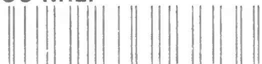
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SILHOUETTES OF AMERICAN LIFE

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BY

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

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AT THE STATION

NOTHING could well be more commonplace or ignoble than the corner of the world in which Miss Dilly now spent her life.

A wayside inn, near a station on the railway which runs from Salisbury, in North Carolina, up into the great Appalachian range of mountains; two or three unpainted boxes of houses scattered along the track by the inn; not a tree nor blade of grass in the "clarin'"; a few gaunt, long-legged pigs and chickens grunting and cackling in the muddy clay yards; beyond, swampy tobacco fields stretching to the encircling pine woods. For Sevier Station lay on the lowland; the mountains rose far to the west, like a blue haze on the horizon. The railway ran like a black line across the plain, and stopped at their foot at a hamlet called Henry's; thence an occasional enterprising traveller took "the team" up the precipitous mountain road to Asheville, then a sleepy village unknown to tourists.

Nothing, too, could have been more commonplace or ignoble than Miss Dilly herself: a pudgy old woman of sixty, her shapeless body covered with a

scant, blue homespun gown, with a big white apron tied about where the waist should have been; a face like that of an exaggerated baby, and round, innocent blue eyes, which, when they met yours, you were sure were the friendliest in the world. Miss Dilly always wore a coarse white handkerchief (snowy white, and freshly ironed) pinned about her neck, and another tied over her ears, for she had occasionally a mysterious pain, commonly known to us as neuralgia, but which the Carolinian mountaineers declare is only caused by being "overlooked" by some one who has an evil eye.

"They tell me it must be so," Miss Dilly would say. "But, of course, my dear, it was done by accident. Nobody would hurt a person thataway, meanin' it. An' it's a mighty tarrible thing to have that kind of an eye! I hope the good Lord don't let any poor soul know that he has it."

Miss Dilly had had this pain only since she had lived in the lowland. It had almost disabled her. She was born in the mountains — up on the Old Black — and she fancied that if she could go back to them she would be cured. But her younger brother, James, owned this farm and inn, and when their mother died, twenty years ago, he had agreed with Preston Barr that he should have both, rent free, if he would give Dilly a home and the yield of one field of tobacco yearly. James then set off to the West to make his fortune. Letters at first came regularly. But it was ten years now since she had heard from him.

Nobody ever heard a groan from Miss Dilly when the attacks of pain came on.

"When the good Lord gives you a load to cahry, I reckon 't ar'nt the clean thing to lay it on other folks' shoulders," she would say, laughing. She shut herself up, therefore, in her own chamber, and would let nobody in, though everybody at the inn, from Squire Barr himself to Sam (the black cook, ostler, and chambermaid), besieged the door.

A gloom like that of a funeral overhung the whole clarin' when Miss Dilly had one of her spells. After the passing of the two trains a day it was the one topic of interest.

"I've knowed wimmen as was younger," old Colonel Royall would say, solemnly wagging his head and winking his bleared eyes; "but Aunt Dilly is the jokingest and most agreeable of her sex in this part of Cahliny, to *my* thinkin'."

"Yes," Squire Barr would answer, nodding gravely. "And how any human fiend could lay the devil's look on her, passes me!"

When the attack was over she would come down, pale and pinched about the jaws, but smiling, kissing and shaking hands all round as if she had come back from a long journey.

The Squire invariably addressed her with ponderous gravity, after this fashion:

"Ef it be so, Aunt Dilly, 's you think goin' back to yer home on th' Old Black 'd give you ease, say the wohd. I cahn't pay you rent in money, foh Godamity knows, I've got none. But in traffic, tobacco, cohn, an' millet—it'll be all sent up reg'lar. Though what we'd do without you all, passes me!"

At which Mrs. Missouri Barr would look at Miss

Dilly with tears on her gaunt cheeks, and the girls would hang about her, patting her, and the Colonel would declare with an oath that "the whole clarin' had been powerful interrupted while you all was gone."

