

point, and becoming quite absorbed in the characteristics and tokens of the child gave renewed uneasiness to Solomon, who expressed his feelings in a loud and somewhat menacing tone.

"Rest you, young man!" she replied, "your fortune is wrapt in that of the child. The hour cometh. Your significator must apply to a sextile of Mercury and Venus. I see a coffin in the wick of this candle. Scare the cats, let me see them jump once more. Now is your moment, depart."

Whatever might be the meaning of this visit and this singular mummery to Margaret, Solomon, it appeared, had now accomplished his object, and was ready to leave. They plunged from the light again into the darkness, and retracing their steps through the woods, returned to the Still. Margaret would have gone in to her brother, but Solomon declared he had something more for her to do, and insisted that she should ride a little farther with him. They went up the road leading to the Pond, and arriving at a growth of trees known as the Pines, lying on the west side of the way, Solomon hitched his horse, and led Margaret once more into the woods. Reaching a spot which he seemed previously to have in his mind, he put a hazle-twig into the child's hand, and bade her go about among the trees in the same manner as she did at Mr. Palmer's at the Ledge. She was not long in announcing the movement of the twig, and the young man secured himself of the place as well as he could in the darkness, by piling a heap of stones over it. She asked him what it was for, but he declined telling; and what he would not do, we must, since, in the sequel, the whole affair came out. This young Smith had a dream, three nights successively, of gold hid in the Pines. He could not identify the precise locality, and sundry private canvassings of the earth with a spade had hitherto been fruitless. Hence his anxiety to secure the services of Margaret, whose success on a former occasion with the divining rod he had been apprized of; hence also his visit to Joyce Dooly the Fortune-teller, for the purpose of fortifying himself more completely in his undertaking. Once more in this night of wanderings and mystery was Margaret conducted to the Still. Morning had scarcely begun to dawn, and Solomon had time to dispose of his horse in the stable, and himself in bed, before the family were up. Margaret found Hash yet in his sleep, the fire decayed, and the Still dark, cold and dismal as the morning after a debauch. She rekindled the fire, sufficiently at least for her own comfort, and lying down before it, with her head upon the breast of Bull, fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARGARET ENQUIRES AFTER THE INFINITE; AND CANNOT MAKE HER WAY OUT OF THE FINITE.—SHE UNWITTINGLY CREATES A GREAT SENSATION IN THE TOWN OF LIVINGSTON.

"WHAT is God?" said Margaret one morning to the Master, who in his perambulations encountered her just as she was driving the cow to pasture, and helped her put up the bars.

"God, God—" replied he, drawing back a little, and thrusting his golden-headed cane under his arm, and blowing his nose with his red bandanna handkerchief. "You shut your cow in the pasture to eat grass, don't you, mea discipula?" added he after returning his handkerchief to his pocket, and planting himself once more upon his cane.

"Yes," she replied.

"What if she should try to get out?"

"We put pegs in the bars sometimes."

"Pegs in the bars! ahem. Suppose she should stop eating, and leaning her neck across the bars, cry out, 'O you, Mater hominum bovumque! who are you? Why do you wear a pinafore?' In other words, should ask after you, her little mistress; what would you think of that, hey?"

"I don't know what I should," replied Margaret, "it would be so odd."

"Cows," rejoined the Master, "had better eat the grass, drink the water, lie in the shade, and stand quietly to be milked, asking no questions."

"But do, sir," she continued, "tell me what God is."

The Master folded back both his ruffle cuffs, lifted his golden-headed cane into the air, and cleared at one bound the roadside ditch, whereby his large three-corned hat fell into the water. Margaret picked it up, and wiping it, handed it to him, which circumstance seemed to recall him to the thread of her feelings; and he replied to her by saying,

"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas. God, child, is Tetragrammatic, a Four-wordity; in the Hebrew יְהוָה, the Assyrian Adad, the Egyptian Amon, the Persian Syre, Greek

Θεός, Latin Deus, German Gott, French Dieu; *Τὸν πταρμον Θεον ηγουμεθα*, says Aristotle; 'God is the Divine Being,' says Bailey; 'Jupiter Divum Pater,' says Virgil."

