THEIR HUSBANDS' WIVES

HARPER'S NOVELETTES

EDITED BY

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Introduction

In a certain sense all wives are Their Husbands' Wives, but in naming their little collection of tales, of varied interest but of single purport, the editors have had peculiarly in mind those wives who perpetuate in the latest woman the ideal of the earliest. It is an ideal which shines alike through the tender humor of Mr. Clemens's charming fantasy of the primal world, Mrs. Stuart Phelps's romance of our great, every-day, latter-day life, Mrs. Roach's interesting study of the truest and most modern of types, Mr. Pottle's rather grimly faithful portrayal of a situation far more frequent in marriage than has been owned, Mr. Hibbard's delicate divination of the secret of a woman's soul, and Mrs. Ellery Channing's hopeful and delightful hypothesis in a region of the heart perhaps too little explored by practical science.

What is this ideal, then, in a word? But it cannot be put in a word. It can only be suggested in two or three. We ourselves should say it was that of a sort of Impatient Grizzle, who achieves through a fine, rebellious self-sacrifice all the best results of the old Patient one's subjection. It is the wife who has her will only the better to walk in her husband's way. That, or something like it, is the ideal of this group of delightful women, so differently dutiful, so freshly, so winningly, so defiantly, at times, devoted.

It follows that they are all American women, not excepting Eve herself, whose Eden now stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf. Her wifely instinct was prophetic of the only daughters of hers who are as free and natural as she and who seem not the less constant in their allegiance to their several Adams because they have always within their reach the baleful deliverance of the divorce-courts. Their bond is the passion of which fiction is never tired, and which in the home of its least restraint has been turned here to the light with a different opalescence from each incidence of the skies.

W. D. H.

MARK TWAIN
EVE'S DIARY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS
COVERED EMBERS

ABBY MEGUIRE ROACH
LIFE'S ACCOLADE

EMERY POTTLE
THE BOND

GEORGE HIBBARD
THE EYES OF AFFECTION

GRACE ELLERY CHANNING
"THE MARRIAGE QUESTION"

Eve's Diary

Translated from the Original

BY MARK TWAIN

SATURDAY.—I am almost a whole day old, now. I arrived yesterday. That is as it seems to me. And it must be so, for if there was a day-before-yesterday I was not there when it happened, or I should remember it. It could be, of course, that it did happen, and that I was not noticing. Very well; I will be very watchful, now, and if any day-before-yesterdays happen I will make a note of it. It will be best to start right and not let the record get confused, for some instinct tells me that these details are going to be important to the historian some day. For I feel like an experiment, I feel exactly like an experiment, it would be impossible for a person to feel more like an experiment than I do, and so I am coming to feel convinced that that is what I *am*—an experiment; just an experiment, and nothing more.

Then if I am an experiment, am I the whole of it? No, I think not; I think the rest of it is part of it. I am the main part of it, but I think the rest of it has its share in the matter. Is my position assured, or do I have to watch it and take care of it? The latter, perhaps. Some instinct tells me that eternal vigilance is the price of supremacy. [That is a good phrase, I think, for one so young.]

Everything looks better to-day than it did yesterday. In the rush of finishing up yesterday, the mountains were left in a ragged condition, and some of the plains were so cluttered with rubbish and remnants that the aspects were quite distressing. Noble and beautiful works of art should not be subjected to haste; and this majestic new world is indeed a most noble and beautiful work. And certainly marvellously near to being perfect, notwithstanding the shortness of the time. There are too many stars in some places and not enough in others, but that can be remedied presently, no doubt. The moon got loose last night, and slid down and fell out of the scheme —a very great loss; it breaks my heart to think of it. There isn't another thing among the ornaments and decorations

that is comparable to it for beauty and finish. It should have been fastened better. If we can only get it back again—

But of course there is no telling where it went to. And besides, whoever gets it will hide it; I know it because I would do it myself. I believe I can be honest in all other matters, but I already begin to realize that the core and centre of my nature is love of the beautiful, a passion for the beautiful, and that it would not be safe to trust me with a moon that belonged to another person and that person didn't know I had it. I could give up a moon that I found in the daytime, because I should be afraid some one was looking; but if I found it in the dark, I am sure I should find some kind of an excuse for not saying anything about it. For I do love moons, they are so pretty and so romantic. I wish we had five or six; I would never go to bed; I should never get tired lying on the moss-bank and looking up at them.

Stars are good, too. I wish I could get some to put in my hair. But I suppose I never can. You would be surprised to find how far off they are, for they do not look it. When they first showed, last night, I tried to knock some down with a pole, but it didn't reach,

which astonished me; then I tried clods till I was all tired out, but I never got one. It was because I am left-handed and cannot throw good. Even when I aimed at the one I wasn't after I couldn't hit the other one, though I did make some close shots, for I saw the black blot of the clod sail right into the midst of the golden clusters forty or fifty times, just barely missing them, and if I could have held out a little longer maybe I could have got one.

So I cried a little, which was natural, I suppose, for one of my age, and after I was rested I got a basket and started for a place on the extreme rim of the circle, where the stars were close to the ground and I could get them with my hands, which would be better, anyway, because I could gather them tenderly then, and not break them. But it was farther than I thought, and at last I had to give it up; I was so tired I couldn't drag my feet another step; and besides, they were sore and hurt me very much.

I couldn't get back home; it was too far and turning cold; but I found some tigers and nestled in amongst them and was most adorably comfortable, and their breath was sweet and pleasant, because they live on strawberries. I had never

seen a tiger before, but I knew them in a minute by the stripes. If I could have one of those skins, it would make a lovely gown.

To-day I am getting better ideas about distances. I was so eager to get hold of every pretty thing that I giddily grabbed for it, sometimes when it was too far off, and sometimes when it was but six inches away but seemed a foot—alas, with thorns between! I learned a lesson; also I made an axiom, all out of my own head—my very first one: *The scratched Experiment shuns the thorn.* I think it is a very good one for one so young.

I followed the other Experiment around, yesterday afternoon, at a distance, to see what it might be for, if I could. But I was not able to make out. I think it is a man. I had never seen a man, but it looked like one, and I feel sure that that is what it is. I realize that I feel more curiosity about it than about any of the other reptiles. If it is a reptile, and I suppose it is; for it has frowsy hair and blue eyes, and looks like a reptile. It has no hips; it tapers like a carrot; when it stands, it spreads itself apart like a derrick; so I think it is a reptile, though it may be architecture.

I was afraid of it at first, and started to run every time it turned around, for I thought it was going to chase me; but by and by I found it was only trying to get away, so after that I was not timid any more, but tracked it along, several hours, about twenty yards behind, which made it nervous and unhappy. At last it was a good deal worried, and climbed a tree. I waited a good while, then gave it up and went home.

To-day the same thing over. I've got it up the tree again.

Sunday.—It is up there yet. Resting, apparently. But that is a subterfuge: Sunday isn't the day of rest; Saturday is appointed for that. It looks to me like a creature that is more interested in resting than in anything else. It would tire me to rest so much. It tires me just to sit around and watch the tree. I do wonder what it is for; I never see it do anything.

They returned the moon last night, and I was *so* happy! I think it is very honest of them. It slid down and fell off again, but I was not distressed; there is no need to worry when one has that kind of neighbors; they will fetch it back. I wish I could do something to show my ap-

preciation. I would like to send them some stars, for we have more than we can use. I mean I, not we, for I can see that the reptile cares nothing for such things.

It has low tastes, and is not kind. When I went there yesterday evening in the gloaming it had crept down and was trying to catch the little speckled fishes that play in the pool, and I had to clod it to make it go up the tree again and let them alone. I wonder if *that* is what it is for? Hasn't it any heart? Hasn't it any compassion for those little creatures? Can it be that it was designed and manufactured for such ungentle work? It has the look of it. One of the clods took it back of the ear, and it used language. It gave me a thrill, for it was the first time I had ever heard speech, except my own. I did not understand the words, but they seemed expressive.

When I found it could talk I felt a new interest in it, for I love to talk; I talk all day, and in my sleep, too, and I am very interesting, but if I had another to talk to I could be twice as interesting, and would never stop, if desired.

If this reptile is a man, it isn't an *it*, is it? That wouldn't be grammatical, would it? I think it would be *he*. I

think so. In that case one would parse it thus: nominative, *he;* dative, *him;* possessive, *his'n.* Well, I will consider it a man and call it he until it turns out to be something else. This will be handier than having so many uncertainties.

Next week Sunday.—All the week I tagged around after him and tried to get acquainted. I had to do the talking, because he was shy, but I didn't mind it. He seemed pleased to have me around, and I used the sociable "we" a good deal, because it seemed to flatter him to be included.

Wednesday.—We are getting along very well indeed, now, and getting better and better acquainted. He does not try to avoid me any more, which is a good sign, and shows that he likes to have me with him. That pleases me, and I study to be useful to him in every way I can, so as to increase his regard. During the last day or two I have taken all the work of naming things off his hands, and this has been a great relief to him, for he has no gift in that line, and is evidently very grateful. He can't think of a rational name to save him, but I do not let him see that I am aware of his defect. Whenever a new creature comes along I name it before he has time to expose

himself by an awkward silence. In this way I have saved him many embarrassments. I have no defect like his. The minute I set eyes on an animal I know what it is. I don't have to reflect a moment; the right name comes out instantly, just as if it were an inspiration, as no doubt it is, for I am sure it wasn't in me half a minute before. I seem to know just by the shape of the creature and the way it acts what animal it is.

When the dodo came along he thought it was a wildcat—I saw it in his eye. But I saved him. And I was careful not to do it in a way that could hurt his pride. I just spoke up in a quite natural way of pleased surprise, and not as if I was dreaming of conveying information, and said, "Well, I do declare if there isn't the dodo!" I explained—without seeming to be explaining—how I knew it for a dodo, and although I thought maybe he was a little piqued that I knew the creature when he didn't, it was quite evident that he admired me. That was very agreeable, and I thought of it more than once with gratification before I slept. How little a thing can make us happy when we feel that we have earned it.

Thursday.—My first sorrow. Yesterday he avoided me and seemed to wish

I would not talk to him. I could not believe it, and thought there was some mistake, for I loved to be with him, and loved to hear him talk, and so how could it be that he could feel unkind toward me when I had not done anything? But at last it seemed true, so I went away and sat lonely in the place where I first saw him the morning that we were made and I did not know what he was and was indifferent about him; but now it was a mournful place, and every little thing spoke of him, and my heart was very sore. I did not know why very clearly, for it was a new feeling; I had not experienced it before, and it was all a mystery, and I could not make it out.

But when night came I could not bear the lonesomeness, and went to the new shelter which he has built, to ask him what I had done that was wrong and how I could mend it and get back his kindness again; but he put me out in the rain, and it was my first sorrow.

Sunday.—It is pleasant again, now, and I am happy; but those were heavy days; I do not think of them when I can help it.

I tried to get him some of those apples, but I cannot learn to throw straight. I failed, but I think the good intention

pleased him. They are forbidden, and he says I shall come to harm; but so I come to harm through pleasing him why shall I care for that harm?

Monday.—This morning I told him my name, hoping it would interest him. But he did not care for it. It is strange. If he should tell me his name, I would care. I think it would be pleasanter in my ears than any other sound.

He talks very little. Perhaps it is because he is not bright, and is sensitive about it and wishes to conceal it. It is such a pity that he should feel so, for brightness is nothing; it is in the heart that the values lie. I wish I could make him understand that a loving good heart is riches, and riches enough, and that without it intellect is poverty.

Although he talks so little he has quite a considerable vocabulary. This morning he used a surprisingly good word. He evidently recognized, himself, that it was a good one, for he worked it in twice afterward, casually. It was not good casual art, still it showed that he possesses a certain quality of perception. Without a doubt that seed can be made to grow, if cultivated.

Where did he get that word? I do not think I have ever used it.

No, he took no interest in my name. I tried to hide my disappointment, but I suppose I did not succeed. I went away and sat on the moss-bank with my feet in the water. It is where I go when I hunger for companionship, some one to look at, some one to talk to. It is not enough—that lovely white body painted there in the pool—but it is something, and something is better than utter loneliness. It talks when I talk; it is sad when I am sad; it comforts me with its sympathy; it says, "Do not be downhearted, you poor friendless girl; I will be your friend." It *is* a good friend to me, and my only one; it is my sister.

That first time that she forsook me! ah, I shall never forget that — never, never. My heart was lead in my body! I said, "She was all I had, and now she is gone!" In my despair I said, "Break, my heart; I cannot bear my life any more!" and hid my face in my hands, and there was no solace for me. And when I took them away, after a little, there she was again, white and shining and beautiful, and I sprang into her arms!

That was perfect happiness; I had known happiness before, but it was not like this, which was ecstasy. I never doubted her afterwards. Sometimes she

stayed away—maybe an hour, maybe almost the whole day, but I waited and did not doubt; I said, "She is busy, or she is gone a journey, but she will come." And it was so: she always did. At night she would not come if it was dark, for she was a timid little thing; but if there was a moon she would come. I am not afraid of the dark, but she is younger than I am; she was born after I was. Many and many are the visits I have paid her; she is my comfort and my refuge when my life is hard—and it is mainly that.

Tuesday.—All the morning I was at work improving the estate; and I purposely kept away from him in the hope that he would get lonely and come. But he did not.

At noon I stopped for the day and took my recreation by flitting all about with the bees and the butterflies and revelling in the flowers, those beautiful creatures that catch the smile of God out of the sky and preserve it! I gathered them, and made them into wreaths and garlands and clothed myself in them whilst I ate my luncheon—apples, of course; then I sat in the shade and wished and waited. But he did not come.

But no matter. Nothing would have

come of it, for he does not care for flowers. He calls them rubbish, and cannot tell one from another, and thinks it is superior to feel like that. He does not care for me, he does not care for flowers, he does not care for the painted sky at eventide—is there anything he does care for, except building shacks to coop himself up in from the good clean rain, and thumping the melons, and sampling the grapes, and fingering the fruit on the trees, to see how those properties are coming along?

I laid a dry stick on the ground and tried to bore a hole in it with another one, in order to carry out a scheme that I had, and soon I got an awful fright. A thin, transparent bluish film rose out of the hole, and I dropped everything and ran! I thought it was a spirit, and I *was* so frightened! But I looked back, and it was not coming; so I leaned against a rock and rested and panted, and let my limbs go on trembling until they got steady again; then I crept warily back, alert, watching, and ready to fly if there was occasion; and when I was come near, I parted the branches of a rose-bush and peeped through—wishing the man was about, I was looking so cunning and pretty—but the sprite was gone. I went

there, and there was a pinch of delicate pink dust in the hole. I put my finger in, to feel it, and said *ouch!* and took it out again. It was a cruel pain. I put my finger in my mouth; and by standing first on one foot and then the other, and grunting, I presently eased my misery; then I was full of interest, and began to examine.

I was curious to know what the pink dust was. Suddenly the name of it occurred to me, though I had never heard of it before. It was *fire!* I was as certain of it as a person could be of anything in the world. So without hesitation I named it that—fire.

I had created something that didn't exist before; I had added a new thing to the world's uncountable properties; I realized this, and was proud of my achievement, and was going to run and find him and tell him about it, thinking to raise myself in his esteem,—but I reflected, and did not do it. No—he would not care for it. He would ask what it was good for, and what could I answer? for if it was not *good* for something, but only beautiful, merely beautiful—

So I sighed, and did not go. For it wasn't good for anything; it could not

build a shack, it could not improve melons, it could not hurry a fruit crop; it was useless, it was a foolishness and a vanity; he would despise it and say cutting words. But to me it was not despicable; I said, "Oh, you fire, I love you, you dainty pink creature, for you are *beautiful*—and that is enough!" and was going to gather it to my breast. But refrained. Then I made another maxim out of my own head, though it was so nearly like the first one that I was afraid it was only a plagiarism: "*The burnt Experiment shuns the fire.*"

I wrought again; and when I had made a good deal of fire-dust I emptied it into a handful of dry brown grass, intending to carry it home and keep it always and play with it; but the wind struck it and it sprayed up and spat out at me fiercely, and I dropped it and ran. When I looked back the blue spirit was towering up and stretching and rolling away like a cloud, and instantly I thought of the name of it —*smoke!*—though, upon my word, I had never heard of smoke before.

Soon, brilliant yellow and red flares shot up through the smoke, and I named them in an instant—*flames!*—and I was right, too, though these were the very first flames that had ever been in the

world. They climbed the trees, they flashed splendidly in and out of the vast and increasing volume of tumbling smoke, and I had to clap my hands and laugh and dance in my rapture, it was so new and strange and so wonderful and so beautiful!

He came running, and stopped and gazed, and said not a word for many minutes. Then he asked what it was. Ah, it was too bad that he should ask such a direct question. I had to answer it, of course, and I did. I said it was fire. If it annoyed him that I should know and he must ask, that was not my fault; I had no desire to annoy him. After a pause he asked,

"How did it come?"

Another direct question, and it also had to have a direct answer.

"I made it."

The fire was travelling farther and farther off. He went to the edge of the burnt place and stood looking down, and said,

"What are these?"

"Fire-coals."

He picked up one to examine it, but changed his mind and put it down again. Then he went away. *Nothing* interests him.

But I was interested. There were ashes, gray and soft and delicate and pretty—I knew what they were at once. And the embers; I knew the embers, too. I found my apples, and raked them out, and was glad; for I am very young and my appetite is active. But I was disappointed; they were all burst open and spoiled. Spoiled apparently; but it was not so; they were better than raw ones. Fire is beautiful; some day it will be useful, I think.

Friday.—I saw him again, for a moment, last Monday at nightfall, but only for a moment. I was hoping he would praise me for trying to improve the estate, for I had meant well and had worked hard. But he was not pleased, and turned away and left me. He was also displeased on another account: I tried once more to persuade him to stop going over the Falls. That was because the fire had revealed to me a new passion—quite new, and distinctly different from love, grief, and those others which I had already discovered—*fear.* And it is horrible!—I wish I had never discovered it; it gives me dark moments, it spoils my happiness, it makes me shiver and tremble and shudder. But I could

not persuade him, for he has not discovered fear yet, and so he could not understand me.

Tuesday—Wednesday—Thursday—and to-day: all without seeing him. It is a long time to be alone; still, it is better to be alone than unwelcome.

I *had* to have company—I was made for it, I think,—so I made friends with the animals. They are just charming, and they have the kindest disposition and the politest ways; they never look sour, they never let you feel that you are intruding, they smile at you and wag their tail, if they've got one, and they are always ready for a romp or an excursion or anything you want to propose. I think they are perfect gentlemen. All these days we have had such good times, and it hasn't been lonesome for me, ever. Lonesome! No, I should say not. Why, there's always a swarm of them around —sometimes as much as four or five acres—you can't count them; and when you stand on a rock in the midst and look out over the furry expanse it is so mottled and splashed and gay with color and frisking sheen and sun-flash, and so rippled with stripes, that you might think it was a lake, only you know it isn't; and there's storms of sociable birds, and hur-

ricanes of whirring wings; and when the sun strikes all that feathery commotion, you have a blazing up of all the colors you can think of, enough to put your eyes out.

We have made long excursions, and I have seen a great deal of the world; almost all of it, I think; and so I am the first traveller, and the only one. When we are on the march, it is an imposing sight—there's nothing like it anywhere. For comfort I ride a tiger or a leopard, because it is soft and has a round back that fits me, and because they are such pretty animals; but for long distance or for scenery I ride the elephant. He hoists me up with his trunk, but I can get off myself; when we are ready to camp, he sits and I slide down the back way.

The birds and animals are all friendly to each other, and there are no disputes about anything. They all talk, and they all talk to me, but it must be a foreign language, for I cannot make out a word they say; yet they often understand me when I talk back, particularly the dog and the elephant. It makes me ashamed. It shows that they are brighter than I am, and are therefore my superiors. It annoys me, for I want to be the prin-

cipal Experiment myself—and I intend to be, too.

I have learned a number of things, and am educated, now, but I wasn't at first. I was ignorant at first. At first it used to vex me because, with all my watching, I was never smart enough to be around when the water was running up-hill; but now I do not mind it. I have experimented and experimented until now I know it never does run up-hill, except in the dark. I know it does in the dark, because the pool never goes dry; which it would, of course, if the water didn't come back in the night. It is best to prove things by actual experiment; then you *know;* whereas if you depend on guessing and supposing and conjecturing, you will never get educated.

