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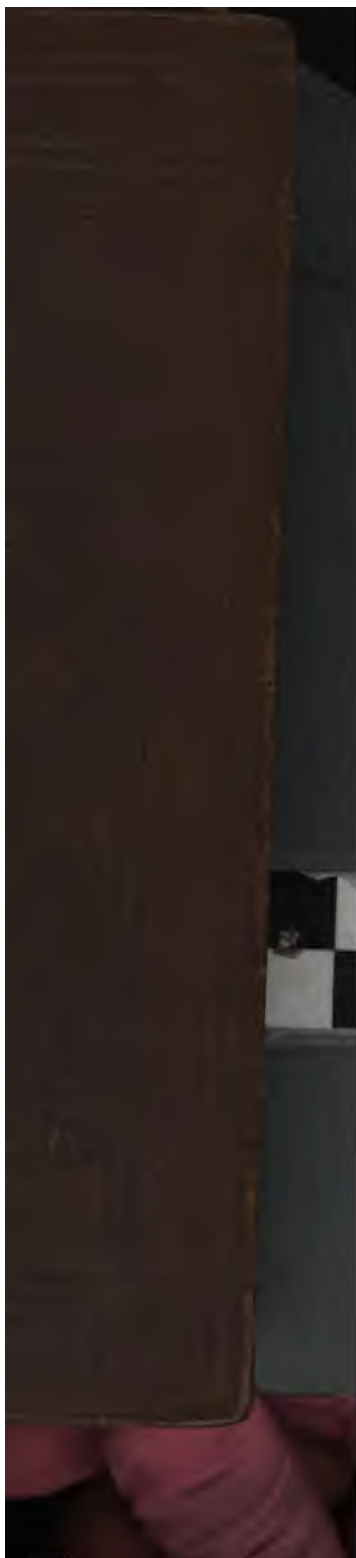
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1840

1841



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Ward, Elizabeth Stuart (Phelps)

# SEALED ORDERS.

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS,

AUTHOR OF "THE GATES AJAR," "THE STORY OF AVIS,"  
ETC., ETC.



BOSTON:  
HOUGHTON, OSGOOD AND COMPANY.

*The Riverside Press, Cambridge.*

1879.

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## DEDICATION.

—◆—  
TO — —.

HOLD them, Dear, these gathered pages,  
Fugitives reclaimed and ordered  
Faltering on a doubtful errand,  
Seeking to renew old friendships —  
Saddest of all human venture,  
Gladdest of all human welcome.  
Hold us ; hold the sent and sender ;  
Touch us, for your hands are gentle.  
When the eager lip is silent,  
When the message is unspoken  
That the heart of health would render,  
And the years wait for their meaning,  
And the hands of life are folded ;  
Turn we to the tried affections,  
To the faithful of the faithful  
That we number counting golden  
Rings upon the bridal finger  
Of the soul . . . .  
Turn we to the truest loving,  
And the tenderest reproving,  
And the cheerfulest inspiring,  
And the loyalest upholding  
That the faith of friend has offered  
To the tale or to the teller ;  
. . . . Turn we, Dear, to *you* !

Hold us, for your heart is gentle.



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NOTE.

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MANY of these stories are reprinted from Harper's Monthly, the New York Independent, Scribner's Monthly, and the Atlantic Monthly.

E. S. P.

EASTERN POINT, GLOUCESTER, *August*, 1879.



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## SEALED ORDERS.

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I SUPPOSE there *are* folks that see the *reasons* of things. But I was never one of them. Made so, perhaps. Made to take life out in that way. But I don't know. It is n't easy to say. Nor it has n't been easy to take; not very.

In a measure I don't mind talking to you, Tom Brown. It's with humans as it is with other cattle out in these here great solitudes,— they herd together close for company. It seems such a lonesome thing to live. Don't it ever strike you, Tom, as a lonesome thing to be alive? Since we've took to this dig-out I've felt it particularly keen. It's this ugly cough that's caught me, in part, maybe.

I feel sick most all the time. A man's apt to be lone like when he's sickly. I've been well off, too, comparatively, since you and I have messed together. I'm free to say I'd like you better if your language was n't rough, odd times, as I've often told you. I suppose your heart's got a rough side to 't, or the words would n't roughen out o't; but ye've never turned it onto me, if there is. I don't like roughness,— like a woman, may be. That set I got into up to Downer's shaft called me the old woman, sometimes. I did n't stay at Downer's a great while. I had n't any luck there. The only stone I sighted was too hard for me to crack. I sold it to Jeb Pekins for ten dollars on his note of hand.

I spoke to you, did n't I, about the reasons of things and the difference in folks? Now I began to the very be-



ginning the way I 've kept up since. I was the youngest of seven, born onto a three-acre farm and a Connecticut stock? You know the Connecticut stock? Slow, and full of meditations before they do a thing; when the crop fails, sit round the tobacco barns and talk it over; sit up straight in meetin'; have a serious manner, like revivals, on the price of corn and school-books; not a spry stock; sleepy, I think, like the great river-flats, and as hard to cultivate. The seventh child comes hard in Connecticut. I come hard, very. Five years between me and Abi'thar, the next boy. I was n't expected nor looked for, and there 'd been a drought, and the season was dull in every particular. I've heard tell how my mother cried, and father said, says he:—

“I've edicated four” (there were six, but two were girls) —“I've edicated four, and this one must rough it best he can.”

“I can't afford him,” says father, shaking his head at the cradle (I've heard tell). “He must shift for himself, poor creetur'! I never thought it possible,” says father, “that I could have *another* boy.”

I was christened Finis. It's a foreign word, and means “the end.” Father got it of Abi'thar and took a notion to it. Abi'thar was put to his book quite young, and he studied all the foreign tongues. I used to cry sometimes nights to think I'd got it. I did n't know any other boy with such a name. But I've got used to it now. The boys took a shine to it out here. Peterson asked me if it was French or Hebrew.

I'm not an imagining man, Tom Brown, nor given to notions and fancies and imaginations, I don't think; but that took hold of me from the very start, somehow or 'nother, that I was n't wanted nor desired to be at all. I used to think about it when I was a youngster a sight. I had n't no chance to forget it. Mother, she made me remember it; if it was n't for anything else, for the way she

sat and cried in patching up my little close. None of the other boys' were ever patched up so much. Father used to talk a sight to me about how much I cost, and that he was poor, and that I must earn my own way, young and early. The boys and the girls, they made me feel it in a sight of curious ways. I think I was a sort of willing little cheersome chap, but I used to wonder how these boys and girls could find so many chores and arrants to be done. Children take a trick of things up from their elders mighty fast.

The most I remember of our folks is what dreadful saving folks they were. And when Connecticut folks set out to save, it's a savin' sight, I tell you, Tom. Sometimes I had a wonder how they ever could have done it if it had n't been for me. If father wanted to save seventy-five cents on a man's hire, he put me at it, — mowing, berrying, weeding, tending caows. I drove a plow before I was up to that little lad of Peterson's shoulders, that he brought down here last Christmas, — maybe you remember. A likely little lad. I was glad to know Peterson schooled him a little. I was glad to see him on a Christmas time. But when I patted his head he shied off. Children don't take to me. Maybe I don't understand their ways. I lived so different when I was a little child. I don't see a little chap brought up just as I was very often.

It was just so with all of 'em ; don't you see? If mother felt tuckered out, and she generally did (most Connecticut women folks are tuckered out) — if mother felt a little peaked, she had me in to do the housework. She learned me to sweep, and putter round, and wash the dishes, like a girl. That's how I came to know when you put too much salaratus in your johnny-cake, and my flapjack receipt I got from her, sitting on a stool and turning of 'em over, and trying not to let the tears fall in, — for I'd picked up a little old picture-book of Abi'thar's, that I'd set my heart on try-

ing to make the pictures out. I was eight years old, and I'd never been to school, when she took the notion to have me turn the flapjacks.

There was one of the girls that never tried to save anything out of me. That was the second one — Susan. Susan come next to Abi'thar. She was six years older than me. She had a soft way with her, Susan had; lightish eyes and hair like Peterson's little lad. She used to come into my loft. I slept in the loft. She come up nights and tucked me up. Seems to me she used to kiss me. There did n't a great many folks kiss me. It was Susan that learned me to say my prayers. One day, I know, says she to me: —

“Finis, would you like to go to school?”

For I'd never been. I said I was afraid they could n't afford to send me to school. The school-books cost so much, and who would turn the flapjacks? But Susan said it was time I went, and said she'd turn the flapjacks. She said I was to go some time or other, and that it was quite high time. So, when the winter term set in and work was dull, she says one day, again: —

“Finis, you're to go to school to-morrow.”

I said she was very kind, and I wanted to kiss her; but I did n't like to ask. But she kissed me twice; she did n't wait for me to ask. We were sitting out on the chopping-block, behind the little hickory woodpile. It was a little pile, but tough; it had taken me a great while to finish that pile. Susan used to come out sometimes when they were baking cookies, with a hot one, and lay it on the block and run. So then I went to school, and I staid two months.

Eh? Yes, that was all. I never went to school only those two months. The other boys? I told you the other boys all went. They did n't try to save out of the other boys. One of my brothers has written a book. I saw it in a newspaper the other day, and that it had sold three thousand copies. I'd like to see the book. I sent for it to

the Crossings, but I don't look to get it. I sent a dollar bill by Pekins, when he was here, to get it with.

So I went to school two months. When my time was up, Susan says to me, one night, says she :—

“ You 're not to go to school again, Finis, after this.”

I says : “ Not any more at all ? ”

For I loved my book. I don't think I ever was so comfortable in my mind as I was when I was at my book those two months. I'd well-nigh forgotten that I was the last of seven, and could n't be wanted nor desired nor afforded, till Susan spoke.

Says Susan : “ No. Never again.” And I saw two tears roll out of Susan's eyes. So, when I saw the tears, I says :

“ Well, never mind, Susan.” For I could n't bear to make her cry for me. I had n't ever seen anybody cry for me before, — only mother, when she mended up my little close, far back as I could remember. So I said :—

“ Never mind, Susan,” and sat up straight, as if I did n't and I should n't mind.

“ You 're to be put to work,” says Susan. “ They can't afford to keep you at your book.”

Says I : “ Susan, do I cost a great deal ? ”

Says Susan, after a minute : “ I don't know, my dear.”

Then says I : “ Susan, do I cost so much more than the other boys ? ”

But Susan only said she did n't know, and cried a little more. Then says I, once more : “ Susan, do you think if father 'd set as much by me as he does by the other boys that I'd have cost him so much more ? ”

But Susan says : “ My dear ! my dear ! I don't know anything about it ! ”

Then says I (I remember plain enough, I says) : “ Nobody sets as much by me as they do by the other boys, Susan.”

I had a kind of drawling, slow way of talking when I

was a little chap, not unlike my manners now. I can hear myself just how I brought it out.

"I set more by you," says Susan, "than I do by all the boys."

And we never says anything more about it or about an education from that day. And I was put to work the next week come a Monday morning. I was ten years old. I've often thought of it how Susan said she set so much by me. Susan was the only living creetur' that ever set by me to that extent. And she died next June. She had the gallopin' consumption and died in twenty days. They forgot to call me in when she was dying, for I was out drawing water for the caows. All the other boys were there. It was at sunset of a June day. When I come in to wash up and go up and see her, Abi'thar come down and told me she was dead.

They buried her over to the first church buryin'-ground. I was very lonesome after Susan died.

Then I had a puppy. I think it was after Susan died that I had that puppy. It was a measly little black-and-tan puppy, that had her leg run over by a hay-cart. I took it and nursed it up. I named her Susan. But I called her Sue, for I was n't sure if it was proper. I never called her so when folks were round. I set a sight by that puppy; took her up to sleep foot of my bed nights. She was civil enough to the other boys, but she set the world by me; followed me round my work; would n't eat out of nobody else's hands, that puppy would n't, if she were half starved. She went hungry, too, sometimes.

She was a large dog for a black-and-tan; and father said she eat too much and he could n't afford to keep her. So he had her killed.

Then there was a little chap I knew at school I took a fancy to. His name was Reuben Ross. He was old Dr. Ross's boy. He was a lively little chap, with black eyes

and a busy way. I liked him. But his father could afford to have him; so he went to school, and through the High, and after that to another school. So he kind of grew away, and got ashamed of me, I guess. I never liked another little chap so well.

Did ye ever chance to see a ship's crew weighing anchor under sealed orders? No? Well, I never did but once. It's a curious sight and it gives a man a curious feeling. He isn't likely to feel so helpless and so ignorant and so hopeless in any other way I know of, nor so down-hearted either. I never saw the sight but once. The feelings it give me stuck like plaster after it. I don't know as I've got over 'em yet. I saw my brother Abi'thar set off in that way once. Didn't know where he was going. Didn't none of us know. It's a long story. His young wife stood by on the wharf. I had to take her home after the boat hove out of sight. My brother Abi'thar married a beautiful wife.

Did I mention a little girl that our folks took into the house after Susan died? For they set a store by Susan. She didn't cost a great deal. And she had such pretty ways. They were very lonesome, and they took this little girl.

They took her to help about the house at first. She was a sort of cousin,—old Cousin Dorothy's daughter's daughter; and Cousin Dorothy could n't do for her, for she was paralicious and the child's parents both were dead. So our folks took her as a sort of charity and to help save about the housework, and for being lonesome, as I said. For my other sister, she'd married by that time, and set up house-keeping over at East Abington. Her husband was a tinsmith, and mother had n't anybody to help about the house; for they put me to farm-work then continual. But when they'd got her they took a surprising notion to that little girl. Her name was Carle. But Cousin Dorothy called her Charlotte always.

I've got a picture, somewheres, of that little girl. She went over to the dagerrotype saloon with Abi'thar and me, one Saturday afternoon, and had her likeness taken. Abi'thar paid for the likeness. Father paid him for his work vacations round the place. Abi'thar always had a little money. Father did n't give me any time, not a half day o't. I was twenty-one before I had my time. But when Abi'thar went to sea he left the likeness. So I got it. I'd show it to you, Tom Brown, if your language was n't sometimes rough.

It's a singular thing to me, the way a man's heart will grow around a little girl. Carle was very good to me. She was a merry creetur', always laughin' out about the house. She turned her head one side, this way, saucy, like a robin's. I've seen that little creetur' go and perch upon the arm of father's chair, no more afraid than I be of you this very minute. I've stood in the back door peeping in and seen her time again. I never dared to touch my father's chair. If him and I were in heaven together this living day, and God A'mighty bade me, I don't think I'd darst touch my father's chair. Couldn't get over the feeling, you know. When he lay a-dying, I'd rather the doctor'd touch him. But Carle did n't mind. Carle never minded anybody.

As nigh as I can remember, I was seventeen years old; when one night I came upon two folks sitting together behind the currant bushes, as I was driving home the caows. I came on them sudden, and Carle was one. Carle was sixteen then, a year younger than me. It was before she had begun to pale down and her cheeks were round. My brother Abi'thar was the other. Abi'thar had his arm round her. He was dressed up in his college close and his wristbands were clean. They were picking the currants together. The color of the currants and the color of Carle's cheeks was much of a piece. They did n't hear me nor see me. I was

in my working close. I was dirty and grimy and had the caows to watch ; so I turned off and went roun behind the chicken-house. I did n't speak to them at all. But when the chores were done I washed up and went off into the cranberry patch, and set there alone. I think I must have set there half the night. I'm a slow-thinking person, may be : just as I am slow of speech. It took me half the night to think out the thoughts that came to me in the cranberry patch. It was a starlight night.

It seems to me, Tom Brown, that there 's something *dreadful* in it when a man finds out that he 'd like to take a particular woman to be his wife. I've often wondered if it 's the same thing to a woman when she likes a man,— only that it 's a disrespectful sort of thing, to my mind, to speculate on the ways of women folks. To be sure, I was only seventeen years old ; but I never was like other boys. Everything come so dear and high in my time. I remember thinking in the cranberry pasture that Carle come just as dear as all things else to me. And yet she always liked me, in her saucy way. I've often plagued myself with wondering, if I 'd worn college close and clean wristbands, like Abi'thar's, how it would have been. Girls mind such things. I was an awkward, gawky lad, and always round the barn.

Not long after I went up to father on a Sunday night, and asked him would he give me my time a half of every year. I had got God knows what notions! in my head, Tom Brown. I would have schooled, and earned, and fought for her like a man. I was such a big fellow, and Abi'thar was a measly, spare-ribbed chap. If I could have fought him on hoeing and spading, or on the number of swathes cut on a July day, or on breaking an ugly colt, or on splitting knotty hickory, or any downright *thing*, I'd have won her at once and a dozen times again. But this book-learning, Tom! It's what you can't explain nor get hold of. Why, it sets one man up above another so, and



gives him such a start, — as wide as ever Heaven started off from Hell.

So, when I says, again : “ Father, I ’d like to go to school. I ’ve got a particular reason for wanting to go to school again,” and he says : “ And I ’ve got a particular reason for wanting you at home. Have you locked the barn-doors up to-night ? ” that way, short, and no more to be said about it, I give it up and I give up beat.

It was four years till I was twenty-one. It would have been a long time for a little girl to wait for a fellow that had never been to district but two months in his life.

So Carle married Abi'thar. She married him on the twentieth day of August, the year she was eighteen. It was the year Abi'thar come from college, to take a school to teach at the West Parish. It seemed to me Abi'thar never had such a sickly, spindling look as he did when they stood up to be married in our front parlor. I could have knocked him down with the tag of my shoe-string. And they paid six hundred dollars a year to that make-up of a man for teachin' school. Father give me fifty cents to make myself fine for the wedding. I got a new cravat and a shirt-pin, and had five cents left. I gave a jerk while the minister was praying, and the coppers rattled in my pocket. I looked at Carle. She stood up very shy, clinging to Abi'thar's lean arm. I thought of a little robin in a cage. I thought of a little flower planted in a strange country. I thought of a little star I'd seen shooting away over my head the night I set in the cranberry patch. I thought of a medley of strange things. Them pennies rattled and rolled in my pocket like mad. But I kept my eye on her. I says to myself : “ You're like everything else. You cost too much for me.”

And so I got through that. It always seems to me the most peculiar place to pray at, — weddings.

I said much the same to her afterward. The other boys

kissed her, being brothers. Hey? No, sir. I did not kiss her. She was my brother's wife; not mine. I never kissed her in all my life.

But I says to her what I says to myself, low, under breath: "You cost too much for me, Carle. Everything always has." And I blessed her, and never looked to see if she understood the meaning of my words. But I blessed her, Tom. I've always blessed her. And I'll bless her till I die; and if so be that I get to a place where blessings thrive, I'll bless her till she'd die for joy if another blessing touched her life.

I'll not talk any more to-night, Tom Brown. I'm very much troubled with this cough, and my breath comes a mite hard. What? Aye, yes, if you like. The rest another time. You've sat very gentle, like a woman, while I've talked.

I don't know what there is about being sickly that sets a man to chattering and complaining like a whip-poor-will. Perhaps that's the way that women come to be such talkers. She never talked overmuch, if I remember. But she was n't sickly then.

I'd got so far as the wedding, last night, — Carle's wedding. Her first wedding, you understand. She and Abi'thar settled down at home. They did n't go away, — only a trip one Monday to the county fair.

I'd have given my soul those days if I could have got off the place. But I was n't twenty-one, and father never let me go anywhere without permission. So I staid along. But I wandered out of evenings, and took to low company, and a groggery there was back in the pasture-road behind our house. So father found me drunk one night on the hickory woodpile. He'd never had a boy drunk before. There was Abi'thar, and Jim, and Hazrow. Jim was a church-member and a justice of the peace, — studied law.

Hazrow was a parson. No, Hazrow died. That was it. I most forget. He would have been a parson, if he had n't died. It was Jim that wrote the book. So, when father found me on the woodpile he sent me off to the button factory. But he took my wages till I was twenty-one.

It was when I was at the button factory that they sent for me to come to see Abi'thar off. He was broken down with teaching, and measlier than ever. The doctor—the old doctor, not the young one—sent him on a voy-age. That was the voy-age I spoke to you about. It was a government vessel, bound on government business. Abi'thar, he 'd studied navigation out of books; but it's my opinion he knew no more about it than you may say you know of heaven out of Revelations. But they got him in, between 'em, somehow, second mate. He took a little trip to New Orleans once, before he went to college. But they weighed under sealed orders, as I told you. The cap'n knew where they was bound; not another soul on board. They knew they were booked for a year, and nothing else besides. But the old doctor thought he 'd better go. So we went down to New York city to see 'em off,—Carle and Abi'thar and I. It cost a great deal to send me, but Abi'thar paid my expenses. He wanted me to look after Carle and the baby. And father was sciatiky, and could n't go. I did n't know Carle had a baby till I got home.

It was a pleasant day that Abi'thar sailed,—one of these blue and yellow days, you know, when a sense of the sun and the sky fills your mind beyond other things. But the men's faces wore a still look mostly, and uneasy, as they boarded. 'Bi'thar's looked that way,—very pale about the mouth at times. We all had this odd feeling, like a funeral. It seemed a singular thing to set out into such a mighty spot as this round world and never to suspicion on what corner or what angle o't you might be ordered to set your foot, nor into what waves and waters, nor acrosst what rocks.

and reefs, and storms, and God A'mighty's perils that He's prepared for them that sail the sea in ships. I don't think we'd none of us understood how it would seem till we got upon them wharfs. Dirty wharfs. A dirty place, New York city. I could n't find a spot for Carle to set her clean, soft foot upon.

The crew's folks come down to see 'em off. There was one old widder lady there, crying and taking on. She begged the cap'n to tell her where her boy was going; she would n't tell nobody, she said. The cap'n had to have her put off the boat (for she'd got on), she bothered so. There was a young woman there with her young man, and wives and young ones abundant. I can't forget it to this day how they took on.

Abi'thar did a curious thing that day. He come back after he'd boarded, and come up to me and grabbed my hand. Says he: "Good-by, Finis, — good-by." I says, "Good-by," and wondered what he meant, for he'd taken leave of me before. But he only says, "Good-by, Finis," and looked and hesitated on himself, and made as if he would say more, and said, says he: "If I never should come back" —

But then the cap'n called an order out, and he left it so. "If I never should come back," says he, and says no more. I've often wondered what he meant to say.

I stood by Carle upon the dirty wharf till Abi'thar'd sailed away quite out of sight. The baby, he cried the whole time, at the top of his lungs. I held him, for the mother did n't take notice of him. I was afraid she'd let him drop. She sat upon a lemon box I'd overturned for her, and watched the ship. Abi'thar hung one of his best white silk handkerchiefs out to her as was agreed. I looked at the handkerchief. I thought I would n't look at Carle. But she put her little hand upon my arm and leaned to look. It seemed to me, standing there alone with her, us three —

Carle's baby in my arms, and Carle leaning gentle that way up against me, and the ship sailing like the Devil out to sea — that a cry came out of my heart louder than any cry folks cried that day about me.

It belongs to those things, Tom, that a man can't well explain, even when he's sickly; but it was like this: "That boat's crew think they're doing a great and cruel thing. I know a greater and a crueler. It's when a soul sails from that great port where the A'mighty anchors unborn babes, and weighs under sealed orders from his very hand into this here great, mysterious world. It's when all things that happen to you from your borning to your dying are as dark as them orders and as unbeknown. It's when the cargo that you carry and the purpose that you serve are like the very name you're known by to you, — foreign tongues. It's to be disapp'inted without comfort, and to suffer without reason, and to labor for no end, and to live to no purpose, and to die as you have lived, and none to mourn you."

That would be some comfort now. I remember thinking so when Abi'thar's wife and baby stood crying after him beside me on the wharf. It's a singular state of things in the mysterious higher politics that govern human life when a man so covets the fall of one little tear out of one woman's eye that he'd sell his soul and body if it would fall for him. But I said nothing to Carle, and I took her and the baby home to live till Abi'thar came back. It was a pretty baby, but it was afraid of me.

I came of age that year. He took my last quarter's wages, and sent me out into the world. Eh? Yes, without a dollar, — unschooled, untrained, a great, helpless, gawky fellow, twenty-one years old. But I didn't look for any better luck. It was what I'd counted on. And I enjoyed it. It was something not to have to ask him for leave to go up to meetin' on a Wednesday night. So I went back to the button factory, and I knuckled down to work.

Did I mention that Ross had settled in our place permanent, — Reuben Ross? He followed his father's business, and went in with the old doctor in the office. That was the little chap I took a notion to at the District, you remember. I never got over the notion, maybe. I never wished Reuben any ill, not on any occasion since. He's much as he was when he was a little chap; good-looking, Reuben is, and his clothes set well.

I don't know how it come about; but when I'd pulled along in the factory awhile, — tough work, factory work; measly men, like Abi'thar, give out on it, — when I'd pudged along awhile, I invented a button, and made money. You would n't think it, would ye? Folks all said it was queer; did n't think me up to that sort of thing. I did n't myself till I'd done it. It was a covered button, with a flat eye. I molded the stuff to the mold, to begin with; wove it so. Simple, you see, but a new process. That button took mightily. I got it patented, and I got into the firm. But I must have got turned round. It seems to me, it was after the report come about Abi'thar that I made the button. It must have been, come to think o't. He was only booked for a year, and it was n't till the third year into the factory that I made the button, and I'd only been in one when Abi'thar sailed. Besides, mother died the year I made the button.

I used to go home in those days occasional on a Saturday night. Carle and the baby were living along with the old folks. Carle worked about the house. She had a very handsome baby.

She was always glad to see me home. Sometimes she said so. I did little chores about for her, for father was so sciatiky and let things run. I saw that the fires were laid, and wood and water plenty, and that. Sometimes she put her little hands upon my arms, leaning gently, as she did upon the wharf, to thank me. She had a very grateful,

gentle manner,—more gentle than when she was a little girl. Whenever she did so, I used to see the dirty wharf, and the blue and yellow morning, and the ship sailing like the Devil out to sea,—sudden, like a picture. Then sometimes my heart sailed like a devil after it, into a strange and foreign land of things and thoughts. She seemed so helpless and so lonesome, and so kind to me. But I don't think I had a wicked heart, Tom Brown. She was my brother's wife; not mine. Though I won't say that I understand it, to this day. It's my opinion it would n't have made half the difference to Providence, nor to Abi'thar, that it did to me, if Providence had portioned her to me. But it's always been like that. Betwixt her and me Heaven holds his great Sealed Orders up forever.

She was leaning on my arm that way when the report come in about Abi'thar. Jim brought it in. He hurried in, and said: "Abi'thar's dead. He died of cholera." He had n't seen her,—that I was not alone; and he looked shot when that awful, echoing, deadly sound a woman makes when she's shrieking for the man she chose, sounded through the sitting-room and out into the house. She shrieked as if she'd shriek her soul out after him before she dropped. But man alive! she dropped into my arms.

I'd never touched her by any chance before, only her little hand. And she was my brother's wife no longer. I told you my soul sailed sometimes like the Devil out to sea. That moment, man, I felt as if I'd struck a sea without a shore, and as if in all my nature was no rudder, nor no compass, nor no chart; no nater'al feeling that a brother bears a brother, no power of mourning for my flesh and blood, no power for any feeling but the feeling that a man bears a woman when he's chose and been denied her. "My brother is dead!" says I. "She's no more my brother's wife!"

I laid her softly on the sofy. Then Jim come up.

“It’s too bad,” says he, “too mortal bad to scare her so. And there’s no proof, either, certain. They brought home the report, believing. They were booked for Shanghai. Abi’tar seemed very weakly, and he went ashore, the cap’n writes, to rest on *terry firma*” (Jim talked in foreign languages a great deal then); “and when the time was up he failed to come. They searched and inquired as they could. But the pestilence was raging like hell-fire. The natives they lay dead before your eyes upon the sands. They darsen’t stay. They weighed and sailed without him.”

Perhaps you can put it to yourself, mess-mate, the position I was in. Not a pleasant nor a safe one, to my mind.

Times I had a ridic’lous angry feeling with my brother for the uncertain manner that he’d disappeared. Like this: Abi’tar’s such a weakly chap he can’t even die outright, like other folks!

Times I had a deep and dangerous feeling: that I owed no longer any dues to him or her, and that I’d got rights of my own to get her if I could, before and above all others on God’s earth; and that my chance had come, and the more fool I not to take it, like a man.

Other times I went about for weeks together, saying over to myself: “It was not proved. Nothing has been proved. They only sailed without him,” — as you’d say your catechism at Sunday-school. Hey? Never been to Sunday-school? Everybody goes to Sunday-school in Connecticut.

No, we heard nothing definite from Abi’tar, — not then. It would have been too good luck for me if I’d heard decided then.

I hate to see a woman in a widder’s cap. Carle took hers off in a few months’ time, to please me. She did many little things to please me. She grew kind and gentle in her trouble, far beyond her wont; leaned on me for help and company in many ways; begged me to come often home;



said she missed me ; said the baby 'd learned to watch for me of a Saturday night.

'Times I think I might have learned her to love me then. It come over me once or twice that first year, like to take my breath away.

Why did n't I marry her? Well, I can't answer you, Tom Brown. I never set up to be a pious man ; but I don't think I've got a wicked heart. I could n't someways — could n't speak. I waited patient as I could. I went home of a Saturday, to draw a sight of her sweet eyes into my soul and her little way of smiling up. I lived on that till come another week. I says : " It was never proved. I'll wait awhile ; I'll wait a little longer ; we shall hear." But why did n't I take her while I could? Why did n't angel nor devil whisper me a hint? Why did n't the voice of my brother's blood cry unto me from the ground to bid me try my honest chance? *Why?* Angel or devil may answer you them inquiries ; it's what I can't do. Sealed, Tom ; *sealed.*

This was the way things went. She was left quite destitute, you might say ; for Abi'thar run in debt to take the voy-age, and nothing of his own to leave her. So I made her comfortable, and the little fellow, as I knew how. I was making money fast in those days. Not that I gave it coarse, outright to her. I put it into father's hands, after mother died, and he paid it over to her unbeknown. I guess she thought it was her husband's. Abi'thar, he had insured his life for a thousand dollars ; but of course they disputed the policy till proof came in. But I guess she thought it was the life insurance. Father told her it belonged to her, and she took it quiet, askin' no questions. She did n't know about money matters ; women don't, you know.

So I come and went and waited patient, and was a happier man, Tom Brown, those days than I'm like to be

again. It gave me a patient, happy feeling that I'd *got* to wait. First time in my life that I did n't fret and ask so many saucy questions of the A'mighty. I felt a desire in me to sweep my soul out clear of unbecoming thoughts, against the day when I might ask her honest for her honest love. It's such a clean and wholesome thing, Tom, when a man has set his soul on a particular woman to be his wife.

Sometimes of a Saturday night, coming home, to see her standing in the door, I thought that she might come smiling up and say: "There's news at last. Abi'thar is a living man, and I'm your brother's wife." But it never happened. And so things went along, and one day father died. The sciatiky struck to his heart, they said.

Maybe the old gentleman softened in his mind a little toward me. Maybe he found he could n't afford to go to t'other world without some thought to wish me well. I don't know as to that; but he willed the farm to me — to me and Carle. Maybe he thought things would take a turn that way. He was a very knowing old gentleman, father, though so saving. So I took care of him, and made him comfortable till he died. I don't want you to think I lay up no grudge against father. So he died; and Jim and Mary Ann, — she that married the tinsmith, — they had the rest of the property, what there was o't. Mary Ann came over and stayed awhile with Carle, after the old gentleman died. Carle was ailing in those days, and the baby too. I sent for the doctor for her. I told him to send his bill to me. The old doctor was growing a mite dull at his trade, folks said. I meant her to have the best she could. I'd no objection to doing Reuben a good turn, neither. So I called the young one to the baby, to give him a trial. Carle liked him; so he doctored in our house considerable that winter.

Eh? Yes, I'd begun to think myself in those days that Abi'thar must be dead; for we heard nothin', not a word

nor sign. But I says : "I'll wait a little longer, patient." So I never spoke to her. She seemed very patient, too. And the young doctor did her a sight of good. Her cheeks colored up, and she looked ten years younger. I don't know as he did the baby so much good as he did her. Some folks liked him, some did n't. It's a slow business, doctoring. The old doctor never laid up nothing of any account, and only her and one child either. Reuben had to help along the old folks, I suspicion. I felt very grateful to Reuben for doctoring up Carle, and when I paid the bill I told him so. He colored up at the time; but whether it was for the words, or whether it was for the money, I could n't say.

You're right, Tom. I believe you're right. But, if I was a blinded fool, I was an honest one. I meant to do the fair thing both by her and by them that might come after us, and by Heaven above us both. I was away from home a great deal, too, you see.

But I come home one Saturday night, and I think I should have spoke. At least, I might have spoke and no sin done, though we waited patient for the rest for a further time. She had a blue ribbon on that night over her black dress, — blue, or purple maybe; I don't know; a sort of Chiny color, such as I've seen on cups and saucers. I thought to myself : "*She* thinks there'll be no more news. In her clean woman's heart she's my brother's wife no more."

I was right there, Tom, quite. She was n't Abi'thar's wife. And she was n't mine.

It was the young doctor, Reuben Ross. She spoke up that very night and told me. She spoke before I spoke, thank God! I never spoke to Carle. She never knew. It was much as the money came — to use an unworthy figger — that my love came into her lot in life. If there's a Father of us all, He took it, as the old gentleman took the

other, and gave it to her unbeknown. If it blessed her in any fashion, she took it quiet, askin' no questions, as if it had been her rightful own. It would have worried her if she had known.

She told me all there was to tell, — as how she thought Abi'thar was surely dead; and Reuben thought so too, she said: and Reuben was so kind, and she was very fond of him. But if they could ever think of one another Heaven knows, she said, for he had others to look after and he was very poor. She cried at that. We sat alone in the sitting-room. She put her face down on my knee, the way a child does, and put up her little hands, and cried as if her heart would break.

Says I: "Carle, do you love Reuben very much?"

"Very much," she says.

Says I: "More than my brother, Abi'thar, Carle?"

She hid her face away from me. She was fond of Abi'thar, she said, and sobbed out hard; but she was very, very fond of Dr. Ross. In all her life, she said, she had never loved anybody quite as dearly as she always should love Dr. Ross. Did I care? she says. Was I angry? Did I mind? She thought I was fond of Reuben, too.

That's about the end, Tom. What's left to tell is of small account and not interesting to a third party. If you'll let a whiff of air in (when I'm rested a spell), I'll finish up.

What's that you said? A great deed to do? I don't know. It never struck me so. Uncommon? Well, maybe. I never thought of it in that way. It was the only thing left for me to do. I had no choice, as I view it, messmate.

It all lays just here. She was n't meant for me. That was plain enough by that time. And you see her heart was set on the young doctor; and where the heart is, Scripser runs, is the treasure. If I could hold her happiness out in

my two hands and say, Take it! what choice had I, man? Carle's treasure! I overheard her calling of him that, one evening in the sitting-room. It ought to be a costly thing — a woman's treasure. A thing that I could n't afford, you see — not with all my money. So I made up my mind to give her the money, and that's how I come to do it. No, I've never repented nor regretted it. It's a great comfort to me, since my cough come on, that I had it in my power to make her happy. I think she must be happy. I meant she should.

I don't see why you should take on so about it. It seems to me the most natural thing in the world. I could n't stay nigh her any longer. I'd been too near heaven to stay in hell of my own free will and choice. I was somehow tired, too, those days; wanted to be by myself. I've been tired mostly ever since. I did n't want the money. What use had I for the money? So I made the will. I willed it to Carle, and to Abi'thar's baby after her. Then I tore up that will, and made another. I would n't restrict nor bind her. There might be other children, and a mother's heart don't see the difference, maybe; a child's a child. And if she leaves it to Reuben, I don't know as I care. She should n't be limited and fixed. As there's no limit nor end to the love I bear her, so there shall be none in the money I leave her. That's my feeling. So I left the money. It's her unincumbered own.

There was only one way to do it. Of course, you've hit it. I planned a great deal how I'd do it. I managed very quiet, and closed up at the factory, without making much ado, and took out a little from the bank for my expenses and to start the world anew, and put the will in the sitting-room, in one of the Chiny vases on the mantel-shelf, where Carle dusted every morning and would be sure to find it; and so I got myself ready and says good-by to no one.

No, I never said good-by to her. I darsen't trust my-

self. When I'd got all ready, I went down into the sitting-room and stood awhile by the fire (it was a January night) and watched her in and out. She was putting the supper things away. She had on that little Chiny-colored ribbon that I spoke of. The baby toddled after, tugging at her close.

I wanted to have set a little while along with her, alone. I'd rather hoped nobody would come in. I should n't have said anything to startle or to grieve her; but I'd like to have had a quiet spell alone with her, and heard her talk of little things and seen her kiss the baby. But when she got the dishes done, Reuben came in himself.

So by and by I put the baby down from off my lap, where I had taken him. I'd learned him not to be very much afraid of me, although a little shy, and looking sidewise out of his eyes, this way. He had his mother's eyes. So I put the baby down, and I kissed *him*. He cried when I kissed him. Says I to the baby: "Tell your mother, God's blessing fall on her and hers forevermore! Tell her, Bub," says I. For he could talk in a fashion of his own; his mother understood him. Bub listened sharp a minute; then he burst out crying, and his mother had to hush him up. I've wondered sometimes if the little fellow told her any jumbled thing when morning came.

When morning come, you see, I was n't there. I made off while the baby cried. Twice I got to the road and come back. Twice I stood and looked in at the sitting-room window from the outside, in the bitter cold. It was biting cold. The snow blew up and froze against the pane. I could see her dimly, as if it had been a haze before my eyes. She set by the fire, on a little cricket at his feet. The baby had rolled off in the old patched sofy, fast asleep. Reuben set there, and he had a grave look. Now and then she cried, and now and then she smiled up, as I had seen her smiling up at me. I could see how anxious and perplexed

they were about their love and lot, poor things! I could n't bear to see her cry. Reuben could n't either. Last time I looked in, he put his arm down and drew her up and kissed her, and he touched the little ribbon that she wore, and seemed to say how sweet a look she had in it, and seemed to say a thousand things that no man else had any right to hear.

After that I went away. I went down to the river, across the fields. There was a stretch where the current had n't froze, being swift and deadly. So I threw my hat in, and the coat I'd worn that day, and a handkerchief, and so on, and left 'em there.

It did come to me, standing looking down in the bitter winter night, to throw myself in after 'em. But I'm a plain, slow man, and desperate deeds don't come easy to me. And the water looked very cold, so I come away.

I come away, and I come out here by degrees, and took to mining, and after di'monds, as you know. I like a downright digging work like that. I have n't made much, on account of the cough: but I've managed to get along. I've never gone hungry, and not very often cold. And I like to think she's happy. I do very well.

I saw my own death, from drowning, in the papers, on the way out here, with full particulars. So I knew that *that* was safely settled. And I took a name, a good name, I thought, Carl — C a r l. It reminds me more or less of her. And a man don't need but one out in these parts; gets nick-names enough to serve any dead man's purpose, like myself.

There's only one thing I'd like, that I know of now. I'd like to hear if she is happy. I'd like to hear just how happy she is. I know when she was married. I saw that in the papers. And the news they got from Abi'thar; that came, nigh as I can judge, the week before. The body was identified by some papers that a native kept and swam to

meet an American cap'n with for a suitable sum of money. The creetur' took care of him in his last hours, and secreted the letters, against a chance to make a little something. So the cap'n took 'em to the American consul, and it all come out. That's it, if I have it straight. I don't feel very clear of anything to-night. Seems as if I should choke to death, odd minutes.

Tom Brown, come here! I must be dressed and take a journey. Come here! I've had a letter. The mail-stage brought it three weeks ago. Peterson got it for me at the Crossings. How long since it was written? Let me see. It's six weeks old to-day.

I don't know how she found out. I did n't understand. But she wants me, Tom. She's sent for me. Why don't you hurry, man, and help me dress? Peterson wrote her? How did Peterson know? I talked to the lad on Christmas night? But the lad was asleep, and his father, too. I could n't have said much to the lad. Talked in my sleep, eh? I don't know; not apt to. Never mind, I can't stop to talk. Have you read the letter? I'll read it to you, again. No, I won't stop for that. They've found me out, she says. They need me, Tom. Money don't make up for me, Tom. Sick and in trouble, and the money *costs too much* in losing me. Reuben is sick, you see; may die. Frets after me. She's fretting, too. She's in trouble — my poor, poor Carle! I can help her. Get me up.

Man alive! what do you stand staring there so at? I don't see what you're sniffing over, like a woman. Can't take the journey? Can't get out of this cursed frozen hole alive? Can't get to her? Why, she's sent for me! You're crazy, Tom! Give me my close. We'll see.

Tell her, Tom, I did my best. Tell her I tried to go. Be sure you make her understand that I tried to go to her.



And how the bleeding struck me when I got my close half on. I would n't tell her that, but that she should be sure to understand I tried to go.

I *can't* see why it should have been like this. It's a great while since I've seen her face. And she sent for me! I should have rather obeyed her orders than these others, just this once. Tell her — I hoped she had been happy; and that I loved her dearly, Tom, and meant she should be; and that I did very well out here and wanted nothing. I don't know (to look at it) as I've ever really wanted anything but her. That's the worst to understand, maybe, of all, — that one straight thing, — why one human creetur' is made to love another human creetur' as I've loved her, in this singularly conducted world.

So I've got my Sealed Orders for the last time, Tom; and I'm setting out to foreign lands as helpless and as ignorant as any man can own himself to be.

There are some words I knew at Sunday-school in Connecticut. I learned the chapter, but I most forget: —

“And I saw a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

“Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?

“And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I beheld, and lo! . . . a Lamb, as it had been slain. . . . And he came and took the book.”

Why, there's Susan! I'm glad to see you, Susan. Go to school? I'd like to go to school. But I don't know about going in my heavenly Father's house. Can He afford it, Susan, do you think? If you're sure He can, I'll try not to cost him more than His other boys, if I can help it. Shall I begin to-night?

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## OLD MOTHER GOOSE.

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WHEN Thamrè consented to sing for the citizens of Haverdash, last year, nobody was more surprised than the citizens of Haverdash themselves.

It was characteristic of Haverdash to have attempted it. Nothing is too good for Haverdashers. Were St. Cecilia prima donna for a season, it would appear to them quite natural to seek her services. Have they not a brown-stone post-office and a senator, a street railway and a county jail, a local newspaper, an author (the public need scarcely be reminded of the "Haverdash Hand-Organ: a Tale of Love and Poverty"), and a shoe and leather trade? Transcending all, is not their city charter two years old?

When the Happy Home Handel Association, headed by little Joe Haverdash (grandson of the original shoe and leather man, whose wooden cobbler's shop occupied the site of the present post-office in 1793), took upon itself the performance of an "oratorio" last Christmas eve, "We will have Thamrè," said Joe, serenely.

Still, when Joe came home from Boston, breathless and radiant, one night early in the season, with Thamrè's tiny contract (she wrote it on a card, he said, with her glove on, just in going out, and the card was as sweet now — see! — as the glove, and the glove had just the smell of one English violet, no more) to sing in the stone post-office at eight o'clock on Christmas eve, on such and such conditions (simple enough), and for such and such remuneration, — *that* was the

astonishing part of it, — even Haverdash was off its guard enough to be surprised.

“She’ll come,” said Joe. “I supposed she would. I meant she should. But the terms are *astounding*. I was prepared to offer her twice that. I’d pay a big slice of it out of my own pocket to get her here. There’s no trouble about terms. Did you see what Max offered her? Do you know what she’s getting a night in New York? Do you know what she asked us? Five hundred dollars, sir! Only five hundred dollars. Think of it, sir! But the conditions are the most curious thing. She scorns to take so little, maybe. I don’t know. All I know is, every dollar of it is to go to old women who have n’t lived as they’d ought to in this town. ‘For the relief of the aged women of Haverdash, who, having in their youth led questionable lives, are left friendless, needy, and perhaps repentant in their declining years.’ That’s the wording of the agreement. I signed it myself in her little red morocco notebook. Most curious thing all round! It’s my opinion, sir, it *takes* a woman to get up an uncommon piece of work like that.”

Last Christmas eve fell in Haverdash wild and windy. The gusts fought furiously with each other at corners, and under fences, and over the bleak spaces in which the new little city abounded, and through which it straggled painfully away into the open country. Where the snow lay, it lay in tints of dead, sharp blue, cold as steel beneath the chilly light; where it was blown away, the dust flew fine and hard like powder. Overhead, too, there hung only shades of steel. One long, low line of corrosive red, however, had eaten its way through against the western hill-country, and looked like rust or blood upon a mighty coat of mail.

So, at least, Miss Thamrè fancied, shivering a little in

her folded furs, as she watched from the car window the swooping of the night upon the bleak, outlying lands and approaching twinkle of the town.

It was a cheerless night for the prima donna to be in Haverdash. Joe had been saying so all day. She thought so, it would seem, when he handed her from the cars. She scarcely spoke to him, nodding only, looking hither and thither about her, through the shriek and smoke, with that keen, baffling glance of hers, which all the world so well remembers. Joe felt rather proud of this. *He* knew what the eccentricities of genius were; was glad of a chance to show himself at ease with them. Had she bidden him stand on his head while she found her trunk, or sit on a barrel in the draught and wait for her to compose an *aria*, he would have obeyed her sweetly, thinking all the while how it would sound, told to his grandchildren on winter nights.

Half Haverdash was at the station. All Haverdash remembers that. It was with difficulty that Joe could get her to her carriage quietly, as befitted, to his fancy, the conduct of a lady's welcome.

"I did not expect to see so *many* people," said Miss Thamrè, in her pretty, accented, appealing way. "What are they here for?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Joe, with a puzzled air, "unless they're here to see me."

This amused the lady, and she laughed, — a little genial laugh, which bubbled over to the ears of the people pressing nearest to her in the crowd.

"She laughs as well as she sings," said a member of the Happy Home Handel Association.

"She has the eye of a gazelle and the smile of a Sphinx," said the Author, and took out his note-book to "do" her for a religious weekly.

"She travels alone," said a mother of four daughters. (She had, indeed, come to Haverdash quite alone, with neither chaperone nor maid.)

"She can wear silver seal and not look green," said a brunette, in black and garnet.

"She sees everything within a mile of her," said Joe to himself, as he held the hem of her dress back reverently from the carriage-wheels.

It would seem that she saw far and distinctly, for half within her carriage door she paused and said abruptly:—

"What is that? Let me see what that is!"

An old woman was pushing her way through the reluctant crowd; a very miserable old woman, splashed with mud. She had a blanket shawl over her head, and her unhealthy yellow gray hair blew out from under it, over her face before the wind.

A crowd of villainous urchins followed, pelting her with slush and snow, and volleys of that shrill, coarse boys' cry (one of the most pitiful sounds on earth) by which the presence of a sacred mystery or a sorrowful sin is indicated, not alone in Haverdash.

"Old Mother Goose! Old Mother Goose! Hi, yi! there! Mother Goosey's out buyin' Christmas stockings for her dar-ter! Old Mother Goo-oo-ose!"

Everybody knew how old Mother Goose hated the boys (and with good reason, poor soul!); but nobody had ever seen her offer them violence before that night.

In a minute she had grown suddenly livid and awful to see, rearing her lank figure to its full height against the steel and blood-colored background of the sky, where a sudden gap in the crowd had left her alone.

"You stop *that!*" she fiercely cried; and dealt a few bad blows to right and left before she was interfered with.

Annoyed beyond measure, Joe entreated Miss Thamrè to let him take her from the scene. She hesitated, lingered, turned after a moment's thought, and sank upon the carriage seat.

"You did not tell me who it was," she said imperiously;

"I asked you. I like to be answered when I ask a question. I never *saw* such a miserable old woman!"

"One of your prospective beneficiaries, madam," said Joe, humbly. "A wretched old creature. The boys call her Old Mother Goose. Do not distress yourself about her. It is no sight for you."

"You say the boys call her — I never *heard* such a poor, sad name! Has she no other name, Mr. Haverdash? Oh! *there* she is again."

A sudden turn of the carriage had brought them sharply upon the miserable sight once more. Old Mother Goose was sitting stupidly in the slush beside the hack-stands. Her shawl was off, and her gray hair had fallen raggedly upon her shoulders; her teeth chattered with chill and rage; there were drops of blood about her on the snow; a few of the more undaunted spirits among the boys still hovered near her, avenging themselves for their recent defeat by furtive attempts to purloin her drabbed shawl; and a savage expression of his country's intention to preserve virtuous order, in the garb of the police, stood threatening poor Old Mother Goose with the terrors of the law.

It was a sorry sight. A sorry sight Miss Thamrè seemed to find it. She leaned forward to the window. Joe could not prevent her; she would see it all. The silver shine of her fur wrappings glittered through the dusk, as she moved; one tiny gloved and fur-bound hand hung over the window's edge; a faint sweetness, like the soul of an English violet, stirred as she stirred, and stole out upon the frosty air.

"There!" cried the old woman, mouthing a hideous oath, "there's the lady! I'll see her yet, in spite of ye!"

Old Mother Goose staggered up from the mud, staring dully; but the silver-gray picture framed in the carriage window flashed by her in an instant. For an instant only the two women looked each other in the eye.

Miss Thamrè turned white about the chin. Her hand

rose to her eyes instinctively, covered them, and fell. It must have been such a miserable contrasting of life's chances to her young and happy fancy!

"I've seen enough," she said. "Never mind!"

"Her name," said Joe, thinking to divert her from the immediate disturbance of the sight, "is Peg, I believe, — Peg Mathers. You see the boys got it Old Mathers, then Old Mother, so Old Mother Goose, I suppose; and quite ingenious, too, I think, poor creature!"

Miss Thamarè made no reply. Quite weary of the subject, she wrapped herself back into the carriage corner, and, asking only how long a ride it was, drew a little silver veil she wore across her face and said no more. Quite weary still she seemed when Joe gave her his arm at the hotel steps (she had refused to accept his or any other private hospitality in the place); and very wearily she gave him to understand that she preferred to be alone till the hour of her appearance before the Haverdash public should arrive.

Joe stumbled upon Old Mother Goose again, in running briskly down the hotel steps.

She was wandering in a maudlin, aimless way up and down the sidewalk at the building's front. Her shawl was gone, and her gray head was bare to the wind, which was now as sharp as high.

"What! *you* again?" said Joe. "What are you doing here, Peg? I was ashamed of you to-night, Peg! The people had come out to see a famous lady, and you must get to fighting with the boys and frighten her. You disgraced the town. Better go home, or you'll be in more mischief. Come!"

"I'm out hunting for my shawl, Mr. Haverdash," said the old woman, after a moment's sly hesitation. "I've lost my shawl. Them boys took it, curse on 'em! I'd go to see the famous lady, if I had my shawl."

“Better go home; better go home!” repeated Joe.  
 “*She* does n’t want to see *you*, Peg.”

“Don’t she, Mr. Haverdash?”

Old Mother Goose laughed (or did she cry? She was always doing one or the other. What did it matter which?), nodding upward at the windows of the prima donna’s parlors, where against the drawn shades a slight, tall shadow passed and repassed now and then, faintly, like a figure in a dream.

“Don’t she? Well, I don’t know as she does. How warm she looks! She must be warm in them fur tippetts that she wears; don’t you think she must? I like to see a famous lady well as other folks, when I have my shawl. Mr. Haverdash!”

“Well, well, well!” Joe stopped impatiently in hurrying away.

“Would you rather I’d go home and say my prayers than fight the boys? I hate the boys!”

“Prayers, Peg? *Do* you say your prayers? What prayers do you say, Peg? Come!”

Mr. Haverdash lingered, entertained in his own despite — thinking he would tell Miss Thamrè this; it might amuse her.

“I say my prayers,” said Old Mother Goose, beating her white hair back from her face at a blow, as if she could give it pain. “I’ve said ’em this many years. I say: ‘When the Devil forgets the world, may God remind him of the boys!’ I don’t feel so about girls, Mr. Haverdash. Maybe, if I had n’t had one once myself, I should. My girl ran away from me. She ran away on a Christmas eve, thirteen years ago. Did ye ever see my girl? Mr. Haverdash!”

But Joe was gone. He looked back once in running up the street (he was late to supper now; his wife waited to know if Miss Thamrè would receive a call from her, and



would scold a bit, — women will, it can't be helped), — he looked back across his shoulder, and saw that Old Mother Goose was still hunting for her shawl beneath the glittering, curtained windows, where a shadow passed and re-passed, high above her head, like the shadow of a figure in a dream.

Thamrè took no supper. It was six o'clock when she entered into her parlors and shut her doors about her. It was five minutes before eight when Mr. Haverdash called to conduct her to the concert hall in the second story of the brown-stone post-office. It is quite evident, I think, that, in all the passage of the somewhat remarkable drama into which her appearance in Haverdash resolved itself, no act can have equaled in intensity that comprised within those two solitary hours. Yet positively all that is known of it, even at this distant day, is that Miss Thamrè took no supper. Every boarder in the hotel knew that in half an hour. Loiterers and lion-hunters beneath the windows where the nervous shadow passed picked it up, as loiterers and lion-hunters will. Even Old Mother Goose knew it — coming in to ask the hotel clerk if he had seen her shawl, and being for her trouble roughly shown the door.

Miss Thamrè, curtained and locked in Haverdash's grand suite of rooms (of which the town is not unjustly proud, it may be said; in which the senator is always accommodated on election days; in which a Harvard professor and a Boston alderman have been known to spend a night; in which the President himself once took a private lunch, in traveling to the mountains), spent, we say, two hours alone. In all her life, perhaps, the lady never spent two hours less alone. For a year the public fancy has been a self-invited guest at the threshold of those hours. It is with reluctance that one's most reverent imagination follows the general curiosity across their sacred edge; and yet it is with

something of the same inner propulsion which forces a dreamer on the seashore to keep the eyes upon the struggles of a little gala-boat wrecked by a mortal leak in calm waters on a sunny day.

One sees, in spite of one's self, the lady's soft small hands close violently on the turning key ; the silver furs shine under the chandeliers as they fall, tossed hither and hither, to the floor ; the little veil torn from the fine, refined, sweet face ; the setness of the features and that pallor of hers about the chin.

One knows that she will pace just so across the long, un-homelike splendor of the gaudy rooms ; that she will fold her hands behind her, one into the other knotted fast ; that she will lift them now and then, and rub them fiercely, as if she found them in a deathly chill ; that her hair will fall, perhaps, in her sharp, regardless motions, and hang about her face ; that her head is bent ; and that her eyes will follow that great green tulip on the Brussels carpet, from pattern to pattern, patiently, seeing only that, as the shadow of her on the curtain passes and repasses, telling only what a shadow can.

One listens, as she listens to the voices of the people passing on the pavement far below ; one wonders, as she wonders what they say ; if they speak of her, if they would speak of her to-morrow ; and what it would happen they would say, should to-morrow bring forth what to-morrow might.

One hears, for she must hear, a Christmas carol chanted flatly by some young people in the street ; the bustle of a hundred Christmas seekers coming homeward, with laden arms and empty pockets, from the little shops ; one notices that she draws the shade, to see if holly is hanging in the windows, as it used to hang in Haverdash, all up and down the street, by five o'clock, — and if she remembers how many times she has stolen out away in her clean hood,

with some care that no one else need follow, shaming her, to see the holly herself and hear the carols sung, like happier little girls — how can one but seem to remember too? And when the church-bells ring out for Christmas prayers, melting through the obdurate mail of the welded clouds, till they seem to melt a star through, as still and clear as God's voice melting through a wrung, defiant heart, — if her set face quivers a little, can one prevent one's own from quivering as well?

Perhaps the church-bells ring in a vision with them, to the barred and curtained glitter of Miss Thamrè's rooms. Perhaps, by sheer contrast, her fancy finds the wretched creature whom she saw to-day, seated with the mud and blood about her, shut in from all the world with her, they two alone together in the dreadful, shining place.

Perhaps she seems to herself to escape it, fleeing with her eyes to the dimmest corner of the room. Perhaps she forces herself to face it, turning sharply back, and lifting her head superbly, as Thamrè can (the shadow on the curtain lifts its head just so, as a passer in the street can see). Perhaps she reasons with it, hotly, on this wise, as she walks: —

“I did not think, in coming to Haverdash, you would strike across my way like this!”

“Heaven knows what restless fancy forced me here, Would to Heaven I had never come!”

“For thirteen years I have wondered what it would be like to look upon your face again. How *could* I know it would be like what it is, — so miserable, so neglected, so alone!”

Perhaps she argues sternly, now and then: —

“I have never left you to suffer, at the worst. You cannot starve. The first ten-dollar bill I ever earned I sent to you. If you are too imbecile to watch the post, am I to blame? If you will have opium or rum for it, am I to

blame? I've done my duty by your shameful motherhood, if ever wretched daughter did! What would you have, what will you have besides?"

Perhaps she droops and pleads at moments like a little child:—

"I have fought so hard, mother, for my name and fame! You gave me such a load of shame and ignorance and squalor to shake off! It has been such a long and bitter work! Let me be for a *little* while now, mother, *do!* Sometime before you die I'll search you out; but not just yet—*just yet!*"

Perhaps she falls to sobbing, as women will. Perhaps she flings her beautiful arms out, and slides with her face upon the stifling scarlet cushions of a little sofa, where she tossed her veil. Perhaps, in kneeling there, the bleeding, gray-haired figure stalks her by, and the quieter companionship of a troop of passive and exhausted thoughts will occupy her place.

It may be that she will think about a certain Christmas eve, windy and wild like this, and with a sky of steel and red almost like this. She thought of it in seeing the sunset from the window of the cars, remembering how a streak of red light crept into the attic corner, to help her while she packed a little bundle of her ragged clothes, thirteen years ago to-night.

It may be that she remembers counting the holly wreaths to keep her wits together as she fled, guiltily and sobbing for terror at the thing that she was doing, through the happy little town; that she saw crosses of myrtle and tuberose in Mr. Haverdash's drawing-room windows as she went by, and how grand they looked; and that a butcher's wife she knew was hanging blue tissue-paper roses in her sitting-room as she climbed the depot steps. She can even recall the butcher's name,— Jack Hash,— Mrs. Jack Hash; as well as a hot and hungry wonder that filled the soul of the

desolate child that night, whether she should ever live to be as safe and clean and respectable as Mrs. Jack Hash, and how she would garland her sitting-room with blue tissue-roses on Christmas, if she did!

It may be that her fancy, being wearied, dwells more minutely upon the half comical, wholly pathetic irrelevance of these things than upon the swift and feverish history of the crowded interval between their occurrence and the fact that Helène Thamrè is kneeling in the Haverdash hotel parlor, to-night, fighting all the devils that can haunt a beautiful and gifted woman's soul for her poor, old, shameful mother's sake.

Her battles for bread in factories and workshops, when first she cast herself, a little girl of fifteen bitter winters, upon the perilous chances of the world; worse contests, such as the outcast child of old Peg Mathers might not escape, being unfriended and despairing as the child had been; her desperate taxation of her only power, at last,—the voice which Heaven gave her, pure and sweet as its own summer mornings; the songs which she sang at street-corners before the twilight fell; the windows of happy people under which she chanted mournfully; the first solo which they gave her at a mission school into which she chanced; the friends who heard it, and into whose hearts God put it to stretch down their hands and draw her straightway into Paradise; her studies and struggles since in foreign lands; the death of the master who had trained her, and the falling of his great mantle upon her bewildered name,—these details, perhaps, float but mistily before her mind.

Sharp, distinct, pursuing, cruel, a single question begins to imprison her tortured thoughts. It took shapes as vague as smoke, clouds, fogs, dreams, at first; it looms as clear-cut and gigantic as a pyramid before her now.

If all the world should know next year, next week, to-morrow, at once and forever, what she knows?

If Haverdash should learn, suppose, to-night, that little Nell Mathers, the unfathered and forgotten child of the creature at whose gray hairs the boys hoot on the streets, is all there is of Helène Thamrè (the very letters of the shameful name transposed to make the beautiful, false image), what would Haverdash, falling at her feet this instant, do the next?

Perhaps to the woman's inner sense neither Haverdash nor the world may matter much, indeed. She has kept, through deadly peril, soul and body pure as light. Not a sheltered wife, singing "Greenville" to her babies, vacant of ambitions and innocent of noisier powers, can show a hand or heart or name more spotless than her own. And now to dye them deep in the old, old, hateful shame! One must have *been* little Nell Mathers and have become Thamrè, I fancy, to measure this recoil.

Perhaps it seems to her more monstrous and impossible as the thought grows more familiar to her. Perhaps a certain hardness begins to creep across the pallor of her face; or it may be only that she has wound her fallen hair back from it, and exposed the carved exactness and composure of her features. It may be that she will argue to herself again, forgetting that the gray-haired vision left her long ago:—

"I could never make you happy, if I did. It would always, always be a curse to both of us. What have you ever done for me, that you should demand a right so cruel? You have no right, I say; you have no right!"

"And, if you speak, indeed, why, who believes you? What can your ravings do against Thamrè's denial, poor old mother!"

Perhaps she muses, half aloud: "You need a shawl, I see. You shall have a bright, warm shawl on Christmas Day. It is better for you than a daughter. Oh! a thousand times!"

Perhaps she laughs — as Thamrè does not often laugh — most bitterly ; and that Joe Haverdash, knocking at her door, hears, or thinks he hears, the sound, before she flashes on him, tall, serene, resplendent, in full dress and full spirit for the evening.

The Happy Home Handel Association were satisfied with the reception given by Haverdash to their rendering of the oratorio of the Messiah last Christmas eve. On settees, in the aisles, on the window-sills, in the corridors, on the stairs, Haverdash overflowed the brown-stone post-office.

Since the incorporation of the city (which is the Christian era of Haverdash, and from which everything dates accordingly) nothing approaching such an audience had been collected for the most popular of purposes. Even Signor Blitz could not have eaten swords or played base ball with uncracked eggs before a quarter of the spectators ; and the New England philosopher, it is well known, reads his lectures in Haverdash to three hundred people.

In this triumph the Happy Home Handel Association felt compelled to own that Thamrè had her share, which for the H. H. H. A. was owning a great deal. When little Joe bowed the prima donna upon the somewhat uncertain (green cambric) stage, the East Haverdash "orchestra" led off in a burst of applause, which threatened to shake the post-office to its foundation stone, and which fired even the leader's dignity of Joe's rotund person to ill-concealed enthusiasm. Even Mrs. Joe, gorgeous upon the front settee, in the opera dress that (it was well known) she wore in Boston, despite the ache of a secret chagrin that Miss Thamrè had received no callers, reflected the general pride and pleasure to the very links of her great gold necklace and the tiniest wrinkle of her rose-colored gloves. Even Mrs. Jack Hash, on her camp-stool, by the second left, though disposed by nature and training to be critical of

anything headed by a Haverdash, applauded softly with the feathered tip of her silver-paper fan upon the frill of her brown poplin upper skirt. Never had there been anything like it known in Haverdash.

Like a bird, like a snow-flake, like a moonbeam, like a fancy, like nothing that the brown-stone post-office was accustomed to, *Thamrè* stole upon the stage. She stood for an instant poised, fluttering, as if half her mind were made to fly, then fell into her unapproachable repose, and at her leisure looked the great audience over, shooting it here and there with her nervous glance.

