories. There must be something in them, though it is more likely to be the sin or sorrow or remorse of souls in the flesh than of souls out of it. And I'm sure no fiend with hoofs and horns could do a man half the mischief he gets from the distilled spirits which make him fancy he sees such a one."

And then Chrystal suddenly remembered she was approaching the scene of the last sensation in Winds' Haven life.

It has been said that one side of Deerham Road was skirted by a dense pine wood. In this pine wood a few clearings had been made. One such clearing lay about the margin of a small deep pool, called the Gipsy's Pond. It was a village history that more than a hundred years before, a gipsy mother had drowned her baby there. She had been hanged for the crime, and there were still living very old people who could remember her gibbet left standing for long years on the top of the Warren Hill. From time to time during those hundred years, village fathers, belated in Deerham beershops, had whispered of seeing a dark figure or figures moving about among the trees, or sitting with bent head on the margin of the water. After these stories the men had been treated by their spouses with a pitiful reverence or a withering contempt, according to the confiding or incredulous nature of those help-mates ; and village public opinion had generally taken its cue from these good women, as presuming that those who knew most must know best. With a view to dissipate all such fumes of fear and superstition, the last Vicar of Winds' Haven had repeatedly held entertainments under the picturesque shades of the great trees which stood a little back from the pond. It seemed as if the children's hymns and the glee-singing of the older people had effectually laid the ghost, for nothing had been heard of it for many years. But now, not more than a week ago, old Harry Snelling, having stayed late at work in Deerham, had taken the short cut across the corner of the wood on his way home, and was prepared to asseverate that the dark-robed gipsy was once more to be seen cowering on the edge of her pond. Old Harry had found himself fallen on a sceptical generation. A sharp fire of cross-examination had opened on him at once, and his only comfort was that his answers were to the discomfort of his examiners. Of course he had stopped at the beershop? No, he hadn't ; he'd been at work in the railway rooms, and the porters could prove it. But he had been drinking—of course he had, though he might deny it. Then it was of no use for him to deny it ; but Dame Snelling could prove that he came home sober enough, with all his money in his pocket, and never a tavern smell