These were the happiest moments of Miss Dilly's happy life. She would explain carefully to them, for the thousandth time, her feeling on the matter. "'T seems to me ef I was in the old place, facin' Old Craggy, 'n the Swanannoa a-runnin' past the door, 'n could go set by father 'n mother every mornin', whar they're lyin' among the rowan trees, I'd get young agin 'n lose this torment. But then, what 'd James think ef he'd come back hyar ready to cahry me to his home in Colorado or them furrin countries? Me gone, after my promise to wait? 'N it would go hard, too, to leave you, Preston, 'n Missoury, 'n the girls, 'n Sam, 'n all — very hard!"

The girls always surprised Miss Dilly with a good supper on these recoveries, and the Colonel and Squire Preston felt it their duty to go to bed drunker than usual, in sign of joy.

At other times, life at Sevier Station was stagnant enough. Miss Dilly sewed or knit in her own room, sitting at the window where she could see the six men of the village sitting in a row in the gallery of the inn, smoking. She called them her boys, and when one chanced to have the rheumatism or toothache or a snake-bite, clucked about him like an old hen over an ailing chick. All the children in the hamlet were free of her room: there was always one at least with her, listening to her old Bible stories.

Neither they nor Miss Dilly were at all sure how far exactly Palestine was from Carolina; indeed, Dilly had a dim conviction that the mountains on which her Lord walked and suffered and died were part of the mountains yonder, which were all the world that she knew.

There was no church near the station; there were not even the monthly "pra'ars" which keep up the religious and social life of the mountains. Miss Dilly with her Bible and her incessant innocent talk of "the good Lord" was all the pope or preacher known to these people, the only messenger sent to show them how to live or to die.

In the morning the train passed the station, going up to Henry's; in the afternoon it came down; it halted for five or ten minutes each time. These brief pauses were the end of life for the population of Sevier Station; the whole twenty-four hours merely led up to them. When the train came in sight, the six men, the women, children, pigs, and chickens dropped the work they had in hand and waited, breathless. It came up out of the great busy world and swept down into it again — a perpetual miracle — leaving them in silence and solitude. Miss Dilly was always at her post by the window to see it go by. The conductor and engineer had learned to watch for the wondering old baby face, and often threw to her a little package of candy or a newspaper. Her heart thumped with terror and delight as the wonderful thing rushed past her. If she could only ride on the cars once, only for a mile! This was the one secret ambition of her life.

Sometimes, but very rarely, the train was belated

and stopped long enough for the passengers to take supper. Then excitement rose to fever height. Mrs. Barr, the girls, Preston, even the Colonel were busy in the kitchen, cooking, and scolding Sam. Miss Dilly, who could do nothing, hurried to the parlor, in fresh apron and handkerchiefs. It was a stuffy little room with plaited rugs on the floor, a chromo of the death-bed of Washington in a mica frame on the wall, and a red-hot stove in the middle. The passengers who were waiting for supper, to Miss Dilly's mind, were all dear good folk who had come up from the world to talk to her awhile. She took the keenest interest in them all; nursed the babies, pulled out some candy from her pocket for the children, ran for a drink for the tired, dusty women, or sat listening eagerly to the talk of the men, now and then asking a timid question. "And you really been at New Yohk, sah? Dear me! I doan know what anybody thet has bin at New Yohk wants to come to the mountings foh. No, I nevah travelled. Much, that is. I was once at Asheville, foh two days. I reckon New Yohk is diffeּrint. But Asheville is a vehy large town, sah. You suhtinly ought to visit it."

It was singular to see how they all, women, children, and men, seemed to understand Miss Dilly at once, and treated her with a tender kind of respect. She usually felt quite intimate with them all before the evening was over, and when they entered the train and were swept out of sight, would stand looking after them, the tears in her eyes.

"The dear friends hardly come till they go again," she would say to the girls.