Some things you *can't* find out; but you will never know you can't by guessing and supposing: no, you have to be patient and go on experimenting until you find out that you can't find out. And it is delightful to have it that way, it makes the world so interesting. If there wasn't anything to find out, it would be dull. Even trying to find out and not finding out is just as interesting as trying to find out and finding out, and I don't know but more so. The secret of

the water was a treasure until I *got* it; then the excitement all went away, and I recognized a sense of loss.

By experiment I know that wood swims, and dry leaves, and feathers, and plenty of other things; therefore by all that cumulative evidence you know that a rock will swim; but you have to put up with simply knowing it, for there isn't any way to prove it—up to now. But I shall find a way—then *that* excitement will go. Such things make me sad; because by and by when I have found out everything there won't be any more excitements, and I do love excitements so! The other night I couldn't sleep for thinking about it.

At first I couldn't make out what I was made for, but now I think it was to search out the secrets of this wonderful world and be happy and thank the Giver of it all for devising it. I think there are many things to learn yet—I hope so; and by economizing and not hurrying too fast I think they will last weeks and weeks. I hope so. When you cast up a feather it sails away on the air and goes out of sight; then you throw up a clod and it doesn't. It comes down, every time. I have tried it and tried it, and it is always so. I wonder why it is? Of course it *doesn't* come down, but why

should it *seem* to? I suppose it is an optical illusion. I mean, one of them is. I don't know which one. It may be the feather, it may be the clod; I can't prove which it is, I can only demonstrate that one or the other is a fake, and let a person take his choice.

By watching, I know that the stars are not going to last. I have seen some of the best ones melt and run down the sky. Since one can melt, they can all melt; since they can all melt, they can all melt the same night. That sorrow will come—I know it. I mean to sit up every night and look at them as long as I can keep awake; and I will impress those sparkling fields on my memory, so that by and by when they are taken away I can by my fancy restore those lovely myriads to the black sky and make them sparkle again, and double them by the blur of my tears.

AFTER THE FALL

When I look back, the Garden is a dream to me. It was beautiful, surpassingly beautiful, enchantingly beautiful; and now it is lost, and I shall not see it any more.

The Garden is lost, but I have found *him*, and am content. He loves me as

well as he can; I love him with all the strength of my passionate nature, and this, I think, is proper to my youth and sex. If I ask myself why I love him, I find I do not know, and do not really much care to know; so I suppose that this kind of love is not a product of reasoning and statistics, like one's love for other reptiles and animals. I think that this must be so. I love certain birds because of their song; but I do not love Adam on account of his singing—no, it is not that; the more he sings the more I do not get reconciled to it. Yet I ask him to sing, because I wish to learn to like everything he is interested in. I am sure I can learn, because at first I could not stand it, but now I can. It sours the milk, but it doesn't matter; I can get used to that kind of milk.

It is not on account of his brightness that I love him—no, it is not that. He is not to blame for his brightness, such as it is, for he did not make it himself; he is as God made him, and that is sufficient. There was a wise purpose in it, *that* I know. In time it will develop, though I think it will not be sudden; and besides, there is no hurry; he is well enough just as he is.

It is not on account of his gracious

and considerate ways and his delicacy that I love him. No, he has lacks in these regards, but he is well enough just so, and is improving.

It is not on account of his industry that I love him—no, it is not that. I think he has it in him, and I do not know why he conceals it from me. It is my only pain. Otherwise he is frank and open with me, now. I am sure he keeps nothing from me but this. It grieves me that he should have a secret from me, and sometimes it spoils my sleep, thinking of it, but I will put it out of my mind; it shall not trouble my happiness, which is otherwise full to overflowing.

It is not on account of his education that I love him—no, it is not that. He is self-educated, and does really know a multitude of things, but they are not so.

It is not on account of his chivalry that I love him—no, it is not that. He told on me, but I do not blame him; it is a peculiarity of sex, I think, and he did not make his sex. Of course I would not have told on him, I would have perished first; but that is a peculiarity of sex, too, and I do not take credit for it, for I did not make my sex.

Then why is it that I love him? *Merely because he is masculine,* I think.

At bottom he is good, and I love him for that, but I could love him without it. If he should beat me and abuse me, I should go on loving him. I know it. It is a matter of sex, I think.

He is strong and handsome, and I love him for that, and I admire him and am proud of him, but I could love him without those qualities. If he were plain, I should love him; if he were a wreck, I should love him; and I would work for him, and slave over him, and pray for him, and watch by his bedside until I died.

Yes, I think I love him merely because he is *mine,* and is *masculine.* There is no other reason, I suppose. And so I think it is as I first said: that this kind of love is not a product of reasonings and statistics. It just *comes*—none knows whence—and cannot explain itself. And doesn't need to.

It is what I think. But I am only a girl, and the first that has examined this matter, and it may turn out that in my ignorance and inexperience I have not got it right.

FORTY YEARS LATER

It is my prayer, it is my longing, that we may pass from this life together—a longing which shall never perish from

the earth, but shall have place in the heart of every wife that loves, until the end of time; and it shall be called by my name.

But if one of us must go first, it is my prayer that it shall be I; for he is strong, I am weak, I am not so necessary to him as he is to me—life without him would not be life; how could I endure it? This prayer is also immortal, and will not cease from being offered up while my race continues. I am the first wife; and in the last wife I shall be repeated.

AT EVE'S GRAVE

ADAM: Wheresoever she was, *there* was Eden.

Covered Embers

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

WHEN the stenographer knocked at the door, John Herrick laid down his brief impatiently.

"I believe I told you not to disturb me," he remarked. His manner had the courteous formality with which he was in the habit of addressing this young person.

Her brows wrinkled. She had the haughty pompadour roll, the coquettish puff of white tulle at the back of her neck, and the severe black silk cuffs characteristic of her class.

"I have done nothing but see people all the morning. I reminded you that I would see no one else until I finished this. It is important. You will say that I am very much engaged."

"But, you see," suggested the girl, shutting the door behind her, "this is a new one, from up-country, I guess,—I should say as much as thirty miles out; perhaps forty. He's got to get the train. His

business is very important,—but they all say *that,*" admitted the experienced office-girl. "He says he's got to get the one-o'clock train back to China."

"Oh, very well," replied the lawyer, "if he comes as far as that—I'd better see him."

The circumstance that John Herrick was a gentleman indescribably affected the new client, who had entered the room noisily; he brought the aggressive scowl of a man whose acquaintance with the bar had been limited to the shysters he had met and the newspaper reports that he had read.

"I came," began the man, with the tactlessness of a country mechanic, "because you was recommended. That's the only reason."

"Ah!" replied Herrick, with a charming smile; "to whom do I owe this pleasure?"

"To last Sunday's *Planet,* sir. You won that case. Me and my wife have been reading it up. My name is Dinsmore—of Dinsmore and Peeler."

The visitor, who had begun to speak in an oratorical key, as if he were addressing a prayer-meeting, now dropped from the combative to the conversational, and took the chair which the lawyer had suavely indicated.

Herrick sat watching him with a clear scrutiny, shrewd but straightforward. Dinsmore was a big, beetling man; his thick hair and his jungle of a beard gave one the impression that he was top-heavy. His eyes were black, and of a smouldering sort; on the surface they were cool, or even cold, and his manner was arbitrary.

Herrick thought: "Born tyrant. I pity his wife." But he said: "I am at your service. What can I do for you, Mr. Dinsmore?"

"Well, you see," blurted Dinsmore, "me and my wife can't get on. We want a divorce."

The lawyer's expression changed indefinably. Indifference and politeness strengthened into gravity and attention. For this class of cases he cherished a distaste out of proportion to his success in the recent instance which had attracted comment in the press and added to his already brilliant reputation. In fact, he had only touched that out of chivalry; the woman was wronged, and she was dying.

"Ah?" He leaned back in his chair, with the motion of a man who has made up his mind not to neglect the client. "That's a pity."

Dinsmore's jaw fell a little, and he sat staring foolishly. This was not what he expected from an attorney who was about to take his money for the disruption of a home.

Embarrassed by he knew not what, and resentful he knew not why, he hurriedly began to talk as if he had been cross-examined; in point of fact, the lawyer had not yet put a question.

"I am Robert Dinsmore, of the firm of Dinsmore and Peeler. There ain't any Peeler—he died of a shakin' palsy, but we go by the name the neighbors are used to. We're in paint and wall-paper. My address is Southeast Street, China. My wife's name is Anna—christened Diana to the Methodist Episcopal Church. I'm a Baptist myself. We don't agree in religion more'n we do in anything. We ain't happy together. We can't get on. We want to be divorced."

"Why?"

"What business is it of yourn?" shot back the client.

"I can give you the address of some other attorney," suggested Herrick, smiling. "There are many. You can take your choice."

"By gum!" exploded the mechanic, "I chose *you,* sir."

"Very well, sir. Then you will answer my questions, and do it like a gentleman."

"I ask your pardon," slowly said the client, after some difficult thought. "Go on. I ain't used to this sorter thing—nor I ain't as used to gentlemen as you be, Mr. Herrick. Go ahead."

"Now we're friends," observed Herrick, in his winning way. "And we can get together. Foes can't, you know. And counsellor and client must work together, as much as—well, in another sense, like man and wife. Litigation, like marriage, demands harmony—while creating discord," he appended, under breath.

"That's just it," urged Dinsmore. "There ain't any in our house. It's one eternal and infernal bob-whizzle."

"What is—excuse me; the word is unfamiliar—what is your definition of a bob-whizzle?"

"Why, it's a—it's a bob-*whizzle*," answered Dinsmore, dogmatically. "If you'd ever been bob-whizzled, you'd know without *askin'* what bob-whizzlin' means."

"Possibly," returned the lawyer, wheeling in his chair and looking out of the window at the opposite building; its dead stone-wall constituted at once his fore-

ground and perspective. "But if you will have patience with my ignorance—suppose you particularize. Precisely what do you understand by the striking phrase that you use? Is it anything—that is to say—"

"*What!*" cried the house-painter.

"Is there anything in this case such as your present manner forbids me to define too particularly?"

"What do you take us for?" gasped the client, starting from his chair. "Why, we're respectable folks!"

"I understand perfectly; of course. In other words, you are not unfaithful to Mrs. Dinsmore?"

"*Me* unfaithful to—my wife? Good Lord, sir! Why, I never *thought* of such a thing!"

"You will excuse me—we lawyers have to be blunt, you know; that is our business. There is, then, no other question of equal or greater delicacy involved?"

"I don't know what you're drivin' at," said Dinsmore, with ominous precision.

"I mean to say that, as a husband, you have no moral grounds of complaint?"

"If you mean to insinerrate that my wife—Diana Dinsmore—*my wife,* sir, is capable of . . . of anything . . . like that . . . If you wasn't so much smaller'n

me, I'd knock you off a fifty-foot ladder and not pick up the pieces."

"Come, Mr. Dinsmore," replied the lawyer, good-naturedly, "be a reasonable man. We agreed to be friends."

"I didn't agree to set here and have my wife insulted," cried Dinsmore, in a high key.

"You don't suppose it's any easier for a lawyer to put such questions than it is for a client to answer them—do you?" asked the attorney, with a self-possession which now began to act upon the client's nerves, like slow massage, set deep, and working to the surface. "Sit down and tell me all about it. Why do you want a divorce? Don't drink, do you?"

"I'm a member of the First Baptist Church of China," answered the mechanic, simply.

"The lady's habits are good, of course? I was sure of it."

"We ain't a dissipated family," replied the client, in a weakened voice.

The lawyer went firmly on. "What is the ground of complaint? Desertion? Won't she live with you? Have you ever stayed three years away from her?"

"I hain't been three days away from her—for thretty years," answered Dinsmore, dully.

His face had now begun to assume a vacant look; his fingers jerked at his beard, and then skulked after his hat. Herrick noticed the stains under the man's nails, where vermilion and ochre had refused to yield to turpentine baths. It occurred to the lawyer that he was dealing with a simple-hearted, good fellow, and that his professional aim had overshot.

"I ain't an edoocated man," said the house-painter, not without dignity. "We can't all be, I suppose. But I've got some sense left in my skull—if I did come to this here office. And I say, sir, I'd rather be a house and sign painter—walls papered in the latest styles at short notice—an' live in Southeast Street, China, —and make an unfortnit marriage with a good woman,—than mix up with sin an' uncleanness the way you do. She wanted a city lawyer," added the client, plaintively; "she said they knew so much. I guess she's about right there—if you're a specimen. I'd rather dry out in China—like old putty—than have your learnin' at the expense of studyin' out the wickedness of this tarnation town—or livin' in it, either."

"And so would I," answered the lawyer, unexpectedly. "You have altogether

the advantage of us. It is that which makes me sorry to see you throw it away. . . . What did you say was the reason you wanted a divorce?"

"Eternal bob-whizzlin'," urged Dinsmore, relapsing into his earlier tone. "She gets mad. She says things she hadn't orter. . . . When she does, I don't *like* my wife. She don't like me, neither. She says I order her round."

"Do you?"

"I dare say. She deserves it. Besides, she's a woman. It's natur' to order a woman round."

"Well?" asked the lawyer. "Go on."

"That's about all," replied the client.

"Nothing else? Consider carefully. Are you telling me the whole story? How about cruelty? Any blows? Did you ever use her roughly?"

"I may not be a gentleman," said the mechanic through his teeth, "but I am a man. Once I yanked her apron-string, and mebbe there was once I sorter pushed her into the wagon of a Sunday when she was all-fired late,—and another time I knocked a coffee-cup outen her hand. There warn't never anything worse."

"Did she ever offer any personal violence to you?" pursued the lawyer; his mustache twitched.

"Do I look like it?" demanded the client, fiercely; he held out his huge clenched fists.

"You never were five years in prison, I am sure?" inquired Herrick, with his perfect manner.

"Good Lord!" cried the client, sopping his forehead with his handkerchief. "Any more questions where that come from?"

"Then," returned Herrick, quietly, "I do not see that you can obtain a divorce —in this State. If you will allow me to say so, I think it is fortunate that you cannot. In fact, I advise you strongly against such a step. I am sure you would both regret it. I should rather not further your making such a mistake —even if the statutes permitted."

"But I thought that was the way you fellars made your money!" cried the client. He sat with his mouth open, staring.

"There is one thing," observed the attorney, in a low voice, "better than the pursuit of money, or the habit of having one's own way—those I take to be the two great errors of life in our day,—and that is a human home. It is the best thing there is in the world. If I were you, I should save yours—somehow."

"But we've gotter have that divorce," insisted Dinsmore, obstinately. "She says we have."

"Very well," replied Herrick, taking up his brief. "Bring her here Friday morning at half past ten. I will see what can be done."

It was early May, and the evening was chilly with a formless blur, neither fog nor rain. Dinsmore shivered as he walked up the path between the dahlia and peony beds and pushed open his own door. His wife had not come to meet him, but she stood in the entry, expectantly. She was a small woman, who had once been pretty; she was neatly dressed in black cashmere, with a fresh, white apron trimmed with edging that she had crocheted on winter evenings; she wore a modern stock of lace and blue ribbon about her still well-shaped throat. Her hair, now rather gray, had been of the reddish variety; she looked like a woman with a warm heart and a red-haired temper.

"Lost your train, didn't you?" she began, nervously. "I've been watchin' all afternoon. Supper's hot and ready."

"I'm beat out," said Dinsmore, handing her his hat. She took it with the

readiness of a wife who has always waited on her husband, and hung it up for him. As she did this, she avoided his eyes, for she felt that these evaded her. Dinsmore put his lips together in the obstinate way that she was used to; he did not—she perceived that he did not mean to—speak.

"Well?" she asked, timidly. The habit of being afraid of him was old and fixed; the prospect of freedom from it did not seem to help her any, yet.

"He says we can't do it," said Dinsmore, stolidly. "There ain't any law."

"There's gotter be a law!" cried the red-haired wife. "I've been miser'ble long's I can stand it."

"Guess I'm even with ye on that score, Anna." The painter laughed unpleasantly. "You got no call to plume yourself that I know of—beginnin' to bob-whizzle already."

"We got no call to set out to quarrel that I know of, either," returned the wife, in a gentler tone. "It always disagrees with you to get riled before eatin'.

"I could eat a pint o' white lead," admitted the man, with a mollified air. "Besides, he says he'll think it over. He says for you to come there along o' me on Friday, and he'll see."

"My spring sack won't be done till Saturday," urged the woman. "But mebbe Mary Lizzie can be drove on it a little. Here—I'll bring your other coat. You go lie down on the lounge till I get supper on. I don' know when I've seen you so beat."

"That's a fact," said Dinsmore, plaintively; he yielded to feminine sympathy as he had always done,—as if it were a man's right, rather than a woman's gift.

"There's shortcake," said Mrs. Dinsmore, cheerfully. "I got the first strawberries Dickson had for you. They ain't half so sour as you'd expect,—and I whipped the cream."

Dinsmore as he ate his supper seemed to smooth in soul and body; one could see the outlines of his cheek round off and his smouldering eye cool. When he spoke, it was in a comfortable tone.

"There ain't a woman in China can beat you on strawberry shortcake, Anna, if I say it as shouldn't."

His wife blushed with pleasure.

"It's your mother's receipt," she observed, with a tact worthy of a happier marriage. Dinsmore cordially passed his plate for a second piece.

"You see," he said, abruptly, "we ain't wicked enough, neither of us."

Mrs. Dinsmore lifted the pained and puzzled expression of a woman who, however unfortunate her matrimonial experience, has never disputed the inferiority of her own to her husband's intellect. It occurred to her that Robert had begun to discourse (he was naturally a little oratorical) upon some abstruse subject, like politics or savings-banks,—one upon which she could not be expected to follow him; she was quite in the dark as to his drift, until he offered a magnanimous elucidation in these words:

"There ain't no law for decent folks. If we wanter divorce, we've gotter do some mean thing to 'arn it. Mebbe if I take to drink—we might stand a chance. If you'd ruther, I can knock you down—I don't favor that way myself. If you'll jam me over the head with the family Bible, it might do; it's good 'n' heavy. There ain't no other way I can see, onless I steal something and get sent to prison for five years. We ain't neither of us loonies, and I've been so nearsighted I hain't deserted you. I can, if we're put to it. 'Tain't too late. But it takes quite a while—three years. If you was to elope with a fellar, that would help us out. Can you think of anybody you'd fancy?"

As Dinsmore uttered this long and inscrutable discourse, his wife had grown pale, and paler; her plump elbows shook.

"He's wanderin'," she thought. "He's taken a spell, and it's gone to his head."

"Let me get you a dose of your spring tonic, Robert," she purred, soothing him. "An' then I'll fix you up a nice hot foot-bath 'n' mustard, and send for the doctor. You must have taken cold, or maybe you're a mite bilious. There, Rob, there! You come along o' me, and I'll take care of you."

It was so long since she had called him Rob that the word arrested Dinsmore's attention and quenched the retort burning upon his tongue. He looked at his wife steadily and with a certain interest, as if in a new subject, or a new phase of an old one.

"You don't understand, Anna. You're a woman, and I hadn't orter expected it. I ain't out o' my head; I've only been to the city. This ain't loonacy. It's law. I ain'ter goin'ter take no spring tonic," he added, pugnaciously. "Nor I ain'ter goin'ter go to bed. I'm goin'ter light the settin'-room fire and set by it. I'm cold. It's so cold I guess I'll keep it agoin' till mornin'. Burnin', did you say? Good and ready? Well! That's

nice, Anna. You'd better go to bed. I'll set a while alone. You've given me a fust-rate supper, and I'm much obleeged to you, Anna. But there's times a man has to be alone—and this is one of them times. . . . We may as well get used to it. We've gotter set alone a good deal, I s'pose."

The wife shrivelled away into herself at once, and assented obediently. Without further words the two parted for the night. She washed the dishes and went slowly up-stairs to her own room, which her husband had not entered for longer than either of them cared to recall.

Robert Dinsmore sat by the hearth and fed the fire gloomily. His thoughts flickered as the blaze did, under the big birch logs, which he crossed and recrossed, and built up and built again; but his feeling went steadily to ashes as the fire went. He perceived that two respectable people who had married ought to be able to live together in comfort and in what is called peace. But he felt that in his own case something fundamental to this mysterious achievement was lacking; he supposed it was what is known as love, but he was not quite sure. That it was something which had been, and was not, was plain; beyond, he got into fog. He

shook his head as he crouched over the fading fire. His wife never saw the look that settled over his large, unfinished face. He sat brooding till midnight, as an unhappy man will, bitter and separate. Then he covered the fire carefully with its own ashes, hot and cold. "It's a tarnation late spring," he said. "I guess I'll keep it up overnight."