The packed house drew and held its breath. Women thought swiftly: Silver-gray satin, up to the throat and down to the hands. No jewelry, and a live white lily on her wrist! Young men saw her through a mist, and half turned their eyes away, as if they had seen a *Madonna* folded in a morning cloud. Reporters pondered, twirling a moustache end, pencil held suspended: Such severity is the superbest affectation, my lady! but it tells, as straight as a carrier-dove. Before she had opened her lips, *Thamrè* had conquered Haverdash.

Conscious of this in an instant's flash, *Thamrè* grew unconscious of it in another. For an instant every detail in her house was in her grasp, even to Mrs. Jack Hash on the camp-stool and the critical attitude of the silver-paper fan; even to old Mother Goose, half fading into the shadow of the distance, quarreling with a doorkeeper about her ticket. The next she cast her audience from her like a racer casting his cloak to the wind. Her face settled; her wonderful eyes dilated; the hand with the lily on it closed over the other like a seal; the soul of the music entered into her, incorporate. She grew as sacred as her theme.

"That little country house," said a critic present, who had heard her before her best houses in the great world, "was on the knees of its heart that night. She never sung



like that before, nor ever will again; nor any other artist, it is my belief. She minded the jerks of that orchestra and the flats of the Haverdash *prime donne* no more than she did the whistling of the wind about the post-office windows. She rendered the text like an angel sent from heaven for the purpose. When she lifted that hand with the flower on it (she did it only in the chorus, 'Surely, he hath borne our griefs,' and in the tenor, 'Behold, and see,' and at one other time) I could think of nothing but

'In the beauty of the lilies  
Christ was born across the sea.'

Couldn't get it out of my head. I meant she should have been *encored*, when it was all over, to give us that itself; but for what happened, you know."

Did I say she grew as sacred as her theme? It might almost be said that its holy Personality environed and enveloped her. Reverent souls that listened to her that well-remembered night felt as if the Man of Sorrows confided to her the burden of his heart, as if he stooped to acquaint her with his grief, as if the travail of his soul fell upon her, and that with his satisfaction she was satisfied.

The sacred drama was unfolding to its solemn close, the wildness of the wind without was hushed, the Christmas stars were out, when *Thamrè* glided into her last solo,— that palpitating, proud, triumphant thing, in which the soul of Divine Love avenges itself against the ingenuity of human despair:—

"If God be for us, who can be against us?  
Who can be against us?  
Who shall lay anything to the charge  
Of God's elect?  
It is God that justifieth.  
Who is he that condemneth?  
It is Christ that died."

It was at this point that the interruption came.

Shrill and sharp into the thrill of the singer's liquid, clinging notes a quick cry cut: —

“Let me see her! Let me touch her! I can't abear it any longer! Let me see my girl!” and, forcing her way like a stream of lava through the packed and startled aisles, hot, wild, pallid, and horrible, Old Mother Goose leaped, before a hand could stay her, on the stage.

“I can't stand it any longer, Nell! It seems to craze my head! I knew you from the time I heard you laughing to the depot. I did n't mean to shame ye before so many folks, and I tried to find my shawl. They said you would n't want to see your poor old mother, Nelly dear. But I can't abear to hear you sing. Nell, why, Nell, you stand up like the Almighty Dead to do it!”

The shock of the shrill words and their cessation brought the house to its feet. Then came the uproar.

“Shame!” “Police!” “Order!” “Take her out!” “Arrest the hag!” “Protect the lady!” And after that the astonishment and the silence of death.

High above the wavering, peering mass, clear to the apprehension of every eye in the house, appeared a lily-bound, authoritative hand. It motioned once and dropped — as the snow drops over a grave.

By those who sat nearest her it was said that the flower trembled on the lady's wrist a little; for the rest, she stood sculptured like a statue, towering about the piteous figure at her feet. Her voice, when she spoke, — for she spoke in the passing of a thought, — rang out to the remotest corner of the galleries, slipping even then, however, into Thamrè's girlish, uneven tones.

“If you *please*, do not disturb the woman at this moment. She is a very *old* woman. Let us hear what she has to say. Her hair is gray. Let us not be *rough* or *hasty* till we have *thought* of what she says.”

Old Mother Goose rose from the floor, where she had

fallen, half-abashed, perhaps half-dazed at that which she had done.

"I've got nothing more to say." She fumbled foolishly in the air to wrap the shawl which she had lost about her lean and tattered shoulders. "I've said as this famous lady is my daughter, that was Nell Mathers, and remembered by many folks in Haverdash thirteen year ago. I would n't have shamed her quite so much if I'd only found my shawl. It's cold, too, without a shawl. I'll go out now, and you can sing your piece through, Nelly, without the plague of me. I would n't have told on you, I think, but for the music and the crazy feeling that I had. It's most too bad, Nelly, to spoil the piece. I'll go right out."

She turned, stepped off, and staggered feebly, turning her bleared eyes back to feast upon the silent, shining figure, on whose wrist the lily glittered cruelly, as only lilies can.

"What a pretty sating gown you've got, my dear!" she said.

Mr. Haverdash could bear it no longer. He took Old Mother Goose by the sleeve, hurrying up, saying: "Come, come!"

"The woman is drunk, Miss Thamrè. She shall not be allowed to insult you any more like this. In the kindness of your heart, you make a mistake, I think, if you will pardon me. See! she is quite beside herself. Something is due to the audience. This disturbance should not continue. Come, Peg, come!"

But Thamrè shook her head. She had grown now deadly pale, — at least so Joe thought, letting go the woman's arm, his own face changing color sharply, the baton in his fat, white-gloved hand beginning to shake.

"If you please, Mr. Haverdash, I should like to know — the people will *pardon* me a moment, I am sure — I should like to know if this poor old creature has anything *more* to say."

“Nothing more,” said Old Mother Goose, shaking her gray head, “but this, maybe, Nelly dear. I says to myself, when I sits and hears you singing, — I says, when you sang them words: ‘If God be for me, my girl won’t be against me! My girl can’t be against me!’ — over and over with the music, Nelly, so I did! If God be for me, how *can* my girl be against me?”

It was said that, when Helène Thamrè stretched down her lily-guarded hand, and, lifting the lean, uncleanly fingers of Old Mother Goose, pressed them, after a moment’s thought, gently and slowly to her heart, she heard the sudden break of sobs in the breathless house; and, pausing to listen to the sound, flushed fitfully like a child surprised, and smiled.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” — her great eyes stabbed the audience through and through; she lifted the old woman’s hand, that all might see, — “I am *sorry* that your entertainment should be disturbed. If you will *excuse* me, I will leave you now, and take my mother home.”

Home? What home was there for Old Mother Goose and her outcast child in Thamrè’s hotel parlors, on that or any other night? What home was there for Thamrè in the God-forsaken cellar whence the woman of the town had crawled? Apparently, the lady had not thought of this. Joe found her standing serenely as an angel when he came into the stifling little green room. She was still smiling. She had buttoned her silver furs about the old woman’s shrunken throat.

“This will be warmer than your shawl, mother, don’t you see?” he heard her say. “The boys shall never bother you in this, poor old mother! There!”

Mrs. Haverdash came with her husband. The Boston opera-cloak was in disorder; her rose-colored gloves were wet and spotted.

“Miss Thamrè,” said Joe, “may I make you acquainted

with my wife? We would not urge upon you again the acceptance of a hospitality which has been already so decidedly refused; but perhaps, considering the state of your mother's health, we can make you more comfortable now at our home than you can be elsewhere. If you will do Mrs. Haverdash and myself the favor to return with us — and her — in our own carriage to-night” —

Joe's grandfather, as has been said, cobbled shoes in a wooden shop; and even Mrs. Joe to-day will drink with her spoon in her tea-cup, you will notice, if you chance to sit beside her at a supper. But show me bluer blood, if it please you, than shall flow in the veins of him and his, to preserve the existence of this most cultivated instinct and the memory of this most knightly deed.

All the world knows how Thamrè suddenly and mysteriously disappeared a year ago from public and professional life. All the world has mourned, wondered, gossiped, caught at the wings of rumors, lost them, and so mourned again at this event.

All the world does not know with what a curious development of pride in and loyalty to the personality of little Nell Mathers, Haverdash has struggled, till struggle has become useless, to enforce a reticence upon the subject of Thamrè's movements and their motives.

To a few friends, familiar with her private history for the past year, its results have seemed to crown its cost, I think. At least, she herself, having proved them so, has contrived to radiate upon us the light of her own content.

“You do not know the life,” she said, at the outset, shaking her beautiful, determined head, “if you would ask me to return to it while my mother lives. Even my name will not bear the scorch of hers. The world is so hard on women! Do not urge me. Let me take my way. Perhaps God and I together can make her poor old hand as white as yours or mine before she dies.”

Perhaps they did. It is known that when Old Mother Goose lay dying in her daughter's quiet house in Haver-mash, one frosty night, not many weeks ago, and after she had fallen, as they thought, past speech or recognition, she raised herself upon her pillow, and, stretching her hands, said slowly : —

“Nell! why, Nell! It is Christ that died! If my girl was for me, Nell, *could* He be against me, do you think?”

And further it is only known that Thamrè will sing this season in the oratorio of the Messiah on Christmas eve.

## THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

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It is not generally known that the Lady of Shalott lived last summer in an attic, at the east end of South Street.

The wee-est, thinnest, whitest little lady! And yet the brightest, stillest, and ah, such a smiling little lady!

If you had held her up by the window—for she could not hold up herself—she would have hung like a porcelain transparency in your hands. And if you had said, laying her gently down, and giving the tears a smart dash, that they should not fall on her lifted face, “Poor child!” the Lady of Shalott would have said, “Oh, don’t!” and smiled. And you would have smiled yourself, for very surprise that she should outdo you; and between the two there would have been so much smiling done that one would have fairly thought that it was a delightful thing to live last summer in an attic at the east end of South Street.

This, perhaps, was the more natural in the Lady of Shalott because she had never lived anywhere else.

When the Lady of Shalott was five years old, her mother threw her down-stairs one day, by mistake, instead of the whisky-jug.

This is a fact which I think Mr. Tennyson has omitted to mention in his poem.

They picked the Lady of Shalott up and put her on the bed; and there she lay from that day until last summer, unless, as I said, somebody had occasion to use her for a transparency.

The mother and the jug both went down the stairs together a few years after, and never came up at all; and that was a great convenience, for the Lady of Shalott's palace in the attic was not large, and they took up much unnecessary room.

Since that the Lady of Shalott had lived with her sister, Sary Jane.

Sary Jane made nankeen vests, at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen.

Sary Jane had red hair, and crooked shoulders, and a voice so much like the snap of a rat-trap which she sometimes set on the stairs, that the Lady of Shalott could seldom tell which was which until she had thought about it a little while. When there was a rat caught, she was apt to ask, "What?" and when Sary Jane spoke she more often than not said, "There's another!"

Her crooked shoulders Sary Jane had acquired from sitting under the eaves of the palace to sew. That physiological problem was simple. There was not room enough under the eaves to sit straight.

Sary Jane's red hair was the result of sitting in the sun on July noons under those eaves, to see to thread her needle. There was no question about that. The Lady of Shalott had settled it in her own mind, past dispute. Sary Jane's hair had been — what was it? brown? once. Sary Jane was slowly taking fire. Who would not, to sit in the sun in that palace? The only matter of surprise to the Lady of Shalott was that the palace itself did not smoke. Sometimes, when Sary Jane hit the rafters, she was sure that she saw sparks.

As for Sary Jane's voice, when one knew that she made nankeen vests at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen, *that* was a matter of no surprise. It never surprised the Lady of Shalott.



But Sary Jane was very cross ; there was no denying that ; very cross.

And the palace. Let me tell you about the palace. It measured just twelve by nine feet. It would have been seven feet post — if there had been a post in the middle of it. From the centre it sloped away to the windows, where Sary Jane had just room enough to sit crooked under the eaves at work. There were two windows and a loose scuttle to the palace. The scuttle let in the snow in winter and the sun in summer, and the rain and wind at all times. It was quite a diversion to the Lady of Shalott to see how many different ways of doing a disagreeable thing seemed to be practicable to that scuttle. Besides the bed on which the Lady of Shalott lay, there was a stove in the palace, two chairs, a very ragged rag-mat, a shelf, with two notched cups and plates upon it, one pewter teaspoon, and a looking-glass. On washing-days Sary Jane climbed upon the chair and hung her clothes out through the scuttle on the roof ; or else she ran a little rope from one of the windows to the other for a drying-rope. It would have been more exact to have said on washing-nights ; for Sary Jane always did her washing after dark. The reason was evident. If the rest of us were in the habit of wearing all the clothes we had, like Sary Jane, I have little doubt that we should do the same.

I should mention that there was no sink in the Lady of Shalott's palace ; no water. There was a dirty hydrant in the yard, four flights below, which supplied the Lady of Shalott and all her neighbors. The Lady of Shalott kept her coal under the bed ; her flour, a pound at a time, in a paper parcel, on the shelf, with the teacups and the pewter spoon. If she had anything else to keep, it went out through the palace scuttle and lay on the roof. The Lady of Shalott's palace opened directly upon a precipice. The lessor of the house called it a flight of stairs. When Sary

Jane went up and down, she went sideways to preserve her balance. There were no banisters to the precipice. The entry was dark. Some dozen or twenty of the Lady of Shalott's neighbors patronized the precipice, and about once a week a baby patronized the rat-trap, instead. Once, when there was a fire-alarm, the precipice was very serviceable. Four women and an old man went over. With one exception (she was eighteen, and could bear a broken collar-bone), they will not, I am informed, go over again.

The Lady of Shalott paid one dollar a week for the rent of her palace.

But then there was a looking-glass in the palace. I think I noticed it. It hung on the slope of the rafters, just opposite the Lady of Shalott's window,— for she considered that her window at which Sary Jane did not make nankeen vests at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen.

Now, because the looking-glass was opposite the window at which Sary Jane did *not* make vests, and because the rafters sloped, and because the bed lay almost between the looking-glass and the window, the Lady of Shalott was happy. And because, to the patient heart that is a seeker after happiness "the little more, and how much it is!" (and the little less, what worlds away!) the Lady of Shalott was proud as well as happy. The looking-glass measured in inches ten by six. I think that the Lady of Shalott would have experienced rather a touch of mortification than of envy if she had known that there was a mirror in a house just around the corner measuring almost as many feet. But that was one of the advantages of being the Lady of Shalott. She never parsed life in the comparative degree.

I suppose that one must go through a process of education to understand what comfort there may be in a ten by six inch looking-glass. All the world came for the Lady of Shalott into her little looking-glass,— the joy of it, the

anguish of it, the hope and fear of it, the health and hurt, — ten by six inches of it exactly.

“It is next best to not having been thrown down-stairs yourself!” said the Lady of Shalott.

To tell the truth, it sometimes occurred to her that there was a monotony about the world. A garret window like her own, for instance, would fill her sight if she did not tip the glass a little. Children sat in it, and did not play. They made lean faces at her. They were locked in for the day, and were hungry. She could not help knowing how hungry they were, and so tipped the glass. Then there was the trap-door in the sidewalk. She became occasionally tired of that trap-door. Seven people lived under the sidewalk; and when they lifted and slammed the trap, coming in and out, they reminded her of something which Sary Jane bought her once, when she was a very little child, at Christmas time, — long ago, when rents were cheaper and flour low. It was a monkey, with whiskers and a calico jacket, who jumped out of a box when the cover was lifted; and then you crushed him down and hasped him in. Sometimes she wished that she had never had that monkey, he was so much like the people coming out of the sidewalk.

In fact, there was a monotony about all the people in the Lady of Shalott's looking-glass. If their faces were not dirty, their hands were. If they had hats they went without shoes. If they did not sit in the sun with their heads on their knees, they lay in the mud with their heads on a jug.

“Their faces look blue!” she said to Sary Jane.

“No wonder!” snapped Sary Jane.

“Why?” asked the Lady of Shalott.

“Wonder is we ain't all dead!” barked Sary Jane.

“But we ain't, you know,” said the Lady of Shalott, after some thought.

The people in the Lady of Shalott's glass died, however,

sometimes, — often in the summer; more often last summer, when the attic smoked continually, and she mistook Sary Jane's voice for the rat-trap every day.

The people were jostled into pine boxes (in the glass), and carried away (in the glass) by twilight, in a cart. Three of the monkeys from the spring-box in the sidewalk went, in one week, out into foul, purple twilight, away from the looking-glass, in carts.

"I'm glad of that, poor things!" said the Lady of Shalott, for she had always felt a kind of sorrow for the monkeys. Principally, I think, because they had no glass.

When the monkeys had gone, the sickly twilight folded itself up, over the spring-box, into great feathers, like the feathers of a wing. That was pleasant. The Lady of Shalott could almost put out her fingers and stroke it, it hung so near, and was so clear, and brought such a peacefulness into the looking-glass.

"Sary Jane, dear, it's very pleasant," said the Lady of Shalott. Sary Jane said, it was very dangerous, the Lord knew, and bit her threads off.

"And Sary Jane, dear!" added the Lady of Shalott, "I see so many other pleasant things."

"The more fool you!" said Sary Jane.

But she wondered about it that day over her tenth nankeen vest. What, for example, *could* the Lady of Shalott see?

"Waves!" said the Lady of Shalott, suddenly, as if she had been asked the question. Sary Jane jumped. She said, "Nonsense!" For the Lady of Shalott had only seen the little wash-tub full of dingy water on Sunday nights, and the dirty little hydrant (in the glass) spouting dingy jets. She would not have known a wave if she had seen it.

"But I see waves," said the Lady of Shalott. She felt sure of it. They ran up and down across the glass. They

had green faces and gray hair. They threw back their hands, like cool people resting, and it seemed unaccountable, at the east end of South Street last summer, that anything, anywhere, if only a wave in a looking-glass, could be cool or at rest. Besides this, they kept their faces clean. Therefore the Lady of Shalott took pleasure in watching them run up and down across the glass. That a thing could be clean, and green, and white, was only less a wonder than cool and rest last summer in South Street.

"Sary Jane, dear," said the Lady of Shalott, one day, "how hot is it up here?"

"Hot as Hell!" said Sary Jane.

"I thought it was a little warm," said the Lady of Shalott. "Sary Jane, dear? Is n't the yard down there a little — dirty?"

Sary Jane put down her needles and looked out of the blazing, blindless window. It had always been a subject of satisfaction, to Sary Jane somewhere down below her lean shoulders and in the very teeth of the rat-trap, that the Lady of Shalott could not see out of that window. So she winked at the window, as if she would caution it to hold its burning tongue, and said never a word.

"Sary Jane, dear," said the Lady of Shalott, once more, "had you ever thought that perhaps I was a little — weaker — than I was — once?"

"I guess you can stand it if I can!" said the rat-trap.

"Oh, yes, dear," said the Lady of Shalott. "I can stand it if you can."

"Well, then!" said Sary Jane. But she sat and winked at the bald window, and the window held its burning tongue.

It grew hot in South Street. It grew very hot in South Street. The lean children, in the attic opposite, fell sick, and sat no longer in the window making faces, in the Lady of Shalott's glass.

Two more monkeys from the spring-box were carried

away one ugly twilight in a cart. The purple wing that hung over the spring-box lifted to let them pass; and then fell, as if it had brushed them away.

"It has such a soft color!" said the Lady of Shalott, smiling.

"So has nightshade!" said Sary Jane.

One day a beautiful thing happened. One can scarcely understand how a beautiful thing *could* happen at the east end of South Street. The Lady of Shalott herself did not entirely understand.

"It is all the glass," she said.

She was lying very still when she said it. She had folded her hands, which were hot, to keep them quiet, too. She had closed her eyes, which ached, to close away the glare of the noon. At once she opened them, and said:—

"It is the glass."

Sary Jane stood in the glass. Now Sary Jane, she well knew, was not in the room that noon. She had gone out to see what she could find for dinner. She had five cents to spend on dinner. Yet Sary Jane stood in the glass. And in the glass, ah! what a beautiful thing!

"Flowers!" cried the Lady of Shalott aloud. But she had never seen flowers. But neither had she seen waves. So she said, "They come as the waves come;" and knew them, and lay smiling. Ah! what a beautiful, beautiful thing!

Sary Jane's hair was fiery and tumbled (in the glass), as if she had walked fast and far. Sary Jane (in the glass) was winking, as she had winked at the blazing window; as if she said to what she held in her arms, Don't tell! And in her arms (in the glass), where the waves were—oh! beautiful, beautiful! The Lady of Shalott lay whispering: "Beautiful, beautiful!" She did not know what else to do. She dared not stir. Sary Jane's lean arms (in the glass) were full of silver bells; they hung out of a soft green

shadow, like a church tower; they nodded to and fro: when they shook, they shook out sweetness.

"Will they ring?" asked the Lady of Shalott of the little glass.

I doubt, in my own mind, if you or I, being in South Street, and seeing a lily of the valley (in a ten by six inch looking-glass) for the very first time, would have asked so sensible a question.

"Try 'em and see," said the looking-glass. Was it the looking-glass? Or the rat-trap? Or was it —

Oh, the beautiful thing! That the glass should have nothing to do with it, after all! That Sary Jane, in flesh and blood, and tumbled hair, and trembling, lean arms, should stand and shake an armful of church towers and silver bells down into the Lady of Shalott's little puzzled face and burning hands!

And that the Lady of Shalott should think that she must have got into the glass herself, by a blunder, — as the only explanation possible of such a beautiful thing!

"No, it is n't glass-dreams," said Sary Jane, winking at the church towers, where they made a solemn green shadow against the Lady of Shalott's poor cheek. "Smell 'em, and see! You can 'most stand the yard with them round. Smell 'em and see! It ain't the glass; it's the Flower Charity."

"The what?" asked the Lady of Shalott, slowly.

"The Flower Charity. Heaven bless it!"

"Heaven bless it!" said the Lady of Shalott. But she said nothing more.

She laid her cheek over into the shadow of the leaves. "And there 'll be more," said Sary Jane, hunting for her wax. "There 'll be more, whenever I can call for 'em — bless it!"

"Heaven bless it!" said the Lady of Shalott again.

"But I only got a lemon for dinner," said Sary Jane.

"Heaven bless it!" said the Lady of Shalott, with her

face hidden under the leaves. But I don't think that she meant the lemon, though Sary Jane did.

"They *do* ring," said the Lady of Shalott, by and by. She drew the tip of her thin fingers across the tip of the tiny bells. "I thought they would."

"Humph!" said Sary Jane, squeezing her lemon under her work-box. "I never see your beat for glass-dreams. What do they say? Come, now!"

Now the Lady of Shalott knew very well what they said. Very well! But she only drew the tips of her poor fingers over the tips of the silver bells. Never mind! It was not necessary to tell Sary Jane.

But it grew hot in South Street. It grew very hot in South Street. Even the Flower Charity (bless it!) could not sweeten the dreadfulness of that yard. Even the purple wing above the spring-box fell heavily upon the Lady of Shalott's strained eyes, across the glass. Even the gray-haired waves ceased running up and down and throwing back their hands before her; they sat still, in heaps upon a blistering beach, and gasped for breath. The Lady of Shalott herself gasped sometimes, in watching them.

One day she said: "There's a man in them."

"A *what* in *which*?" buzzed Sary Jane. "Oh! There's a man across the yard, I suppose you mean. Among them young ones, yonder. I wish he'd stop 'em throwing stones, plague on 'em! See him, don't you?"

"I don't see the children," said the Lady of Shalott, a little troubled. Her glass had shown her so many things strangely since the days grew hot. "But I see a man, and he walks upon the waves. See, see!"

The Lady of Shalott tried to pull herself up on the elbow of her calico night-dress, to see.

"That's one of them Hospital doctors," said Sary Jane, looking out of the blazing window. "I've seen him round before. Don't know what business he's got down here;



but I've seen him. He's talkin' to them boys now, about the stones. There! He'd better! If they don't look out, they'll hit" —

*"Oh the glass! the glass!"*

The Hospital Doctor stood still; so did Sary Jane, half risen from her chair; so did the very South Street boys, gaping in the gutter, with their hands full of stones, — such a cry rang out from the palace window.

*"Oh, the glass! the glass! the glass!"*

In a twinkling the South Street boys were at the mercy of the South Street police; and the Hospital Doctor, bounding over a beachful of shattered, scattered waves, stood, out of breath, beside the Lady of Shalott's bed.

"Oh the little less and what worlds away."

The Lady of Shalott lay quite still in her brown calico night-gown [I cannot learn, by the way, that Bulfinch's studious and in general trustworthy researches have put him in possession of this point. Indeed, I feel justified in asserting that Mr. Bulfinch never so much as *intimated* that the Lady of Shalott wore a brown calico night-dress] — the Lady of Shalott lay quite still, and her lips turned blue.

"Are you very much hurt? Where were you struck? I heard the cry, and came. Can you tell me where the blow was?"

But then the Doctor saw the glass, broken and blown in a thousand glittering sparks across the palace floor: and then the Lady of Shalott gave him a little blue smile.

"It's not me. Never mind, I wish it was. I'd rather it was me than the glass. Oh, my glass! My glass! But never mind. I suppose there'll be some other — pleasant thing."

"Were you so fond of the glass?" asked the Doctor, taking one of the two chairs that Sary Jane brought him, and looking sorrowfully about the room. What other

“pleasant thing” could even the Lady of Shalott discover in that room last summer, at the east end of South Street?

“How long have you lain here?” asked the sorrowful Doctor, suddenly.

“Since I can remember, sir,” said the Lady of Shalott, with that blue smile. “But then I have always had my glass.”

“Ah!” said the Doctor, “the Lady of Shalott!”

“Sir?” said the Lady of Shalott.

“Where is the pain?” asked the Doctor, gently, with his finger on the Lady of Shalott’s pulse.

The Lady of Shalott touched the shoulders of her brown calico night-dress, smiling.

“And what did you see in your glass?” asked the Doctor, once more, stooping to examine “the pain.”

The Lady of Shalott tried to tell him, but felt confused. So she only said that there were waves and a purple wing, and that they were broken now, and lay upon the floor.

“Purple wings?” asked the Doctor.

“Over the sidewalk,” nodded the Lady of Shalott. “It comes up at night.”

“Oh!” said the Doctor, “the malaria. No wonder!”

“And what about the waves?” asked the Doctor, talking while he touched and tried the little brown calico shoulders. “I have a little girl of my own down by the waves this summer. She — I suppose she is no older than you!”

“I am seventeen, sir,” said the Lady of Shalott. “Do they have green faces and white hair? Does she see them run up and down? I never saw any waves, sir, but those in my glass. I am very glad to know that your little girl is by the waves.”

“Where *you* ought to be,” said the Doctor, half under his breath. “It is cruel, cruel!”

“What is cruel?” asked the Lady of Shalott, looking up into the Doctor’s face.

The little brown calico night-dress swam suddenly before the Doctor's eyes. He got up and walked across the room. As he walked he stepped upon the pieces of the broken glass.

"Oh, don't!" cried the Lady of Shalott. But then she thought that perhaps she had hurt the Doctor's feelings; so she smiled, and said, "Never mind."

"Her case could be cured," said the Doctor, still under his breath, to Sary Jane. "The case could be cured yet. It is cruel!"

"Sir," said Sary Jane, — she lifted her sharp face sharply out of billows of nankeen vests, — "it may be because I make vests at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen, sir: but I say before God there's *something* cruel *somewhere*. Look at her. Look at me. Look at them stairs. Just see that scuttle, will you? Just feel the sun in t' these windows. Look at the rent we pay for this 'ere oven. What do you s'pose the merkiry is up here? Look at them pisen fogs arisin' out over the sidewalk. Look at the dead as have died in the Devil in this street this week. Then look out here!"

Sary Jane drew the Doctor to the blazing, blindless window, out of which the Lady of Shalott had never looked.

"Now talk of curin' *her*!" said Sary Jane.

The Doctor turned away from the window, with a sudden white face.

"The Board of Health" —

"Don't talk to *me* about the Board of Health!" said Sary Jane.

"I'll talk to *them*," said the Doctor. "I did not know matters were so bad. They shall be attended to directly. To-morrow I leave town" — He stopped, looking down at the Lady of Shalott, thinking of the little lady by the waves, whom he would see to-morrow, hardly knowing what to say. "But something shall be done at once. Meantime, there's *the Hospital*."

"She tried Horspital long ago," said Sary Jane. "They said they could n't do nothing. What's the use? Don't bother hêr. Let her be."

"Yes, let me be," said the Lady of Shalott, faintly. "The glass is broken."

"But something must be done!" urged the Doctor, hurrying away. "I will attend to the matter directly, directly."

He spoke in a busy doctor's busy way. Undoubtedly he thought that he should attend to the matter directly.

"You have flowers here, I see." He lifted, in hurrying away, a spray of lilies that lay upon the bed, freshly sent to the Lady of Shalott that morning.

"They ring," said the Lady of Shalott, softly. "Can you hear? '*Bless* — it! *Bless* — it!' Ah, yes, they ring!"

"Bless what?" asked the Doctor, half out of the door.

"The Flower Charity," said the Lady of Shalott.

"*Amen!*" said the Doctor. "But I'll attend to it directly." And he was quite out of the door, and the door was shut.

"Sary Jane, dear?" said the Lady of Shalott, a few minutes after.

"Well!" said Sary Jane.

"The glass is broken," said the Lady of Shalott.

"Should think I might know that!" said Sary Jane, who was down upon her knees sweeping shining pieces away into a pasteboard dust-pan.

"Sary Jane, dear?" said the Lady of Shalott again.

"Dear, dear!" echoed Sary Jane, tossing purple feathers out of the window and seeming, to the eyes of the Lady of Shalott, to have the spray of green waves upon her hands. "There they go!"

"Yes, there they go," said the Lady of Shalott. But she said no more till night.

It was a hot night for South Street. It was a very hot night for even South Street. The lean children in the attic opposite cried savagely, like lean cubs. The monkeys from the spring-box came out and sat upon the lid for air. Dirty people lay around the dirty hydrant; and the purple wing stretched itself a little in a quiet way to cover them.

"Sary Jane, dear?" said the Lady of Shalott, at night. "The glass is broken. And, Sary Jane, dear, I am afraid I *can't* stand it as well as you can."

Sary Jane gave the Lady of Shalott a sharp look, and put away her nankeen vests. She came to the bed.

"It is n't time to stop sewing, is it?" asked the Lady of Shalott, in faint surprise. Sary Jane only said:—

"Nonsense! That man will be back again yet. He'll look after ye, maybe. Nonsense!"

"Yes," said the Lady of Shalott, "he will come back again. But my glass is broken."

"Nonsense!" said Sary Jane. But she did not go back to her sewing. She sat down on the edge of the bed, by the Lady of Shalott; and it grew dark.

"Perhaps they'll do something about the yards; who knows?" said Sary Jane.

"But my glass is broken," said the Lady of Shalott.

"Sary Jane, dear!" said the Lady of Shalott. "He is walking on the waves."

"Nonsense!" said Sary Jane. For it was quite, quite dark.

"Sary Jane, dear!" said the Lady of Shalott. "Not that man. But there *is* a Man, and he is walking on the waves."

The Lady of Shalott raised herself upon her calico night-dress sleeve. She looked at the wall where the ten by six inch looking-glass had hung.

"Sary Jane, dear!" said the Lady of Shalott. "I am

glad that girl is down by the waves. I am very glad. But the glass is broken."

Two days after, the Board of Health at the foot of the precipice which the lessor called a flight of stairs, which led into the Lady of Shalott's palace, were met and stopped by another board.

"*This* one's got the right of way, gentlemen!" said something at the brink of the precipice, which sounded so much like a rat-trap that the Board of Health looked down by instinct at its individual and collective feet, to see if they were in danger, and dared not by instinct stir a step.

The board which had the right of way was a pine board, and the Lady of Shalott lay on it, in her brown calico night-dress, with Sary Jane's old shawl across her feet. The Flower Charity (Heaven bless it!) had half-covered the old shawl with silver bells, and solemn green shadows, like the shadows of church towers. And it was a comfort to Sary Jane to know that these were the only bells which tolled for the Lady of Shalott, and that no other church shadow fell upon her burial.

"Gentlemen," said the Hospital Doctor, "we're too late, I see. But you'd better go on."

The gentlemen of the Board of Health went on; and the Lady of Shalott went on.

The Lady of Shalott went out into the cart that had carried away the monkeys from the spring-box, and the purple wing lifted to let her pass; then fell again, as if it had brushed her away.

The Board of Health went up the precipice, and stood by the window out of which the Lady of Shalott had never looked.

They sent orders to the scavenger, and orders to the Water Board, and how many other orders nobody knows;

and they sprinkled themselves with camphor, and they went their ways.

And the board that had the Right of Way went its way, too. And Sary Jane folded up the shawl, which she could not afford to lose, and came home, and made nankeen vests at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen in the window out of which the Lady of Shalott had never looked.

## THE TRUE STORY OF GUENEVER.



IN all the wide, dead, old world of story, there is to me no wraith more piteously pursuant than the wraith of Guenever. No other voice has in it the ring of sweet harmonies so intricately bejangled; no other face turns to eyes of such luminous entreaty from slow descents of despair; no other figure, majestic though in ruins, carries through every strained muscle and tense nerve and full artery so magnetic a consciousness of the deeps of its deserved humiliation and the height of its lost privilege. One pauses as before an awful problem, before the nature of this miserable lady. A nature wrought, it is plain, of the finer tissues, since it not only won but returned the love of the blameless king. One follows her young years with bated breath. We see a delicate, high-strung, impulsive creature, a trifle mismated to a faultless, unimpulsive man. We shudder to discover in her, before she discovers it for or in herself, that, having given herself to Arthur, she yet has not given all; that there arises now another self, an existence hitherto unknown, unsuspected, — a character groping, unstable, unable, a wandering wind, a mist of darkness, a chaos, over which Arthur has no empire, of which he has no comprehension, and of which she — whether of Nature or of training who shall judge? — has long since discrowned herself the Queen. Guenever is unbalanced, crude, primeval woman. She must be at once passionately wooed and peremptorily ruled; and in wooing or in ruling there must



be no despondencies or declines. There are no soundings to be found in her capacities of loving, as long as the mariner cares to go on striking for them. At his peril let him hold his plummet lightly or weary of the sweet toil taken in the measure of it; at his peril, and at hers.

To Arthur love is a state, not a process; an atmosphere, not a study; an assurance, not a hope; a fact, not an ideal. He is serene, reflective, a statesman. The Queen is intense, ill-educated, idle. Undreamed of by the one, unsuspected by the other, they grow apart. Ungoverned, how shall Guenever govern herself? Misinterpreted, value herself? Far upon the sunlit moor, a speck against the pure horizon, Launcelot rides, — silent, subtle, swift, as Fate rides ever. . . .

Poor Guenever! After all, poor Guenever! Song and story, life and death are so cruel to a woman. To Launcelot, repentant, is given in later life the best thing left upon earth for a penitent man — a spotless son. To Launcelot is reserved the aureola of that blessed fatherhood from which sprang the finder of the Holy Graal, “pure in thought and word and deed.” To Guenever is given the convent and solitary expiation; to Guenever disgrace, exile, and despair. Prone upon the convent floor, our fancy leaves her, kissing Arthur’s kingly and forgiving, but departing feet, half dead for joy because he bids her hope that in some other world — in which she has not sinned — those spotless feet may yet return to her, her true and stronger soul return to him; but neither in this world — never in this. Poor soul! Erring, weak, unclean; but for that, and that, and that, poor soul! poor soul! I can never bear to leave her there upon the convent floor. I rebel against the story. I am sure the half of it was never told us. It must be that Arthur went back some autumn day and brought her gravely home. It *must* be that penitence and patience and acquired purity shall sometime win the respect

and confidence of men, as they receive the respect and confidence of God. It must be that at some distant but approaching day *something* of the tenderness of divine stainlessness shall creep into the instinct of human imperfection, and a repentant sinner become to human estimates an object sorrowful, appalling, but appealing, sacred, and sweet.

Who can capture the where, the how, the wherefore of a train of fancy? Was it because I thought of Guenever that I heard the story? Or because I heard the story that I thought of Guenever? My washwoman told it, coming in that bitter day at twilight and sitting by the open fire, as I had bidden her, for rest and warmth. What should *she* know of the Bulfinch and Ellis and Tennyson and Dunlop, that had fallen from my lap upon the cricket at her feet, that she should sit, with hands across her draggled knees, and tell me such a story? Or were Dunlop and the rest untouched upon the library shelves till after she had told it? Whether the legend drew me to the fact, or the fact impelled me to the legend? Indeed, why should I know? It is enough that I heard the story. She told it in her way. I, for lack of her fine, realistic manner, must tell it in my own.

Queen Guenever had the toothache. Few people can look pretty with the toothache. The cheeks of royalty itself will swell, and princely eyelids redden, and queenly lips assume contours as unæsthetic as the kitchen-maids' beneath affliction so plebeian. But Guenever looked pretty.

She abandoned herself to misery, to begin with, in such a royal fashion. And, by the way, we may notice that in nothing does blood "tell" more sharply than in the endurance of suffering. There is a vague monotony in the processes of wearing pleasure. Happy people are very much alike. In the great republic of joy we find tremen-

dous and humiliating levels. When we lift our heads to bear the great crown of pain, all the "points" of the soul begin to make themselves manifest at once.

Guenever yielded herself to this vulgar agony with a beautiful protest. She had protested, indeed, all winter, for that tooth had ached all winter; had never even told her husband of it till yesterday. She had flung herself upon the little crocheted cricket by the sitting-room fire, with her slender, tightly-sleeved arm upon the chintz-covered rocking-chair, and her erect, firm head upon her arm. Into the palm of the other hand the offending cheek crept, like a bird into its nest; with a caressing, nestling movement, as if that tiny hand of hers were the only object in the world to which Guenever did not scorn to say how sorry she was for herself. The color of her cheeks was high but fine. Her eyes — Guenever, as we all know, had brown eyes, more soft than dark — were as dry as they were iridescent. Other women might cry for the toothache! All the curves of the exhausted attitude she had chosen had in them the bewitching defiance of a hard surrender to a power stronger than herself, with which certain women meet every alien influence, from a needle-prick to a heartbreak. She wore a white apron and a white ribbon against a dress of a soft dark brown color; and the chintz of the happy chair, whose stiff old elbows held her beautiful outline, was of black and gold, with birds of paradise in the pattern. There was a stove, with little sliding doors, in Guenever's sitting-room. Arthur thought it did not use so very much more wood to open the doors, and was far healthier. Secretly he liked to see Guenever in the bird-of-paradise chair, with the moody firelight upon her; but he had never said so — it was not Arthur's "way." Launcelot, now, for instance had said something to that effect several times.

Launcelot, as all scholars of romantic fiction know, was the young bricklayer to whom Arthur and Guenever had

rented the spare room when the hard times came on,— a good-natured, inoffensive lodger as one could ask for, and quite an addition, now and then, before the little sliding doors of the open stove, on a sober evening, when she and Arthur were dull, as Guenever had said. To tell the truth, Arthur was often dull of late, what with being out of work so much, and the foot he lamed with a rusty nail. King Arthur, it is unnecessary to add, was a master carpenter.

King Arthur came limping in that evening, and found the beautiful, protesting, yielding figure in the black and golden chair. The Queen did not turn as he came in. One gets so used to one's husband! And the heavy, uneven step he left upon the floor jarred upon her aching nerves. Launcelot, when he had come, about an hour since, to inquire how she was, had bounded down the stairs as merrily as a school-boy, as lightly as a hare, and turned his knightly feet a-tip-toe as he crossed the room to say how sorry he felt for her; to stand beside her in the moody light, to gaze intently down upon her, then to ask why Arthur was not yet at home; to wonder were she lonely; to say he liked the ribbon at her throat; to say he liked a hundred things; to say it quite unmanned him when he saw her suffer; to start as if he would say more to her, and turn as if he would have touched her, and fly as if he dared not, and out into the contending, mad March night. For the wind blew that night! To the last night of her life Queen Guenever will not forget the way it blew!

"Take some Drops," said Arthur. What a tiresome manner Arthur had of putting things! Some Drops, indeed! There was nothing Guenever wanted to take. She wanted, in fact, to *be* taken; to be caught and gathered to her husband's safe, broad breast; to be held against his faithful heart; to be fondled and crooned over and cuddled. She would have her aching head imprisoned in his healthy hands. And if he should think to kiss the agonizing cheek,

as *she* would kiss a woman's cheek if she loved her and she had the toothache? But Arthur never thought! Men were so dull at things. Only women knew how to take care of one another. Only women knew the infinite fine languages of love. A man was tender when he thought of it, in a blunt, broad way.

There might be men — One judged somewhat from voices; and a tender voice — Heaven forgive her! Though he spoke with the tongues of all angels, and the music of all spheres, and the tenderness of all loves, what was any man's mortal voice to her — a queen, the wife of Arthur, blameless king of men?

The wife of Arthur started from the old chair whereon the birds of paradise seemed in the uneven firelight to be fluttering to and fro. The color on her cheeks had deepened painfully, and she lifted her crowned head with a haughty motion towards her husband's face.

"I'm sure I'd try the Drops," repeated Arthur.

"I'll have it out!" snapped Guenever. "I don't believe a word of its being neuralgia. I'll have them all out, despite him!"

Guenever referred to the court dentist.

"I'll have them out and make a fright of myself once for all, and go mumbling round. I doubt if anybody would find it made any difference to anybody how anybody looked."

It cannot be denied that there was a certain remote vagueness in this remark. King Arthur, who was of a metaphysical temperament, sighed. He was sorry for the Queen — so sorry that he went and set the supper-table, to save her from the draughts that lurked even in the royal pantry that mad March night. He loved the Queen — so much that he would have been a happy man to sit in the bird-of-paradise rocking-chair and kiss that aching, sweet cheek of hers till supper-time to-morrow, if that would help her. But he

supposed, if she had the toothache, she would n't want to be touched. He knew he should n't. So, not knowing what else to do, he just limped royally about and got the supper, like a dear old dull king as he was.

If Queen Guenever appreciated this little kingly attention, who can say? She yielded herself with a heavy sigh once more to the arms of the chintz rocking-chair, and ached in silence. Her face throbbled in time to the pulses of the wind. What a wind it was! It seemed to come from immense and awful distances, gathering slow forces as it fled, but fleeing with a compressed, rebellious roar, like quick blood chained within the tissues of a mighty artery, beating to and fro as it rushed to fill the heart of the black and lawless night.

It throbbled so resoundingly against the palace windows that the steps of Launcelot, blending with it, did not strike the Queen's ears till he stood 'beside her, in the firelight. Arthur, setting the supper-table, had heard the knightly knock, and bidden their friend and lodger enter (as King Arthur bade him always) with radiant, guileless eyes.

Sir Launcelot had a little bottle in his hand. He had been to the druggist's. There was a druggist to the king just around the corner from the palace.

"It's laudanum," said Launcelot. "I got it for your tooth. I wish you'd try it. I could n't bear to see you suffer."

"I'm half afraid to have Guenever take laudanum," said Arthur, coming up. "It takes such a mite of anything to influence my wife. The doctor says it is her nerves. I know he would n't give her laudanum when her arm was hurt. But it's just as good in you, Sir Launcelot."

Guenever thought it very good in him. She lifted her flushed and throbbing face to tell him so; but, in point of fact, she told him nothing. For something in Sir Launcelot's eyes, the wife of Arthur could not speak.

She motioned him to put the bottle on the shelf, and signified by a slight gesture peculiar to herself — a little motion of the shoulders, as tender as it was imperious — her will that he should leave her.

Now Launcelot, we see, was plainly sorry for Guenever. Was it then a fitting tenderer than sorrow that she had seen within his knightly eyes? Only Guenever will ever know; for Arthur, on his knees upon the crocheted cricket before the palace fire, was toasting graham bread.

Guenever, on her knees before the rocking-chair, sat very still. Her soft brown eyes, wide open, almost touched the cool, smooth chintz where the birds of paradise were flying on a pall-black sky. It seemed to her strained vision, sitting so, that the birds flew from her as she looked at them, and vanished; and that the black sky alone was left. The eyes that watched the golden birds departing were fair and still, like the eyes of children just awake. It was a child's mouth, as innocent and fair, that Guenever lifted just that minute suddenly to Arthur, with a quick, unqueenly, appealing smile.

"Kiss me, dear?" said Guenever, somewhat disconnectedly.

"Why, yes!" said Arthur.

He was n't able to follow the train of thought exactly. It was never clear to him why Guenever should want to be kissed precisely in the *middle* of a slice of toast. And the graham bread was burned. But he kissed the Queen, and they had supper; and he eat the burnt slice himself, and said nothing about it. That, too, was one of Arthur's "ways."

"Only," said Guenever, as the King contentedly finished the last black crust, "I wish the wind would stop."

"What's the trouble with the wind?" asked Arthur.

"I thought it was well enough."

"It must be well enough," said the Queen, and she shook

her little white fist at the window. "It *shall* be well enough!"

For the pulse of the wind ran wildly against the palace as Guenever was speaking, and throbbed and bounded and beat, as if the heart of the March night would break.

All this was long, long, long ago. How long Guenever can never tell. Days, weeks, months, — few or many, swift or slow, — of that she cannot answer. Passion takes no count of time; peril marks no hours or minutes; wrong makes its own calendar; and misery has solar systems peculiar to itself. It seemed to her years, it seemed to her days, according to her tossed, tormented mood.

It is in the nature of all passionate and uncontrolled emotion to prey upon and weaken the forces of reflective power, as much as it is in the nature of controlled emotion to strengthen them. Guenever found in herself a marked instance of this law. It seemed to her sometimes that she knew as little of her own story as she did of that of any erring soul at the world's width from her. It seemed to her that her very memory had yielded in the living of it, like the memory of a person in whose brain insidious disease had begun to fasten itself. So subtle and so sure had been the disease which gnawed at the Queen's heart, that she discovered with a helpless terror — not unlike that one might feel in whom a cancerous process had been long and undetected working — that her whole nature was lowering its tone in sympathy with her special weakness. She seemed suddenly to have become, or to feel herself become, a poisoned thing.

We may wonder, does not the sense of guilt — not the sensitiveness to, but the *sense* of guilt — come often as a sharp and sudden experience? Queen Guenever, at least, felt stunned by it. Distinctly, as if it and she were alone in the universe, she could mark the awful moment when it



came to her. Vivid as a blood-red rocket shot against her stormy sky, that moment whirred and glared before her.

It was a fierce and windy night, like that in which she had the toothache, when she and the King had eaten such a happy supper of burnt toast (for *hers* was burnt, too, although she would n't have said so for the world, since the King had got so tired and warm about it). How happy they had been that night! Sir Launcelot did not come again after supper, dimly feeling, despite the laudanum, that the Queen had dismissed him for the evening. She and Arthur had the evening to themselves. It was the first evening they had been alone together for a long time. Arthur sat in the chintz rocking-chair. He held her in his lap. He comforted her poor cheek with his huge, warm hand. His shining, kingly eyes looked down on her like stars from Heaven. He said:—

“If it was n't for your tooth, little woman, how happy we would be.”

And Guenever had laughed and said: “What's a toothache? I'm content, if you are.” And then they laughed together, and the golden birds upon the old chair had seemed to flit and sing before her; and brighter and sweeter, as they watched her, glimmered Arthur's guileless eyes.

The stars were fallen now; the heavens were black; the birds of paradise had flown; the wind was abroad mightily and cold; there was snow upon the ground; and she and Launcelot were fleeing through it and weeping as they fled.

Guenever, at least, was weeping. All the confusion of the miserable states and processes which had led her to this hour had cleared away, murky clouds from a lurid sky. Suddenly, by a revelation awful as some that might shock a soul upon the day of doom, she knew that she was no longer a bewildered or a pitiable, but an evil creature.

A gossip in the street, an old neighbor who used to bor-

row eggs of her, had spoken in her hearing, as she and Launcelot passed swiftly through the dark, unrecognized, at the corner of the Palace Court, and had said:—

“Guenever has fled with Launcelot. The Queen has left the King. All the world will know it by to-morrow.”

These words fell upon the Queen’s ear distinctly. They tolled after her through the bitter air. She fled a few steps, and stopped.

“Launcelot!” she cried, “what have we done? Why are we here? Let me go home! Oh! what have I done?”

She threw out her arms with that tender, imperious gesture of hers—more imperious than tender now—which Launcelot knew so well.

Strange! Oh! strange and horrible! How came it to be thus with her? How came she to be alone with Launcelot in the blinding night? *The Queen fled from the King? Guenever false to Arthur?*

Guenever, pausing in the cruel storm, looked backward at her footsteps in the falling snow. Her look was fixed and frightened as a child’s. Her memory seemed to her like snow of all that must have led her to this hour.

She knew not what had brought her hither, nor the way by which she came. She was a creature awakened from a moral catalepsy. With the blessed impulse of the Prodigal, old as Earth’s error, sweet as Heaven’s forgiveness, she turned and cried: “I repent! I repent! I will go home to my husband, before it is too late!”

“It is too late!” said a bitter voice beside her. “It is too late already for repentance, Guenever.”

Was it Launcelot who spoke, or the deadly wind that shrieked in passing her? Guenever could never say. A sickening terror took possession of her. She felt her very heart grow cold, as she stood and watched her foot-prints, on which the snow was falling wild and fast.

It was a desolate spot in which she and Launcelot stood. They had left the safe, sweet signs of holy human lives and loves behind them. They were quite alone. A wide and windy moor stretched from them to a forest, on which a horror of great darkness seemed to hang. Behind them, in the deserted distance, gleamed the palace lights. Within these the Queen saw, or fancied that she saw, the shadow of the King, moving sadly to and fro, against the drawn curtain, from behind which the birds of paradise had fled forever.

From palace to wilderness her footsteps lay black in the falling snow. As she gazed, the increasing storm drifted, and here and there they blurred and whitened over and were lost to sight.

So she, too, would whiten over her erring way. Man was not more merciless than Nature.

"I will retrace them all!" cried Guenever.

"You can never retrace the first of them," said again bitterly beside her Launcelot or the deathly wind. "Man is more merciless than Nature. There is no way back for you to the palace steps. In all the kingdom, there is no soul to bid you welcome, should you dare return. The Queen can never come to her throne again."

"I seek no throne!" wailed Guenever. "I ask for no crown! All I want is to go back and to be clean. I'll crawl on my knees to the palace, if I may be clean."

But again said sneeringly to her that voice, which was either of Launcelot or of the wind:—

"Too late! too late! too late! You can never be clean! You can never be clean!"

"Launcelot," said Guenever, rallying sharply and making, as it seemed, a mighty effort to collect control over the emotion which was mastering her, "Launcelot, there is some mistake about this. I never meant to do wrong. I never said I would leave the King. There is some mistake.

Perhaps I have been dreaming or have been ill. Let me go home at once to the King!"

"There is no mistake," said once more the voice, which seemed neither of Launcelot nor of the wind, but yet akin to both; "and you are not dreaming and you can never return to the King. The thing that is done is done. Sorrow and longing are dead to help you. Agony and repentance are feeble friends. Neither man nor Nature can wash away a stain."

"God is more merciful!" cried Guenever, in the tense, shrill voice of agony, stung beyond endurance. It seemed to her that nature could bear no more. It seemed to her that she had never before this moment received so much as an intellectual perception of the guiltiness of guilt. Now mind and heart, soul and body throbbed with the throes of it. She quivered, she struggled, she rebelled with the accumulated fervors and horrors of years of innocence. But it seemed to her as if the soil of sin eat into her like caustic, before whose effects the most compassionate or skillful surgeon is powerless. She writhed with her recoil from it. She shrank from it with terror proportioned to her sense of helplessness and stain.

"They who are only afflicted know nothing of misery!" moaned Guenever. "There *is* no misery but guilt!"

She flung herself down in the storm upon the snow.

"God loves!" cried Guenever. "Christ died! I *will* be clean!"

It seemed then suddenly to the kneeling woman, that He whose body and blood were broken for tempted souls appeared to seek her out across the desolated moor. The Man whose stainless lips were first to touch the cup of the Holy Graal, which all poor souls should after Him go seeking up and down upon the earth, stood in the pure white snow, and, smiling, spoke to her.

"*Though your sins,*" he said, "*are scarlet, they shall be white.*"

He pointed, as he spoke, across the distance; past the safe, sweet homes of men and women, toward the palace gates. It seemed to Guenever that he spoke again and said: —

“Return!”

“Through those black footsteps?” sobbed the Queen.

But when she looked again, behold! each black and bitter trace was gone. Smooth across them all, fair, pure, still, reposed the stainless snow. She could not find them, though she would. They were blotted out by Nature, as they were forgiven of God. Alas! alas! if man were but half as compassionate or kind. If Arthur —

She groveled on the ground where the sacred Feet had stood, which now were vanished from her. Wretched woman that she was! Who should deliver her from this bondage to her life's great holy love? If Arthur would but open the door for her in the fair distance, where the palace windows shone; if he would take a single step toward her where she kneeled within the wilderness; if he would but loiter toward her where that Other had run swiftly, and speak one word of quiet to her where He had sung her songs of joy! But the palace door was shut. The King took no step toward the wilderness. The King was mute as death and cold as his own white soul. On Arthur's throne was never more a place for Guenever.

Guenever, in the desert, stretched her arms out blindly across the blotted footprints to the palace lights.

Oh! Arthur. Oh! Arthur, Arthur, *Arthur*. . . .

“Why, Pussy!” said Arthur. “What's the matter?”

However unqueenly, Pussy was one of the royal pet names.

“My little woman! Guenever! My darling! Why do you call me so?”

Why did she call him indeed? Why call for anything?

Why ask or need or long? In his great arms he held her. To his true breast he folded her. Safe in his love he sheltered her. From heaven the stars of his eyes looked down on her. As those may look who wake in heaven, whose anguished soul had thought to wake in hell, looked Guenever. She was his honored wife. There was no Launcelot, no wilderness. The soul which the King had crowned with his royal love was clean, was clean, was clean!

She hid her scarlet face upon his honest heart and seemed to mutter something about "dreams." It was all that she could say. There are dreams that are epochs in life.

"But it was n't a dream, you see," said Arthur. "We've had a scare over you, Guenever. You took the laudanum, after all."

"Launcelot's laudanum! Indeed, no! I took the drops, as I told you, Arthur."

"The bottles stood together on the shelf, and you made the blunder," said Arthur, anxiously. "We think you must have taken a tremendous dose. I've sent Launcelot for the Doctor. And Nabby Jones, she was in to borrow eggs, and she said a little camphire would be good for you. She just went home to get it. But I've been frightened about you, Guenever," said Arthur. Arthur spoke in his own grave and repressed manner. But he was very pale. His lips, as the Queen crept, sobbing, up to touch them, trembled.

"Well, well," he said, "we won't talk about it now." Guenever did not want to talk. She wished Nabby Jones would stay away, with her camphire. She wished Launcelot would never come. Upon her husband's heart she lay. Within her husband's eyes the safe, home fire-light shone. Across the old chintz chair the birds of paradise were fluttering like birds gone wild with joy.

Without, the wind had lulled, the storm had ceased, and through the crevices in the windows had sifted tiny drifts of cool, clean snow.

And this, know all men henceforth by these presents, is the true story of Guenever the Queen.

## DOHERTY.

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IF you *want* to see the inside of a station, you 'd ought to have been here last night. It is n't often, ma'am, there is a night that would be suitable for you. I don't think there's been half a dozen this winter that I 'd want you round if you was my daughter or my sister — begging your pardon, ma'am, as the best way I can put it to you to express my meaning and the feeling that a man has about such things.

Ladies drop in of an errand now and then — you ain't the first. Curious errands, too. One, she wanted to circulate a total abstinence pledge; and another, she offered to pay the salary of a chaplain. She brought a specimen with her. Most I remember of him is what a little chap he was. Then I remember three coming in a squad to teach the women how to darn stockings. And one — but she was young — she brought a package of tracts, on pink paper. Then we've had 'em bring sandwiches, and hymn-books, and laylocks, and other singular things.

Most of 'em that drop in have that way about 'em as though the officers were a-locking these folks up here for their own personal gratification. Can't seem to get it into their heads! I always like to be polite to ladies, too, myself. Then, another thing. They're bent on it, these creeturs ain't past making over. Want to give 'em old clothes and get 'em work; set 'em up in little shops, and that. Shops! There is n't a man here once a month that would set under a roof, if you 'd give him a salary for it.



Why, once we used to give 'em soup. That was last winter. It did n't work. We don't do it now. But the city had a soup-day here one while, and a fish firm down on Atlantic Wharf said we might have their heads. So we told the men, if they 'd go down and get the heads it would make their soup so much the richer. Don't you see? Now we could n't get a man-jack of 'em to stir. Not one. They 'd rather go without than take the trouble. They're all so. All of a piece. And the women — well, the women —

Upon my word, I wish you *had* been here last night. I've been Lieutenant in this station for twelve years, and I don't think I ever felt as I did last night. It's puckery kind of work this — like taking alum on your tongue. After a year or so a man feels himself wizzling and toughening up in his feelings. Can't afford to have feelings down here, more 'n you can afford to stand round a burning house in cotton clothes. It only scorches you and don't make any odds to the house.

Ever see our books? No? Well just you look here, if you please. Just count those pages. Will you? From there to there. We took in all those in December. In the month of December, 1876, we had in this one station two thousand two hundred and fifty-two men and women. Of course, there's the usual share of arrests. There's Mahoney, and Jones, and Sullivan, and Pete Cartwright, and Julia Henderson right under my finger, all arrests. All drunk. But most of 'em are vagrancies in the winter time. You see it was pretty cold last December, especially nights. And then we're careful about our officers. Don't allow kicking, and no more swearing at 'em than circumstances require. These creeturs get such things round among themselves. They have a fancy for this station, maybe. I don't know how that is. We mean to be humane on this corps. That's our theory. Some of our officers have a very gentlemanly

way. Not that we think it makes much difference. I tell you, madam (you may better understand it at the outset), I don't know what your intentions are, of course — but ladies come with so many charitable and curious designs which it seems a pity to disappoint; — but I tell you the folks that get into these places are a hopeless lot. They're folks without a chance. Most of us have a chance, I reckon, in this world, some time or nuther; even them poor devils. But by the time they get here their chance is as dead as John Brown's body. I don't say there's never an exception. Now, there was that creetur last night. Maybe if somebody'd taken her in hand several years ago — if a lady with the way you seem to have — (I hope you'll excuse me, ma'am, but there is a difference in a lady's way, such as I think you'd have to be a man and do a pretty rough man's work, like mine, for instance, to understand so clearly as you might). I wished last night, I will confess, that there'd been a lady here. It did occur to me to go home for my wife. But I never bring my wife into the station-house.

Here's the entry — one of the last ones I mean. See!

“*D*: — *Doherty, Ellen. February 20th, 1877. Vagrancy.*” When I get time, I'm going to count up how often that woman's name has been on these books. But it would take a good deal of time. It's some years.

I remember very well the first time she came. Don't know how I happen to. There's such a lot of young girls. And pretty ones, too. This one was more than commonly good-looking — an Irish girl. She had a dark style and was paler than most of 'em. I think it must have been five years ago. It was the first time she'd ever been arrested. She took on dreadfully about it. She had n't begun to drink then. And what she was taken up for had never happened before. It was the first time, she said. Some-ways, I remember, I believed her. Seemed as if she'd break her heart. Had n't any folks, she said. Her'n were

dead. She cooped up in a little heap in the corner, on the floor, that night, and sat crying all the night. It was n't till nigh morning that the other women could get a word out of her. If I remember straight, we had an uncommonly rough lot of women-folks on that night. I would n't have put her in among 'em : but there's no other way. I never get quite used to that — shutting up a young thing with an old one.

Well, so she was sent to the House for thirty days ; and by and by she was back again. She came of her own accord that time. Said she could n't get anything to do. Seems to me she said she wanted honest work. They do say it once in a while. And it was a pretty cold night. She came for a place to sleep.

So after that we got pretty well used to her ; but mostly after she begun to drink, and alter, like the rest. It don't take long. Their own mothers would n't know 'em mostly in three years or so ; less, maybe, as it happens.

Well, yes. Our rule is : come a fortnight and you go. When one comes steady for two weeks every night, then it is a case of vagrancy and we can send 'em to the almshouse. But Doherty, she was pretty careful. She grew smart as she grew worse. If she got taken up, it was n't for a long pull. Never knew her in the House at the longest more than three months at a time. And when she come to lodge, she steered pretty clear of the law — coming for a few nights, you see, and then off again on her own ways. They're more afraid of the almshouse then they are of hell, these folks.

So she got to be a pretty old customer — always come to this station. I don't know but that was my fault. Once I give her a pair of my wife's shoes. It was one January morning, twelve below zero. She had n't any stockings, only a pair of old rubbers, and her bare feet came through onto the pavement, and it was pretty icy. I suppose I might have lost my place for it. Eh ! Cap'n ? But I don't think Doherty ever told of me.

So you see, ma'am, we've all got kind of dependent on her. Should have missed the creetur, I dare say, if she had n't come. You get so used to the same thing, you know, much as you do to your temper or your whiskers. She'd come in, and I'd say: "Well, Doherty, back again?" And generally I went down myself to see her in the cell. Sometimes I do, with the old hands. She grew to be a pretty tough case, Doherty did. And yet there was always something I liked about Doherty.

You see she used to sing. Sometimes they do. And once or twice I've had a chap here who could draw portraits of the rest. Scrawl the walls all over, if he was n't watched. One of the worst cases we ever had on these books, his name was Gaffrey — Peter Gaffrey. Killed an officer, finally, with a horse-shoe. He used to talk Latin when he was drunk, and some other language. I thought it was Dutch: but the chief heard him, and said he guessed it was Greek. The fellow used to get the rest all ranged round like an audience, and then go at it. But generally they talk religion. It's more popular.

This Doherty that I speak of, she had a beautiful voice. I'm something of a judge of music. My wife sings in a choir in a Baptist church. There was a lady happened here once — wanted to get some scholars for her Bible-class, she said; and she heard Doherty sing. It was on one of her sprees. I would n't have had a lady heard Doherty sing that night, if I'd been in time to stop it. None of the men are often quite like that. This lady, she grew so faint we had to carry her away. She did n't come again. It was early — six o'clock in the morning, too — and she'd come all the way from the West End to see the women before they were let out. We let them go at six o'clock. They don't get in very thick till toward midnight. By one o'clock we're pretty full.

Time and again I've set up here looking over the books

at dead of night, alone along with an officer or so, and heard the call go up from a man somewhere down below :—

“Doherty! Sing us to sleep, Doherty! Sing us to sleep!”

And then Doherty from the women’s cell would hear them, through the wall, and she’d begin. And the fighting and the swearing and all the horrid noise would quiet down ; and, true enough, I think they slept. I had a Newfoundland dog that went to sleep when my wife played the cabinet organ. Sometimes that woman would sing enough to make your flesh creep. She’d lost all her looks by that time. But she never sang so when she was sober. And sometimes she’d strike up a pretty thing, as clean and sweet as the hush-a-by my own baby hears, ma’am, from my own wife’s lips. Sometimes she sang “Auld Lang Syne” or “Home, Sweet Home ;” and once that woman picked up a song called the “Three Fishers.” Maybe you know it. You could hear her all over this great building :—

“For men must work, and women must weep,  
——And women must weep.” ——

“Don’t you ever sing any hymns, Doherty?” I says to her one night — more to see what she would say, you know. But she looked at me and made no answer, and passed on. Doherty never quite lost her ways, like other women, when she was herself. Sometimes she was quite manageable and gentle in her ways. That night she did n’t sing at all. The men kept it up, off and on, all night : “Is Doherty in to-night?” “Has n’t Doherty come?” “Sing us to sleep, Doherty! Sing us to sleep!”