"Christ the Beautiful One, I saw in my dream, said if I loved I should know God," replied Margaret.

"Verily, as saith the Holy Apostle, God is Love."

"Did Love make me?"

"Mundum fecit Amor; or as Jamblicus has it, 'God produced matter by separating materiality from essentiality,' or as Thomas writes, 'Creation is extension produced by the Divine power.'"

"Is God Latin?"

"He is in Latin. Deus is Latin for God."

"I don't know anything about it. I had rather go into the woods, or up to Obed's. His mother wants to see you; she told me to ask you to call there, the next time you came to the Pond."

"I thought she did not like me."

"But she wants to see you very much."

"I hope she has no designs upon me?"

"I don't know. — It is something she wants."

"She don't purpose to marry me?"

"I guess that is it. Hash said Miss Amy was going to marry you."

"What, both? You are a ninny. You never heard of the Knights of the Forked Order. There is the old song:

'Why my good father, what should you do with a wife?
'Would you be crested? Will you needs thrust your head
'In one of Vulcan's helmets? Will you perforce
'Wear a city cap, and a Court feather?'

Malum est mulier, women are an evil."

Thus talking, they approached the Widow's. To the road up which they went, the Master gave the name of Via Salutaris, the stile by which they crossed the stump-fence into the herb-garden or front yard, he called Porta Salutaris, as the Leech herself he had already honored by the title of Diva Salus.

"The child said you wanted me," outspoke the Master, as he entered the house, in a tone that savored of irritated dignity.

"Please Ma'am," interposed Margaret, both to explain and appease, "he says he won't marry you."

"Mehercule! What are you about, my little Beadswoman?"

exclaimed he, endeavoring to impose silence upon the child. "In what way, capacity, office, character, can I do you service, Mistress Wright?"

"Gummy!" retorted the woman. "He has been a talkin' about me, and a runnin' of me down. I wouldn't stoop so much as teu pick him up. I wouldn't crack my finger joints for him."

"He didn't mean you," replied Margaret. "He said women were an evil."

"Not widows, child," added the Master.

"Yes," said the woman, "we are evil, but not evils, I trust. No offence, I hope, sir," she added in a softened tone.

"None in the world," answered the Master. A widow the good Fuller enumerates in his Holy State."

"Ah yes, they would try teu make us think we are sutthin when we are nothin, as the Parson says."

"She is one, as that old writer observes, whose head hath been cut off, yet she liveth, and hath the second part of virginity!"

"The Lord be praised," said the woman, with a curtsey, wiping her mouth with the corner of her apron; "I do survive as good a husband, as ever woman had."

"Her grief for her husband," continues the Worthy to whom I refer, "though real, is moderate."

"Yes, sir."

"She loveth to look on the picture of her husband, in the children he hath left her, as adds our reverend Author," subjoined the Master turning his eye towards Obed, who stood in the door, twitching up his breeches.

The manner of the Master was too pointed not to be felt, and when he had succeeded in smarting the good Widow's sensibilities, his object was attained. But she, on the other hand, had the faculty, by a smile that was peculiar to her, of disguising her emotions, and always contrived to cover up her sense of humiliation with the airs of victory. These two persons, as we have formerly remarked, did not like each other very well, and in whatever respects they stood mutually beholden, it was the object of each to make it appear that favors were given without grace, and received without gratitude. We will not follow their diplomatic banterings, but join them when they have concluded to go peaceably about their business. The Widow had invented a new medicine which would cure a great variety of diseases. But she wanted a scientific name for it, and also the scientific names of its

several specific virtues. Her own vocabulary supplied her with an abundance of common appellations, but her purposes aspired to something higher, and the Master's aid was brought in requisition. The Leech sat by a table, holding a pen, with a pewter inkstand, and some scraps of dingy paper before her, and endeavored to avail herself of every suggestion of the Master's by committing it immediately to writing.

"Widder or woman," said she, "I knows what I knows, and I know what is in this ere medicine, how many yarbs, and how I gathered um, and how I dried um, and how I pounded um, and how I mixed um, and I kalkelate there is a vartue in it. It'll dill fevers, dry up sores, stop rumatiz, drive out rattle-snake's bite, kill worms — there an't a disorder you can mention that won't knock under to't."