The stenographer's brows wrinkled perplexedly when she admitted the unworldly couple. A composite feeling of disdain and respect struggled for expression in the face of this sophisticated young woman as Mrs. Dinsmore, in her new spring sack (visibly unappreciated by the office-girl, though conceded to be the banner of fashion in China), was introduced into the inner office. A peremptory wave of the girl's hand relegated the husband to a seat in the waiting-room without.

"That young lady with the tulle rosette behind told me to come in here," began Mrs. Dinsmore, with her company manner. "She said you wanted to see me alone. My husband is right out there in call," she added, with a sudden sense of propriety. She could not remember when she had been shut up in a room with a strange man. Indeed, she had

never met a man like this one. His delicate courtesy, his high-bred features, his chivalrous smile, first bewildered and then charmed her. When he said, "I thought, Mrs. Dinsmore, we had better talk matters over together," she could have told him everything she had ever thought or felt.

The instinct for the confessional which is so strong in every woman is not provided for by the polity of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Anna Dinsmore, who was in her own way a reserved wife, had never told her story to her minister. Herrick's sincerity and sympathy, qualities necessary to a successful counsellor, and obvious in him, drew the woman on. The misery of years melted from her lips. In half an hour he had a life's history, and the heart of a wretched wife throbbed in his hand.

His face underwent a change as the consultation progressed; the experienced lines about his mouth wavered, and his melancholy eyes dwelt upon the client kindly; once or twice they grew moist, and once his finger dashed to the lashes.

"And the child?" he asked, gently. "I understood you to say that there was a child?"

"One, sir. We never had but one.

That was a little girl,—that was Deeny. He named her Diana, after me. He used to call me Nan in those days; he don't now. But we called her Deeny. She called herself that before she could talk. Deeny died. She was three years old. She was the prettiest little girl, Mr. Herrick, you ever see. . . . Her father set the world and all by her. It's fourteen years come Sunday after next since Deeny died."

Herrick arose silently, opened the door, and beckoned the husband in. The two sat before their lawyer like children before a father, with downcast eyes. The man was the first to assert himself.

"Well!" he began, in a loud voice. "I suppose she's been pitching into me?"

"On the contrary," replied the lawyer, sternly, "your wife has taken her full share of the blame—more than her share, perhaps."

"I'm obleeged to ye, Anna," observed the husband, after some thought. "I wisht I'd done as much by you. I'm afraid I didn't. I told him you bob-whizzled."

"Now, if you will be influenced by me," began the lawyer, in his paternal tone; it was that of a man who has listened to the uneven tempo of so many

hundred disordered human hearts that he might have been pardoned for slighting the exigency of these plain people; instead, he made it his own, as a few men might who hold and honor the name of counsellor—"if you will be guided by me, you will go home and begin all over again—make the best of each other, and of life, in short. You have no case at all. You cannot obtain a divorce in this State. If you feel that you must separate, you can do that, of course. I can arrange the details, if you wish."

"That would do," said Dinsmore, quickly. "It's more respectable, and it ain't so ondooable either—is it?"

"I guess we'd like that," added the wife, but slowly and with averted eyes. Those of the lawyer saddened a little; he had the look of a man who has lost his case. But he said:

"I have told you what I advise. If I were in your place, I should try again. A hot temper and an arbitrary will are not a fatal combination. I assure you that it's a pretty common one. It's worth the fight to get the better of it, —or so it strikes me."

"We've fit—and fit," replied the man. "We're beat out."

"Yes," assented the woman.

"Very well," returned Herrick, curtly. "Come a week from Monday, and I'll go over the details with you. I am greatly pressed for time just now. Mrs. Dinsmore, if you please, I will speak with your husband a moment alone."

When the two were left together, the counsellor's manner abruptly changed. John Herrick's face had taken on a certain transparency, making him look fairer and finer than most men; he wheeled in his office chair before he began to speak. His words were carefully chosen and few in number. These were they:

"Dinsmore, I want to tell you about a friend of mine—a man I knew well. He was not happy with his wife, and they parted. They had one child—it was a little girl; it died. After that they drifted apart, the way people do,—and then they drove apart. Matters got worse—you know how it is. They had begun by loving each other . . . very much . . . very truly. When they found that they were losing this . . . precious thing—this feeling that brings men and women together—and leads them to meet life patiently and tenderly for one another's sake,—they did not try to hold it; they let it go, and so—I think I told you,

didn't I?—they parted. She went—in fact, they put the seas between them. I think the man was the more to blame—I think we are apt to be to blame. It isn't a very easy thing to be a woman, Dinsmore. Let us put ourselves in their places. Come! They need to be loved manfully, nothing cowardly about it,—not to whine over the disappointments of marriage. These are altogether mutual.

"A woman has got to be *cherished,* Dinsmore,—yes, even if she is quick-tempered. A man can do that—though he has outlived his honeymoon. This man that I tell you of began to think so after a while; after he had lived alone till the ferment of things—that is, perhaps I do not make it plain—till his first irritation and soreness had healed and calmed. One day he said to himself: 'I will take the next steamer. I'll go to her and tell her how I feel. We will try again. We will begin all over.' That night, Dinsmore, that same night, he had a message from her by cable. . . . Do you see? . . . that very evening. She said, 'Come at once.' . . . When he got there, she was . . . He was too late. She was dead. . . . He never had his chance to try again.—You have. Good-by."

Herrick wheeled and dismissed the client, who went from the office with hanging head and walking on tiptoe.

Robert Dinsmore was not a quick-witted man, as we measure men and minds, but he had it in him to surmise, if he did not perceive, that the counsellor had shared with him—a stranger—the sacred tragedy of his own history; and that he had done this delicate, self-obliterating thing not to save a case, but to save a client's happiness and a human home.

When Dinsmore had gone, John Herrick turned the key in the door. The stenographer knocked in vain, and whisked away, pouting. Herrick did not get to work, but sat for some time looking at the dead stone-wall, which constituted his foreground and his perspective.

The late spring lagged. The peonies and dahlias in front of Robert Dinsmore's house held up green finger-tips, as if they were trying the weather, and found it too cold to venture into, so came no farther. For several evenings the fire burned late on the sitting-room hearth, and the man sat before it, silent and apart, bitter and determined. As determined, but sadder and more gentle, the

wife wept on her pillow, listening for his heavy footfall turning to his downstairs room. If the night were cold, she could hear the scrapings of the shovel as he covered the fire to hold it over till morning. Like many big men, he had small weaknesses and self-indulgences; fancied a warm place to dress in if it were chilly, and crept there with his clothes, half guiltily, while his wife was building the kitchen fire and getting breakfast.

The lawyer had allowed the couple ten days before the fateful and final interview which should indicate the terms of their separation and put its details into execution. If it occurred to them to wonder why, in reply to the incontrovertible statement on Mrs. Dinsmore's part that Monday was washing-day, Mr. Herrick had nevertheless insisted on that moist date, they had not protested, and obediently pursued their preparations for the step which they now curiously felt as if they were legally obliged to take.

It was to their simple minds as if their fate were in the hands of a sheriff. In a sense it was. The dark sheriff Disillusion that arrests fugitive married love, and does not easily let go, had laid a heavy grasp upon these two. Yet the

mechanic perplexed the lawyer by a certain fine magnanimity which would have embellished the soul of what we call a gentleman:

"Allowance? All there is, if you say so. I don't propose to cut Anna short. I'm in comfortable circumstances and have laid up consider'ble. I don't want more'n enough to pay the laundryman and find a little to eat somewheres. I can sleep in the shop. She must have the house, it stands to natur'. No man could turn a woman outer doors. I want to pervide handsomely for Anna."

"Mr. Dinsmore is very generous to me." His wife, to her neighbors and relatives, said this proudly.

The domestic misfortunes of the two were now the scandal of China, and she reported to her husband the efforts of the village to preserve the indivisibility of their home. Public opinion was against them; their course was felt to be a distinct reflection upon the character of the community and the standing of the Baptist and Methodist churches.

The unhappy husband and wife were made to feel themselves the object of a general censure so unexpected and so severe that they combined instinctively, like the happiest of people, to resent it.

They grew, in fact, quite friendly over their common misfortune, and discussed it daily between gusts of a mutual irritation.

"Your minister called here to-day. He preached at me for an hour. I told him I preferred to be disciplined by my own denomination. He said wives orter submit themselves to their own Baptist husbands."

"*Your* minister came to my shop this afternoon. He pitched into me for quite a spell. He said husbands oughter love their wives, as Christ loved the Methodist Church."

It would not have been easy for Robert and Diana Dinsmore to say when they had passed so much time in each other's society as since they had agreed to forswear it forever.

All this was by day. With evening their spirits fell, and they crept apart. The wife cried a good deal; but never in his presence. She was mysteriously and remorselessly busy—over what, he could not have told; she seemed to be working about the house all day, giving it the religious touch of something more sacred than spring cleaning; washing his bedspreads, ironing his shirts, doing up curtains in his room, mending flannels,

disinterring camphorated mummies of summer clothes—all *his,* all for *him.* His smouldering eyes saw everything, but he asked no questions. With the eagerness of a bride, the skill of a happy and experienced housewife, and the sadness of a widow, the woman worked on doggedly. He thought what a neat, sweet housekeeper she had always been—snapping, sometimes, when he tracked in mud, but always ready to mop it up after him with a laugh. He thought—he began to think—how many comfortable hours he had owed to her for how many years. He hated to see her tiring herself like this—at the last.

"What ails you, Anna?" he asked, sharply.

"Don't ye darst find fault with me—now!" she cried, quavering. She took up the big stocking she was mending and went into another room. Dinsmore stared after her. His large face wrinkled uncomfortably. She could see him from where she sat, though she seemed not to. She thought:

"He was a handsome fellow—those first years. He's lost consider'ble looks the last two weeks. I hope he'll keep his health, and not get to complainin'. I don't know who to mercy 'll look after

him if he should have any of his spells. His aunt Sophia couldn't no more'n a"—she paused for an adequate simile —"no more'n a camphorated woodchuck," added the New England wife.

The spring relented slowly and began to burgeon. The dahlias and peonies thrust up their arms beside the front walk. In the bed under the south window—that had been the little girl's window—an old-fashioned flower called the star-of-Bethlehem budded and blossomed; it was a delicate flower, lily-shaped, or star-shaped, with a gray shade and a white light.

The fire in the sitting-room was not burning now, but Dinsmore kept it carefully laid, and sat by its cold hearth dolorously. It had come to be Saturday night—the last that they were to spend together. Dinsmore had been quiet and dull; but Anna worked all day. She did not stop sewing until nine o'clock; then she put away her thimble, folded a big pink and blue outing-shirt neatly, and came and sat down beside her husband. The unlighted fire lay between them.

"I believe I've thought of everything," she began, in a tone as if she had been entertaining a caller with whom she was

on rather distant terms. "Your winter ones are all done up in camphor,—summer ones in the lowest drawer of your bureau. I don't think you'll find a button off of anything. I hain't intended you should. All yer stockings are mended up 'n' turned at the heel. Your furs are in the big chest in the attic,—here's the key. I've had 'em all aired 'n' sunned 'n' brushed, an' done up in camphor 'n' cedar-oil,—I know you hate moth-balls. Don't you never let anybody—" She broke off.

"The house is clean's clean from top to toe, Robert. I've had everything out and everything in. It fairly smells of soap 'n' water 'n' sunshine. You'll find your spring tonic in the medicine cupboard. I do hope you will—will—you will take good care of yourself, an' not get any of your spells. I should kinder hate to have you get sick and me—I hope you'll change your feet when you get 'em wet, when I— Then, come sunstroke weather, remember how I always put a wet sponge in the crown of your straw hat, won't you? You'll find it over the kitchen dresser. I've baked a dozen pies—all sorts. I'll roast a couple of fowl and leave doughnuts—and those long cookies with holes in that you like.

You can get along for quite a spell, till that camphorated wood — I mean your aunt Sophia comes. I made up my mind —after we come from that lawyer o' Monday night—to stop along o' Mary Lizzie."

"*What?*" shouted the husband.

The wife winced—as she had done, how often!—at his rising voice. But she answered steadily: "I've made up my mind. I ain'ter goin'ter turn you outer your own home. I'm goin'ter stop along of Mary Lizzie. I couldn't seem, anyways, to turn you out, Robert. It don't seem fair. I ain'ter goin'ter do it. I ain'ter goin'ter stop here. I've fixed everything for you, Robert,—pretty 's I know how,—and come o' Monday I guess I won't come back. Seems to me it would be easiest, somehow. I— No, Robert, no! I *ain't* cryin', nor I ain'ter goin'ter cry. You lemme be, that's all. Hain't you always been at me all these years to let *you* be, to let you have *your* way? Now, I'm goin'ter have *mine*—for once. I've made up my mind. I know you've got one of your own, but it ain't big enough to change mine this time. I ain'ter goin'ter turn you out, and that I'm set on. I couldn't stand it, Robert,—no way in this world,—to see you campin' in that shop. A man is such a helpless creetur,—a man

is such a—such a *tomfool* without a house and a woman in it! No, I ain'ter cryin', either, but if you darst touch me, Robert, I shall—I shall begin to . . ."

He did not dare to touch her. He was a dull man, as we have said. Before his wet and winking eyes, before his empty arms, she whirled and fled. He heard her sob her way up-stairs, and heard her lock her door.

She was quite self-possessed the next morning; more so than the man. Dinsmore flung himself about the house uneasily, and took an after-breakfast pipe—a secular amusement which he did not allow himself on Sunday. When he knocked the ashes out in the hearth the fire caught and blazed robustly; he watched it with sombre eyes till it had fallen quite away.

"It's the last one," he thought; he gave the fender a kick as he shoved it into place.

They went to church as usual, and reflected what credit they could, and such discredit as they must, upon their separate and distinct denominations; he drove her both ways, and helped her in and out of the buggy. She got up an excellent Sunday dinner for him, one of

her best, and it must be recorded that he did generous justice to it, and that this gratified her very much. In the afternoon she began to grow a little gray about the mouth, and he noticed that her hand fumbled with her apron when she came at last and stood behind him. He was laying the fire on the cold hearth.

"Well," he said, "you don't object, do you? I thought I'd leave it as it had orter be. It won't—we sha'n't—*I* sha'n't set by it any more, I s'pose. If you think you're goin' to Mary Lizzie's, you never was more mistaken in your life, Diana Dinsmore. You *can't* leave this here house. It's your house. Mr. Herrick's got the deeds made out. Come to-morrow he'll pass 'em, and you gotter stay."

"I ain'ter goin'ter," replied the wife, with the inexorable obstinacy of gentleness. "I ain'ter goin'ter turn you out. It ain't gospel."

"Well, it's law," persisted Dinsmore. "Mr. Herrick 'll make you. You'll see."

"Isn't it kinder late to be fightin' as to which shall treat the other prettiest?" asked Mrs. Dinsmore, slowly.

"By gum!" answered Dinsmore, "I never thought of that."

"Robert," laying her hand timidly on his arm, "have you forgotten—"

"I hain't forgotten a blessed thing," interrupted the husband, shortly.

"It's fourteen years — you know— since—"

"Lord, don't I know?" groaned Dinsmore. "I've thought about it every night I've set here this two weeks past."

"Would you mind coming along o' me —this last time—same's we've done for fourteen years—to . . . to visit with her, Robert? The star-of-Bethlehem is up. It's always up—in time for Deeny."

"It *gnaws* at me so, Anna!" The man put his hand to his heart as if he were undergoing a physical pang. "I always feel it—here," he said.

"I didn't know but you'd *like* to go and say good-by to Deeny—with me," urged the woman, drooping; "but never mind!"

"Oh, I'll go!" cried Dinsmore; "of course I'll go."

Silently the two went out of the house, and silently took the road together. They walked with bent heads. Their feet seemed to carry them without direction of their wills to the greening, budding village churchyard. Anna held the star-of-Bethlehem in her hand. Now and then she buried her face in the silver-gray, lilylike, starlike flowers. Once he

thought she kissed them, but he did not seem to see or know it. He seemed to see nothing, he seemed to know nothing, and he had a stolid look when they came to the little girl's grave. One might have thought that he did not care. The bit of marble flickered before his eyes in the cool May sunlight, as if it had been a leaf, or some frail living thing.

What a little grave it was! It had never seemed so short before.

"The letters need polishin' up," he said; he traced them out with his stained forefinger.

DEENY.
Three years old
When she died.

"She would have been seventeen, wouldn't she? I hadn't thought of that."

"Shall we divide 'em up—same 's we always have?" asked Anna, hesitating. She was afraid of him even then, and even there. It was an old habit and an iron one. She glanced at him deprecatingly.

"I don't know 's I care if we do," he answered. "I s'pose Deeny'd like that."

Anna halved the flowers in silence. He was conscious of wondering why she

did not cry. He laid the star-of-Bethlehem on Deeny's grave with his huge fingers; they shook, and one of the silver-gray bells fell. Anna picked it up and kissed it before she added to it her handful. He watched her with wretched eyes; hers leaped, and it was for a moment as if they ran to him.

"There's Dickson!" he said, suddenly, "and your minister's wife. And Mary Lizzie."

The last place in China where grief could shelter itself was in the spot where it grieved the sorest; and on the day when it had most leisure to weep it had least opportunity. There was no seclusion in the village churchyard on Sunday afternoon. The childless parents fled the place before their curious townsfolk, and, climbing the old stone-wall among the blackberry-vines, went home silently by another way.

The mother did not look back, but the father did so once; it seemed to him as if the bit of marble turned a little, like something that watched them. But marble does not move, and Deeny could not. She lay deep among the roots of spring, with the star-of-Bethlehem above her.

The two came to their home as mutely

as they had gone from it, and made no attempt to reassume the shield of words. It was as if it had suddenly proved to be made of some false substance—gauze or paper — and hung ragged in their hands. Now they flung the flimsy thing away.

Anna laid the table for their light Sunday-night supper, and both sat down, but neither ate. Pretty soon she came back and cleared away the dishes. Dinsmore lighted his pipe, and went and sat by the fireless hearth. He heard her stirring about with her soft, housewifely step; she had a light step for so heavy a woman. Anna was not awkward; she had been a graceful girl, and pretty—he remembered how pretty she used to be; he did not know when he had thought of it before. He had been very much in love with her; so had most of the young men in China; but she had denied them all to marry him. Anna had always kept something of the look and manner of a woman who has been ardently and frequently sought in youth, and when marriage ceased to sustain the valuation at which she had been taught to rate herself, she was as perplexed as she was wretched. Dinsmore pulled at his pipe nervously.

"Yes," he thought, "she was a good-looking girl. And Anna's a handy housekeeper. If it hadn't 'a' ben for bob-whizzlin'— By gum!" he said, aloud, "if she ain'ter gone up-stairs without comin' to set along of me—this last night!"

For Anna had crept up-stairs to her own room, and he heard her lock her door. He put his pipe away; suddenly there was no pleasure in it any more. He stretched his legs out on the cold hearth and, folding his hands, began to twirl his big thumbs perplexedly; his head fell to his breast. He must have sat there for some time. Presently he said:

"*Deeny* . . . she would ha' stayed along of me. It would ha' ben somebody. . . . No," he added, on reflection. "Women hang together. She would ha' stood by her mother. . . . I'd ruther she would, too. If there'd ever ben a boy,—but there warn't. No. There warn't no boy. And Deeny's dead."

He repeated the word aloud, two or three times:

"Deeny? *Deeny!*"

With a cry the man sprang to his startled feet. He did not believe in ghosts; no good Baptist did; but then

and there he was sure that one had got into the house. It was well fitted up against burglars, but there were no ghost-locks on the doors and windows, as there are no ghost-locks on a father's or a mother's heart.

It was his wife who had frightened him so—as he started to tell her, but he thought better of it. Her feet were bare, like any spirit's, and her hand as cold as Deeny's; she had come without sound and she stood without speech; though the night was warm, she had covered her night-dress carefully with her blue flannel wrapper, as if he had been some neighbor or acquaintance hurriedly met in an emergency.

"Lord!" he said,—"Lord o' mercy! You scared the sense outer me."

"Robert," she began at once, "I came to—I thought I'd come—I wanted to sit with you this last time—if you don't mind me. Do you, Robert?"

She looked about timidly. "There ain't any chair."

"Would you care," asked Dinsmore, humbly, "if you should set on the arm of mine? Seein' it's the last time."

He sank back into the big cushioned chair that he had been occupying. After a moment's hesitation she seated herself

upon its arm. She did not look at him, but began to talk at once: he saw that she had one of those flowers thrust in the bosom of her blue flannel gown.