But she would n’t open her lips ; and when morning came — it was a snowy morning — and I let her out, she tugged a little, this way, on my sleeve, as she went out, and said : “Good-by, Lieutenant,” like a lady. She did n’t show herself again for a long while after that.

This winter she’s come pretty often. In December she

come nigh her fortnight's term; but she cleared out just in time. Then again this month. It's been a pretty cold winter, and the woman seemed sickly. I felt sorry for her. She'd grown unpleasant looking, and she coughed. I don't think she had any place of her own this season, anywhere. We could n't find out. The Cap'n and I both felt a kind of interest, you see, she'd been on our books so long. It was only natural. But I do assure you, ma'am, there is nothing to be done for such a case. Nothing whatever. I would n't look like that, if I was you. You can't help it. Him that permits 'em, He strikes 'em off our books, now and then, into his, madam; and best for Him and them and us, I take it, when it happens.

Now, last night, the 23d of February, that woman, she'd just made out her fourteenth night consecutive; and I had it planned to send her to Tewksbury to-day. She'd be warm in the poor-house, at least, and sure of her rations. Cap'n and I both felt glad of it when we saw her stagger in. He said: "We've got her this time." And I said: "Here again, Doherty?"

I went up to speak to her, for I felt a little sorry, too, knowing it was the last time. For you could n't understand how familiar their faces grow, nor the kind of feeling that an officer gets about them, now and then.

There is the entry just as I put it down, after so many times.

"No. 31 (she came in rather early) — No. 31. D:— *Doherty, Ellen. Vagrancy. Sick.*" For we saw at once that she was pretty sick. She'd been beating about in the storm. The snow was all over her. I noticed she had on a clean calico dress. She stood just where you're standing, ma'am, while I made the entry. It took the snow some time to melt, for it had sleeted some. She looked almost as if she was in a white dress, she was so covered. She had her hair done up neat, too.

I thought I'd go and see her in the cell myself. So I went down. She walked very slow and seemed weak. "Tired, Doherty?" said I.

"Lieutenant," said she, "folks used to call me Nell. Nobody called me Doherty till I begun to come to the police-station. I don't think anybody called me that till I'd been into the House," says she.

Then I said, for I thought I'd pacify her, if I could: "Are you sick to-night, Nell?"

"Oh, my God!" says she — just like that. Then she threw up her arms over her head, and began to sob and take on. But she did n't swear. She felt too sick, I take it. So we put her in with the rest, and she got into the corner and sat crying.

It was not till toward midnight that she begun. They did n't get well in and quieted before that. But every now and then the men would call: "Sing us to sleep, Doherty! Where is Doherty? Doherty! Sing us to sleep!"

The storm set in hard toward midnight. It beats heavily here upon the office windows, as you see, ma'am; and we get a pretty clean sweep of the wind, on account of the street running to the wharves. I sent down once to ask how Doherty seemed: but the officer reported that she was quiet, and he wished the rest were. They'd all set in, men and women, he said, in concert, a-crying out: "Sing us to sleep, Doherty!"

Pretty soon she began. I could hear her plain above the roaring of the storm. She began — Doherty began — that — that poor — miserable — creetur — she that had once been a woman like other womanfolks — excuse me, ma'am; but she's been on our books a good many years. And I've heard her sing such things! I never looked to be taken by surprise, as Doherty took me. You're not surprised very easy, in such a place as this, at anything your fellow-sinners do.

But about midnight, when the storm was at its thick and the cells were growing still, Doherty, she sat up and began to sing a hymn. She sang: —

“Shall we gather at the river?”

My boy sings that at Sunday-school, and my wife, she strikes it up the first thing on the cabinet organ every Sunday night. Doherty sang it all through: —

“At the margin of the river,  
Washing up its silver spray,  
We shall walk and worship ever,  
All the happy, golden day.”

Those are the words. I thought perhaps you would n't know them. Folks sing them a great deal in the Baptist church.

Before you could have cocked a pistol it was as quiet as the grave all through this place. The officers looked at one another. All the men waked up. The women, they got together in a heap about her. The Cap'n said to me: *Doherty's* singing *hymn-tunes!*” I said I thought we'd go down and see; and down we went.

When we looked in at the grating, I wish, ma'am, you could have seen those men — ragged, rough, red, drunk. Some of 'em taken in awful crimes. No, I don't wish you had seen them. But there they set, as silent as a row of angels on the judgment day, a-listening to hear that woman sing. One and another, they said: “Hush! Hush!” And one fellow said: “I used to sing that song myself.” He was up for assault and battery. Badly beaten, too, himself, about the face. He crept along the wall, I noticed, on his knees, to get where he could hear her better. When she stopped, he hollered out: —

“Give us some more, Doherty!”

And the rest said: —

“Doherty, give us another psalm-tune!”

But one of the women said: —



“Come, Nell! Sing us to sleep with the hymns.”

So then she began again; and she gave it to 'em, one upon another, fast and clear. Heaven knows where the creetur learned 'em. At some Protestant Sunday-school, maybe, where she 'd wandered in at holidays. They go a good deal, on account of the Christmas presents.

We all got round her there — the men inside and the officers without — and listened for awhile. I don't think I ever heard her sing so in all my life. Doherty had a fine voice, and no mistake. If she 'd been respectably born, she 'd have been a great singer, that woman, I take it; and folks would have been running to the opera and to concert halls to hear her.

So there she sat and sung. She set up in one corner, with her chin upon her hands and noticed nobody; but stared straight on before her. She sang “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” and “Depths of Mercy;” and she sung “I heard the voice of Jesus say,” and “Love at Home,” and all those. And all the men and all the women listened. And I saw the Cap'n draw his hand acrost his eyes. And I'll own it was too much for *me*. I will, indeed.

To see her there, letting out those holy words so trustfully, as you might say, ma'am, as if she had as much right to 'em as anybody — that — poor — wretched — Madam, it was enough to break your heart to hear her. I could n't help remembering how pretty she had been and young, and how she took on the first night she ever come to us.

Pretty soon I come away up-stairs — for she unmanned me so, before the men; and I set down here and had it out alone. But while I was setting here I heard a lull, and one of the Irish boys called out: —

“Give us the one more, Doherty! Then ye can take yer sleep yerself!” —

And then, ma'am, she began, quite low and in a faint voice, and very sweet, and she sung: —

“Jesus, Lover of my soul.”

She sung it this way, singing louder now and then : —

“ Let *me* to Thy bosom fly,  
While the billows near *me* roll. . . .  
Hide *me*, O Thou Saviour, hide,”

and in the midst of the verse she stopped. The men called to her, and the women ; and the Cap'n said : —

“ Give us the rest, Nell ! ”

I was rather glad he called her Nell just then ; for when we got in, wondering what it all meant, and hushing up the women, ma'am, as best we could, we found her lying turned a little on her side, with her face against the wall, quite dead.

It does n't happen so often, ma'am, that we ever get quite toughened to it. And being a woman makes it a little different. I wish you 'd seen her. Upon my soul, I do. I wish some woman had been there of a different sort from them about her. We don't often have a prettier nor a more modest and more gentle creetur than Doherty was the first night we ever saw her here. I wish you could have heard her sing the hymns.

## THE VOYAGE OF THE "AMERICA."

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It seems as wild as Constance, as eerie as Undine, as far as Morte d'Arthur, as big as Robinson Crusoe, as hard as Jonah.

I sit upon the jutting lava rocks of Eastern Point, and say it seems impossible.

Lazily upon the rich and tortured hues which the beating water and the bursting fire opened for my pleasure ages ago, falls the liquid August sunlight, as only Gloucester sunlight falls, I think, the wide world over. Through it, the harbor widens, gladdens, to the sea. The tide beats at my feet, a mighty pulse, slow, even, healthy, and serene. Scant weeds of umber shades and emerald, with now and then a dash of carmine, are sucked in by the olive-green barnacles, or wash idly past me through the lava gorge. The near waves curve and break in quiet colors; across the harbor's width they deepen and purple, if one can place the eyes, beneath the blaze of the climbing sun, upon them. A shred or two of foam, curling lightly against the cliffs of the western shore, whispers that far across the broad arm of the Point the sleeping east wind has reared his head to look the harbor over. Beneath the bright shade of many-hued sun-umbrellas the dories of the pleasure-people tilt daintily. At the distance nearly of two miles — the harbor's width — I can see the glitter of the cunners caught sharply from the purple water: as well as the lithe, light drawing of a lady's hand over the boat's side against the idle tide. All along

the lee shore from the little reef, Black Bess, to the busy town, the buoys of the mackerel nets bob sleepily; in and out among them, with the look of men who have toiled all night and taken nothing, glide the mackerel fishers, peaceful and poor. The channel, where the wind has freshened now, is full. The lumber-schooner is there from Machias, the coal-bark bound for Boston, the fishing-sloop headed to the Banks. The water-boat trips up and down on a supply tour. A revenue cutter steams in and out importantly. The Government lighter struts by. A flock of little pleasure sails fly past the New York school-ship, peering up at her like curious canaries at a solemn watch-dog. A sombre old pilot-boat, indifferent to all the world, puts in to get her dinner after her morning's work, and the heavily-weighted salt-sloops tack to clear the Boston steamer turning Norman's Woe.

And Norman's Woe, the fair, the cruel, — the Woe of song and history, — can it ever have been a terror? Now it is a trance. Behind it the blended greens of the rich inhabited shore close up softly; upon it the full light falls; the jagged teeth of the bared rock round smoothly in the pleasant air; the colors known to artists as orange chrome and yellow ochre and burnt Sienna caress each other, to make the reef a warm and gentle thing.

Beyond it stirs the busy sea. The day falls so fair that half the commerce of the Massachusetts coast seems to be alive upon its happy heart. The sails swarm like silver bees. The black hulls start sharply from the water-line, and look round and full like embossed designs against the delicate sky. It is one of the *silver days*, dear to the hearts of dwellers by the shore, when every detail in the distance is magnified and sharp. I can see the thin, fine line of departing mast-heads, far, far, far, till they dip and utterly melt. Half-way Rock — half-way to Boston from my lava gorge — rises clear-cut and vivid to the unaided eye, as if

brought within arm's-length by a powerful glass. And there the curved arm of the Salem shore stretches out, and Marblehead turns her fair neck toward us: in the faint, violet tinge of the outlines I can see pale specks where houses cluster thickly.

Beyond them all, across the flutter of uncounted sails, which fly, which glide, which creep, which pass and repass, wind and interwind, which dare me to number them and defy me to escape them, — dim as a dream and fair as a fancy, — I can distinctly see the long, low, gray outline of Cape Cod.

Cape Cod? I will take the "Sandpiper" and row over there after dinner. Nothing were easier.

I say as much to the Ancient Mariner who sits below me in the lava gorge, bracing his foot against the death of half a hundred green and golden snails, engaged, as Mr. Coleridge, you remember, tells us, in the honorable, if prosaic, occupation of cleaning cod. The Ancient Mariner is of a literal turn of mind, and, to my innocent, metaphysical attempt to "conceive the inconceivable," superciliously and succinctly makes answer: —

"Think so!"

And indeed, after some moments of reflection, the bold idea seems so to work upon his feelings that he turns slowly around, as far as he ever allows himself to turn around when honoring me with his society, for he considers it a point of gallantry that he keep his busy shoulder broad across the range of vision which interposes between the cod and me; and for that knightly instinct, may all the cod in Gloucester harbor take it as a pleasure-trip to come into his net and be cleaned! He turns slowly, half-way round, and articulates distinctly: —

"Think so! Cape Cod! The 'Sandpeep'!"

No language can express the immense atmospheric pressure of scorn to the square inch of accent contained in this

irreverent remark. I catch my breath with horror. The "Sandpiper" — the dignified, the delicate, the dear; the "Sandpiper" that skims the glowing bay, now to the measure of Celia Thaxter's poem, now to the beat of swift and tiny wings above my head — now to the throb of the rower's own unspoken and unspeakable fancies — my boat — the "*Sand-peep*"!

It may be that my breathless silence penetrates the superb superiority below me with a dim sense of desire to make amends for an uncomprehended but palpable injury; for, after a certain pause, in the serene, slow voice peculiar, I believe, to an old salt about to spin an intricate sea-yarn, there float to me the words:—

"Did ye ever hear about the schooner 'America'?"

In an instant I forgive him. He might have called it, as the reporter did, the "*Sand-scrafer*" — I could have forgiven that, yea, unto seventy times seven. I clamber into the softest corner of the lava gorge; I court the tenderest embrace of my Himalaya shawl; I fix my eyes upon the violet horizon and the silver sea. The Ancient Mariner, sitting still, impervious, between his honorable occupation and my own, gestureless, unimpassioned, half-hidden, tells the tale with the serenity and insistence of an old Greek chorus; and between the pauses of his unvaried voice the rising tide beats restlessly.

"Wal, I'll tell you about that if you'd like to hear. Times I've sat in the chimbley corner and heerd my grandfather tell it, ain't skerce. You see my *grandfather* was one of 'em. We used to consider it a great honor in our days, folks did, to be one of that there crew. True? It's true as Bible. And I'm an old-fashioned man that believes in Bible. Mebbe because I was brought up to, and it's handy coming by your religion in the course of natur', as it is by your eyebrows or your way of walking. Then, mebbe it's

the way a man's made up. Some folks take to religion, and some folks take to shoes, and it may be fishing, or, perhaps, it's rum. My grandfather was a pious man.

"It was nigh a hundred years ago; in Anne Dominoes 1779, as my grandfather used to say, that the schooner 'America' weighed anchor from this port bound for the West Indies on a trading voyage.

"There was five in the crew, and my grandfather he was one. They were Gloucester boys, as I remember, grow'd up around here. And Cap'n Elwell, everybody knew *him*; he was postmaster. They sailed the last of July, 1779.

"'We sailed the last of July,' says my grandfather, 'seventeen hundred and seventy-nine,' says he, and if I've heerd him say it once I've heerd it fifty times. I was a little shaver. I used to sit on stormy nights and hear him talk. The only thing I ever had against my grandfather was the time he took to steer through family prayers. I whittled out a dory rudder once before he got through praying. But when it come to yarns, you could n't find his beat. And that's what perplexes me. Why, if a man can tell a good yarn to folks, can't he tell a good one to the Lord? For that a prayer's no more nor less than that, to my mind — a mighty yarn — so big you believe it when you're telling it because you can't help yourself, and other folks believe it when they listen because they can't help theirselves. Eh? Well, I don't know; that's the way it seems to me.

"There was one chap among the boys booked for that voyage in the 'America' that I must mention. The boys they called him Bub. He was a youngish fellow — the youngest of the lot. And I've heerd tell he was palish in his make, and slight, sort o' like a girl; and how he had a pretty face, and that his hair curled. Light hair, grandfather said, and blue eyes. I can remember once his sitting up against the kitchen boiler and saying how that fel

low's eyes remembered him of a little sister that I had about that time. But her name was Dorothy, and she died of scarlet fever.

"Now, you see, this young chap that they called Bub, he'd just got married. Barely nineteen, says grandfather, was that boy, and married to a little girl mebbe a year the less. And the cutting thing about it was these poor young things had n't been married not more than six weeks when the 'America' set sail.

"I don't know if folks took things a hundred years ago as they might take 'em now. Suppose so. Don't you? Seems somehow as if they was made of different dough. Now, I've seen women, and women, and the way wives take on, you know, when their men set sail from Gloucester harbor. Fishing folks are used to that. Them that go down to the sea in ships get used to bitter things. It ain't so much taking your life in your hands, as other matters that are wuth more than life to you to think on and remember of. If you've married a good woman and set anything by her, and she set anything by you, a man takes her eyes along with him as they looked with tears in 'em; and her hands along, as they felt when they got around his neck; and her voice, the sound it had, when it choked in trying to say good-by that morning; and the look of the baby in her arms as she stood ag'in the door.

"Women-folks are plenty, but they're skerce in their ways. One don't do things like another. You'll never find two fish jump on the hook in the same manner, not if you fish to the next Centennial. I've seen a little measly cunner make fuss enough as it hed been the sea-sarpeut; and I've seen a two-pound mackerel slip int' the dory polite and easy, as if he'd only come to dun you for a little bill.

"Some women they take on like to make you deaf. Screech. Have highsterics. Some they follow him to the wharf and stand sobbin', sort of quiet. There's others that



stay to home, and what they says and what they suffers no man knows but him that they belong to. That's the way my wife always done. Never a messmate of *mine* saw that woman cry. Once I saw a woman at the laundry over there, doing clothes among a lot of folks, and a man steps up and says to her before them all — and if I'd been nigh enough seems I should have knocked him down — and says he: 'Your husband's drowned, and your son Tom.' Like that! Wal, she just put her apron over her head, that woman did, threw it across without a word, and she dropped her irons, and she put and run. She run right through us all, and up the streets, and straight for home. And in she went and shut the door, and let no one come after.

"Nigh as I can make out, this young fellow's wife I'm talkin' of was some like that. Folks say she was a pretty creetur, with that look some women have when they're just married: as happy as an angel, and as scarey as a little bird — I've seen 'em; shy of everybody but him; and think themselves too well off to care if ever they speak to other folks again. I like to see a woman have that look. It wears off quick enough. So does the shine on a fancy bait; but all the same you want your bait to *shine*; you don't go trading for a dull one, if only of respect to the feelings of the fish.

"Now, of all the p'int's that have been forgotten in that affair, it's never been disputed to my knowledge what the name was of that poor young woman. Cur'ous, ain't it? Her name was Annie. I've seen men sit and wrangle over bigger matters in the story, as how the wind was on a certain day, or who it was that picked them up, and so on; but I never heerd one yet deny that the young woman's name was Annie.

"You see they was mostly older and settled down; used to their wives by that time. And then it turned out so with Bub. The chap was musical too, I've heerd tell, and folks

had it, that he called her Annie Laurie. I suppose you 've heerd a song called 'Annie Laurie'? Eh? Did n't sing 'Annie Laurie' those days as they sing it these'n? I don't know. All I know is what folks said.

"It was a blazing hot July, I've heerd, the July the 'America' set sail. Night before they was to sail, it was dead still, and hot like to weaken you to rags. My grandfather he was out a little late, to get a sou'-wester that he'd ordered in a little old shop that used to stand over there beyond Davis's Fish Dinners — tore down long ago. His house, you see, was there — about there, acrost Front Street: and them two young things, they lived in a little alley, long since made away with, and he had to pass their house in going home. And because they was so young, and because of what come after, I suppose, he said, says he, 'I shall never forget to the day I die,' says he, 'the sight I saw in walking by poor Bub's', says he.

"It was so hot, he says, that the curtain was rolled up, and they'd set the light off in an inner room, thinking, mebbe, that no one would see. Or mebbe, in their love and misery, they did n't think at all. But the light shone through acrost, and there they sat, he says, half indistinct, like shadows, in one another's arms.

"He thought she must have had some wrapping-gown on, he said, of a light color and thin, because it was so hot; but not considering it quite proper to reflect upon, and half ashamed to have looked in, although not meaning to, he could n't say. But the poor young woman she sat in her husband's lap, and Bub, poor fellow! was brushing of her hair. She had long yellow hair, folks say, most to her feet. So there sits poor Bub, brushing of it for her, and just as grandfather went by, she put up her little hand — the way a woman has, you know — against her husband's cheek.

"To the day he died, my grandfather never mentioned that outside the family. It seemed a wickedness, he said.

He jammed his hat acrost his eyes, and hurried home to his own folks. It was an old story to him and grandmother, he said.

"'But,' says he, 'I felt as I'd have taken a five year voyage,' says he, 'if them two young things, just six weeks married, could have been let alone a little longer. They was living,' says my grandfather very solemn, 'what never comes but once to no one. They'd ought to have been let be. That kind of thing's too skerce in this world to be easy spoiled. God pity us!' says grandfather.

"Wal, so the next morning down the crew come, when the tide made, to the old wharf — rotted away, that wharf did, fifty years ago — where the 'America' lay at anchor. And the young man that they called Bub was among 'em — pale as one twelve hours dead, folks said; and about as still. But he spoke no word to nobody.

"The boys said she seemed to have said good-by within the door; and when she'd let him go, repented of it or found it more than she could bear. And how she follered after him a step or two — but he, never knowing, did n't turn. And when she saw the boys, and folks about, she stood a minute looking scared and undecided; and then they say she turned and ran — and never spoke; and that he never knew, for no one had the heart to tell him. And as she ran, she flung her hands above her head, and that long hair she had fell down and floated out, I've heerd. But she never spoke nor cried. And Bub walked on; and the boys they looked the other way.

"They had a likely voyage, I've always understood, and made their port in safety, although in war times, and feeling, I suppose, a little nervous all the while. I forget the place. They took in a cargo of cocoa and rum. 1779, you know, was in the Revolutionary War. I had a great-uncle that was killed in Stony Point that year.

"Wal, the 'America' she sailed for home on the 25th

of November. Cap'n Elwell, he calculated to be home, some folks said, by New Year's, some by Christmas; but that seems to me onreliable, though the facts come nigh enough to it. They sailed in particular good spirits. Sailors are like horses headed for home. Seems as if they'd take the A'mighty's wind and weather like bits between their teeth, to get there.

"In particular, I've heerd tell it was so with the young chap that they called Bub. On the out voyage he'd moped like a molting chicken; said nothing to nobody; never complained nor fretted; just moped. He hung round grandfather a good deal, who was civil to him, I guess, being sorry for the lad. Once he drew him on to talk about her, of a quiet evening, when they were on watch together; and he told him how he'd find, when he got back, the comfort that she'd taken in counting of the days, and how women he had known grew quiet after a while, and contented like, and how the first voyage was the worst, and what grandmother said to *him* when *he* come back, and things like that. I guess he chirked the creetur up.

"From the hour they weighed anchor for home, folks say, you never saw another like him. It seemed as if the 'America' was n't big enough to hold him. He said nothing to nobody, even then — only he began to sing. They say he had a beautiful voice. Of nights, the boys set out on deck to hear him.

"About half seas home, the 'America' she entered, on a run of foul weather. There was fogs, and there was headwinds, and there was some rain and sleet. And there come a spell, turned cold as a woman when her fancy's set ag'in you — a chilling, crawlin', creepin', offish sort of cold, that of all things is most onpleasant when on sea or land.

"Howsomever, they made good fight against it, though discouraged, till they sighted Cape Ann. Then come up an awful storm.

"There's a hymn I've heerd my boys sing to Sunday-school. They sing it in this way:—

" ' Safe, safe to home !  
No more to roam ;  
Safe, safe to home ! ' "

"I tell you, now, it *takes* a sailor to sing the sense into them words. Ther's no other callin' that I know of where the nigher you come to home the bigger your danger. Most folks when they're going anywhere feel safer nigher that they come to it. At sea it's different. The very rocks you played acrost when you was a baby, the old reefs and beaches and cliffs you know by inches and love like brothers, — they'll turn on you and gore you to death of a dark night, as if they'd been bounding bulls gone mad. And the waves you've learned to swim in, and plashed about and paddled in, and coaxed your father's heavy dory through when your hands was n't big enough to hold an oar, — those waves will turn ag'in you, as if you'd been their deadly foe, and toss you up as if you was a splinter, and grind you to pieces on the cliff, five rods, mebbe, from your own front door, with your children's shadows on the window-curtain before your eyes.

"There's an old proverb we used to have round Gloucester: 'A sailor's never got home till he's had his dinner,' meaning, I take it, that same idea.

"Wal, you see, when the 'America' was hove just off Cape Ann, then come up this storm I speak of. They was within a few hours' sail of home. They'd had east sou'-east winds, and a fine, drivin' snow-storm, squally and ill-tempered. That was about the first of January, most folks say. My grandfather he said it was the 27th of December, two days after Christmas, by his reckoning. That was off over the P'int — in that direction. Grandfather was trying to tie a reefpoint, with his fingers nigh frozen to't, and the bitter wind a-blinding him. All at once there comes a

dead shift. The wind she veered to the nor'ard at one awful bound, like a great leopard, and struck him like to strike him down. Through the noise he hears Cap'n Elwell shouting out his orders like a man gone mad; but whether it was that they did n't understand, or whether because so many of the crew had froze their fingers, I can't say. Anyhow, it all went ag'in them, and scoot they went under full canvas, headed out to sea before that dead north wind.

"Wal, by the time they'd furred and come to their wits again, and strove to look about 'em, and crawled up gaspin' from the deck where the wind had hammered of 'em down as flat as dead, they made a horrible discovery, for when the blow was lightened more or less, the 'America' she began to flop hither and yon in that manner that you would n't think much of if you did n't understand it; but if you was a seafaring man your heart would stand still to see.

"'What, in Death's name!' cries Cap'n Elwell, turning pale, I've heerd, for the first time upon the voyage, 'has happened to the rudder?'

"Then up steps one of the boys, — him that had the helm — and tells him, short, like this: —

"'Sir! we've lost our rudder. That's what's happened.'

"Wal, there's disarsters and disarsters, and some are as much wuss than others as the small-pox is wuss than the chicken. I've been to sea a good part of my life. I've been wrecked four times. I've been in Death's jaws till I could feel 'em crunch upon me times again, and I give it as my personal opinion, I'd ruther lose my mainmast, or I'd ruther run aground, or I'd be stove in aft, or I'd take my chances most anyhow, before I'd lose my rudder.

"Wal, the 'America' she lost her'n, and there they was. It was the fust of January, 1780. Cold. Cold as the eter-

nal grave. On an almost onsailed sea. Five poor freezin' fellows by themselves. Almost in sight of home, too.

"There they was. No more power to manage her than if they'd been five young ones put to sea in a wash-tub. Just about as if you and the 'Sand-peep' was to put out here int' the harbor and leave your oars to home.

"I've heerd my grandfather sit and tell how she behaved. Possessed as if she'd been a human creetur. Fust she'd start and put like mad for sea, head down and keel up, as she'd scour the ocean over. Then again she'd back, and go for home, like to dash herself ag'in the coast just for temper. Then she'd change her mind, and seem to draw herself up and step along, stately, like a lady out on a pleasure-trip, and minding her own business. Then mebbe she'd strike chop-seas, and just set there waddlin' like a mighty, helpless, dull old duck. Then more like she'd take the notion and make for the nighest breakers like a bee.

"Hey? No. I never read about her. Constance, did you say, they called her? I had a second cousin of that name. Put aboard without a rudder on the Mediterranean? Lived five year? We — all. I don't know. That's a bigger yarn than mine. Did you have it from any of the lady's relations?

"If you're acquainted with any folks that tell a yarn like that, you'll take it easy about the 'America.' Most folks don't. I've seen men sit and tell my grandfather and Cap'n Elwell to their face they lied.

"You see Cape Cod yonder — that grayish streak. Can't see it every day. Wal, it was the fust of January when the 'America' lost her rudder. *It was the fust of August when she was picked up.* As true as St. John wrote the Gospel before he lost his head, that there schooner drifted about in these waters mostly somewhere between Cape Ann and Cape Cod *from January until August next.* And of all the souls aboard her, only one — but I'll tell you about *him* presently.

"No; in all that while no living sail come nigh 'em. That shows, I take it, how onsailed the waters were in them days. Though what with the war and trade, I could never understand it only on the ground of luck. They'd got the Devil's luck.

"First month, they could n't none of 'em understand how bad the position was. Expected to be picked up, I suppose. Or thought they'd run the chance of wreck, and come out uppermost. And then their provisions held.

"But it come to be February, and there they was; and March, and there they was; and it wore to be April, and it settled to be May; and then it come June, and July.

"About along spring-time the provisions they began to give out. Then, I take it, their sufferings began. So they took the cocoa and they boiled it down, and lived on it, with the rum. But they suffered most for water. I take it, what those men did n't know of misery ain't much worth knowing.

"When the fuel give out, they tore out the inside of the boat. When they were picked up, I've heerd the inside was most gone, scooped out, bare timber enough left to hold her together.

"When you come to think of it, how all that time the schooner was drivin' up and down like a dead cops at the mercy of the wind and tide, it seems to me it must have give them a feeling enough to make a man go mad. It gives me a sensation to the brain to think on't sometimes safe at home. I've seen my grandfather after all those years set in our setting-room and tell, with the tears a-streaming down his cheeks, to remember of the suffering that they had.

"Once, I've heerd, one April day, there'd been a fog, and it lifted sudden, peeling off with a nor'-wester, and the men were lying round upon the ruined deck — they say they used to spend their time that way mostly, lyin' in the



sun or rain, stupid like a sleepy dog — and all at once there come an awful cry among 'em. It was the young man Bub. He was standing in the bows with his hands above his eyes to look.

“And all the boys crawled up to see. And there was Gloucester shores before 'em, far and looking peaceful like, and blessed as you might think heaven would look to souls in hell. But the wind it shifted, and the tide set out shortly after. And when the night-fall come, they had drifted out of sight again.

“From that hour, folks say, the poor lad kind of battered out. He could n't eat the cocoa as the rest did, and the rum it disagreed with him, and the drought fell on in June, and the heat come. He crawled into a little corner forward that he took a fancy to, and set this way, with his hands about his knees, and his eyes kind of staring from his head. Times they tried to talk to him, but nothing could they get. Only now and then he talked a jumble in a gentle way, but mostly all they could make of it was the poor young woman's name.

“‘Annie? Annie?’ softly over like that, as he was asking her a question. ‘Annie?’ he'd say, says grandfather. Nigh as I can make out, I think the heat must have gone harder by 'em than the cold.

“The blazin' of the sky above your head, says grandfather, and the deck blisterin' in little blisters, and feeling along with the tips of your fingers beside you, as you lay with your head upon your arms, to count 'em, not having other thoughts, and seeing the sky take on cur'ous colors, as green and purple, and seem to break up in flying solid bits, and spin before you, as you'd see it in a mighty dark kaleidoscope, and the gnawing like a thousand claws throughout your vitals, and the loathing of the cocoa, and the cur'ous way in which you'd feel, as you had n't eaten anything for swallowing of it. And how, when you was

lying there a-tossing up and down, crazy mebbe (for some of 'em was crazy as a loon, or dead drunk like with the miserable rum), a starving, thirsting, sickening, dying, and deserted creetur, — sudden you 'd seem to see the supper-table spread to home, and a piece of ice melting slowly at the edges down into the water-pitcher; and a bit of bacon mebbe, and the kind of muffins that your wife made best, and her pouring of the coffee out, and the children teasing you for scraps and tastes, and of having had so much, you stopped to feed the kitten with the gristle. And then its coming to you all at once how fat that kitten was, and well-to-do, and your own folks feeding her while you was starving. 'I can understand,' says my grandfather, 'forever after how the fellow felt in Scriptor, when he said the servants in his father's house had bread enough, and some to spare. It was a very natural state of mind,' says grandfather.

"One chap, he says, was mostly troubled to know who his wife would marry after he was dead. They was a fellow he 'd been jealous of, and it bothered him. It was a second wife, too.

"I don't know how it was about the fishing. Whether it was lines they lacked or luck. Nigh as I can remember, it was both, but there was a net, and they got a mortal few.

"About the middle of July, there happened a cur'ous thing. The cocoa was gone. The day was hellish hot. They was perishing for water and for food. Then up the Cap'n rises slow and solemn, like a ghost among a crew of ghosts, and, says he: 'Let us pray.'

"I can't say if it had just occurred to him, or if he 'd ever said the same before. All I know is, how he said: 'Let us pray,' says Cap'n Elwell. Well, they say the poor creeturs crawled ont' their knees, such as had the power left, and all began to say their prayers in turns, like children, beginning with the Cap'n, and so down. And one,

he said, 'Our Father,' and some they prayed a regl'ar meetin' prayer, and one said, 'Now I lay me,' till it come to Bub.

"The poor lad lay upon the fore quarter-deck, all coiled up like a cable, and panted for his breath. One of the boys he nudged him.

"'Come, Bub,' says he, 'it's your turn. Everybody's tried his hand but you.'

"And you would n't believe it, but up that creetur got, and kneeled onsteady, and rolled his great blue eyes upon 'em, and folded his hands together — and his hands was that worn you could see through 'em — and then he lifted up his head and began to sing. And the words he sung was the words of 'Annie Laurie.'

"No man, I've heerd say, who saw that sight, forgot it to the day he died.

"Sang poor Bub: —

" 'Her face is aye the fairest  
That e'er the sun shone on.'  
'And she's a' the world to me,  
She's a' the world to me!'

"They say you could have heard him a full mile acrost the blazin', awful waters, singing there among them kneeling men, —

" 'She's a' the WORLD to me!'

"Him that made the heart of man to cling to woman, so deep and so mysterious, He knows; and Him that made the heart of man to turn to Him so weakly and so helpless, He may judge. The feelin's that a clean-natured young man will bear to his wedded wife ain't so far removed from a pious spirit, to my thinking. But, as for poor Bub's prayer, I ain't a judge, nor wishing to be one. I can't say what all that had to do with the fish. Folks have their personal opinions about that fish, as about most things that come up. All I know is, and this is a living fact, that very

mortal evening, as they floated, sickening unto death, upon the horrid calm that fell upon the sea, there jumps an enormous fellow from the water — clean out — and up, and over, and on deck among them. And they fell upon him like wild creeturs, not waiting to cook the flesh, but eating of it raw. And they feasted on him many days, and he kept them from starvation, I never heerd a doubt expressed. But Cap'n Elwell, I've been told, he thought it was the prayers. There was a shower come up that evening, too, and the men they saved a little water, and got poor Bub to drink it. I never could get my grandfather nor any one of 'em I knew, to talk much of what took place upon the 'America,' after that. Up to that p'int, he 'd talk and talk. But there he stuck. I take it the sufferings they suffered from that time to the rescue was of those things that no mortal man can jabber of. It's much with misery as it is with happiness, I think. About so far, you're glad of company, and you like to cry a sort of boat ahoy! to other folks' joys or sorrows; but there you stop; you draw in, and hold your tongue and keep your counsel. Other folks don't matter.

"Most I know is how they 'd drifted someway nigh Long Island when they was taken off. It was the second day of August, 1780. The boat that sighted them was bound from Dartmouth, over to England, to New York City. Seems to me, her Cap'n's name was Neal. At any rate, she set eyes on the 'America,' driftin' helpless up and down; and those men, like dead men, setting on the deck; and whether they made signals I don't know, but my impression is, they 'd lost the strength to use their voice. But, Neal, he lowered his boat, and he went to see. And there they was before him. And he took 'em off, and brought 'em home.

"And all the town turned out to greet them when they come. Some folks I've heerd they shouted, but others

stood and sobbed to see 'em. And mostly, I think, they took 'em to their wives and children, and never stopped to ask no questions, but shut the door and went about their business.

"Years and years, when I was a little chap, I've seen those men about our town. Folks looked on 'em as folks may have looked, I often think, on the fellows that come out of the tombs when Christ was crucified, and walked and talked among the livin'. I used to have a feeling, as I was afraid of 'em, and must speak softly, for fear I'd wake 'em up. And Cap'n Elwell, he lived to be ninety — being postmaster — and his wife very nigh the same.

"No; I was coming to that. I always hate to, when I tell the story. But gospel's gospel, and gospel-true you can't manufacture nor make over, no more'n you can the light of sunrise, or a salt east wind.

"Of all them men on the 'America,' six months tossing on the tides, and starved, and crazed, and tortured, as they was, one only died. They all come back but just that one. And he was the poor young lad that they called Bub.

"Now, there's a singular thing about that p'int. The men that come home you never could get them to tell of that poor young creetur's last hours. Of the time and manner of his death, no man would speak. Some say it was too dreadful to be talked of, that he suffered so, and raved about his wife enough to break the hearts of them that heard. Some say he got delirious and jumped into the water. Others have it that he just wasted on and pined away, and that he lay and begged for water, and there was a little in a dipper, but that the boys were stupefied, as you might say, and out of their own heads, and nobody noticed it to give it him. And others say another thing.

"One night I come home and found my grandfather there, I can remember just as plain, setting on the settle by the fire-place.

"'Grandfather,' says I, walking up and setting down and opening of my jack-knife, I remember, while I asked the question: 'Grandfather, what become of Bub?'

"'Bub died,' says the old man, short enough; 'we've talked enough of Bub.'

"'Wal,' says I, 'what I want to know is, you did n't draw for him?'

"'WHAT?' roars the old man, turning on me, like to knock me over.

"'Folks say,' says I, 'how the men on the "America" drew lots when they was starving, to eat each other up; and I heerd say the lot fell on Bub. I said I knew better than that,' says I, 'and so I thought I'd ask. You did n't eat him, did you, grandfather?'

'says I, as innocent as that.

"I remember I was whittling a thole-pin with my jack-knife, and I remember how I whittled it all round smooth, before that old man spoke or stirred. Then, up he come, and shook me till the breath was nigh out of my impudent little body, and glares down at me, till I'm frightened so I begin to cry.

"'If ever I catch you listening to such damned stuff again,' says grandfather, 'I'll have your father flog you till he's like to break every bone you've got!' Although he was a pious man, my grandfather did say, 'damned stuff.' And, after that, he was n't pacified with me for a year to come.

"In all that miserable story, now, there's one thing I like to think of. The poor young woman never lived to know. Whether it was the oncertainty and distress — but something went wrong with her, everybody agrees on that; and she and her baby, they both died before the boys come home without him. There used to be an old nurse, a very old creetur, about town, that folks said took care of her, and told about it; and how, at the very last, she set erect in bed, with all that hair of hers about her, and says, quite gentle and happy in her mind: —

"My husband's coming home to-night," says she; and up she raised her arms and moved one hand about, though feeble, as she was patting some one on the cheek, across the empty pillow; and so died.

"Wal, I've talked a powerful while. It's getting hot. Have dinner about this time, at your house, don't ye? If you did n't, I was going to say there's a lady that I know, can give you information of the 'America'; she's got a copy of the records. They've got the records over to Squam, and, if you find yourself so minded, I'll take the 'Sand-peep' some time when it's cooler, and row you up to see them. No trouble. Just as lieves. She's a pretty plaything, and you keep her clean. I would n't have you think I'd hurt your feelin's and meant a disrespect to-ward the 'Sand-peep.'"

The Ancient Mariner's tale, I am well convinced, is, for the most part, history; and it is proper for me to add that I owe to the kindness of "the lady that he knew," — and to that of a writer of Cape Ann, who, some time since, I am told, published in a local paper a fictitious version of these facts, — an exact copy of the records upon which the popular faith in the story leans.

These are the old parish records of Annisquam, and were kept by one Rev. Obadiah Parsons; upon whose authority we have the following facts: —

"The schooner 'America,' Capt. Isaac Elwell, sailed from Gloucester, the last of July, 1779, for the West Indies, which she left Nov. 25, bound for this town. She met with remarkably severe weather off this coast, and about ye first of Jan., 1780, when within a few hours' sail of Cape Ann, ye wind suddenly put into ye north-west, he lost ye vessel's rudder and was drove off ye coast again, and driven hither and thither on the ocean till ye second day of August last, when they were taken off ye wreck by Capt. Henry Neal,

of N. York, on his passage from Dartmouth, Eng., to N. Y. Who, when near Long Island, Aug. 10th, gave a boat to Capt. Elwell, in which he and the survivors of his crew, viz. ; John Woodward, Sam'el Edmundston, Jacob Saney, and Nath'el Allen came alongshore and arrived at Cape Ann, Aug. 26, 1780. Many were ye hardships Capt. Elwell and his crew endured for six months and seventeen days ; they had no bread nor meat to eat ; they lived on parched cocoa and N. England rum burned down, and sometimes they ate fishes raw ; in their greatest extremity, a large fish providentially leaped on ye vessel's deck, which served them for several days. They were frequently in great distress for want of water."



## WRECKED IN PORT.

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I NEVER set out here to the mouth of the harbor, anchored or becalmed (your line's taut, sir!), or similarly or otherwise at my leisure to take a fair squint inwards at the town, but I wonder what it may be like to go stark, staring mad.

If you'll haul in a mite faster now, it'll be better for you, and just as well for the fish.

That's about it.

I've noticed it about our cod, they know when I take gentlemen out, as well as I know myself. They'll take advantage of you, if they can, most any day. Maybe it's a professional preference, or a political, I'm sure I could n't say. I'd be willing to grant a Gloucester cod his choice of either, and then admit that he might have a mixed motive to bottom of it. It's natural enough, brought up as they are from infancy on the Fishery Question, with views more or less decided and distinct.

A little blue you are about the mouth, sir. I'd lay down if I was you. It's better for you, and quite as well for the fish, as I said before, and I'm used to it, bless you! When it is too rough for a gentleman outside, and it very often is, I always say: "Just lay down and take it easy, and leave the cod to me." He takes as many pound home to his wife come night, I reckon, and nobody the wiser for it, and who'll ask questions? Not me, nor yet the cod. How does that go? There! When there's a mite less embarrassment between yourself, sir, and your stomach, I'll

explain to you the feeling I had occasion to mention about the harbor mouth, and looking inwards at the town.

Well — and yet it ain't so easy to explain. Most things ain't. I've told it times enough, and yet not the whole of it either. There are folks, you know, you can talk to, and again there are folks you can't. There are boarders in the little hall chamber, not to mention names, I would n't tell Jib Hancko's story to, not for a week's board outright; but a pleasant way, sir, and an honest, as between man and man, and no complaining of the coffee, and not staving the dories in regardless because they ain't your own, and a kind of forethought for the cabbages if the garden lays between you and the bathing-house, why, that 's a different thing.

You'll remember of hearing of the great gale of 1839? No! You don't say! It's a surprising thing to me how ignorant folks are in the country. There are some smart men come from the country, too.

We were booked for Boston when the great gale of '39 came up. It was the last voyage I took to Boston. Fact is, I may as well own it was the last voyage I took anywhere. I was n't born with a reef-knot between my fingers, never boarded a fishing-smack that I did n't feel I'd as lief's be boarding my coffin, and that gale made a landlubber of me once for all.

We cleared from Wiscasset, along about the first week, if I recollect, the first week of December, in the schooner Pansie, with a cargo of lath and piles. We had about fifty thousand feet of lath aboard. Griggs was our cap'n. He belonged in Wiscasset. He had his mother aboard. She was an old lady, over seventy year old. He was taking her to Boston to spend the winter with her daughter.

"The old lady enjoys it, having these fair blows," says he one day to Hancko, standing aft. "She is n't much of a sailor."

"Did you ever see a woman that was?" asked Hancko. Jib Hancko was mate.

"Well, I don't know," says the cap'n.

"I have," says I. And so I had. But she was n't aboard the Pansie that trip, thank heaven! and it was n't necessary to specify where she was, as I remarked to Jib when he made the inquiry. She went to the Banks with me once along with her father, who was skipper of the smack. You would n't believe, to see her turning over a griddle-cake or a cruller now, what a sailor she was. She hauled a catch as big as mine right along any day; the only thing she failed up on was stripping of the mackerel. It was while I was to work stripping of the mackerel, to spare her tender eyes, that I first began to think of her. She was down to Calais, visiting a cousin of hers, when I took that trip to Boston.

The skipper's mother was a kind of cute old lady to see round. She sat on deck most every day, mending up Griggs's shirts. She set the world by Griggs. She used to stop me most every time I happened round, and say:—

"My son's taking me to Boston to spend the winter with my daughter. He said it should n't cost me nothing. My daughter's children have got the whooping-cough, and she thought she'd like to have me come."

Then the next time I came along she had it over: "My son's taking me to Boston. He said it should n't cost me nothing. My daughter's children have got the whooping-cough"—just the same.

Some of the boys laughed at the old lady; but I could n't see any fault; she looked so cute, sitting up there on deck, mending Griggs's shirts.

Jib Hancko used to play backgammon with her (not that the old woman could play backgammon more'n a monk-fish, but she thought she could, and that amounted to the same thing, as it does with most of us in most things), and find her knitting-needles for her, and set her up easy with her shawls in the sunny spots among the piles.

Jib set almost as much by the skipper as the old lady did herself. He and Griggs had run this coast together, master and mate, some half a dozen years; they always were agreeable to one another's women-folks; at least Griggs would have been, no doubt, but Jib had n't any himself — not a living woman. He courted a girl once down our way, up to Squam; she was washed off the rocks at Little Good Harbor, at a picnic, one day; I never heard of any other. Before the trip was over, I was glad of it, too. I've heard that's where Griggs got the name of that schooner, but I can't say. All I know is, that was the given name of the young woman — Pansie; and she was painted about the time of the funeral. Griggs was a polite fellow about such things.

I don't believe you'll ever see a nicer day, sir, this side of heaven, than I saw aboard the Pansie on Saturday, the 14th of December, 1839. It blew from sou'-sou'-west as softly as a woman singing to a baby. There were clouds, a few of them, of color like mother-of-pearl, curling at the edges like a shell, and the noon warmed up warm as a May-day over-head. Some of the boys went in for a swim, it looked so warm. The old lady sat on deck without her extra shawls, and the skipper was afraid she'd take cold.

"You'll be in Boston to-morrow, God willing, mother," says the skipper (the skipper was a pious man at times, a Methodist), "and I'd be sorry to take you in all hoarsed up; Keziah would think I had n't taken good care of you."

Upon this the old lady pipes up again:—

"My son will take me into Boston to-morrow. Keziah's children have got the whooping-cough, and she thought she'd like to see me!"

I noticed Griggs putting on her shawl for her, and putting on her shawl for her, half the afternoon; the old lady dropped it off, and dropped it off; finally, Jib Hancko got a little shingle-nail and pinned it together for her through the fringe.

It was on towards five o'clock that I saw the mate stand talking in a confidential way alone in the stern with the skipper. Except when under orders, he was on very confidential terms with Griggs. He nods, and Griggs nods, and Hancko points to the sou'-east, and the skipper nods again, and walks the deck a bit, and stops to ask the old lady how she feels, and back again to the mate; but I could n't make head nor tail of them until six o'clock, when we got an order to tack and put into Gloucester over night.

The captain did n't like the looks of the sou'-east; thought there was an ugliness, more or less, in it; may be there was mischief ahead, and may be there was n't: having his mother aboard, he thought he'd be on the safe side; any way, there was the order: Into Gloucester over night.

We got it round among us, by degrees, as we rounded Eastern Point — it's never any nonsense rounding Eastern Point — and sulky enough we were about it, too. One of the lads had a young one with the croup in Boston, he'd counted on seeing by Sunday night. Couple of 'em had tickets to a dance in a Mariner's Tavern. Most of 'em wanted liquor. One of 'em — his name was Ben Bumper — said: —  
“Curse the old lady!”

Next minute he lay on deck for it, flat as a griddle-cake. He did n't count on the mate's being round when he made the observation.

Jib Hancko was a little man with a squint eye: but when his blood was up he looked more like a likeness I've seen of Giant Despair, in a book called the Pilgrim's Progress, than any other man alive I ever come across.

Well, so we put into port, and anchored — just about there; no, a little further to your right; just beyond that red buoy where you see the very young gentleman's dory tied to fish, and the young lady in the red jacket screeching at the bait.

That was about half-past six. It had freshened up a lit-

tle, but no more than you'd expect of any high-spirited December evening. Half a dozen of the lads wanted to put over into Fresh Water Cove for a lark ; but Griggs was obstinate as a mule ; he kept all hands aboard, and mad as hornets.

We had neighbors plenty by nine o'clock, but none too many. There's always shipping enough runs in for a night's lodging to Gloucester ; always was, even in those days. Griggs brought the old lady up to see the lights of the Harbor — by which we meant the town there, same as we mean it now — and the twinkle of the shipping, red as blood and green as grass, to starboard and to port, while sailing in ; and the pale flame-color of the lanterns swinging on the anchored craft.

But the old lady said she'd rather her son would take her into Boston, and she was afraid her daughter's children would sit up late for her, and that was very bad for children with the whooping-cough.

It was about midnight that the blow stood up — about midnight between the Saturday and the Sunday of the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of December, 1839.

From that hour until Tuesday morning there was no rest in the heaven above, nor the earth beneath, nor the waters under the earth, for the soul nor for the body of any of them that go out in ships and down into the sea along this Massachusetts coast ; and though I say it that should n't, being a good citizen, and voting the straight Republican ticket year in and out, it's the awfulest, cruelest, coldest coast I ever trusted to the mercy of, or the honor of, or the fellow-feeling of, from the time I first set foot on shipboard to this day.

If you look over the Eastern Light there you'll see how it must have struck that sheer wall of rock on the Fresh Water side.

It struck as straight as an arrow from the sou'-east.

And as sharp. It was more the sharpness than the heft at the beginning. It snowed a little, too, in a sleety way; that's the worry of a gale. I'd rather it would rain a deluge.

Howsoever, being at anchor, and in port, we thought no more of it than to own the skipper knew his business as well as we did, and chaff Ben Bumper on that little remark of his concerning the old lady, at spare minutes, until the morning.

All the solemn, roaring, blinding night, the ships came scudding in from open sea for shelter. I watched them, being aloft, with a serious feeling in my mind I could n't have found reasons to explain. They were so still about it, and so many; it occurred to my thoughts towards morning that they were unusual many, and the blood-red lanterns that have struck your fancy so, sir, smoking off the rocks by my house of a quiet evening, gave me a notion that was most surprising, about wounded creatures that the rocks had gored.

When the Sunday morning lifted, the masts were thick as mosquitoes at a lighted window, all up and down the harbor. The sky was dull as death. Off over the Point, along by Niles's trees there, a little palish streak lay, of a sort of salmon color, and with an unpleasant twitch across it, like a winking man. On account of the swinging of the schooner, and the swinging of our neighbors, and the slope of the swell before the eyes, all Gloucester shores seemed waltzing in a horrid waltz; and what was curious about it, was to see them waltzing to the time beat by the Sunday church-bells. They rang at half-past nine at the Harbor, and I could see folks, like specks, stir through the icy spray to go to meeting. I could n't help wondering that morning if any of them said their prayers for folks at sea. Not that we looked for any mischief at that hour, and who ever thought to pray for folks in port?

It blew all the morning and it blew all the afternoon.

The skipper came up about dinner-time, and says to the mate :—

“I wish I had the old lady ashore to-day.”

But we could have got to China as easy as we could have got ashore—some three or four boats’-lengths—on to the awful rocks nigh Fresh Water Cove, that Sunday noon.

Yes, sir, it looks still enough over there now, and green and soft, and kindly to the eye; and the foam against the rocks falls and rises in a pleasant manner, much like the muslin curtain, I often think, that hangs in our big parlor-window. See how Half-way Rock looms to-day? And the purple color that hangs on Norman’s Woe? You should have walked up and down Niles’s beach and looked at Norman’s Woe on that Sunday noon, the 15th of December, 1839. They said it looked like the mouth of the Bottomless Pit; and that the spray rolled up like smoke.

By two o’clock they ’d begun to go ashore. A brig and two schooners broke there in the Sunday daylight before our eyes. One smashed to splinters just above us here. She was from Mount Desert; I forget the name. An old man and his three boys went down. I could see them dropping off like flies. You see the rigging froze so, and everything you touched glazed over and slipped up. It blew all the afternoon, and it blew all the evening.

A little to the fore of midnight, the skipper sent Hancko below after the old lady. Jib brought her up, and they tied her to the mainmast with a tippet she was knitting for her daughter’s children, and almost broke her heart. Griggs would have her on deck, and handy. Heaven nor earth could n’t tell, he said, what would come next.

“Good God!” says he, “if this goes on, we shall go down at anchor like a baby’s raft!”

To say that that two-hundred-and-fifty-tonner just swashed,



sir, like the chips you're throwing in this minute, ain't to say anything about it. To say that we could n't tell one minute from another, whether we stood on our keel or our mainmast, ain't to give you an idea. To say how the gale put arms under us, and clutched us in, and then stepped back an awful step or two, over Eastern Point, and down with its head, and *bunted* at us, and up with its shoulders and h'isted us along, dead against the rock, ain't to express nor to imply it.

To say that at midnight of that Sunday night all hell opened under Gloucester Harbor, is to draw upon your imagination, sir ; but it's the best I can do.

Five minutes after twelve, the cry came up : —

“ We've slipped our anchor ! ”

Five minutes more, and we were on the rocks.

“ If we don't swamp before we've time to break,” cries the skipper, “ there's chance for a rope. Volunteers for a rope, my lads ! ”

For folks were upon shore from the village, and cries came up, and every time the sound cut through the thunder, the Pansie leaped as if she would answer to it, and rammed herself between the teeth of the breakers like a wedge.

We looked at one another, but no man stirred.

Said Ben Bumper, “ Curse a rope ! ”

Said Jib Hancko, slowly, “ I guess I'll go.”

But the skipper turned round on him — says he : —

“ I'd go myself if it was n't for the old lady. Anyhow, I won't send you Jib. Who'll hold ont' the old lady if I don't get acrost ? ”

“ I'll hold ont' the old lady,” said Jib Hancko, slow as ever ; “ but I'd rather go myself, Cap'n Griggs.”

“ Hold your tongue ! ” roars Griggs through the bellow of the blast. “ I won't send you if nobody goes, Jib Hancko ! If I don't get acrost, you hold ont' the old lady, will you, Jib ? ”

“Ay, ay, sir,” says Jib.

“And if I do get acrost, you’ll hold ont’ the old lady, will you, Jib? She’s to come over first, you understand — do you, Jib?”

“Ay, ay, sir,” says Jib.

With that, the skipper steps up and kisses the old lady, before us all, once on one cheek, and once on the other.

“Good-by, mother!” says he.

But the old lady only wrung her hands and said they’d spoiled Charles Henry’s tippet, and she was very cold.

Well, so Griggs set off with the rope. It was an ugly job. Twice we thought he’d gone, and three times we thought he’d gone, and once the mate struck his two fists together so the blood come from his knuckles.

“The rope’s parted!” says he.

But next minute through the hellish noise we heard the skipper’s voice, and saw, through the thin and broken shine of lanterns that folks held on shore, that the rope lay over, safe and sound.

Now, would you believe it, sir, that after that, that old creature would n’t budge an inch? I declare, it makes me feel bad to think of it, to this day.

“Come, mother?” says Jib Hancko, hurrying her up in a gentle way, for we were terribly strained and mangled, and no time to lose. But she sat and wrung her hands, and wrung her hands — quite crazed by fright and cold, and crying out: —

“My son’s carrying me to Boston to spend the winter with my daughter! He said it should n’t cost me nothing! My daughter’s children have got the whooping-cough!”

Do our best, we could n’t stir her, hide nor hair.

“Lord A’mighty!” said Jib Hancko. But after that he held his tongue. He went and sat down by the old lady, and untied the tippet from her, and put his arms around her. The cargo leaped and struck at them, in plunging over. I

saw blood upon his head and face. He wiped it off with his lee elbow, so the old lady should n't see it. He sat crouched up a little to keep the timber off from her, I take it, with his head and shoulders out—so.

Well, we went and left them, sir. What else could we do? Ben Bumper was the first. Half-way over he cried out and dropped. What he did we never knew—whether he was struck, or slipped, or froze, or what it was. Some of the lads said it was for damning the old lady. But I don't know. All I know is he just cried out and dropped. Yes, we left 'em, him and the old lady, sitting side by side. I felt as mean as Lucifer. I called out good-by to him, and how mean I felt. But the blast blew his answer the other way.

I saw his lips move, but I lost the words. I heard the old lady, though, as I swung off. You could have heard her in purgatory, if you 'd been so far. She piped up like a weasel:—

“My son's carrying me to Boston! He said it should n't cost me nothing”—

I heard her until I got ashore. Griggs did n't, himself. He was chilled or frozen, or something of that kind, and in a kind of faint, they said. I was mighty glad of it, I must say. The old creeture did pipe up so! We stood on the rocks and watched them, well as we could see them through the beating of the blow. I had a feeling as if my eyes were beaten in my head. I put both hands up to hold 'em. I saw Hancko trying to tie a life-preserver on to the old lady. The other boys did n't. But I did. He tried to tie it on, and she sat and wrung her hands. I don't suppose I heard her, but I'd have sworn I did, a-piping up:—

“*He said it should n't cost me nothing!*”

Hancko stood up. I saw that. He stood looking straight ahead. I thought he had a grand look, being at a distance where you missed the squinting of his eye. And he stood

so tall, sir, on that wreck, as tall as I stand to-day, which is six foot three in my stockings.

I suppose when a man's courting his wife he thinks more of such things quite natural; but I could n't help thinking, when I saw Jib Hancko standing there, of that young woman down to Squam. If she'd been down to Calais visiting a cousin now, it would have seemed a pity. And I wondered if he thought of it, how he and the Pansie were going down together by themselves.

Next minute there come the awfulest, longest, horriddest cry I ever listened to on land or sea. Whether it was the old lady as she struck water, or whether it was the skipper coming to and seeing the Pansie's head-light out, or whether it was the devils below or the angels above, I could n't tell you to this day.

I don't think you could understand, sir, unless you'd been through it yourself, what a feeling it gives a man to fall and slip, slip and fall, clutch and cling, and drop plumb down a wall of rock like that — all ice beneath you and about you — and squeeze your feet into a little ledge you know of, and jam your fingers into a little crack above your head, to save a human creature if so be it washes up against you, and see the lath and piles come thundering in. To see 'em rear and strike, and topple over, and splinter up like tea-cups, and suck under, and slip off. To hear the noise they made in hitting, and to mistake 'em for human legs and arms, and grab at them, and lose your balance, and duck your head as they come crashing up. Nor yet to dodge a bundle of lath carried shoulders over on one awful wave, and find you'd dodged a human body, sir, and it was banging up against the cliff like sea-weed, before your very eyes.

Well, I dodged him just that way; then I sprang on him, then I lost him; then I had him, I could n't tell you how — by the hair, by the leg, by the collar, all ways, no ways: he was very slippery. It was a very slippery feeling I had, what with him and the ice.

Yes. Oh, yes! They got us up. I was n't much hurt myself. I don't know how it happened about Hancko. He lay such a dead weight, I suppose.

There was a hole there in the rock. You could see it if we were nigh enough. None too big for a man's body. They had to pull him through. Twice they had him, and he slipped. He was awfully jammed.

Well, the Monday morning came at last. I had a feeling all the night as if the sun would never rise again. But Monday morning come like other Monday mornings, and folks hung out their washing all along the shore.

But it was the awfulest Monday morning, sir, that ever Gloucester knew. All the shore, from Pavilion Beach there to Norman's Woe, was covered with wreck washed up like pebbles on the beach. All up and down the harbor ruins of boats lay rocking in the wind. Some went to shore as we did, and cracked on the rocks, dead weight; some got speared in the breakers; some drifted off to sea; many of 'em just went down at their anchors, with the lights of the town in their faces, or swamped before striking the rocks. Fifty craft went to pieces in that harbor, and fifty men, some folks said, went to the bottom before the blow was over.

The harbor lay a solid sheet of foam that day, from end to end. From its having such a white and shining look it made me think about the Sea of Glass we read of, sir. I thought of it when I saw them drag the bodies up, and the poor fellows' faces turned up on the snow. And I wondered if their ghosts were walking up and down the channel in the winter morning, playing harps. It seemed such freezing work. All along the coast, and in Boston Bay, and off Cape Cod, it was an awful blow. But Gloucester got the knuckles of it.

The old lady come ashore that morning. We hauled her up and carried her into a little shed there was about there, and covered her over with a bed-quilt before the skipper saw her.

We never found Ben Bumper.

The mate come to about dawn ; that is to say, as much as Jib Hancko will ever come to, this side of the place where the young woman from Squam has gone to (for which, if I'd been a pious man, I should have thanked the God of Sea and Shore). It would n't have been a pleasant job for her riding over in the wind four miles that morning, to see the cuts he had about the head, and the look.

You see the jam was all about the head. We warmed him up, and rubbed him up, and cheered him up, and Griggs paid the doctor seventy-five cents for feeling of his pulse ; but it was no mortal use. He sat as crazy as a loon in the kitchen of the house we took him to, chattering about that old lady, and saying how he'd held on, until I wished for one, he'd gone to the bottom with her himself. It seemed to me that would have been an arrangement much more agreeable to the young woman from Squam — if she has her preferences in her existing residence — than the present.

Not but what Griggs has paid his board quite regularly, and been to inquire about him at the asylum twice a year, then and ever since. And he's peaceable, too, and very happy in his mind, they say, and spends his time in whittling little figure-heads for ships, with the name of Pansie underneath, in purple ink, done with a fine steel pen.

We did n't mean him to get into that shed that morning, but he got in somehow ; took us all by surprise, and at our wit's end for him.

It was a dreadfully bleak little open shed, and the old lady looked uncommonly cold, even considering the circumstances. Griggs was sitting by her with his hat jammed on his eyes. Two or three of us were about, standing in the door.

Hancko walks in with his head in its bandages, white and bloody, straight to Griggs.

“Well, Griggs,” says he, “I held ont' the old lady.”

“So you did, Jib,” says Griggs, staring.

“I’m glad she looks so comfortable,” says Jib, smiling round the shed. “But I think you’d better take her where it’s a little warmer, Cap’n, when she can be moved. I told you I’d hold on, Griggs!”

Folks say he sits saying that now, to this very day, “I held on, Cap’n Griggs! I told you I’d hold on!” over and over to himself, and always smiling round.

Sometimes, when I’m lying off here at the harbor’s throat on a quiet day, I wonder whether it is n’t better to *be* Jib Hancko — in a mad-house — holding on and smiling round, than it is to be me or you, sir, or the most of folks that I’m acquainted with. When I’m out here by myself, with the great sea calm below me, and the great sky still above me, I sometimes think it is, sir; I think it is with all my heart. But when I get home to my wife and sit down of an evening, I ain’t so sure, and so it goes.

## RUNNING THE RISK.

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“THERE! Is the pillow put to suit you? Let me draw the shoulder-robe a little closer to your chin. This is cold for Florida. The room is chilly as a capricious heart. Not a little blaze? You never *would* have a fire, you know, Jane. The same old girl to sit freezing at forty as at seventeen! It was always I who got the old air-tight red hot. And do you remember how Madame shook me the day I set the music-room on fire?

“Let me take your hair down, while I talk. Like to have it brushed as well as ever, don't you? Your hair is beautiful as ever, Jane. I like it better to be shining gray than shining black; but it always shines. And how large and still your eyes are, looking through it at me while I speak. Still eyes than mine, dear, in spite of all.

“Jane Beranger! When you got my letter — five years ago last May you got that letter — I wonder what you thought?

“If I could have seen your eyes when you got it, perhaps — but ah, well, well! You were in Constantinople, teaching little heathen something. I forget what. What was it, Jane? And I was attending Shakespeare Clubs at home. And it's all just as well now, and better too.

“Speaking of the Shakespeare Clubs — that was principally the matter. Never join a Shakespeare Club, Jane, for any other reason than the ice-cream or charades. If you want literary companionship, keep away.



“Now *I* wanted literary companionship; intellectual stimulus; interchange of original ideas; spur to dormant energies; mutual improvement — all that sort of thing. So I went to the Shakespeare Club; and, as I say, you were in Constantinople. Jane, shut your eyes a minute, and see it all again. Does it hurt you, dear, to go back into the old days? No? I thought not. It cannot hurt *you*. And it does n't hurt me now; so don't mind me. Let us go back. We must go straight through it all, if I am to tell my story. Back to that bleak, bright, cruel winter morning when the news came. I cannot see the sun shine on freezing snow now — not even now — without turning a little sick and chilly suddenly.