"Except one."

"What is that?"

"Cacoethes Feminarum."

"Up-a-daisy! What a real soundin' one! Bile me up for soap, if that an't a pealer," exclaimed the delighted woman, giving a kind of chuckling grin both to the Master and Margaret. "Deu tell us what it is?" she added. "Is it round hereabouts much? Has any died on't?"

"I know," said Margaret, "it is something about women. Femina is Latin for woman."

"Oh forever! I dussay," rejoined the Widow, "it's some perlite matter, and he would'nt like to speak it out before a body. How vallible is scientifikals and larnin'! Prehaps he'd tell what brings it — lor me, what a booby I be teu ask. My skull for a trencher, if I can't cure it, if it's as bad as the itch itself."

"Humors —" said the Master.

"Humors! Humors in wimmin — now don't say no more. I knew 'twas some perlite matter. But I can cure it, or any thing else; only give us the scientifikals and larnin'. There's elderblows in my new medicine, and they'll drive out humors as clean as a whistle. Only if I had the name. A name that has the scientifikals and larnin' in't. Diseases dont take now-a-days without they have the pecoolar; and you can't cure 'em without the pecoolar. I've studied the matter out and out, and I knows, what I knows, Widder or no Widder. I an't teu be befooled by nobody, not I. I don't ask no favors of nobody. But the Master knows so much, and here's our little Molly, she's as smart and pecoolar as the best on um. The Master knows there's a good deal in a name, if he'd only say so. There

was four cases up to Snake Hill, and I got two of um, and should have got the rest bein Dr. Spoor hadn't a come in, with his larnin' words, and that took. They'll all go teu the dogs if they can't have the scientifikals and the larnin'. If he would only be so kind as to give a poor woman a name for her medicine — but I won't beg, no I won't."

"Nominis stat umbra," said the Master slowly and solemnly, while with assumed gravity and inward impatience he had been listening to the balderdash of the woman.

"Is that it?" asked she hastily.

"Verily," he replied, "Nominis stat umbra."

"Nommernisstortumbug," said the Leech. "Why now, I vum, I could a thought of that myself. Obed here, see how easy tis, Nommernisstortumbug, remember, Obed, and you'll be as larnt as Miss Molly. Git Molly some honey, prehaps the Master would like teu taste on't. We'll go it into um now. My husband made a great push in the scientifikals, and his pills did amazin' stout; but he didn't live in my day. I ought by good rights to make sutthin out of it, for I've took pains and studied long enough teu git it through. Jest give us the names, and we'll go right among the upper crust anywheres, and Dr. Spoor may hang his saddle-bags in his garret. There's Deacon Penrose's gally pots and spattles, and Nigger Tony's prinked up Patents, I an't afeered of none of um, no, nor of old Death himself. He daren't show his white jaws where the larnin' is. A box of my Nommernisstortumbug would give the saucy rascal an ague fit, and he'd be glad teu put on some skin and flesh, and dress up like a man, and not be round skeerin' people so with his old bones. There's Parkins's Pints has been makin' a great pudder over to England, but they an't knee high to a toad to't. The thing of it is, people has got teu be so pesky proud and perlite, they will have the very best of names. They'd all die every one on um, before they'd touch the Widder's stuff, as they call it; but the Nommernisstortumbug they'll swallow down box and all, and git well teu, ha, ha! I knows what I knows, I've seen how the cat has been a jumpin'. The ministers try to save their souls, and have to preach sich things as 'll take; I mean to save their bodies, and I must fix it so it'll take; — I han't a grain of interest in the matter, not I. As soon as Obed gits a leetle older, I mean teu send him teu Kidderminster, and Hartford, and Boston, and all about the country, with my medicines, and there won't be a spice of disease left. The Pints is a pound sterling, and I shall put my Nommernisstortumbug right up, and when you ax a good round price, it'll sell all the quicker."