"I brought it down for you," she said, hurriedly, "seein' it's Deeny's. I picked it up off the grave after I'd laid it there. I thought you'd like to keep it . . . even if you took it from . . . me. Put it in your Bible, will you, Rob? Put it on that Jairus chapter we read together that night we buried her; about his little girl who was not dead but sleepeth,—don't you remember? See, Rob, what a pretty flower it is! What a *Deeny* flower! When it is a bud, it is a lily. When it blossoms, it is a star. I've been thinkin' it's that way with Deeny. When she died she was just a baby, Rob, no more'n a lily-bud—a little white thing. Then we could hold her—and cuddle her. Now she's blossomed, she is a star, and we can't.

"Oh, she was such a pretty baby, Rob! She was such a *dear* little girl! . . . I—I set so much by her— Ah me! Ah me! . . . Oh, Robbie, don't blame me, will you—not now? Don't be hard on me—if I set and cry a little . . . about . . . about Deeny . . . this last time I'll get a chance? Nobody else cares about Deeny but you 'n' me. Everybody else

has forgotten Deeny. She's nothin' but a handful o' dust in the graveyard to other folks—just a little dead baby fourteen years ago. . . . It's only fathers and mothers that love dead children so long 's that. Why, Robbie, think! She's seventeen years old to-day! She's singin' round heaven—a grown-up girl—same 's she would ha' ben singin' round this house along of you and me."

Dinsmore's large face worked pitifully; a man should not cry—like a woman—but the tears came storming down.

"Now, Anna! Now, Anna!" he repeated, helplessly. He thought of Deeny as a seventeen-year-old ghost with a harp and wings. But her mother thought of her as an angel in a long skirt, with a lace stock and ribbons.

"She was a dear little thing!" reiterated the woman, who was sobbing now.

"So she was, Anna, so she was!" the father groaned.

"And she set so much by you, Robbie, —climbin' onto your knees to pull your whiskers, and kissin' of you—"

"So she did, Nan, so she did!"

"And singin' of a morning to wake us up . . . and sayin' her little prayers of an evening—'Now I lay me'—so gentle and so—so *Deeny*."

"It gnaws me—here," gasped the man; he laid his hand upon his heart, and changed color. But the woman, herself stupid with misery, went, unobserving, on:

"Rob— Listen to me; I've been thinkin' . . . we can divide everything else . . . houses 'n' lands 'n' money 'n' all those things that ain't of no account —Mr. Herrick can fix 'em all up, and the law can deal with *them*. But, Rob, *we can't divide Deeny* . . . noway in the world."

"That's a fact, we can't," panted Dinsmore, faintly. "Who ever said we wanted to?"

"The law can't part off Deeny, Rob, between . . . you and . . . me. It was love made Deeny, and law can't unmake her. Love and law can fight for ever 'n' ever, Rob, but *there's Deeny*. Robert?—Say, Robert? Did you hear me?—Robert!"

But Robert Dinsmore did not answer Diana his wife. His head against the tall easy-chair suddenly fell to one side. His big body sloped and toppled, and his wife caught him as he dropped.

"He's got one of his spells," thought Anna. "I've killed him—this last night."

Then she fell upon him with the hunger of her starved heart. She kissed him

and kissed him, she chafed and stimulated, she wept and called, she warmed him and held him, and yearned over him, and prayed over him, and kissed him again.

"Oh, my man!" she cried,—"my man, my man!"

. . . . . .

When Dinsmore came to himself he muttered a little, and said queer things:

"I am not dead, but sleepeth . . . I've lost my chance to try again. . . . Good morning, sir."

"It's a stroke," thought Anna. "He'll miss his mind same as Peeler with the shakin' palsy."

But it was not a stroke, and the painter did not miss his mind. He found it, presently, all he ever had, and perhaps a little more. And when he found it, he perceived a marvel.

On the cold hearth the fire leaped and began to burn joyously. From ashes below ashes some hidden spark, some covered coal, had caught, and in a moment the cold room went warm, and the gray night turned a royal color.

Did wonders, like troubles, come together? For now the man was aware that an unbelievable thing had happened, and this was the greatest wonder in the

world. Love had happened. His head was on a woman's breast. He felt her arms, her tears, her lips.

The miracle of married life had happened. Long-forgotten tenderness, smothered and silent, had leaped from the embers of cold years; it was not dead, but smouldered; for love is not a circumstance; it is not a state; it is a living soul.

"That you, Nan?" he asked, feebly. "I must have had a spell."

The two sat in the shining, clasped and still. She did not cry any more. She feared to agitate him, and was very quiet. She put up her hand to his beard and stroked his cheek. Her wrapper fell away from her neck, but she did not notice that her throat was bare, until he turned his face and kissed it. Deeny's flower—lilylike, starlike, childlike—had fallen from the warm blue gown, and lay upon her mother's bosom beneath his lips.

"Nan," said Robert Dinsmore,—"Nan, you may bob-whizzle all you want to."

"But I don't *want* to, Rob."

"And, Nan, I guess I've ordered you 'round some."

"I'd rather you would!" cried the wife. "Shouldn't know you if you didn't. What 'll Mr. Herrick say?" she added,

in a frightened voice. It occurred to her at that moment that even now the statutes would require her to live alone in the house, while Robert camped in the shop.

Then Robert laughed. "I'll risk Mr. *Her*rick, by gum!"

"But the law, Rob—"

"Law be hanged! This ain't law. It's *love!*"

—"That's a clever fire of yours, Nan," he suggested, smiling beatifically at the hot birch-blaze. He thought that she had lighted it, and she did not undeceive him. She and the fire exchanged looks, and kept each other's counsel. But the fire laughed.

Life's Accolade

BY ABBY MEGUIRE ROACH

"OH, there are ever so many ways of living; no one can have everything; whatever you do, you miss something and gain something." Miss Branham dragged her words, as if they were hardly worth saying, anyway: she spoke with a rising inflection, and her pointed eyebrows emphasized an inquiring, slightly derogatory expression. "It's a choice of what *you* want most."

"Choice? Want? If there's choice at all, it's of what you can get. Oh, I know you don't like that idea," he smiled and shook his head at her, "but that's the way things are. It's all law, absolutely neutral: you work with it and grow, against it and break, stay out of it and atrophy."

"Still, the universe is large enough for the individual to be an exception if he chooses. And the onlooker has the fun without the work."

"But the work is two-thirds of the fun. And you miss the best points from the grand stand."

"You don't think experience invariably necessary to realization, do you? It's my observation that experience is hieroglyphic; the individual has to supply the key; and each reads it his own way,—the old fable of Œdipus and the Sphinx. Either sympathy or self-consciousness is mostly a matter of temperament."

"But things are always different when they happen to you. Most people learn only by seeing and feeling.—Or what's life for?"

She smiled at his personalizing eagerness—a faint smile, ironical but indulgent. "Oh, life! What's it worth, anyway?"

"So little that surely one must get all there is out of it," he smiled back, an entirely different kind of smile. Channing's humor was of the sort that takes the edge from misadventure, softens criticism with kindliness, and saves the person himself from the egotism of overseriousness. "Do you know, I am going to call you the Princess of Nought: hungry at the feast for fear of poison in the wine. Have you ever"—look and voice shaded a tone deeper than

the casual—"ever considered appointing a taster?"

Her eyes slipped from his. "No, really, I'm not so much afraid as—cross!" She laughed. "We poetize about beauty and truth, as if they went together! Truth is ugly. Beauty is a dream. Religion is a goad or a bait. Morality lies merely in authority or opportunity." She spoke without emphasis, with an amused drawl and bantering eye. Channing wished she wouldn't; she did herself injustice, he thought, and made him feel like one of her specimens, held at arm's length, merely stimulating epigrams. "The world is a cheese too aged, unsavory, requiring an unnatural appetite. Charity is a transparent cloak for embarrassing facts. Ideals are writing in water. Love is a euphemism for convenience or selfishness; and marriage, a makeshift, a compromise."

"So it's the thorn on the rose that pricks, eh? Oh, Nature must balance things. The right way to put it is that she always sugar-coats her pills."

"Optimism," she told him, "is putting out your eyes to call a dull day bright. Confess now, there's a great deal of mismanagement."

"But it's the best world we have at

present,"—beyond a gleam of appreciation, he refused to be diverted, for it was more than conversation; "and since it is as it is, the question is how to make the best of it. What's the use of kicking?"

"Ah, *that's* the last straw!" she said, and forgot to smile. "I sympathize with the Confederates who preferred exile to allegiance."

"What a rebel it is!" Channing's look was wise and genial. "Millions for free gifts, but for tribute never a cent. When you *do* fall in love . . ." The intonation was unintentionally admiring and wistful.

"I fall in love? How absurd!" Though she laughed, her vehemence was suggestive, and hastily recalled her to guard. "Oh no; my defence is not compromise, but avoidance," she added, dropping to her habitual drawl. "After all, one likes to keep *some* illusions!" Always so, on the verge of intimacy, she eluded him with the reserve of merriment or generalization. "See," she forestalled his opening lips, "what a murderous sunset!"

He looked automatically, and instantly grew tense; looked overhead, behind. "Jove!" His head lifted in an alert

boyish way he had in emergencies. "Take the tiller," he ordered, still bracing it with one hand, while with the other he worked rapidly to free the fastened sheet. "Now—to the left—jam her round—hold hard! It's a race for it."

It was: a race with the storm. Busy with his own work, he hardly glanced at the girl even with his short commands; and Frieda, gratified at the tacit compliment, gripped the helm till her knuckles whitened, and obeyed. Her eyes watched the grace and strength under his flannels with the same appreciation and response that met the wind in her face. It was like flying, as if they had suddenly launched a new world in space. She shook back the whipped hair and breathed deep and exultant.

With a final careen they swooped into a more sheltered cove, and as they ran alongside the dock, Channing remembered her.

"Bully for you! I never would have much opinion of any one who couldn't take orders." Then, mid-motion, he stopped and looked at her.

But the boatman was hurrying them. "Better stay here a spell, sir. You'll never reach camp dry."

"Never mind," said Frieda. "Come."

As they rounded the rocky ledge into view of the open lake, the first big drops splashed down, and the storm rushed at them. Frieda leaned forward on it and stopped to look. "Never mind. What's a little wetting?" Then suddenly she flung up her arms and shouted against the gale.

"Great, isn't it?" he agreed, boyishly, and though she looked amused deprecation of their enthusiasm, she stood all kindled with life, fluttering in the wind. "After all, on the whole, a jolly nice world, eh?" he teased. Her skirts beat round him; a gust swayed her dangerously; he flung out a steadying arm. Where his hand touched hers, both burned; their eyes grew conscious; they had a moment of utter equality and sincerity. The man's very self leaped; all her will ebbed from her, leaving a delicious weakness. Their kiss was as vital and spontaneous as its breath.

It was the girl's first knowledge of "life's sacred thirst."

When, breakfast over next morning, Miss Branham had not appeared, Channing wondered about her casually. "Oh, didn't you know? Bad news in her mail last night. She's catching the early boat to Clayton."

All regardless, Channing grabbed his cap and ran. The gangplank was up, the man with the rope had jumped aboard, when Channing leaped, clung, climbed over the rail.

He had always thought Miss Branham thoroughly patrician, with that hauteur, that faint insolence, shadowing a gracious vivacity. Now she retreated into an arctic circle as he approached.

"You couldn't have mistaken!" He was still breathing hard.

A movement dismissed the idea half impatiently. "Why did you do this? You might have respected— In any case this is not the place—"

"Yes, it is, and the time. If you did not mistake, what then?"

She hesitated; then, though the sun rose in her face, turned away coolly. "You did. It was just the rush of things—"

"Oh no," said Channing, and smiled with relief. He would never be puzzled by her again. "Oh no. It was that we were we. The rush of things that we were part of, if you choose. You do care. You've kept me guessing all summer, though I've often thought if something could just carry you out of yourself and you would be honest— Oh, why, why do you fight me so?"

The girl's habit of mockery and indifference was not fully regained. "And why, why can a man never understand that a girl may not want to marry?"

Slur of the water against the side of the boat; throb of the engines; disconnected voices from beyond their world.

At last a girl's voice uncertainly cold: "Don't you think you would really better go now? Am I not shamed enough?" So all girlhood since Eve in the garden has waked to knowledge bewildered by sweet shame and reluctant longing. "I shall never be self-righteous or intolerant again."

"That you should want me to go, after yesterday!"

"Oh, for that very reason."

Channing leaned over the rail. "Couldn't you—trust me, and risk it until—I can show you, until we can—talk things over?"

"If you don't understand that—"

"I do. I've tried to show you.—I'm so tied!" he chafed. Then that way of lifting his head that always touched a pulse in her. "Frieda?" he asked leave. Again their eyes had a moment of equality and sincerity. "I thought yesterday when we—got in the push, you

had—caught on. It's life. It's not all of it, not nearly all we would have. But shouldn't one have everything that's intended? Do you really think it admirable to take a vow of silence till you can't talk, or stand on one foot until the other dries up? And to miss things because one is afraid either to live or die! 'The coward dies a thousand deaths,' you remember; 'the brave man dies but once.'"

"It's not that I'm afraid of pain or responsibility. I could sacrifice everything for a fine love, but would a fine love ask it?"

"But, Frieda, can't you see that it's all like the stars and the flowers? Do you think I would ask you to give up what I couldn't love you without? Do you imagine our love would take it? Have eighteen centuries of the Virgin and her Child given you no traditions of the purity of motherhood? Are only common women to be mothers, then? Life is to give life. Life rationalizes love."

"That's another thing." She spoke steadily now. "Can you really think it kind or fair to—give life, considering . . ."

"Oh, you don't believe those things! Why, isn't it worth anything just to have

the chance of yesterday? Oh, there is so much to say! It may be all right for some to keep out of it, but you have a splendid spirit if you would just trust it, and one has to live the life that comes to him: send me away now and you maim yourself. . . . Look at it this way, dear: We see only the surface of other people's lives, not their inner compensations; because things are yours, they are interesting, and important, and nice. Evil is only in misuse. Life will be what we make it, what we are. Don't you know I would be as slow as you to cheapen it? To be happy with you I would first have to make you happy with me.—Frieda! Look at me, won't you? Let me see what you think."

Her face lifted slowly, eyes dizzy from the running water. "Oh, I don't know. Can we make it like that? Can you keep me seeing it so?"

Their brief engagement was wholesomely busy with diverting superficialities—clothes, ceremony, trip, the surface interest of outsiders. Sheer happiness and excitement gave the days an impetus, a glamour; made the girl unwontedly sweet, a most unclouded bride.

But Mrs. Channing returned from their month in the Berkshires more veiled

than ever in languor and superiority. She was conscious of people's eyes, too conscious of their minds. Sentiment, his or hers, she protected or avoided with deprecatory nonchalance. All the threads of her thought were tangled. How could a public ratification and social sanction make right the reversal of all her old instinct and training? With such confusion within no windows were open to spectators.

His friends thought her too self-contained and sarcastic. "They're afraid of you," Channing teased, "as I used to be,—you're so clever!"

"Dear me! that's too bad! I ought to be cleverer than that."

She had been warned that the first year determined all the rest. So, fearful of not beginning right, of spoiling him, she determinedly kept her fingers from their impulses toward a loosened tie or a shirt in need of studs. When he gave her a brooch she considered a bad bargain she exchanged it with a practicality and frankness that would have made for comfort could she have done it less aggressively. She was jealous of all his old attentions, public and private, and the way she pulled the string to make him step up, or show off, first puzzled, then

nettled, the self-respecting chap she had married. A habit of sparring grew between them in silence and the dark. He had looked forward particularly to her always greeting his home-coming; and Frieda decided it unwise to encourage any such expectations of dictatorship. Once home, he wanted to stay there and have her to himself; and Frieda feared his growing indolent about evening clothes, their getting into a rut. Other men tired her; she was too absorbed in herself to be interested in other women; and the whole thing bored Channing so patently she had no pleasure, anyway, and was embarrassed for him. So, with subtle logic, she took to going alone,—which was still less pleasure and a delicious reversal of traditions. Yet if Channing was half an hour late to dinner, she had received him from the ambulance, raised his tombstone, and, at eighty, was supporting herself basket-weaving,—when he came — to be reproached because the soufflée had fallen.

It was only moods and phases, simply two young folks in new and complicated conditions, trying to avoid the mistakes and absurdities they knew, and making their own. The mock-duel was already slackening with returning balance and

adjustment, when the end of all going out came naturally.

Mrs. Channing was refolding a fluffy blue and white something into its box, when a knock sounded. "Who is it?" The covering-papers dropped guiltily. "Oh, you, dear? Come in. See what Clara Hardy sent me—the dear girl that she is! I said the other day it would have been nice to wait till I was quite ready; and she writes that every stitch in the cloak stands for envy and regret from one who waited too long. Poor old girl!"

"I've been wondering if I mightn't be allowed in that contribution-box, too. Could you use this?" Channing offered it modestly, inquiringly, as befits one experienced in intruding into the feminine domain.

"Why, yes." Frieda took it. "That's very nice." She never could gush. Occasion for thanks affected her like expectation, demand; stiffened her. All her life she had been fluid to love, ice to constraint, so that even love had to be wary about implying a *must*. Now her eyes filled, but she looked hurriedly away to hide it.

Channing watched her, satisfied. "And you're not antagonistic any more?"

The color dropped from her very lips, but she turned toward, not from him. "Don't make me say too much yet. It's the *thought!* And I've been so hurried; hardly used to the idea of things before they're on me."

"And hardly on you before they're over," he said.

It was over and Frieda slept, and now woke, softened and relaxed through all her nature. "It was worth the pain, dear," she told him, "to know this freedom from it. I have never felt so sweet and light before.—But sit close; it was so terribly lonely. I suppose death is like that, and life; through all the big experiences one goes alone."

Frieda had never been so pretty, so light-hearted, so natural, as in the next few months. Though that ultimate moment on the rocks had never recurred, its memory vibrated still with a sweep and uplift. Affection and romance were alchemists transmuting common things to gold. She reversed her old proposition—passion did not degrade love so much as love ennobled passion. There was new meaning in those old folk-tales where the gods visit men in servile or commonplace disguises. Motherhood brought her

the woman's ecstatic vision of the divinity of life, that makes a Madonna even of the peasant newly initiated. Men see life cleanly, as fact, taken for granted: their attitude was an enlightening paradox of Frieda. But the woman must idealize; like Murillo's Virgin, entering motherhood, far above earth, solitary, in a dream-cloud of glorified babyhood. When Frieda lifted her little one, that suction that seemed to be in the whole small body as well as the tiny clinging palms called out all her chivalry; the fuzz on the little crown against her cheek seemed the very bloom of life. Yes, indeed, life rationalized love. Though with her fear of melodrama, she flung a glitter of jest over her emotions, it had the soft brightness of tears. As shyly, as imperceptibly as a rose, she began to blossom.

Channing knew her well enough to know how mere a trifle, even the consciousness of observation, would check that delicate unfoldment. And yet—she was so sweet. . . .

Suddenly she closed like a touch-me-not; into a quiet coldness that neither complained nor relented for all his effort.

"Frieda dear. I'll take everything from you I can. Get another maid. Save yourself."

"Save myself," she repeated, and stung him.

"Oh, this is not all of life, you will recall," she reminded him, when he attempted to sympathize with her as she freshened for second use the little garments hardly outgrown.

Channing had memories himself—"To be happy with you I would first have to make you happy with me."

Frieda was thrown back on her old nausea of sex, and its antagonism, now made personal, and exaggerated, distorted, like a shadow. It was true—Love was a euphemism for convenience or self-indulgence. Ideals—and promises—were writing in water. Trust and generosity only offered opportunities to take advantage.

When the nurse presented Channing to his second daughter, appending the optimistic, "She's all right now, Mrs. Channing is," Frieda opened her eyes on them both with her flitting ironic smile.

She had always a point of wit to prick such bubbles of convention.

"Selfishness!" Clara Hardy reproached her.

"Now, my dear, which side in love can cast that first stone?"

"All the same, altruism is the ethics of sex."

"Undoubtedly men have made it so for the women!—Why is it always the woman who must give up?—Is it fair that she should pay the penalty with what is usually purely vicarious suffering?"

The physician, comprehending the unspoken, had delicately assured Channing that when it was all over it would be all over. But doubtless it had been too much for Frieda. A reaction was natural from such rapid living. Her present depression was far more profound than her old scepticism. Life was to give life; life rationalized love: but did anything rationalize life? Love, work, heaven? At best stimulants or narcotics. And she was involving others in this situation requiring so much philosophy! Her strength did not come quickly. And the little new life was as flickering as candle-flame. Frieda sheltered it with a passion of tenderness and apology and jealous exclusion that shut Channing out from all opportunity with her or the child: until one midnight he resolutely took the baby from her arms,—"You must sleep, Frieda."