“It was like you to come to me, Jane; even then. To the end of my life I shall bless you for it. It was like you to look as you did. It was like you to speak as you did. Often and often, when I am sitting in the sunshine, singing to my baby, suddenly I seem to hear you open the door, and come up to me, and put your hands out across the child's head, and say: ‘Delight, there has been a dreadful accident upon the Valley Road — upon the business train; and Robert is dead and Greyson is dying.’ It was like you not to make it worse by one unnecessary word. It was like you to forget yourself, my poor girl. . . . You're right, Jane. We've had enough of this. I've got no more to say.

“And it was like you, too, to go to Constantinople, after little heathen; and like me to go to the Shakespeare Club, after literary companionship. And so one day you got my letter, saying that I was going to marry Henry Davenport. I went to the Shakespeare Club, as I tell you, for literary companionship. Six years were over.

“Now, six years teaching little heathen in Constantinople are not the same thing with six years at home, with my Aunt Maria and the town library. And then I haven't

your eyes, nor your shining hair. Henry says my hair is soft and fine ; but it does not shine. And he says my eyes are never still ; and I suppose they never are.

“Now, in truth, you see, all the story lies in the fact that Henry Davenport *thoroughly* loved me. There are all kinds of love, you know. Though how *should* you know in Constantinople? Do missionaries ever have love-affairs, Jane? There’s the first bit of the old mischief I’ve seen in your eyes yet. What was he, Jane? A widower? And was he very black? All the missionaries I know are so very black. And did n’t you flirt with him, Jane, one bit? Don’t saints with shining hair and peaceful eyes ever flirt a *little*? What! Not a widower? ‘A dear friend’? Jane Beranger! And — you — did n’t —

“I give it up, Jane. I’ll tell my story without a spasm of compunction. I’ll fling my happiness in your dear old aggravating, peaceful face, without a twinge. I’ll rub it up. I’ll shine it up. I’ll make the most of it. I’ll wring your prudent heart in the clinch of it as hard as my little Del wrung the kitty in the washing-machine yesterday. ‘Dear friend! very dear friend!’ and not so very black, and not a widower, and you did n’t! Jane, I’m ashamed of you. There!

“There are, as I was saying, all sorts of love. Now, Henry Davenport is not like any other man I ever knew. He does n’t *know how* to be selfish ; he never did. And when his great, good heart took in that poor little selfish girl, sitting in the corner at the Shakespeare Club, in her black dress, he just took her in for once and for all ; for better, for worse. It did n’t matter to him what he got from her. It was only what he gave to her. It did n’t matter whether she made *him* happy, if only he could make *her* less unhappy. He asked nothing from her. He gave her all.

“I told him I was n’t fit to make him happy, Jane. I was as honest as I could be. I told him how I loved Grey-

son always, just the same. We used to talk a great deal about Greyson; and he used to sit there and comfort me for my poor boy's memory. You're right, Jane. I led him an awful life. I don't know another man who would have borne it. Heaven bless him!

"And so it went on, and went on, for a year and a half And so, because he was so patient with me and so gentle, and because he always said, 'I can wait,' so sadly. 'You will love me some day, little woman. I can wait;' and because I was so lonely, and so glad to be cared for and comforted; and because I *could n't* get much comfort out of Greyson, you will admit, Jane; and partly because I was selfish, and mostly because I was idle, I told Henry Davenport, at last, that I would be his wife.

"To my dying day I shall never forget his face. We were standing in the parlor, by the fire-place, one on each side of the happy blaze. The lamps were not lighted, but the light shot up like an agony or an ecstasy when I spoke, and made the little space between us glorious; and out of the glory he stood and looked at me. To my last hour I can never forget the sudden, sick sense that came to me that I had done a good man a deadly wrong.

"I didn't think — I was so tormented and buffeted and desperate — I had not thought how it could mean so much to him. But when I had said the solemn words, and when I saw his look, my heart misgave me and I cried out that I was doing wrong; that I could never, never make him happy; that, if he loved me *so*, I could not make him happy; for that I loved him selfishly and smally, and that I could not help it, and that I wished we had never gone to the Shakespeare Club for literary companionship; and that it was all too bad, too bad!

"And then, Jane — well, I'm ashamed to tell of it, even *now*. I would n't have believed it of myself. I would n't *have my daughter* do it. But I did. I just ran across the

bright width of the little quivering fire, and put my arms about his neck to say good-by, for I meant it to be good-by ; and he'd been very good to me, and I was very lonely. And I don't know how it happened ; but I did n't get away again exactly as I thought I should.

“ ‘ Why, child,’ said he, ‘ you love me !’

“ So I thought about it, and I told him : No, I guessed not much.

“ ‘ A little, yes,’ said he.

“ ‘ A little bit, perhaps,’ said I. ‘ But Greyson ’—

“ He took my face between his hands and turned it toward the light, just as you turned my tea-rose bud on its stem, this morning, toward the sun.

“ ‘ Delight,’ he said solemnly, ‘ if you love me enough to be my wife, I am not afraid of Greyson.’

“ So I thought it over once again ; and when I had thought it over I said :—

“ ‘ Must I keep it from you when I think of Greyson ?’

“ ‘ God forbid !’ said he.

“ ‘ And must I feel as if it were a thing to be buried up between us that I loved Greyson, and a thing you're not to know or be reminded of ?’

“ ‘ God forbid !’ said he, again.

“ ‘ And when I miss him, for I shall always miss him, Henry, and when I mourn a little, for I shall always mourn a little ; and when, though I don't mean it or want it, I see his face, for I shall always see his face, must I make believe I don't, because I married you ?’

“ ‘ God forbid !’ said Henry Davenport, once more. ‘ Delight, only *tell* me about Greyson, and I am not afraid of him.’

“ Well, I did n't seem to have anything to tell him about Greyson just then, and so I went out, instead, and told Aunt Maria what had happened, that very night, as if to make it sure ; for I'd as lief have been married as tell Aunt

**Maria.** One was no worse than another. And she said she *was* glad if I'd done moping for Greyson Hardy ; and, if Mr. Davenport stayed to supper, should she put on quince or jam ?

“ And so, dear — for I thought the sooner it was over the better — in three months I married Henry Davenport. And we moved to Boston, after his father died, and took a pretty house in Roxbury ; and he went into the shoe-and-leather business, as I wrote you, with Mr. Jameson. You remember David Jameson ?

“ I thought the sooner the better, for I led him such a life. Could n't help it, Jane. Could n't. Would do just the same again. Yes, I would. He says those three months — well, no matter what Henry says about those three months.

“ There were weeks that I could n't bear him to touch my hand ; and sometimes, when he came in, I could n't say a word to him, from trying not to cry, and crying, and then being ashamed of it, and then crying and crying again, as if my heart would break. And then there would come days that I was comforted and happy ; and I would tell him so. And he would always tell me that, if I wished it, I was free to go. But I could not wish it. Don't you see, Jane ? For, in spite of myself, I was as glad to be cared for as a thirsty anemone is of a shower.

“ I remember one day saying to him, laughing and crying together : ‘ Henry, I *wish* you did n't want me to marry you. I should like it so much better to be always engaged.’ Girls are such glorious geese, Jane. Henry will never forget that. When he wants to be just one shade more aggravating than usual — and, take him at his best, he's the worst tease on the American Continent — then I have to hear it over : ‘ Delight, I *wish* you did n't want me to marry you. I should like it so much better to be always engaged.’

“A stronger woman than I, would n't have done it, Jane, even then. A brave, well woman, with something else to do (I had nothing else to do, Jane. You'll own that. And that's the trouble with girls), would never have drifted on into such a wicked thing.

“Yes, Jane Beranger, I mean exactly that, in plain English, out and out. For all everything has turned out as it has, and for all I've been blessed so much above anything that I ever could deserve, I maintain that when I married Henry Davenport I did a wicked thing. And, for all, and for all, and for all, rather than see my daughter live to do that thing, I would wish her laid in her little grave, this safe, sweet morning, before my eyes.

“I did not marry my husband because I loved him. I married him because he loved me. And so I wronged myself; and so I wronged him. And so his great, good, patient heart bore with me. Heaven bless him! And so at last it all came round. And I took off my dear boy's ring from my finger only the night before my wedding-day, and I cried over it as if my heart would break the whole night long.

“Well, Jane, you need n't look so unhappy about it *now*. I don't want your pity, thank you, *now*. And I wish that black missionary were here, to hear my story. Yes, I do. I'd make it twice as pretty, if he were only here, to pay you for that look.

“Jane, it is n't when people are new to each other that they can guess whether they are meant for one another. It is only when the soul you love has become an old story, that you can guess whether it is for you a true story.

“Few women, I believe, would have so little to discover in a husband as I had to discover in mine; and yet, Jane, when I had been married three months, I was a wretched woman.

“It was n't because he neglected me; for he could not

do that. My husband is not so made up. It was not because he was cross. We had been married twice that time before he ever spoke a quick word to me. It was just because I did not *love* him.

“Love is a great idealizer, Jane. It lights up a character, and softens its outlines, and sweetens its shadows, and makes it more a fancy than a fact.

“Now, make the best you may of it, married life is a state where people must idealize each other to get along at all.

“It is so vividly, continuously, terribly real!

“Put yourself where you are morally certain to see the worst and weakest side of a nature dear to you, and, if you do not take with you a determination to believe in its best and strongest — to believe through wear and tear, thick and thin, good or evil, life and death — a fig for your happiness!

“Marriage brings to the surface of character all the smallness, all the selfishness, all the roughness, all the meanness there is in it; and, if people do not hold sweet, serene, and steady as the rising sun, to faith in each other's largeness, generousness, fineness, nobleness — that! for their peace of mind!

“Perhaps a woman feels these things a little differently. I don't know. Marriage makes such unmixed prose of a man! His wife must *make him poetry*, if she would tolerate him. Don't arch your beautiful eyebrows at me, Jane. The words are none too strong. I'm not romantic, you know — never was; but that's the way it strikes me. And what should you know about it? Death is the falsest and sweetest idealizer that we know.

“Now you see I did not love Henry Davenport, and so I saw him all the wrong way.

“If he took a nap after dinner, when I was n't sleepy, I sat and thought how ugly he looked. If he wanted to talk

when I was sleepy, I thought how inconsiderate he was. If he criticised the coffee, I wished I had n't been married. Henry is never *cross* — he does n't know how to be cross ; never scolds, never sulks. But sometimes he would speak quickly, being a nervous man. Then I thought my heart would break. Once I remember he came home and found me sitting in a draught, with an epidemic influenza ; and it was when they were bothered about my lungs. He came in, and just said : ' Delight, how *could* you be so careless ? I can't *understand* it ! ' And I went off up-stairs in the cold and cried an hour.

" I remember coming down that night, and finding him sitting alone by the parlor-grate. He had a book in his hand ; but he was not reading. He had laid his head back against the chair and his eyes were shut. He looked so tired that a woman might have loved him just for sorrow.

" I went up to him, and just put out my hand and touched his forehead. I felt so sorry for him and for myself.

" I said : ' Poor boy ! My poor boy ! '

" Now I had never called him that before. It was not he who had been my poor boy. And all his face changed, as if I had let in sudden light upon it. And he turned and caught me in his arms before I could think or breathe.

" But I got down from his lap presently, and crept away. For I did not love him. It was only sorrow. And he was my husband, and I thought our hearts would break.

" And so it went on, Jane, and went on. And how it was, I cannot say ; and what it was, I cannot tell you. And the forms my misery took, it seems a wickedness even to remember now. And the most that I can say is : *My* daughter shall never do it — never, never, never !

" Once, I remember, on a rainy evening, he came home late. I stood at the window, watching him splash through the little puddles of water on the garden-walk. He had on his rubber boots and that old cap, that makes him look



so. He stoops, you know, and is awkward as he walks. Everything had gone wrong that day. The cook was sick; the furnace-fire had smoked; I'd had to get dinner; I had burned my hands; my head ached; and I had come across some old letters in trying to fix up my bureau-drawers.

"My husband came up the walk, nodding to me, through the rain.

"I don't know what it was, or why it was, or why it should have come to me just then; but I sat and looked at him suddenly, as if I had never seen him before, and I thought: 'I'm tied to *you* for life!'

"My husband came in, and took off his wet things, then into the parlor, stooping over my shoulder, as I sat by the window, for the kiss he always sought and I always gave when the day's work was over. I gave it partly because it was my duty; and partly because I had got into the way of it — there's nothing you won't do, you know, if you get into the way of it; and sometimes because I felt like it. But at that moment I could not kiss him, and I drew back. He turned white — you know his way when he is much moved — white to the lips. He took his hands from off my head, but very gently, Heaven bless him! and came and sat down opposite me in the little, low, cushioned window-seat. We had such pretty cushioned window-seats in our house at Roxbury! He sat down, and took my hands in both of his, and began to stroke them, still very gently, as you would stroke an ailing child. But his voice, when he spoke, was very grave, and in his grave, good face I saw a look that I had never seen before.

"'Delight,' he said, 'it has been all too bad! We have made a sad mistake.'

"Now, if you will believe it, I didn't quite like that. To be sure, it was just what I had been saying myself; but it was another thing for *him* to say it. I lifted up my head *and asked him what he meant.*

“‘I mean,’ said he, still very solemnly, ‘that you and I should never have married one another. It has all been wrong. I thought I could make you happy, little woman. It was all my blunder. I am very sorry.’

“Now, still I did not like this — I did not like it at all; but I did not know exactly what to say. So I told him politely that he was no more to blame than I; but that I agreed with him that it was all too bad, and that I ought never to have been his wife.

“‘I think so, too,’ said my husband, decidedly. ‘No woman ought to be the wife of a man she does not thoroughly love. It is only *thorough* love, Delight, that can make marriage tolerable.’

“Tolerable! Marriage tolerable! I lifted my foolish, frightened head a little higher.

“‘Sir,’ said I, ‘if your marriage with me is only tolerable’ —

“My husband seemed to start to speak; but controlled himself by a great effort, and sat for a moment perfectly still, looking gravely at me across our clasped hands. It was growing very dark around us; but I could tell that he looked at me through the dark.

“I think we may have sat in that way for five minutes. The rain came down on the windows hard and fast; and once a dead leaf flew against the pane; and once a little bird, storm-tossed and weak, brushed against the glass and then dropped down. I wondered if Henry noticed these little things; but I could not tell. I noticed everything, as you do at funerals or in death-rooms. I thought of the old superstition about the spirits of the dead coming back in little birds; and I thought of Greyson. But he seemed a great way off, and cold and thin and ghostly; and my husband sat there so near me, and he had loved me so patiently and well, I began to wish that I had loved him half as patiently, or half as well. I began to wish that I had loved

him as I loved Greyson, once and all and only. I had half a thought to tell him so ; but, whether it was doubt or pride, or whether because of what he said about our marriage being tolerable, — I did not speak. And the little bird fluttered away, chirping mournfully ; and it grew dark and darker ; and presently my husband said : —

“ ‘ Well, Delight, we must make the best of it now. If there is to be no happiness for you and me, we must make each other as comfortable as we can.’ We unclasped hands at that, and he rose and walked away. He did not kiss me or speak again, and I sat on in the dark a long time alone.

“ It might have been fancy, Jane ; but I fancied that my husband began to change to me from that hour. It was not that he neglected me or was unkind ; but there was a certain difference in him, which I felt, as a sensitive person feels the oncoming of a cold storm before the wind has swung around, or the barometer risen.

“ He was polite to me — oh ! very polite. He never forgot to open the door for me ; or to fix the fire for me ; or to run up-stairs for me, if somebody must run up ; or to hand me the newspaper first ; or to tell me if the pudding were to his liking ; or to cut the leaves of my magazine. He remembered the book that I asked for from the Athenæum ; he shawled me carefully for a party ; he buttoned my gloves and boots ; he helped me, as he used to help me, hold the braids up while I did my hair. But by and by I noticed that a certain little kiss — a little silly kiss — I used to get while the front braid went up, was wanting ; and other little silly things that happened when the gloves and boots went on, were missing too ; and the book was left upon the table, not upon my lap ; and the door was opened without a smile ; and in this way and that, by little and little, I began to understand a dreadful thing.

“ I began to understand at last, Jane, that my husband’s love for me was wearing out.

“ Now, I had never thought of *that*. I had never thought that such a thing *could* be. I had taken his love, as we take God’s sunshine, just as a settled, sure, and common thing — so settled and so sure that we never think to care about it; so common that we cannot prize it till it is gone. I had played with it, neglected it, slighted it, hidden my selfish face from it; and yet I had leaned on it, lived in it, breathed it, and now I had lost it. That was the point, Jane, where my true misery began. Of all the miserable sides to my life, that was, of all, the most miserable that I have ever known.

“ At first it was my pride that was hurt. I would have died before my husband should have known how I felt. I put on my prettiest dresses and my prettiest smiles. I made myself as lovely as I knew how.

“ One time, I remember, I went to five parties in a week. I went to everything. I was in and out, up and down. I read, I walked, I drove, I sang. Henry said I was as restless as a northeast wind.

“ He was troubled about it, I could see, for I was not very well and I ought not to have done so. He asked me once if I could not keep more quiet. But his tone was so polite that I could have cried for grief and shame, and I ran up and paced the attic for an hour. Jane, he almost killed me with politeness in those days.

“ Now, this was where things were, when the Fire came. Yes, of course. To Boston people there has never been but one fire in the world. I mean *the* fire of November, 1872, — November 9th.

“ You know the shell of all that happened. It’s the kernel I am giving you. It’s the things I could n’t write in letters to Constantinople. Though, perhaps, if I’d known about that black missionary — But I did n’t, don’t you see?

“ I was lying on my own bed, up-stairs, that evening,

wondering why he did n't come home, and where the fire was, for the bells had bothered me for an hour past. I remember I lay alone a long time, for I was not well enough to pace the attic. I think I must have been there till nine o'clock, wondering and worrying, before any message came.

"Jane, that was the prettiest room! I believe the only thing I have ever stopped to miss in Florida has been that old bedroom of mine in our Roxbury house. It was furnished in the carmine shades, and there was peach tint on the walls under carmine borders, and the open grate, and the soft cannel fire. Henry used to say the room looked like a great jewel, when he came in, cold and wet, on a winter's night. Our house was pretty enough all over; but I've never minded the loss of anything since, but that room.

"I was lying there, wretched enough, alone, when Aunt Maria came up, to say that my husband would not be at home that night. Aunt Maria was making me a visit just then. My husband would not be at home, she said, till nobody knew just when. She was sorry to frighten me, in my state of health; but —

"'But *what?*' I sat up straight in bed and tossed the eider-down shoulder-robe away like a savage, for I felt choked.

"'W — well,' said Aunt Maria, 'you ought to know better than to take on so, Delight; and your husband said particularly that I ought to break it to you gently. But you know there *is* an awful fire; and how can *I* help it if his store's burned down, and he's got to stay out all night to keep the bonds in his boots. At least, they say all the business men are carrying bonds in their boots; and I suppose you won't be beggars. Money'll come from somewhere. It always does come from somewhere, though where to mercy out of ashes I don't see. But it's very unfortunate for you, and I think, myself, Mr. Davenport might just run home and see how you are.'

“Jane, for a minute my pretty red room whirled round and round before my eyes, and seemed to deepen and flash, and then break to pieces and roll away in little, gorgeous sparkles, as a jewel would if struck and broken by a hammer’s blow; and for a minute I seemed to see my husband (but I knew that it was only seeming) standing in the shower of fading color, with a look he used to wear sometimes, when we first were married; and I seemed to cry out to him (but I knew that it was only seeming): ‘Only look like that again, and what *can* we care for this?’ And then the look, and the color, and the cry died out blackly. And I suppose it was because I was not well, for I never fainted before in my life or since.

“When I came to myself (for I was ill all night) it was Sunday morning, and the fire-bells were still ringing.

“Aunt Maria was standing by me, with a scared face. I asked her, sharply, if my husband had come home. Yes, she said, he had come home. Where was he? I must go to him. How was he? Was he very tired? Why did he not come to me? Was he sick? ‘Aunt Maria! *Aunt Maria!* WHAT has happened to my husband? This minute! Quick! WHAT?’

“I’d got up by that time and gone to the door. Feeble as I was, I had got to the door, dragging and tripping in the silly little eider quilt, as I staggered on. Aunt Maria came and planted herself directly in my way, with the old look she used to have when I started for the preserve-closet, and she intercepted me.

“‘Delight Davenport,’ said she, ‘you just turn round and go back to your bed quicker than you got off it!’

“I hesitated.

“‘If you don’t go this minute, I’ll lock you in,’ said Aunt Maria. I knew the look and the tone. I went. I did n’t dare to do anything else. I went as if I had been eight, instead of twenty-eight; and Aunt Maria picked up the eider quilt and tucked me in.

“ ‘And *now*,’ said she, ‘since you’ve done as you’re bid, and since there’s never any cheating you, by fair means or foul, that I know of, I may as well out with it first as last. Your husband’s store is burned to the ground, and that’s the long and short of *that*. And Boston is burning up, near as I can make it, and one set of folks is as badly off as another. And that’s all I know of *that*. And your husband — well, your husband’ —

“ She missed it that time, Jane. She should have been quicker. She gave me too much time. I just gave that eider quilt such a jerk, that the pretty, soft red silk went tearing down the whole length, like a beautiful cobweb; and I was out of her hands and out of the room before the old lady could speak or cry.

“ I don’t clearly remember to this day what room he was in or how I got there. I only know that they had laid him somewhere; and that I found him; and that when I saw the blood, I thought he was dead.

“ The stone had struck him in the face, across the forehead, here, before it hit the chest. The blood came from the little cut, but it gave him a dreadful look. You remember he was trying to save a fireman, and how the poor fellow had ventured too long and too far; and when the building fell, he went down with it. Henry says to this day he sees in his dreams, sometimes, that man throw up his arms above his head and go toppling down and crashing in. So he sprang to warn him; was a little too late, too long, too near. I don’t know exactly how it was, but just like him, Jane. Himself the last to think about himself. They say a dozen men sprang to warn him back. Just like my husband, Heaven bless him!

“ The stone had struck him in the left lung. One of those great granite blocks that the Devonshire Street stores were built of. Mr. Jameson managed to get to him; and *they contrived* to get him into a carriage and so home. They *said he spoke* but once only on the way, and that he said:—

“ ‘Gentlemen, if you *can* get me into the house without awaking my wife’ —

“ And so Aunt Maria came panting in, at last. And there, she says, I sat, and which of us was the whiter, no tongue could say.

“ ‘And his head on your lap, Delight, and your arms about him, and you crying, crying on his face enough to put out Boston fire; and all those men there looking on.’

“ Jane, love comes in such exquisitely different ways to differing souls. Sometimes it creeps slowly after you, like your shadow, always dogging you, never ahead of you, never abreast of you, only creeping along, a silent, sure, and sombre thing, that you only turn to look at over your shoulder, but never face nor understand. I’ve seen people whom love *dogs* just that way through a whole life long, but never, never, overtakes and masters. Do you know, Jane, to me, that is the saddest kind of life I know?

“ Now, I believe it might have been like that between Henry and me. I might have gone on and gone on to my dying day, never knowing what he was to me — calling it fondness, friendship, intellectual sympathy, loneliness, wifely duty — I don’t know what not. I might have gone on like that, until or unless something happened to wrench me round and *make* me look my own heart in the face.

“ It sometimes needs a sudden, solemn light let in upon a lurking love to arrest the prisoner by — the light of a great pain, or a great peril, or even a great joy. Heaven must strike flint against the nature to startle it into self-knowledge. And the light that I read my love for my own husband by was the great and terrible light of Boston Fire.

“ All that day and the next night, while I hung over him, thinking he would die, the smoke of the burning city ascended like the smoke of torment. I looked out at it, now and then, through the drawn curtains, in a dim, dazed way, as a heart-broken woman does, thinking very little of



all the misery of all the people ; but only of her own little stinging share. It was only to *me* the smoke of *my* torment ascending up forever and ever.

“ For, as I tell you, Jane, by that awful light I read my heart, at last. I knew, at last, that the love of my dead lover had become a faint and ghostly thing beside the living love of this living man. I knew, at last, that I cared for life only that it might be lived for him, and feared death only lest it should part me from him before I had had one little chance to win back to me the patient heart which I had lost.

“ I stooped over him now and then, when he sank or seemed to sink into the dreadful faints ; and it comforted me a little — when nobody was by — to try to tell him how I felt, though he could not hear me, just *because* he could not hear. But all I could think to say was : ‘ Oh, my dear ! my dear ! ’ ”

“ There ! I might talk till morning at this rate ; and Henry will soon come in, and wonder that I do not go to meet him. And I know that Easter has given the baby the sugar-bowl, for she has not cried for twenty minutes. Take out your watch and time me, Jane. I ’ll talk ten minutes more and stop.

“ Two months to a day from the great November fire, on January 9th, we started for Florida. We started for Florida sick, poor, homesick, and alone ; and my baby was to come in April. There are few places, as you said last night, where you see sorrier sights than in traveling to Florida — the sick people, and the anxious people, and the people worn with watching, and the people fighting death. But I do not often see in the great hospital of this healing State anybody that I feel *more* sorry for than I feel for our two selves, in looking back.

“ My husband got up from his injury a shattered, bankrupt, dying man. If it had not been for the hurt, we might

have pulled through the other ; might have set our heads to the wind — I in my way and he in his — and built our fortunes up again, like many another in that sad time. But there was the hurt in the lung, and the cough.

“ He came to me one day and stood behind my chair, and, without looking or seeming to look at me, slowly said : —

“ ‘ Delight, Dr. Bowditch agrees with all the rest. He orders me to Florida.’

“ ‘ Then we will go to Florida, Henry.’

“ ‘ It is thought best, it is, indeed, thought necessary, that I should go at once.’

“ ‘ Then,’ said I, ‘ we will go at once.’

“ ‘ And it may be, Delight, that, even if the experiment succeeds, I must be exiled there for life.’

“ ‘ Worse things might happen, Henry.’

“ ‘ True. You are right. But we have left (since the fire) just five thousand dollars. Three of that is your own.’

“ ‘ Five thousand dollars will last a long time,’ said I.

“ ‘ And then ?’ said my husband.

“ ‘ I ’ll take care of the “ then,”’ said I.

“ ‘ You ?’

“ My husband came round in front of my chair and smiled. Not as he used to smile ; but in a reticent, perplexing way.

“ I felt the blood rush to my face, as if I had been a girl cherishing some romantic dream of self-sacrifice for a man whose love she had not won. My husband looked at me steadily for a moment, and then turned away.

“ I drew myself up a little, I dare say, and gravely said : —

“ ‘ I mean to say, Henry, that I am not afraid of the future, and that, if my husband is no longer able to care for me, it is my duty to care for *him* ; and that we will go to Florida, if you please to trust me so far, and — take what comes.’

“He gravely thanked me for my courage and consideration; said that trouble was teaching us both many lessons; said that he feared for my health, starting on this cruel risk just now; thanked me once again for my keen sense of *duty*; told me that I encouraged him somewhat; and then abruptly left me.

“And so, in January, with a dreary snow-storm darkening down upon us, and Aunt Maria in hysterics at the depot, I started for Florida, Jane, to fight for my husband’s life and love.

“The first three months I thought he would die, in spite of me. We went to St. Augustine, and the salt air hurt him. The next three months I thought *I* should die, in spite of both of us. Things went wrong with me, and the baby came too soon — born the week after we went to Jacksonville — a little, miserable, ailing, heart-broken thing. And she cried! Oh, how that child did cry! I think the nights I lay there in our boarding-house at Jacksonville, too weak to lift my arms, and watched her father walk the room with her — she was a heavy baby, and it made him cough — I think those nights were the deadliest, darkest hour before the dawn. But there never was a minute, Jane, that I gave up fighting for my husband’s life and love.

“Nothing was said between us all this while of either life or love. For one thing, we had too much else to do, perhaps. Sometimes he sat and watched me with that singularly reticent smile, and sometimes it would seem as if he had words to say that he never said; but he never spoke of love, and what could a woman do? Though my heart had broken, I could not *court* my husband.

“It ended in our sending for Aunt Maria, after all. It ended in Aunt Maria — and the oranges.

“Henry came in one day, when I was getting better, and said, in a careless way — in that way of his he has when he *has thought* a great deal about a thing and wants you to

think he has n't -- that he had just heard of a fine chance to buy an orange-grove up the St. John's River; and that, if he were a well man, he'd half a notion he should like the business and could make it pay.

"You know how a thing strikes a woman sometimes, Jane, like chain-lightning. All in a minute that struck *me*. I asked my husband for the advertisement of the place, and I took it away into the bedroom and shut myself up alone with it and the baby, and thought it all over, and thought it all through, and came back, and did n't say anything about it then. But after supper I told him that I thought we had better take the orange-grove and settle on the river.

"'And who did you say would farm it?' asked Henry, laughing. 'The baby?'

"'Sir!' and I, laughing too, but fighting, as hard as a woman could fight who had been kept awake by her baby for six nights running, to keep back the tears. 'Mr. Davenport, *I* will farm the orange-grove!'

"It's amazing, Jane, the crazy things people will push through to success when they're hard pressed. It is amazing what you can do when you are fighting *both* for life and love.

"Ridiculous as it looked at first, we did it. We took our five thousand, what there was left of it, and bought the place. And then we sent for Aunt Maria, and then we went to work, and here we are.

"I always thought I had a genius for farming (my mother was just so before me), and I took to it quicker than Henry did. And when he was too feeble to work or think, I worked and thought for two; and when he was strong enough to be about, we worked together, in the blessed, golden, healing weather. And Aunt Maria kept things straight about the house and child, when I was called away -- for it would sometimes happen that I would be called to Jacksonville or elsewhere -- oftener then than now, when Henry is a little stronger and is so happy to think that he can go himself.

“And, if Aunt Maria had n’t died, and left us her little moneys, poor old lady! we should have got along; only, I dare say, with more worry for the future, which is something, for the Lord has been partial to our oranges, Jane, from first to last, and you want so little in Florida, and last year’s fashions are just as good.

“But no, I won’t! You don’t care a fig for the oranges or any of that. What *you* want to know is, how people make it up when they come to Florida to fight for life and love, and when she *will* not court her husband, though her heart should break.

“Jane, dear, it was after we had been in this place a year. The holidays were coming on. The crop was in. The splendid fruit lay in piles, like solid gold, waiting to be boxed. I had been down to the little wharf, to see about the packing; and because I felt tired, and somehow saddened and disheartened, although the crop was in, I stole away alone into the edge of the forest, beyond our place—just over there where you see the tall live-oak standing out of the soft blue line that the great Florida wilderness makes against the sky.

“I had thrown myself down full length into the scrub, and flung my arms above my head to think. I had not had much time to think, since we had been in Florida. But now because the crop was in, and because all went well with us, and because the holidays were coming on, and because it would have been so natural to be happy in the holidays, I threw my arms out, as people throw them out in drowning, just to think.

“Jane, now you’ve seen the Florida wilderness, you know what the thing is like. Look at it from out this window! See? The cruel, infinite thing! I was in the Florida wilderness. Lying there in the scrub, that day, this was all that I could think. A lonely, comfortless woman, who had thrown away the love of the dead, who had thrown

away the love of the living, who had breathed a year of the happy Florida weather into her hungry heart so near him, Jane — so near, yet as far from him as if the world's wide width were sprung between us. I tell you, a solitary, an exhausted woman; but she *would* not court her husband if she died.

“He must have been a little anxious about me, I suppose, for I had been ailing and miserable despite myself; and, while I lay there, face down, among the wretched scrub, he came quietly up and sat down beside me.

“‘We shall get the last of the crop off by the next boat, I think, after all, Delight,’ he began, in his ordinary way. But, suddenly seeing my face, he turned.

“‘Crying? Delight! Why, Delight!’

“I wound my arms about the scrub savagely. I could have choked to death rather than that he should have seen me cry. I besought him to leave me and go home. I besought him not to speak to me or touch me. But it was too late. It was so long since I had cried, and the dreadful sobs tore out.

“‘Why, Delight!’ he repeated. ‘Why, Delight!’ And could seem to say that one word only at first, over and over again. ‘Why, Delight, come here!’

“Come there! I would have gone into the St. John's River first, and so I told him. ‘Come there, sir, indeed! What do you think a woman's made of? Oh! go into the house and talk with Aunt Maria about your orange crop, and leave me and my wilderness to myself, sir!’

“‘The matter? You don't know what's the matter? After all I've done for you, you wish you could have made me happy? I don't want your gratitude, I thank you, sir. So long since I've kissed you or let you think — and you did n't know? You might have known. *Anybody but a man would know.* Was I so easy to win, Henry Davenport, when you were my lover, that you think I'll come courting you now you are my husband?

“ ‘I ’d rather court a lover than a husband, any time.

“ ‘Come there? Come *there*? I tell you *No!*

“ ‘You did n’t know? Did n’t understand?

“ ‘And, if I did fling your love away, you did n’t suppose I wanted it back again soon as it was gone? And you did n’t *know* I loved you, loved you, loved you all this while?

“ ‘Then all I have to say, Henry Davenport, is: I thank Heaven I was n’t born a stupid man!

“ ‘And you may go down to the wharf and count your oranges. Yes, you may. And you might have loved me all this while—a little. Yes, you might, sir. I’d never have treated *you* so, if I’d been a stupid, heartless man.

“ ‘Come there, sir, indeed! Not if I die in the Florida wilderness. Not a living inch.’

“ Well, Jane, I stopped at last, breathless, hot, and haughty, all tears and temper — stopped and looked at him across the little bush that had swept between us. His face was very pale, but it shone like the shining holiday weather. And suddenly a thought struck me, and things took on a new color, and my heart beat for the minute with a hope as wild and deep and as rich as the splendid Florida sky.

“ My husband gently put aside the little bush and said — but did not ask me to come ‘there,’ just then: —

“ ‘Delight, I did not know. Upon my life, I did not guess. Perhaps I have been wrong. I meant to do the best thing. I thought if you thought I had grown weary of you — women are like other people, after all, even my little wife, Delight — I thought if you thought I did not love you — perhaps — But I could not tell ’ —

“ ‘WHAT, sir?’

“ ‘I did not mean to do wrong, I repeat,’ said my husband; but he grew paler and paler as he spoke. ‘Perhaps it was not fair. But I was tortured and perplexed. Delight,

I love you, love you, have always loved you. There has never been a minute — Delight, if you *won't* come here, *look* here !'

"Well, and so, you see, the little bush was pushed away, and — no, I did n't 'go' there, Jane, not even then ; but I was *taken* 'there' forever.

"So we walked out of the Florida wilderness ; and out into the deep-hearted, throbbing weather ; and out upon the little wharf, to see the oranges. But we could not talk of oranges ; and it was twilight when we got into the house, and the perfect, purple Florida night was settling softly down upon the world.

"The baby was asleep up-stairs, in our own room. Easter had gone to get supper, and the room was still. My husband came up, when I had been there for a little while in the dark. And when he saw me kiss the child, he kissed her too ; and when he saw that I got upon my knees, he kneeled down too ; and above the baby's face we clasped our hands and prayed."

"Easter ! Mr. Davenport come in ?

"Oh, Henry ! Are you there ? Down directly. I've been trying to find out from Jane what the fashions were in Constantinople."



# LONG, LONG AGO.

A TRUE STORY.

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WHEN Rachel Fross promised to marry Azrael Graven, the whole church militant rejoiced.

It was so long ago, that young people who thought of marriage, considered first what the church militant would think.

It was so long ago, that a young man preparing for the Gospel ministry, was an object of peculiar veneration, and a subject of exceptionally persistent prayer.

It was so long ago, that such a young man was held to have sacrificed this world and the glory thereof, upon the altar of his consecrated youth, and to have wrestled for Heaven's blessing, as Jacob wrestled of old till daybreak, with a hidden, smiling, favoring Lord.

It was so long ago, that such a young man expected, sought, and found a life of much self-conquest and self-denial — of poverty, of anxiety, of patience, of prayer, of honor, of peace.

It was so long ago, that such a young man excited the supernatural respect of women, and induced in them a devotion resembling that in which a Claude, a Bossuet, a Savonarola lived and moved and had their being, and were not, for God took them.

It was so long ago, that the imagination of a *young* woman faltered before the conception of a loftier lot than that of providing for the temporal and lower necessities of so elevated and dedicated a being.

It was so long ago, that when Azrael Graven asked Rachel Fross if she would join with him in the service to which he had given his life ; if she would become his comforter and assistant in the holy work ; if she thought that it would insure her happiness to unite with him in the bonds of matrimony, which was of God and blessed by God, to this great end — it was so long ago, that Rachel felt as if the Archangel Michael had stepped from heaven to earth, because he had need of her.

In fact, it was so long ago, that people went to church with foot-stoves : and Azrael Graven was carrying Rachel's foot-stove home for her, after the Thursday evening conference meeting, when he brought the subject of Michael so vividly to her mind.

"I had not thought," said Rachel, trembling visibly — "oh ! Mr. Graven, I had never thought of *that* !"

"It has weighed upon *my* mind," said the Angel Michael, "for a long while, Rachel. It has seemed to me that the Lord, for a long while, has been leading my thoughts in this direction ; and I have allowed myself to hope that He would lead yours in the same."

"But, oh ! Mr. Graven," trembled Rachel, once again, "I am not good enough. I can never be good enough to be a minister's wife. I never can, indeed !"

Rachel Fross was a tall and stately woman, with pale hair, heavy upon her forehead, and grave, great, reticent eyes. She turned her head as she spoke, and looked upward at the Angel Michael (who was rather tall himself) with a motion such as Memnon might have made in looking eastward for the first flush of dawn which should unbind the marble of his lips.

It was *not* so long ago, but that the Reverend Mr. Graven observed the motion and the look with keen-felt satisfaction, albeit with a dull sense that they were both natural and appropriate. He shifted the foot-stove on his thin, long arm,

and, gravely lifting Rachel's hand, pressed it gravely to his lips.

"There is none that doeth good," he answered her; "no, not one. We can grow in grace together, Rachel."

"Ah! well," said Rachel, softly, "I can try. I will try, if you would like to have me, Mr. Graven."

"I have come to feel," said the Reverend Mr. Graven, speaking slowly, and with some suppressed emotion upon his thin, sickly, abstracted face, "that my work could not be, could never be, rounded and complete without you, Rachel Fross."

Now, it was *so* long ago, that the atrocity of this love-scene was perfectly simple and serious to its actors; so long ago that, in spite of it, Azrael Graven and Rachel Fross, joining hands across the foot-stove, set from that moment their young feet in Eden, and heard the Lord of eternal Love walking in the garden of their hearts that day.

In fact, it was so long ago, that a man's relative estimate of himself and the woman whom he loved, might be simply preposterous, and yet that he might love a woman very much; and that a woman might be so far glorified for this life by the one fact, as never to discover the other, till death had blurred it to a faint, untroubling shade.

At all events, it remains, that Rachel Fross came home from Thursday conference "promised" to Azrael Graven, and that the fitness of this event was apparent at once and forever to the church and society of Southampton, in which devout, dead Deacon Fross had been a "pillar" for more than thirty years; and by which Azrael Graven was supported in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, with faith, hope, charity, and a quarterly allowance of one hundred and five dollars and fifty cents.

A few grave calls, received in the sitting-room with her mother knitting in the rocking chair beside the fire; a few grave walks in the broad winter day, up and down the

drifted, watching streets ; a little grave discussion of the revival and the freshets ; a little, strange, sweet chat of common things, — of a headache that he had, of a pudding that she made ; a little awed listening to his last new sermon, and a little temper with her mother for suggesting that he change his text ; some reading aloud in an evening from Jeremy Taylor, or from Walter Scott ; a dignified kiss or two left upon her forehead in the entry, with the door open ; a timid suggestion that she mend his gloves, and a half a night spent in darning them to a hair-line's wondrous nicety ; a faint, sweet sense of household fellowship when he "stopped to tea," and "led in prayer" thereafter ; and the perplexing presence of a shy, elusive pain at the thought of what Southampton would be like to-morrow, when he had gone, — these things preceded Azrael Graven's return to the Seminary to complete his senior year.

It was so long ago, that Rachel did not tell him she should miss him ; did not say that she should mourn. They talked of the neighbors, and the news the semi-weekly paper held ; of the "Association," which would meet with Azrael's aunt, across the street, next week ; of the prayer that Deacon Judkin made on Sunday ; of the price of board in Princeton ; of the best remedies for spring colds, and the flavor of sage-tea. The young student had a heavy cold upon his lungs. now some weeks old.

"You come of a sickly stock," said Rachel's mother. "Your mother died at thirty, you remember ; most of the Hebbards I have known (I mean the women) have. Then there was your poor father ! But your Grandfather Graven — they thought he *never* would die. It's a slender, *switchy* stock, Mr. Graven ; may bend, may break. You should take good care of yourself. It's a blood that owns good care ; but rebels at a slight, always."

She was a Bradford herself — Mrs. Fross ; came as straight and stiff as her silhouette over the mantel-piece,

from the Mayflower. She knew all about "blood" and "stock"; she could apportion to any family in town its proper quantity and quality of inbred sin by legitimate inheritance for such case made and provided.

Rachel stole out into the entry after Azrael Graven had risen to take his leave that night, and waited for him by herself.

Thinking how long it would be before she saw his face again, (how pale it looked, swimming before her tears across the half-swung door!) the sparse limits of her happiness suddenly struck and chafed the Puritan girl. She fed her love on such scanty fare! She felt starved. A rapid, unreasoning thought came to her that in some way she was wronged — and he. A hot flush ran to her temples, and under her heavy, pale hair, while she stood there, half hearing her mother advising Mr. Graven to put on a mustard paste.

When the young man came out to find his hat, Rachel took a sudden step and shut the door; then, finding herself quite alone with him, looked once or twice about the dim, still entry, threw her arms about his neck and kissed him of her own accord.

"Oh!" she said, "I love you!" and fled, scarlet and blinded, out of sight.

The young minister felt the world spin for an instant beneath his steady, consecrated feet. He passed his hand once or twice over his eyes, coughed, took his hat, and walked bareheaded quite down the garden walk and out into the chill, spring night.

Rachel had letters at due intervals. She returned them at corresponding and punctilious distances. Mr. Graven wrote of the tardy spring, of the size of his class, of the somewhat chilly outlook of his northeast room, of the audience which he had last Sabbath, of the great theological professor's latest anecdote, of a prospect of "a call" in a

seaboard village, of the difficulty which he found in preaching with his cold (which lingered still) in windy weather, of some exercises of mind which he had experienced of late in prayer.

Miss Fross wrote of Mr. Graven's cold, of the care that he should take, of her pleasure at the prospect of the call, of her fears that the coast would prove too severe a climate for his health, of her mother and his aunt, of the "exchange" which they had last week, of the seeds which she had sown in her garden this year, of something which had pleased her in "Doddridge" or in "Baxter," of Deacon Judkin's fever, of a funeral or a wedding down the street, of the pleasure which she had taken in his last letter, of the anxiety once more which she felt about his health, and the desire which she experienced (very timidly expressed) to see his face again, and judge from it for herself exactly how he was, and why that cold hung on so long, and if he were not in need of rest.

Mr. Graven read Miss Fross's letters, sometimes twice, with care and pleasure; tied them neatly together with red tape, and laid them away on file in a pigeon-hole of his desk, with a volume of "Jewell's Sermons" laid upon them to keep them quite safe and still.

Miss Fross read Mr. Graven's letters — ah! well, she read the last one till the next one came. She wore them out in her pocket; she crumpled them with tears of joy; she folded them in her Bible, and locked the Bible into her lower bureau-drawer. Once she pressed them hastily and hotly to her lips; but she was quite alone, and it was midnight, and Azrael had written "Dear Rachel" in three places in a note which came that day.

It was quite in the heart of the sultry summer that a letter came which Rachel carried to her mother. It was very short, somewhat wearily written, and ran like this: —

“MY DEAR FRIEND :—

“I have excused myself from prayers this morning, for I have had a restless night, with a racking and exhausting cough. I must in some way have taken a heavy chill. I shall be in better health, to-day, I think. The anniversary exercises will occupy the last week of August, I understand. I spoke with the senior professor this morning about my essay, which is in preparation. I should like to be excused from the exercises altogether, unless I find myself in better health before vacation. I mentioned this to the professor this morning. He remarked that he would consider what was practicable and advisable in the case; and inquired if I studied much by candle-light, and if I had tried the renovating agencies of calomel.

“My lecture-bell rings. I will post this communication in its incomplete condition, that you may feel acquainted with my state, and be spared undue uneasiness. I shall improve rapidly with rest and change, I feel no doubt. You will please to serve my respects to your mother, and believe me to be

“Always truly yours,

“AZRAEL GRAVEN.”

Rachel's mother read this letter, folded it slowly, read it again, and handed it back to her daughter.

“Well?” asked Rachel, wondering why her mother did not speak.

“Oh! he will do well enough if he comes home,” said Mrs. Fross. “He ought to come home. I think myself he will, before long.”

Mrs. Fross was busy putting a curtain up against the parlor window. She spoke with her mouth full of tacks. Rachel listened to her eagerly, but her voice was drawn through her teeth and whistled over the tacks. It meant nothing. Rachel made nothing of it, and went away.

Not a week therefrom, in the middle of a slow, lifeless

morning, as Rachel stood in the kitchen, dreamily coaxing a slow and lifeless bread-cake into being, her mother came and called her into the parlor in a sudden way, bidding her sit down and get cool for a little while.

"I'm not very warm," said wondering Rachel. "I'd rather rest by and by, when the cake is done."

"But you'd better rest now," said Mrs. Fross, nervously walking around the room.

"You'd better rest. The fact is, Mr. Graven came home last night."

Rachel rose impetuously from the chair, where she sat by the window, with her sleeves rolled up, and the sluggish breeze striking faintly against her flushed cheeks and well molded arms and disordered, beautiful hair. She rose impetuously, but sat slowly down again.

"He came home with bleeding at the lungs; and you might as well know it first as last. And I've got to tell you!" sobbed Mrs. Fross, sitting suddenly down herself, with her back to her daughter. "And, Rachel" — still with her back to Rachel — "if I *were* you, I'd rather know this minute that the doctor says it *may* be quick consumption, and it *may* be that there's nothing in this world to do; and I'd rather my own mother would tell me."

Rachel, in the sluggish breeze, her bared arms crossed upon her calico cooking-apron, and her falling hair blown about her face, sat for some moments perfectly still. Her mother did not look at her. The wind rose a little restlessly, and the bees in the front garden, feasting on the hearts of the great crimson peonies, hummed so loudly that it seemed as if all the world could hear them.

"I suppose," said Rachel's voice, at length, breaking dully against the roystering, lawless sound, "that he is not — able — to come and see me?"

"Oh! my dear," said her mother, "he cannot leave his bed!"



"Then I will go to him," answered Rachel, simply.

She rose, and pulled her sleeves down and took her apron off.

Mrs. Fross put her black hair-cloth chair against the wall. She shut the door: she shook her grave, gray head.

"My daughter, you are troubled and not quite yourself, or you would think — it is not suitable; it is not maidenly; you cannot offer Mr. Graven your services as a nurse, Rachel."

"He is to be my husband!" Rachel cried. She felt her brain whirl; all the world grew dark; in her mother's pained, uneven but unrelenting voice all the world — her world, the grave, good, calm, virtuous world — spoke out to her. Clear through the humming of the crazy, blessed bees among the peonies, the good people whom she knew, Mr. Graven's stately friends, the blurred vision of the Seminary at Princeton its awful self, and worse, ah! worse than that, Azrael's weak, fine voice came, cutting the two words out and welding them around her: "Not maidenly." It seemed to Rachel Fross that chains could not have held her from her lover; but those two words fettered her fast to the great brown rose in the parlor carpet which sprawled beneath her feet. She looked down at it with a sudden hate for the dull, false thing. Roses *could* not grow that color. They never had; they never would!

Her thought followed this fancy in a confused way. She could not think about Azrael for a moment; she could not understand; the idea slipped away from her. What did it mean?

She wondered how long her mother had been talking, when at last these words attracted her attention: —

"And since he is not your husband, Rachel, and since it is not becoming in a young lady to think of *that*, I do not see, my dear, what can be done. If the Lord should will" —

Rachel started and recoiled. She could not talk about

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the Lord's will. Of course, it was right, and great, and good ; but she could not talk about it then.

She walked drearily and dizzily away ; and, not knowing what else to do, went back and finished her bread-cake by herself. She noticed that she could not hear the bees among the peonies at the kitchen window.

Her mother had spoken the truth. Rachel realized this keenly enough as weeks dragged on. It would not have been "maidenly." No one in Southampton would have thought it so. Mr. Graven would not think it so.

At times a querulous hatred of the word sprang up in Rachel's heart. If one were *unmaidenly*, would the earth spin on her axis still ? What would it be like ? Would it make so much difference after Azrael was dead ?

For Azrael must die. Rachel never questioned that. The jets of hope that flashed about her when people brought her news of feverish, bright changes in his failing strength ; the cheerful messages he sent her by her mother — that he enjoyed the custards which she sent, that he had passed a quiet night ; the confident, calm clinging which he held himself to life, never touched the steady under-current of the knowledge in her that Azrael would die.

It seems to those of us who have heard something of Rachel Fross's history, in that summer, now so far behind her troubled, strong young life, that the fiction would fore-ordain itself a suicide, which should make so audacious an attempt upon the courtesy of our credence as is made by this plain, true tale.

That Azrael Graven should have been suffered to die, lying just across the street, the windows of his sick-room in sight from Rachel's little chamber, without a sight of his promised wife, seems to us a fact to smile at, till we find our eyes have filled.

It seemed to Rachel hard. Yet the sternly-nurtured woman accepted her lot with a certain calm. She felt it to

be inherently inevitable. For the most part she did not question it.

The Puritan blood in her veins ran with a powerful repression which was not unlike repose.

When she sat, at dead of night, shivering at her window, to watch the sick-light burning and waning in Azrael's room ; when she stretched her arms out to it in the black, chill air, thinking weakly how Azrael's life was burning and waning with the tiny spark ; when she went down into the gray morning, waiting for a chance word of the dying man's condition, watching for a stir about the house which held him, shrinking when they said "He suffers," faint with trying to thank God when they said "He rests," compelled to exhaust the yearning of her exiled heart toward his in a foolish jelly that she made him, in a pale, proper, useless flower that she sent — she did not think that Fate had treated her unkindly. She said, "It is the sovereign will of God." Rachel had heard a great deal about the sovereignty of God : not much about his tenderness. If his awful Presence held a rich compassion for a woman who must be "maidenly," for Southampton's sake, though Azrael lay dying, — it was a daring fancy ; He had many things to occupy his great Eternal Thought. How could it be ?

Once her young life rebelled with all its might against this Thought.

It was a rainy night and very dark. Azrael Graven had been worse all day, in much distress and weakness. Her mother had given her to understand this with some reluctance, and set her some household task, Rachel thought, to avoid any further comment on the fact. When this was finished, Rachel slipped away, and out of the backdoor, into the little dripping yard. She found the house too strait for her. She could not breathe. She felt benumbed. The ache in her heart ran, an actual pain, all up and down her feverish young limbs. She threw her shawl over her head,

gathered her dress-skirt wrong side out over her shoulders (she could not afford to spoil it because Azrael was dying), and so ran about for a little while in a purposeless, half-blind way, to and fro over the wet chips and rubbish, with the wind and rain upon her face.

Timidly and on tiptoe she wandered out, at last, into the black, deserted street, and across to Azrael's aunt's. The sick-lamp was the only light the house held, and that burned brightly, striking a slender, long shaft of gold across the slatted fence and down upon the dripping grass and little pools of water in the road. To Rachel, skulking like a criminal in the shadow, it looked like the beautiful ladder on which of old angels ascended and descended out of heaven. Her heart climbed up its shining height with a sudden, daring, wifely sense of right to turn the whole world out, and minister to Azrael's meanest wants. She felt shut out — down there in the storm and dark — like a soul in hell.

A soul in hell — or so to Rachel's excited and unnatural fancy it seemed just then — flitted past her down the street, while she stood crouching there beside the slatted fence. The light of the golden ladder which climbed to Azrael's room struck full upon its haggard face. Rachel knew the face, and shrank; she went to school with the poor girl once. She was a gentle, pretty girl. When her baby was born, the people that she lived with turned her off. She had worked in a shop since that, and lived a decent life enough, some said; but no one spoke to her, and the baby died. Rachel had sometimes wondered, in a shocked, dim way, what life was like to her.

Now, as the vision of her flitted by, a throb of awful envy bounded in Rachel's pure, young heart. This woman had dared to sin for love's sake. While she —

She fled with her head hanging, her hands before her face, as if *she* had been a guilty woman; fled from the

shining ladder, where the angels would not walk ; home, and into a dark, still room, where she dropped upon her knees.

It is said that when the early autumn chills came on, upon a windless, moonlit night, a little after the village clock struck three, Rachel Fross waked her mother, sleeping by her side, with an exceeding great and bitter cry : —

“ Mother,” she said, “ Azrael is dead ! ”

Something in that cry chilled all the placid, proper Bradford blood of Patience Fross. She sprang trembling up. The room was lighted with a mellow light, like the opening of flowers in the sun ; the shadows of a partly leafless tree fell in and lay motionless on the bed. Rachel was standing in the middle of the room, in her white night-dress, with the moonlight on her, full and solemn.

“ You are dreaming, Rachel.”

Mrs. Fross, quite herself again, rose in the stately Bradford way, and drew her daughter back to bed.

“ Mr. Graven was better this morning than he has been for a week. You have been dreaming. Go to sleep, my dear, and do not think about it. It annoys me. Why, Rachel ! Why, Rachel ! ”

Rachel sat just where her mother had placed her, straight and stiff in bed. Her eyes looked straight before her ; one hand fell over the bed's edge.

“ But, mother,” she said, “ Azrael is dead. Azrael has just died.”

She spoke very quietly then, and lay very quietly back upon the pillow.

The words had scarcely left her lips before a slow, cold horror, like a word, like a cry, like a struggle, like nothing that the two women had ever heard in all their lives before, filled the earth and sky.

It was the passing bell of the old town church.

When it had tolled twenty-nine times, Rachel turned her

face wearily to the wall. Azrael Graven was twenty-nine years old.

"But it may be some one else!" cried her mother, snatching at a hope. Rachel smiled, and said that it was no one else. Azrael was dead.

"I told you, mother, that Azrael was dead."

In the morning a bit of crape hung from Azrael Graven's sick-room window, which stood wide open to the piercing wind.

About noon a little crumpled paper came to Rachel, with two penciled words upon it, in the young minister's stiff hand, very faintly put together: "Dear Rachel" — That was all. He had tried to write, they said; but wandered. He had spoken once or twice after the moon rose in the night, and in a restless way looked round him. "Tell Rachel" — And again, "Tell Rachel" — But they could not tell Rachel, for he said no more.

Rachel went to the funeral. She walked in the procession among "the neighbors." The mourners, in their crape, crisp grief, looked far off and small to her. She wore a blue ribbon and her old plaid shawl.

Some one lingering in the road as the people scattered, attracted her dull attention. It was the girl whom she saw flitting by her in the rain when she was hiding by the fence to watch the light in Azrael's room. The girl turned upon her, as she passed, an awed and puzzled look. It changed after an instant's thought, into an expression such as one sees in the eyes of a dumb animal whose compassion is powerfully and ineffectually moved.

Rachel Fross did not die. Ah! no; not for twenty years. Of her life or of her death one fact only has been, beyond this, recorded. It is said that in her last hours she called the watcher to her bedside, with a singularly pleasant smile, and gently said: "I have had such a pleasant dream. I thought that Mr. Graven and I were married, and that I climbed a golden ladder to take care of him before he died."

## SINCE I DIED.

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How very still you sit!

If the shadow of an eyelash stirred upon your cheek ; if that gray line about your mouth should snap its tension at this quivering end ; if the pallor of your profile warmed a little ; if that tiny muscle on your forehead, just at the left eyebrow's curve, should start and twitch ; if you would but grow a trifle restless, sitting there beneath my steady gaze ; if you moved a finger of your folded hands ; if you should turn and look behind your chair, or lift your face, half lingering and half longing, half loving and half loth, to ponder on the annoyed and thwarted cry which the wind is making, where I stand between it and yourself, against the half-closed window — Ah, there ! You sigh and stir, I think. You lift your head. The little muscle is a captive still ; the line about your mouth is tense and hard ; the deepening hollow in your cheek has no warmer tint, I see, than the great Doric column which the moonlight builds against the wall. I lean against it ; I hold out my arms.

You lift your head and look me in the eye.

If a shudder crept across your figure ; if your arms, laid out upon the table, leaped but once above your head ; if you named my name ; if you held your breath with terror, or sobbed aloud for love, or sprang, or cried —

But you only lift your head and look me in the eye.

If I dared step near, or nearer ; if it were Permitted that I should cross the current of your living breath ; if it were Willed that I should feel the leap of human blood within

your veins ; if I should touch your hands, your cheeks, your lips ; if I dropped an arm as lightly as a snow-flake round your shoulder —

The fear which no heart has fathomed, the fate which no fancy has faced, the riddle which no soul has read, steps between your substance and my soul.

I drop my arms. I sink into the heart of the pillared light upon the wall. I will not wonder what would happen if my outline were defined upon it to your view. I will not think of that which could be, would be, if I struck across your vision, face to face.

Ah me, how still she sits ! With what a fixed, incurious stare she looks me in the eye !

The wind, now that I stand no longer between it and yourself, comes enviously in. It lifts the curtain, and whirls about the room. It bruises the surface of the great pearly pillar where I lean. I am caught within it. Speech and language struggle over me. Mute articulations fill the air. Tears and laughter, and the sounding of soft lips, and the falling of low cries, possess me. Will she listen ? Will she bend her head ? Will her lips part in recognition ? Is there an alphabet between us ? Or have the winds of night a vocabulary to lift before her holden eyes ?

We sat many times together, and talked of this. Do you remember, dear ? You held my hand. Tears that I could not see, fell on it ; we sat by the great hall-window up-stairs, where the maple shadow goes to sleep, face down across the floor, upon a lighted night ; the old green curtain waved its hands upon us like a mesmerist, I thought ; like a priest, you said.

“When we are parted, you shall go,” you said ; and when I shook my head you smiled — you always smiled when you said that, but you said it always quite the same.

I think I hardly understood you then. Now that I hold your eyes in mine, and you see me not ; now when I stretch



my hand and you touch me not; now that I cry your name, and you hear it not, — I comprehend you, tender one! A wisdom not of earth was in your words. "To live, is dying; I will die. To die is life, and you shall live."

Now when the fever turned, I thought of this.

That must have been — ah! how long ago? I miss the conception of that for which *how long* stands index.

Yet I perfectly remember that I perfectly understood it to be at three o'clock on a rainy Sunday morning that I died. Your little watch stood in its case of olive-wood upon the table, and drops were on the window. I noticed both, though you did not know it. I see the watch now, in your pocket; I cannot tell if the hands move, or only pulsate like a heart-throb, to and fro; they stand and point, mute golden fingers, paralyzed and pleading, forever at the hour of three. At this I wonder.

When first you said I "was sinking fast," the words sounded as old and familiar as a nursery tale. I heard you in the hall. The doctor had just left, and you went to mother and took her face in your two arms, and laid your hand across her mouth, as if it were she who had spoken. She cried out and threw up her thin old hands; but you stood as still as Eternity. Then I thought again: "It is she who dies; I shall live."

So often and so anxiously we have talked of this thing called death, that now that it is all over between us, I cannot understand why we found in it such a source of distress. It bewilders me. I am often bewildered here. Things and the fancies of things possess a relation which as yet is new and strange to me. Here is a mystery.

Now, in truth, it seems a simple matter for me to tell you how it has been with me since your lips last touched me, and your arms held me to the vanishing air.

Oh, drawn, pale lips! Nerveless, dropping arms! I told

you I would come. Did ever promise fail I spoke to you? "Come and show me Death," you said. I have come to show you Death. I could show you the fairest sight and sweetest, that ever blessed your eyes. Why, look! Is it not fair? Am I terrible? Do you shrink or shiver? Would you turn from me, or hide your strained, expectant face?

Would she? Does she? Will she? —

Ah, how the room widened! I could tell you that. It grew great and luminous day by day. At night the walls throbbed; lights of rose ran round them, and blue fire, and a tracery as of the shadows of little leaves. As the walls expanded, the air fled. But I tried to tell you how little pain I knew or feared. Your haggard face bent over me. I could not speak; when I would, I struggled, and you said "She suffers!" Dear, it was so very little!

Listen, till I tell you how that night came on. The sun fell, and the dew slid down. It seemed to me that it slid into my heart, but still I felt no pain. Where the walls pulsed and receded, the hills came in. Where the old bureau stood, above the glass, I saw a single mountain with a face of fire, and purple hair. I tried to tell you this, but you said: "She wanders." I laughed in my heart at that, for it was such a blessed wandering! As the night locked the sun below the mountain's solemn, watching face, the Gates of Space were lifted up before me; the everlasting doors of Matter swung for me upon their rusty hinges, and the King of Glories entered in and out. All the kingdoms of the earth, and the power of them, beckoned to me, across the mist my failing senses made, — ruins and roses, and the brows of Jura and the singing of the Rhine; a shaft of red light on the Sphinx's smile, and caravans in sand-storms, and an icy wind at sea, and gold in mines that no man knew, and mothers sitting at their doors in valleys singing babes to sleep, and women in dank cellars selling souls

for bread, and the whirl of wheels in giant factories, and a single prayer somewhere in a den of death, — I could not find it, though I searched, — and the smoke of battle, and broken music, and a sense of lilies alone beside a stream at the rising of the sun — and, at last, your face, dear, all alone.

I discovered then, that the walls and roof of the room had vanished quite. The night-wind blew in. The maple in the yard almost brushed my cheek. Stars were about me, and I thought the rain had stopped, yet seemed to hear it, upon the seeming of a window which I could not find.

One thing only hung between me and immensity. It was your single, awful, haggard face. I looked my last into your eyes. Stronger than death, they held and claimed my soul. I feebly raised my hand to find your own. More cruel than the grave, your wild grasp chained me. Then I struggled, and you cried out, and your face slipped, and I stood free.

I stood upon the floor, beside the bed. That which had been I, lay there at rest, but terrible, before me. You hid your face, and I saw you slide upon your knees. I laid my hand upon your head; you did not stir; I spoke to you: "Dear, look around a minute!" but you knelt quite still. I walked to and fro about the room, and meeting my mother, touched her on the elbow; she only said, "She's gone!" and sobbed aloud. "I have not *gone!*" I cried; but she sat sobbing on.

The walls of the room had settled now, and the ceiling stood in its solid place. The window was shut, but the door stood open. Suddenly I was restless, and I ran.

I brushed you in hurrying by, and hit the little light-stand where the tumblers stood; I looked to see if it would fall, but it only shivered as if a breath of wind had struck it once.