One stormy night in winter the train was delayed two hours beyond its time. A child of one of the passengers had been taken sick, near Henry's; the train was stopped, and a man who was said to have considerable skill in physic was sent for, two miles distant. The passengers waited willingly. They were in no hurry; nobody in Carolina was ever in a hurry in those days. Everybody was anxious to help the baby, and proposed his own favorite remedy, brandy being the most popular.

There were only two men in the car who did not join the group about the sick child. They sat on a back seat; one of them, a swarthy, middle-aged man, with eyes like those of a stupid, affectionate dog, stooping forward, listening eagerly to its moans and the advice of the crowd.

"Poor little kid!" he said, earnestly. "I reckon it's its head as is wrong. I had a boy once. He only lived to be seven. It was the head as ailed him. The brain, sah. Enormous! Ef that little fellah had lived he'd have made his mark in the world, alongside of Alick Stephens."

"Died at seven?" said his companion with an inarticulate murmur of sympathy. "Well, sah. Him thet's above, He knows. It's all foh the best."

"Not foh me; not foh me!" with a fierce growl, after which he was silent. Presently he said: "Captain, I used to quiet my boy a-strokin' of his temples. Ef they'd try it on the baby —"

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Judson," said the other man, with sudden gravity, "thet I cahn't let you try it yohself. But duty, sah —"

"I didn't think of doin' it myself!" exclaimed Judson, angrily. "You don't suspect me of a trick? D'ye think I'm a sneak?"

"God forbid! No, no, Mr. Judson. I know a high-toned gentleman when I see him. When Sheriff Roylston give me this commission he says: 'Treat Mr. Judson as a high-toned gentleman.' And as such I reco'nized you. And as such I treated you."

Judson made no answer. He had dropped back into his seat and pulled the wide-rimmed hat over his brows.

The child by this time was asleep; the passengers crept softly back to their places, and the train was again in motion. As, an hour later, it rushed along through the gathering twilight, Judson glanced out of the windows from side to side with a terrible apprehension on his face.

"Isn't this the old Sevier plantation?"

"Yes, sah. Consid'able altered since the railway was laid."

After a few minutes Judson again broke the silence. "Thah was a house jest beyond the Branch hyah. 'T used to belong to a family named — Holmes."

"Yes. Station's nigh thah now. Holmes house's took as inn. Squire Barr's the proprietor, sah."

"Any of the Holmeses livin' thah?" asked Judson in a tone which made Captain Foulke turn and look at him curiously.

"Miss Dilly. She resides with the Squire. Colonel James Holmes, he's gone out West thataway. I hear as he's made a fortin out thah. So I've heered. I never knowed Colonel James myself. I belong down

in the piny woods kentry. I've heered, though, as he was a powerful agreeable gentleman. Very free an' friendly. The folks hyahbouts think a heap of the Colonel yet, though he's bin gone a good many year."

"Do they?" said Judson, with a queer intonation.

"Friend of yours, may be?" asked the Captain, curiously. Judson's back was turned toward him; he was staring out into the darkening fields. He did not answer for a moment.

"No. He was no friend of mine," he said at last in a tone which made Captain Foulke keep silent. He was the last man in the world to annoy or suggest unpleasant subjects to Mr. Judson, or any other gentleman who was in difficulty.

The engine gave a shriek. The conductor, who had been dozing near the stove, got up, yawning.

"Sevier Station, gentlemen," he suggested mildly. "Train stops hyah for supper."

The train ran bumping along the track and stopped. The passengers rose and made their way out leisurely. In the noise, they did not hear an altercation that was going on at the back of the car. Judson had stiffened himself back in his seat.

"My God! I cahn't get out hyah! Thah — thah are folks in thet house thet know me." He panted for breath with sheer terror; his eye gleamed dangerously. Foulke and the conductor stood over him anxiously. For the first time the conductor saw that he was handcuffed.

"Yes," explained Foulke rapidly, in a whisper. "Bringin' him to Raleigh from Tennessee, on riquisition from Governor, to stand his trial for manslaughter.