Then the utmost she could concede was to turn without a word and lie down.

When she woke in the dawn he was sitting in the big chair, its high arms

supporting his exhausted elbows. The trouble in his face was more than weariness. Had she gone beyond fairness? Where was the generosity learned with self-knowledge from that moment of life on the rocks? He did pay part of the price, and *he* paid it cheerfully. Hard work was telling on his practice and every advantage he turned to her. With what good humor he met the discomforts her disabilities had let increase in the house. What sweetening salt his wholesomeness brought to things. He said one could only suppose that what was obviously intended was right. For his part he could not doubt that there was some point to it all. And in every uncertainty he believed in taking the highest chances.

She had overheard him that evening with some man with a "tough luck" story. "Nonsense!" Channing answered, and she had guessed that spirited lift of the head. "We have to stand for what we do. Do your best; try not to repeat a mistake; and trust the rest." He had the courage of life as well as its joy. Would she want any of the edge of that keen spirit dulled? She did like him, admire him! Her tenderness glowed warm as a banked fire.

Reluctantly, mastered, she slipped over to him. "Can't you put her down now? How your arms must feel!"

He looked at her tentatively. "Feel pretty much as Moses did, I fancy, with Aaron and Hur supporting his arms while he held up the children of Israel—and prayed," he added, with something back of the genial gleam.

Frieda leaned over from behind—a familiar little imp peeping from the corner of her eye, a wan little imp, but tantalizing as ever. Something brushed his cheek as soft and fugitive as a butterfly's wing. "Is that the answer?" Then, across the room, she laughed at his abrupt remembrance of his paternal handicap and caution.

It was not forgiveness, she told herself, but justice, and more: with no schoolgirl sentimentality she recognized his nature as higher than hers, saner, really sweeter-minded, braver. Even his failings were those of strength and generosity; hers, she scorned herself, of niggardliness, morbidness. This, from a woman to whom masculinity had been itself the primary fault; to whom fineness was of the feminine gender alone! In her devotion to this new revelation she would have welcomed the proof of

martyrdom. She could repeat the past year at once, she felt, with what different spirit!

Then that Channing, just when she was ready for unconditional surrender, should concede her grievances and offer lavish indemnity, completed the conquest of her loyalty; all the more for his perfect guiltlessness of diplomacy.

Frieda thought she had never known love until this second child wrung it from her inhospitality. (So it wasn't purely vicarious suffering, after all?) Baby Clare had always been a joy; but her feeling for Fee (the name Clare distilled from Frieda to fit the mite) was too intense and insecure for joy. It was amends as well. Frieda loved her so it hurt, it frightened her.

"I didn't see how I was to be equal to it," she half apologized to Clara Hardy. "But it doesn't seem to make much difference. The first took all my time. A dozen couldn't do more."

Now and then as she glowed over them the abrupt consciousness of Channing's approving eyes stiffened her like an electric shock. Nevertheless, more and more life and nature had their way with her. She had never doubted the value of the children; but now it was all actualized.

Already her plans for them gave her a hold on the future, on a longer future than the individual's. In the promise of evolution she saw them as an opportunity, and felt herself justified in them. Nor could she help enjoying this fulness of life, the rising tide of vitality and maturity as Channing guarded her back to vigor. Her quizzical belittling of feeling, her shyness of demonstration, were partly fear of the ridiculous: she had not understood the dignity of this softening and expansion of her nature, the luxury of easy tears and laughter, the enrichment of mere emotion. Her whole personality took on color and aroma. After all, love needed nothing but itself to rationalize it. And so with life. Everything was worth its price; the price was worth itself.

After long service and vigil she stood knighted by the stroke of life.

Beauty and truth were reconciled. Things were good enough as they are, even without the golden touch of Midas love or humor's sweetening salt. Nearness had shown her things in scale. Suffering had dignified the imperative. The end had justified the means. Even of the means,—the impersonal, which is the attitude of science and art, is also the at-

titude of life. Nothing of itself is common or unclean. Evil is not inherent in things any more than modesty can be defined as clothes. An enveloping veil may be suggestive of vulgarity, and nudity may front you with "formidable innocence." In the last analysis purity is but clear vision. And Frieda's old puzzle over the distinctions between the right and wrong of passion penetrated to this—that the right of passion lay in its not wronging love.

Clara Hardy found her on the nursery floor, buried under toys, her hair pulled and tousled to a mist.

"Take the Morris chair, Clara. Oh no, it's not too far back. It's delightful once you're in. But it's like love—for it to be any comfort you have to give up to it."

Clara, sinking back, dropped a photograph into Frieda's lap. "I came across that picture of Mrs. Channing, the bride; and it brought me to see *you*. My dear, you were handsome always, but now you're lovely!"

"Hear! Hear! Harry's been talking to you. My husband and children think me the most beautiful thing that ever was. Obliging of them, isn't it? Really it's quite an incentive to keep up the illusion. *I'm* not going to tell them bet-

ter. They might think me in a position to know."

"What a cynic you were!"

"O—h, it was all true enough; but so many other things are just as true. Frieda Branham may well look rather contemptuously on Mrs. Channing, who does all the things she deplored—compromises, goes with the current. But Mrs. Channing can afford to be equally superior,—she's a deal happier and wiser than Miss Branham.—Do you know, I believe that it is one of the greatest gains in marriage—the wider outlook. Each gets to see the other's side of life; and then the man lets the woman into bigger concerns than her sewing-machine and gas-range, out of the personal into the general. Aren't you glad you live in the day of electricity and all this talk of the future of the Anglo-Saxon?—These," beginning to remove the débris from her lap in the hope of rising in life herself, "are symbols and prophecies. This costume, for instance, is oracular. Fee, whose signature is in these needle-prick stains, will some day be a great milliner, with suave complimentary manner and soaring bank-account."

"I hope you will teach them something useful."

"We mean to."

"I know what I want to be," fluted Baby Clare, unexpectedly.

"Yes, dear?"

"A little mother, like mamma."

"You darling!" her godmother wept. And Frieda's face shivered with emotion like a mirror flashed in sunlight.

"Only I'd have a boy, too," the child wished. "Couldn't you get one, mamma, for us to play with?"

The women were glad to laugh. "Maybe," Frieda answered. "And perhaps mamma will after while," she admitted, with a fine color.

Clara's brows lifted in interrogation, and Frieda's lids fell.

Then they saw Channing in the door.

"Did you hear that unprogressive daughter of yours?" Frieda asked him, brushing a bit of lint from his shoulder with a touch that was a caress. Channing's smile was response. Love had grown so instinctive, endearment so habitual, it showed now, even at times before others, without self-consciousness or bad taste.

Clara gone, Channing himself looked inquiry at his wife. Their eyes met with the intelligence of a mutual memory—the memory of just such a moment as

had constituted their spiritual marriage on the rocks. Then a mist gathered across his.

But Frieda was illuminated. "Oh, he'll be well and beautiful and happy, —you'll see,—born so!—Do you remember that day on the lake, dear (I'm not accusing you of softening of the brain!), when we got in the push, as you said, and you thought I had caught on? I had, more or less, but I couldn't give up all at once. I don't admit now that I couldn't have learned otherwise, but *I* wouldn't: I had to be carried away because I wouldn't let myself go. It came hard to learn trust and obedience; to understand how one saves his life by losing it; to know that Life is to know the Power, and be a part of it, and work with it: and that happiness depends not so much on things or circumstances, or even on work or love, as on being in tune."

"Now that's strange," Channing considered, "that what has been teaching you to give up has been teaching me not to.—And yet . . ." he looked troubled, ". . . after all . . . Things aren't turning out exactly as . . ."

"We promised ourselves," she smiled at him, too assured of him now to calculate or be on the defensive. "Neither

of us understood. But, dear boy, it's all right. Why shouldn't I do my work? And what difference does it make which way one lives, just so he really lives?"

The Bond

BY EMERY POTTLE

SHE was complete, perfected, one might almost dare the word—elegant; "fine lady" was so beautifully a part of her—*was* her, indeed. Keppel, who had always apprehended things quite out of himself, whose perceptions, like the rays of a candle, constantly struck and illumined and compassed a world which, whatever it might be, wasn't as yet his, knew her at once for the realest thing of her kind. For him there was first the joy of knowing—just as for the humble collector there is the joy of knowing a perfect Gainsborough, for instance, though possession is another matter.

But it was, after all, destined to be possession for Keppel. How it came about—this possession, in its despair, its hope, its humility, its frightened courage, its despondency, and its last ultimate siege and storm, that recognized no barrier

and assailed furiously, till she was won, till Frances was his wife—a little panting, a little startled, but wonderfully admiring of his strength,—how all this came about Keppel could not think out. Looked at calmly—not a common quality of his own view—it all came to an acknowledgment of Keppel's real worth—worth for Frances, at least.

There she was — Frances — anyway. Keppel loved the fact of her, the sense of her, as his wife! His love of what she was, what she represented, almost equalled, in a way, his love of her. It was nothing to Keppel's discredit that he so strongly cherished the pride of possession; pride that took itself out in little ways of congratulation, wonder, and satisfaction. His whole attitude toward Frances and what she represented to him was a nice part of his sensitiveness to the best things—things that in reality belonged to him, though his earlier life had held them in a vague perspective only.

In his eagerness to show her how far he had gone, how clearly he saw the values of his canvas, Keppel had spoken, at first, lightly of this earlier life, though not with shame. He gave her the truth of it, but he gave it humorously, with the result that Frances saw it, as he made

her, of no great seriousness. The sum that she had to make out of his home, his friends, above all, his kindred, amounted of necessity to something rather unimportant. It was a relief to find it so. Not only were complications lessened, but he assumed a nearer valuation in her eyes.

After their marriage in Paris—which, it must be confessed, had been rather tumultuous and hurried, with little time on either side for subdued realization of what each was getting—the first month was their own, and perfectly their own. In the absorption of sharing all of himself, Keppel had no chance for the first old fear to creep in—the fear that Frances was, after all, too far removed from him by virtue of her ancestry, her fortune, her attenuation of fineness. And as for her, she accepted Keppel so generously, and, indeed, so simply, that what she was she made him, unquestioningly. They both felt it—this *goodness* of themselves, though it wasn't, of course, a thing to put into words.

There was one thing, it happened later, that Frances was not to understand about Keppel, nor could it be expected of her, in view of all the circumstances. She, herself, had never known it, for

her girlhood had been spent almost wholly in travel abroad; and that, too, without parents, for they had died out of her memory. Life had resulted for her in an existence with a guardian's family, who, however excellent in attitude they were, made few attempts to establish a relation with their ward to simulate blood-kinship. Therefore the incomprehensible was destined to be Keppel's punctilious observance of close relations with his relatives.

Heaven knows he had ample opportunity to exhibit this after they were back from Europe.

It was his mother first who came, naturally enough.

"I hope, tremendously, you'll like her," said Keppel, nervously, the day of her arrival. "She's been so fine always to me."

"Will she like me?" was Frances's quick question.

"You're my wife," he laughed—and that, to him, covered the ground.

"That oughtn't to be the real basis of liking," she protested. "She must like me for *me* if we are to get on."

"Oh, she'll like you," he replied, easily.

At the time of it, Frances adequately and graciously met a situation which on the whole was difficult. Keppel's

mother was difficult and rather captious. The fact that the case should have been reversed—that the graciousness, if at all, should have been the other way—was, to Keppel, with his tingling sensitiveness to all the meeting implied, not lost sight of. His mother was to him, above all else—and he saw all there was to be seen,—just that—his mother. He was jealous for her position.

The only admission of it—the disparity between Frances and his mother—that he actually put into words was the day his mother went away. It couldn't well have been harder for Keppel. She called him to her room and took out of her trunk a collar—a thing of magenta velvet and lattice-work and seed-pearls.

"I want to give her something, Richie," she said, embarrassedly; "would she like this?"

The possibilities of its effect on Frances flashed over him completely, but he met the moment bravely.

"I wouldn't, mother," he said, gently. "Frances has so many things of that sort. You keep it yourself—I would if I were you."

"Maybe she's too proud to take it?" his mother hazarded.

"Oh, it's not that—oh no! Only she'd

rather have something that you have made yourself."

It was not the notion of any smallness in Frances that might belittle the gift; it was the facing of the fact that he knew, as she would know—hide it as they might,—the awfulness of the collar translated into his mother, which gave Keppel his qualm.

After she had gone, beyond their talk, which had to be all on the outside of things, his mother was a topic Keppel and his wife couldn't very well voice, with truth. The inflicted silence was a tangible hurt to him after that.

Then there were his sisters—he had talked of them repeatedly to Frances. "They're such nice girls," he was always saying. But to her request, "Tell me all about them, how nice they are," he usually gave a vague and laughing answer that rather unprepared her for the meeting. They were nice—his sisters. Nice in a blowzy, generous, red-cheeked, utterly irresponsible way—a way that expressed itself in good-natured jesting, frank curiosity over Frances's life, her habits, her clothes, her fashion of doing her hair, and in an innocent aptitude for hitting hard her most cherished reserves.

"Now that you're in the family," was

the phrase oftenest on their lips. Frances came out of Keppel's sisters with a dazed relief at having done her duty and being rid of their noisy affection. Not that she wasn't beautiful during their visit—that was a part of her. For Keppel, after the first vigor of the visit, the home jokes, the eagerness over half-forgotten family escapades, it was all spoiled. To put it candidly, Frances spoiled it for him—unconsciously. He was bewildered at his inability to project what his sisters were to him into his wife. It seemed at first that with all his readiness of tongue he could make her feel about "the girls" as he did—that they were nice. His failure—he had to admit the failure—left him with all his perception of Frances's fineness unimpaired, but it sapped terribly his confidence in himself.

"My cousins from Michigan are coming to town on Tuesday," he told Frances one evening, laughing apologetically.

"What cousins, Richard?" she asked, vaguely.

He was surprised at the interrogation. "Why, you know, dear! I've told you of them so often. My Michigan cousins —Edward and Grace; and they want us to dine with them that night at

their hotel." He waited, in spite of himself, at a tension.

"Oh—you have so many cousins, I forget. Are they interesting? Or clever? Or frightfully rich? Or beautiful?" she jested.

He thought it out. "No—o, no, I suppose not. But they are near to me."

"But why need we—"

"Oh, you needn't go, dear, of course. But I must. I couldn't bear to hurt them;" he added, wistfully: "they'll want so to see you—they've heard so much of you."

She was candidly amused in a way he apprehended to the core, and the very apprehension hurt him more than he cared to admit.

"You're laughing at me for caring so —about just relatives who aren't anything in particular."

"Why do you care?" asked his wife, curiously.

He did not explain, only replied, slowly, "It's silly of me, I dare say."

"I don't understand you, Richard. You have a beautiful perception of everything, but in this— Why bother about the mass of things—in this case, relatives? It's the individual always that counts with me."

And there she summed up the whole case for them both, though she did not then guess it.

When it was a question of himself, Keppel's wife was wonderfully generous. She saw not the real issue, but only him. So she closed their discussion with: "We'll go, Richard, of course, if you want to. I want always, above everything, to please you."

He sighed, for she had missed the essence of it. "To please him"—that was just the very thing, intrinsically, that he didn't want. That was the key to everything. If she could but see in his relatives what he saw—not, perhaps, companionship, nor charm, nor intellect, nor social preferment; he was too keen an analyst, had gone too far, had seen too much, to mark these qualities in his kin; but to find and to cherish the *bond,* —that was it.

Keppel hammered it all out after his wife had gone to her room, and always with perfect exoneration for her. "They bore her, that's the truth of it," he sighed. "She's too fine for us. It isn't that I want to force them down her; nor hold them up as paragons. Nothing like that; I know where they fail—know it better, too, since I've

known *her*. I ought to be clear to her, but I'm not; she's not had my chances for it—for relatives," he laughed, ruefully. "It's enough for her that kinsfolk just are. She can't get the fact that, however modern and advanced I might grow, I can't shake them off like dust from my coat. They're mine own people, confound it,—mine! I must be square with them! Poor Frances, I'm not her sort, that's true."

In the end there was little comfort in all this for Keppel. There is rarely comfort in an abstract proposition of justice. The grievance stayed with him — the grievance that Frances couldn't see what his relatives meant to him. He went over it again painfully: "Great heavens, I wouldn't hurt one of them for the world. I couldn't do that—they'd never understand. And Frances won't see it! She's too good for us—we're common folk, after all. I was a fool, maybe, to think I could come up to her completely. But my attitude toward my relatives, in her eyes, must put me below her, where I can't reach up. And some day she'll know it out for a certainty, and then—"

The end of the pondering left him down, left his sensibilities in a roughened state, gave him a soreness of attitude

toward—he believed it faithfully—himself alone, toward his incapacity, his failure to make out for Frances all she had expected to find in marriage with him.

This mood of unworthiness daily grew on him, accentuated from time to time by the recurrent periods of very old friends, or more relatives—there were always more with Keppel. To Frances they were confessedly not worth while, intrinsically considered. She did not see, in their life, which was undeniably a good one, why, when her friends were so freely and desirably at her husband's disposal, he might not rest content; especially as he repeatedly declared, and with sincerity, the people she knew were the people he found actually most compatible with his thought and aim.

The situation livened in Keppel, by fault of its very untalkableness, a seed of distrust and suspicion of everything Frances did. So much nowadays seemed to point to dissatisfaction with him; the love itself, which she held before him like a clear flame, he began to question and to value as pity.

"If there is anything between us, Richard," said Frances, at the last, abruptly, "let us talk it out. You can say anything you like—you are, above all

men I have ever known, able to tell things."

He could only give her his gaze appealingly. Keppel—and no one knew it better than he—was not of the kind that facilely "talks out" a situation based on a personal sense of incompetence. Besides, the fact of the ultimate justification of her position put him, when he looked the matter full in the eyes—less selfishly, less morbidly, than was his wont now—tremendously in the wrong, made him seem smallish and peevish.

He evaded the opening clumsily:

"Oh, I'm just a little down in the mouth—it's the weather, I fancy." The evading of the chance she gave him was an added hurt, for he loved frankness above all.

It came in the end to a very bad state with Keppel and his wife. He left her blind, groping for reasons in the dark. And this hurt her pride in herself, and, too, in him. With his mental defection she had little to consider save the objective field, and that was crowded with her husband's relatives. He forced her to face a condition which had hitherto existed only in Keppel's fagged brain—the general fact of a mistake for them both in their marriage. Nothing had

struck, as yet, at the root of their love; but they were in one of those inevitably dark periods of weariness, distrust, overstrained emotion, which, if not lighted with delicate understanding, results often in desperate measures for relief.

When Keppel had to tell her of the two-o'clock Sunday dinner his aunts in Brooklyn were planning largely to give them—as a domestic hostage to their matrimonial bliss,—Frances openly rebelled. "I have—indeed, we both have—an engagement for luncheon that day," she said, coldly. "Besides—"

"But it is only tentative—that engagement," he hazarded.

"I choose to make it decisive. I see no reason, Richard, why, for the sake of something that comes very near being a piece of illogical sentimentality on your part, we should drag ourselves to a barbarous two-o'clock meal with — why, you've laughed a hundred times at your Brooklyn aunts."

He met it doggedly. "They've planned it and they'll be—"

"Hurt, you're about to say? Very well, if it comes to the question of hurt feelings, my impression is that my own should be considered."

"Oh, Frances, you don't understand."

"No, I do not."

"I must go in any case," he finished, wretchedly, impelled on the instant to a disagreement, which afterward he bitterly repented.

"Oh, if you take it—and your aunts—so seriously!"

It was serious enough—and taking it so, or leaving it, made no alleviation. Frances, after all, had the better of it, for she had her own friends as a diversion, if not a refuge; and they also were the sort that Keppel most desired, but could not, in the present mess of things, avail himself of with any dignity.

Ultimately Keppel went alone to the dinner of his aunts.

The ensuing weeks brought Keppel—though in his saner moments he saw the absurdity of it—to a state of despondency which had for its nucleus the fact that he was hopelessly misunderstood. From misunderstanding him on one point, he grew to feel that Frances was missing him on every point. His morbid self-searchings left her still on her pedestal, and, like pedestalled beings, left her alone. The rarefied atmosphere of her elevation, it must be said, afforded her little satisfaction. She was almost at the point where her love was ready to

admit its last effort was expended, its high courage daunted.