But I was restless, and I ran. In the hall I met the

doctor. This amused me, and I stopped to think it over. "Ah, Doctor," said I, "you need not trouble yourself to go up. I'm quite well to-night, you see." But he made me no answer ; he gave me no glance ; he hung up his hat, and laid his hand upon the banister against which I leaned, and went ponderously up.

It was not until he had nearly reached the landing that it occurred to me, still leaning on the banister, that his heavy arm must have swept against and *through* me, where I stood against the oaken moldings which he grasped.

I saw his feet fall on the stairs above me ; but they made no sound which reached my ear. "You'll not disturb me *now* with your big boots, sir," said I, nodding ; "never fear !"

But he disappeared from sight above me, and still I heard no sound.

Now the doctor had left the front door unlatched.

As I touched it, it blew open wide, and solemnly. I passed out and down the steps. I could see that it was chilly, yet I felt no chill. Frost was on the grass, and in the east a pallid streak, like the cheek of one who had watched all night. The flowers in the little square plots hung their heads and drew their shoulders up ; there was a lonely, late lily which I broke and gathered to my heart, where I breathed upon it, and it warmed and looked me kindly in the eye. This, I remember, gave me pleasure. I wandered in and out about the garden in the scattering rain ; my feet left no trace upon the dripping grass, and I saw with interest that the garment which I wore, gathered no moisture and no cold. I sat musing for a while upon the piazza, in the garden-chair, not caring to go in. It was so many months since I had felt able to sit upon the piazza in the open air. "By and by," I thought, I would go in and up-stairs to see you once again. The curtains were drawn from the parlor windows and I passed and repassed, looking in.

♦

All this while the cheek of the east was warming, and the air gathering faint heats and lights about me. I remembered, presently, the old arbor at the garden-foot, where, before I was sick, we sat so much together; and thinking, "She will be surprised to know that I have been down alone," I was restless, and I ran again.

I meant to come back and see you, dear, once more. I saw the lights in the room where I had lain sick, overhead; and your shadow on the curtain; and I blessed it with all the love of life and death, as I bounded by.

The air was thick with sweetness from the dying flowers. The birds woke, and the zenith lighted, and the leap of health was in my limbs. The old arbor held out its soft arms to me — but I was restless, and I ran.

The field opened before me, and meadows with broad bosoms, and a river flashed before me like a scimitar, and woods interlocked their hands to stay me — but being restless, on I ran.

The house dwindled behind me; and the light in my sick-room, and your shadow on the curtain. But yet I was restless, and I ran.

In the twinkling of an eye I fell into a solitary place. Sand and rocks were in it, and a falling wind. I paused, and knelt upon the sand, and mused a little in this place. I mused of you, and life and death, and love and agony; — but these had departed from me, as dim and distant as the fainting wind. A sense of solemn expectation filled the air. A tremor and a trouble wrapped my soul.

"I must be dead!" I said aloud. I had no sooner spoken than I learned that I was not alone.

The sun had risen, and on a ledge of ancient rock, weather-stained and red, there had fallen over against me the outline of a Presence lifted up against the sky; and turning suddenly, I saw . . . .

Lawful to utter, but utterance has fled! Lawful to utter,

but a greater than Law restrains me! Am I blotted from your desolate fixed eyes? Lips that my mortal lips have pressed, can you not quiver when I cry? Soul that my eternal soul has loved, can you stand enveloped in my presence, and not spring like a fountain to me? Would you not know how it has been with me since your perishable eyes beheld my perished face? What my eyes have seen, or my ears have heard, or my heart conceived without you? If I have missed or mourned for you? If I have watched or longed for you? Marked your solitary days and sleepless nights, and tearless eyes, and monotonous slow echo of my unanswering name? Would you not know?

“Alas! would she? Would she not? My soul mis-gives me with a matchless, solitary fear. I am called, and I slip from her. I am beckoned, and I lose her.

Her face dims, and her folded, lonely hands fade from my sight.

Time to tell her a guarded thing! Time to whisper a treasured word! A moment to tell her that *Death is dumb, for Life is deaf!* A moment to tell her —

## A WOMAN'S PULPIT.

---

I FELL to regretting to-day, for the first time in my life, that I am an old maid; for this reason: I have a very serious, long, religious story to tell, and a brisk matrimonial quarrel would have been such a vivacious, succinct, and secular means of introducing it.

But when I said, one day last winter, "I want some change," it was only Mädchen who suggested, "Wait for specie payment."

And when I said, for I felt sentimental, and it was Sunday too, "I will offer myself as a missionary in Boston," I received no more discouraging reply than, "I think I see you! You'd walk in and ask if anything could be done for their souls to-day? And if they said No, you'd turn around and come out!"

And when I urged, "The country heathen requires less courage; I will offer myself in New Vealshire," I was met, by no louder lion than the insinuation, "Perhaps I meant to turn Universalist, then?"

"Mädchen!" said I, "you know better!"

"Yes," said Mädchen.

"And you know I could preach as well as anybody!"

"Yes," said Mädchen.

"Well!" said I.

"Well!" said Mädchen.

So that was all that was said about it. For Mädchen is a woman and minds her own business.

It should be borne in mind, that I am a woman "myself,

Mr. Copperfull," and that the following correspondence, now for the first time given to the public, was accordingly finished and filed, before Mädchen ever saw or thought of it.

This statement is not at all to the point of my purpose, further than that it may have, as I suppose, some near or remote bearings upon the business abilities — by which, as nearly as I can make out, is meant the power of holding one's tongue — of the coming woman, and that I am under stress of oath never to allow an opportunity to escape me, of strewing my garments in the way of her distant, royal feet.

"To be sparing," as has been said, "of prefatory, that is to say, of condemnatory remarking," I append at once an accurate vellum copy of the valuable correspondence in question.

HERCULES, *February 28, 18 —.*

SECRETARY OF THE NEW VEALSHIRE HOME MISSION-  
ARY SOCIETY:

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR, — I am desirous of occupying one of your vacant posts of ministerial service: place and time entirely at your disposal. I am not a college graduate, nor have I yet applied for license to preach. I am, however, I believe, the possessor of a fair education, and of some slight experience in usefulness of a kind akin to that which I seek under your auspices, as well as of an interest in the neglected portions of New England, which *ought* to warrant me success in an attempt to serve their religious welfare.

For confirmation of these statements I will refer you, if you like, to the Rev. Dr. Dagon of Dagonville, and to Professor Tacitus of Sparta.

An answer at your earliest convenience, informing me if



you are disposed to accept my services, and giving me details of terms and times, will oblige,

Yours respectfully,

J. W. BANGS.

HARMONY, N. V., March 5, 18—.

J. W. BANGS, ESQ. :

MY DEAR SIR, — Your lack of collegiate education is an objection to your filling one of our stations, but not an insurmountable one. I like your letter, and am inclined to think favorably of the question of accepting your services. I should probably send you among the Gray Hills, and in March. We pay six dollars a week and "found." Will this be satisfactory? Let me hear from you again.

Truly yours,

Z. Z. ZANGROW,

*Sect. N. V. H. M. S.*

P. S. I have been too busy as yet to pursue your recommendations, but have no doubt that they are satisfactory.

HERCULES, March 9, 18—.

REV. DR. ZANGROW :

DEAR SIR, — Yours of the 5th is at hand. Terms are satisfactory. I neglected to mention in my last that I am a woman. Yours truly,

JERUSHA W. BANGS.

HARMONY, N. V., March 9, 18—.

JERUSHA W. BANGS :

DEAR MADAM, — You have played me an admirable joke. Regret that I have no time to return it.

Yours very sincerely,

Z. Z. ZANGROW, *Sect.*

HERCULES, March 11th.

DEAR SIR, — I was never more in earnest in my life.

Yours,

J. W. BANGS.

HARMONY, *March 14th.*

DEAR MADAM, — I am sorry to hear it. Yours,  
Z. Z. ZANGROW.

HERCULES, *March 15, 18—.*

REV. DR. ZANGROW :

MY DEAR SIR, — After begging your pardon for encroaching again upon your time and patience, permit me to inquire if you are not conscious of some slight inconsistency in your recent correspondence with me? By your own showing, I am individually and concretely qualified for the business in question; I am generally and abstractly beyond its serious recognition. As an educated American Christian, I am capable, by the word that goeth forth out of my mouth, of ministering to the Vealshire Mountain soul. As an educated American Christian woman, I am remanded by the piano and the crochet-needle to the Hercules parlor soul.

You will — or you would, if it fell to your lot — send me under the feminine truce flag of “teacher” into Virginia, to speak on Sabbath mornings to a promiscuous audience of a thousand negroes: you forbid me to manage a score of mountaineers. Mr. Spurgeon’s famous lady parishioner may preach to a “Sabbath-school class” of seven hundred men: you would deny her the scanty hearing of your mission pulpits.

My dear sir, to crack a hard argument, you have, in the words of Sir William the logical, “mistaken the associations of thought for the connections of existence.” If you will appoint me a brief meeting at your own convenience in your own office in Harmony, I shall not only be very much in debt to your courtesy, but I shall convince you that you ought to send me into New Vealshire. Meantime

I am sincerely yours,

J. W BANGS.

HARMONY, *March 18, 18—.*

MY DEAR MISS BANGS,— You are probably aware that, while it is not uncommon in the Universalist pulpit to find the female preacher, she is a specimen of humanity quite foreign to Orthodox ecclesiastical society.

I will confess to you, however (since you are determined to have your own way), that I have expressed in our hurried correspondence rather a denominational and professional than an individual opinion.

I can give you fifteen minutes on Tuesday next at twelve o'clock in my office, No. 41 Columbia Street.

It will at least give me pleasure to make your personal acquaintance, whether I am able or not to gratify your enthusiastic and somewhat eccentric request. I am, my dear madam, cordially yours,  
Z. Z. ZANGROW, *Sec't.*

I went, I saw, I conquered. I stayed fifteen minutes, just. I talked twelve of them. The secretary sat and drummed meditatively upon the table for the other three. He was a thin man in a white cravat. Two or three other thin men in white cravats came in as I was about to leave. The secretary whispered to them; they whispered to the secretary: they and the secretary looked at me. Somebody shook his head: somebody else shook his head. The secretary, drumming, smiled. Drumming and smiling, he bowed me out, merely remarking that I should hear from him in the course of a few days.

I have since acquired a vague suspicion, which did not dawn at the time upon my broadest imagination, that the secretary sent me into New Vealshire as a private, metaphysical speculation upon the woman question, and that the New Vealshire Home Missionary Society would sooner have sent me to heaven.

However that may be, I received from the secretary the following:—

HARMONY, N. V., *March 23, 18—.*

DEAR MISS BANGS, — I propose to send you as soon as possible to the town of Storm, New Vealshire, to occupy on trial, for a few weeks, a small church long unministered to, nearly extinct. You will be met at the station by a person of the name of Dobbins, with whom I shall make all necessary arrangements for your board and introduction.

When can you go?

Yours, etc.,

Z. Z. ZANGROW, *Sect.*

HERCULES, *March 24, 18—.*

MY DEAR DR. ZANGROW, — I can go to-morrow.

Yours, etc.,

J. W. BANGS.

A telegram from the secretary, however, generously allowed me three days "to pack." If I had been less kindly entreated at his hands, I should have had nothing to pack but my wounded dignity. I *always* travel in a bag. Did he expect me to preach out a Saratoga trunkful of flounces? I explosively demanded of Mädchen.

"He is a man," said Mädchen, soothingly, "and he has n't behaved in the least like one. Don't be hard upon him."

I relented so far as to pack a lace collar and an extra paper of hairpins. Mädchen suggested my best bonnet. I am sorry to say that I locked her out of the room.

For the benefit of any of my sex who may feel induced to follow in my footsteps, I will here remark that I packed one dress, Barnes on Matthew, Olshausen on something else, a Tischendorff Testament, Mädchen's little English Bible, Jeremy Taylor (Selections), and my rubber boots. Also, that my bag was of the large, square species, which gapes from ear to ear.

"It is n't here," said Mädchen, patiently, as I locked the valise.

"Mädchen," said I, severely, "if you mean my Floren-

tine, I am perfectly aware of it. I am going to preach in black ties, — always !”

“Storm!” said Mädchen, concisely. As that was precisely what I was doing, to the best of my abilities, I regarded Mädchen confusedly, till I saw the Pathfinder on her knees, her elbows on the Pathfinder, and her chin in her hands.

“It is n’t here,” repeated Mädchen, “nor anything nearer to it than Whirlwind. That’s in the eastern part of Connecticut.”

I think the essentially feminine fancy will before this have dwelt upon the fact that the secretary’s letter was not, to say the least of it, opulent in directions for reaching the village of Storm. I do not think mine is an essentially feminine fancy. I am sure this never had occurred to me.

When it comes to Railway Guides, I am not, nor did I ever profess to be, strong-minded. When I trace, never so patiently, the express to Kamtschatka, I am let out of the Himalaya Saturday-night accommodation. If I aim at a morning call in the Himalayas, I am morally sure to be landed on the southern peak of Patagonia. Mädchen, you understand, would leave her card in the Himalayas, if she had to make the mountains when she got there.

So, when Mädchen closed the Pathfinder with a snap of despair, I accepted her fiat without the wildest dream of disputing it, simply remarking that perhaps the conductor would know.

“Undoubtedly,” said Mädchen, with her scientific smile. “Tell him you are going to see Mr. Bobbin of New Vealshire. He cannot fail to set you down at his backdoor.”

He did, or nearly. If I cannot travel on paper, I can on iron. Although in the Pathfinder’s index I am bewildered, routed, *non est inventus*, “a woman and an idiot,” I can master the *patois* of brakemen and the hearts of conductors with unerring ease. I am sure I don’t know how I got to Storm,

and when I got there I was sure I did n't know how I was to get back again ; but the fact remains that I got there. I repeat it with emphasis. I beg especially to call the masculine attention to it. I desire the future historian of "Woman in the Sacred Desk," as he playfully skims the surface of antiquated opposition to this then long-established phase of civilization, to make a note of it, that there *was* a woman, and she at the disadvantage of a pioneer, who got there.

Before proceeding to a minute account of my clerical history, I should like to observe, for the edification of the curious as well as for the instruction of the imitative, that I labored under the disadvantage of ministering to two separate and distinct parishes, which it was as impossible to reconcile as hot coals and parched corn. These were the Parish Real and the Parish Ideal. At their first proximity to each other, my ideal parish hopped in the corn-popper of my startled imagination, and, as nearly as I can testify, continued in active motion till the popper was full.

Let us, then, in the first place, briefly consider (you will bear, I am sure, under the circumstances, with my "porochial" style)

#### THE PARISH IDEAL.

It was "in the wilderness astray," but it abounded in fresh meat and canned vegetables. Its inhabitants were heathen, of a cultivated turn of mind. Its opportunities were infinite, its demands delicately considerate ; its temper was amiable, its experience infantine. It numbered a score or so of souls, women and children for the most part ; with a few delightful old men, whose white hairs would go down in sorrow to the grave should they miss, in the afternoon of life, the protecting shade of my ministrations. I collected my flock in some rude tenement, — a barn perhaps, or antiquated school-house, — half exposed to the fury of the elements, wholly picturesque and poetical. Among them,

but not of them, at a little table, probably, with a tallow candle, I sat and talked, as the brooks run, as the clouds fly, as waves break; smoothly, as befitted a kind of New Vealshire *conversazione*; eloquently, as would Wesley, as would Whitfield, as would Chalmers, Spurgeon, Beecher.

Royally, but modestly, I ruled their stormy hearts. (N. B. — No pun intended.) Their rude lives opened, paved with golden glories, to my magic touch. Hearts, which masculine wooing would but have intrenched in their shells of ignorance and sin, bowed, conquered, and chained to their own well-being and the glory of God — or their minister — by my woman's fingers. I lived among them as their idol, and died — for I would die in their service — as their saint. Mädchen might stay at home and make calls. For me, I had found the arena worthy of my possibilities, and solely created for my happiness.

I wish to say just here, that, according to the best information which I can command, there was nothing very uncommon, certainly nothing particularly characteristic of my sex, in this mental *pas seul* through which I tripped. I suspect that I was no more interested in myself than and as much interested in my parishioners, as most young clergymen. The Gospel ministry is a very poor business investment, but an excellent intellectual one. Your average pastor must take care of his own horse, dress his daughter in her rich relations' cast-off clothing, and never be able to buy the new Encyclopædia, and this as well at the end of twenty years as of two. But he bounds from his recitation-room into a position of unquestioned and unquestionable official authority and public importance in two months. No other profession offers him this advantage. To be sure, no other profession enfolds the tremendous struggles and triumphs, serving and crowning, of the Christian minister, — a struggle and service which no patent business motive can

touch at arm's length ; a triumph and crown which it is impossible to estimate by the tests of the bar, the bench, the lecture-room. But as it is perfectly well known that this book is never read on Sundays, and that the introduction of any but "week-day holiness" into it would be the ruin of it, I refrain from pursuing my subject in any of its finer, inner lights, such as you can bear, you know, after church, very comfortably ; and have only to bespeak your patience for my delay in introducing you to

## THE PARISH REAL.

I arrived there on Saturday night, at the end of the day, a ten miles' stage-ride, and a final patch of crooked railway, in a snow-storm. Somebody who lectures has somewhere described the unique sensations of hunting in a railway station for a "committee" who never saw you, and whom you never saw. He should tell you how I found Mr. Dobbins, for I am sure I cannot. I found myself landed in a snow-drift — I suppose there was a platform under it, but I never got so far — with three other women. The three women had on waterproofs ; I had on a waterproof. There were four men and a half, as nearly as I could judge, in slouched hats, to be seen in or about the little crazy station. One man, one of the whole ones, was a ticketed official of some kind ; the other two were lounging against the station walls, making a spittoon of my snow-drift ; the half-man was standing with his hands in his pockets.

"Was you lookin' for anybody in partikkelar?" said one of the waterproofs, thoughtfully, or curiously, as I stood dismally regarding the prospect.

"Thank you. Yes. Can you tell me if Mr. Do" —

"obbins," said the half-man at this juncture. "Bangs?"

"Yes, sir."

"New parson?"

"Yes, sir."



"That's the talk!" said Mr. Dobbins. "Step right round here, ma'am!"

"Right round here," brought us up against an old buggy sleigh, and an old horse with patient ears. "Hold on a spell," said Mr. Dobbins, "I'll put ye in."

Now Mr. Dobbins was not, as I have intimated, a large man. Whether he were actually a dwarf, or whether he only got so far and stopped, I never satisfactorily discovered. But at all events, I could have "put" Mr. Dobbins into anything twice as comfortably as I could support the reversal of the process; to say nothing of the fact that the ascent of a sleigh is not at most a superhuman undertaking. However not wishing to wound his feelings, I submitted to the situation, and Mr. Dobbins handed me in and tucked me up with consummate gallantry. I mention this circumstance, not because I was prepared for, or expected, or demanded, in my ministerial capacity, any peculiar deference to my sex, but because it is indicative of the treatment which, throughout my ministerial experience, I received.

"Comfortable?" asked Mr. Dobbins after a pause, as we turned our faces eastward, towards a lonely landscape of billowy gray and white, and in the jaws of the storm; "'cause there's four miles and three quarters of this. Tough for a lady."

I assured him that I was quite comfortable and that if the weather were tough for a lady, I was too.

"You don't!" said Mr. Dobbins.

Another pause followed, after which Mr. Dobbins delivered himself of the following:—

"Been at the trade long?"

"Of preaching? Not long."

"Did n't expect it, you know" (confidentially). "Not such a young un. Never thought on't."

Not feeling called upon to make any reply to this, I made *none*, and we braved in silence the great gulps of mountain wind that well-nigh swept the buggy sleigh over.

"Nor so good lookin', neither," said Mr. Dobbins, when we had ridden perhaps half a mile.

This was discouraging, A vision of Mädchen scientifically smiling, of the Rev. Dr. Z. Z. Zangrow dubiously drumming, of the New Vealshire Home Missionary Society shaking its head, drifted distinctly by me, in the wild white whirlpool over Mr. Dobbins's hat.

Were my professional prospects to be gnawed at the roots by a dispensation of Providence for which I was, it would be admitted by the most prejudiced, not in the least accountable? Were the Universalist clergywomen never young and "good lookin'?"

I did not ask Mr. Dobbins the question, but his next burst of eloquence struck athwart it thus:—

"Had 'em here in spots, ye see; Spiritooalist and sech. There's them as thinks 't ain't scriptooral in women folks to hev a hand in the business, noway. Then ag'in there's them as feels very like the chap whose wife took to beatin' of him; 'It amuses her, and it don't hurt me.' Howsomever there's them as jest as lieves go to meetin' as not when there's nothin' else goin' on. Last one brought her baby, and her husband he sat with his head ag'in the door, and held it."

To these consoling observations Mr. Dobbins added, I believe, but two others in the course of our four miles and three quarters drive; these were equally cheering:—

"S'pose you know you're ticketed to Samphiry's?"

I was obliged to admit that I had never so much as heard a rumor of the existence of Samphiry.

"Cousin of mine," explained Mr. Dobbins, "on the mother's side. Children got the mumps down to her place. Six on 'em."

It will be readily inferred that Mr. Dobbins dropped me in the drifts about Samphiry's front door in a subdued state of mind. Samphiry greeted me with a sad smile. She was

a little yellow woman in a red calico apron. Six children, in various picturesque stages of the disease which Mr. Dobbins had specified, hung about her.

“Law me, child!” said Samphiry, when she had got me in by the fire, taken my dripping hat and cloak, and turned me full in the dying daylight and living firelight. “Why, I don’t believe you’re two year older than Mary Ann!”

Mary Ann, an overgrown child of perhaps seventeen, in short dresses buttoned up behind, sat with her mouth open, and looked at me during the expression of this encouraging comparison.

I assumed my severest ministerial gravity and silence, but my heart was sinking.

I had salt pork and barley bread for supper, and went to bed in a room where the ice stood on my hair all night, where I wrapped it around my throat as a preventive of diphtheria. I was prepared for hardship, however, and bore these little physical inconveniences bravely; but when one of Mary Ann’s brothers, somewhere in the extremely small editions, cried aloud from midnight to five A. M., and Samphiry apologized for the disturbance the next morning on this wise, — “Hope you was n’t kept awake last night, I’m sure. They generally cry for a night or two before they get through with it. If you’d been a man-minister now, I don’t s’pose I should have dared to undertake the keep of you, with mumps in the house; but it’s so different with a woman; she’s got so much more fellow-feeling for babies; I thought you would n’t mind!” — I confess that my heart dropped “deeper than did ever plummet sound.” For about ten minutes I would rather have been in Hercules making calls than in New Vealshire preaching the Gospel.

I was aroused from this brief state of despair, however, by the remembrance of my now near-approaching professional duties; and after a hot breakfast (of salt pork and *barley bread*) I retired to my icy room to prepare my mind *appropriately* for my morning’s discourse.

The storm had bent and broken since early dawn. The sun and the snow winked blindly at each other. The great hills lifted haughty heads out of wraps of ermine and gold. Outlines in black and gray of awful fissures and caverns gaped through the mass of wealthy color which they held. Little, shy, soft clouds fled over these, frightened, one thought; now and then a row of ragged black teeth snapped them up; I could see them struggle and sink. Which was the more relentless, the beauty or the power of the sight, it were difficult choosing. But I, preparing to preach my first sermon, and feeling in myself (I hope) the stillness and smallness of the very valley of humiliation, did not try to choose. I could only stand at my window and softly say, "Before the mountains were brought forth, THOU art."

I do not know whether Mary Ann heard me, but when she appeared at that crisis with my "shaving-water," and blushed scarlet, transfixed in the middle of the room, with her mouth open, to beg pardon for the mistake, but "she'd got kinder used to it with the last minister, and never thought till she opened the door and see my crinoline on the chair!" I continued, with a gentle enthusiasm:—

"That is a grand sight, my dear, over there. It ought to make one very good, I think, to live in the face of such hills as those."

"I want to know!" said Mary Ann, coming and gaping over my shoulder. "Why, I get as used to 'em as I do to washing-day!"

I had decided upon extempore preaching as best adapted to the needs of my probable audience, and, with my icy hands in the warm "shaving-water" and my eyes on the icy hills, was doing some rambling thinking about the Lord's messages and messengers; but wondering, through my eliciting of introduction, firstly, secondly, a, b, c, d, and conclusion, if the rural tenement in which we should wor-

ship possessed a dinner-bell, or a gong, or anything of that sort, which could be used as summons to assemble, and if it were not quite time to hear the sound, when Mary Ann introduced herself upon the scene again, to signify that Mr. Dobbins awaited my pleasure down-stairs. Somewhat confused by this sudden announcement, I seized my Bible and my hat, and presented myself promptly but palpitating.

"Morning," said Mr. Dobbins, with a pleasant smile. "Rested yet?"

I thanked him, and was quite rested.

"You don't!" said Mr. Dobbins. "Wal, you see I come over to say that meetin' 's gin up for to-day."

"Given up!"

"Wal, yes. Ye see there 's such a heft of snow, and no paths broke, and seein' it was a gal as was goin' to preach, me and the other deacon we thought she'd get her feet wet, or suthin', and so we 'greed we wouldn't ring the bell! Thought ye'd be glad to be let off, after travelin' all day yesterday, too!"

I looked at Mr. Dobbins. Mr. Dobbins looked at me. There was a pause.

"Will your paths be broken out by night?" I asked, with a terrible effort at self-control.

"Wal, yes. In spots; yes; middlin' well."

"Will my audience be afraid of wetting their feet, after the paths are broken?"

"Bless you, no!" said Mr. Dobbins, staring, "they 're used to 't."

"Then you will please to appoint an evening service; and ring your bell at half past six precisely. I shall be there, and shall preach, if there is no one but the sexton to hear me. And next Sabbath you will oblige me by proceeding with the regular services, whatever the weather, without the least anxiety for my feet."

"If you was n't a minister, I should say you was spunky,"

said Mr Dobbins, thoughtfully. He regarded me for some moments with disturbed interest, blindly suspicious that somebody was offended, but whether pastor or parishioner he could not make out. He was still undecided, when he took to his hat, and I to my own reflections.

This incident vitally affected my programme for the day. It was harrowing, but it was stimulating. There was the inspiration of the rack about it. The *animus* of the stake was upon me. I could die, but I would not surrender. I would gain the respect of my parishioners, whether — well, yes — whether I gained their souls or not; I am not ashamed to say it now, partly because of the gnawing hunger for usefulness for usefulness' sake, and for higher than usefulness' sake, which came to me afterwards, and which, you remember, is all left out for the Sunday books, partly because the acquisition of my people's respect was a necessary antecedent to that of their salvation.

So by help of a fire which I cajoled from Samphiry, and the shaving-water which was warmer than the fire, I contrived to employ the remainder of the Sabbath in putting my first sermon upon paper.

The bell rang, as I had directed, at half past six. It did not occur to me at the time that it sounded less like a dinner-gong than a church-bell of average size and respectability. I and my sermon were both quite ready for it, and I tramped off bravely (in my rubber boots), with Mary Ann as my guide, through the drifted and drifting paths. Once more, for the benefit of my sex, I may be permitted to mention that I wore a very plain street suit of black, *no crimps*, a white collar of linen, and a black tie; and that I retained my outside garment — a loose sack — in the pulpit.

"Here we are," said Mary Ann, as I floundered up half blinded from the depths of a three-foot drift. Here we were indeed. If Mary Ann had not been with me I should have sat down in the drift, and — no, I do not think I should

have cried, but I should have gasped a little. *Why* I should have been horribly unprepared for the sight of a commodious white church, with a steeple, and a belfry and stone steps, and people going up the steps in the latest frill and the stove-pipe hat, the reader who has ever tried to patronize an American seamstress, or give orders to an American servant, or asked an American mechanic if he sees a newspaper, must explain. The citizens of Storm might be heathen, but they were Yankees; what more could be said? Sentence a Yankee into the Desert of Sahara for life, and he would contrive means to live like "other folks."

However, I did not sit down in the drift, but went on, with meeting-house and worshipers all in an unnatural light like stereoscopic figures, and sat down in the pulpit; a course of conduct which had at least one advantage — it saved me a cold.

Mr. Dobbins, it should be noted, met me at the church door, and conducted me, with much respect, up the pulpit stairs. When he left me, I removed my hat and intrenched my beating heart behind a hymn-book.

It will be understood that, while I was not unpracticed in Sabbath-school teaching, mission prayer-meeting exhortation, "remarks" at sewing-schools, and other like avenues of religious influence, of the kind considered suitable for my sex, I had never engaged in anything which could be denominated public speech; and that, when the clear clang of the bell hushed suddenly, and the pause on the faces of my audience — there may have been forty of them — warned me that my hour had come, I was in no wise more ready to meet it than any Miss A, B, or C, who would be content to employ life in making sofa-pillows, but would be quite safe from putting it to the *outré* purpose of making sermons.

So I got through my introductory exercises with a grim desperation, and made haste to my sermon. Once with the manuscript in my hands, I drew breath. Once having looked

my audience fairly in the eye, I was prepared to conquer or be conquered by it. There should be no half-way work between us. So I held up my head and did my best.

The criticism of that sermon would be, I suspect, a choice morning's work for any professor of homiletics in the country. Its divisions were numerous and startling; its introduction occurred just where I thought it would sound best, and its conclusion was adjusted to the clock. I reasoned of righteousness and judgment to come, in learned phrase. Theology and metaphysics, exegesis and zoölogy, poetry and botany, were impressed liberally into its pages. I quoted Sir William Hamilton, Strauss, Aristotle, in liberal allowance. I toyed with the names of Schleiermacher and Copernicus. I played battledoor and shuttlecock with "views" of Hegel and Hobbes. As nearly as I can recollect, that sermon was a hash of literature in five syllables with a seasoning of astronomy and Adam.

I had the satisfaction of knowing, when I read as modestly, reverently, and as much like an unanointed church-member as I knew how, a biblical benediction, and sat down again on the pulpit cushions, that if I had not preached the Gospel, I had at least subdued the church-going population of Storm.

Certain rough-looking fellows, upon whom I had had my eye since they came in, — there were several of them, grimy and glum, with keen eyes; men who read Tom Paine, you would say, and had come in "to see the fun," — while I must admit that they neither wept nor prayed, left the house in a respectful, stupid way that was encouraging.

"You gin it to us!" said Mr. Dobbins, enthusiastically. "Folks is all upshot about ye. That there was an eloquent discourse, marm. Why, they don't see but ye know jest as much as if ye was n't a woman!"

And when I touched Mary Ann upon the shoulder to bring her home, I found her sitting motionless, not quite



strangled stiff. She had made such a cavern of her mouth, during my impassioned peroration, that an irreligious boy somewhere within good aim had snapped an India-rubber ball into it, which had unfortunately stuck.

Before night, I had reason to feel assured from many sources that I had "made a hit" in my corner of New Vealshire. But before night I had locked myself into the cool and dark, and said, as was said of the Charge of the Six Hundred: "It is magnificent; but it is not war!"

But this is where the Sunday part of my story comes in again, so it is of no consequence to us. Suffice it to say that I immediately appointed a little prayer-meeting, very much after the manner of the ideal service, for the following Wednesday night, in the school-house, with a table, and a tallow candle, too. The night was clear, and the room packed. The men who read Tom Paine were there. There were some old people present who lived out of walking distance of the church. There were a few young mothers with very quiet children. I succeeded in partially ventilating the room, and chanced on a couple of familiar hymns. It needed only a quiet voice to fill and command the quiet place. I felt very much like a woman, quite enough like a lady, a little, I hope, like a Christian, too. Like the old Greek sages, I "was not in haste to speak; I said only that which I had resolved to say." The people listened to me, and prayed as if they felt the better for it. My meeting was full of success and my heart of hope.

Arrived at this point in my narrative, I feel myself in strong sympathy with the famous historian of Old Mother Morey. For, when "my story's just begun," why, "now, my story's done."

"Ce n'est pas la victoire, mais le combat," which is as sure to make the best autobiography as to "make the happiness of noble hearts."

From the time of that little Wednesday-evening meeting

my life in Storm was a triumph and a joy, in all the better meanings of these words. My people respected me first and loved me afterwards. I taught them a little, and they taught me a great deal. I brightened a few weeks of their dulled, drowsy, dejected life : they will gild years of mine.

I desire especially to record that all sense of personal embarrassment and incongruity to the work rapidly left me. My people at once never remembered and never forgot that I was a woman. The rudest of the readers of the "Age of Reason" tipped his hat to me, and read "Ecce Homo" to gratify me, and after that, the Gospel of John to gratify himself.

Every Sabbath morning I read a plain-spoken but carefully written sermon, which cost me perhaps three days of brain-labor. Every Sabbath afternoon I talked of this and that, according to the weather and the audience. Every Wednesday night I sat in the school-house, behind the little table and the tallow candle, with the old people and the young mothers, and the hush, and the familiar hymns, and lines of hungry faces down before me that made my heart ache at one look and bound at the next. It used to seem to me that the mountains had rather starved than fed them. They were pinched, compressed, shut-down faces. All their possibilities and developments of evil were those of the dwarf, not of the giant. They were like the poor Chinese monsters, molded from birth in pitchers and vases ; all the crevices and contortions of life they filled stupidly. Whether it was because, as Mary Ann said, they "got as used to the mountains as they did to washing-day," and the process of blunting to one grandeur dulled them to all others, I can only conjecture ; but of this my New Vealshire experience convinced me : the temptations to evil of the city of Paris will bear no comparison to those of the grandest solitude that God ever made. It is in repression, not in extension, that the danger of disease lies to an immortal life. No risks

equal those of ignorance. Daniel Webster may or may not escape the moral shipwrecks of life, but what chance has an idiot beside him ?

“ It’s enough to make a man wish he’d been born a horse in a treadmill and done with it ! ” said Happen to me one day. Happen was a poor fellow on whom I made my first “ parish call ” ; and I made a great many between Sunday and Sunday. He lived five miles out of the village, at the end of an inexpressible mountain road, in a gully which lifted a pinched, purple face to the great Harmonia Range. I made, with difficulty, a riding-skirt out of my waterproof, and three miles an hour out of Mr. Dobbins’s horse, and got to him.

The road crawled up a hill into his little, low, brown shanty, and there stopped. Here he had “ farmed it, man and boy,” till the smoke of Virginia battles puffed over the hills into his straightforward brown, young eyes.

“ So I up and into it, marm, two years on’t tough ; then back again to my hoe and my wife and my baby, to say nothing of the old lady, — you see her through the door there, bedridden this dozen year, — and never a grain of salt too much for our porridge, I can tell ye, when one day I’m out to cut and chop, ten mile deep in the furrest, — alon’ too, — and first I know I’m hit and down with the trunk of a great hickory lyin’ smash ! along this here leg.

“ A day and a half before folks found me ; and another half day before the nighest doctor could get over to East Storm. Well ; I s’pose he done his best by me, but mebber he did n’t know no more how to set a leg nor you do. He vowed there war n’t no fracture there. Fracture ! It was a jelly before his eyes. So he ties it up and leaves a tumbler of suthin and goes off. So it mortified. So I’ve ben here ever sence, on this sofy. Likely to be here — bless you, yes. My wife she tends the farm and the baby and the old lady and me. Sometimes we have two meals a day,

and ag'in we don't. When you come to think as your nighest neighbor is five mile off, and that in winter-time — why, I can see, a lookin from my sofy, six feet of snow drifted across that there road to town — and nought but one woman in gunshot of you able to stir for you if you starve — why, I feel sometimes, beggin' your pardon, marm, I feel like Hell! There's summer-folks in their kerridges comes riding by, to see them hills — and kind enough some of 'em is, I'll say that for 'em — and I hear 'em chatterin' among themselves.

“‘The grand sight!’ says they. ‘The damned sight!’ says I; “for I lie on my sofy marm, and look over their heads at things they never see — lines and bars like over Harmonia red-hot and criss-cross like prison grates. Which comes mebbe of layin' and lookin' so long, and fanciful. They say I'd stand a chance to the hospital to New York or Boston, mebbe. I hain't gin it up yet. I've hopes to go and try my luck some day. But I suppose it costs a sight. And my wife, she's set her heart on the leg's coming to of itself, and so we hang along. Sometimes folks send me down books and magazines and such like. I got short o' reading this winter and read the Bible through; every word, from ‘In the beginning’ to ‘Amen.’ It's quite a pretty little story-book, too. True? I don't know about that. Most stories set up to be true. I s'pose if I was a parson, and a woman into the bargain, I should think so.”

Among my other parochial discoveries I learned one day, to my exceeding surprise, that Samphiry — who had been reticent on her family affairs — was the widow of one of my predecessors. She had married him when she was young and pretty, and he was young and ambitious, — “Fond of his book, my dear,” she said, as if she had been talking of some dead child, “but slow in speech, like Moses of old. “And three hundred and fifty dollars was tight living for a family like ours. And his heart ran out, and his people,

and maybe his sermons, too. So the salary kept a-dropping off, twenty-five dollars at a time, and he could n't take a newspaper, besides selling the library mostly for doctor's bills. And so he grew old and sick and took to farming here, without the salary, and baptized babies and prayed with sick folks free and willing, and never bore anybody a grudge. So he died year before last, and half the valley turned out to bury him. But that did n't help it any, and I know you 'd never guess me to be a minister's widow, as well as you do, my dear. I'm all washed out and flattened in. And I can't educate my children, one of them. If you 'll believe it, I don't know enough to tell when they talk bad grammar half the time, and I'd about as lieves they'd eat with their knives as not. If they get anything to eat, it's all I've got heart to care. I've got an aunt down in Massachusetts, but it's such a piece of work to get there. So I suppose we shall live and die here, and I don't know but it's just as well."

What a life it was! I felt so young, so crude, so blessed and bewildered beside it, that I gave out that night, at evening prayers, and asked Samphiry to "lead" for herself and me. But I felt no older when she had done so.

I should not neglect to mention that I conducted several funerals while I was in Storm. I did not know how, but I knew how to be sorry, which seemed to answer the same purpose; at least they sought me out for the object from far and near. On one occasion I was visited by a distant neighbor, with the request that I would bury his wife. I happened to know that the dead woman had been once a member of the Methodist church in East Storm, whose pastor was alive, active, and a man.

"Would it not be more suitable," I therefore suggested, "at least more agreeable to the feelings of Brother Hand, if you were to ask him to conduct either the whole or a part of the service?"

“Waal, ye see, marm,” urged the widower, “the cops was partikelar sot on hevin’ you, and as long as I promised her afore she drewed her last that you should conduct the business, I think we ’d better perceed without any reference to Brother Hand. I’ve been thinking of it over, and I come to the conclusion that he could n’t take offense *on so slight on occasion!*”

I had ministered “on trial” to the people of Storm, undisturbed by Rev. Dr. Zangrow, who, I suspect, was in private communication of some sort with Mr. Dobbins, for a month, — a month of pouting, spring weather, and long, lazy walks for thinking, and brisk ones for doing; of growing quite fond of salt pork and barley bread; of calling on old bedridden women, and hunting up neglected girls, and keeping one eye on my Tom Paine friends; of preaching and practicing, of hoping and doubting, of struggling and succeeding, of finding my heart and hands and head as full as life could hold; of feeling that there was a place for me in the earnest world, and that I was in my place; of feeling that my womanhood and my work, like “righteousness and peace,” had “kissed each other;” of many other things which I have promised not to mention here, — when, one day the stage brought me a letter which ran: —

HERCULES, April 28, 18 —.

MY DEAR, — I have the measles. MÄDCHEN.

Did ever a woman try to do anything, that some of the children did not have the measles?

I felt that fate was stronger than I. I bowed my head submissively, and packed my valise shockingly. Some of the people came in a little knot that night to say good by. The women cried and the men shook hands hard. It was very pleasant and very heartbreaking. I felt a dismal foreboding that, once in the clutches of Hercules and Mädchen,

I should never see their dull, dear faces again. I left my sorrow and my Jeremy Taylor for Happen, and my rubber boots for Samphiry; I tucked the lace collar and the spare paper of hairpins into Mary Ann's upper drawer. I begged Mr. Dobbins's acceptance of Barnes on Matthew, with the request that he would start a Sunday-school.

In the gray of the early morning the patient horse trotted me over, with lightened valise and heavy heart, to the crazy station. When I turned my head for a farewell look at my parish, the awful hills were crossed with Happen's red-hot bars, and Mary Ann, with her mouth open, stood in her mother's crumbling door.

## NUMBER 13.

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MY DEAR, it's my opinion that if all folks that thought of getting married were compelled by state law to spend six months with some respectable family, under the same roof, before they did it, there would n't be more than one wedding sift through that sieve to where there's twenty now.

Since you *asked* me why I never got married, that's why. Bless you, no! I don't say you put it in so many words, but that's what you've been a-saying, every look and motion and tone of you, since you sat here, turning your pretty eyes about my room and over me, my dear, quite gentle and uninquisitive, but full of a kind of wonder and a kind of sadness too. I've seen that look in young folks' eyes times and times. But it is n't often Number 13 sees such eyes as yours, my dear, though there's been enough that was kind, and enough that was sorrowful in it, for that matter, too. I took a fancy to the look of you, I tell you plainly, the first day you come — three weeks ago come Thursday — with those half dozen lawn petticoats for a fine tuck, you remember, and the insertin that was wore to be taken out from above. I'm set in my fancies, as I am in my ways. It is n't everybody one feels a drawin' to. You know you feel a drawin' in you sometimes to folks, when all the folds of your heart seem gathered up toward them like fine gathers — so close you'd hardly see to stroke 'em down. There's folks I've cut and basted this dozen year, and those I've done for by the fortnight, and even those I've made and finished, that I could n't set and talk to as I'm going on to



you, my dear — not for a steady engagement on their trussows or their mournin' for a year to come; and if you thought it was because you made it a dollar a day when I was askin' only eighty-five, I should be sorry; and you did it such a pretty way, how could I help it? And when I heard how Miss Jabez Smithson run on about you for settin' me up to ask more than your neighbors was able to pay me, I'd have — I'd have asked her one thirty-seven and a half, my dear, if I could have got it.

Stand a mite this way, if you will, my dear, nigher to the glass. There! Will you have the walnut silk cut bias for the shirr? I cut one on the square for Miss Colonel Adams's navy blue repellent. I'll pin it up a scrap, and let you see it for yourself — so!

You see, my dear, he was my cousin, and he come to our house the winter mother was failin' — when we lived down East in Franklin — to help do for us, father being dead and the boys gone. There was two boys, Ned and 'Li'kim. Ned was the one that died, I never did know what of. Our old doctor said he had wind in his brain. My little brother 'Li'kim — there! I need n't keep you standin' any longer in the blazin' light — I always said that 'Li'kim meant well, my dear, and I always, always will, and I'd rather not talk about it just now; but he got into bad company, poor little chap! and after father died he — ran — away. One night I come home from the sewin' circle, and I found his common close and his little skates and things he'd left in a heap, and a little note atop to mother. And mother she just threw up her arms and ran to meet me, screechin' through the entry; and, my dear, it left her ravin' wild from that hour till she died. Forshe'd had a fever, and been a scrap weakly in her head since father's funeral.

But that does n't matter now, only it will explain some things to you, and how my cousin Peter Doggett come to *live with us*. And that does n't matter, only that when I got

through with that job, I did n't want him for a husband, nor no man else. The ways they have with their boots, my dear, and the smell of blacking, I don't like; and the pipes, and laying them against your clean mantel-piece after you have dusted, and the bein' so particular about the pudden sauce when you're wore with watching sick folks all the night, and the sitting still and seeing you bring kindlen and draw water, and the getting used to you, my dear, and snapping of you up. And then the way of speaking to your mother!

My dear, when it all began, I was that fond of Peter Doggett I'd have carried kindlen, or bore with pipes, or fussed with pudden sauces, or run my feet off for him to all eternity, and thought myself well off. And when it all was over, I would n't have lifted a winker, much less an eyelash for him, come what might. For when we come to set down day by day and meal by meal and worry by worry together, then all the temper and all the selfishness and all the meanness there was in us come up. I don't know what he thought of *mine*, my dear. Temper enough, the Lord knows, but I *couldn't* have snapped him up, my dear, as he did me; and if I'd spoke to his mother as he spoke one afternoon to mine — she very troublesome in the head that day, poor old lady, and requirin' all the patient love of son and daughter both to keep her strong and still — if I had, I'd have looked to be turned into a pillow of salt, like Lot's poor wife, my dear, and kept a-standin' in the settin'-room for a shame to the family forever after. So after that I says to him, "Peter Doggett, we're never fitted to make each other happy as married folks if we can't get along as common folks." And so that was the end of *that*. And mother died the next week, and Peter went home after the funeral; and so I was left to myself, my dear, for my aunt Hannah, Peter's mother, was offended, very natural, and there was no other of my blood in all the world. I would n't

have thought that meant much once. Young folks don't understand such things. You've no more idea, my pretty, setting there with your great eyes, what the drawin' of kith and kin is like, when you're left to shift without it, than an unhatched bobolink, and please God you never, never may ! Nor I'd no more idea till after the house was sold to pay off old mortgages of father's, and I come to this place, my dear, on the recommendation of a friend of mine, to take in, or go out if desired, but much preferring to take in, and only advertising to begin with, for plain sewing, on account of a little weakness in my eyes. Her name was Susannah Greenwich, and the first month I rented Number 13 she was a comfort to me, my dear ; for she had the second rear, and ran a Wheeler and Wilson, with a dreadful backache, and I used to make a drop of tea for her of evenings, and I got a new tea-pot big enough for two on purpose ; and that was a pleasure you'd never guess, my dear, unless you'd drunk out of the smallest size a while, and cried into it a good deal of stormy nights alone. But Susannah Greenwich she got married. She married the first floor, that I cured of the toothache ; and it was coming up after the drops that he took the notion to her, when I'd got her fixed comfortable, with a Scotch plaid blanket shawl across the chair, and that red cricket to her feet, and the mug a-steaming in her hand ; for I had n't any tea-cups at that time, and the wash-stand mug has more comfort in it than you'd think, my dear, when tea-cups are out of the question for lack of steady work.

Now I'll tell you that this minute I never told Susannah nor a living soul. He asked me first, the first floor did. His name was Thrasher. But I would n't have a man named Thrasher if he was first cousin to the Angel Gabriel. And he took it very kind indeed, and made up to Susannah that day come a fortnight, for he was in a taking for a home as ever I saw ; and she moved her Wheeler and Wilson

away, and they went across the river to live, for he kept a lard factory, and it was more convenient for the hogs.

It was n't till Susannah 'd gone that it all came over me, my dear. Long as you have a cup of tea to make or a toothache to cure for folks, it ain't so bad, but when you've settled down in a big houseful of those that you have n't the right to lift a finger for, nor one of them the heart to do for you, and all going their own ways, and living their own lives, and sorrowin' their own sorrows, and lockin' their souls against each other as they do their drawers and trunks, and if you was to die in your bed of some lonesome night, my dear, not a soul of 'em would know nor care until the landlady noticed, maybe, by next evening that you did n't make a noise about your room, and sent up the Loon to see. I call her the Loon, my dear, for she's the chamber-maid and-nigh as crazy; besides, the color of her eyes the same, if you noticed it upon the stairs. I've lost my collection of ideas, my dear, but I was going to say, it is a way of living that folks can't dream nor guess at till they've lived it. It seems to me, as I set and think it over, as if we had to live such large whiles in this world, my dear, to understand the least, least little things!

Hard? Yes, my dear, I thought so then. When first I knuckled to it down in Number 13 I thought it was a little hard. But, bless you! that was before I knew what hardness was, or where the comfort of it was coming in. It's like the soft side of a pine board, boardin' is. There! I didn't *mean* that for a conundrum, but it's a pretty good one; don't you think so?

Turn a scrap this way, while I pin the gore against the loop. Yes.

Comfort? I've had enough of comfort in this scrimpy little wee worn room, my dear, to warm a cold heart through for forty harder lives than mine. No, I don't know as I could tell you *how* it comes. Comfort is like sunshine of

an afternoon : you can't reason how it comes, but only know the blessed comin', and set and curl up in it a-warmin' through and through, my dear. And it ain't so much then as it is afterward that you know how warm you are. I've taken a surprising deal of pleasure in the course of my experience in thinking how well off I was once, after it was over. Some folks can't, I know. Eggs ain't speckled all alike, nor there don't no two kittens in a batch run after their tails with just the same degree of sperit. I've seen cats that would do it in a melancholy manner, as if they were doing you a personal favor, and cats that would do it in a superior manner, as if they'd show the other cats how much it was beneath 'em. There's cats and cats.

If you'd rather set and wait for me to baste the kilt platin' together, I'll try and tell you something about it; but it's a scrimpy story, like the room, my dear, and wee and worn too, like the room. Everything's been scrimpy in my life, my pretty, but the comfort.

After Susannah, it all began with Miss Major Crackle-jaw, upon the same floor front. I'd seen her going in and out — a little crectur with big eyes and stylish hair; but I'd never taken notice to speak to most the folks, for the third floor rear, with one window and a gas stove and do for yourself, ain't just abreast of the full soots or front parlors and board besides, you see. So, after Susannah Thrasher went, I fought mostly shy of 'em, unless it was a little plain sewing, and once or twice the week's mendin' for Miss M'Henry Dumps (as true as you stand in your bustle, that was her blessed name!) — the first floor she was, with three babies and a nurse with neuralgy twice a week in the frouziest head I ever saw, that dropped the baby down the steps if you'll believe it, twice that winter.

And so, because I kept so mostly to myself, and because Number 13 *was* cold, my dear, when the gas was contrary, and I had n't that chair in there made out of the barrel, with

the patchwork cover — poor Miss Flynn and Tommy Harkness, they gave me that chair, but I have n't come to them yet — nor the Turkey-red valance on the curtain, my dear: and you can't guess the comfort there is in a mite of Turkey red, nor how my poor dear Helen Goldenough looked blushing in the day she knocked and said, Might she give herself a *great* comfort by putting of it up? And I had n't got the tea-set then, nor that little shelf old Mr. Hopkinson put up to hold the cups I bought next quarter, nor the pretty shade across the gas, for your poor eyes, or the lace and paper with the maple leaves between, sent by the attic rear, my dear, with the sweetest poor face, and, oh! *she* got into such a trouble! nor the little book-case either from Miss Cracklejaw herself, one Christmas-eve, with John G. Whittier's poems a-standing all alone and looking such a comfort! Nor I had n't got this blessed stove in then that I saved a year to run the pipe through, and to get the landlady quite willing; for anybody's temper would be wore a little thin, my dear, with folks that did n't pay, to say nothing of the Loon. And make the best you might, my dear, there is *no* comfort in the Loon.

So I was setting all alone, my dear, one night without a light, and shivering over the gas stove, and moping by myself, for I was out of work; and, setting there, I began to think. All at once I began to seem to be setting in the keeping-room at home with my little brother 'Li'kim. What I said about the drawin' that you feel for folks, you know, and you know how some drawin's is as much tighter than other drawin's as is the difference between the sunlight and the moonlight, or between the fire and the freeze! I don't know how it was — I can't talk much about it even, after all — but in all my life I never had such a drawin' of all that in you that makes you love and live for folks, and be blessed when they're by you, and be wretched when they ain't, and most of all that feelin' that makes you glad

to do and suffer for 'em and spare 'em pain, and shelter of 'em up as hens brood over their poor chicks, or like young mothers cuddlin' their first babies, as the feelin's that I had for my little brother 'Li'kim. What I thought of Peter Doggett before he come to live with us come nighest to it ; but it never, never was the same.

'Li'kim was a pretty boy, my dear, and his hair curled. I used to curl it across my fingers for him every morning ; and he brought his little lessons to me, and he always liked to get by me, and he'd rather I'd go up to hear his prayers. And oh, my dear, from the night he left us till — till long afterward — till this very living night — I'll own to you, when I've kneeled to say my own, there's never, never been a night, not one, that I have n't said over " Now I lay me " through for *him*, my dear, fearin' he'd grown too wild and wayward to say it for himself.

But I've wandered far from Miss Cracklejaw ; you must excuse me. I have n't often spoke of 'Li'kim — not for many years. He was the light of my eyes, my dear — poor boy ! — just the living light of my young eyes. I used to tell him so sometimes when we sat alone ; but *then* I did n't even know what I was a-saying when I was a-saying that.

But when I was setting there that evening it all come back, and all I could think of was that little fellow ; and the strange old mystery of kith or kin, and how I was left battlin' without it, come over me ; and how dreary the room looked, and how cold it was, and I without a friend in all that big drear house, and the tea-pot only lukewarm upon the stove ! And I seemed to see my life go stretching out, out, like an awful seam to which there is no end, and me sitting taking stitches to shorten of it up, just so, pent up alone with my tea-pot in that little room, and never a face to kiss nor a hand to get hold of when your head aches like to split, my dear, and never a voice to speak nor to talk *back to*, and in all the wide, old world no speck of comfort *to your name*, my dear.

Then all at once within the little lonely room I seemed to see my little brother 'Li'kim kneeling down to say his prayers ; and I put down my tea-cup — for it was dark, and my eyes never very strong, and I often saw queer things — and I kneeled down where I seemed to see him and went through “Now I lay me” by myself, till the tea was cold. But I felt better for it, somehow, that I did, my dear, and before I was off my knees Miss Cracklejaw knocked sudden, and I jumped as if I'd been struck in a heap to let her in.

She wanted a little sewin' done, she said, and would I just step into her room and see if I could do it for her? So I went in with her, and we set down and began to talk about the work. They was little things, my dear, a little blanket, and a little shirt, and what not, and she'd given out on finishing 'em off, for she was n't very well ; and I was sorry for her as we set and talked, for now and then the tears come and trickled down, and she in a sadder way, my dear, than she'd ought to be, till I knew there was a trouble on her mind ; and at last, while we were talking, it come over me, with a great stirring in my heart, to find out what it was that wore on her, and be a comfort if I could. So, though I *was* the third rear and a gas stove, I up and says : —

“Miss Cracklejaw, something worries you. I'm a poor woman, but your neighbor, and if ever I can do for you, just let me know, and there I am ; for it's lonesome boardin' with your worries, as I know, my dear.”

Well, she thanked me pretty enough — very prettily for a woman with such a stylish head of hair, and cried again, and said she'd see, and said there *was* a worry, and it broke her heart.

Now it was that very night, my dear, I sittin' in my dressin'-gownd to read my chapter, that I heard the noise outside my door, a stumblin', scrapin' noise, and then a bangin'



like the last trumpet up against my door, and I went to see, for it was half after eleven o'clock, and the hours in the house are half past ten, excepting latch-keys to gentlemen of good habits at eleven, and there, my dear, I come plump on Major Cracklejaw, drunk as drunk.

His poor wife come out as I come out, in a pretty white wrapper, with shirred pink merino up the front, you know, and her hair all streaming and her face as white! And we helped him into bed together, he never knowin', and neither of us spoke a word till it was done. Then says I, "I know your worry now, Miss Cracklejaw, and Heaven help you!"

And she says: "Oh, what shall I do? what shall I *do*? It was so last week and the week before, and twice last month, and some other times. And I've let him in quite quiet, nobody knowin' his disgrace; for he's a young man, my husband is, and never was like this before, and promised me he never, never would. But he's got into a bad set," she says, and "he's troubled in his business" — we had to excuse so much in men, she said, on account of business — and now, when she was taken ill, oh! who would let him in at nights, and save the house from knowin' of the shame? she says. And she was in such a taking as you never saw. So of course I said I'd let him in, my dear, and so I did. And I let him in with a vengeance, I tell you; for when it happened twice, I gave him such a talkin' to, she lying weak and miser'ble up-stairs, poor creetur, that, for very shame, it was a fortnight before he dared to try it again, my dear. And I talked when he was sober, and I talked when he was drunk, and I set up always till that man was in, as if he'd been a boy a dozen years old; and after the baby was born he got ashamed of it, or else I made it too much trouble, and he pulled through and come out all right, my dear; and such a grateful creetur, when I sat of evenings now and then to help about the baby! for she was a long time getting up. And never a soul but them two and myself knew

of his disgrace, my dear, for I never let on a word of it; and if they had n't been unknownst to you, and gone to California besides, I would n't let on now. I don't know why she took on so about it, as if I'd done her some tremendous favor. Any woman would have done it she'd seen fit to let.

Now when I saw that young thing well and spry, and him as well-behaved as need be, and the baby with the whooping-cough, and him so tender to it, and home of evenings, I got such comfort in it as you'd never guess. It was 'most as good as having a husband and baby of your own, without the bother or the blacking. And there was that in the way them two looked at me, and the tones of their voice when they spoke to me, my dear, forever after, that made my scrimpy little room a sort of home to me — if you can understand the feelin' — even when I set alone.

And oh! the tones, my dear, and oh! the voices and the looks these walls have seen, I don't know why! And the folks that have made this house a comfort to me, I don't know how! I think I got the most out of poor Miss Flynn and Tommy Harkness for a while, though why they ever should have come to *me*! You see, it had been going on a long while: she very young and pretty, and her mother dead, and working in a dollar store all day; and Tommy Harkness, he was young and thoughtless, and he had the second opposite, but he was in the retail grocery; and I don't suppose they thought of marrying. But she was lonesome, and the boy was good-natured, and this had been goin' on for nigh two years, till, my dear, she was the talk of the house.

One evening, up comes Miss Barker — she's the landlady, you know — and says she, "I can't have this any longer," says she; "there's such goin's-on, and in her room at reasonable and onreasonable hours, and caught a kissin' of her a Tuesday last! All my folks are talkin' about it.

Maggie Flynn must suit herself with a less respectable house," says Miss Barker.

Now, my dear. I was in that distress I could n't bear myself for a half an hour, for I liked Miss Flynn, though very imprudent; but I'd as soon think evil of myself, my dear, as of that child. And in she comes while I was turning of it over, all her hair tumbled, and her eyes as red as the Loon's herself, and wringing of her hands and wringing of her hands. Oh! what would ever become of her? What had she done? What should she do? And she clings to me, and begs me to save her from such a shameful, awful thing. In all the house, she said, I was the only friend she had to tell. I don't know why, for more than taking in a hot brick or so when she had an influenza, and watching for a word, and wishing she'd confide in me about the boy — for I'd felt uneasy — I'd never done.

I think, my dear, that was the hardest three days' work I ever did, for it took three days to straighten of it out. And such a time! Miss Cracklejaw did most of that, though set against the girl to start with. But we talked it over, and we had Miss Barker up, and Miss Flynn, all red and crying, and Tommy too; and Miss Cracklejaw she said if we could carry it out, she'd invite me down to supper on Christmas evening — for it was Christmas time. She'd invited me before, my dear; but when it's only a dried herring and a cup of tea *and* a gas stove you can ask back to, you feel a delicacy. So Miss Cracklejaw invited me to supper, and Miss Barker, we prevailed upon her to say she'd abide by the decision of the house if it was laid before the house. So then I goes to Tommy Harkness, and I says, "Thomas, you and Maggie Flynn must be engaged to be married before six o'clock to-night. And then, Thomas, you'll have to go across to old Miss Phipps's to board, and call on Maggie in the parlor."

Says Thomas, groaning out between his hands, "Oh, is

it so bad as that? Oh, I wish she'd never seen me! I would n't have had this happen, not for the worth of State Street," say Tommy Harkness; for he was fond of Maggie, and never meant to harm her. Then he holds up his head, with his cheeks hot. "Maggie's a lady!" says he, fast and mad. "She's been a lady to me. It's I that was n't the gentleman," says he, "for I ought to have thought of her. Maggie is a good girl," says Tommy, mighty proud. Then he melted down quite piteous, and cries, "I did n't think! I did n't think! And we have n't any thing to marry on, and how *could* a fellow get engaged?"

So I made quick work of Tommy Harkness, but it was three blessed days before Miss Flynn would show her poor face to any soul but me, or barely eat a morsel, and crying her eyes out, my dear, till she was almost blind. But when the Christmas come, I told Miss Cracklejaw I'd accept her invitation to supper, seeing it would run on forever if I did n't take a step decided; and I took her just as she was, all pale and blinded with the tears, one hand in mine, and Tommy Harkness with the other on his arm. My! how that boy did tremble! And Miss Cracklejaw she was very polite and pretty, and so I took my first tea, my dear, at Miss Barker's table.

All the house was there, and the room as bright as bright. And you never saw how the silver seemed to me to shine, or the pleasant look about the cake-basket, my dear. And I stood up before them all, and I says, for I knew them mostly by that time.

"My friends," I says, "I've come to ask you to congratulate these two young people for being promised to each other to be man and wife." I says it very solemn, 'most like a marriage service, and the people's faces, though black enough, my dear, took on a solemn look. "They're very young," I further says, "without father or mother to guide them or advise them—very young," I says; and when I

felt her poor hand shake in mine, there come that trembling in my voice I hardly could get out the words. "And I think," says I, "that you 'll all agree with me as it 's easier in this world to do foolish things than prudent ones, and sweeter to think well of folks than ill of folks, and nobler to remember that we none of us ain't sure till we are in our graves that the time may n't come we 'll need folks to believe in us too against appearances, and to forgive us too the little follies we may commit despite ourselves. My friends," says I, "it 's my belief no man nor no woman of us will ever grow so old as to be sure we might n't make a blunder and be sorry for it, and yet have hearts as innocent as two young hearts I 've looked into and know all about. And so, because it 's the blessed Christmas time, in which we all love to think kindly and believe much in one another, I 'm sure you 'll join with me in the little supper of congratulation I 've come down to take with you and my two dear young friends to-night."

And, my dear, they did—yes, they did. Even Miss Barker she cleared up, and they helped Miss Flynn six times to marmalade among 'em, and wished her merry Christmas, and talked politics most beautiful, when she began to cry afresh, to change the subject. And when that supper was over, first I knew that whole tableful of folks, they rose up, and Major Cracklejaw, says he:—

"A hundred merry Christmases and three cheers for her that has the Christmas soul among us!" says Major Cracklejaw. And so, as I sat looking round, quite pleased and happy, and wondering who it was of whom the Major thought that pretty thought, my dear, would you believe it? All those folks they got up and they cheered *me!* ME!

My dear, I like to have fell through the floor, not so much because the Loon dropped the preserved ginger down my neck that minute, as she truly did, and very cold I found it for so hot a tasting thing, and my best alpaca too

— but you can't scold a creetur with no more gumption than that creetur has — but because of the fright of it and the surprise. But afterward, when I come to think it over, there come such a comfort to it I could hardly close my eyes that blessed night.

Ah, my dear, and so it's been this thing and been that; but I wish you'd seen my poor Miss Goldenough before the small-pox winter. Not so very pretty, but gentle and well-looking, though I never can abide loops brought round behind and puffed across the bustle. And when she was taken down up there in that attic, and not a relative nigher than Kentucky, when she come on to sing in the Beethoven chorus, there was I, with a full week on Miss Jabez Smithson, for she was going to New York to make a little visit; and when Miss Barker come up all of a zeal about sending of the poor creetur to the hospital, I says, "What shall I do?" Indeed I did! But then I thought of being down with small-pox in that attic, and no kith nor kin to stand by you, and of the terror that she had about the hospital, for she'd often told me, and it was something of a cousin that was neglected in one once, and died most horrible. And I says, my dear, what has Heaven left me without own folks for, if it ain't to be own folks to those that are similar? and I says:—

"Miss Barker, let the poor thing stay, and shut us up together in the attic, and the Loon will bring the meals and my good-by to all the house," says I, "and tell no one to come nigh us."