Mr. Judson!" raising his voice, "let me make you acquainted with Captain Arny. Mr. Judson," he proceeded in a hurried, deprecating tone, "hes come with me clar from Nantahela range, whah I — whah I — met him, and has give me no trouble whatsoever. He has conducted himself like the high-toned gentleman which Sheriff Roylston —"

"— I will make no trouble now," panted Judson. "Only let me stay in the car. Foh God's sake, Captain!"

The deputy sheriff and conductor exchanged perplexed glances.

"Come, come, Mr. Judson," said Arny, authoritatively; "Captain Foulke must have his supper 'n somethin' warmin'. So must you. See hyah now!" wrapping the gray shawl which was common in use among men at that time about the prisoner so as to conceal his arms, and pulling his hat well over his brows. "Yoh own wife wouldn't know yoh, sah. Come now. You can sit in the parlor if yoh doan keer to take supper. On yoh parole, sah."

Judson hesitated, looking through the lighted windows of the inn with a terrified yet longing eye. Figures moved dimly within.

"I'll go," he said, starting forward. "I'll sit thah. I'll not try to escape, so help me God."

* * * * * * * *

What with the sick baby and the tired mother, Miss Dilly had much to do that evening. She soon, however, had both of them comfortably disposed in her own room for the night, and then hurried down to see if any one else needed her.

"Why, Squire," she said, bustling into the kitchen, "thah's a gentleman alone in the parloh, eatin' nothin'."

"He's ailin', Miss Dilly. Never mind him. He doan want nothin'."

But Miss Dilly was not used to leave ailing people alone. She made ready a steaming cup of tea.

"I'm so sorry yoh feelin' porely, sah," she said. "Won't yoh take this, jest to warm yoh?"

"No," said the man, gruffly. Miss Dilly, unused to rebuff, stood hesitating. The lamplight shone full on her gray hair and kind blue eyes.

"Don't go," said Judson. "Stay with me. It will only be for a few minutes. I'll never see you again."

Something in the voice startled the old woman. She looked at him, raised her head, listening, and then, recollecting herself, sat down, laughing.

"Thet's jest what I allus say to myself," she said. "The folks come up hyah, 'n stay jest long enough foh me to find they're dear friends, 'n go, 'n I never see them again."

"And yoh're satisfied with sech friends as the cars bring yoh every day?" he sneered, savagely.

Miss Dilly drew herself up with a certain dignity. "They're all my friends, as I said. But I have my own people, sah, blood of my blood and bone of my bone. The dear Lord sent them an' me into the world together."

"Who are they?" he said in a lower tone.

"Our family? Thar's my brother, sah, Colonel James Holmes. I'm waiting hyah for him now. I'm expectin' him every day. An' my father 'n mother:

they're up on the Old Black. An' thah's a child in our family," she added, with a proud rising of the voice. "He's my brother's son. He is such a boy's yoh never hear of now, sah. He was jest seven when he — went away."

She turned her head, the tears creeping down her withered cheeks.

The prisoner half rose, with a muttered exclamation.

"What's that? Who —" cried Miss Dilly. "I beg yoh pardon, sah, I thought I heard a name —"

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing — nothing. I thought yoh said a name that I used to be called at home — mother an' Jem an' all of them. I haven't heard it foh years. I reckin it was talkin' of them made me fancy it. I'm afeerd my mind's gettin' foolish studyin' about Jem, an expectin' him."

"An' yoh think he'll come?"

"I know it," said Miss Dilly, quietly. "Squire Barr, sometimes he says: 'Maybe the Colonel's merried a rich wife, in some of them big Western towns, and hes done forgot us all.' An' the girls, I know they're afeerd he's dead. But he'll come. Every day since he went away I've asked the Lord to send him back: so he — *hes to come.*"

Judson did not speak for some time. His jaws sank deeper in the mufflers about his neck. He said at last:

"An' when he comes, I reckon yoh'd be pleased to hear of the rich wife and grand house?"