The outward show of things between them was well enough; their conversation was a graceful skipping from tussock to tussock in the swamp of unsaid things. After an evening of this ungrateful striding over unmentioned abysses, Keppel brought up the matter of the family gathering at Thanksgiving in his home—a day's journey distant in a weather-worn country village.

"We've always gathered at Thanksgiving," he said, hesitatingly. "It's our home custom, you know. I've never missed more than two or three of those festivals. Mother would break her heart if—" He left the sentence unended.

Frances had a mental flash in which she saw all that Keppel had told her of the bleak, barren, wintry little place, set off in an alien valley peopled by men and women assuredly not her own kind, distant, comfortless. In her present repelled emotional condition, it all seemed unendurably intolerable.

"Oh, I couldn't—" she gasped, quickly.

Keppel was silent, shrinking inwardly from the truth of her words.

"Must we go—now? It seems so—so far, and surely they understand how en-

gaged we are here? How difficult it is to take such a journey, just at the beginning of the season in town? I—"

"Please don't think of it, Frances," he said, coldly. "I understand how difficult the journey would be for you. I—I scarcely thought that you'd care for it. I can say that you are ill, if you like —ill enough not to undertake the trip. You'll get on quite safely here for the two days I'll be away."

She looked at him with the calm curiosity of utter aloofness. "Then you'll go—without me?"

Keppel rose, avoiding her eyes. "I cannot disappoint them, of course—it means very much to them. Yes, I shall go," he said, as he left her.

"Very well, Richard. As you will."

She had, at the moment, not the least inclination toward tears. Indeed, she was conscious of a certain relief in the thought of prospective freedom. Later she had a wretched time over the whole unfortunate affair.

For Keppel the journey home had absolutely none of the traditional about it. He could not foresee with his former warmth at the heart the eager faces, the generous glow of the house, the brightness, the welcomes, which, jovial as they

always were, had a scarcely concealed depth of tender affection, the sense of reunion accentuated by a smoking-hot turkey and a burden of home dishes. In fact, he shook himself out of the disordered sleeping-car early in the gray creeping chill of Thanksgiving morning, utterly at odds with the whole situation. The effort to greet his father's blankness of face over the sight of Keppel alone, with a cordial gayety of reassurance, of explanation of Frances's inability to come, of her dreadful disappointment, nearly set him crazy.

"Well, well, I am sorry. I've counted so on seeing my new daughter," his father said, regretfully, as Keppel climbed into the big red "cutter" and they drove off. The younger man took sorry note of the robes and the hot soapstones that filled the conveyance; they had been provided for Frances, he knew, though he did not speak of the fact.

The "Why, where is Frances?" that Keppel had shrunk from all the way, with keen sensitiveness, came at last, with even more of blankness, of dismay, of incredulity, than he had anticipated, as his family tumultuously drew him back among them again. He put them all off gayly—so gayly that he almost re-

aroused the suspicions he was trying to allay in them.

"So I came without her—just to see your Thanksgiving faces, eat your blessed food, tell my old jokes, and be gone. No, really, she wasn't fit to take that long trip."

"Well, if I was as young as Frances—" sharply began an aunt whose spirit was irreconcilable with extreme delicacy.

"Now, Mary," protested Keppel's mother quickly.

After the momentary forgetfulness in the greetings, the cloud settled on Keppel heavily. On a slight pretext he went up to his old room—they had kept it for him just as it was the day he went to college a matter of twelve years ago—went just to get away from his sisters and their good-natured raillery about his being a "bachelor again" and "deserted."

The parting from Frances had been worse than he had thought it might be, and he had given it every dull shade. He had still the sense of her at parting—straight, slim, calm, unprotesting, and terribly removed from him. In his distress over the whole thing, in his feeling of hurt, Keppel had—he saw it clearly enough now — made himself out in a worse light than he had intended. His

wretchedness stopped his throat, laid on his tongue a silence that was a leaden weight. So it came ultimately to some muttered words of farewell, a snatch at his bag, and brusque departure.

Keppel's mother came in softly and laid her hand on his head; he had flung himself prone upon his bed.

"Richie, what is it?" she asked, gently.

"What is what, mother?" he parried, listlessly.

"Isn't home good to you?" she went on.

"Home—is home, mother dear, always." He smiled at her wistfully.

"You didn't used to have the lines about your mouth, boy, or the tired eyes?"

"I didn't used to be thirty-two years old, madam," he laughed in a gay attempt.

"I'm sorry Frances couldn't come."

Keppel had helplessly felt the moment coming.

"Yes, I knew you would be."

They sat silent, the shrewd eyes of his mother on him compassionately.

"Richie?"

"Yes?"

"Well?"

"Well?"

"I'm waiting."

He put his hand on hers with a pat of reassurance.

"You'd not understand," he evaded.

"I do not know that I want to—understand," she returned, with a straight glance at him. Keppel looked at her, wonderingly.

What she said next made him catch his breath.

"You shouldn't have left her,"—that was all.

"But you don't understand," he repeated, irritably.

"You should have stayed with her, Richie," she went on firmly.

"But—"

"She's everything now, my son, and we—your father, the girls, and I—we are—are not your first thought. Frances didn't marry us; she married *you.* Richie, she loves *you,* and that's all that counts."

Keppel was strangely humbled, speechless; he had never seen his mother so. It was as if knowing none of it, she yet apprehended all. The instant was a little awesome.

She continued: "Remember, remember that you can't bring everything right in six months. Why, Richard, your father and I struggled for almost two years be-

fore we found out the truth of what we were destined to be to each other."

Keppel bent to kiss her.

"Be kind with her, my boy. Tell me nothing about what has happened, if anything has,—I don't want to hear it. Only always be gentle with her. She'll understand you some day. It's just *you* she wants now—not us."

She rose, tying the strings of her apron with nervous fingers. That she let the tears come into her eyes, and taking both his hands kissed him, was to her son wonderful. She was not a woman who made a light show of tenderness.

"Oh, Richie boy, mother's sorry," she cried, jealously, as if he were her boy again.

"Mother, you're splendid," he said, brokenly. "If she only knew—"

"Hush, Richard."

She put her hand on his arm with an earnest gesture. "There's the noon train, you know. It 'll take you back to New York by nine o'clock to-night."

He understood. "But the others?"

"I'll explain. Slip out quietly when you're ready and I'll have John harness old Kit for you. You can leave her at the station—and you know it's hard for me to let you go?"

Keppel nodded. "I want to go back, mother."

"Dick! Dick!" called his sisters, impatiently.

"Be still," his mother cried, softly, coming out to them. "Can't I have my own son to myself just once a year?"

The train from New York pulled in just as Keppel drove up to the little wooden box of a station. His own train was not due for a matter of five minutes; so he waited in the sleigh, idly watching.

She was the only one to alight at the dreary snow-bound spot—tall, fur-wrapped, and shrinking, she turned helplessly around and looked full into his eyes.

"Frances!"

"Dick, I had to come," she sobbed into his coat. "I wanted you so."

The Eyes of Affection

BY GEORGE HIBBARD

ISABELLE HALCOMB was aware that she had come perilously near to marrying "Dick" Graham. That she should have done this if John Halcomb had not masterfully appeared she did not attempt to deny to herself. That he had appeared when he did she was obliged to confess was almost an accident. She felt a little humiliated by the fortuitous — what she sometimes feared was almost the casual—nature of the event. She should have liked to consider the circumstances preestablished, written in the stars, a part of the inevitable sequence of the universe. That anything else might have been, seemed to her to detract from what was. Still, the truth was unquestionable. She would have married "Dick" Graham—she knew she was drifting toward it—if she had not met Halcomb. Then she had turned without hesitation toward

him with a finality of feeling which could not be mistaken. However, after all these fifteen happy years of placid married life, to know that Graham was at the Detmolds', and that she would undoubtedly see him in the course of half an hour, had made her think.

The heart is an organ of an "uncertain age." With the oldest there are always surprising stirrings of youth in it. Even when one has concluded that it is dead it has an astonishing way of displaying vitality and frequently coming to life again. It is an unruly member, and with its belated youthfulness puts unaccustomed and unaccountable thoughts into the head. Not that the thoughts which Isabelle Halcomb found rising in her mind were in any degree reprehensible or blameworthy or, in fact, unnatural. Still, that she discovered herself, at what in her most uncompromising moments she described as "middle age," thinking of much which might have been, in a measure disconcerted her.

Owing to a high wind in the night the awnings had been torn away from the windows of her dressing-room at "Greenlawns." The unusual strength of light, an incautious remark of her maid's, a state of mind, had brought her actually

face to face with an unpleasant reality. As she gazed at herself in the mirror she saw the white in her dark locks with great distinctness. Not at once, not for some years, but soon she would be gray. As yet her warm black hair only showed threads and traces of the coming change; but they were unmistakable in the present and in their promise. Presently she would be a gray old woman. Would life be the same? Would Jack care for her as he did? For a long time she was obliged to confess they had gone on in a humdrum fashion. Was this the end?

To a mood induced by such reflections had come the announcement of Graham's presence at the neighboring country house. The Dick Graham of her youth, the lover of other days. To be sure, there had been nothing but a flirtation, one of those flash-in-the-pan failures of fate. Certainly she was entirely satisfied and perfectly happy, and yet— Youth with all its never-realized promises had been such restless delight. Seeing him again would be a little like going back to it. She felt that she was measurably excited —unusually interested.

That she was longer than usual in dressing she was conscious; that she took unusual care in preparing herself for the

encounter she was aware. She was particularly exacting with her maid as to her hair. She halted between two gowns, and having put on one, changed it finally for another. Going into the world had become such a matter of routine that her unusual perturbation held an exceptional significance. She felt almost a girlish anxiety as to her appearance. What did it mean? Finally, as she came down-stairs, she reached a conclusion. Because of the past she felt a pride in being at her best.

The door of the smoking-room which Halcomb used as an office was open. She saw him as she stood at the entrance, thrown back in a low chair, with telegrams, letters, and newspapers scattered on the floor. Usually he had such a litter about him. In vagrant fancy she had sometimes thought of it as chips of the workshop of his busy life.

"Jack," she said, softly.

The sound with which he answered betokened a whole relationship—a relationship of pleasant confidence, of comfortable congeniality, of habitual affection. Unsought, unbidden, unwished came for an instant in her mind the little imp-like query, Would "Dick" Graham have responded in that way if—if— The heart of the girl never quite ceases to

beat in the woman, and the girl's heart was asking the question a little bitterly. As she did not speak, he looked up suddenly.

"What is it?" he asked.

"How much time you give to money-making!"

"Well," he said, placidly, "I have always."

"Yes," she answered, softly, "you have always."

What was she asking, she asked herself. What did she desire, or did she even desire anything? What did she find lacking? All was so doubtfully uncertain that she felt she was indeed groping in a very tenuous mist of discontent. Still, full satisfaction did not stand out in all its clear and unshaken outlines. The most of the facts of her life seemed at best only gray and pale—a few, only faintly discerned, almost appeared distorted and awry.

"Why do you want more money, Jack?" she asked.

"I don't," he answered.

"Then why—" she began.

"Because I've always been in the harness," he replied, "and out of it I'd feel as uncomfortable as if—as if—I'd lost a suspender-button."

The prosaic—as she felt, almost coarse, thoroughly marital — comparison made her wince. When one is reaching up into the empyrean, to bump one's head against the ceiling is unpleasant and disturbing and bewildering.

"Don't you think I'm pretty any longer?" she asked, with what she knew must seem inconsequence—though to herself, aware of the mental steps, the question appeared perfectly logical.

"Beautiful," he answered, readily.

"But now—" she began.

"You are the best-looking woman going," he answered, heartily, as he turned another page of a letter and began on the other side.

"Yet," she commented, "you never say anything about it, even now when I'm dressed up in all my fineries,—never say anything about — anything," she concluded, as she felt, lamely.

"Why, Lizzie!" he replied, lowering the paper and looking at her curiously. "When one has had the proud privilege of dressing beauty in Paquin gowns for a number of years, one does not write poetry about it. However"—and the twinkle showed in his eyes which had helped so much in making his fame as an after-dinner speaker—"I assure you

that I still look upon you with the eyes of affection."

She sighed.

Was that what she desired—poetry? When she felt the lack of something, was this because she was receiving affection? Was she asking for the bread, or rather the cake, the sugared confection of romance, and getting the stone of every-day regard? At her age she confessed anything else was foolish, even such speculation absurd, and yet—

"Take care," she said, moving toward the door and letting her hand rest for a moment on his shoulder. "I am going to the Detmolds', and Dick Graham is going to be there."

Halcomb whistled.

"My old rival," he said, slowly. "How jealous I was of that fellow! Yes, he was and is the man to write sonnets to your eyebrow. I must take care."

He looked up at her in placid contentment, while she glanced down at him with adoring indulgence.

"Nonsense!" she said, with a slight blush. "Still, it made me think of the—past."

"So," he laughed, "that is the rift in the lute. That is the reason the sweet bells jangle a little out of tune. That

is the way the wind is blowing. That is the nigger in the fence."

"Yes," she answered, smiling.

"Then," he replied, dramatically, "I must say, madam, that I consider your conduct most scandalous indeed—most improper. You—with a devoted husband— Fie! madam; it is most monstrous."

"Won't you go with me?" she asked, pausing at the door and throwing him a kiss with the ends of her fingers.

"No," he replied. "I've got to stay here and see Higgins about this right of way."

As the victoria rolled up the drive to the porte-cochère she saw a number of carriages and automobiles. When she stood at one of the low windows of the drawing-room and looked out upon the terrace she discovered that a dozen or more of people were gathered about the tea-table. It stood under the spreading awning, with Mrs. Detmold behind it. Isabelle Halcomb paused a moment before advancing. With an eager glance she examined the scene and the company. Yes, she could not be mistaken. She recognized him in a moment. Yet in the next she experienced a feeling of surprise that she had known him. Not, in-

deed, that he had so very much changed. Still, the stout, sturdy, ruddy man whom she beheld was very different from the image of the man of whom she had been thinking.

For the first time a momentary doubt assailed her. She had gone forward to the meeting with an unthinking certainty —almost as if she were returning into her own youth. At the very threshold the shock of disillusionment seemed to have struck her.

She advanced more sedately but with even less inward composure toward the place where her hostess was seated. With a concealed confusion which she had not felt since her earliest year in society she swept forward. The group parted, and she stood beside the tea-table.

"So good of you to come," murmured the lady behind the teacups. "I wanted a few of you to meet Mr. Graham at once—but I did not remember—you know him already."

The moment for which she had been preparing herself was not long delayed.

"I forgot," Mrs. Detmold laughed. "Only the assurance that you were coming this afternoon, I believe, has kept him from taking horse instantly and riding to see you."

As Mrs. Detmold spoke, Graham advanced. She discerned that he was looking at her curiously. What did he see? Was the realization for him as different from the memory as it had been in her case? As she stood under his examining gaze she was conscious of the years. Uncertainly, apprehensively, almost affrightedly, she stood trying to read what she felt would be a verdict in his eyes. The crisis endured for a moment—the retrospective moment, though, of the drowning man catching at a straw—in which she not only with vivid revision saw the past, but in quick anticipation caught glimpses of the future. She seemed only to become conscious of time and place when she heard his voice.

"Indeed, it's true," he asserted, earnestly. "I was for hurrying off at once."

"I am glad," she said, with a voice she was reassured to feel was so serene. "I think, however, that it would only have been fitting in the case of such an old friend."

They stood examining each other with appraising glances. The challenging was only kindly, the scrutiny most gentle. Still, both were there in the duelling looks. Instinctively they moved a step or two away from the others, until what

they said could not be heard in the confusion of resumed conversation.

"As it is," she said, lightly, "I have come to see you. One may do much at my age—"

"It is a long time—" he admitted, thoughtfully.

"And you have done many surprising things," she continued, feeling for the moment safer in the level fields of generalities.

That he had honestly cared for her she had never doubted for a moment. Indeed, that she had been obliged to hurt him had caused very real grief for her. The first of his wanderings dated from that time. She had wondered if other of his expeditions into the remote parts of the earth had been not so much for discovery as to lose—to forget. The meeting must assuredly mean as much to him as to her—more even. So many years had passed though, that she felt that the ragged, cutting edges had been worn off, and that they could talk more easily and painlessly.

"An explorer," he said, "is always something of a freak. I am not sure that I do not feel that my proper place would be in the tent of a side-show with the wild man of Borneo—"

"You are a personage," she said, "who adds to empires and is welcomed by emperors. I have read all about you—"

He nodded his head, but did not speak.

"It must be very interesting," she said, almost timidly.

"There is not such an amount of adding to empires and being welcomed by emperors as to become monotonous. And you?" he added, abruptly.

"About me there is never anything new," she answered, deliberately.

"Shall I tell you something?" he asked.

"Yes."

"The newest thing which has happened to me—for one may become swamped in variety—has been seeing you again."

"New because it is so old?" she said, confusedly.

"Yes—and no," he replied. "Of course the time is long—and much has changed."

"Ourselves for one thing," she said, gently.

"Yes, ourselves for one thing," he acceded. "Confess,—was there not something of a shock for you in looking at me again?"

"That is as much as saying you were shocked yourself," she evaded.

He remained silent.

"You do not answer."

"You said that age may forget formality. I will make a confession,"—he laughed again a little bitterly: "I believe I must have gone on thinking of you as you were—"

"You did not know me," she accused, quickly.

"I did," he defended, with conviction, "at once—only the picture in my mind was of the girl—"

"And to discover an old woman—" she hurried on, with an impatient little gesture.

"The child is father of the man. The girl is mother of the woman. *O filia pulchra matre pulchrior.*"

"Oh, do not try to be apologetic or flattering," she said. "That is unnecessary, as we agreed."

"The change is but very slight," he argued. "As I look again, I see it. But the remembrance I had was so clear and distinct—"

"I am a disappointment," she declared.

"One star differeth from another star in glory."

"I suppose I too thought of myself as I was," she mused. "In what way am I the most changed?"

"Why discuss it?" he asked, earnestly.

"I am interested," she urged. "One does not have every day such a standard of comparison as a returned friend."

He looked at her doubtfully.

"Yes," he said, "we can be friends now. I never thought that could be. How time takes the bitterness out of everything! Why, it's as sweetening as air or sunlight—and yet they say that nature is not beneficent. Yes, I can talk like an old friend now."

"Then how have I changed the most?" she insisted.

"It is the part of an old friend to tell unpleasant truths." He smiled. "I am only fulfilling my character. The gray hair—"

Involuntarily she put her hands to her head.

"I think that I was startled by that," he said. "The sight was so wholly unexpected—so absolutely out of accord with my memories—my picture—"

"You noticed it?" she demanded.

"At once," he said. "If there was any shock, that was it."

"Oh!" she cried.

"You are displeased—I have offended you—"

"No. No," she replied, quickly. "Only I have been foolish. I should have

thought—I should have realized that after all these years you would notice the difference immediately. It is a little like seeing a ghost of one's self—and ghosts are so frightful."

Halcomb did not look up when his wife came into the room. Neither did he get up. She knew that if she had been another woman he would have been ceremoniously on his feet in an instant. She had not made a grievance of such conjugal immobility. Still, she had noticed it. Unfailingly she had considered it a part of the general system of matrimonial *laisser-faire,* which she deplored. On this occasion, as she came slowly through the door, the fact that he did not stir remained unmarked by her.

She advanced with downcast eyes and sank silently into a chair.

"You're back early," he observed, still writing on.

"Yes," she answered.

"Many people there?"

"No," she replied, dully.

"Pleasant?"

"Yes."

At last, conscious of the tone and manner, he glanced about.

"Ah," he said, "I didn't remember.

There is more in this than meets the eyes. On the whole, your expedition into the past seems to leave you thoughtful. This experience with auld lang syne appears to have given you food for reflection. Did not the light of other days have the radiance you expected of it?"

"Don't make fun of me, please," she said, hopelessly; "I can't bear it."

"He was there?"

"He was," she replied, despondently. "Oh, life is so bewildering and unsatisfactory!"

"Were you disappointed in him?"

"No."

"Something has gone wrong," he said, rising and drawing nearer her. "Our cosmical doll is stuffed with sawdust. Our personal apple-cart is upset. Our individual grapes are sour."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, impulsively. "The worst of it was that he was disappointed in me."

"Impossible!" he declared. "How do you know?"

"He told me."

"The—" he began.

"No, no," she interrupted. "He was very nice about it, and said it very nicely. Indeed, I don't know that I am quite fair in saying that he was dis-

appointed. Oh, don't you understand, it was so different—"

He continued to gaze at her with amused curiosity.