And so she did it, for she's a grateful creetur; and ever after not scolding her about the ginger, she was most willing *for* a Loon: a little used to sharp words, I guess, for most things.

So I stayed three weeks in that attic, and the doctor and the Loon come every day — at least the tips of her fingers with the dishes — and I never saw her eyes so blazin' red

before nor since. And we did the best we could; but one night, Tuesday three week, as I was dropping into a scrappy nap upon the comfortables I'd laid upon the floor, Helen Goldenough she called me in a ringing voice.

I spring, and am by her in a minute, and there she sits, bolt-upright and awful, in the bed. Says she:—

“Why, mother!” says she — “why, mother, how good of you to come!”

My dear, she took me for her mother; and when I saw the change upon her, I can't tell you the solemn feelings of my heart to hear that word.

But they wern't as solemn as the feelings that I had a minute after, when that poor thing did what she did. My dear, upon my living word, she rose upon her knees and folded of her hands and begun to say her prayers to me. I'm 'most afraid to tell you what she said. Says she:—

“*Our mother who art in heaven!*” that's what she says — “*our mother who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!*” says Helen Goldenough. And then, whether she took me for mother on earth or mother in heaven I can't say, not knowin', but she puts her poor hands about my neck, for I would n't have deceived her not to move an eyelash if I'd died for it that minute; and, my dear, I was so much own folks to her, and whether those of earth or heaven does n't matter as I know, that she fell into my arms, all dreadful as she was, and there she died.

Her mother did come on two days after, and I told her how it was. I don't think, if I'd live to the next Centennial and the ballots, I'd forget that woman's look nor the words she said to me. I can't tell them to you, my dear, for they were far, far above my best deserving; and she gave the Loon a dollar bill, and slept with me and cried upon my neck till she went home.

No, I never had it, after all; only three days' touch of varyloid, that the Loon brought the meals to, and Miss

Cracklejaw she sent up grapes ; and after you have found out it is n't it, my dear, it ain't so bad to be alone. First two days I did n't know, and I thought a great deal about my little brother 'Li'kim, and of bein' glad I had no own folks, after all, to take into mortal danger for my sake, till there fairly was a comfort in it, don't you see ?

And now, my dear, if I had time to tell you about Mr. Hopkinson and his broken arm, or about Miss M'Henry Dumps's baby, or about that matter in the first floor rear, or about Miss Barker herself and the invitation down to dinner, or a thousand thousand things that took place to bless me ! but I see you're getting tired, and if I'm going to tell a story all about myself, I must tell it I suppose, and you'll excuse me for the impoliteness, and I'll make it short as possible.

But, oh ! I wish you'd seen the attic rear poor thing of which I spoke. Mercy Maynard was her name, and saleswoman in a fancy store, and a little wild and fond of dress, but a modest woman, in spite of him, my dear ; for he owned the store, and he kept the wages down on purpose. And she used to come of evenings, and set on that cricket at my feet, and tell me ; and it was a cursed story, that it was, my dear — may I be forgiven for a little swearing when I think of him ! — and often and often it happens in this town to them poor girls. And there was a time I thought I'd lost her, for I'd talked till I was wore out, and she got as wild as wild with desperation, not knowing any place to go to ; and poor girls must earn their bread, my dear, in spite of cursed men. And it was n't much to do, I'm sure, but all I could ; so I persuaded her and I begged her till she came. Says I : “ Just quit, and stop with me a while, and help me at my work, till you find more, two in a room being nigh half as much a week, and two to a teapot nothing more to speak of, and twice the comfort,” as was true, my dear. And so she come and stayed till Mr.



M'Henry Dumps he found her something in a corset store that a woman owned it, and only peace and women all around her. I was a little short of work just then, it's true; but, bless you! somehow we seemed to get along. I've often thought of a thing she said one night, and stroking of my hair in a little way she had. "You poor old dear!" says she. "You love your boardin'-house neighbor as yourself." says she. I'm just so mean, my dear, I suppose I did for her twice as happily for hearing that. It's the very Alderney cream of comfort when folks think kinder of you than you deserve.

But it was about this time there come slowly growin' on me that trouble and that terror that drove all other folks' troubles half out my crazy, selfish heart.

It come slowly, and yet it come sudden too. I'll put it in few words now if I can, for there's nothing in it worth the telling to make a fuss about.

It was about my eyes, my dear—never very strong, and sewing so constant, and perhaps a little with watching with Miss Barker when she had the fever; but, first I knew, the black work had to lay by till morning; and then it could n't be black work at all; and then I noticed that the sewing in the evening had to slip; and sudden, one afternoon, as I sat hurrying to get the narrow velvet on Miss M'Henry Dumps's polonaise, there come to me a dreadful thing.

My dear, I could n't thread my needle.

Thinkin' to mercy it might be a headache, I let it go till next day, and the next; and when it got no different, I put my bonnet on and went out, sayin' nothing to nobody, and asked the doctor.

My dear, I think I know how folks feel when they jump into rivers in their night-gownds, and swallow poison (which must be a most unpleasant manner to select), and even a pistol or a razor — any dreadful, desperate, wild, mad way

that you can think of of getting rid of the life the Lord has laid upon your breaking shoulders. When he told me it was cataract, and very doubtful, but they would try it at the hospital if I could get in, I never even said a Thank you, Sir. I tied on my bonnet and come home, and I crawled up stairs to my little room — my precious little room, my dear, where it was n't the dyin' light that made things look so dim and strange to me — and down I sat and locked the door, and there I stayed.

I can't tell you how long it was — maybe till next evening, maybe days and more; I never could exactly tell. Folks come and come. I sent them all away. They knocked and questioned, but I turned 'em off. I had to turn it over in my mind alone.

I turned it over in a curious way. I seemed to see myself a-setting there, much as I'd seen 'Li'kim on his knees beside the bed, distinct — a miserable woman, half dazed and crazed. I seemed to set and talk about myself as if I'd been one of the poor creeturs in some other room I'd gone to do for. And as I set, I talked like this: —

“Dependent on her needle. Poor. A woman. Living by herself. Beginning to grow old. No home. No folks. And growing blind. Oh, poor thing!”

Then I'd have it over a little different: —

“Growing blind. No home. No folks. Poor. Living all alone. A woman. Takes in sewing for a living. How sorry I am for her!”

Then I'd try it once again: —

“An old woman. Took in sewing for a living. Long gone blind. No home. No folks. Sent her to the poor-house. There she sits. Stone-blind. May live to be eighty. Poor thing! What can I do for her? Oh, what can I do?”

It was when this had been going on a while that, sudden, as I sat there, Helen Goldenough, that was dead and buried, come walking up across the room to my poor eyes that

saw all things so queer. And she took me by the hand, and down she pushed me gently on my knees. And I saw her kneel beside me, and seem to take my hands and lift 'em up — so! And I saw her talking — so! And, my dear, she says:—

“Our mother who art in heaven” —and seems to wait for me to say it after. And after thinkin' of it a little while, I says:—

“Our Father and mother who art in heaven,” and then I stopped. I felt easier, my dear — I truly did. I *sensed* it, as we used to say to home, that there was another kith and kin than that I had n't got, and lovin'er own folks than the own folks I had lost, and I felt ashamed, my dear — I was ashamed to have forgot it, for I was brought up religious always, though never quite settled in my mind on justification by faith and the election doctrine, with a leanin' to immersion, I will confess.

So when I'd said those words, and Helen Goldenough she'd seemed to go, I let in Maggie Flynn, most uneasy and crying at the door, and told her all about it.

My dear, it was just three days since the people in the house had known, and I never, never was deservin' of it, when up it come! I sitting all forlorn and at my wits' end in the dark, and the Loon one mortal grin — I don't, indeed, believe no other creetur could, *unless* the bird itself. And in she brought the round robin on a stone-china plate, with a red doyley and two apples. Miss Barker's compliments and the house's love, she says; and they begs you to accept, she says.

I'll get you the paper, my dear, and let you read it for yourself. Rather not? Well, I will try; but it always makes my voice a little shaky, and Mr. Hopkinson, I think it must have been, that drew it, for he's a school-teacher, my dear; and never was there a mortal thing but helping when the arm was set, and now and then a stockin' or so; *he'd got no women-folks to do for him.*

“Miss Barker’s boarders” — (it begins) — “Miss Barker’s boarders beg leave to send their profound sympathy and sorrow to Number 13, in the unexpected trial that has fallen on that room. And in token of their grateful remembrance of unnumbered large and little kindnesses” — (my dear, those are the very words, though blush I do to say it) — “of unnumbered large and little kindnesses that they, Miss Barker’s boarders, have received from the occupant of that room in this and other times, and in memory of her endeavors to bring the spirit of a home among so many homeless people, and of their great indebtedness to her for much neighborly, unselfish service, offered in a sweet and modest manner peculiar to herself, Miss Barker’s boarders hereby request her to favor them by accepting the inclosed trifle, hoping it may help to defray the expenses of that affliction which it has pleased Heaven mysteriously to send upon her, and wishing it might testify one half of both the sadness and the hope that is felt throughout this house for her.

“(Signed): M’Henry Dumps, Althea Dumps, E. G. Hopkinson, Maggie Flynn, T. Harkness, John Cracklejaw, May Cracklejaw, O. L. Smith, P. Jones, Susannah G. Thrasher, Caleb Thrasher, Mercy Maynard, E. P. Green, Sarah Barker, Elizabeth Tudor, Mary Ann Shamway.”

And, my dear, it was eighty-five dollars and forty-two cents.

But I never would have thought the forty-two cents of them two girls; and Mary Ann Shamway’s neuralgy, I never could help her much, poor thing, do or not do; and before I could get it into my head that Elizabeth Tudor was the Loon! To say nothing of Miss Barker’s receipt for three months’ rent, my dear. And those strange gentlemen, that more than a civil “Pleasant morning, sir!” never did I have the pleasure.

And so I went to the hospital, my pretty, quite brave and

happy. And a paid bed *is* a comfort, my dear, if go you must. And for all the courage and all the happiness that bore me through, like wings, I have to thank their generous way of saying so. For, oh! there's no tonic and no ether to bear pain and weakness on like joy, my dear; and the feeling that you're cared for and thought kindly of, comes nighest to the name of joy of any that I know.

So I left my little room, my dear, saying good-by to all the things, to wonder if I'd ever see them more; the Turkey-red valance, and the tea-pot, and the cricket in especial, and Mercy Maynard's ivy growing in the bottle over there. Eyes looked out of them plain and scrimpy things, my dear, to my eyes, and voices spoke from them to answer me, and grace and blessin's seemed to stand in 'em and reach to me, and seem to say: —

“Goin' to the hospital. Goin' to be cured. Pretty well off. Hosts of friends. And a round robin. Need n't worry. Coming back to us. Not so much a happy woman as a quiet. Plenty of folks. Our Father and our mother who art” —

And then I shut the door, my dear, and, as I told you, went and bore it through.

Well! well! well! it was, oh! the loveliest spring night, my dear, when I come home. And, oh! so much beyond my grumpiness and deserving when first they told me all was going well. Never did I half believe nor understand it till the very night they drove me home. It was of an April evening, and the grass was springing greenish here and there in spots upon the Common, and pleasant to the eyes, if weak, my dear, in driving by. And the same I thought with the dyin' light, a pink and gentle one, and many thin, high clouds. So many little boys a-whistling in the street, and standin' on their heads to scare the wits of you, I never saw. And I counted twenty little girls a-laughing, happy

as the angels, between that hospital and home. And warm, too; and so mild! One of the hospital doctors he come with me, for they were kind as kind, and him and the driver they got me out the carriage as if I 'd been the Queen.

My dear, for all the fits of blues and undeserving may I hope to be forgiven! But I was kind of hustled into the parlors, and in a sort of soft, low light, and very thoughtful of my eyes in 'em, all smilin' to their eyebrows, there stood the house — the whole of 'em, all in a row, my dear, to greet me home, they said. And up they come, and like to been the end of me, and Susannah Greenwich too. Some they shook my hands and some they kissed me, but they were women, only poor old Mr. Hopkinson, that you must excuse; and some they cried and some they laughed, and Miss Barker in the middle, with a tea-table spread out, and a little speech, with ice-cream that the Loon she tripped and stuck her elbow through; but if you did n't happen to see it, it tasted just as well.

But there was a strange gentleman among 'em that I 'd never seen, and he did n't come to shake hands quite natural with the rest, not ever having had the pleasure; but he stood apart, a little sober; and Mary Ann Shamway, with her poor head tied up, she said it was his way, and there about a fortnight, and a little sickly, when I went to kiss the Dumpses' baby. I'm a little bashful with strange gentlemen, and though he kinder looked at me, I did n't trouble with him not to notice him particular; and the doctor said too much excitement and the pleasure would n't do, for he stayed to the ice-cream, as Miss Barker invited him most prettily; and I thought the Loon would be the death of him, in spite of tryin' to be most polite and handin' Mercy Maynard out.

So by and by I creep up softly to my own old little room, not to disturb their pleasure, and unbeknownst to most.

There it was, my dear, And the pretty shade against the

gas, and a pink geranium in the window, with Mercy Maynard's love, and the towel rack from Maggie Flynn; and I never did know who put the English breakfast tea into the tea-caddy, but, by the spillin' round, I knew it was the Loon that tried to set the tea-pot boilin' ready. And as for that chromio upon the wall, I *suspect* Miss Cracklejaw, but never did I know; nor the five roses and smilax, with a bit of heliotrope, upon the table, and the little vase.

It was n't till next mornin' that I found the note upon the bureau from Aunt Hannah, sayin' how she'd but just heard of my condition, and that Peter he had married Sarah Amelia Bolingbroke — her that was Miss Patterson before her first — an excellent woman, but fully equal to it if there was any snappin' of you up, and havin' had her hand in once besides. And she said would I come on and make a visit, by-gones bein' by-gones, and her health but poorly?

That was n't till next mornin', as I tell you. And, oh! my dear, as I set down alone, so grateful and so happy, no cur that runs is meaner than was I to take exception to my lot. But after all their kindness, they *was n't* own folks, was they? And across my feelings there ran a little chilly longing, something as if your soul had taken cold. I could n't get my little brother 'Li'kim out of my head, do what I could. And all his little ways come up to me, and the feel of his fingers, don't you know, and wonderin' what it would be like if he had grown like other folks' brothers, faithful and considerate, and been by me through my troubles, and been there to set down in your pretty room and call you by your Christian name you'd most forgotten, being mostly Miss in that great house.

And as I set, I seemed to see him, though fainter than it was before the operation, kneeling by the bed. But the most peculiar prayer, my dear! Like this: —

“Cured. Come home. Every body glad to see her. Better blessed than she deserves. Grumblin' over what she

has n't got. Ought to be ashamed. Got a cataract upon her heart. Ought to have it operated on. Hopeless case."

It was then, my dear, that there come a knock upon the door, and up I jumps to wipe the mean, ungrateful tears and let it in.

My dear, it was a gentleman — the strange gentleman I saw lookin' at me row and then down-stairs.

Says I, "Sir, most happy, if I had the honor, but the wrong room, perhaps," says I.

Says he, "No ; the right room — the right room, I am sure, thank God!" says he.

For something in his voice, I don't know what, I began to tremble very sudden ; and for something in his way, I can't explain, I thought I should have lost my wits. And there was that drawin' drew me to that unknown man — I can't begin to tell you — till up he steps and shuts the door. And, oh ! my pretty, I see it in your eyes — you understand it all !

He never was a boy of many words, my dear, and all he says was this : —

"If your little brother 'Li'kim come back, sick and sorry, would you care to live with him?" says he. "I can go away again," says he, "if you think you 'd rather not."

And, oh, the way the stars shone through the window hours and hours ! And the people laughing down below as if all the world had got its own folks back, my dear ! And the tea-pot that the Loon had spilled, it bubbled up and bubbled up, and the flowers on the table, and all the dear old things set looking on. And like a little child that hears a fairy tale I set and heard 'em say : —

"Happy woman ! No cataract. Cured ! cured ! cured ! *The light of her eyes has come back !* Oh, happy, undeservin', blessed woman ! Cured ! cured ! cured !"

And if you think I asked him many questions to pry into



his poor past life, my dear, you're wrong, that's all. And if folks tell you how he's ailing and works irregular and a burden, never do you listen to 'em — not a word of *that*, my dear, for the tenderest and the lovin'est, there never was a brother more so.

And up the Loon comes, when the people wondered, and Miss Barker red and white, for there sat I in his lap a sight to see.

“If it had been a physician,” says Miss Barker, “at such hours, or even a clergyman, if in spiritual need. But even if it was — and he told me he was flour and grain — *such* a state of things is most unnecessary, and I never would have thought it of you if I died!” says Miss Barker, mad as mad.

So when I tell her, like to die of laughing, down we go. And all the house is there, and Mercy Maynard in pink ribbons, and the gas as bright! And away at the other end I could see the Loon a-siugein' her hair against it while I spoke. And I went in upon his arm, and says, for Miss Barker 'd let a whisper of it round: —

“Dear friends, you've come to wish me joy on my great happiness to-night, and I thank you kindly. There are eyes of the body,” says I, “and eyes of the soul, and there's blindness comes to both, and cures sometimes. And the light of the eyes of my body and the light of the eyes of my soul have come back both at once: and may yours be as bright forever, and bless you all!” says I.

## TWO HUNDRED AND TWO.

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THE town of Telephone is ten miles from Boston. It is comfortably situated on the Breakwater Branch of the Happiness and Energy Railroad, whose trains leave the Boston and Mexico Dépôt at all inconvenient hours of the day and evening, reaching Telephone when they feel like it, and departing at the same time, — the half or even the whole of a minute in advance of their time-tables being looked upon, perhaps, by the corporation as a delicate atonement for avoidable delays in arrival, and as tending in the long run to exhibit the law of compensation and the equality of things.

No one was ever heard, however, to criticise the railway communication of Telephone with the outer world except the house-hunters ; and as this long-suffering class of society formed the larger part of the passengers, naturally little attention was paid to their preferences.

So at least a man was thinking, somewhat sulkily, one bitter day last November, as — having lost his dinner, gained a sore throat, and paid Telephone's most aspiring price for carriage hire to prospect the town in forty-five minutes, and find a home for a lifetime before the two o'clock train went — he found himself gaping at the empty track, whose conscious rails trembled yet with the thrill of departed force. He had not only lost his train ; he had failed to find his house. Any under-graduate in human experience will comprehend how heavily the annoyance of the one circumstance was heightened by the existence of the other.

“Did n’t lose the train, did you now?” The station-mistress said this. She spoke in a tone of cautious sympathy, not unlike that with which we approach the threshold where we are uncertain whether death has recently preceded us.

She came out from her little “parlor” into the deserted waiting-room. Beyond the swinging and uncertain door one could perceive the colors of a very modern carpet, a paper dado, German ivies, an air-tight stove, decorated blacking bottles, a child framing chromos in colored straws, a girl in a pullback and imitation lace frill thrumming polkas at a piano with its legs in calico pantaloons, rag mats, a cat, and the odors of beefsteak and doughnuts. As the woman stood in the doorway a baby crawled after her, pushing aside her flounced alpaca skirts, and from beneath them regarded the passenger with the marble calm peculiar to a child of the railway, to whom men, machinery, and other sources of disturbance are as unimportant as a daily lullaby.

The mother’s ankle, which the child first generously revealed, and then obligingly called attention to by clasping it with one hand and pounding it with the other in a particularly absent-minded way — the mother’s ankle was incased in a shapely Balbriggan stocking of striped red and white, which lost itself in the outline of a well-fitting “Newport tie.”

“Beg pardon, madam?” said the passenger. He was wondering if he had sworn a little about the train. He did not know that there were women about. What a consummately American scene it was in there behind that self-conscious, superior, jealous door! Comfortable enough, too. They had a right to feel superior, these people with houses. He would have accepted five rooms in a railway station himself then, not ungratefully. It might well be jealous, the door that creaked guard upon the blacking bottles and the kitten and the baby.

He felt to the full at that moment the indefinable, eternal aristocracy of home, wondering if he had ever felt it before. She might put her piano in calico trousers to the end of her days, this high-cheeked woman; but she did not invite strange gentlemen into the room where her little daughter sat practicing in the pull-back and the frill.

"I'm sorry you lost it," pursued the station-mistress, with some vain effort to disunite the baby and the Balbriggan stocking; "and your dinner too, I'll dare say? Next one goes at quarter to five. Hope you'll set down and make yerself as comfortable as you can. I'll turn on the draught a mite; it's growing cold. There! There's a lady I've got to speak to. She left a bundle of salary here. They 'most always leave something — pocket-books and parasols and arctics; we have one man always leave sassingers. They come from Boston dead beat out, and so they drop things — butter, and silk dresses, and no end of neckties and that. I'll wait till she gits along. It seemed a pity to have her salary spile. 'She can't afford salary none too often."

"It *is* cold, as you say," suggested the passenger, idly, "and the mud is not yet frozen stiff. Allow me; I will hand the package to the lady. Oblige me by staying indoors with the baby — as you should," he added, with unconscious autocracy. It seemed to him unnatural that a woman with a baby should go out-of-doors. It usually did, he thought, but he had never, perhaps, recognized this essentially masculine train of logic in himself before. She should sit down, in the clean red and white striped stockings, under the German ivies, and watch those patient frames go fitting themselves under impatient little fingers, colored straw to colored straw.

It was not until he got out into the keen air that he remembered how much beefsteak and doughnuts this picturesque course of action involved breathing.

This lady now who had lost her "salary" — As he explained his errand in a word, standing before her with lifted hat, he caught himself wondering incoherently whether she liked it, facing the full east wind. She stood with her face to the marshes, beyond whose pale gray tides the other tides of the sea could be neither seen nor heard. Yet the air was salt with them; he could taste them with his dinnerless lips. But the lady was protected with a veil of heavily figured, old-fashioned lace; perhaps she did not taste the salt. At all events, she had her celery, probably her dinner too, and a house.

The passenger put on his hat again and dreamily returned to the station. As the celery lady walked on, with rather a bounding step for a woman who could have been no longer in her first youth (he should judge by the gravity of her dress and the repose of her carriage), he bluntly wished he had some more women to think about before five o'clock. Probably the station-mistress had shut her Balbriggan stockings away with the piano legs by this time. He had a great mind to knock, and ask her to let the cat come out and stay with him. Not the baby. He would n't ask for the baby. It would probably attack the hem of his pantaloons to hunt for striped stockings — and his were a pale gray. Then it would be disappointed, and perhaps cry. Besides, he was muddy.

But the baby was already there before him; the mother held it deftly under one arm while she poked the fire in the sad cylinder stove with a cheerful muscle.

"How large is this metropolis?" asked the passenger, abruptly, coming to warm his hands before the burning heart of the coals, which acquired a preternatural homelikeness from the fact that it was the only spot of comfort or of color in the bare room; it was clean, though, that room: they always were when your station-master was a woman.

"Sir?"

“How many people are there in this town?”

“Two thousand.”

“How old is it?”

“Two years.”

“Two years! And all these houses?”

“There ain’t a house in this town, sir, hain’t been built within two years — only one.”

“And how old, pray, is that?”

“Two hundred.”

“This is not a common state of things,” said the passenger, after a pause.

“We wouldn’t have that,” pursued the station-mistress, in the regretful tone of one who is explaining away a blemish on a friend’s character, “but for the b’und’ry line.”

“The — what kind of line?”

“Well, yes. When they laid us out they cut the b’und’ry line acrost Palestine, and cut this lady right through; and so we hed to take her. And that’s how she happens to be so old; for Palestine is full of that kind of folks, and the rest of us so young, sir. There’s three first-rate chances up that way — two sales and one rent, besides a barn — and not too near the steam-shovel.”

“The steam-shovel?” echoed the passenger.

“Why, yes,” said the station-mistress, closing the stove door with a snap of superior intelligence. “Don’t you know? They use it for building the aqueduct, and for gravel trains, and all those things. Folks don’t always like it, because it shovels all night. Some take it to heart so, they move away. But you hev to pay higher as you get off from it. There’s a good many things to consider in buying house lots in Telephone.”

“So it seems,” said the passenger. “I think I’ll run out, if I’ve got three hours to wait, and look at those places opposite the house from Palestine. I surely have seen none such.”

“I would if I was you,” said the station-mistress. She seemed to have changed her mind about something she was going to say to the passenger, speaking with a slight reserve, as to a possible neighbor of whom one knew nothing. She gathered the baby into her neck and turned away. She shut the door upon her sacred little daughter and the pull-back and the polka.

She was at home, thought the passenger, as he turned out into the now fast-rising wind, and smacked his hungry lips again, to taste the salt from the unseen sea.

Miss Vesta Rollinstall came and looked at the clouds with a gentle sigh. Standing in the street below, one could almost have seen her sigh. She was not a sighing woman, either. Her wooden house was gray, but not with paint; gray, too, was the sleeve of her cashmere dress which thrust the gray blind back, and held an ashes-of-roses curtain half drawn, as if reluctant to shut out the bleached grass in the front yard, the black trunks and branches of the few and faithful elms that the “b’und’ry line” had left her, the colorless gravel heaps in the empty corner lot, the dull outline of the aqueduct, the gray paint (mixed with kerosene) of the opposite empty house, and the grayer hue of the bending and more empty heavens. She *was* reluctant. She stood longer than usual on these pallid November nights taking her last look at the outer world, dreading to light the old lamps which had not yet yielded the field to that puffy and expensive suburban gas; slow to acknowledge that night had come; unready to admit by this mute leave-taking of her neighbors that it was time to turn the old-fashioned bolt in the uneven front door, and to know that there would be no occasion to open it again till she peered out, shivering in her dressing-gown, at six o’clock next morning, to pull in the little pint can that the milk-man would leave at three.

She did not even keep a dog. The Rollinstalls never had.

The Rollinstalls, it is needless to say, were a very old family; none older in Palestine. Miss Vesta prided herself upon being too good an American to remember this fact — and accordingly seldom forgot it. She had acceded cheerfully to the geographical and political fate which had expatriated her into this truly representative American community with the absurd name and the absurder aspirations, feeling it to be her duty; parted even with the ancestral elms and the apple orchard, to make way for the Happiness and Energy Railroad, without an audible groan. Many of her Palestine friends had moved to town; Miss Vesta sometimes wondered why. Now and then they came out to lunch with her. Others had died; for Miss Vesta was no longer young. Some had married, which amounted to the same thing. Miss Vesta lived very much alone. As years went on she sometimes felt as if that “b’und’ry line,” invisible, intangible, unassailable thing as it was, had, in deed and truth, cut her off from her old familiar life into this new and unnatural one, in which she felt herself as solitary among the bustling young couples who gossiped and laughed and trusted their way along, with unpaid debts and uncounted babies, as the gambrel-roofed, unpainted house itself, set wistfully down among its pert and peaked neighbors.

In pleasant weather she had a theory that she did not think about these things. But when it was stormy, as tonight, she could not deny that she hated it all — yes, all; the whole new, shiny, vulgar sight; the little square lots with the turned-up turf, in which no tree nor shrub had found a shelter, not even a make-shift of an arbor-vitæ, fresh from the nursery, and tied shivering to a stake, like a baby learning to walk in a baby-jumper; where the human babies played about in the mud, while their fathers painted



the fences and put on silver door-plates, and their mothers wore trailing calico wrappers on week-days and velveteen suits on Sundays, and kept the blinds of the parlor shut. She hated the rows of cheap houses, all alike; she hated the signs put out, "For Sale," or "To Let;" the shabby paint peeling off; the smell of the concrete sidewalks; the barbarous steam-shovel; the gangs of laborers putting water-works into streets whose existence she had not heard of a month ago; the lines of lank men pouring every day to and from the business trains; the serenity of their uncultivated and unthoughtful faces: why, the half of them were mortgaged over the depth of soul and body for those square little showy homes of theirs!

Miss Vesta felt very lonely whenever she began to hate anything. So now, as she stood reluctantly clinging to the ashes-of-roses curtains, casting her eyes up and down the empty streets, they slowly darkened and blurred; one quiet tear rolled and fell upon her gray dress.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Vesta, with a start. "Salt spoils cashmere!" and she went for the hartshorn bottle to rub off the spot. Miss Vesta did not often cry.

When she came back, resolutely this time, to draw the curtain close, she saw, across the gloom of the rapidly-darkening street, and through the drizzle of the rain which now fell steadily, that lights were astir in the opposite house. She stood for a minute looking over. It was Mr. Jobbs, with tenants possible, or perhaps even actual. It often happened. She was used to it — rather liked to see it. Of all these people who came out house-hunting on the afternoon trains, Jobbs would decoy one some day to sign the lease of his leaky house; the family would have the rheumatism, but she would have neighbors. Possibly — who knew? — pleasant neighbors like the dear old lady Church who had pneumonia there last year; or the young Pettiwinkles, with the very clean baby, on the corner; or even the Pur-

chases, whom she liked so much when she helped them through with the scarlet fever; or the Adamases, who subscribed to her mission Sunday-school.

It was noticeable how perceptibly Miss Vesta's opinion of Telephone rose as she stood looking at the cheerful flicker of Mr. Jobbs's kerosene lamp from empty room to empty room across there in the dusk, and the broken outline of the shadows that the two men made, seen through the uncurtained windows as Jobbs threw back the blinds. The Jobbs shadow was short, square, and familiar. The tenant shadow was tall and strange, yet, after the moment's glance, seemed not unfamiliar either. This struck Miss Vesta pleasantly as she drew her curtain in good faith at last, shrinking suddenly back, as if she had herself been visible behind the small green panes of her old window. Perhaps he would be a gentlemanly person with a nice wife. Miss Vesta felt starved sometimes for a woman — a woman one would care to see, perhaps, twice a week. In Palestine how she and Susy Hemlock used to "run in" every day! There seemed no place to "run in" to in Telephone. And Susy was dead. And it was time to light the astral lamp and the kitchen lamp, and to put on the kettle. She must wash the celery too, which would not keep till to-morrow.

It was scarcely a Palestine custom, eating celery for supper. Miss Vesta crushed it delicately and doubtfully. She liked to do things as she was brought up to do them. She washed her solitary tea-cup and her two silver spoons and her lonely goblet daintily by themselves in the Dresden bowl upon the table, just as she used to do when she "kept help," before her Michigan Central stock went down and she had no one to tell her that it was time to sell. After she had wiped the silver and glass with delicate fingers upon a fine old red and blue fruit doyley by the light of the astral, she went into the kitchen, turned up her sleeves, turned up her dress, put on an apron, and "did" the rest of the dishes by the little brass kitchen lamp.

After this she turned down her sleeves, with darned Valenciennes at the wrist, turned down the skirt of the cashmere (which had been her "afternoon dress" for seven years), went into the silent parlor and lighted the fire in the fire-place, and sat down alone. She did not light that fire often. Open fires are expensive company. When it stormed, she sometimes allowed herself the luxury. She sat in a low cushioned rocking-chair, in the irregular light. She had a pink ribbon at her throat, over her gray dress; it was of the old-fashioned rose pink now so hard to find, not a scorch of magenta in it, pure as a blush-bud on a June day, deepening as one looked at it. Stiff little roses were painted on it in watercolors. Susy Hemlock painted that ribbon for her one day; she had a cold — could n't come — could n't wait — Jared brought it over.

Miss Vesta rose and walked about the room two or three times. The Rollinstall ladies often had that trick of pacing the room — a habit which only women of independent character and circumstances are apt to have, I believe. The Rollinstalls had always felt at liberty to do as they chose. Usually, however, they chose to do largely the same things. When they married, they married clergymen or lawyers; brought up their children to have the measles under allopathic treatment, to brush their teeth three times a day, and never to go to church twice a Sunday before they were five years old. When they did not marry, they kept house; no female Rollinstall went to live with her relatives unless it were a very clear case that she was the giver, not the receiver, of benefits by so doing; they never quartered themselves on young married brothers or struggling male cousins; a Rollinstall preferred her own household, if it were in an attic. No one ever questioned the suitability of any such arrangement which members of her family might make. Miss Vesta herself was but thirty-five when her mother died, and there was a second cousin who took a flat

alone at twenty-six. But *hers* died. Jane Rollinstall bore forever about her the sacred and sweet shield of maiden widowhood. Happy Jane!

Miss Vesta said "Happy Jane!" aloud, pacing bitterly to and fro. The storm had now come on heavily, and she could hear the wind beat up and down the level, lonely street. Miss Vesta's had not died. Now and then Miss Vesta remembered this. It was a luxury to think about him at all, like the open fire, only to be indulged in on stormy nights. He had not died. Oh that he had! Oh that he had! Sometimes, if it stormed *very* hard, Miss Vesta said this too aloud, crying passionately out. Sometimes she thought if this had been so, how blessed she would be. But he did not die; he only got tired of waiting. Why was it that men could not wait? Women did.

And they could not marry then. Jared himself admitted it after a while. But it was a good while before Miss Vesta stopped remembering on stormy nights how he looked the day she told him — blazing, white, taking her face between his shaking hands — her face, young then, and not uncomely: there was never a Rollinstall who was not comely. They used that sweet, decorous word when they spoke of it even in their own hearts; it seemed more reserved, Miss Vesta thought, more modest, than "pretty" or "good-looking."

Miss Vesta's thought had diverged just here, like my sentence. She did not like to keep it where it was; it took her breath.

"I never will endure it!" Jared Hemlock said. "I cannot live without you. Neither heaven nor hell shall come between us. I'll have you somehow, Vesta."

Miss Vesta's pale face scorched as she sat alone there by her own fire, with no one else in all the empty house. She looked at her withering hands, the prim, pure colors of her dress. It seemed to her a kind of rudeness that any man should ever have been in the world talking so to her, it was

so far off now. And then he had not had her somehow, He had lived without her. He had endured it. Nor was it heaven or hell that had come between them.

It was nothing so romantic or profane as that, thought poor Miss Vesta. It was only that her mother had the paralytic stroke, and that her father, as everybody knew, grew blind. Some one must take care of them. There was nobody but Miss Vesta.

And then there was not much to live on. There were rich Rollinstalls — rich enough to have bought up the Michigan Central Railroad — but that was the Rhode Island branch. And Jared was the minister's son. Ministers, of course, were poor. Jared said he never would be a minister. He studied law. And they had waited and waited. Jared used to come to tea every Thursday night.

And then there came a time when Jared would wait no longer. He went to Germany. Jared went to Germany, to study law or something. He went partly for his health, poor fellow. He had a touch of rheumatism, or — what was it? At first they wrote to one another. But her mother lived on, and on, and on, poor mother! quite changed, and with broken mind and petulant ways. And when her father grew so helpless, Miss Vesta sat down one day, in a fever of worry and weariness, and wrote to Jared that since her duty was at home, and was likely to be there till she was old and ill herself, since God had willed it so, and since they could not help it, she or he, and since he was so far away, and in strange scenes and among strange people, perhaps they had better call themselves dear friends only to each other, knowing so little as they did what the future had in store for him especially. And Jared wrote that perhaps they had, but that no one else could be so dear as she — not even in Germany; which was a great comfort to Miss Vesta for a little while. She had never been in Germany. She felt as if that mysterious country abounded in pleasant

ladies with no invalid parents to take care of. And so by and by Jared did not write so often. And so one day she saw it in the *Puritan Recorder* that he was married, and that his wife's first name was Berta, and that she lived in Leipsic. And Jared sent cards to the family. And then he wrote no more. And he had never come home. Jane Rollinstall had a theory that he was dead. Once she had expressed it to Miss Vesta. But Miss Vesta could not talk about it. She did not answer Jane. Her father died that year. When she was thirty-five her mother followed him. The old lady complained a great deal to the neighbors of her daughter the last year of her life; said that Vesta had not got married, and was a burden to the family. Miss Vesta laid her away in the Rollinstall lot of the Palestine Cemetery, with a sickening grief which none of the occasional friends who came from Boston to lunch with her seemed to understand; even Jane Rollinstall herself said it was not like losing one's husband or lover, but invited Miss Vesta to spend a month with her.

Miss Vesta cried when nobody saw her, and then cried because there was nobody to see her; and so, for economy, gave up crying by and by, except on stormy nights, as I said. She had lived a hard life of devotion to a hard duty for a great while. Every nerve in her body and soul quivered tense now like a breaking thing. She could not afford to become hysterical. If she did, something would snap.

Youth dies hard, and hope harder. Miss Vesta could not understand at first, when at thirty-five she was left alone in the unpainted house, where two hundred years of human joy and anguish kept her mute company, that doing one's definite duty bravely and patiently to the end does not bring one definite happiness. She had really felt sometimes as if God must mean to surprise her now that the duty was done, as if He had kept some good thing waiting till she could take it.

At first she thought it must be the mission Sunday-school he meant, for to the Sunday-school she had turned devoutly and devotedly as soon as her lonely hands were free. All the Rollinstall ladies taught in mission schools; usually stopped when they married, and gave the class to some well-connected young lady who was actively desirous for religious usefulness.

It was with as much surprise as pain that Miss Vesta discovered by and by that there were fierce clamors and wide wastes in her nature which even her twelve big, red, freckled boys in the vestry could not fill. They were fine fellows; and when the superintendent said that each class might give itself a name for use at the concert, they suggested that they should be called Lilies-of-the-Valley.

But ah! if hope dies hard, perhaps, after all, youth dies harder. Miss Vesta was still "comely," and the old people were gone. Palestine bachelors and widowers began to think of this. On week-days, between the returning excitements of the mission school, Miss Vesta's life vibrated now with strange confusions. The minister himself paid his decorous distinct addresses at the ancient house, and Miss Vesta had all the weakness of a woman of the olden time (to say nothing of the added family predilections in this direction) for ministers. At least two lawyers came, saw, and were conquered; and Jane Rollinstall herself wrote, advising her to think seriously of the shoe-and-leather merchant who did business in Boston. But Miss Vesta watched them all come and go with pure and puzzled eyes. She had loved one man. She had promised to be his wife. His hand had held her; his kiss had touched her. What did they mean, these other men? What did they expect? Could a woman do that thing again?

"How *dare* you?" she cried, to the shoe-and-leather lover, when he urged his suit a little on a moonlight evening, coming from the preparatory lecture; and then had fled from him, aghast, sobbing, like an insulted girl.

But if youth and hope die hard, the capacity for love dies harder. Here in Telephone, in this unfamiliar life, with silence for her lover, with solitude for her husband, with lonely hours for her children, Miss Vesta had been, perhaps, most sorely bestead. There was a minister, too, in Telephone. He presided over the Union Church, that towered liberally opposite the Telephone Bowling-Alley. Miss Vesta disapproved of Union churches on general principles; thought them not apt to be sound; her family had always thought so. But since her old Palestine pastor, Dr. Conserve, had accepted a call to Boston, there was little to do but to submit gracefully to the march of circumstances. Miss Vesta waited on the Union gentleman's preaching, and the Union gentleman waited on her.

Miss Vesta was lonely; that cannot be denied. And every week she thought she grew lonelier — a little. She tried hard to like the Union minister. For a whole week she kept him waiting for his answer. She went alone into her room, and sat down in her gray dress and pink ribbon that Susy Hemlock painted, and folded her hands, and said, "Let me see if I cannot love this good man." But when the week was over, she went to him and gravely said: —

"When I was young I promised to be some one's wife. I cannot do that twice. A woman cannot" —

"But other women are not so fastidious!" interrupted the minister, with a flash of temper. He had never had a woman refuse him before.

"Then I am not like other women," said Miss Vesta, simply.

So now she sat alone in the November storm, in the solitary house, thinking about these things. Her thoughts were sad enough, as those of the solitary may be — must be, we sometimes say; but they were not disquiet or perplexed. Miss Vesta was not a great, or wise, or exceptional woman; she had lived a plain and commonplace life; no heroic



chance had opened before her ; usefulness and honor had spoken to her in lowly language ; her story had been all prose.

But one poem Miss Vesta knew by heart — the long, sweet, sane poem of a pure and permanent love. She was a delicate and tender woman ; she had felt as if her delicacy and tenderness both demanded of her that she should be true to the best and highest side of her nature, so far, at least, as she understood it : Miss Vesta was an old-fashioned woman, and did not think much about “nature.” All she knew was that God had given her one right love for one right man, and that solitude was a small cross to count against the wearing of such a crown. It was the only ideal she had ; of reforms, causes, missions, and careers she knew little. She did not care much even about “Boston culture,” and sat puzzled when the ladies talked about it at lunch. It was different somehow from what she was taught at the Palestine Female Seminary. Her unreasoning and unswerving love, I say, was the only ideal she had. She cherished it in purity and peace ; she served it in honor and fidelity. Nobody called her a great woman. But that does not matter. God understood.

Miss Vesta went to bed early that stormy night ; put away Susy’s painted ribbon in a little olive-wood box where she kept a few other precious, useless things (her thin old betrothal ring among them) ; folded her gray cashmere skirt carefully ; screwed out the lonely astral ; knelt and said her prayers ; asked the Lord, as usual, to bless Jared Hemlock, without the least doubt in the world as to whether that awful and Infinite Will could be shaken by a thing so slight as the request of a solitary old maid shivering in her night-dress on her knees, asking the same thing in the same way every night for fifteen years. Theology was not Miss Vesta’s specialty. It was one’s duty to say one’s prayers. *And see*, when they are said, and the light of the econom-

ical street gas, which Telephone will put out at half past eleven, falls in through the parted ashes-of-roses curtain upon the smooth white bed-spread, and the increasing rain drives against the small-paned window and the sunken piazza roof, how peacefully one falls asleep!

It was twenty minutes past five o'clock — an angry storm. Miss Vesta waked ten minutes before her usual time, wondering why, above the raging of the wind and wet, the milk-man stood making such a racket at the door below. She got herself hurriedly into her wrapper; then, filled with a dim consciousness of the unusual, anticipating possible parleys with unknown tradesmen on unguessed themes, modestly slipped instead into the gray cashmere, and, throwing an old lace handkerchief round her collarless neck, went shivering down and confidently drew the bolt without question or demur. She peered out into the breaking darkness through the curtain of the rain.

“Jerry, is that you?”

“Madam? — excuse me.”

It was not Jerry. Miss Vesta pushed the door a trifle closer, but stood serene, looking through the crack. A man was out there, dripping; dazed, it seemed.

“I thought it was the milk-man,” she said, placidly.

“Would you be good enough to call your husband?” gasped the visitor. “I — I did not mean to disturb a lady at this untimely hour; but the fact is, I'm suffering.”

“Step in, then, out of the rain,” said Miss Vesta, decidedly. Miss Vesta was not “timid.” And this was no tramp. Besides, why tell strange men that she had no husband? It was far easier to let this person come into the front entry.

He stepped in. Miss Vesta had left one of her brass kitchen lamps burning on the stairway-landing. The feeble glimmer struggled half-way down, fainted, and fell into the mysterious half-light in which her visitor stood facing her. He had taken off his hat.

“I bought that confounded house opposite yesterday,” began the man at once — “your pardon, madam: I mean that very unpleasant house. I took the whim to stay in it; sent in town for my things. Don’t think me crazy. I’ve nobody but myself to think of. As well there as in hotels. That Jobbs built up a furnace fire. There was a sofa and an empty pillow-case left by the last tenants — decoys, I suppose. Madam, that house leaked like an umbrella turned wrong side out; spattered into my face; trickled up my sleeve; tickled my feet; crawled down my neck; ran in streams down the register; put out the furnace fire — almost did as much for me. I am subject to rheumatism at the heart. I stood it till I thought somebody would be stirring. I — I’ll not come in to annoy a lady unless there are gentlemen here; but — excuse me, madam; I am in great pain.”

He staggered slightly, leaning against the half-shut door through which the pursuing storm beat in.

“Come!” said Miss Vesta. She shut the front door, and herself led the way into the dim and silent sitting-room, where the embers of last night’s fire peered winking sleepily through the ashes.

The intruder followed her without speaking, groaning now and then.

Miss Vesta started the fire promptly, and went out to get the little lamp from the landing. She did not look at her visitor as she went. He might murder her if he chose. She would not turn a man with rheumatism at the heart out into the storm. The conventional propriety of her hospitality it never occurred to Miss Vesta’s mind to question, or to question if anybody else would question it. The Rollinstalls were ladies. They never did what was not proper. Everybody knew that. If Miss Vesta chose to turn her house into a hospital for tramps at six o’clock in the morning, her so doing would in itself be the only explanation that the eccentricity would require.

While Miss Vesta was gone for the brass lamp, the fire began to burn.

She came in, looking very pale and sweet and assured in her colorless dress, carrying the lamp with one thin hand curved to shelter the tiny flame. It was a delicate and faithful motion — like Miss Vesta.

Crouched over the waxing fire, haggard, with one hand on his heart, she found her man. She went directly up, and began with the business-like sympathy of voice that she reserved for watching and funerals and all the old-time neighborly services to the suffering.

“Now what is the first thing to be done for you? Let me see your pulse. No, your face first.”

In the light of the lamp and fire he turned his face, and they looked at one another.

“You are the man — you are the gentleman who handed me the celery,” said Miss Vesta, after a pause. Then she began to tremble. Then she flung away his hand, which she had lifted with cold far fingers to feel the pulse. She retreated from him suspiciously.

“I don’t know who you are!” she shrilly cried.

“Forgive me, Vesta!” he said, stretching out his shaking arm. “Before God I did not know! Everything is so changed” —

“But where is Mrs. Hemlock?” asked Miss Vesta. We must forgive her. Rheumatism at the heart is a passing pain, soon over. That other pain of Miss Vesta’s had lasted fifteen years. And Jared was warm now and comfortable; had tasted of the coffee she had cooked; Miss Vesta ate and drank nothing. She took care of him, with compressed and colorless lips, dutifully, as of an old neighbor; the tramp would have been treated as conscientiously, more tenderly. She had asked no questions. His eye had followed her. They had both been silent and constrained.

Now that he was out of suffering, Miss Vesta began to wonder what Jane Rollinstall would say. So she asked:—

“Where is Mrs. Hemlock? Where is your wife?”—primly, with the sharpest twang Jared had ever heard in her voice. Miss Vesta had a soft voice.

“I have no wife,” he said, not more gently.

“When did she die?”

“I don’t know,” said Jared, meekly, with a dash of his old sauciness.

“Don’t *know*?” exclaimed Miss Vesta, with great propriety of manner.

“I never had any,” pursued Jared. He began to whistle; then said, “Excuse me, Vesta.”

“You are perfectly excusable,” said Miss Vesta, still with much Rollinstall dignity. “But we had the cards. I do not understand you, Jared Hemlock. I do not understand anything—anything in this world.” She broke down with an unexpected little womanish wail.

“Berta jilted me,” said Jared, shortly. “Perhaps you can understand that. She found a German baron she liked better. She jilted me at the very last moment. I deserved it.”

“Oh!” said Miss Vesta. She did not say he did not.

“And I’m glad of it,” added Jared.

“Oh!” said Miss Vesta again. She did not say she was sorry.

“But, of course,” observed Jared, stirring his coffee, with a touch of embarrassment, “I thought *you* were married long ago. I was ashamed to come back to you, Vesta. To think how I did come in the end—a beggar—a tramp—drowned—a rat—a dying rat!” continued Jared, with twinkling eyes. “And to think of your saying, ‘Is that you, Jerry?’” He laughed. Despite herself—the sensitive, suspicious, woman’s self that was stung and bewildered in every nerve—Miss Vesta laughed too.

"It *was* funny," said Miss Vesta.

"Very well, then," said Jared; "suppose you eat your breakfast."

"There is the celery," said Miss Vesta.

She brought the celery, and Jared ate some of it. She looked on. Jared said it was frozen, and she said she did not wonder; and then neither of them said anything.

The clear day drew on; the wind was shifting; through the curtain of the rain a soft gray light began to stir.

Jared sat by the fire, and Miss Vesta put away the breakfast things. The wind went down. Scant drops trickled and twinkled from the piazza roof. People went by to the business train; they left their umbrellas, and nodded at each other merrily. The gray light sweetened; a warm color lay upon the gravel heaps in the corner lot. By and by there came the sunburst.

Miss Vesta was standing by the window, and the color broke full against her face—the shrinking, womanly face, pale and pinched and perplexed. Jared Hemlock wondered what it was like to be a woman; to be treated as he had treated her; to stand there waiting, not able to say what she thought or felt or wanted; wounded, wrung, and dumb, yet so tender! And true—so true!

He went abruptly over to her, and said: "Vesta, I'm not fit to touch the hem of your dress." But he put out one finger and timidly stroked the old gray cashmere sleeve. "I never felt about any body as I did—as I do—about you," said Jared Hemlock. He did not whistle now, nor laugh. Miss Vesta looked at him piercingly. She did not understand that. Perhaps it was because she was not a man. Men were so different. The Rollinstalls had always held that men were very different. "It won't do for me to stay on this way," said Jared, awkwardly. "I ought to take the next train, you know, and—clear out, and all that."

"Yes," said Miss Vesta.

"It *sounds* mean," said Jared, "but I don't *mean* to be mean. If I supposed you'd ever take me now, Vesta, after all — perhaps by and by, when you've got used to me — there is n't much to take, Vesta dear — an old fellow with rheumatism. It's endocarditis," added Jared, with a scientific air, "if you'd like to know."

"I'm glad you did n't marry her," said Miss Vesta, trembling. "But" — She stopped; she could not say what she was thinking. She looked at him; her delicate face shone. So the priestess might have looked, tending the white fire in that older, ruder age which cherished its own share of fine ideals. She lifted her head with a certain haughtiness. "I never kissed any one — any man — but you."

She had not meant to say it, but it was said. He had not meant to do it, but it was done.

"All the more reason, Vesta, why you should do it again."

"I wonder," said Miss Vesta, presently, "what Jane Rollinstall *will* say?"

"Why, really," said Jared, in a comfortable, commonplace tone, "what with my coming in the rain and all, and the fuss it would be to explain — I hate a fuss, Vesta. Suppose we omit that stanza — suppose we go somewhere and get married? I don't see but one time's as well as another: and the sun is out."

"The Rollinstalls never have done such a thing," said Miss Vesta, hastily.

"I doubt if they ever had the opportunity," observed the lover, irreverently. He began to whistle again; but Miss Vesta, looking up, saw that his eyes were full; the hand with which he held her shook. "The amount of it is," he said, less distinctly, "I've beaten about the world so long alone, and you — you — you — my poor girl! Come, we are n't young any more, Vesta! We've tried being lone-

some long enough. I don't feel as if we had a minute to lose. If I'm fit to be taken at all, I'm fit to be taken at once. Besides," added Jared, clearing his voice, "you'll *have* to take me in for charity. I can't go back to that confounded house (I paid five thousand dollars for it); I have n't any place to go. If you're going to keep me, I think it's more proper we should be married."

"I suppose it is," suggested Miss Vesta, after some thought. "We might go to Jane Rollinstall's; she would send for Dr. Conserve. I should have preferred to wait till I had thought more about it. But if you should have another of those attacks, I—should prefer to take care of you. It's nobody's business but ours," pursued Miss Vesta, with a touch of the family dignity.

The sun came out, and came out. It seemed as if there never was so much sun to come out before. The fickle wind turned south, and there stayed faithfully.

They went into Boston on the noon train. Half Telephone went too. Telephone always went to Boston after a storm.

Miss Vesta would not take his arm; she said, "Wait till we come home;" but she walked beside him with lifted head. She drew the old-fashioned lace veil, and under her cloak she wore Susy's painted pink ribbon and the cashmere dress. She thought of putting on her silk; but it was black. She had brought down the thin engagement ring, and Jared had put it on again. She said she should have plenty of time to get some gloves in town.

The sun came out, and came out, and came out. The turned-up turf in the square lots took on warm shades of brown and scanty green. People opened the blinds of the shut parlors (on account of the moths) to let in the air. The rows of cheap houses looked fresh and clean; the gangs of laborers whistled at their work; the smell of the concrete sidewalk came up pleasantly, as if to remind one of



summer, when the air would be full of it; the signs put out read cheerfully. How many happy homes there were "For Sale," or "To Let," in Telephone! All the business men Miss Vesta and Jared met, had paid for their houses; their faces shone; they did not seem lank at all. Miss Vesta thought how many intelligent-looking people lived in Telephone. She told Jared she thought the place was rapidly becoming cultivated.

The ladies of the neighborhood passed them; only one had on velveteen; they were going in shopping; they wore pretty, modest clothes. The Pettiwinkle baby trundled by in its carriage, holding out its hands to Vesta. The Purchases nodded at her, smiling through the window. One of the Adamses stopped and told her that the old lady Church had sent in five dollars from Boston for the mission school. In the distance the steam-shovel sighed softly.

They looked back as they turned the concrete corner to the station. On an old gray house with little panes of glass and some elm-trees, two hundred years breathed a pure and patriarchal benediction.

"Heaven bless it!" said Miss Vesta.

On a saucy, shabby cottage with a suspiciously wet roof, the morning sun winked warily.

"It was only two years old, after all," said Jared, forgivingly. "Too young to know better. I'll turn it into a mission school."

The station-mistress came out see them when they got to the station. Jared went to telegraph to Jane Rollinstall and Dr. Conserve. The station-mistress told Miss Vesta she didn't know it was an acquaintance of hers, and asked her if she was goin' in to Cousin Jane's. The station-mistress had on a clean white apron over the alpaca dress. The baby sat on the floor and held the door open—the stockings were blue that day. The sun lay distinctly on the modern carpet; it was so warm that there was no fire in

the air-tight stove, and the German ivy jar stood upon it; the paper dado glittered like old mosaic varnished; the chromos were framed in the colored straw and hung over the piano. The girl in the pull-back was ornamenting the calico pantaloons with stripes of deep brick-colored worsted braid; as she sewed she sang. There was a red geranium in one of the decorated blacking bottles. The station-mistress said it was one of the days everybody went to Boston. She said folks looked so happy after it had rained. Then she asked Jared if he found a house to suit him, and he said he had. Then she asked him if he minded the steam-shovel, and he said no, he did n't mind anything; and the station-mistress said that was kind of queer. Then she asked Miss Vesta if her salary was frozen, and then she asked —

But just then the whistle sounded down the narrow, sunny length of the Happiness and Energy Railroad. The two-o'clock train was prompt to an instant. Jared noticed this with approval. Everybody pushed and hurried gently, laughing, to get in. Miss Vesta felt it very strange not to have to push and hurry for herself. She sat by Jared silently; she looked very sweet and young behind her veil. Now and then she wondered if she had let Jared win her too easily this second time. But then she remembered those attacks. If he had not had rheumatism at the heart, of course it would have been very different. And then, as he said, they had been lonesome so long.

So when they got to Jane Rollinstall's (Jane had a flat in the Boswick Hotel) they found her at home, sitting in her black dress. She was writing invitations to a course of parlor lectures, by an unpopular but conscientious critic, on the Minor Nova Zemblan Poets. She put down her pen, and said, with much Rollinstall independence and decision: —

“You did perfectly right, my dear, to come directly to me. Dr. Conserve has sent word — he boards here — that

he cannot come here till quarter of five. So take it easily. There are a few old Palestine friends — board here ; I thought you would like to have them present. I have invited Herman and Dorothea Rollinstall — boarding here — they belong to the Rhode Island branch.”

## CLOTH OF GOLD.

### CHRISTMAS STORY.

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THIRTEEN hundred miles from home.

The two Boston boys stepped slowly off the "City Point" upon the little pier's head at Tocoï. The Florida traveler is not accustomed to step slowly at Tocoï. He springs, he vaults, he flies, he pounces, he reddens, he perspires, he agonizes ; for, like the old sums in the arithmetic which were the Nemesis of childhood, whose finality serenely and unblushingly disposed of six eighths of a man, or a half a monkey, or three fifths of a goose, the railroad accommodations at Tocoï were adapted chiefly to fractional parts of humanity.

But the young men whose simple story I am to tell made no effort to join the crowd that poured into the pert, conscious little train, whose very smoke-stack held itself with the coquettish air of a creature much sought and not easily won, and aware of the impossibility of rivals.

The two Boston boys in the vibrating crowd stood still ; quite still. They looked about them wearily. There was not much to look at, for the matter of that ; the single pier, the lonely river, the departing steamer, the hurrying train, a solitary house ; the crowd pouring, pulsating, pursuant, like a creature in whom one brain beat and one heart throbbed ; the forest, vast, untrodden, dumb ; and above, the unmated southern sky. Everything looked so lonely in Florida !

So thought many another northern tourist at Tocoí that late December afternoon: people peered from the car-windows into the gray wilderness through which the light was already slanting low, with the hyper-critical eyes of travelers at the end of a week's journey; they hugged themselves in their wraps, for the wind swept keen from the St. John's River despite the Florida sun — and drizzled complaints, or dammed them (with two m's), according to their several capacities and abilities.

It was too cold. It was too hot. The twilight was oppressive. The light was glaring. The conductor, they had heard, was three hours getting through. On the contrary, accidents were very common from the reckless manner in which the train was driven. It was too early in the season. It was too late in the season. It was too dusty. It was too damp. Too many pine-trees. Too many swamps. Too many oranges. Not oranges enough. Oranges hung too high, too low. A consumptive lady, rousing from a despairing apathy in a corner, suggested that the oranges were too yellow. She called her daughter in from the platform of the baggage-car, where she stood silently and intently looking river-wards.

"Calla! The only thing people in this car can agree upon is that Florida looks lonely. Now, *I* think the oranges are too yellow. What do you think? I must have somebody agree with me immediately. Ask Dr. Frankrow. Dr. Frankrow! I insist upon it, that the orange, — regarded as a fruit, purely as a fruit," persisted the lady argumentatively, as if the orange, but for the conciseness of her language, might be considered a vegetable, or possibly a mineral, or even an animal, — "purely as a fruit, is several shades too yellow."

"Indeed, mamma," said the young lady gently, "I had not thought about the oranges. I was thinking of the boys."

"She means those two poor young fellows on the wharf, Mrs. Hepburn. It seems we are to leave them behind," the gentleman explained, also very gently, but standing, as the young lady stood, still looking intently river-wards.

The young lady wore a dark, lustreless blue dress; she carried a cloth of gold rose. Most northern women in Florida decorated themselves, like children at a May picnic, with flowers; whether in traveling or under whatever inappropriate circumstances. Dr. Frankrow found it agreeable that Miss Hepburn bore the gorgeous bit of color in her hand and not upon her dress.

There is so much of the glacier in us, after all; so chilling is the self-concentration of our natures, that perhaps it is not strange that of some sixty tourists packed into the train at Tocoí that night, and magnetically agreed upon the solitude of Florida, it occurred only to the two who stood persistently upon the platform, that those boys were the most solitary sight they had seen yet. They did not, however, discuss it. The physician, indeed, through a physician's deep-set glance, muttered something as he turned away. The young lady, standing alone, and still persistently looking river-wards, thought he said, "tuberculosis," paying little attention, however, to the word or to the man. The physician was a Bostonian, as was evident; a gentleman.

"All aboard!"

The elder, and it seemed the stronger, of the solitary figures on the wharf, made a quick movement towards the train. He spoke with a keen Yankee stir in his voice:—

"How far is it to St. Augustine?"

"Eighteen miles! *All aboard!*"

"*Eighteen miles?* What is the fare?"

"Two dollars apiece, sir! Take you right there, sir! Cheap at that. Just hurry up a little, will you, please? Two dollars! Eighteen miles! All aboard there! Sorry to go without you, sir."

The boy shook his head; he went slowly back; the swift New England animation had died out of voice and face.

"It would cost us four dollars, Dan!" mournfully.

"Never mind," said Dan, "I guess I can walk it."

He spoke with that enforced cheerfulness which is so much sadder than a moan or a tear, and crept to his feet as he spoke, coughing.

"Never mind, Jim! *Don't* bother, Jim! I can walk as well as not. I did n't come way down here to be scared at a little walk. Let him go without his four dollars! There, he's off, and I'm glad of it."

"All a-boo-ard! Last chance, sir! Better come on there with that sick boy! No hotel for ye in *this* city!" the conductor, glancing about the desolated landing, called with a certain blur in his voice, as if a cinder or two of sympathy had got into it; but one must never be blinded by sympathy in Florida, or honorable trade would come to a standstill. Sick people are, like the babies of Lamb's acquaintance, "too common" in the commercial regions of American Italy.

"Dan! There's three dollars and ninety-two cents left, yet; besides the chromios. They'll take us for that. It does n't seem as if I could let you walk it, Dan. Come! We'll get aboard, yet. Let's run!"

But Dan, upon the wharf, sat obstinately still. He shook his head again and again. He had not come all the way from Boston to cost Jim (poor Jim!) four dollars for a ride of eighteen miles. He turned over their heavy old valise laboriously and sat upon that with a pallid smile.

"You can go without us, Jim — me and the valise. *We'll* walk!"

At this moment the young lady on the platform of the car beckoned suddenly and rapidly, The asthmatic locomotive hoarsely shrieked. The elder boy ran confusedly,

not knowing why. But the lady pointed to Dan, beckoning again, and violently now, while she seemed making some ineffectual effort to find the conductor, who had disappeared, or to stop the train, which had stirred. It had stirred, it had started, it had gone. The boys both rose to their feet and stood looking after it. The figure of the young girl upon the platform seemed to shrink and droop as they looked. She slightly threw up her hands with the gesture of one in acute disappointment, and then suddenly, with a swift, beautiful, womanly impulse, — as unconscious that every passenger's eye was now upon the little scene as a lily is unconscious of a visitor to a hot-house, — tore off a blue veil she wore, and with a free, fine motion tossed it towards the river.

“There!” said Dan, “the woman in the blue dress has lost her veil. Go pick it up, Jim, and mebbe we can give it to her when we get there.”

But Jim, when he picked up the twisted gossamer ball, found within a bill and silver pieces. Three dollars. The rose, too, had fallen, snatched away by the sweeping motion, and lay entangled, broken. The great, firm, shining petals heaped themselves like spilled gold coin upon the sand.

“Considered as an act of benevolence, my dear,” coughed Mrs. Hepburn, “simply as an act of benevolence, fifty would n't materially help those boys in a country where you pay two dollars to go eighteen miles, and what *is* the use of three?”

Three dollars; and a blue veil; a rose-leaf, and a swift, sweet, womanly thought. What was the use, indeed? The boys looked at one another. They felt suddenly rich and protected; they had grown well and glad. Dan laughed, — he was only sixteen, — he laughed out like a pleased child. But Jim spoke first; Jim was a man — nineteen years old, and supposed to know what was fitting to do or



say on any given occasion. Dan used to think he should like to see the things Jim *would n't* know what to do about. Why, they never should have come to Florida — where he was going to get well and tough — if it had n't been for Jim. Jim knew it was the thing to do. Jim always knew. Jim had said: "I can sell the chromios, and we'll find work down there." Jim always knew what to say.

So now he drew himself up; his lip twitched a little as he looked after the retreating train on which the slender blue figure still stood intently. He folded away the money silently. He did not immediately speak. Dan began to be afraid Jim was not going to know what to say. But when his brother gravely said at length: —

"That is a good woman, Dan. Let's take extry care of her veil," Dan nodded delightedly. He took the veil himself; he folded it across and across with care, and reverently laid it under his waistcoat.

Now Dan carried a book in his waistcoat pocket, the little old Testament once belonging to that dead mother whom these two young creatures remembered with a faint, sweet sense of awe and mystery, like that with which they would remember the face of an unusual Madonna seen, and seen but once, in a window as they passed: but he did not tell Jim that he put the lady's veil between the leaves of the Testament. It was not necessary to talk about everything. One of the great petals of the great rose had slipped between the folds of the veil; but he did not talk about that either. It was his fancy to let the rose-leaf stay.