Miss Dilly winced. "Ef Jem's home is like thet,

it's all right. I'd go if he wants me. But what I've thought I'd like —" She hesitated.

"What?"

"Ef we could go back, jest our two selves to our house on the Old Black, an' him an' me live thah together a few year before we went away —"

The man's head dropped on his chest. He was so still that she jumped to her feet, frightened.

"Yoh're very porely! I'll bring something — I've gum camphor in a jar of whiskey —" She laid her hand on his arm.

At that moment the passengers came in from supper, Arny and Captain Foulke, who had kept their eyes on the prisoner through the open door, foremost. They thrust themselves between him and Miss Dilly.

"Come, Mr. Judson, take somethin' warmin'."

They talked loudly, bustling about him, that she might not see the handcuffs. The passengers crowded out of the door, going to the train.

Judson with a fierce gesture motioned the men aside. "I must speak a word to her." He crossed the room to where Miss Dilly stood.

"Doan yoh git tired prayin' foh him! For God's sake doan git tired! An' maybe he kin come back!"

. . . The train was gone, and Miss Dilly went about her work, stupefied. Why had she talked of Jem and his boy to this man? She never spoke of them to strangers. It seemed as if the good Lord had made her do it to-night.

She prayed for her brother that night as she never had prayed before. She did not know why she did it.

Nothing in this gruff stranger had reminded her of saucy, affectionate Jem.

But when everybody in the inn was in bed and asleep, she crept on to the porch and stood looking out into the gray, fathomless night. Somewhere out in that great unknown world — he was. He might be in that grand house — he might be sick and starving among beggars; but wherever he was, he must come back to her. Her childish, faithful soul went out in an agony of supplication.

"Lord, bring him back to me. To me — *me!*"

The fog was thick and cold, and Miss Dilly was used to the warmest corner of the house. But it seemed to her that she must go out into the open wide night to come nearer to him. He was there alive, needing her. "Lord, bring him back to me," she cried.

* * * * * * * *

The people at the station noticed a change in Miss Dilly after that night. She had always been kind, but now she was tender to every living thing she could reach, with the tenderness which a mother shows to a sick child. She had always been cheerful, but now she was breathlessly anxious to make every one about her happy and merry.

"I reckon," said Colonel Royall, shaking his head, "she's a ripenin' fur the end. The doors is openin' an' the glory's a shinin' down on her."

An uneasy dread seized the station when this opinion was made known. Everybody whispered and kept an anxious watch on Miss Dilly's coughs and appetite. Mrs. Barr, who was a dribbling woman as to mind, at last told her what they feared.

Miss Dilly laughed a sound, healthy laugh.

"It's not death at all that's comin', Missoury," she said. "It's Jem! The Lord isn't deaf. Nor hard of heart. Neither hes he gone on a journey, as the prophet says. He'll send my brother back to me. I'm thinkin' of it continooally now. If one of you's sick, I think — what if that was Jem? An' I try to help you. And if another one's downhearted, I think, what if that was Jem? An' I try to cheer him up. That's the truth, Missoury. It isn't death, it's Jem."

"If the Lord shud go back on her after all?" the Squire muttered with bated breath when he heard this report from his wife.

Summer came, and winter, and summer again, until two years had gone by.

Judson had stood his trial and been convicted and served out his brief term of imprisonment. On the day that he received his discharge, the warden of the prison, as usual, spoke a few kind words of warning and counsel to the prisoner at parting. He was startled when Judson, who was noted as a reticent, gruff man, answered him formally:

"Sah, yoh're quite right. I'd been runnin' down, steady, for ten year. Down. Sudden, one day, like a flash of lightnin' across my path, I was made to know of a woman — who shell be nameless hyah — who hed loved me an' believed in me all my life. Thet has made a different man of me. Sah, she's kep' a holt on me! She's tied me to God with her pra'ars! I cahn't get loose!" he cried with a nervous gulp in his throat.