The Master, secretly amused at the Widow's self-complacency, was not disposed to give her any interruption, at least so long as he ate of her clear white honey, which Obed supplied in liberal quantities, and of which he was thoroughly fond. Nay he went farther, and at her request wrote down for her, in scientific terms, the several and various properties of her nostrum, which she described to him. The Widow's bad feelings towards the Master were likewise so overcome by the thought of her good fortune, as for the moment to throw her off her guard, and she forgot her usual self-possessed spitefulness. Their interview was in fair progress towards an amicable termination, when the Master happened to say he wanted Margaret to do a service for him that day. But the Widow in the mean time had been concocting plans in her own brains which included the aid of the child. Their difficulties broke out anew, there were taunts on the one side, and feminine objurgations on the other. How far the matter may have been carried we know not, when Margaret took the decision into her own hands, by running off. Both started for her, and came to the stile nearly at the same moment. Margaret had already got into the road. The Master, having a little advantage in point of time, mounted the stile first, but his course was checked by the skirts of his coat catching in one of the roots that composed the fence. The lady in excess of strong feeling pounced upon his ankles, and held him fast, while Obed hovered near with a look that threatened to facilitate his mother's purposes. The Master flourished his long golden-headed cane in the air, greatly to the consternation of Obed, and the merriment of the Widow, who dared him to strike. Margaret hastened forward, intercedingly, and begged the Master off, under such conditions as the woman chose to stipulate, to wit, that she should come and help her some other day.

The Master sometimes employed Margaret to scour the woods in search of wild flowers, a pursuit for which she was fitted both by her own lightness of heart and foot, and a familiar acquaintance with the region. It was his wish that she should preserve specimens of almost all kinds she encountered, in the expectation, partly, of discovering some new variety. He furnished her with a tin case or box to keep the flowers fresh and sound. Providing herself with a lunch of bread and cheese, she took a familiar route through the Mowing into the rich Birch and Walnut woods lying towards the village. Bull had gone off with Hash in the morning, and she was obliged to fail of the usual companion of her rambles. The sun shone

warm and inviting, and the air was soft and exhilarating. The olive-backs trolled and chanted among the trees, and in the shadowy green boughs, innumerable and invisible creepers and warblers sang out a sweet welcome wherever she came along. She found varieties of fungus, yellow, scarlet, and blood-colored, which she tore from the sides of trees, from stumps, and rails. She gathered the wild columbine, snakeroot, red cohosh, purple bush-trefoil, flaxbell-flower, the beautiful purple orchis, and dodder, that gay yellow-liveried parasite; and other flowers, now so well known and readily distinguished by every lover of nature, but which, at the period of our Memoir, had not been fully arranged in the New England Flora. She turned to the right, or towards South, and came to a spot of almost solid granite, through the hard chinks and seams of which great trees had bored their way, and forced themselves into the light and air. This place was set down in the vocabulary of the district as the Maples, or Sugar Camp, from its growth of sugar maple trees. Over these stones she stepped as on a pavement, or leaped from one to another as one does on the foam-crags at Nahant. In these dark crevices she found the bright green bunches of the devil's ear seed, and the curious mushroom-like tobacco-pipe; all about her, on the rocks, the bright green polypods and maiden's hair waved in silent feathery harmony with the round dots of quavering sun light, that descended through the trees — little daughters of the sun dallying with these children of the earth, and, like spiders, spinning a thin beautiful tissue about them, which was destroyed every night, and patiently renewed every morning. Here also she found beds of shining white, and rose-colored crystal quartz stones, large and small, striped and ruffled with green moss. On the flat top of a large boulder that was thrown up from the mass of rocks, she saw growing a parcel of small polypods, in a circle, like a crown on a king's head. Up this she climbed, and sat among the ferns, and sang snatches from old songs she had learned:

“There were three jovial Welchmen
As I have heard them say,
And they would go a-hunting
Upon St. David's Day.”