"Now," said Dan bravely, "let us start, Jim; I'm quite ready. You could n't guess how tough I feel to-night!"

They started bravely and toughly enough. It was still quite light. Dim in the distance sped the retreating steamer, and the retreating train — one to the river, one to the sea. On either hand the well, rich, happy people fled from them. In the perfect stillness the waves of the St. John's

lapped with a lazy sound. The sun slept upon the pier and in the little freight-house where a solitary negro was sleepily closing the door. Into the heart of the forest, mysterious, daring, lonely, cut the narrow line of rails. It plunged into swamp and thicket recklessly; it seemed like an unfinished story, or a broken word, or an unfounded hope. The sense of incompleteness which always lends so subtle and so weird a sadness to a railway in a solitary region is intensified to an exquisite strain, when one stands watching the fine, diminishing coil of smoke marking the track of the now unseen train that spans the Florida wilderness from river to sea.

"There! it's gone!" said the elder boy in a half-whisper, feeling in spite of himself a certain awe or depression. The smoke had melted. The track was bare. The negro in the freight-house was gone. St. John's on the hot beach whispered hoarsely, like a sick man speaking in a foreign tongue. The two boys, as they turned into the forest, seemed to be the only breathing souls in Florida.

Thirteen hundred miles from home. The boys glanced covertly at one another's faces as they trudged along, stepping heavily across the uncertain sleepers, and the rude and frequent culverts. The road lay upon little piles, defiant of abounding swamp; the forest pressed in sturdily on either hand; on the tops of the trees the light struck freely; in the thickets it had already begun to darken; the flame of the wild oranges was fainting; the wreaths of moss made delicate tendrils of color overhead, that seemed to grasp and entwine upon the sky; as they swung and dipped into the shadow, they took on sudden ghastly shades like the faces of the ill or dying.

"Tired, Dan?"

Jim did not like the looks of Dan as they toiled along. Perhaps it was because they walked so near the thicket, and that the gray moss made a gray shadow upon the boy's

pinched, pathetic face. They had been already long enough in Florida to have learned the fatal story of the gray moss. It is treacherous beauty, it is demoniac grace, it is an exquisite Medusa. The tree which shelters it must die. It is bloodless, relentless. It is to the forest what the devil-fish is to the sea.

The elder boy, turning his brave young face upwards and inwards through the mystery of the wilderness, with that impatience of sorrow and blind pursuit of hope which only a young face wears, felt himself, in an imaginative fashion which he could not have withstood, because he could not have understood it, vaguely disturbed by this symbol of death and decay. He hoped Dan did not see the grand old cypresses standing in the shadow stark and dead; nor the pitiful young oaks that had but just begun to die, thrusting out scant foliage through the coils of the gray vampire, like struggling hands.

“Tired, Dan?”

“I’m first-rate!” said Dan, nodding. *He* hoped Jim did not notice that bother in his breath. He had never had so much trouble with his breath. It came laboriously at the end of the first two miles. The low, purple shadows of the everglades seemed to crowd about him, as it darkened, like flocks of uncleanly birds. They had a faint sweetish odor which sickened him. He shrank when they touched him as if he had felt the flap of cold wings against his head. Strange sensations seemed to await him as he walked deeper and deeper into the forest. The wilderness itself seemed to become embodied, energetic, like a vast unknown disease, and grappled with him. Singular distresses — neither sickness nor faintness, nor altogether pain, nor exactly giddiness — took hold of him. He was filled with unexampled fear.

Eighteen miles. Well. If only Jim would n’t ask him how he felt! Poor Jim!

“Tired, Dan?”

"Splendid!" said Dan. He looked up; he smiled into his brother's face, growing dim, now, like the thicket and the forest and the sky, — it would soon be dark. It was too dark now for Jim to see what a pitiful little smile that was. To have that "splendid" without that smile was well worth while. Jim tugged at the heavy valise with a happy whistle.

"We'll be there before we know it, Dan, if only you'll hold out as well as this."

"Oh, I'll hold out," said Dan. But after that he did not speak again for a long time. The purple shadow in the everglades deadened black; the dull shine of patches of slimy water died across the swamp; above the tree-tops the throbbing color of the sky grew faint; the tendrils of the far moss seemed to relax like nerveless fingers, and the ghastly faces which had troubled Jim to turn themselves over solemnly against the wall of the night. Strange birds, whose note was unfamiliar to the northern boys, called to each other mournfully from unseen nests. Strange sounds, from unknown creatures of the wood or swamp, glided stealthily to and fro about them. Now and then a cow, that the departed train had disturbed, wandering yet unsummoned to the home of some solitary cracker in the forest, plunged heavily into the thicket, or out of it, as they passed. In the dimness these creatures showed gigantic and wild.

"Jim?" said Dan at length in the slow, plaintive voice in which excitement has given place to endurance.

"Yes, yes," said Jim. "Most there! Ain't very tired, be you, Dan?"

"Not very tired, Jim," more slowly; "I was only wondering, you ain't homesick now, I guess. You never are homesick, are you, Jim?"

"Me and you have n't got so much to be homesick over, if you come to that." Jim spoke gruffly. "There's Mis'

Green; and the cat; and the lame dog; and the crooked boarder into the attic rear."

"And the fellow at Jobbs's that brought me the orange when I was first sick," interrupted Dan, eagerly; "and that little girl of Peter's that made me tissue-paper roses; and the last boss I worked for at the factory, — he did n't jaw, that boss did n't; and Betty Poggin's hen, now, Jim, that come over to be fed when we had crackers for dinner, — would n't you like to see Betty Poggin's hen, to-night?"

"Rather see Augustine!" growled Jim; he walked on faster, with a jerk at the valise. "Folks with homes and mothers and places to go to when they're sick can afford to be homesick, Dan. *We ain't* no call that way."

"And sisters," added Dan, coughing. "If we had a place to go to, we'd have a sister in it, would n't we, Jim? Like her that tossed us the veil. I'd like my sister to wear a blue veil — soft and with a sweet smell to it like that," said Dan audaciously. "But *I ain't homesick*, either. Only I'd like to know if the crooked boarder stayed his time out. I wonder if Jobbs's boys'll ever get to Florida. He said he meant to come some winter peddlin'."

"Jim?" — presently, "I'd like to see the cat. And the dog. I'll be glad when I get well and we go home. Do you suppose Mis' Green *misses* us any?"

There has been a silence in which the rasp of the boy's labored breathing is louder to Jim's ear than any of the voices of the strange, unhomelike night. "Do you suppose," — more slowly and more plaintively, "Do you suppose, Jim, all these folks we saw in the car, are *going* somewhere?"

"Why yes," said Jim with a practical air, "they're going to Augustine. And so are we. Be there pretty soon. Ain't tired, are you, Dan?"

"Oh no, not tired, Jim," faintly, "but I meant, were they going *to* folks? There'll be somebody glad to see 'em, won't there?"

"Mebbe," said Jim shortly. "Hurt you to breathe, Dan? I did n't know it was so cold in Florida. Want to rest a bit?"

"It is a little cold — for Florida," shivered Dan, with the wise air of an old resident. "But I don't mind. And it does n't hurt me very much to breathe. We're most there, ain't we? I can get along nicely, if we're most there."

"Do you think," — presently again, "do you think, Jim, there'll be anybody glad to see us when we get there?"

"I've heard they're very fond of Northerners in Florida," said Jim, sententiously.

"I guess they are," returned the boy cheerfully. "We've been a-travelin' so long. I'd like somebody to be glad to see us. That was what I liked about that lame dog. He was always glad to see me. And Mis' Green she let me feed him. He'd eat my dinner when you was off to work; but I did n't want the dinner, Jim, you know. Do you remember the day Mis' Green broiled me the herrings? She was always good to us, Mis' Green was, nelse it was washin' or ironin', or mebbe bakin' or sweepin' or rent days, or some such times. And I don't think the room was quite so cold as we thought it was, come to think of it, — after we put the weskit in the window and puttied up the other panes. But I ain't homesick, Jim. I'm glad we come to Florida."

The two young travelers are walking slowly now; very, very slowly. It is too dark to walk fast, and one stumbles so against the rickety sleepers, and the feet plunge suddenly into sodden sand or oozing water, and now and then one falls heavily in groping on. It is deadly dark. It is deadly still. Throughout the sweep of the vast wilderness there is no sign of human life. The boys can hear their own heart-beats if they pause, half-frightened, to listen, hand in hand. The faint odors from the swamps deepen and sweeten like

rare poisons. The painful breathing of the sick child becomes a spasmodic, strangling cough. He stops frequently to rest. They sit down side by side, shivering together, upon the hard, damp hummocks that lift themselves above the stagnant pools. The wilderness closes around them, solidly, like walls. They seem to sit, prisoners in a little cell of blackness. They look up, far, at the faint sky in which the stars are pulsing now. The two poor young things — these strangers in a strange land — receive dimly a sense of welcome from the sky.

“Seems as if *they* was glad to see, anyhow, Jim.”

“Who?”

“The stars. I’ve seen a star like that one out of Mis’ Green’s window. It was one night when there was n’t bed-close enough, and I laid awake to keep warm. When we get out of these woods, it’ll be warm in Florida, won’t it, Jim?”

“Warm as toast!” said Jim. “Ain’t *very* tired, Dan?”

“Not very tired;” hopefully, — “Jim, do you think I shall get *well* in Florida?”

After a pause, again: “You expect to sell the chromios till I get well, don’t you? You expect they’ll buy a lot of chromios in Florida, don’t you?”

Dan has walked in perfect silence for now, a long time; he pulls heavily upon his brother’s hand like an exhausted child. “Most there, aint we? I — must — sit — down. I — can’t” — sinking slowly down again, “*You’re glad we came to Florida, ain’t you, Jim?*”

“Considered as a work of art, purely as a work of art, *you* know, it is an atrocity,” said the lady, plaintively.

“Ma’am?” said Jim.

“A chromo, young man, is to the world of art what a *left* or a murder is to the moral world. The trader in *chromos*, considered generically as a trader in chromos, ought

to be held legally responsible for the enormities which he commits. We talk of crimes and criminals. The degradation of art" —

"Mamma dear?"

The trader in chromos looked confusedly around. The soft voice reached him distinctly; but the speaker was hidden mysteriously somewhere overhead, behind the blinds of the great coquina house. It was dead December noon — white-hot in St. Augustine. The house was closed and dark. Long shadows slept upon the painfully cultivated lawn. Vivid Florida foliage sheltered a rose-garden which curved, crescent-wise, across the place, and shone softly; it seemed like a rainbow thrown down by mistake. The leaves of orange-trees glittered like the fine scales of jointed, jeweled armor worn in defiance of the arrows of the hot-headed sun. In the air was the undefined perfume of buds yet unopened and unseen. To poor Jim's eyes vistas of magnificence opened beyond the great door of the deep, cool hall. The wind blew from the water, and the veranda faced the blessed sea.

Jim, dusty, hot, anxious, gaunt, — leaned against one of the great veranda pillars. He was sorry when he heard the lady cough. But she would get well. Dan would have got well in such a house as this.

"Mamma dear?" The blind stirred softly overhead, letting a gleam of rose-color through from shadowed walls and ceiling, "suppose you take a chromo. Never mind about the degradation of art, just now. It must be so hard to make a living that way, don't you think, mamma? Take me one for a Christmas present," laughing softly. "I'd come down, only," whispering, "don't tell the chromo-man, but — I'm in my dressing-sack!"

"Will you have something mediæval, my dear? Here's an indigo Madonna on a gamboge sky. Or a *genre* piece. I find a choice bit in that line. It is called The Twins.



They part their curls alike to a hair, and are clutching two separate and individual black-and-tan terriers, as a *pièce de resistance*, in their separate and individual right hands. Beautiful studies from still life; peaches and a cucumber — three for twenty-five cents, my dear! Oh, and a vinegar cruet and lobster salad. Or perhaps you'd prefer a chicken? Or an angel. Here's an angel in Naples yellow, put out to pasture in a field of emerald green. And — oh, shade of Correggio! His Magdalene in Indian red — with an arm — Here, Mr. Peddler! Give me a dozen and go. And when you've sold them all, I advise you, as a mother, select some occupation less perilous to the interests of the country, and more soothing to the individual conscience. . . . I don't wonder you look pale. Call it two dozen, and make haste! There!"

Jim's eyes (despite a little perplexity, for he found his customer more or less mysterious) glistened faintly at the unprecedented luck; but very faintly: and he walked away without a smile. The Naples yellow angel might have arisen from the old valise (he had six of her) and walked beside him, or the indigo Madonna herself bought out his stock; he would hardly have cared to-day. What a lark they would have had over it once! Nobody could be happier over a stroke of luck than Dan. And two dozen chromos! Perhaps, even now — Jim began to whistle in spite of himself, as he crossed the rose-garden, stepping from the rainbow to the dense cloud of the orange-grove; and the young girl, shrinking behind the blind in her dainty undress, in the rose-heart of the shining room, leaning one soft cheek dreamily upon a soft shoulder — a cheek like a shell, upon a shoulder like a foam-flake — listened to the sound with happy, parted lips. She had that faint, sweet sense of having partially earned the right to be happy, which makes a kind act, to a sensitive nature, the necessary condition of content; and even the element of sadness which

most kind acts introduce into the imagination, beautiful only as the gentle darkness of the Claude Lorraine in which the sunrise shines softer and more fair.

St. Augustine keeps Christmas week as if the Lord were born entirely on her account. This is very natural. St. Augustine is a little world; has its own axis, its own orbit; its own astronomy; spins serenely through the chaos of the Florida wildness to the music of its own sweet sphere. Sufferers may seek her for healing; revelers may woo her for pleasure; but they are visitants from another planet, after all: seek they never so wisely, woo they never so passionately, yield she never so graciously, they may be in her world, but they are not of it. She is like a reserved and beautiful woman — she keeps them seekers and lovers forever. There are other worlds to be ordered — that is plain. There may be other sinners to be saved — that is possible. But meanwhile, in this matter of Christmas, St. Augustine is *so* sure that Christ came for love of her, that her full heart overflows with an intense, individual joy, at once a humility and an inspiration to see.

“Verily,” wrote Latimer to Cranmer, on the birth of a son to the king, “God hath showed himself the God of England, or rather we may say, *an English God.*”

So it seems St. Augustine, in her heart of hearts, did she but admit it, were fain to consider Him a Floridian.

Thus, at least, one visitor, strolling through her quaint and quiet streets one vivid morning of the Christmas week, entertained himself by fancying.

The sweet alien sound of matins in the old Cathedral, the shadows of the robed priest on the coquina walls of the gray monastery, the placid faces of the sisters from the convent, the fitting of the incense-boys on mysterious Christmas business, the faint glow of reverent expectance on the faces of the Catholic natives, the swiftly growing presence of the

fair sign of cross and wreath in the windows of obscure Negro and Minorcan homes, even the preparation for the crude worship of fireworks, like a northern Fourth of July, all the indefinite sense of hope and holiday which gave an atmosphere to the place, seemed to the northern gentleman to form a sort of sacred exhilaration such as no northern Christmas could give him though he sought it, and which here he experienced, as one always experiences the finest intoxications, imperiously, despite the resistance of his nature. The wonderful wine-like southern sunlight either added to this impression, or created it, it was impossible to say which; and the high, warm winds that swept the widening southern heavens chanted a deepening *Te Deum* to the reverent ear. It seemed to Dr. Frankrow as if the very roses which he had come out to order for Miss Hepburn's Christmas party, — the cream, the blush, the pearl, the carmine and the snow, and the royal gold, — the warm, rich, riotous roses, lifted their fair faces at once tenderly and loftily as if conscious that they too were members of the body of the beautiful lost earth, which eighteen hundred years ago was placed in the tiny hands of an obscurely born Baby to redeem. It seemed as if Christmas in Florida meant more than it could under a more reticent sun. The very flowers had souls here, and would have part in the solemn privilege of the holy time. Indeed, why not? Would Christ forget the roses when He saved the sinners? God had created many a soul less fair, less pure, less worthy of being, than those sensitive, it seemed sentient, hearts of scent and color. Might they not then have part in the great ennobling, the great idealizing, which was promised to all earth-born and imperfect beauty? Would roses some day bud in heaven as never roses blossomed upon earth, for his dear sake?

She was saying something like that yesterday.

Had he caught the sweet tricks of her fancies already, so that he could not distinguish them from his own? He bent

over the cloth-of-gold roses with a man's slow, deep, painful blush.

Ah well ; own up to it like a man ! here among the roses. They would never tell. The palpitating southern sunlight which crowned the flowers, the world, the future, in a sudden glory, would be dumb. Own, then, that he loved her ! He loved her. Any man would. He loved her — and it was Christmas week. And the roses — could not *Florida* roses speak ?

He broke them delicately, nervously, lavishly ; he heaped his arms with the choicest that the great and famous gardens held. To the northern gentleman, — standing flower-laden, rapt, an inexpressible radiance within his eyes, such as perhaps might only be seen in the eyes of a man in love, on Christmas week, and in St. Augustine, — appeared suddenly a haggard, grimy, panting boy. He stood in the hot road and looked over the fence, which he griped with both his hands.

“ Can you tell me where to find a doctor ? ”

“ I think I can. What do you want of a doctor ? ”

“ I've got a brother sick. He would n't have a doctor. He's very sick, sir ! I want to get back to him. But I must find them both first, the doctor and the lady.”

“ The lady ? ”

“ There's a lady that he's set his soul on seeing. I've got to hunt her up. Mebbe you can tell me where she is, sir ? ” said Jim, innocently.

“ Perhaps I can,” said the other, without a smile. “ Do you know her name ? ”

“ Oh, no,” said Jim dejectedly, “ nor nothin' about her. Only she tossed us a veil — Dan says it is a veil. There was money in it. We was at Tocol. Dan wants to give her back the veil. I promised him I'd find her. I calc'late to keep a promise that I make — to Dan. I'd like to find the lady.”

“What is the matter with Dan?”

“The cough. And yesterday and to-day he bleeds dreadfully,” said Jim, with a sudden, sick look. “I sold two dozen chromios yesterday at one place, but when I got back he choked so that I dares n’t tell him, to talk about it.”

“How long has the lad been sick?”

“A year, sir; off and on, but not like this. He thinks it was the moss, sir.”

“The moss?”

“He took a notion again the moss that hangs acrost the trees. They told us up to Jacksonville it eet out people’s lives. It was in the swamp, from walking over. We walked over from Tocoï.”

“Oh! *walked*? That malarial night?”

“Yes; it took a good spell; we had to set and rest: Dan choked unless he set to rest pretty often. He give out before we got in. We spent that night in the woods. It was pretty damp. Next day we went round and round. I got him some breakfast at a hotel — but it took a good deal of money. If I’d had a place to let him rest that day — but I dares n’t ask it. I went here and there, you know, sir, and it was nigh midnight before I got a place to stop. We’re stoppin’ at an old darkey’s out beyond the Gates. It’s pretty dirty, and they make us pay ’em every mornin’, and he ain’t willin’ to take the chromios,” said Jim, sadly. “And Dan he’s homesick to die among folks. Dan never did like darkies much.”

“Have you friends at home?”

“Only the woman where we boarded, and the dog he talks about, and such, sir. I have n’t any folks. Our folks died when we was little, and we was all scattered. You’ve heard tell of a place they call the ‘Little Wanderer’s Home,’ in Boston?”

Yes; he had heard of it.

“ We come from there — Dan and me.”

“ Ah ? ”

“ Yes ; we was parceled out in families nigh together, in New York State. Dan, he learned a plasterer’s trade, ’prentice — but the lime got into his breathing. And once he was in an organ factory, but that was to Boston. I was a grocer’s boy at the start ; but I took to pictures. And after Dan began to be poorly, we come back to Boston. Then we come here. I worked my way down in a Savannah steamer. I thought I’d find work down here. I expected to sell a good many chromios. I did n’t think it would have been so hard to make a living here. And Dan’s lost an awful sight. I tried to do what I thought was right. But I wish we’d never come to Florida.”

Jim has a manly young lip, but it trembles ; and dry, deep-set Yankee eyes, but they dim.

“ I’ve set up with him for ten nights. I’m most beat out. But I said I’d find the lady. He thought it would cost too much to have a doctor. But I can pay him in chromios. And a *doctor’d* think more of chromios than these darkies do,” said poor Jim. A sense of high, personal culture struggled through his grief. He held up his head with a tear on his cheek. The swift New England pride glanced across his pathetic mouth.

“ Perhaps you’re from Boston, sir ? ” said Jim.

“ Come,” said the Boston gentleman, “ come away to the lady.”

They found her standing in her own rose-garden. Her tender, young face wore a flitting shadow. It was too bad to spoil a rainbow for a party ! The rose-garden should not be touched. She stood breast-high among the flowers. She wore a dress of pale blue, the color of a partly-clouded, far, June sky. Her hair and eyes shone when she turned suddenly at the low sound of her name. She stood quite

still — an Iris in a prism — stretching out her hands with a pretty, appealing gesture of welcome that she had. She had delicate hands, and she used them with the motions which only delicate breeding and a life of ease can give to a woman's hand. Dr. Frankrow remembered for a long time after what a delicate and sheltered look she had that morning, and how untouched by care appeared her lifted face. He remembered thinking how she seemed a creature set apart from the striving, black world — such a world as that in which this haggard boy lived, moved, and had his being. She was as alien to it as the wild rose-curlew is to the Florida marsh over which it flies, slender, shining, unapproachable. Circumstances in Miss Hepburn's life, of which he had received dim perceptions, gave a zest to these fancies; and he had all a young man's (and a Bostonian's) instinctive delight in the outer symbols of inner gentleness in the lady of his choice. He was glad with all his soul that she was a happy, idolized girl, to whom life had never brought a labor, a perplexity, nor a care. Her own Christmas roses should not bloom as tenderly — Heaven helping him! — as she should — Heaven bless her! — if he won her to the eternal Florida summers of his daring heart.

He silently and tremulously unloaded his arm of its fragrant burden; the flowers lay at her feet in the shadow of the orange grove. He took a bud of the cloth of gold, scarcely knowing that he did so, or why he did so, and, bowing his agitated face over it, laid it in her hand.

Jim, too, said, "Heaven bless her!" But nobody heard him, and it did not matter.

She joined them without a curious or hesitating word. "Hers not to question why." Since the poor lad wanted her that was enough. She stepped from her rainbow to the shadow of the orange grove in a sweet and serious silence. Dr. Frankrow stood to let her pass, and she and the chromo peddler stepped out together into the dusty road.

"She looks like that blue chromio," said Dan, weakly. Jim had thought so, on the way over. He took the Madonna out of the valise, shyly, when Dan mentioned the likeness, and put it up against the smoky wall.

She was kneeling by the poor lad's bed. In her pale, transparent dress, with her shining hair and hands and eyes she made, the Christmas lover thought, a luminous life in the miserable room, as if there had fallen into it, indeed, a creature of the holy sky.

"I'm glad to see you, ma'am," said Dan.

"I am glad to be here," said the young girl, gravely. "I am sorry to find you so very, very ill. I remember seeing you before. You have had a hard time in Florida."

"You won't tell Jim, will you, if I tell you something?"

"No, I won't tell Jim."

"I wish we had n't come to Florida. We had n't got the money to get well in Florida. I thought I should get well. But don't mention that to Jim. He tried so hard to sell the chromios!"

"And now," said Dan again, in a confused, pathetic whisper, "if I've got to die, I'd rather die to home at Mrs. Green's. I know the dog would like to see me, — and Jobbs's boy, perhaps, and the cat. I have n't got anybody in Florida. We're thirteen hundred miles from home."

A silence falls upon the very face of the sunshine that dozes on the miserable floor. It is plain from the physician's look that the stifling hut is becoming fast a solemn and a sacred place. Jim turns his face towards the indigo Madonna, and hides it in his hands beneath the pity of her supernaturally round eyes. The wide, warm Christmas eve comes slowly on. The chattering of the Negroes hushes in the hut, and in the street outside. From the distant Cathedral the sound of Christmas chant floats faintly. The wooden shutter which has been drawn across the window flaps suddenly and heavily back. Jim, with a start, closes



it in again solidly. Through that window Jim, the physician, the lady, and the boy upon the bed, can see the outline of the old city churchyard, behind which the sun will soon set in the fair Florida colors that die but to live again in the Florida Christmas dawn.

“I sent for you to give you back — your veil. You was very good to us. I’ve kept — the veil.” The poor lad preludes the word with a reverent pause. “I’ve kept it in a place where it should n’t get a harm. I’ll show you. It’s in a Bible. It was my mother’s Bible. She has her name in it. I thought you’d like to see it.”

He puts the book into her hands, and the perfumed veil falls out and flutters down. The leaf of a dead rose falls, too, leaving an evanescent scent of its own, swift as a vanishing soul, upon the air. The young girl kneeling, blue-robed, reverent, turns the fly-leaf of the book, and reads. Over her head the blue-robed Madonna, with the deathless maternal yearning which even an indigo “chromio” cannot quench, looks silently. Faint and far from the Cathedral sounds on the Christmas chant.

“Jim?” The pathetic, interrupted whisper hits against the hush. “I let her look at mother’s Bible. It’s — almost like having — own folks — in Florida to see a woman” —

“Dr. Frankrow!”

Calla Hepburn gently laid down the little old book. A change, marked as that upon the faces of the dying, or as the look of one suddenly restored to life, had fallen upon her. It might be that she had grown very pale. A dazzling color seemed to have crowned her. To those who saw her, her young face shone as it had been the face of an angel.

“Dr. Frankrow, will you step aside with me one moment? I have a word to say to you.”

He stepped beside her and she closed the door. They stood in the little garden-plot belonging to the hut, sheltered by high coquina walls. The sun dreamed upon the straggling, dusty flowers. The square of sky above them seemed to stoop to meet them where they stood. By the closing of the door the sound of poor Dan's cruel breathing was quite shut out. They seemed to stand alone in the world in that one moment, among the dying flowers, beneath the stooping sky — they two.

Miss Hepburn, looking up into the young man's face, was suddenly, though it were difficult to see how, made conscious of this. Her own face indefinitely changed its expression for an instant. Her eyes sought the dying flowers before she spoke.

"You knew, Dr. Frankrow," she said at last in a low, but perfectly even voice, "something, I think, of my history?"

He knew that she was the adopted daughter of Mrs. Hepburn; certainly; little else; he hastened to deprecate being made the recipient of any allusions painful to herself; but his clear-cut, high-bred features sharpened; he put out his hand as they stood there, impulsively, incoherently, as one does in pushing something away from one in the dark.

"I have nothing to say which is painful to myself" — the young girl lifted her head — "Mr. Hepburn took me from a place of public charity. My parents could not help that; they died. One is not ashamed of one's parents for being dead. Dr. Frankrow, that is my mother's name in the old Testament. What is the matter? Are you ill?"

No; he was not ill; only a trifle dizzy; the sun glared so, in this dusty garden. . . . The boys, then?

"The boys are my brothers."

And she proposed to — do what?

"Do!" The young girl turned her shining face upon him. He felt to his inmost soul at that moment that she

scorned him for the question. She had no more what she should do than a star has of its orbit. of charity, moved by instincts so lofty and the high-bred gentleman felt himself plebeian. "Do? I only called you here to ask if I might. You are his physician. I did not dare to judge. — I thought you would go and tell mamma. Mamma once to find out about the boys, but we lost them. Tell mamma I shall stay with Dan, may I tell him? Will it do, Doctor, to tell that I love him, before he dies?"

"Tell Dan," said the physician huskily; "yes. A man would die a few hours sooner to be in Dan's hands."

She turned; she swept; she fled from him. Her nervousness would have fled like that; but so would his scorn. The breadth of the dusty little garden between them; it seemed to the young man to stretch immeasurable, black; and the narrow space between the hut and the Negro huts to reel and yawn like a gulf.

In the hut door she paused; she did not face him. He paused. The bud which he had given her was in her hand. She lifted it and looked deep into it. She held it above her head like a lamp. One can look into the heart of a rose of the cloth of gold. One can look into the heart of a tender woman — and as dazzling as the cloth of gold.

Calla Hepburn for a swift instant peered into the royal rose — petal past petal, down to the bud. The flower shed a pale lambent color upon her face as she held it so near.

She held it so near, that he hardly knew she had kissed her lips to it, till the sudden, shy, maidenly kiss was given. She *had* kissed it. Then, did she seal the kiss? Or did she seal it? Would she seal it like the rising wind? or would she seal it like the Florida garner and guard it for her? Who could say?

she tossed the rose with a magnificent movement towards the Christmas sky. It flew like an oriole, and fell like a sunbeam. The young man left alone in the dingy garden-plot caught it, kneeling in the dust. It quivered under his touch, like a thing of life. There was a soul in the cloth of gold roses; that, he had always known. He had been used to call it a bird's, a butterfly's, a sun's. Now he knew. It was a woman's. He held it for a moment against his heart, still kneeling, with uncovered head, before he stirred.

The indigo Madonna was radiant when he came into the stifling hut. Beneath her happy eyes the blue-robed girl had crept upon the wretched bed, beside the wasting lad, "to help him die," she said. She had told him, that was clear. She had told him quietly, with such sweet, serene, simple nature, as the roses had, when they told the sun they grew. Dan had accepted it as quietly. The poor boy's head lay upon her arm. Her little blue veil was still in his hand; the withered rose-leaf had dropped from it upon the floor. The Florida roses had faded for poor Dan.

"We did n't think," said Dan, "we did n't think we 'd find own folks in Florida, did we, Jim?"

He wandered a little, as the Christmas eve drew solemnly on. He talked of Jobbs's boy, and Mrs. Green. He talked of the hen that came to get the crackers for her dinner. He longed for the little girl that made the tissue-paper roses. He asked if the boss had given him a notice. He called the cat that was purring in the Boston boarding-house, thirteen hundred miles away, and seemed to pat an unseen dog upon the head. That dog, he said, was always glad to see him; he had n't seen a decent dog in Florida. He did n't know it was so cold in Florida. How much farther was it to St. Augustine? He would n't have thought eighteen miles would last so long. *Jim! Jim! Jim!* *That moss* was round his neck: it twisted tight and choked

him. If he had a sister, she would take it off—yes; there! Oh, yes. He opened the book and found her. They keep sisters in their Bibles down in Florida. That's one good thing he'd found about the place. But don't tell Jim. Poor Jim! Don't tell Jim it was a mistake to come to Florida. Jim would have to work his way back to Boston with the chromios. But then, he'd found his folks. Perhaps they'd buy the chromios to help. He'd find her in the Bible. She would look after him, till he got to Mrs. Green's.

He liked the music. How much folks sang in Florida! That new lodger in the attic rear was fond of music. He played the jewsharp on a rainy day.

Christmas music? Christmas? That was somebody's birthday—Christmas. He feebly put his wasted hand against his sister's cheek and asked her: was it hers?

*"Now . . . . Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea."* Too solemn for a sob, her voice broke against the distant Christmas chant, and reverent, ringing, penetrated the miserable room.

*"And lo, the angel of the Lord came . . . . and the glory of the Lord shone."* . . . .

The angel had come, in truth; the glory was shining as she spoke. "Why Dan!" said the Christian woman simply, "you're going to spend the Lord's birthday with Him!"

But Jim suddenly lifted his gray face from his hands.

"Dan!" he cried, "Dan, old boy, you ain't *afraid*, be you?"

Dan stretched out both his arms: "I ain't afraid, Jim, to go anywhere with you. But don't you think—we've been in Florida—long enough? Take me back—to Boston."

All the world—that is to say, all St. Augustine—knew by the setting of the Christmas sun why Miss Hepburn had

no Christmas party. All the world knew, too, that by the setting of that solemn sun a pathetic dead face rested on Miss Hepburn's own delicate pillow in the heart of her rose-red room. It was the little last thing left to do for him, and she thought it would seem to him like "having folks in Florida." The chromo peddler sat by; he held the lad's unresponsive hand; it was hard to say what Jim thought about the rose-room, or if he thought at all. He did not talk. A new sister — like an angel — in a wonderful room, was a mystery yet, deep and dim like life or death. But Dan he knew all about. And Dan was gone. He had brought Dan to Florida. And Dan had asked him to take him back to Boston. One does not talk about such things. So he sat and held the boy's hand. Dan had lifted up his hands to him the very last, last thing.

"I'll set by him, if you please," said Jim.

And so he did, till Dan was borne away to the little old churchyard without the City Gates, where the peaceful graves are marked with crosses of Florida shells. The rose garden was shorn of every white bud it bore, to carry too. But in the lad's hand, hidden half from sight, there was one rose of the cloth of gold. The other flowers were so dazzling white, that this looked like sunshine upon snow: or like a woman's kiss on marble.

"Considered as a funeral," sighed Mrs. Hepburn one day when the roses had had time to wither on the grave, "purely as a funeral, I called it a very melancholy thing. But when you come to view a chromo peddler in the light of a brother-in-law, I will say I regard Dr. Frankrow as the only man I know who is half worthy of her, though I don't doubt he's got more than he deserves at that. Regarded as a man, simply as a man, a lover always does. Call him a photographer — substitute a camera for a chromo — and in process of time, can you tell me where will be the odds? Mrs.

Cameron herself is a photographer, and Tennyson sits to her, and that in England. An American, regarded merely as an American" —

"Mamma dear? Suppose you regard me as a daughter for a minute — merely as a daughter, and tell me — If you were going to be married again, mamma?" —

"No, I thank you, Calla! Mr. Hepburn was a good man, my dear, an excellent man. But marrying, like dying, should never be expected of one but once. I claim you've done your duty — in either case — by God and man if the thing is once thoroughly attended to. I prefer not, if you please, my dear!"

"But mamma, if you *must*, you know — if there were n't any way out of it that you could see — and you'd put it off, and put it off, and all, and it had got to be done sometime, what should you think of being married when the new spring comes on to the everlasting summer, in — Florida, you know?"

"Regarded as a duty," said Mrs. Hepburn, sadly, "entirely in the light of a duty, I would rather be married in Florida than in Paradise."

## SAINT CALIGULA.

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THE first time that I saw Caligula, I remember, my cigars had given out.

I was, it is needless to add, a smoker; Caligula was a member of a Baptist church. I was in the combative phase of experience; Caligula was in the acquiescent. I was, perhaps I may venture to say, of a speculative nature; Caligula of an incurious one. I was twenty-six; Caligula was sixty-two. I was reading "Hopkins on Original Sin;" Caligula was blacking my boots. I was a junior in the Theological School of Harmouth University; Caligula was the divinity sweep. I was white; Caligula was black.

To say that Caligula and I had never met before would be inaccurate. I believe I had been in Harmouth ten days. Ten times, therefore, I must infer that Caligula had been a visitor in No. 2, West Depravity Hall. Ten times he must have stepped in slippers sanctity of foot across my smoke-beclouded threshold. Ten times he must have dusted those lyrics of Heine into the waste-basket, and put the English Bible conspicuously on top of the meerschaum. Ten times he must have essayed to produce order in that awful bedroom, out of which I got with the utmost possible speed every morning, thinking it the discreeter part of valor not to look behind. Ten times — yes, it must be he who had ten times washed the soap-dish and forgotten to dry it; ten times made unpardonable dust with that particular kind of a broom, patented for University purposes, which can't go



into corners, but leaves a circular mark to show how clean the middle of the room is. He it was, then, who had ten times blacked my ungrateful boots; but until this day I mention, I am not quite sure that I had ever bestowed upon Caligula any such share of my valuable mental processes as could be philosophically called attention.

That day — it was Friday, and rained — I put my amber-mounted pipe upon the askew little thin red cloth of the unsteady library table (one of the fellows had whittled a leg short), and, without raising my eyes from “Hopkins,” said leisurely:

“Oh! Here, if you please. I want an errand done downtown.”

“Yes, Mist’ Hub.”

“My name is Hubbard,” I said, putting down the book. “I wonder, by the way, what yours is.”

“I did n’t supposed you ’d done forgot, Mist’ Hub,” said the negro, gently.

I closed the book and regarded him.

“Why, Caligula! Is this you?”

“Yes, Mist’ Hub.”

“You were round senior year, in college, a week or so. Somewhere the end of the term, was n’t it?”

“I had you three month, Mist’ Hub,” said Caligula, slowly. “I tought you ’d done remembered. You was very good to me. I had you ole weskits, Mist’ Hub; an’ de neckties you trew in. I did n’t supposed you ’d done forgot, sar.”

I have said that this was the first time I saw Caligula. The visual power of a student in Harmouth College (not too much restricted in income, let us say, and not of an unpopular temperament) during the last three months of senior year is a more or less limited faculty. Could it be expected to bring to a focus distinctly upon a negro sweep of temporary history and unobtrusive habits?

My "Original Sin" dropped with a resounding thwack upon the floor. Caligula picked it up. He stood bowing and cringing. I looked at him silently. A little man, gray, spare, bent, bald, black as the French boots which stood shining upon the pine shelf somebody (was it he, perhaps?) had obligingly put up for them behind the bedroom door. A little, obsequious, uninteresting man, of an enslaved nature, I thought, flattering myself upon the judicial nicety of my perceptions; a creature without even the crude conditions of heroism, of romance, of poetry, which now and then attach to select specimens of his rudimentary race. Gentle, perhaps, with the grotesque sarcasm of that name of his to overset all possible gravity in one's appreciation of the fact; gentle, silent, and commonplace. Oh! yes, and clean. Caligula was tolerably clean, and his forehead was heavily lined. He wore small round earrings, too. Next time I should know Caligula. He "would n't supposed I done forgot" again. My cheeks burned at the gentlemanly rebuke.

"I stand corrected, Caligula," I said. "You have better manners than I. Come and shake hands. But I don't know why you should remember me out of so many fellows."

"It was the weskits partly, Mist' Hub," said Caligula, thoughtfully. "But, ye see, some de young men dey yank a man's earrings — an' old man's earrings," added Caligula, with dignity — "dat a doctor said would cure me of weak eyes, sar. You neber tetched 'em, Mist' Hub."

"Glad if I did n't, Caligula!" said I, hastily thinking what a narrow escape it was, if I had n't. "But you need n't have been at any trouble to remember the waistcoats. And now I remember that you used to get tobacco for me before. I want some cigars from Dobbins's."

"Yes, sar. I know. I remember de sort I done used to got for you at Dobbins's. I'll go at once, sar," said Caligula, gravely. He did not approve of smoking. He gave it

up when he was immersed, and he always used to say: "I'll go at once, sar." I began to recall these incidents in Caligula's history.

Caligula turned, as he went out that day, standing in the doorway, through which (I had front corner, ground floor) I could see the wet, graveled walk and the rain beating the infirm October grass.

"Dar's one reason, sar, I remember you, Mist' Hub. When Mari come home wid de wash"—

"Mari?"

"Mari is my wife, sar. I tought you'd done remember Mari. She washed for you for two years, sar, Mari."

"Caligula," said I, decidedly, "I have been in Germany for two years, studying biology."

"Sar?"

"And when a man studies biology in Germany for so long a time, Caligula, it is difficult for him to keep all his American acquaintances as distinctly in mind as he would like. Don't you see? Biology preoccupies the memory to a curious extent."

"Yes, Mist' Hub." A look of awe stole over Caligula's humble, listening face.

"But really I think, Caligula—yes, I do think that I remember Mari. Short, was n't she?"

"Tall, sar. Mari is tall of her size, and well put togeder."

"Yes, I mean—rather tall. Just tall enough to be good-looking, and somewhat slim?"

"She's pretty stout," said Caligula, patiently; "pretty stout of her weight, an' lighter complected than I, sar. She's handsome to see, Mari. An' she had one twenty-five a dozen for starched, sar; she did up so well."

"Now I am *sure* I remember her," I continued, enthusiastically. "A handsome woman, stout and short"—

"Tall, sar."

“Stout and tall I mean, who asked one twenty-five for starched things. I remember perfectly. An admirable woman. But what was it I did about Mari, Caligula?”

“Some de young men chaff at her,” said Caligula, with reviving spirit, “seein’ she was a washwoman and — black. Dar was some rooms she would n’t go nigh, sar. She’s sperited in her feelin’s, Mari. She used to send me to their rooms. Mist’ Hub, I tank you, sar. *You* treat my wife like a lady.” Caligula drew himself up. He had put on his hat; but took it off again, and bowed gravely to me, standing in the rain, before he shut the door.

Some of the fellows were in when Caligula came back with the cigars. I nodded at him kindly, with a vague sense of gaining experience in the pastoral work. I said, “Did you get very wet, Caligula?” with that unconscious condescension we fall into, especially in the presence of witnesses, toward a person to whom we have been kind. I think I had some idea of asking further questions about Mari, with the purpose of drawing him out, for the entertainment of my visitors. But the sweep checked my advances with an indefinable reticence and dignity of manner. I let him go in silence. It suddenly seemed to me that he was rather an old man to be going out in the rain to get cigars for us.

We were preparing for a debate in our Seminary Literary Society that week — the fellows and I. I remember that I had the affirmative on the question, “Is it desirable to have a Celibate Clergy?”

“I hope your wife is well,” I said one morning to Caligula. I spoke with something of a society air in my anxiety, newly acquired, to avoid the twang of patronage. Indeed, I think I put the question rather gayly, like a man exchanging the compliments of a New Year’s call.

Caligula was cleaning my coat. He had the ammonia bottle, and with assiduous, cramped finger was rubbing the

spot spattered by the turtle soup at dinner. He did not immediately answer me. When he did, he said:—

“Powerful strong ammony, sar, dis yere.” He lifted his eyes—the melancholy eyes of his race. I found myself unexpectedly face to face with an old man’s difficult and impressive tears.

“She’s well, sar; yes, Mari is well, tank God. She’s peart an’ well. An’ so’s de chillen. They’re powerful peart chillen, sar.”

“I have some washing, if she wants it,” I said, with the irrelevance of perplexity.

“Tank you, sar. She don’t take in now.”

“Why, what’s the matter?”

It takes the bluntness and the boldness of youth (and I had both) to ask such questions. Caligula put down the ammonia bottle and slowly folded the coat before he said:—

“Mist’ Hub, sar, Mari’s out with me.”

“Out with you, Caligula?”

“She’s been out with me, sar, dis two years. She’s powerful sperited woman, Mari. Mist’ Hub, sar, my wife hain’t spoke to me for two whole years.”

He bowed as he said this, crouching a little. It is not easy to put into words the effect the motion had upon me; as if the creature must apologize to another for his very sorrows. I was young and a theological student. I knew little about sorrow. But I felt to the bottom of my untaught, untried heart that I was in the presence of a profound affliction. Biology offered no assistance for such emergencies. “Original Sin” gave me no suggestion. I ran over the main points in my paper on the “Celibate Clergy,” without avail. In simple desperation, I said:—

“Caligula, I beg your pardon.”

“Tank you, sar,” said Caligula. He was at work once more on the turtle spot, rubbing meekly, with bent, bald head. As he rubbed his earrings shook.

"I did not know you had domestic troubles. I did not mean to intrude upon them by — by careless questions."

"No, sar. Tank you, sar."

There was a silence.

"You'd been kind to her, of course, Caligula?" I ventured, breaking it at last.

"I tried to be, Mist' Hub," said Caligula, gently. "She's a powerful sperited woman, Mari," he added, slowly. "She can't stand much. We disagreed, sar, 'bout de doctrine of Immersion. Mari took to the 'Piscopals, to St. John's. A powerful aristocratical church, St. John's, Mist' Hub; s'ported mainly by head waiters an' barbers, sar. Mari an' me, we disagreed on Immersion an' 'Postolical Succession. I tried to be kind to her; but she hain't spoke to me for two years. I don't wish to find no fault with Mari; but it's hard, someways, to git 'long, sar. She won't take in nor go out, sar, to earn nothing. Nor yet she won't cook, sar, an' tend up at home. She hain't lifted a finger to do for me for nigh two years, sar. She does for de chillen, sar; but she neber does for me."

"But do you support, do you take care of her, under the circumstances, Caligula?"

"Sartainly, sar. She has a claim upon me for s'port. She's my wife. She has de legal claim. I s'ports 'em all, sar, de same as if Immersion had n't come between us. It comes a mite hard; but I don't wish to find no fault with Mari."

"You're too good to her!" I said, hotly.

Caligula lifted his head. "She is my wife, sar," he answered, simply.

"You're too good to her, all the same, Caligula."

"So she says, Mist' Hub. It's that she's most high sperited about. She says it makes her heaps ob trubble in the way of gitten' the divose."

"Divorce! Does she want a divorce?"

“ Yes, Mist’ Hub, sar. She’s been tryin’ for de divose dis year while past. Mebbe she’ll git it, sar, de lawyer done says. I’d be sorry,” said Caligula, sighing. “ But de Lord understan’s de matter. He’s de best lawyer I know, sar. You see, Mist’ Hub, sar, I’ve sorter put de case in his han’s. He knows Mari. He must kinder see what a powerful fine woman she is, settin’ ’Postolical Succession out the account, and them high sperits he giv’ her. A handsome woman, too,” pursued the sweep, straightening. His eye flashed with marital pride; but across his dark and heavy jaw there passed the pinched look peculiar to those species of animals who suffer without outcry.

I did not understand the expression, being, as I say, but twenty-six. But I understood that I did not understand it, and sat before Caligula awed and silent. Who was I, that I should comfort, instruct, or edify my negro sweep? Love? I had thought myself in love once or twice, in summer vacations; when the moon was on the river; when the twilight touched the sea; when the wind blew soft hair against my face; when the scent of flowers was strong; when people in parlors sang love songs without the lamps; when it was not incumbent to reduce one’s visions of domestic life upon a rural clerical income to the coherence of an immediate engagement.

This black brute, it seemed, could love a woman, in his own way. Well, what a way it was.

Christianity? I had chosen the sacred profession, whose peculiar precinct it is to define for other men their duty to God and man; to inspect their motives; to judge their conduct; to prescribe their principles; to be their leader through the subtle perils and delicate intoxications of a spiritual consecration.

Suppose I prated of resignation, of self-denial, of purity, of integrity, to this negro Baptist, building my fire there, crouched, patient, kneeling on the seminary floor! I!—

I looked at the man with a peculiar interest, I remember, as if I had never seen a Christian before; as if I had discovered the type of character. My heart said: "Caligula, teach me."

I was still young enough not to ask for the other side of a story that appealed to my sympathies; and it was not until I happened to lunch one day with Mari's lawyer — a professor in the Harmouth Law School, I regret to be obliged to say — that it occurred to me what a shock it would be to discover in my St. Caligula some ordinary domestic tyrant, of uncertain habits, temper, or purse-strings, from whom the protective marriage laws of the parental state would be richly justified in freeing that handsome, high-spirited, but long-suffering female, Mari.

I measured my escape by my sensations when Burrage said, carelessly: —

"You have a phenomenon up at Depravity Hall, in the shape of your sweep; one of the best husbands I ever knew in my life. Eh? Oh! yes, the divorce. I think I shall be able to get the woman the divorce from him. Should have got it last year if he'd neglected her or showed temper. She'll make it incompatibility, I think — under the present laws. Curious case. The worst she acts the better he treats her. He's hard pushed, poor chap. Very curious case. Why, confound it! the fellow seems to love the woman! *Says he promised to, when they got married!*"

Having neither experience nor wisdom with which to help Caligula, I offered him the only trifles at my command — money and reverence. He accepted both, without remarks. He seemed to be suffering from an attack of dumb gratitude. But next week he appeared with a new broom. I am not versed in the natural history of brooms; but I suppose this to have been rectangular in shape, for the corners of my bedroom were clean from that day forevermore.



Being very much occupied about this time with my debate on the Celibate Clergy, with the lectures on Predestination, some Hebrew roots on which I had "got sat down" in the class-room, and a few other matters of importance, I think, as nearly as I can recall, that I had little or no conversation with Caligula for several weeks.

One day he hung about, after his work was done, with that pitiable bow. I was reading Baur on the "Fourth Gospel," I remember. Caligula seemed at a large remove from the argument. I was tense with zeal for the honor of the tender evangel, and the affairs of this colored brother seemed unimportant beside the literary history of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Caligula said: "Busy, Mist' Hub?"

"Why, yes, Caligula; rather, just now. Anything wanted?"

"No, sar; tank you, sar."

He moved away. His hands came together at the lean finger-tips with a submissive motion.

"Caligula! Come back!"

"Yes, sar; tank you, sar."

"You had something to say to me. What troubles you? What has Mari done now?"

"Nothing, sar, of no great consequence; but the divose."

"Oh! The divorce."

"She done got the divose, sar — she an' de chillen. I did n't s'posed she'd done get a divose for de chillen. She's took 'em with her, sar. She's gone to *Tennysee*, Mari has. Dey's all gone, sar. I'm lef' to myself, sar; tank you, sar. I thought I'd give you information of the fac'. That's all. . . . Mist' Hub, the pail needs fillin' fresh. I call the water turned a mite sour. I will fill it. I'll go at once, sar."

I was too much of a novice in human experience to be

equable in my treatment of human confidence, and remember to have suffered many keen alternations of feeling about Caligula; but from this time I think he advanced upon my interest with sad and steady inroads. I did not call in the fellows to see him now. I could not, somehow. Caligula did not converse much with the rest; or, if he did, it was on a superficial plane, carefully confined to the area of blacking, brooms, and coal, of soap or towels, of the weather or the wages. There was a senior opposite — the ablest man in the seminary, and reported to be of a singularly spiritual nature, interested in the higher life. But Caligula had never mentioned Mari to this good man. As I thought more about it, I became at first awed, then humbled, by the confidence of the sweep.

I remember saying, one day: —

“Caligula, I’m a young fellow, and can’t understand your troubles, I know. But I’d like to have you know I’m downright sorry for them and for you! I hope Mari is ashamed of herself before now!”

Caligula lifted his melancholy eyes to answer me: but spoke with difficulty, bringing out his patient “Tank you, sar,” without his usual distinctness.

“I’d take it kindly, Mist’ Hub,” he added, “sein’ you’ve been so good, sar, if you’d speak regardfully of my wife. Don’t s’pose she done understood how lonesome it would make it, gettin’ de divose for de chillen too. She was sech a handsome woman,” sighing, “and so high sperited. I don’t sweep up no grudgin’ feelin’s against my wife.”

It was the second term of middle year. The examinations on Federal Headship in Adam were past. The snow had melted from the University Green; the ice was breaking on the Harmouth River; great freshets were gathering their forces. Our seminary windows stood open. Caligula’s coal fires burned low. The Professor had got

along as far as Justification by Faith. Sparrows twittered in the bare seminary elms. Spring was coming.

So, it seemed, was Caligula, with a definite haste in his shuffling step. I heard it far down the stairs that day, and listened idly over the notes on Eternal Punishment and the Natural Man.

The year had come and gone, leaving Caligula as it found him — a patient, melancholy man, with slavish in-born manners and grand acquired Christian eyes. Caligula had ceased to talk of his domestic afflictions. He honored me by a silent assumption of my sympathy.

This day I have in mind, he presented a remarkable, though perfectly indefinable appearance. We call it transfiguration in white people. He came directly to my side, and said : —

“Mist’ Hub, sar, I done got a letter from her. I got a letter from my wife.”

“She is not your wife!” I exclaimed thoughtlessly. I was angry for Caligula. I do not know but I was angry with him. I should have relished a touch of masculine temper in this long-suffering and long-loving creature. Caligula waved away my words with a gesture of much dignity.

“She writes to say, sar” —

“What business has she to write to you at all?”

“It is in reply,” said Caligula, with a good deal of manner. “I wrote de fust letter. Dis is in reply.”

“Oh! you’ve been writing to her, have you?”

It is as unsafe, we find, for a superior nature to assume that it has absorbed the confidence of the inferior as it would be to establish an elective affinity between the “walrus and the carpenter” (with whose attempt to walk “hand in hand” a contemporary humorist has made us all familiar).

What else had Caligula done, pray, which he had not condescended to communicate to me?

"I wrote to her," pursued Caligula, with increasing independence, in a tone which, however, lost none of its gentle and appealing character. "I wrote that I had 'bout made up my mine, sar, to go to housekeepin' again. I'd live alone too long. I should marry somebody, sar, as de law allow, an' go to keepin' house dis yere season. So I told her I'd give her de fust chance."

"Hem! You did, did you?"

"Yes, sar. I did n't cringe to her, sar. She's high-sperited herself. I jest told her, in a high-sperited way, how it was. She could do jest as she done pleased. But I told her I'd give her de fust chance."

"And what — under these unusual circumstances — did the lady say?"

"She say she'd come, and be tankful, sar. But I must send a hundred and fifty dollars to get her and de chillen on from Nashville."

"It is a large sum, Caligula."

"A large sum, sar," repeated Caligula, cheerfully. "But she says she's done glad to get home again and behave like a lady, sar. She says she's had a very dull time in Nashville, sar." "I expect she would," added Caligula, modestly.

Justification by Faith was struggling with the natural man in this model husband at that moment. Anybody but St. Caligula would have said: "I told her so!"

"And how," I asked, submissively, "do you expect to raise one hundred and fifty dollars, Caligula?"

"The Lord will provide!" said Caligula, religiously. "I've laid up a trifle — jest a trifle, sar — sence she got de divose. I laid up against things took a turn in dis direction, sar. I neber wanted to marry no other woman. Mari was my wife. I expect she done come back to me. I ain't gwine to let a matter like a hunderd and fifty dollars come between me an' my wife, sar."

Caligula stood confidingly — child-like, serene, and sweet.

Burnt out of the dark mirror of his face, as out of the Claude Lorraine illuminated landscapes, looked and blinded me. The Negro sweep was a radiant creature.

I yielded the case without a murmur. We took up a subscription in Depravity Hall. The theological professor himself subscribed five dollars, at the close of his famous lecture on Imputed Sin. The exegetical chair was generous. The homiletic department kindly headed a paper. Several of the fellows put down a Sunday's preaching. One of them was supplying a mission pulpit at two dollars and seventy-five cents a Sabbath. In three days I had made up the amount necessary to reinstate Caligula in the perils and the pleasures of domestic life. He requested me to write the letter which should explain to the absent fair the profound mysteries of money orders, railway routes, the divorce laws, and his own unconditional forgiveness and unswerving attachment, especially urging me to "make it cl'ar 'bout de money an' de feelin's" involved in the complicated case. Humbly I did my best in both particulars; adding, I must confess, one or two pungent suggestions in postscript form and on my personal responsibility, which Caligula did not see, but I am glad to remember that Mari did.

I sent the letter. And the freshets came; and the coal-fires died quite out; and the elms began to breathe; and the class got their three-months' license; and the Greek department had us all to tea, six at a time; and the spring budded and burst. And one afternoon Caligula walked in, at an unwonted hour, and said: —

"I've had a telegram from my wife. She'd like to have me meet her an' de chillen at Forty-second Street Station, in New York, to-morrow. I'll go at once, sar."

Two days after, as I stood plaintively blacking my own boots and thoughtfully wondering how Caligula managed to get the sheet on the bed so it would turn over the blanket, my sweep reappeared. He had on a new pair of earrings,

very bright. He wore fresh kid gloves that had ripped across the thumb. He held his gray head loftily. He said : —

“ Mist’ Hub, sar, we ’d take it very kind, me an’ Mari, if you ’d step over to de house this evening, sar, and read the service, sar. We ’re gwine to be married again, Mari an’ me. Dar ’s de Baptis’ minister *could* do it. But I told Mari to have that aristocratical clergyman to St. John’s, if she done want him. But, Mist’ Hub, sar, she say she take it very kind if you would condescend to come yourself, and no sectarian diffunces to be considered on dis yere peaceful and glorious occasion.”

## MISS MILDRED'S FRIEND.

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THE nurse was gone at last.

Miss Mildred sighed peacefully, watching the door as it closed upon her. The door was of black walnut. Mrs. Hobson had the effect of being finished in black walnut too. She wore brown — and then her complexion!

Miss Mildred herself had the rare pleasure (to an invalid) of having retained her complexion. She was sensitive about this point in other people. And Mrs. Hobson moved like a bureau without casters. Besides, she called her "my dear." Mildred always sighed peacefully when Mrs. Hobson had rolled up the round stand, brought the ice-water, wrung out the wet towels, set the milk behind the Cologne bottle, and the crackers on the chair, measured off the Life Food, put the chamomilla within reach, and "fixed" the fire, — a terrible process, consisting of raspings and scrapings, of puffings and pokings and gaspings, on the part of Mrs. Hobson, every one of which Miss Mildred firmly believed to be an unnecessary torture inflicted upon her nervous system, but against which there was no redress. Mrs. Hobson was one of those persons who have theories about managing a fire, and with such people it is no more possible to argue than with a man in love. When all this was over, and Mrs. Hobson had vanished for the night, Miss Mildred, as I say, was glad.

She had resolutely refused to have Mrs. Hobson in attendance upon her at night. This pleased her mother, who

thereby received and gave the impression that *she* took care of Mildred half the time. No one ever alluded to the fact that it was because Mrs. Snowe was systematically incapable of taking care of her daughter at any time, that there was a nurse in Mildred's case at all.

Mildred Snowe was what I have heard called "one of the ethereal invalids." Nothing very dreadful or disagreeable was the matter with this pale and patient young woman, who had not left her beautiful room in the stately Snowe mansion for now three long and empty years. She did not have sick-headaches, a cancer, or a cough. She had never even gone into hysterics. She did not often cry. She was not expecting to die, and had never once called the family together to give orders about her funeral. She had only met with an accident a good while ago, and got a hurt upon the spine between the shoulders, and so had the backache ever since. Her mother said Mildred always "kept up;" and what would have become of *her* if she had n't, Heaven only knew, for she sometimes thought of the two she needed nursing as much as anybody, but she would n't let poor Mildred hear her say such a thing for the world.

Oh, how many times Mildred had heard her say it, talking to callers down in the front entry, as they went away, in that high-strung voice of hers that pierced her daughter's ears like a fine poisoned wire, and seemed to revolve upon itself within the brain for an hour after — how many times!

But Mildred only said, "Poor little mother! she can't help *herself*," and spoke gently next time she came up, asking how the pleurisy was, or the dyspepsia, or if she slept last night, or dwelling upon whatever cheerful conversational material of this sort happened to be uppermost at the time in Mrs. Snowe's interest and favor. The subject of discussion on this especial night, before Mrs. Hobson came in, had been diphtheritic throats, Mrs. Snowe having heard that the next lecturer in the Hamlet's Citizens' Lecture



— I have not been obliged to postpone his engagement for some time owing to his afflictive cause. The night before, Mrs. Snowe was interested in a theory of mineral poisoning. — I was always something. Mildred was used to it. Perhaps I was not half, she sometimes thought. It came of having an invalid in the house.

“After his appointment had observed Mrs. Snowe, when Mr. Johnson had turned out of the way, — comes Mr. Hogarth. I have long wanted to see that man. It is a fine specimen his year.”

“What Henry Hogarth?” asked Mildred. — “The poet?”

“Yes, it is Henry Hogarth. I never thought of him so much as a poet, though, in my heart, as I did as a lecturer on Pompey — it was a —

“Pompey?” suggested Mildred.

“Well, yes, Pompey and Hieronymus, or the Schleiermacher investigations of something of that sort. At any rate, I’ve always *traced* of him as a lecturer on antiquities with an invalid wife,” signed Mrs. Snowe.

“Ah! had he an invalid wife?”

Mildred’s eyes twinkled merrily. Nothing could have so recommended a poet to her mother, unless, indeed, he could have been an invalid himself.

— “Why, yes, my dear, an *extremely* invalid wife. So I’ve always understood. He is most devoted to her. He won’t stay at a party — and he is said to be very fond of society — after nine o’clock, because she prefers to have him help her to bed rather than the maid. And he answers her bell *like* a maid, jumping up every half hour. And it’s so interesting to know that they live in a boarding-house, in two small rooms, and he does *all* his writing with her beside him at a little table, and her callers coming in as lovely as possible!”

“That was very interesting, surely — very much so; Mildred said, idly.

"She has a most remarkable disease," pursued Mrs. Snowe, with animation. "I hear it is deterioration of—something. There is no other case on record like it. Deterioration of"—

"The heart?" suggested Mildred.

"Oh, no!"

"Intellect? feelings? will?"

"No, none of those, I am sure; they don't sound like it. I think it may have been 'deterioration of the arteries.' At any rate, it is a most remarkable disease. I've a mind to invite him to stay here when he lectures."

"*Mother!* To find out what is the matter with his wife?"

"Oh, no, Mildred, not at all. What an unpleasant way you have of putting things! But he must stay somewhere. Mrs. Jessop will be after him if she gets over her neuralgia. I should be ashamed to have him stay at the Jessops'. Their carpet is blue and their curtains maroon. She'd be sure to have his cold mutton overdone, besides. The man with the spectroscope stayed there."

"Stereoscope, mother?"

"Yes, stereoscope, I should say—and had to go up to the hotel for a lunch. If I don't have one of my attacks I will try it, I believe. It would be pleasant for you, too, Mildred. The lectures run over several weeks. I suppose he would come and go. But we need n't give him the permanent invitation till we've tried him once. If you don't need me any longer, Mildred dear, I'll go and write to him, I believe, to-night. I suppose the committee have his address. Comfortable, Mildred? There! I meant to have got out of my silk before I came into your room. I must remember."

Mildred smiled patiently. Her mother seldom did remember. It could not be helped. She pulled the blue Chinese crape coverlet close about her ears, but her eyes

ders what the world is like — to the well. She has forgotten. It is so long now that she has lain here ! so long since she has been “ Miss Mildred ” to people ! — a way of speaking that came by degrees, a phrase full of the patronage of compassion, and the dreary recognition of her lost youth. Yet Mildred is not so very old. She felt young enough the day it happened, bounding out from her blue room in blue ribbons, while the picnic wagon stood waiting, and Jamie Lenna called her at the door, and her mother — Yes, her mother trips ; that `is all. Her mother trips, and the low, wide, oiled stairs are slippery, and Mildred springs. She knows how to put one hand on the baluster and bound down ; she is a hoidenish girl perhaps, lithe and fearless. To leap and fling herself before the sliding figure is the work of a thought —

So here she is.

Jamie Lenna used to call at first, but she could not see him. And by and by he moved to Boston. He was a nice boy, but he liked well people. He had always seemed like a boy to Mildred ; most of the young men in Hamlet did. Outside of Hamlet it was different, for Mildred had been outside of Hamlet. But Jamie was outspoken and honest, and told a good story ; she would have liked to see him now and then. Mildred had been one of those frank, merry girls who are easily “ good friends ” with the young fellows.

But only the girls came now into the sick-room, and not too often, either. Mildred remembers a Miss Jones, who used to be The Invalid of Hamlet ; had consumption, but would n't die ; lasted unpardonably long ; people went to see her fast-days and Sundays after church ; sent her jelly when it was left over, and ice-cream after parties if the children did n't eat it all for breakfast. When there was a sermon on charity, or a revival, Miss Jones was run to death with callers. She was the village scape-goat for an



"And the modern improvements in troches are so great," thought Mrs. Snowe, pensively. It seemed as if a man in that profession would eat them for the luxury of testifying to the advancement of science.

"I hope you are not very much fatigued with your journey?" began Mrs. Snowe, sympathetically, extending her delicate and hospitable hand.

