throw myself into this deep leather chair before such a congenial little fire. I like the very odor of the old calf-skin books and strong cigar smoke of the library. I like to stretch here in the evening light and listen to the clatter of the many hoofs as they ring out on the clear, frosty air, and the laughing voices of the merry holiday crowd as they pass the house. It all soothes and makes me forget that to-morrow I leave—

Listen! some one is coming up the steps outside. Ah—don't I recognize that little patter? And if I desired I could easily turn my head on the soft leather and look out of the window—and yet I will not—just to spite myself, and I keep my eyes on the fire.

I can hear James open the door. Then there is a gentle little patting on the stair-case, I can just barely hear it. There, a step near the landing creaked. Then all is silent within again.

Outside I hear some rider, who is hurrying to get his dinner, probably. The double click of hoofs is like the artificial gallop behind the scenes at the theatre, I am thinking. But just as they are dying away a low muffled roll, like rain beating upon a mossy bank, comes from the hallway. The little beating feet and rustling skirts are accompanied by a gentle whistle, which becomes louder and higher as the foot-beats become faster, and finally ends in a shrill staccato note as she skips the last three steps with a jump.

Tantalizing silence again. It seems very long.

There. I hear the beads of the portiere rattling musically. Another pause. I feel that two brown eyes are being turned into every corner of the half-dark room. But I do not turn my head.

What! is she turning away? But I stubbornly stay in my comfortable seat.

Ah, I can hear the low rustle of her dress approaching. I know, though I can't see it, that it's the light blue one with the white ruche all down in front. The rustling is ap-
proaching. Look! in that small old-fashioned mirror over
the fire-place—I see her stealing with long tiptoe strides,
towards the back of my chair; both arms are stretched
half forward. Her white throat catches a gleam from the
ruddy fire-light and I can see it throbbing, quivering; one
row of pearly teeth is pressing hard into a rosy lip.

I shut my eyes tight.

The rustling comes nearer and nearer.

I feel a warm vapor on the back of my neck, and with it
a ghost of an odor that makes me think of a certain sloping
meadow and bunch of willows I once saw while shooting
quail in Virginia.

First, something like a fine cobweb strikes against my
cheek and nearly goes in my eye, then suddenly two warm
little hands lay hold of my cheeks and swiftly draw my head
back.—I am conscious of a satiny cheek, still cool from the
air, bumping against my big nose—all in half a second.

Then a merry laugh mixed with a little scream, as if a bit
frightened—causes me to jump up and rub my eyes sur-
priously and pretend to be indignant. And I proceed to
pronounce a scolding which does not in the least frighten,
for a right brave little girl is my sister.

A RETREAT.

I know a spot in forest gloom,
Where lofty trees arch overhead,
And violets on a mossy bed
With quaintly-fashioned orchids bloom;
They glance at me in mute surprise,
As with a blushing maiden’s eyes.

Kind nature guards her creatures here
In rocky caves that murmur low,
Timing the gentle brooklet’s flow.
Oh, let me tarry ever near,
And, burdened with a world of care,
Briefly this peaceful quiet share.

Pierre Frederick Cook.

THE AFTER-GLOW.—A sunny autumn afternoon, a bright,
blue sky with great banks of fleecy clouds piled one upon
another near the horizon, a laughing, sparkling sea which
ever sent to land gently lapping waves—this was nature’s
framework of the picture. A little way up the beach lay
an old dismantled hulk, half covered by the drifting sand,
on which was seated an aged man, at whose feet two pretty,
blue-eyed children were busy at play—these were the
figures on the canvas.

Presently the children, tired of digging tunnels with
their wooden shovels and carrying away the debris in
diminutive pails, climbed upon the old man’s knee and
begged him for a story. “A shipwreck story,” they said,
and when he told them of perils and storms and dangers
encountered in the very boat that lay beneath them, of
days spent without food and of nights of wild tempest
and bitter cold, they looked up at him with great, wondering
eyes, and when he had finished they thanked him with a
kiss.

Then it was time to go home, for evening was drawing
nigh, and the autumn nights were cold, so the old man
arose, took his grandchildren by the hand, and the three
walked slowly along the shore toward the little fishing
hamlet, where they lived.

The sun had just sunk behind the western hills, but its
light had not yet faded from the sky, and land and sea
were gilded with the soft radiance of the after-glow, so that
it seemed almost impossible that day was done.

But this brightness remained only a little while, every
moment the light became fainter, and soon the shadowy
veil of twilight had gathered round, hiding the world
within its gloomy folds.

Then gazing at the dim outlines of the figure of the old
man far up the shore—the thought came, how like the
“after-glow” were the last years of this aged sailor’s life.
His sun had in reality already set, his days of active conflict