She selected some of the fairest of the fronds, and singing —

“Robin and Richard were two pretty men,
They laid in bed till the clock struck ten;
Then up starts Robin, and looks at the sky,
O! Brother Richard, the Sun is very high,”—

leaped down again. A humming-bird that she had seen, or fancied she saw, early in the morning sucking her scarlet bean flowers, shot by her. She would follow it. It led her towards the road going from the Pond to No. 4. She pursued it till she came to its nest on the branch of a tree, which she was able to reach by means of a high rock. She found the nest constructed of mosses, and lined with mullein down, and in it were two tiny white eggs, a second hatching for the season. Two birds, the male and female, darted angrily at her, and ruffled their golden-green and tabby-colored feathers, as if they would fight her. She spoke to them, and discovered that they were really the same that had fed on honey from her hand, and one took quietly to the nest, while the other winged a swift, playful roundelay above her head. Leaving the birds, she crossed the road, and entered the Pines, where Solomon Smith took her a few nights before. Here, under the trees she found a crowd of persons, men and women, boys and girls, who seemed bent on some mysterious thing, which they pursued with an unwonted stillness. Among them was a man, whom she knew to be Zenas Joy, pacing to and fro with a drawn sword, and keeping the people back. Damaris Smith ran to her, and whispered her not to speak loud, and said they were after the gold. Let us explain what Margaret herself had not been apprised of, that young Smith, after discovering the supposed deposit of the gold, for two or three nights, went and dug alone there. Baffled in his search, but not in his expectations, he had recourse to his neighbors, and so the secret leaked out. There were five or six men employed in digging, and for more than a week had they worked there, day and night, without intermission, relieving one another by turns. They had excavated the ground to the depth of nearly thirty feet, and with a proportionately large breadth. A prodigious heap of earth and stones had been cast up, and great pine-trees had been undermined, precipitated, cut off, and thrown out. When Margaret approached near enough to look in, she saw the men, noiseless and earnest, at work with might and main; scarcely did they stop to wipe the sweat that reeked and beaded from their faces. Among them she saw her brother Hash, and others, whom she knew to be No. 4's and Breaknecks. It was a received notion of the times, that if any spoke during the operation, the charm was destroyed, hence the palpitating silence Margaret observed, and for this purpose also a sentry had been appointed to keep order among the people.

Margaret seeing Hash, was inconsiderate enough to speak

to him, and ask after Bull. For this Zenas Joy, since words were out of the question, administered a corporeal admonition with the flat side of his sword, and Damaris Smith, with the other girls, seconding his endeavors, fairly drubbed her from the place. She went off, singing as she went,

“ Little General Monk
Sat upon a trunk
Eating a crust of bread;
There fell a hot coal
And burnt in his clothes a hole,
Now little General Monk is dead;—
Keep always from the fire,
Keep always from the fire.”

She had not gone far when Bull, who had been asleep in the shade of a rock, awakened by the sound of her voice, came leaping out to her, and continued in her company. In the Pines she gathered such flowers as, for the most part, are proper to that description of soil;—the sleepy catchfly that is wide awake nights, pennyroyal with its purple whorls, yellow bent spikes of the gromwell, the sweet-scented pettymorrel, the painted cup with its scarlet-tipped bractes, yellow-horned horse balm, peach-perfumed waxen ladies tresses, nodding purple gay feather; she climbed after the hairy honey-suckle, and the pretty purple ground-nut, which, despising its name, overmounts the tallest shrubs. She encountered in her way a “clearing,” now grown up to elecampane, mullein, fire-weed, wild-lettuce. She forced herself through a thicket of brakes, blackberries and thistles, and clambered upon a fence, where she sat to look at the tall lettuces that shot up like trees above the other weeds. The seeds disengaging themselves from the capsule at the top, and spreading out their innumerable long white filaments, but still hovering about the parent stalk, gave the plant an appearance as if it had instantaneously put forth in huge gossamer inflorescence. Then a slight agitation of wind would disperse these flowers or egrets and send them flying through the air, like globes of silver light, or little burred fairies, some of them vanishing in the white atmosphere, others brought into stronger relief as they floated towards the green woods beyond. Descending towards the Brook, she gathered the beautiful yellow droops of the barberry-bush, white wall-cress, yellow none-such, flowers of the sweet-briar. She came to the stream, Mill Brook, that flowed out from her Pond; near it grew the virgin's bower or traveller's joy, bedstraw, the