"Thank you, not at all. I am seldom tired."

The hearty words rang over the sad and silent house. Mildred heard them up-stairs. A happy man, she thought. An interesting man, notwithstanding his extreme health, thought Mrs. Snowe, scrutinizing him over her silver teacup at supper. She liked him. All the woman in her responded to his quick, dark eyes and straight shoulders and firm mouth; his full, vibrating voice; his outright way of saying, "What a cup of tea!" his unexpressed (but evident) pleasure in being delicately entertained; his readiness to be "made at home," and his fluent, excellent stories.

A man was a rarity now at the Snowes'. The widow felt a change in the atmosphere, as if she had gone to the beach or the mountains. She experienced a faint excitement in putting on her bonnet to attend the lecture. She had one of the faces which it is easiest to classify by saying, She is a woman who looks her best in a bonnet. Yet let us understand her. Mrs. Snowe was a lady, not a flirt. For a woman of her years to wear her widow's veil a fold the more or less becomingly for the sake of a gentleman, she would have felt from the bottom of her heart was vulgar. Still, as I say, there existed this undefined stimulant to the pose of the bonnet. Mildred and Mrs. Hobson were so used to things, and did not notice how one looked.

Now the lecturer, it had already become evident, did. He saw everything: the silhouette of Konewka's on the tile beneath the tea-pot; the square pattern of hand-carving (a hundred years old) in the white painted cornice of

the softly lighted and heavily shaded room, fourteen feet high above his head; the Shetland shawl, too, that had dropped to the floor by the sideboard: it was blue — her daughter's shawl, she told him, as he stooped to pick it up. With his permission, she would take him up to see the poor girl presently. It was a case of nervous shock and abrasion of one of the cervical vertebræ — an accident.

“He would rather come up *after* lecture,” said Mrs. Snowe, kissing Mildred good-by. She was a little hurried, and chiefly kissed her own veil, while Mildred made the best of her way through a mouthful of crape to hastily cry: —

“Don't bother him to drag him into a sick-room, mother! — *don't!* Let the poor man go to bed in peace.”

In her heart she wondered if he were not rather relieved, on the whole, that his business required him to be so much away from that other sick-room and that other sufferer, to whom his affectionate and celebrated loyalty was so sensitive; for the well, be they never so loyal and affectionate, are glad to be free. Mildred knew.

What Mr. Hogarth expected to find when, still flushed with the proud pleasure of leading the Hamlet intellect captive into that region vaguely described by his hostess as “Antiquities,” he followed her up the wide, low stairs which Mildred had not crossed for three years, it is not easy to say. He was a man of broad experience, setting his domestic afflictions even out of the account, and prepared for anything in the invalid line, — dark rooms, camphor, paregoric, tears or a whine, bottles on everything, the thermometer at ninety, a good deal about the doctor, and a singularly hideous shade of purple-gray, of which he had observed that very *yellow* sick people *always* had their wrappers made.

What he found — rather, let me say, what he felt — was at first a delicate misty fine sense of the color of blue — a pale blue with much lace drapery. He stood in a lady's

parlor, it seemed ; a small room, with a recess closely curtained. Books were about, and flowers. A window was open. A low fire in an open grate flickered gently. Not a bottle was to be seen. Mrs. Hobson was not present. The lamps were shaded with blue and creamy laces, but burned cheerily beside the lounge on which Mildred lay, easily putting out her little hand, with the frank, girlish motion she had never lost, to say : —

“ It is kind in you to come up, Mr. Hogarth, and I am glad to see you. Do you like smoking-chairs? Because there's one I keep for people who do. No; mother likes her low rocker here by me. So I can see you both. *That is right!* ”

Mildred had a voice of which it was not possible to say that sickness had not saddened it slightly, but it had not *soured* it by a fleck; and she had no whine. She laughed, too, most merrily. She wore something of cream-colored cashmere and blue ribbons. She had a little lace cap over her smooth hair, which was light and abundant, and grew low upon her temples and forehead, brushed back in those natural waves, the peculiar charm of low, thick hair, and which are sufficient in themselves to draw an attentive glance repeatedly to a woman's face. Then she had her unspoiled complexion, and her eyes; but the visitor did not quite make out Miss Mildred's eyes. They struck him as fine but guarded; only slightly, however, and (who could say?) possibly thereby revealed the more clearly, like ladies' faces behind what are called *masque* veils.

They fell into talk, easy and ready as Mildred's laughter. Mr. Hogarth leaned back in the smoking-chair; he did not even miss his cigar — yet. The reaction from the strain of public speech came on gently in the calm blue room; each nerve adjusted itself to every other with a certain pleasurable leisure. They talked of lectures and lecturers, of Hamlet society, of Boston music, of Western hotels, of

Yankee idioms, pastry, and poetry. Mrs. Snowe was "dying" to ask about his wife's Deterioration, but remained loyal to Mildred, and contented herself with vague remarks about Antiquities, and with observing that her daughter had long admired Mr. Hogarth's works.

"My works?" echoed their visitor, with one of his quick looks.

"Your poems, sir."

"I never wrote a poem in my life that I know of — but once."

"But Mildred said — I am sure you said Mr. Hogarth was a poet, Mildred."

"You wrote a song about the sea," replied Mildred, quietly. "I thought everybody knew it."

"Oh, *that!* And you called me a poet for it? You are generous."

"It never struck me so. I am not apt to be generous with people who work (or live) only in moods. I think I was only just to the poem."

Mildred spoke in a grave, impartial tone, as if she were discussing some character dead and buried in a text-book of English literature; it was impossible to be foolishly flattered. Mr. Hogarth felt that he had been severely weighed and measured in the making up of this judgment; he was not sure that this thoughtful little invalid (*was* she little, though? In all those wraps, who could say?) did not rate him, on the whole, as a man of mood rather than of purpose, and while appreciating his best, set him down as incapable of living up to it. He felt at once gratified and stung. He should either like or dislike this sick girl, decidedly, he thought, yielding to the almost inevitable impulse of the author whom a stranger's criticism has moved. What most people say of us does not matter. But you who have hit the truth, we never forget.

"It was something about the tide," hummed Mrs. Snowe.



“ ‘When the tide comes in,  
When my love leans ’ ” —

“ Oh, mother, *please!* You have n't it right,” cried Mildred, so hastily that Mrs. Snowe, with what she felt was admirable tact, changed the subject at once to Homœopathy.

Soon after, what appeared to Mr. Hogarth to be a walnut bureau rolled into the dark doorway. It proved to be Mrs. Hobson, who said that it was time for Miss Mildred's drops. Mr. Hogarth remembered as he went away that this was the first word he had heard mentioned about the poor girl's illness since he had been in the blue room. She must have put her mother under a severe course of training in that respect.

“ He never once mentioned his wife!” mourned Mrs. Snowe when she came to kiss Mildred good-night. “ And I spoke of the difficulties of such a public life to a domestic man. In fact, I did n't really make out where his home was, or even if he *had* a home. Did you?”

“ I did not ask him,” replied Mildred, pulling out the comb from under her lace cap and letting her hair down for Mrs. Hobson to brush. She looked younger with her hair down.

Mr. Hogarth's lectures in Hamlet were eight in number. He came twice a week till they were given, remaining the guest of Mrs. Snowe.

“ I feel that I know him like a — relation,” Mrs. Snowe used to observe vaguely, but with great earnestness. “ In fact, he seems to be very happy with us; as if he had always lived here.”

He certainly did seem happy; Mildred admitted as much as this. He was, of course, a great deal in the sick-room — the sitting-room of the family. As they grew better acquainted, Mrs. Snowe left them sometimes together.

“ These have been four pleasant weeks to me,” said Mil-

dred, in her frank way, one evening as the limit of his stay approached.

"Have they?" Henry Hogarth hesitated a moment; he came and stood by her sofa, looking down. The man of the well world felt that he must protect the invalid. He paused before saying, "I am glad. I have enjoyed them too."

"Thank you. I see so few people" —

Mildred looked up with her candid but still gravely-guarded eyes. They were alone just then, and both fell silent. Hogarth glanced about the blue room; his eye took in every familiar detail in the sheltered lonely place — all so like her! all grown in his memory now, a part of a sweet, brave life, and of the story of his admission to its trustful friendliness. He thought he should always remember the color of the Chinese crape shoulder robe, the pale pearl of the ceiling, the names and bindings of the books, where the flowers stood, and the piano, which window was open, with the lace curtain drawn over the stuff one, and the pictures: there was a Landseer, one of Norton's beaches, Holbein's Madonna, Ary Scheffer's Francesca di Rimini, and Leonardo's Christ among them; the last two hung in the corner opposite the sofa. The fire burned low in the grate between.

It was a cheerful room, but ah! so pitifully *resigned!* The man looked about impatiently, then down again at her.

Her head ached that evening — he could see — and she had thrown aside her lace cap; her hair fell in two long braids, like a little girl's, and her cheeks were flushed with pain of which she did not speak. The beautiful, brave face! The poor, denied, appealing face!

"What did you say?" asked Mildred, looking up.

But he had said nothing. He turned away, muttering something about being there only once again, and that he should miss coming to Hamlet.

"I am glad you will miss us," said Mildred, openly.

He wondered, as he stood there, what it would be like to be this peaceful, patient woman shut up there, seeing nothing, suffering everything. And still so young!

When she was well it was evident that she had seen something of the world; she had been admired, he thought. He knew when a woman had been admired without her saying so; the rather if she did not say so. But now — why, she had not seen a man for three years, except her doctor and her minister. Mr. Hogarth had indirectly found out all about *them*. The minister was seventy; the doctor was married and loved his wife. Besides —

Mrs. Snowe rustled in. She, too, felt sorry to think how soon they should lose their guest. She had enjoyed having some one to sit opposite at her lonely teas and breakfasts. The sad, sick woman's house reluctantly yielded its hold on the well and happy but elusive man. Still, Mrs. Snowe was too old a woman to forget the main objects of existence in its casual recreations. She could not but admit it to be very strange that all this while Mr. Hogarth had never spoken of his wife. She could not deny that she did not altogether approve of this reticence. She had said so to Mildred. She talked a good deal to-night about the sacredness of home, its cares and anxieties. She reproached herself for her unwary promise to her daughter not to start the subject of Deterioration; thought she should know better next time. But Mildred said, if a man were silent about his domestic life, the more reason for respecting his reserve, and suggested that perhaps Mrs. Hogarth did not *like* to be talked about. But Mrs. Snowe replied that she thought more likely she was an idiot or insane.

“There is a wish expressed,” began Mrs. Snowe, on this evening, when she had taken her low rocker by Mildred, and turned her handsome profile toward their visitor — “a very *general* wish expressed that Mr. Hogarth should come again in a few weeks and give his course on Egyptology in

Hamlet; but in a more select manner. Mr. Hogarth — in some parlor, by private arrangement with some of our best people. I was requested to mention it to you. I was asked to do so by Mrs. Martin B. Hallowell. She wishes to entertain you, but I hope you will consider yourself pre-engaged. Mrs. Hallowell is a very interesting lady, with a tendency to consumption. She has old-school treatment.”

Mildred had looked up quickly when her mother spoke; she had heard nothing of this before. For the instant her unguarded eyes leaped out. He saw them, for he, too, had been taken by surprise, and turned quickly toward her. He saw them, and answered, after some thought, that he thanked the people of Hamlet for their interest in his work. It would be impossible for him to decide so unexpected a point just now. He was not in the habit of giving parlor courses. He said he would, however, consider it, and rather abruptly bade the ladies good-night. He took Mildred's hand gravely, and bowed with formality.

Mildred looked after him. Her mother buzzed on, but she did not hear. Mrs. Hobson came to brush her hair. Well, it must be borne; she tossed the long, bright braids at her silently. As Mrs. Hobson untwisted, waves of light came out and flooded the invalid's face.

“You look to me, my dear,” said Mrs. Hobson, “as if you needed a little chamomilla. Or shall I read that story of Auerbake's awhile?”

But Mildred thanked her, and got alone as soon as might be. Chamomilla and “Auerbake” were not to the purpose. Her face looked out, shocked, hurt, and old, between all that young glad hair. To the bottom of her soul the woman felt shocked and hurt. If she lived till morning, she would tell him; but what would Mildred tell him? What *could* a woman tell a man who had dared —

She checked herself. Mr. Hogarth had dared nothing. He had hurt her without daring; he had shocked her without speech.

Indefinable as the oxygen in the air had been her trustfulness and happiness an hour since; indefinable as the carbon in the close room her sense of outrage now. Men knew how to do those things, risking nothing, saying nothing, cruelly. Perhaps they did not know how to do them in any other way.

She called to Mrs. Hobson to fling both windows wide open, and lay looking from her curtained alcove with smoldering eyes that flashed now and then about the deserted room. The fire trembled and went out. The outlines of the books grew dim, and of the sofa and the smoking-chair. The hyacinths gave out the strong tenderness of a flower's night. Francesca, on the pure blue wall, with closed eyes, whirled through hell, and above her the Christ looked down.

In the morning, when Mr. Hogarth came to say good-by, Mildred looked uncommonly well. She had a pink ribbon, instead of the blue, knotted into the cashmere wrapper, and the flush of the headache had not faded from her cheek; it was dying slowly, like an undisturbed and gentle fire. She said:—

“If you come back to give the other course of lectures, Mr. Hogarth, I hope, as mother does, that you will consider this your home.”

“Thank you. If I come — You are very kind. I have not decided.”

“And I wish it were possible,” Mildred continued, “to bring Mrs. Hogarth with you. Does she never go any where? Is she quite unable?”

“Mrs. Hogarth” — A rapid change, which puzzled Mildred, swept his face. It was a face never too easy to read at best. “I thank you. Mrs. Hogarth is” — He hesitated.

“We have always understood she was ill,” Mildred hastened to add, “but I did not know how seriously — Mr.

Hogarth! Why do you smile? Why do you laugh? I had a sick wife. I never would laugh at her, sir! Never Not if she were the most unreasonable and fussy person in the world. And I never would" — She stopped. I was a dead stop.

Henry Hogarth threw himself down in the smoking chair and laughed in good earnest now; peals of merriment rang through the blue room and out into the silent house Mrs. Snowe, in a becoming morning cap, glided in to share the fun. She said she was glad to see him enliven Mildred so.

"Mr. Hogarth is laughing at his wife," said Mildred angrily. "Or else at me. I don't know which. I don't believe he does himself."

This was Mrs. Snowe's hour. She had borne too much, and resisted too long. Flushed and tremulous with excitement, she moved the matronly little rocker nearer to the smoking-chair, and, in her saddest and most intelligently pathological tones, began: —

"Ah! your poor wife! I have never mentioned her, Mr. Hogarth, but I assure you, not from want of sympathy. Mildred would n't let me. She said men never liked to talk about diseases. Whereas, in this case — so uncommon — and I have heard *all* about it from *many* sources — your kindness and patience" —

"But, Mrs. Snowe" —

"I insist upon saying my say, sir. *Such* patience is seldom surpassed and never equaled among husbands, Mr. Hogarth. Oh, I know! Don't protest. You deserve to be told how the public revere you for your devotion — and in a boarding-house too — and coming home at nine o'clock from parties because she prefers" —

"But, my dear Mrs. Snowe" —

"Because she prefers you to the maid," persisted Mrs. Snowe, triumphantly, "and writing at a little table by her

side. Ah! Sir, we know how it all is — and she sick so many years. And that it was a most uncommon and trying disease I've *always* heard, but Mildred wouldn't let me say how I sympathize with you both. But now, Mr. Hogarth, the ice is broken, and you *know* we know your goodness and patience and all about it, I think I *may* ask if she has homœopathic treatment, and what it is Deterioration of? And" —

"But, my *dear* Mrs. Snowe," gasped the gentleman again, "hear me a moment. I must protest — indeed I must. For there is n't" —

"Sir!"

"There is n't any," said Mr. Hogarth, more quietly.

"Any what?" cried Mrs. Snowe.

"Any Mrs. Hogarth," said the guest, meekly.

"But you must be mistaken," insisted she, putting her hand to her forehead. After a pause she faintly said: —

"Is she dead, then?"

"Not that I know of."

"And you never lived with her in two little rooms at a boarding-house?"

"Not yet."

"Nor were so devoted and good, and all that?"

"Alas! never yet."

"And she *never* had Deterioration of *Any* thing?"

"Not that I ever heard of."

"And she is n't insane, or an idiot?"

"Decidedly not."

"You mean, then," returned the lady, in some sense recovering her composure after this blow, "that you are not a married man?"

"I certainly am not."

"And never were?"

"To the best of my knowledge and belief, never."

"But we heard all about it," urged Mrs. Snowe, mournfully — "all the details — a great many times."

"I don't doubt it," said the poet and lecturer. "I am always hearing my own biography in full, with variations according to the latitude and longitude. In Massachusetts my wife is ill; in Maine, she is dead; in Texas, I am divorced; in California, I am engaged to an actress. I don't know whether the soul of man is immortal, but I know his gossip is. But really, I think this *was* funny."

Really, Mildred thought so, too. Her smoldering look was gone, her eyes were electric with fun, as he shook hands hurriedly, for Mrs. Hobson lumbered in to say that the carriage was at the door.

But Mrs. Snowe could not be reconciled. Now she should never know what it was Deterioration of. She felt that she had been defrauded of a rare experience, and at first quite inclined to let Mr. Hogarth go to the Jessops' or the Hallowells' if he returned for the Parlor Course. She was much depressed the rest of the day; talked a good deal about her boy who was drowned; thought if he had not had scarlatina so recently, he would have resisted the cramp; and said that if Jamie Lenna had not called so loud that day of the picnic, she should never have started and slipped, and poor Mildred would have been like other girls.

They met next time like children. A beautiful joyousness seemed to be in the air that they might breathe it. Hogarth came in laughing. He had never known before, he thought, what wonderful eyes she had. They were not guarded to-day; they sported with him. He held out his hand, retaining hers a moment, as if to be sure he touched it, then sat down in the smoking-chair, and looked at her merrily.

"So you thought me an old married man all this while?"

"You *knew* I did!"

"With an invalid wife, whom I" —



"Never mind her, sir."

"Whom I was tired of?"

"Naturally, yes."

"You must have thought I behaved pretty well, considering."

"Well, perhaps so, on the whole. But you insulted me, sir, once."

"I? *You?* Tell me what you mean."

"I shall never tell you," cried Mildred, shaking her head with a sweet obstinacy. "But you did. I was very angry; I am a little angry yet. But never mind: I am glad to see you back. You look tired, though!"

She turned toward him with a familiar affectionateness, like that of a very old friend.

"I was in a hurry to get here," murmured Hogarth.

She did not answer this. The windows were open, for the afternoon was warm, and the sounds of the approaching spring were in the air. The melting snow trickled somewhere unseen, like a brook beneath leaves. The first robin of the year sang as they sat listening.

"Summer is coming," said Mildred.

"You are happier in the summer? you are better?" he asked, with unconcealed tenderness.

"Oh, so much better! Mrs. Hobson rolls me out upon the piazza roof. I mean to be taken down-stairs this year. When I can touch grass with my foot, I shall be so grateful — so glad!"

"You look glad," said Hogarth, dreamily, "already. And you have n't touched the grass yet."

An indefinable expression flitted over Mildred's forehead. She pushed her hair back as if to push it away.

"Why are you so glad?" pursued the man, inexorably.

"Why are you?" flashed the woman, turning upon him. She looked young and well, brimming with mischief.

"I don't know," answered Hogarth, honestly enough.

He really did not see what they had to be glad about. He thought he knew her too well for that. Perhaps, alas! perhaps he knew himself too well, besides.

"I know," said Mildred, more quietly. "I am glad, because" —

"Well!" for she hesitated.

"Because I really believe that you are my friend," continued she, simply.

"I wish I were worthy!"

"And would contribute to my happiness, would make my life easier, if you could."

"God knows! Yes, if I could."

"I thought so," said Mildred, contentedly; and then fell silent, as if there were nothing more to be said.

Hogarth heard the robin plainly as they sat there, singing as if its heart would break with joy. But Mildred listened chiefly to the melting snow.

"Why should it make you so glad," asked he, breaking the silence, "to know that we were friends — only friends? You have many such."

No, not many *such*. But she did not tell him that. She said, in her sweet voice, with its minor ring: "If you had lain here — for three years — perhaps you would understand. I cannot explain."

The man of the world looked down at her, perplexed; he did not understand this invalid girl. Many women would feel that he was playing a cruel, perhaps an unmanly, part; would withdraw, wounded, from his half assertions and his hints. Mildred did not withdraw. She advanced.

Yet the child was as sensitive as the snow-drop that lay hidden yonder beneath the drift beside that happy brook they could not see. He wished he were sure that he understood her. He felt the extreme helplessness of a man in such a position, which is beyond the helplessness of the woman, inasmuch as it carries the responsibilities of both.

A moment since, perhaps, he wished he could be sure that he understood himself. But he had forgotten that now.

"A man who could be a friend, a real friend, to a woman situated as I am" — began Mildred, but paused.

"What would you do," cried Hogarth, with rebellious eagerness, "for such a man? Say! tell me!"

But she turned her face away from him.

"You would do anything for him — but one thing!" said he, savagely.

"But one thing; yes."

"And he might ask — that — to the day of doom; you would not yield."

"I hope not. I hope he would not ask it."

"Would you not ask it if you were a man?"

"No, sir!"

Her voice rang through the sad, blue room, strong and sweet and assured. Hogarth looked at her — blindly.

"But sick people have made — have felt differently. All do not judge so."

"No; all do not judge so."

"And people have been — have risked it — have been very happy," urged the man. Really he had not meant to go so far.

He was stung by being baffled. She knew that better than himself. She turned to him; a certain haggardness came about her mouth and chin.

"Mr. Hogarth! I thought you were to be *my friend!*"

He felt the appeal. He got up abruptly and walked to the window, talking no more to her. Pretty soon he said: "It is time for me to go and look over my lecture," and so went away.

After lecture he seemed tired, and Mrs. Snowe was interested in an account of a female electrician who had come to town. Did Mr. Hogarth think it would be wise for Mildred to try her?

"How can I tell?" cried Hogarth, rudely enough, but there was distress in his voice. Mildred looked on mildly; she was sorry for him — sorrier for him than for herself.

"I wish," pleaded Hogarth, more gently, "if you feel able, that you would sing to me to-night, Miss Mildred, — pardon the consummate conceit of it, — that song of my own you were so kind as to like."

"Very well," said Mildred, in a motherly way, as if he had the headache and needed petting.

Mrs. Snowe went to the piano. She had a lady-like touch, and Mildred sang "When the tide comes in" from beginning to end. It was a passionate song, and not without power. It was the best he had ever done, better than he would ever do again; he knew that. The girl's controlled, sweet voice gave a soul to the fair body of the rhythm, which it seemed to him had waited for one always until now. But as he sat with his hand above his eyes to listen, he thought, "It is a lost soul."

The lecturer on Antiquities, in the Citizens' Star List, did not give the Parlor Course in the town of Hamlet. He and Mrs. Martin B. Hallowell compromised upon a single lecture, his famous "Legends of the Sphinx," to be read in Mrs. Hallowell's drawing-room upon a day in April — a severely selected day, when Hamlet had no Church festivals, Shakespeare Club, sewing circles, private theatricals, prayer-meeting, or rival lecturer upon its mind, and Mr. Hogarth was not preëngaged to enlighten the rural New England intellect upon the matter of Antiquities in any other direction.

In the interval between Antiquities and the Sphinx he wrote to Mildred thus: —

"DEAR MISS MILDRED, — I have decided against the course on Egyptology, very reluctantly; but shall visit

Hamlet once more by a special business arrangement with the committee of ladies who were interested in the matter. I thought I should like you to be the first to know of my decision. It seems, on the whole, to be the wisest and best thing. I wish to do the wise and right thing if I can.

"I hope you are suffering no more than usual.

"I shall be your mother's guest again for this last time.

"I am, most sincerely, yours,

"HENRY HOGARTH."

But when he came, all that broke down. The man meant to be prudent — cruelly prudent, perhaps. But he had not seen her for two weeks.

She was out on the piazza roof when he came, in her invalid's chair, looking very sweet and calm and happy, trustfully gazing over the railing at the thin and pale grass that sprang below — the grass she could not yet set her poor feet upon.

A mad impulse came to him to snatch her in his arms and carry her down into the throbbing spring, and say, "I'll hold you here till you, too, live again!"

For it might be — who knew? Love had raised the dying. Mildred was not dying. Joy was God's great healer. What if joy were all she needed! If happiness could cure —

"Good God!" he said, brokenly; "I believe I could make you happy."

But Mildred answered, "Hush!"

They sat together for a little, quite silent. Mrs. Snowe and Mrs. Hallowell were chattering down stairs about the Sphinx. Mrs. Hobson, in the blue room behind them, trundled to and fro. The elm branch that overhung the piazza was tender and tremulous with buds; the soft air stole by; it was growing green in between the irregular stones of the old flagged walk.

"What do you expect," he cried at length, impatiently — "what do you expect of a man in just my place?"

"I expect nothing," replied the woman, quietly.

"But what would *you* do if *you* were I?"

A superb light shot through and through her face.

"Never mind what I would do if I were a man. I am not."

"Such acquaintances, such friendships, ending nowhere, meaning nothing" — he began. But at this, for the first time, Mildred winced. He cried out then, hating himself, angry, tender, wise, and mad at once — *a man!*

"Oh, forgive me! I meant, nothing to the world — nothing to other people."

She was silent.

"You despise me!" said Hogarth, between his teeth.

"Oh, no. Heaven knows, no!"

"You think me a coward, then?"

But she was silent still.

"I have to think, to judge, for two," urged the man, hotly and justly enough.

"It is not *that*," she said.

"I wish I'd never written you that accursed note!" he began.

But Mildred said, "Mother is coming." She had grown a little pale. Mrs. Hobson came out and offered her some of the Life Food.

He came to bid her good-by when the lecture on the "Legends of the Sphinx" was over. It was late, for Mrs. Martin B. Hallowell had invited some of our best people to meet him. And in the morning he took an early train — for Omaha, Mildred believed.

Mrs. Snowe was present. They talked of Egyptology and the Jessops, Mrs. Hallowell, and the Swedish Movement Cure.

Then they shook hands, and he closed the door softly — he had always closed it more softly and thoughtfully than any one in the house. And then Mrs. Hobson came in, and rolled up the round stand, brought the ice-water, wrung out the wet towel, set the milk behind the Cologne bottle, and the crackers on the chair, measured off the Life Food, put the chamomilla within reach, and fixed the fire.

## NEBLITT.

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As to putting of it into print, I ain't so clear.

I'll tell you the story, sir, being as you ask me for it. But as has regards to the noospaper, I must leave it to your honor, sir, if you'll excuse the word. I ain't partial to them of your calling, take 'em as a family lot. I won't go so far as to say they might n't have their feelin's like other folks; but take 'em as a family lot, I'd as soon turn my heart t' other side out to a sou'west wind, beggin' your pardon, sir. There was a man down our way once, screwed a poor young creetur's affairs out of her — she waited on him at table to the hotel — and by and by out it come all printed in a religious paper up to New York, that some of her folks found to a reading-room and told her of it — like to die of shame and temper. The young woman's name was Soosan. But the young woman into the story, he called *her* Puella Ann.

Howsomever, I'll lay no obligations on you, sir, in p'int of what I have to tell, beyond leaving of it to your honor. Mebbe there might some poor chap take heart from it if so be he read the noospaper. Being an unedicated man myself I can't judge. Which will explain to you what I mean by leaving of it to your honor.

The first time I saw *Her* was the thirteenth of July before last, at five minutes to four o'clock in the afternoon.

But before I get onto *that* I'd ought to explain how I come to be that as it would have been anyways proper or pretty for *Her* to take notice of.



I suppose now, you read the noospaper after you've wrote it, don't you? Because. In case you do, you'll not be so ignorant, sir, as some is. We had some summer-folks here this season that went into Charles Henry's grocery and asked what Club it was. One of them she thought it was Dress Reform; I did n't so much blame her, considerin' that it was she'd have ben a pretty serious case herself, if you considered the kivering on her arms and neck, sir. Another one he asked if it was a Radical Club. But I don't rightly know what he meant by that. He was the one that hired Charles Henry's boat so much to fish on Sunday mornin's. Charles Henry asked him fifty-two cents an hour. But on week-days it was forty-eight.

I'm an uneducated man, sir, as I told you, and I can't talk as clever as some can; but I can *think* as well as anybody. I was setting here this morning and thinking, just before you come along, about this new race we've got into New England these last two years. It don't always seem to me as if folks had got it into their heads yet what it means, sir, to have a new race of men thrown onto society like we are. There's all sorts of men, you know. There's black men, and white men, and Yankees, and pious men, and Dutch and Irish, and those; and there's blacklegs, and Sunday schools sooperintendents, and tramps, and sots, and insurance men, and men that play the pianner; and all sorts. And then there's Reformed men.

You'll remember, mebbe, what it has said in the noospaper, off and on of late, about us? Should be glad to have you step in, I'm sure, some evening, to a lecture, if you felt inclined. It's over Charles Henry's grocery, one flight up — ours is. I'm second Vice-President. There's a matter of two hundred members or so, in our Club. We've ben organized two years. Hey? Not more than ten of us has broke in all that time, sir. We was mostly pretty hard drinkers, too, to the start. I'm not wishing to be on-

charitable, but I think it's partly owing to the hats. It's dirty work — hat factories. I suppose it's in the nature of felt to be pulpy. And it's hot in the ironin'-room, and you look so black, a walking home, and other folks look so clean. It makes you kind of down. And they hain't paid us very reg'lar since the Treasurer eloped with the assets. So you run in debt.

Wife? No, I haven't got a wife. I'd rather not talk about my wife. She's dead. She died in Pennsylvania. I lived in Pennsylvania once, before I come here. I have n't lived in this place not more than going on four year. I was a railroad man. I drove an engine one spell. I drove it off a broken bridge one night. We had four hundred and fifty passengers aboard. We did n't lose but twenty-two. But it was the first time the Company suspicioned that I was a drinking man. I was young then. I was just courtin' my wife. She felt bad when they turned me off.

There's one thing I don't like to hear a man do: I don't like to hear him set down and brag of his sins. I've heerd that plenty in temperance meetin's and revivals, and all sorts of caucusin'. I'm sick of it. I've seen men stand up and take the ondecient part of their history and hold it up before an audience, and pet it and hug it as if it was something that set 'em up a peg or two above other folks. And I've seen good people set and cheer 'em on as if it was a polite sort of thing to do. I ain't that kind, myself.

I'll tell you, sir, as short as possible, how it was. If you'll excuse me for sayin' it, I was a pretty bad man. I was a rum-soaked, rascally man. I was a Godless, scoffin', desperate man. That's the kind I was. I had some boys, but they died. I'm glad on 't. They'd have been like their father, poor little devils. I'm glad my boys are dead.

There was one little girl, we had, but you see I — well, I left home. I left my wife. It's seventeen years since I deserted her. She died after a while, so I've heerd tell.

The little girl, she was two year old when I left ; but I never kept no trace of her. It's easy to lose girls, because of their taking of his name when they get married.

It was five minutes to four, as I tell you, the afternoon I saw Her. No, sir, I'm not likely to forget. I'd come out of the pressing-room and run acrost to Jobbs's there, to get a drink. I met her on the way back. She was coming along just there by them spruces. I'd never seen her before. She was dressed in black ; a little creetur. She held a young un by the hand. It was a little girl. The young un did n't notice me, but as I come reeling by the lady lifted up her eyes and looked at me.


It's often bothered me to make out, sir, I'm free to own, what it is about a lady born that ain't like other women. This one was something like the summer-folks, and then again she was n't like the summer-folks. There's chaps that works beside me in the dryin' room, their wives wears finer clothes a sight than she did. She was dressed as plain, sir, as plain as a chip-bird on a June day, and she had a widder's veil about her. She had eyes, sir, about the color of the veil. I remember thinking in a muddled sort of way — for I was n't so far gone as might have been — as how her eyes had gone into mourning, like her clothes. They had that look about 'em.

There's one of our men — his name is Amram Peterweigh, we call him Ram — he stood to the window when I'd got back into the factory that day, a-looking out. Says I : —

“ Ram, who is she ? ” says I, for I went and stood alongside of him to watch her.

“ The devil knows ! ” says Ram. Ram was a sulky fellow at his best.

It is difficult to explain, sir, the feelings that a man will have, and how they come and go, — I think, don't you ? If he'd sent all the women of New Hampshire to the devil, I



should n't have felt hurt about it. Women did n't make no odds to me. But when he spoke up onrespectful of that little strange creetur, I was that riled I could have knocked him down, sir.

Mebbe I may have spoke a little sharp to Ram ; I can't exactly say how that was. He give me a look and walks off. The men, they *said* I called him a pretty hard name, which I was in no state, sir, to remember of. Ram's a man that nusses a grudge.

Next day he comes up and says in this way, sudden : —

“She's a school-ma'am.”

“Who?” says I, for I was n't thinking of Her at the time.

“The little widder,” says he.

But I said I'd never seen a school-ma'am complected like her.

“She keeps a Kind o' Garden,” said Ram.

“Does she hoe her own potatoes?” says I.

What I *intended*, sir, was to be severe and sarcastikle on Ram. For her little glove was off that day beside the spruces, and I see her hand, and the size of it, and the color white enough to blind a sober man, let alone a drunk.

“I can't say whether it's District or Grammar or Graded, and it can't be High on account of the lowness of the young uns,” said Ram ; “but it's a new fashioned sort o' school. They call it Kind o' Gardenin. I suppose they let the young uns run to grass,” says Ram.

Now, sir, it was just that living minute that a chap come up. His name was Jones ; but he was dangerous in his cups, drawed revolvers, and so on, and we called him Cosset. Cosset, he come up — for he'd been reformed going on eight days, — and asked me and Ram to sign. Nobody'd asked me to sign for going on a month or so. Mebbe if I had n't kicked the last man as tried it down the elevator, — but he only fell a piece and did n't limp a week, — they might, sir.

"*You* won't last more 'n two or three weeks, Cosset," said Ram, kind of tenderly, as if he 'd taken a sight of pains to say the most oncouragin' thing in the Dictionary.

I remember plain enough how Cosset looked.

"I don't think," says he, "one wicked wretch had — ought — to talk to another one like that, Ram," says he. "I hain't been sober eight days steady before sence I was sixteen year old," says Cosset, looking all around the mill, kind of strange. "A lady, she asked me to sign," says Cosset. "I moved some books for her of a Saturday night. She's a stranger to town. She's a little widder, and keeps a Kind o' Garden in her front parlor."

Can't say what come over me, sir, to do it, — whether it was the joke of seeing Cosset sober, or mebbe from what Ram and me 'd been saying, and the kind of gentle feelin', sir, it gives a man to talk about a lady, — but I says: —

"Curse it, Ram, let 's sign!"

Ever been a drinkin' man yourself? No? Well, then you could n't be looked to understand. Most folks don't seem to understand. I've seen 'em sit down and talk to a chap, — parsons and women and such, — and tell him how wicked it was; and I've seen him set and look at 'em, — every vein on fire, and them so cool. It's much like fastenin' onto a man a-fightin' with a typhis fever, and tellin' of him how sinful he was to have the fever, sir. Then again it's like pitchin' onto a poor devil a-drownin' in the river, and settin' up in your boat a-hollerin' to tell him how careless it was in him to have fell in.

I'm not denying the wickedness, sir, but think of the manners of it!

Sir, I stuck ten days. I did, upon my honor; I stuck ten days before I broke. Mebbe you won't understand our ways of speech. I mean to say, I kept my pledge ten days before I touched a mortal drop. I don't think there's any

other ten days in my whole life I'll remember so long as I shall them ten. But if you was n't a drinkin' man yourself, you could n't understand.

She spoke to me one day. It was the second day. She'd been in to give us a chromo of her'n, that the janitor he hung bottom upwards most gratefully, for it was sky-terrier pups, — I don't know 's I blame him, they look so derned similar to both ends, sir, — and I was hangin' round when she come out.

She stopped a spell upon the steps, and says she to the janitor, says she : —

“Will you introduce Mr. Neblitt to me?” says she. That's my name, sir, Neblitt. Dell Neblitt. But when she called me Mr. Neblitt I was stuck. I could n't tell you when anybody 'd Mistered me before. It was a good while. It must have been as far back as when I was courtin' my wife. It was mostly Neb, and Dell, and Whiskey Neb, and Devil Neblitt, not to mention wuss.

“Mr. Neblitt,” says she, and she drew aside her long black veil to look at me, “I'm glad to hear good news of you,” says she. “A reformed man's life is a noble life,” she says.

Sir, those was the very words. A noble life. She said a noble life. I set and looked after her when she'd gone. I did n't answer her more than to lift my hat and stand and hold it. I could n't seem to put it on. If she'd said as much to Bealzebob himself, I don't think it would take him more onexpected.

Me — *me* a raskill, rum-sodden — good-for-nothing — that cared a darn for nobody, and nobody cared a darn for him — *me* — a NOBLE LIFE!

I hain't got used to it, exactly, yet. Sometimes it comes all over me.

I don't suppose I'd have stuck till Saturday but for that. Bein' as it was, I stuck ten honorable days, square days,

by the First Methodist clock, from four o'clock to four o'clock, sir, of an afternoon.

If you was to ask me what injuced me to step into Jobbs's with Ram at three minutes after four, I could n't explain it to you. And if you was to ask why I was drunk as Lucifer before the Methodist clock struck five, I could n't tell you. Seems as if I should die, sir. Seems as if Hell eternal could n't be wuss than to stick another hour. I drank and I drank and I drank. I kept at it, sir, a matter of some three weeks, that spell. I heerd the boys about the club-room, sayin' : —

“He's voyilated his pledge, and gone upon a tear.”

And one day I met Her acrost the road. But I looked upon the ground. It's cur'ous how I happened to think on 't at the time, but there was a passage of Bible come into my head — I used to hear my wife read it quarter days when she had n't nothiu' to pay the rent, and a few such times ; it went like this : —

“But he . . . standing afar off, darst not lift up so much as his eyes toward Heaven.”

Well you see, when I come out o' that, I vowed I'd never sign again, for Heaven nor Hell, sir. And no more I'd never have, for either of them parties.

It was her being so little, partly, I think, sir, and so white; and if she'd been rich we should n't have set so much by her. But for all she worked so steady at that Kind o' Gardenin, she seemed to be most as poor as some of us.

It was her bein' so near like us, and yet so terrible onlike, that give us the feeling we had towards her. She come from Ohio. She'd seen what you may call temperance work, I take it. She'd a mite got over the nateral scar of women folks at a drinking man, may be. She treated us like human bein's.

A cur'ous thing happened along that time. Cosset come up to me one day and says he: “You're invited up to see

Her," says he; "you're invited with me and my wife and one or two, up to spend the evening," says Cosset.

"I think I see you!" says Ram.

"I think I see myself!" says I.

"I'd go, Neb, if I was you," said Cosset. "She'll — she'll think you're — why she'll think you're stuck up if you don't!"

So I went. For I did n't like to hurt her feelin's.

I've sometimes set and thought, sir, how a chap *would* feel that had climbed out of the bad place by some mistake or nuther and got adrift in t'other. Always thought I knew jest how he'd feel sence that night.

I'd never been into a lady's house before that I remember of. Only once I helped Pudge's Express carry a sewing-machine into Mrs. Hemenway's — he's the Corporation, Hemenway — but Mrs. Hemenway did n't remember me to keep up the acquaintance afterward.

Sir, she asked us into her parlor — like gentlemen. There was pictures in the parlor, and a sight of books. You never see such a sight of books. And a fire in the open grate, for it was sort of chilly. And one or two statooes in the corners. But the carpet was most wore, and the sofy I see was patched. She had a little girl with her and I see it was her own little girl. Pretty soon a young woman come in and took the child to bed. It was her servant girl. I liked her looks.

We hated to let the young one go. She took a shine to Mrs. Cosset, — by which I should say Mrs. Jones, — and the boys they set and laughed to see her. But the young woman told her to bid us all good-night, and so she did. She come up to me and give me her little hand. I can't tell you when I'd had holt of a little girl's hand before. It made me kind of down. I was the only chap there that night that had broke. I did n't see what she'd asked me for.

So then she told us of the pictures, and we played some



games, and had some cake and raspberry shrub that the young woman brought, and she played the pianner to us (for she had a pianner), and we sung a spell; and then she read us a little story for a spell. It was a Christmas story, with something of a cricket in it, and a tea-kettle, and a man's wife that he thought she took a shine to another feller but she had n't. And I sat by the fire, for I could n't sing. And I covered up my face and thought, and thought.

I thought partly, sir, of her onlikeness and how far she was above us, though so poor and Kind o' Gardenin' for a livin'. And I thought what another spere it was, too, to the spere we lived in; how clean it was, sir, and sheltered in. And I thought, seems to me if I could set long enough in a room like this, and see her passin' in and out, and hear her speaking to her little girl, I thought if I could stay awhile where I could so much as see her shadder on the floor, that may be I could undertake to be a better man.

And by and by we all went home (for we'd had a first-rate time), but when the young woman had let us all out and drawed the bolt, I fell behind the rest a spell. I stood out by the fence in the dark. Cosset walked on with his wife. And one of the boys he had his daughter with him. And two they were together, for they were very thick. So I was to myself, and I stood to think. The young woman come to the window and drawed the shades. She was a quiet-looking young woman, with a modest way. And then acrost the shades I saw Her pass, the shadder of her to and fro. But all I could seem to think about her was, Heaven bless her! And after that I turned away.

But I did n't sign again till next week. I wanted to think it over. If I signed again I meant to stick. So next week I just went up one day and put my name down, and Cosset he carried the book up to her to show it where it was.

I kep a copy of that pledge to home; like this. Here's



and had some cake and raspberry shrub that the woman brought, and she played the pianner to us (she had a pianner), and we sung a spell; and then she told us a little story for a spell. It was a Christmas story, something of a cricket in it, and a tea-kettle, and a wife that he thought she took a shine to another man, but she had n't. And I sat by the fire, for I could not see. And I covered up my face and thought, and thought.

I thought partly, sir, of her onlikeness and how far she was above us, though so poor and Kind o' Gardenin' for a man. And I thought what another spere it was, too, to the place we lived in; how clean it was, sir, and sheltered in. And I thought, seems to me if I could set long enough in a room like this, and see her passin' in and out, and hear her talking to her little girl, I thought if I could stay awhile here I could so much as see her shadder on the floor, that maybe I could undertake to be a better man.

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All next week. I wanted to think about her, but it meant to stick. So next week I went out my name down, and Cosset went to show it where it was. And I went home; like this. Here's

the way it stood on the books to the Club room, you know: "I hereby pledge myself with the help of God not to buy nor sell nor drink intoxicating liquors as beverages."

Here 's the way my copy went that I took home: —

"I, Dell Neblitt, raskill, hereby pledge myself with the help of *Her* and God, to stick it out, so help me them two! Till Death us do part. Amen."

But I never showed that copy to the boys.

Now I 'll tell you two facts. In order to explain myself I must tell you these two facts. I 've heerd folks doubt 'em — as there 's always folks to doubt the druggin' stories, and such like. They need n't. They 're true. This is the first one: —

It was after I 'd stuck awhile, — quite a spell as I remember, — and one day me and Ram Peterweigh were histing empty cases onto the elevator, and we got to skylarking. And the men stood by to see, and bet on us accordin' to their taste, for Ram was the heftiest, but I 'm a wiry man into the muscle. But Ram he got the better of me that time, and in the scuffle, first I knew he 'd rubbed my face all over with something wet. Sir, it was rum!

Whysoever I did *not* go under with the smack of it upon my lips, sir, I cannot tell you. And Ram stood by to see. And all the boys. But Cosset said it was too derved bad. And one of our men, a presser, that was a steady fellow, and got converted once or twice in the Methodist meetin', so he used to say, but had sorter got out o' the habit of it of late years — he comes up to me and says: —

"Here Neb," says he, "come away. Let me walk home with you a spell," says he. But he spoke quite low. And they looked to see me go to Jobbs's, going by. But when we got home, for I was all of a ragin' tremble with the anger and the taste, I set down on the doorstep of my boarding-house a spell, me and this man I tell you of. And it was a sunny day, and as I set there she come along

herself. Somebody 'd told her, for she was out walking with her little girl. But she come up to me and held out her hand. She had on white gloves. She held out her hand, and says she : —

“ You 're a brave man, Mr. Neblitt.” says she, and then she went her ways, and the little girl ran on before.

Sir, after that you might have drowned me in it. I don't believe I 'd have swallowed a drop.

' Well, after that I held out considerable of a while ; nigh upon four months, and I went to the Club quite reg'lar. We elected Cosset President that quarter, for he 'd never broke, and Hemenway raised his wages for the quality of his work being so far reformed, as you might say. And there come along a chap about that time, a drummer for a firm that sold policemen's outfits, and it was so orderly along our way he got quite discouraged and low in his mind. He said if these Reform Clubs went on they 'd spoil the billy business.

May be you saw that in the noospaper yourself a spell after ; for it got into the noospaper. But I knew the chap that said it. He said it over there by the pump in the square. It was Charles Henry he said it to.

Now this other fact I spoke to you about has to do with that there pump. This was the way of *that* : —

We take our dinner to the factory, you see : only them that has wives and hot coffee to home, unless the pail leaks or he can support a separation from her from dawn to dark without much suffering, sir, then he eats with the rest of us baches and widderers. For a factory boarding-house, and a mile and a quarter to do it come winters, and your ontire nooning but three quarters, and you wet and hot from the steaming-room in the raw wind, it ain't a seducin' type of dinner-party. That's one way, if you'll take the trouble to consider, sir, how it comes to be so easy to run over to Jobbs's.

Now you see we get our water from the pump I tell you of. Do you see that there little dipper hangin' by a chain onto the nozzle? A tin dipper with a rusty iron chain, rasping up against the shoulder of the pump when the wind is up like it is to-day. See it?

That's the very dipper. One day I come out to get a drink. It was a December day. It was pretty cold, and the snow blew. I had n't had much dinner. The johnny-cake was heavy, and salt by mistake into the gingerbread ain't so fillin' or so stayin', sir, as sugar. And I'd give the corned beef, what there was on't, to a starvin' pup that come rubbing himself against me. My wife she had the greatest taking for a pup. It always remembers me of her to see one round. She got a striped yellow creetur for the baby once, — which was the little girl I spoke about, — that was drowned from having too many fits in the front entry. Well, there. It was the dog that had the fits, you understand. So I come out to get a drink and to rinse the dipper. But it was so cold I did n't rinse it, and I noticed of it that it was very wet about the rim. But I filled it up and drank!

I told you, did n't I, the rim of that dipper was wet? It had n't froze. Sir, THAT was rum.

It was, upon my honor as a poor devil, that would n't bely another, not for no purpose. Upon my honor as a reformed man — and I've got no other honor, sir, in this world now, to swear by, — he'd smeared the lips of that there dipper with it a purpose to draw me down to break. I could n't lay it to him, not to swear to it, but I could n't believe there was another chap in Hemenway's would have did it. I hoped to God there was n't.

I don't know as much as most folk seem to know about the t'other world, sir. Never having got religion, I did n't feel no call to know. It was a kind of fancy religion, too, I was brought up to. I was brought up a Universal. The

Universals, you know, don't take no stock in damnation. May be they're right, may be they're wrong; can't say; but I was pious myself so far as that, this time I speak of, that *I* did n't take stock in damnation neither. But I thought it over a sight then and after then, and I got so far as this:—

If there ain't a hell for a creetur that will do for another what that creetur did for me that day, sir, there'd ought to be! If there ain't a punishment for deeds like them deeds, there'd better be. I'm clear on that. If I'd been God Almighty, and had n't never opened one before, I'm clear I'd have opened one the hour that I looked down and see Ram Peterweigh standing by the pump that freezing day, rubbing that there rum acrost that there dipper to draw a strugglin,' sinful, rum-soaked, reformin' man like I was down to break!

That was along the first of December. I don't remember much that happened after that, till to-wards Christmas time. I remember tasting of it on the brim and the scorch of it upon my tongue, and I remember standin' stock-still there in the snow beside the pump and striking my two hands together. I think I must have spoke aloud. But no one was nigh me. It had begun to snow and had a dreary look. I can remember that I wished I had a wife or a bowl of soup or something. Or anywhere to go where folks would care for me to keep me to home in a warm place that day. I struck my two hands together, and says I, standin' there alone, says I:—

“O my God! I'm a lost man this time!” And then I began to walk to-wards the factory, and can remember that I wondered to myself if God Eternal cared enough for me to help me get by Jobbs's.

And I can remember making little circles in the drifting snow to get by. And how I narrowed in and narrowed in. And how I struck out again, and struggled to-wards the fac-

tory. But all I could do I kept a narrowing — narrowing in. The dog I gave the corned beef to, he followed me. He kept between me and Jobbs's a long time, that dog did. When I went nigh he 'd growl. Seems as if he knew. I can remember of giving him a kick, and that he yelped and got behind me. But nobody else seemed to care, only the dog; neither the boys nor God, nor any of 'em, for they did n't understand the case, perhaps; and so I kept a narrowin' in. Then first I knew it was as if some onseen creetur come behind me through the snow and *pushed* me in.

I started, and I tried to run — I tried to run past the door. I started three times. I could n't get past. I went into Jobbs's. The dog he come and curled upon the steps all crinkled up. But I stepped over him, for I thought I would n't kick him twice. It was curious how I had an idea come to me my wife would n't feel quite so bad about it if I did n't kick him. I could n't get by, sir. I *had to go*. But you could n't understand. I would n't try, if I was you. I went to Jobbs's.

From then till Christmas week I can't remember much to tell you of. From having stuck so long I took it out most thorough. Most folks don't seem to remember of a drinking-man, leastways a habitual, that he's a diseased and pisoned creetur, that wants to be treated for pison and disease. Treat him for sin and wickedness, for deviltry and damnation, if you feel a call; but wait a spell. What the creetur needs is coffee and beefsteak, a doctor, may be, medicine, a fire, and a place to set by it, a home and folks within it, eyes to watch him, sir, that cares enough to cry for him, and hands to hold him that ain't loath to touch on his'n; a voice, sir, to be patient to him, and tender of him, as mothers is to babies, or wild things to their young; or as them that have got religion perfess to say God would be patient and tender of his own accord with all folks if he got



the chance. Sympathy before sermons, sir, if you're set on making a good man of a bad. You'll remember some day a reformed man told you that. May be it will serve you in good stead.

It ain't that I would be excusing of myself, but it's simple justice as between man and man, to remind you that I hadn't none of these things myself.

Ever been into a factory boarding-house? Ever been into a *hat*-factory boarding-house?

That was all *I* had.

Seems to me it must have snowed pretty much all that time, as I remember. There was a kind of white mist before my eyes wherever I come or went. Once or twice I thought I see Her through it, but I could n't tell. Sometimes, I seemed to see her betwixt me and the glass. She must have been in my mind quite nateral, a good deal, in a kind of crazy way. But there was always a white mist before her. Call it snow. Call it craze. Take your choice. *I* don't know.

One day I was setting on Jobbs's counter — the candy and peanut counter; it's cod-fish and postal cards the t'other side — and when the constabulary come he keeps a trap-door to the rear that he empties it into the river, and treats them to sweet apples all around. He's a well-mannered chap, Jobbs; but the sign says, "W. I Goods and Groceries," in pale green letters on a butt'nut-colored ground.

I was setting on the peanut counter, and at once I come to. A man will, sometime, that sudden. I looked up and it was snowing. It was snowing very hard. The shop was full. The boys was all around the store. They was laughing and larking like to split. They was in a little hollow circle, this way, me and the stove over against 'em. I see in a minute they were larking at me.

The tumbler was in my hand, for I'd drained it dry, I know. Ram Peterweigh was there. He come up to me

and asked me how I was. Said I'd given them a most on-common entertainment. I can remember that I put down the tumbler, for I felt a kind of sudden soberness and fear. I couldn't tell you why. I can remember that I asked him what he meant before he says : —

“ Why, Neb, you 've been drinking to Her ” —

“ WHAT ? ” roars I, and over that glass goes, sir, in a thousand shivers ; but it was cracked before, and Jobbs he knows it, too.

Then Ram he finished his sentence, very slow : —

“ To her health,” said he ; “ you 've been drinking to the little widdler lady quite a spell,” says Ram, “ and very entertaining, too,” said he.

Sir, there ain't no words for it, there ain't indeed. All the boys stood looking on. And none of them gainsaid him. And I set upon the counter like a caged creetur, to think of what I'd said. But it was gone, sir, gone like the souls of dead folks out of their bodies. There's a man we read of in Bible who come to himself and was a most onhappy cuss ; I mean him that arose and went to the old gentleman that ran half-ways to meet him. But, sir, *he* don't know misery when he sees it, nor any man don't that has n't come to himself to find he'd took the name he honored above all others on the earth — a lady's name — *Her'n* — on lips like his'n — in such a place — *such* a place — *such* men — he crazy drunk to drag the shadder of the thought of one like her down through that — and not to know what his cursed tongue had said —

“ Oh, for God's sake, Ram ! ” says I, “ tell me what it was ! ”

But Ram puts his hands in his pocket and walks off. He whistled as he walked.

I must have been lying down behind the counter, groveling there ; with my face between my hands ; seemed to me I could never lift it up to see the light of day again ; the

sun that shone on her, the air she breathed, the pure white snow she trod on — and me to look into her face and know — when at once the door opened wide, and a lady come in.

Sir, it was Herself. She come into Jobbs's. She come after me. *Me*. If ever Him who made us come from Heaven to earth, as some folks say He did, to hunt us out, it must be most like that of anything I know. The snow blew in with her when she come. She was nigh covered with it acrost her black dress. And when I looked up, I saw her through the mist, dead-white, as if it was snowing even in Jobbs's, soft and clean upon us all.

She stood a minute, for I think she'd caught what we were saying; and she turned a deadly color first. And she looked upon us all. And we all fell silent, sir, and Ram he'd shuffled up and hung his head. Jobbs took off his hat. But I lay groveling by the peanut counter on the ground. And then she spoke.

"Is Mr. Neblitt here?" says she; "I've come to find him if I can. I want him to leave this place. It's no place for a poor man that had begun to lead a better life," says she; "I want to take him to his home." But still I lay groveling before her, for I darsent look her in the holy face. Her color had come back, and she stood among us looking scared and scarlet, as she'd fly.

Then one of the boys he spoke up compassionate and told her of me; the state that I was in, and the consequences when I come out of it, and that I had no wife nor daughter and no home but the boarding-house and the yellow dog as had hung around me ever since.

"It is a hard case," said this chap, "and the landlady she don't like him, nor yet the dog. Jobbs feeds the dog."

And so he did, I'll say as much for him. And he was so tickled, for he thought she'd come to talk religion to him, that he dusted off a chair for her, and asked Ram where was his manners, hulking in her way.

And then, as I lay there, she looked around again upon us all — but she would n't take the chair — and says : —

“Is there any one here who will help me take this poor man to a place where he can be properly cared for? I will find the place.” said she.

So the chap I spoke of he volunteered. And she walked beside us. And we went out into the fresh, falling snow. And the yellow dog went too. But she patted him upon the head.

But I didn't understand till I'd got there, where she'd took me to. I'll tell you.

It is a living fact. It is true as Heaven. It's just as much perplexing and mysterious to the mind. Sir, she took me to her own house — she did; that little — delicate — white — and me so's I was, just off from Jobbs's floor.

The chap I spoke of, he hung round and hesitated a spell as if there was something on his mind he'd ought in common honesty to warn her of. And I seemed to hear him say : —

“You'd ought to know, marm, the state he's in. You'd ought to understand what it means. It means a case of delirium *tre-men-jous* before to-morrow morning on your hauds, marm.”

“Yes,” she says, “I know. I understand.”

And he could n't stir nor change her. And she took me in.

But I reckon she sent for Cosset, being as it needed a man to hold me for a day or two; and Mrs. Cosset she come off and on; and the young woman was there. Mostly I remember seeing the young woman, so fur's I remember of it, anyhow, those first few days. She took a sight of pains the young woman did, and hung around me and nussed me up.

Sir, she kept me for three mortal weeks. She did, may Heaven bless her, true as you and me are standing here ag'in

this fence, she kept me, crazy and disgraced, and onclean and ravin' — she kept me in that little quiet holy house of her'n along with herself and the young woman, and the little girl till I was over it.

She sent for her doctor to doctor me. But when I wondered how I was to pay his bill, she said it was no matter. She brought me down into her parlor to set among the pictures, and the books, against the sun, before the fire. And I set and see her passing in and out as once I'd thought of. And I watched her shadder on the floor. And I heard her voice a hushing to her little girl. And I knew that I was safe and sheltered in. And I set a storin' strength to undertake to be a better man.

But she did n't talk to me, not a great deal to sarmonize, only to amuse me, till I got able to be out. And first she trusted me to saw some wood. And then I carried some apples down the bulk-head for her. Then one day she sent me to Charles Henry's on an errand, but the young woman was going as far as the Methodist Church, so she went too. Next time she trusted me alone. And once she went herself.

And so it went till I got pretty strong. But I could n't say much to her to bless her. And, sir, when I remembered me of what had happened into Jobbs's — and of the drunken words I'd spoke to drag her holy name acrost that mire — I was as staring still as them born deaf and dumb.

If there's anything wuss in hell than what I underwent in thinking of it, I'd like to see it, sir, that's all. Talk about fire, brimstone, smoke, and lakes, and that. I don't want no other scorch.

And me beneath her roof — a lady's roof — cared for, and sheltered in, and nussed — and with the chance to look up any hour, if I would, and see her eyes bent towards me, and the smiles she had.

You're right, sir, he would n't have been wuth saving,

the more wouldn't, as could go back to the mud of China like that; may God do so to me, and more also, ever for so long; no Him and Her!

One day I know I says to her, for I'd been thinkin' in even to wonder what obliged her on to do it.

"It can't be for no credit nor no selfish reason that I got hold of it; it must be for humanity's sake," says I.

It's she that come up to me, and said quite soft:—

"Call it for Christ's sake, Mr. Neb litt," says she.

Now I've thought a sight about that sence. For Christ's sake. She said for Christ's sake. Well, if that was it, but there's folks that hold us at arm's-length and no sence to be a poor up-strugglin' sinner so much as to say to him, 'most the street — and they're what you call Christians, you see. If thir way is Christ's way, wh should take it, her'n was n't. And if her'n is, I tak thair's adit. So there it is. I'm a ignorant, ourelig man, sir, but when I was to her house that time, I read the Testament one day a piece, one sunny day while was Kind o' Garden in the parlor with her young o Seems to me her way is more like His'n, sir. At all eve I'll bet on her'n, however that may be.

So at last, sir, it come Christmas-time, and on Christ Eve she had a little party for her little girl. The young woman and I — her name was Jinny, — Jinny and I, carried the oysters in, and the cake and things. But after the folks had gone, and the young one was in bed, I wand and wandered about a spell through the kitchen and room she'd gin me in the L. — a warm room, sir; I was used to having a warm room in the winter-time, — and had patchwork on the bureau of a blue color, and picture, and a looking-glass; and Jinny kept it very tight for me.

I felt lonesome and down about my mind that night; I knew that I must go, and I had n't nobody to go to,

yet to go with, in all the world, sir, — only the yellow dog that she'd been so considerate of and let him sleep into the wood-shed all that while.

And while I set there beside the kitchen fire, the young woman come out. Jinny come out. It was Christmas Eve that Jinny come to me, and said : —

“ Ain't you lonesome,” says she, “ setting all alone ? ”

“ I'm going to the boarding-house to-morrow,” says I, “ I've plagued her long enough.”

“ Well ! ” says Jinny.

“ Well,” says I. And then we come to a halt.

“ How many years,” asks Jinny, “ is it since your wife died, Mr. Neblitt ? ”

“ Don't talk to me about my wife ! ” says I, for I thought it strange in Jinny. I wondered if the girl was sparking ; she usually so modest, and I felt no call that way. But the young woman she went on without seeming to take a-notice : —

“ And your children,” says she, — “ did all your children die, too, and leave you — leave you ” — and there the young woman begun to sob for sympathy, — “ all alone in the world, poor man,” says Jinny ; “ all alone with none to claim you on a Christmas Day ! ” says Jinny.

“ All alone,” says I, for I was sot I would n't cry over it, “ only the yellow dog, — and Her we leave behind us in this house. We're going now, the dog and me, to undertake to be better men, because of Her. Don't forget us, Jinny,” says I, “ and don't cry ! ”

Now, sir, that very minute, as I set by the kitchen fire, saying, “ Don't cry, Jinny ! ” this happened : The young woman come up and put her hand upon my arm, and says she : —

“ Fa-ther ? ” like that ; “ fa-ther ? ”

“ *O my God !* ” says I.

“ It's true,” says Jinny. “ It's true, true, true ! And

work on it from the first. For she took me seven years ago. But she wouldn't let on when she found you. 'Well, father's earned a daughter,' says she to me: 'well, father's earned a daughter,' says she. 'O father, father, father says dinnny, just like that.'

'Well, sir, it's a real as story, but a true: I won't bot you at it any more: I've talked a long spell. But was all as dinnny said, and they explained to me how she took her to the County-house and cared for her, and how they planned between 'em to save me, sir, when first they come to look a way and heard my name.

It was my daughter, sir. I had n't seen her since was two years old. It was my little girl.

And, sir, she let me stay. She wanted a man about her for many things she said, in odd hours after me went out, and for feeling safer in the night-time, and for rands in wet weather. She let us take the L and fix it me and Jinnny, — the room with the blue bureau and Jinnny's room, and a cook-room of our own, where we have our meals together that we get ourselves, for to give us a feeling of a home to our two selves, she says, — and a yellow dog besides.

I never had to go out from the blessin' of her presence, sir. I never had to go where I could n't hear her voice, nor see her shudder on the floor, nor see her kiss *her* little girl. Me and my little girl, we live in the shelter of her. 'O Heaven bless her!'

Now there's one other other thing. It was about New Year's time. There come a message to me one day at Club meetin' that Ram Peterweigh 'd got hurt. He was jammed into the elevator very bad, and they thought he could n't last. So he wanted to see me most particulerly, and I went over to his house.

I found him pretty low, for it was an awful jam. And



died next day. But he asked me if I thought She 'd deign to come and make a prayer for him. So I went for her, and she came and made the prayer, and set by him, and Ram he seem to feel a sight easier in his mind for it. For he 'd never been a pious man.

"If there was more like her" — Ram says; but he stopped there, for he was very low.

Only when she was gone into t' other room with his wife to hush the baby, he turned to me and says: —

"Neb, I 'm done for."

"I 'm afraid so," says I.

"But I can't die easy," says Ram, "till I tell you what it was you said at Jobbs's."

I felt myself run cold, sir, for I wanted to forget it if I could, and lest she should overhear. But to humor him, being a dying man, I asked him what it was. But I sat all of a tremble to be told.

"You took the tumbler," says Ram, but he groaned out awfully. "You took it up, and says: '*God bless Her!*' Upon my honor as a dying man, that was every mortal word. You *God blessed Her, in the rum,*" says Ram, "may Him and you and She forgive me!"

But with that he sank into a sort of doze, and when She was not needed, we went home to Jinny, and to tell her how it was.



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