"I don't believe that I know what to think. Oh, I wish I could wear a nun's head-dress."

"Why?" he demanded, in amazement.

"To cover up—the gray hair," she exclaimed.

"Gray hair!" he said. "What gray hair?"

"Mine."

"But yours is not gray."

She sat up, looking at him wonderingly. In an instant she was on her feet. She sped to the window and stood in the strong light of the late afternoon sun. With a quick movement she tore the hat from her head. With swift gestures she had undone her hair.

"Come here," she commanded. "See?"

"Yes," he answered, standing before her and looking as he saw she desired he should look.

"Well?"

"Yes," he responded, slowly, "there is a touch here and there of whiteness. But I never noticed it."

"Do you mean to say that you never saw it before?"

"Never," he announced, with a force which was unmistakable.

"Really?" she demanded, joyfully.

"Really," he replied. "On my word!"

In a moment her arms were clasped about his neck.

"Jack! Jack!" she cried. "It's so foolish at my age. I can't help it. I'm so delighted—so happy. All this time when I did not think you were noticing anything — anyway you were not noticing that I was changed—"

"You haven't," he declared, stoutly.

"Truly?" she inquired. "Do I seem so much the same to you as that?"

"In my eyes," he said, "you have not changed a particle since the day we were married. You see, we are so accustomed to one another."

"Yes — yes," she exclaimed, eagerly. "It's that. It does not sound romantic, but it is."

"You are just every bit as beautiful as you ever were," he assured her.

"The eyes of affection," she murmured, as she kissed him. "And, Jack—I'm more than satisfied."

"The Marriage Question"

BY GRACE ELLERY CHANNING

THE noonday quiet was only interrupted by the click of the typewriter at one desk and the occasional restless movement of legal papers at the other. In the outer office nearly every one had gone to lunch. It was indeed past the hour when Satterlee himself usually went, yet he lingered. Perhaps the breath of river air, lacking in the streets below but gratefully felt at this altitude, was too pleasant to leave. Outside, the mercury stood in the nineties, but up here it registered a bare eighty-two; if not cool, it was at least tolerable.

The girl at the typewriter put up one hand and pushed the damp hair off her forehead with a languid gesture curiously in contrast to the almost feverish though ordered activity with which her fingers the next moment renewed their dance over the keyboard.

Satterlee, behind the screen of his desk-top, made a mental note of this, adding it to the entries of several months (its power of extension gives the mental note-book its chief danger), and he frowned above the papers *in re Pettis*.

Suppose—just for once and for instance—one *did* ask her to cure the day's fault of heat with the cool pleasantness of a roof-garden at night, wherein would be the harm? Would there, in fact, be any? And—a question nearly as interesting—suppose one did ask her, would she go? It was a nice problem in the adjustment of employer and employed.

It grew hotter every minute. It was going to be intolerably hot riding the rail a whole hour to S—— merely for the satisfaction of riding back again with the other commuters in the morning. Satterlee detested S—— anyway; moreover, he suddenly remembered a great number of useful things he could do in town—such as looking up precedents *in re Pettis*. It was only the matter of wiring Isabel. Instinctively he drew towards him one of the pile of yellow blanks and pencilled the message:

"Detained on business. Will be down to-morrow."

While he did so he had already a vision of its reception some hour later. One of the servants of the luxurious cottage for which he enjoyed the privilege of paying would carry the envelope sedately on a silver salver to Isabel; Satterlee could see the very gesture with which she, cool and elegant in some of those intricate creations of lawn and lace for which also he had the privilege of paying, and which so admirably became her, would stretch out her smooth, slim fingers to take it. That vague irritation which he so often felt in his wife's presence stirred him now at the image. He moved so brusquely that the girl opposite looked up, surprised, and their eyes met.

It was a meeting without occult significance beyond that contained in the bare fact of meeting without embarrassment or the need of speech,—the implication of a certain fine adjustment. The girl went on again with her typing, but Satterlee looked down at his desk strangely troubled.

Yes, if one asked her,—he thought she would go. A kind of rage of compassion seized him for that indomitable and enduring frailness which had faced him so equally, without fainting or murmur through the winter's rigor and the sum-

mer's strain. He made a few aimless markings with his pencil, a sharp breath that might have been a sigh escaped him, and he tore the yellow paper into two long strips and pushed back his chair.

"I shall be back within the hour," he said, brusquely, reaching for his panama.

The girl nodded, without stopping that incessant dance of fingers, and Satterlee paused as he passed her table, ostensibly to glance at the copy. She was too pale by half! Again that rage of compassion swayed him subtly. Why should some women rest eternally and a girl like this never know an hour's recreation? And where could a girl like that go alone in New York for recreation? Satterlee himself was tired; extreme heat is a subtle sapper of the moral energies; the long torrid months, with the bidaily railroad trips, had relaxed some fibre in him; he felt used up. It would be immeasurably restful to take a woman like that to a quiet little supper somewhere and see her enjoy it;—a woman who shared his preoccupations of mind and fatigues of body and who wouldn't expect him to entertain her with golf or scandal. He mentally defied his whole social world—*Isabel's* whole social world—to show cause why he

shouldn't or indicate the smallest earthly harm therein. They were necessarily comrades to an extent already, in the enforced intimacy which was the substance of their waking hours; exiles of labor, isolated from that world in which Isabel and her associates took their pleasure so lavishly, why should their moment of innocent relaxation be disallowed? Because she was not of his social set?—Isabel and she had been classmates; nothing but the accident of money—*his* money, as he could not help recalling at this moment—ordained the one's life of leisure and ordered the other's life of work. And yet he *must not* ask her; this he kept reiterating to himself through his growing consciousness that he *should* ask her, that he was even now on the very point—

There came a knock at the door—a well-bred knock, but which went through Satterlee's nerves like a bang. He jumped, and facing suddenly about, faced his wife.

"You didn't expect me," said Isabel, smiling.

Her husband stared at the sleek, rosy, healthy creature, redolent of sea and air and superior to temperature. To all appearances she might just have come off of ice and out of a glass case. So flaw-

less a vision might, it would seem, have stirred a pulse of masculine pride in ownership, but the effect was the opposite. Her very remoteness from the common influences of heat and dust and fatigue, the very perfection of her toilette, the accurate angle of her becoming hat, and the immaculate crispness of her white duck costume were an offence to him at that moment.

"I certainly did not," he replied, with unconscious emphasis. "What in the world brought you to town on the hottest day of the season?"

"Oh, I had business," said Isabel, lightly. She moved, with the artificially natural carriage of the woman of society, across the room, and sitting down at her husband's desk, laid thereon a frivolous pocketbook and preternaturally slim umbrella, and began slowly to remove her gloves.

"You were just going to lunch, weren't you? Don't let me keep you; I will wait here till you return."

"Won't you lunch with me?" her husband asked, with an effort of courtesy.

"No, thanks; I have lunched already. I sha'n't disturb Miss Clarke," — she nodded pleasantly to the girl.

"She needs to be disturbed," respond-

ed Satterlee, with sudden sharpness. "She has been at work since eight o'clock." As he spoke he moved to the window and solicitously lowered a shade to intercept a ray which fell across the girl's hair. It was done with that masculine unconsciousness which must be a remnant of man's lost innocence. The girl, flushing slightly, bent lower over the typewriter; Mrs. Satterlee, leaning her cheek on one hand and nonchalantly tapping the desk with the fingers of the other, gazed discreetly down at it. Satterlee, vaguely helpless between the two, hesitated a moment and then put on his hat once more.

"You won't come, then?"

"No, thank you."

"Very well; I sha'n't be long."

The door closed somewhat forcibly. Simultaneously, Isabel Satterlee lifted her eyes and contemplated the figure of the girl before her. Item by item she inventoried her, with a characteristic and liberal justice. The bent head, the tumbled masses of soft hair, the face—its subdued suggestions of beauty dimmed by the pallor of heat and too unremitting confinement—she noted them all. That the head contained a good brain she knew; they had been college classmates.

Indeed,—she recalled the circumstance with faint cynicism,—it was on her own recommendation that Richard had given Miss Clarke the post. Trimly exquisite herself, in her appraisement she did not make the mistake of discounting anything for the other's tumbled cuffs, disordered hair, and cheap shirt-waist, which had lost its first crispness. She conceived these things might have their appeal for a man by nature chivalrous. Mentally she was reviewing, as best she could, the life of her husband in this restricted space; here he really and effectively *lived* in the intervals of those transient moments of existence spent with his family. And here—it came to Mrs. Satterlee with a new vividness even after months of contemplation of the fact, —here Eleanour Clarke really lived also. This with them both expressed the major part of their existence not merely in measure of time, but in measure of weight. Here was the chief occupation and preoccupation of each, necessarily; the active reality of labor and interests about which the remainder of their lives was more or less loosely builded. Isabel looked down at the desk with its crowded pigeonholes and files of bulky papers, and up at the formidable legion of calf-

bound volumes on the shelves all about; these represented the internal life and world of the man for whom she poured coffee every morning,—and to whom she had incidentally borne two children,—and she found herself wondering what kind of world it was. Probably Eleanour Clarke knew. Isabel's glance, traversing the desk once more, fell upon two yellow strips in the immediate foreground. Mechanically she absorbed their pencilled contents. In an instant the message had delivered itself, and for the first time Mrs. Satterlee's dark cheek flushed.

A slight movement recalled her. Miss Clarke had risen, put aside her papers, and producing with a murmured word of apology a little package of bread-and-butter sandwiches, sat down by the window and began to eat. Mrs. Satterlee watched her with fascinated interest; not a movement of the other escaped her, and not one was ungraceful or displeasing. The girl had the dignity of her justified position; even the pallor and dimmed array, eloquent of her working-value, became her.

"Do you always lunch here?" asked Isabel.

"In this weather. It saves time, and the going into the sun."

Isabel's fingers drummed lightly on the desk.

"How is your mother?"

"Thank you;—she always suffers from the heat," said the girl, with a kind of weary acceptance.

Mrs. Satterlee leaned lightly forward on the desk. Few women had a more charming manner; it wore even more than its habitual graceful detachment now.

"Will you take her down to my cottage for a month?" she said.

Eleanour Clarke turned two blankly astonished eyes upon her; evidently she doubted her own ears.

"Take mother to your cottage!" she repeated,—then the color mounted slowly to her pale cheeks. "You are very kind," she said; "but it is quite impossible; I could not leave my work."

"There would have to be a substitute, of course," said Isabel. She also flushed a little, hesitated, and then added, with great frankness: "That is exactly what I came to town about to-day; I will be your substitute, if you will let me."

"You — Mrs. Satterlee!" exclaimed Eleanour Clarke. She stared at the elegant figure before her, and then all in a moment, without knowing why, she drew herself up to an unconscious defensive.

"Oh, I should be a very bad one, of course," said Isabel, lightly, "but I have been studying stenography for some months, and I really typewrite pretty well. Then this is the dull season, isn't it?—a good time for an apprentice."

Eleanour Clarke rose to her feet.

"You mean to take my place!"

The absoluteness of the attack broke through every conventional shade and brought the other woman also to her feet, as if in response to a summons.

"I mean to try," she answered, simply. "No, no, of course not!—that isn't what I meant!"

They looked at each other, equally aghast. In the girl's face a kind of waking fright was mingled with resentment and a half-blind questioning. Isabel walked to the window and stood there with her back turned, her long, useless hands clasped lightly behind her,—in ostentatious contradiction of her tense lips and contracted brows.

"I express myself very badly," she said, speaking quietly. "What I meant is—that I am desperately tired of doing nothing, and you—you have always been doing too much. It will do us both good to take each other's place for a while. When did you last have a vacation?"

Eleanour Clarke smiled a trifle bitterly.

"The year before we both entered college."

"Exactly! But I can't leave the children with only nurses and servants; I must have some one I can trust,—and there is no one I could trust so completely as you."

Eleanour said nothing.

"And of course"—Mrs. Satterlee colored a little—"it is understood that it is a business proposition,—it would come to the same thing; I am not asking you to afford a vacation."

"No," said Eleanour, quietly; "I have my mother to support." She added, after a moment, coldly, "This means, of course, that I must look for another position."

Mrs. Satterlee had gone back to the desk and was mechanically shifting the two yellow strips of paper as if they had been pieces of a puzzle. She was exceedingly pale. Now she looked up quickly.

"It means, necessarily, nothing of the kind. Please try to understand. It is—an experiment. I may not do at all. In any case,—*in any case* nothing would induce me to take your place permanently unless you preferred another. Please"—she looked directly at the girl—"con-

sider it a plan for the moment only, and let me know what you decide." She sat down suddenly in her husband's chair with a movement of involuntary exhaustion—singular in such a woman, if Eleanour Clarke had noted. But she was not noting,—she was looking instead at the opposite wall intently, and her voice, when she spoke after what seemed a long time, sounded from a long way off, oddly constrained.

"Very well, I will go."

Mrs. Satterlee drew a swift breath. As if she had recovered all her composure, the girl moved to her table and began quietly to arrange her papers for work.

"When should you like me to go down?" she asked, in a matter-of-fact voice. "I shouldn't wish to—put Mr. Satterlee to any inconvenience."

"N—of course not," said Isabel, faintly. She leaned her head on one hand and stared again at the yellow papers.

"There is this brief, and the other papers in this case which must be finished to-day—"

Isabel sat upright with sudden energy.

"Could I finish them? I have until 5.45,—and might as well do that as be idle. Could you—would it be possible to talk it over with your mother and arrange

to come down to-morrow? That would give us Sunday to get things running smoothly,—and Mr. Satterlee will be on hand to make the journey comfortable for your mother. Or is that too little time—would you rather wait?"

"No," said Eleanour Clarke, "that will be time enough." She rose, gathered together her small possessions swiftly, and put on her hat. "You will explain to Mr. Satterlee."

Mrs. Satterlee came forward with her hand outstretched. They were perfectly natural now, both of them, with the swift self-recovery of women.

"It is good-by until to-morrow only, then, and I can't tell you how much obliged I am."

"It is I who ought to be obliged, no doubt," replied Eleanour Clarke, with a pale smile, "but it has been—rather sudden, and I am a—little dazed." She cast a look about her. "Good-by," she said, and was gone.

Isabel, left alone, leaned for a moment heavily on the table, her color changing from red to white; she stared another moment blankly at the shining keys, then, sitting down, fell upon the typewriter with her long hands, in a kind of rage of doing.

Her husband, coming in an hour later, stopped abruptly on the threshold. He cast a quick glance about the room and then at his wife.

"What does this mean?" he asked, sharply. "Where is Miss Clarke?"

Isabel, leaning back in the typewriter's chair, told him, with a smile.

"The whole thing strikes me as Quixotic to a degree," said Satterlee, dryly. He stood by his desk, whither he had walked at the conclusion of her statement, and moved the papers impatiently. There was every shade of annoyance and disapproval in his voice.

"It must of course strike you as—sudden," said Isabel, with unexpected meekness, "and I admit I owe you a sincere apology,—but I hoped you would approve. Eleanour Clarke needs a vacation."

"About that there cannot be two opinions," replied Richard, with unconscious emphasis; there was almost an implication in the glance he cast at his wife,—so cool and composed, so redolent of summer idleness, of an infinity of doing nothing. He was instantly aware of it and ashamed.

"Of course it is very kind,—not to say Quixotic,—on your part, and there is no

earthly reason why you should not invite Miss Clarke and her mother to visit you if you choose. I can easily procure a substitute,—if you had done me the honor to consult me," he ended, dryly.

"It was outrageous in me, of course," said Isabel, still meekly; "but you see I knew Miss Clarke would never consent,—in any other way,—and unless she could go as a paid companion, she would not feel she could go at all."

"Then pay her," said Richard.

Isabel shook her head, controlling a climbing knot in her throat. Was it necessary for him to make it so very obvious?

"It wouldn't work. Besides,—I really mean that I want to come. If you knew how tired I am of doing nothing,—do let me try, Richard!"

"There is no necessity for my wife to drudge through the summer either," observed masculine inconsistency stiffly. "If there were,—it would be quite another matter."

"There are different kinds of necessities. I admit I have taken an outrageous liberty, but—couldn't you stand me—just one month, Richard?"—the little laugh with which she said it ended, to her horror, in something like a sob.

Richard was horrified in his turn. He had not caught the sob, but her words touched so very near the spring of his reluctance. He flushed as he hastily took up a paper and gazed with great intentness at it,—upside down.

"That, of course, doesn't enter; I should only be too honored—" Then his annoyance again overcame him. He flung down the paper. "But you must remember this is a place of business. I should much prefer to know you were enjoying yourself at the shore, and any professional typewriter—you must excuse me—would serve me quite as well."

"Better, no doubt," said Isabel, smiling resolutely; "but—you said last week this was the dull time. I promise not to be troublesome in any way. Won't you let me at least try?"

"You couldn't possibly stand the commuting."

"I don't intend to; I think you find it rather hard yourself. It would be much better only to go down Saturdays."

"You forget that the house is closed and the servants gone."

"We don't want them; I've thought of all that. Do please let me arrange—"

"There are the children—"

"They will be perfectly well and

happy. Miss Clarke will telephone every day, and we shall have Sundays with them."

Satterlee was silent; there was indeed nothing left to say. He glanced moodily at his wife's face, fresh and fair.

"One of her usual caprices," he thought, "and she will be heartily sick of it by the end of a week."

"Of course," he said, aloud, "if you put it that way, there is no more to be said."

"I may try?"

"You may try." He could not repress the slight shrug with which he acceded.

"Thank you," said Isabel, cordially. "Then I'll just finish this."

She bent her head above the machine, and Richard sat devouring his annoyance in silence, while his wife's fingers filled the room,—not with the steady click to which his ear was accustomed, but with positive little taps, very characteristic of Isabel, he thought. As he glanced at the industrious figure opposite, he bit his lip, smitten suddenly with the absurdity of the situation. It would be a singular experience to have her opposite him day after day, except across an elaborately appointed table. Of course, too, she would be more or less on his hands out-

side the office as well; not that she was a woman to be much on any one's hand—he did her that justice, she was extremely independent,—but there would be none of her set, nor the children. After all, it might be better to commute.

Meanwhile Isabel typed steadily on, and as she did so another quality in her became evident—the rare, the golden quality of concentration. She knit her brows and wrestled silently with the unaccustomed legal phrases, bringing to the accomplishment of the task so much conscience that she partially forgot her husband's presence and the strained point of the situation. When at last she brought him the pile of neatly typed legal pages, it was almost without embarrassment, and she awaited his verdict like a child.

"Is there anything else?" she asked, glancing at the desk.

"No; you have been very industrious,—and you type very well indeed," he was forced into adding with some surprise.

"I shall do better with practice. Then, if there is really nothing more, I will go." She took up her big hat, pinned it on, and slowly drew on her gloves. "You were not coming down to-day?"

Richard hesitated, then seized the bait. "No; I want to look up some rulings."

Isabel nodded. "Would you like me to come up to-morrow? Miss Clarke will need all her time—oh, I forgot—will you please send her the exact train-time?—and I told her you would see them comfortably down."

Satterlee turned and looked with sudden kindliness at his wife.

"No, don't come; I'll close up early to-morrow. I shall put you on your car, of course." He reached for his hat.

A moment later he stood looking after the car which bore his wife away, with some contrition.

"After all," he thought, "there aren't so many women of her set who would take the trouble. Of course the thing is going to be a confounded nuisance, but she doesn't realize that, and I needn't have been so beastly unsympathetic."

He was grateful to her again, as he walked up-town, for the breathing-space she had so opportunely furnished him—in which to look over the ground and collect himself. It was not until hours later that it occurred to him to wonder how she knew he was not intending to go down?

His compunction had lost nothing next day when he delivered his two charges into his wife's cordial hands. Whatever of embarrassment he might have felt in

the rapid readjustment of relations, the night's reflection had restored to the man of the world his self-possession; he had cordially endorsed Isabel's invitation and made the journey delightful to his visitors. Mrs. Clarke was a fine, worn, elder edition of her daughter, and Satterlee watched, not without emotion, the brightening of their city-tired eyes when the blue waters bore them their first breath of sea air. In the girl's sigh he read a vast and pathetic expansion; some thin armor of manner fell suddenly away.

"Oh," she breathed, "it *was* good of Mrs. Satterlee to give us—to give my mother this chance!"