"Sah, I thank yoh foh yoh words. I'm goin' to her

to try to be the man yoh say. I'm goin' to trust to her an' God to pull me through!"

Before he left, the warden gave him more advice. "Take your own name, Judson," he said. "I suspect you are now under an alias. Say nothing to this woman of your past life. Begin afresh where it is not known, and — may God bless you, sah."

This was in October.

Christmas, that year, brought, as usual, a stir of delightful excitement to the inn. Sevier Station knew nothing of the high significance which modern thought attaches to the great festival of the Christian Year. It was the day, however, on which Colonel Royall sent, before breakfast, a bumper of foaming egg-nog to every white man and woman in the clarin'. Every negro who asked for it had "a warmin'" of whiskey at the Colonel's expense. It was the day, too, on which Squire Barr gave his annual tremendous dinner of turkey and chicken pie, at which the six families of the village all sate down together. Mrs. Missoury Barr, also, made a practice of sending dishes of roast pork and hominy, or 'possum stewed in rice and molasses, or some such delicacy, to every negro cabin. There was a general interchange of gifts: brier-wood pipes, or pinchbeck scarf-pins, or cakes of soap in the shape of dog's heads, all of which elegant trifles had been purchased from travelling peddlers, months before, and stored away for the great occasion. Miss Dilly, you may be sure, was quite ready for Christmas. Her locked drawer was full of socks and mufflers knitted by herself, all of bright red, as "bein' more cheerin'." Nobody was forgotten in that drawer,

from the Squire to the least pickaninny in the quarters.

There was a vague idea throughout the clarin' that the day was one in which to be friendly and to give old grudges the go-by: the Lord (with whom Aunt Dilly was better acquainted than the rest) was supposed, for some reason, to be nearer at hand on that day than usual, though not so near as to make anybody uncomfortable.

Father Ruggles, the jolly old Methodist itinerant, was up in the mountains, and had sent word he was coming down for his Christmas dinner.

"He'll ask a blessin' on the meal, thank Heaven!" said Mrs. Missoury, with a devout sigh.

The Squire hurried with the news to find the Colonel.

"It'll be a big occasion," he said, triumphantly. "Father Ruggles 'll be equal to a turkey himself. I depend on you foh makin' de coffee, Colonel. Sam's that eggsited now he doan know what he's about."

"Suhtenly, suhtenly! But really, Mrs. Missoury 'd better double de supply of mince-pie," he suggested, anxiously. "Father Ruggles is taerible fond of mince."

Preparations went on with increasing force and vigor. They reached full completion the day before Christmas. Then the station paused to take breath before the great event.

Father Ruggles arrived at noon, and in five minutes had shaken hands with everybody, black and white, and put them all in good humor with him, themselves, and each other.

"A doan like Miss Dilly's looks," he said, lowering

his voice, when he and the Colonel and Squire were seated together in high conclave on the gallery. "She's blue 'n peaked about the jaws. Old age, heh?"

"Not a bit of it!" rejoined Preston, quickly. "She's a young woman, comparatively. It's Jem. Colonel James. She's done tired out waitin' on that man. These last two year she's took to expectin' him every day. She watches the train night 'n mornin'. It 'ud make yoh sick to see her old face when it goes by."

"Natuhlly," the Colonel struck in pompously, "we want to make Miss Dilly happy to-morrow, long o' the rest. She doan forget none of us in her knittin's an buyin's, I'll warrant! I says to the Squire hyah, 'Suppose de clarin' com-bine, 'n buy somethin' wuth while — a cheer or new calico or somethin'.' But he says, 'Whah's de use?' he says, 'she wants nothin' but her brother. Kin we give her her brother?' So thah's how it is!" filling his pipe with a gloomy nod.

The men glanced furtively at Miss Dilly, who, in her blue gown and white apron, stood in the yard below, feeding a noisy flock of chickens.