nightshades, yellow spearwort, button-bush, purple thoroughwort, the beautiful cardinal flower or eye-bright just budding, and the side-saddle flower. On its grassy margin she took her seat under the shade of a large white birch. She ate her bread and cheese, sharing her morsel with the dog. She kneeled and drank from the swift sparkling waters, where they ran between two stones. It was now past noon; her box was full, and quite heavy enough for one so young to carry, and she might have returned home. The woods beyond, or to the west of the Brook, were close and dark, hardly did the sun strike through them, but the birds were noisy there, and she must perforce enter them, as a cavern, and walk on the smooth leaf-strewed floor. The ground ascended, then rounded over into a broad interval below, down into which she went. Here a giant forest extended itself interminably, and she seemed to have come into a new world of nature. Huge old trees, some white pines and white oaks, looked as if they grew up to the skies. Birds that she had never seen before, or heard so near at hand, hooted and screamed among the branches. A dark falcon pierced the air like an arrow, in pursuit of a partridge, just before her eyes. An eagle stood out against the sky on the blasted peak of a great tree; a hen-harrier bore in his talons a chicken to his young; large owls in hooded velvety sweep flew by her; squirrels chattered and scolded one another; large snake-headed wild-turkeys strutted and gobbled in the underbrush; a wild-cat sprang across her path and she clung closer to her dog. Resting herself at the foot of a large pine-tree, she picked and ate the little red checker-berries that grew in profusion on the spot. The birds fluttered, rioted and shrieked, in strange confusion, among the trees, and she entertained herself watching their motion and noise. The low and softened notes of distant thunder she heard, and felt no alarm; or she may have taken it for the drum-like sound of partridges that so nearly resembles thunder, and which she had often heard, and thought no more of the matter. Had she been on the tops of the trees, where the birds were, she would have seen a storm gathering, cloud engendering cloud, peaks swelling into mountains, the entire mass sagging with darkness, and dilating in horror. The air seemed to hold in its breath, and in the hushed silence she sat, looking at the rabbits and woodchucks that scampered across the dry leaves, and dived into their burrows. She broke into a loud laugh, when she saw a small brown-snouted martin in smart chase after the bolt-upright, bushy, black-tipped tail of a red fox, up a tree,

and spat her hands, and stamped her feet, to cheer the little creature on. She sung out, in gayest participation of the scene, a Mother Goose Melody, in a Latin version the Master had given her;—

“*Hei didulum! atque iterum didulum! felisque fidesque,
Vacca super lunæ cornua prosiluit:
Nescio qua catulus risit dulcedine ludi;
Abstulit et turpi cochleare fuga.*”

While she was singing, hail-stones bounded at her feet, and the wind shook the tops of the trees: Suddenly it grew dark, then, in the twinkling of an eye, the storm broke over her, howling, crashing, dizzying it came. The whole forest seemed to have given way—to have been felled by the stroke of some Demiurgic Fury, or to have prostrated itself as the Almighty himself passed by. The great pine, at the root of which she was sitting, was broken off just above her head, and blown to the ground; and by its fall, enclosing her in an impenetrable sconce, under which alone, in the general wreck, could her life have been preserved. A whirlwind, or tornado, such as sometimes visits New England, had befallen the region. It leaped like a maniac from the skies, and, with a breadth of some twenty rods, and an extent of four or five miles, swept everything in its course; the forest was mown down before it, orchard-trees were torn up by the roots, large rocks unearthed, chimneys dashed to the ground, roofs of houses whirled into the air, fences scattered, cows lifted from their feet, sheep killed, the strongest fabrics of man and nature driven about like stubble. In bush and settlement, upland and interval, was its havoc alike fearful. When Margaret recovered from the alarm and bewilderment of the moment, her first impulse was to call for the dog;—but he, at the instant having been caught off by the apparition of the wild-cat, was overtaken by the storm, and borne down by the falling trees, losing all sense of duty, wounded and frightened, he fled away. She herself was covered with leaves, fragments of bark, hail-stones and sand; blood flowed from her arm, and one of her legs was bruised. The end of a bough had penetrated her box of flowers and pinned it to the earth. The sun came out as the storm went by; but above her the trees with their branches piled one upon another on the great pine that had been her salvation, formed an almost impervious thatch that enveloped her in darkness. Making essays at self-deliverance, she found her path in every direction closed, or at least distorted. Thé