It *was* good of Isabel, Richard felt, when he consigned them to a greeting so cordial. The large guest-room had been filled with flowers by the children; Isabel herself had a thousand preoccupations for their comfort, and presently advanced as many charming prospects for their days. Under the spell of her entire naturalness, even Eleanour Clarke's constraint wore subtly away. It *was* certainly good of Isabel, thought Richard.

"It will do them no end of good,—and was no end good of you to think of it. I was a brute," he said that evening.

"I am glad you approve," she answered, quietly.

It was a novel experience to Isabel Satterlee to rise early for a definite purpose unconnected with the pursuit of pleasure, and once seated beside Richard in the train, she was conscious of an excitement she had not previously reckoned with. Under certain circumstances, to travel with one's own husband becomes the boldest of adventures.

Richard was half amusedly, half awkwardly alive to the oddity of the situation. To his masculine eyes his wife wore somehow a look of difference. He vaguely missed the plumes and furbelows and long skirts which became her so well; yet it occurred to him that she was looking usually distinguished.

"She is dressing the part," he decided, with some secret entertainment.

"You will want to go up to the house," he observed, as they emerged from the station after an almost silent journey. "I will put you in a cab and you can come down when you feel like it."

"No," said Isabel, quickly. "The house can wait; I am going to the office."

If this excellent promptness was expected to win approval, she was disap-

pointed; it annoyed Richard instead. He felt the yoke settling about him, but he merely answered shortly:

"All right. I've got to hurry and look over some papers before a man comes." And straightway Isabel was a witness for the first time in her husband of that change, incomprehensible to the average woman and proportionally resented by her, which falls upon the man the moment he is face to face with his work, be that what it may;—the sudden banishing of the personal which leaves most women feeling cold.

Possibly Isabel was not an average woman, or possibly with this too she had reckoned, for she stepped into the elevator with unabated energy.

"Will you please tell me what you wish done first?" she asked, slipping off her hat and gloves and uncovering the typewriter with a despatch for which Richard was unprepared. The personal note had vanished also from her voice, and Richard, looking up, found her standing like a respectful subordinate awaiting orders. He repressed an inclination to laugh—she was taking the game so seriously; then he glanced at his papers and his business preoccupation returned.

"Can you take my dictation?" he asked, dubiously.

Isabel nodded. She sat down and drew towards her pencil and pad. Richard began dictating—slowly at first, then, as he became immersed, faster and faster, and Isabel with knit brows dotted and dashed after.

"Copy those out at once," he said, without looking up. "They want to catch the Chicago mail."

The morning wore away almost in silence. Once or twice Isabel referred a phrase, and from time to time she rose and laid a neat pile of pages on her husband's desk, which he acknowledged by a mute nod. The "man" came and was introduced into the inner office. He happened to be of their set socially, and for a moment Richard looked a halting doubt whether to present him to Isabel or not, but she kept her head resolutely bent and ticked steadily on, and the gentleman departed without a glance in her direction. This first obliteration of her identity amused Isabel, but she soon found enough to do in wrestling with unfamiliar terms, and ceased to take note of the opening and closing of doors.

At noon Richard suddenly resumed human relations. He came and stood

beside her; there was even a little smile in his eyes at her exaggerated industry. The day was hot, and damp curls of hair clung to Isabel's forehead; something of the spick-and-span freshness of the morning had departed from her aspect, but she typed steadily on. It occurred to Richard that he had never seen her look like this before.

"You don't have to work yourself to death," he said.

Isabel sat back and looked up at him. Then she laughed.

"I am having a splendid time," she said, and the zest of her eyes bore out the words. "Will you correct that, please?"

"After lunch. Where may I take you?"

"Nowhere; I'm going to lunch here." She rose as she spoke, and producing a dainty hamper, proceeded to open it. Richard hesitated between relief and courtesy.

"You can't live on sandwiches; you aren't used to it."

"I don't intend to," she answered, cheerfully, over her shoulder. In a twinkling she had spread a spotless napkin on the airiest of the broad window-ledges, and proceeded to set forth a dish

of salad, bread-and-butter cut delicately thin, a couple of perfect peaches, and a pint bottle of claret. All that looked uncommonly good, it struck Richard hungrily, and he observed with a distinct disgust that it was obviously apportioned for but one.

"There!" said Isabel, with a cheerful nod, as she installed herself in the breezy window and drew forth a new magazine. "I shall cool off until my hour is up."

Richard smiled and went off without further words; when the door had closed behind him, Isabel also smiled, a trifle subtly. She had expended much thought upon that lunch—for one.

Her husband meanwhile, walking towards his customary lunch-place, experienced a curiously compounded sentiment of relief and resentful surprise. Quite evidently he need not have worried as to her being a burden on his hands; she was well able to manage for herself—*uncommonly* able, apparently,—apparently, too, she meant to let him understand so. And of course this was very convenient;—nevertheless he recognized a duty towards her and should invite her to lunch and dine regularly. He would take her to dinner at the club to-night;—it would indeed be decidedly

piquant to gather her first impressions of a legal career.

Having arrived at this conclusion, he had a recrudescence of the forenoon's unpleasant sensations when his wife promptly but graciously declined his invitation.

"You can't starve yourself," he insisted, rather sharply.

Isabel only smiled. She explained that she had "things" to do at the house, and passed him a formal promise to dine well—alone.

That house, to which he always made late and reluctant returns on such occasions as business detained him for the night, wore a pleasant difference to-night, of which he was sensitively conscious the moment he crossed the threshold. Without analyzing it, he accounted for it vaguely on the ground of feminine presence. The gas was burning low, the evening paper was spread readably, and a general lived-in air pervaded the rooms even in their summer undress. His own exhaled a seductive order and rest. Isabel, however, had already retired, and again he was not sure whether this was a relief or a disappointment.

There was something so completely unnatural in the situation that it kept him awake for a time. Vaguely he misgave

that he was being made the subject of some kind of experiment, which he was prepared to resent in advance. Then he remembered that all kinds of notions were epidemic among women nowadays, and that probably Isabel had contracted a feverish germ of efficiency which might be safely left to burn itself out. In this wise conclusion he fell asleep.

The odor of newly made coffee saluted him desirably the next morning when he strolled into the breakfast-room, and Isabel smiled at him from a table temptingly set forth with coffee, rolls, and cream. Richard decided to invite himself to breakfast on the spot.

"That smells powerful good," he said, enviously. "Is there enough for two?"

"Dear, I'm afraid there isn't," replied Isabel, peering sympathetically into the pot. "And no hot water, either! Could you wait? You see, I naturally thought you would prefer the club. I can make you some to-morrow."

"Oh, don't trouble; it's not the slightest consequence," said Richard. He departed with an elaborately friendly nod, but feeling distinctly—and he recognized, unreasonably—hurt. Isabel, watching his tall figure down the path, smiled; then her eyes irrationally filled with tears.

She was at her desk, however, bright and busy, when her husband arrived.

"You are punctuality itself," he said, a trifle formally, as he passed to his.

And the morning and the evening made the second day.

They made also the third and fourth and a whole summer sequence after. Richard had been too proud to hint breakfast again, but his way lying through the breakfast-room, he strolled in the second morning with the air of one who expects nothing of destiny. *Two* cups and plates greeted him cheerfully this time, and Isabel nodded across a platter of his favorite melons. Richard unbent promptly.

"This is good," he said, with a sigh of satisfaction presently, giving himself up to the luxury of a second cup,—and he meant more than the coffee.

It was strangely pleasant to have his wife opposite him in the intimacy of a tête-à-tête; and this Isabel, trim and brisk in her business suit, waiting upon him herself, making the coffee with her own hands, and ordering him to get the sugar-bowl, was a different personality from the Isabel of the laced and flowing gowns who descended indifferently and late to a state breakfast.

"How much jollier it is without the servants!" he exclaimed. "I have an unholy feeling of taking liberties with my own house,—don't you?"

"I am just finding out what a nice house it is," said Isabel, with conviction.

Life became a constant "finding out" to her as the days wore on.

She did her work well and with few words. And her improvement was rapid. She had already travelled a long way in her grasp of his world since the day when she confided him her awakened sympathy for two of his clients—John Doe and Richard Roe—and her sometime wonder that any two men could achieve so many kinds of trouble. They had made a great deal of history together since then. *Together*—that was the key-word—the great thing; this common bond of *little* things knitting their days in one. To Isabel it was as if for the first time she were living with her husband. Not wifehood, nor motherhood, had brought her this as a continuous experience; those had brought consummate moments, after which Richard drifted away and left her stranded in an outer world, or in an inner corner of the real world outside. But this—

It moved her with a great compunction, and she went, on her next visit to S——,

and sought out Eleanour Clarke sitting apart on the shore. The ex-secretary was prettier with every week, the rose and tan of the sea and sun vivifying her delicate face. It was Isabel who looked a trifle dragged, if either of them, as Richard found himself remarking at lunch with a movement of sympathy.

"The children are looking splendidly," said Isabel. "How am I ever to thank you? And you—do you find time heavy on your hands? Are you sure you do not want to go back?"

"Not now," Eleanour answered her. "Just at first I did. I am used, you see, to working steadily. But it has meant a great deal to me—this rest and time to think things out. I was a little worn, I think, and for mother this has been like a miracle." She hesitated a moment, then lifted her eyes with grave directness to Isabel. "I want to thank you—*now,* Mrs. Satterlee."

Isabel did not speak; she was profoundly moved.

"And you, Mrs. Satterlee?" asked Eleanour Clarke, quietly.

"I," said Isabel—"I am just beginning to live."

They were silent after this, looking out over the rocks to the breadth of blue

sea. When they returned to the house presently, talking, as women will, of trivial things, each was sentient of an unspoken knowledge between them—the foundation of one of those friendships which men deny to women, and of which, in fact, only a few, either of men or women, are capable, since its essential condition is a high reserve.

Isabel awoke the following Monday with a keen sense of anticipation. She looked forward alike to the office routine and the informal housekeeping, and sank into the car-seat with a sigh of satisfaction.

"What a comfort to get rid of that eternal commuting!" exclaimed Richard, as he drew down the car-blind. "We don't have to do this for another week."

Isabel's conscience registered a pang for all her husband's years of commuting. She was learning to weigh with some wonder and more respect the stores of masculine patience and good-will annually consumed in this sacrifice on the family altar, as she encountered Richard's many fellow victims, perspiring but devoted, rushing to and from the town.

Meanwhile Richard, adaptable as man is, and straightforwardly made as man is

also, had accepted the *status quo* with final ease and simplicity. Twenty times a day (it was perhaps the finest compliment he paid her) he spoke to her, put into her hand or took from it a paper, issued a brief command, as if she had been the machine she operated; but on the twenty-first he addressed her with such an explicit note of personality as had been absent from his voice and eye for long. Occasionally her inexpertness drew from him a quick impatience, and Isabel silently swallowed these small surprises, bethinking herself she was official.

Eventually she came to pay him back in his own coin, and this the man found distinctly unfit. On the first occasion he looked up with a quick frown, but the sight of Isabel's unconscious head and flying fingers set him smiling suddenly over his papers.

He came back early from lunch this Monday (he was always coming back early nowadays), and surprised this ardent worker asleep in her chair, her book fallen to the floor. Richard smiled as he picked it up—it was *Biles on Bills*—and with it in his hand he stood contemplating his wife. The day had been scorching, and there were slight dark circles under her eyes and a suggestion

of pallor—just that faint, ennobling hall-mark which says so clearly, "I have labored." It stirred Richard with a kind of tenderness which would have been out of place towards the brilliant and unfatigued Isabel of other days, and he bent and kissed his wife's hair, very lightly, but at the touch she opened her eyes, and started bolt upright at sight of her husband's face.

"I have kept you waiting!" she exclaimed, with mortification. "I had fallen asleep!"

"Don't you think you might let up a little on this?" replied her husband. "You are fagged out."

Isabel knew an instant foolish and feminine pang for appearances, but she rallied stoutly.

"I am not in the least tired; it was only the heat."

"Well, wait one moment." Her husband laid two detaining hands on her shoulders. "You don't go back to that desk until— At least, I beg your pardon," he added, awkwardly, removing his hands and coloring, "but won't you promise to dine with me to-night? You never saw a roof-garden, did you? We will go and refresh ourselves in a cool corner I know; is it agreed?"

Isabel hesitated one moment.

"It is agreed," she said, and rising quickly, went over to the desk. But all the afternoon's sober routine could not bar out a little subconscious anticipation, which now and again brought their eyes together with a laugh at their own youth.

They fared forth that evening as gayly as two children to the garden in the sky, where a river breeze blew and where, in spite of the gayety about them, or because of it, they were deliciously withdrawn and secluded in their cool corner. They were both honestly tired with their day's work, and gave themselves up with relief to the repose and unrestraint of the hour. At first they scarcely talked at all; it was entertainment enough to sit and watch their fellow diners; but later they talked a great deal, smiling over the humors of the scene and exchanging sympathies over the pathos of the common humanity about them, till, driven back by this to their own immediate life share, they fell into discussion of Richard's impending cases. Last of all, over his cigar and her coffee, they fell into a silence which was also best of all. In one of its moments, Richard, glancing across at his wife's face, knew suddenly

that this was what he had dreamed of all his life—this companionship which was as far from society as it was from solitude, which was, indeed, a kind of companioned solitude. And he had a passionate moment of gratitude that it was his wife who sat there, not another.

"Are you still so warm?" said Isabel, smiling at his flushed cheeks.

But Richard, signalling the waiter, made himself very busy with the ridiculously small bill, to which he added a lavish tip, and his smile was for once as subtle as a woman's.

"I haven't had so much fun for my money in years," he said.

"Nor I—"

"Then why not every night?"—he caught up the admission quickly. "I know so many jolly places—and you know nothing of the city. Do!"

"You really want me?"

He did not answer, but he looked at her.

From that time a new life began for them. They dined together nightly, wandering inconstantly as the mood impelled them, and wondering as constantly at the resources of the cosmic city. That well-regulated institution the club saw them but seldom. It was a surprise

to her husband, but a far greater to Isabel herself, to find how rich was her endowment of adaptability—that precious capacity for living, so much rarer in women than in men, so rare in high degree in either. It made her an essentially good comrade, bringing to all their little adventures that wide-eyed interest and tolerant capacity for small pleasures which render the society of some beings an eternal feast. Under it all she was learning.

Men whom she had hitherto associated solely with the champagne frappé of idle dinner-tables she met now working like steam-engines and solacing hurried lunches with the homelier beverage of beer,—and she took the discovery for symbolic. Everywhere so much more malt,—so much less fizz than she had dreamed! And everywhere man, on the whole, a better and a simpler animal than he shows to be in drawing-rooms. She wondered anew at the eternal disadvantage of this meeting-ground of the sexes.

The remainder of the summer ran away with appalling swiftness, punctuated by visits to riotous babies and an ex-secretary who grew prettier every week. One day Richard, coming into the office, laid a paper on his wife's desk.

"What is it?" she asked, abstractedly.

"Your salary; I forgot it till now."

To his amusement she took it up soberly and looked at it a long time.

"Well," he said, quizzically, "how does it feel to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow?"

"It feels very good. Have I really earned all that?"

"All that!" Richard could not suppress a smile. He recollected other checks in the past. "Yes,—it is honest money,—you have earned every cent of it. You make a very capable private secretary; I will give you a recommendation any time."

"Thank you," said Isabel, seriously. She laid the check aside and resumed her typing; but Richard continued to lean on the desk, looking down at her.

"Next Tuesday is the 15th; does it seem possible! You will want to go down, of course,—and I suppose Miss Clarke will be ready to return?"

"Yes,—I suppose she will be ready."

"And you—you will be *more* than ready?"

Isabel struck two keys together; she waited deliberately to disentangle them before she replied.

"Don't talk to me now, Richard; you

are making me make a dreadful mess of this Latin. Wait till lunch-time."

He smiled, fidgeted restlessly for a few moments, and finally put on his hat and went out. The Latin came to an abrupt standstill, and Isabel, with a long breath, leaned back in her chair.

It had come at last!—and she was ready for it; but this moment of extra preparation had seemed nevertheless as necessary as the gathering together which precedes a spring. It had come,—but how little as she had foreseen! She sprang up and began to pace the office floor with quick, excited steps. What a tragic farce it all had been! She smiled to herself now, remembering how she had girded herself and gone forth to heroic conquest,—where scarce an effort had been required. Her husband's heart had come home to hers as if opportunity had been all it sought. There was almost an element of the ludicrous in it. Was it possible, she asked herself, that there *was* no marriage question, after all?—that all that was needed was to be *married enough?*—that what men craved in a wife was, first, last, and always—a comrade? A comrade, it is true, capable of all, capable of those breathless moments which are the mortal's nearest reach to

immortality, and of that tender maternity which extends from a man's children to himself, but capable consummately of comradeship, of loving a man's work, his life, his play, because it is all his? Was it possible that nothing else was needed? —and that nothing less would serve?

It was not necessary that every woman should enter her husband's office to learn this,—but neither, surely, could such a bond ever exist between the worker and the parasite. She put it aside as a doubt to be resolved in the larger future whether such a bond were possible, either, between the worker and the working drudge,—whether the happiest "domestic" marriage in the world did not leave long reaches in the man's existence which the merely domestic woman could not fill, yet which must inexorably be filled, if not by one means, then by another.

So far from the man's point of view;—there remained the woman's! She walked restlessly up and down the room. Now she wished her husband would return,—now that she was quite ready. And she wished, irrationally, for the babies. On the strength of this longing she rang them up over the long-distance telephone, and when their voices chirped in her ear, she laughed with her eyes full of tears.

It did her good, however, and she went and stood quietly looking down at her husband's desk with its files of paper and cumbered pigeonholes. It seemed a lifetime ago that she had sat there twirling the yellow strips and wondering about Richard's world—*Richard's* world!

He had come in so quietly that she did not hear him till he spoke beside her.

"Marvelling at the admired disorder of my desk?"

"The children are going clamming, Richard."

"And you wish you were? Poor child!"

"Richard, there is something I want to tell you."

"That you are homesick? Well, I can't blame you. You've stuck it out splendidly, but, of course—" His voice somehow did not sound quite natural.

He too had been preparing himself, telling himself that the end had come; that of course he had always known it couldn't last; it had been a glorious resurrection, but of course it couldn't last. He must make up his mind to lose the new-found comrade in the old Isabel, as was inevitable with the return of the old habits of life, demands of the old imperious preoccupations. And his duty

—the least return he could make her—was to be gracious and reasonable.

"You asked me this morning if I wanted to go down to S——."

"No, excuse me. I said of course you *did* want to."

"Well, I don't. No, please, Richard; let me speak." She began to pace the floor again nervously; then, ashamed of that nervousness, stopped with dignity in front of her husband and went on with quiet energy.

"Richard, when I came into the office, it was for—well, it was for personal reasons; it doesn't matter what they were, for they no longer exist; but it's enough to say that I wanted to get nearer you and understand your life. We seemed to have drifted away. That was my real reason for wanting to work. No, *don't* speak! I haven't finished, and you won't like the rest so well. I don't know how to make you understand, Richard, but now I care so much for the *work* that I'm afraid I shall have to go on working."

He was walking up and down now, with quick, impatient steps. He stopped at last, facing his wife, and gazed intently at the kindled face, the figure so full of health and suppressed energy.

"I understand—I understand perfectly; what I never *did* understand is how women of your type endure their lives. And you can't think I don't wish it were possible to go on this way always? It has been—well, no matter what it has been. The point is, we can't relive our lives, and I'm afraid, dear, it is too late! For one thing, there are the children."

"Yes, thank Heaven, there *are* the children," said their mother, with vigor; "I'll do better by them than I was done by. The baby shall have a profession, for one thing."

Richard smiled, then grew grave again.

"But it is useless to pretend they need me every minute. They are busy all day long; that's why they are so well and jolly. I could breakfast with them, lunch with them, dine with them, have all their leisure hours with them; I don't do more than that now. *Everybody* is busy except me, and the time has come when I have got to be busy too—really busy, not play busy."

Richard, looking into her eyes, was suddenly dazzled by what he saw there. The old Isabel, then, was gone? She need not return? She could not, indeed, return! The bright new comrade, the equal friend, need not be lost? In an instant

he had the vision, and it led him down the whole vista of their lives. He too asked himself suddenly if possibly *this* was what marriage meant—was what life meant?

He took his wife's hands in his.

"Stay with me, Isabel," and quiet as his tone was, it had not been more passionately urgent when first he asked it of her. "Stay with me—if you can. Study with me, read law with me, work with me,—do whatever you will,—but stay with me if you can!"

"I can—gladly," said Isabel, with the old humorous smile, above which her eyes sent a ray of deepest tenderness.

THE END