The sun going down through a frosty sky threw red lights upon the vast white plains and the cluster of little gray houses huddled closely together. Their hoods of feathered, crusted snow made them almost picturesque.

Across the road came a black, paunchy figure. It was Nutt, the carpenter, who kept the post-office in a box in his shop.

"What ails Jabez?" wondered the Colonel. "Somethin's happened."

Nutt hurried up the steps. "Mail's in, gentlemen.

Two circuelars an' this letter. Foh Miss Dilly. I just run over with it; I thought —"

"Quite right, quite right!" exclaimed Father Ruggles. "It may be —"

The men all rose in their excitement. "Do you give it to her, Squire," said the old minister. "You've been her best friend."

Miss Dilly came up the steps. The Squire handed her the letter without a word. His red, pudgy face fell into queer grimaces as he watched her.

"Foh me! A letter! Foh —?"

The blood stopped in her old body as she took it, smiling but very pale. When she saw the writing on the envelope she turned and went to her own room and shut the door.

The news spread. In ten minutes the whole clarin' was gathered on the gallery.

"It may not be from Colonel James at all," suggested Jabez. "It may be on business."

"Business! Doan be an ass, Jabez Nutt," said the Colonel.

The station waited breathless.

She came out at last, her face shining with a great inward peace.

"Jem," she said to them in a low, quiet voice, "has gone back to our house on the Old Black, an' put it an' the farm to rights, an' him an' me is to live thah together. He's comin' to-night on the train."

Nobody spoke. The tremendous tidings took their breath.

"An' — an' when is yoh a-goin', Miss Dilly?" gasped Sam, who was the first to recover.

"Not jest right away. He'll stay hyah a week, to see his old friends," she said. "An' — thah's the train!" Then she broke down and began to tremble and cry. The women gathered about her and cried too, while they smoothed her hair and re-pinned her handkerchiefs.

The men hurried down to meet the train.

"What an occasion to-morrow'll be!" panted Squire Barr. "It's nothin' short of providential that the Colonel shud come on this Christmas. Father Ruggles hyah 'n all. The station kin give him a suitable reception. Ef the turkeys only hold out! I count on you foh the coffee, Royall."

"You kin. But it isn't victuals I'm keerin' foh, sah," said the Colonel, with a quaver of genuine feeling in his voice. "It's thet pore soul yonder. Godamighty hes sent her her Christmas gift, shore. Hyar's the train, gentlemen!"

It rolled up the track — stopped.

A short, heavy man, with gray hair and a kind, resolute face, came out on the platform.

"Thet's him! Thet's Jem!" shouted the Colonel. Then they all broke into a rousing cheer, pressing round him, waving their hats, and shaking his hand, after the hearty Southern fashion.

"She's up thah, Colonel," said the Squire. "Go right away up, sah. She's been waitin' a long time."

TIRAR Y SOULT

ROBERT KNIGHT, who was born, bred, and trained in New England, suckled on her creeds and weaned on her doubts, went directly from college to a Louisiana plantation. The change, as he felt, was extreme.

He happened to go in this way. He was a civil engineer. A company was formed among the planters in the Gulf parishes to drain their marshes in order to establish large rice-farms. James B. Eads, who knew Knight, gave his name to them as that of a promising young fellow who was quite competent to do the simple work that they required, and one, too, who would probably give more zeal and time to it than would a man whose reputation was assured.

After Mr. Knight had thoroughly examined the scene of operations, he was invited by the president of the company, M. de Fourgon, to go with him to his plantation, the Lit de Fleurs, where he would meet the directors of the company.

"The change is great and sudden," he wrote to his confidential friend, Miss Cramer. "From Boston to the Bed of Flowers, from the Concord School of

Philosophy to the companionship of ex-slave-holders, from Emerson to Gayarré! I expected to lose my breath mentally. I expected to find the plantation a vast exhibit of fertility, disorder, and dirt; the men, illiterate fire-eaters; the women, houris such as our fathers used to read of in Tom Moore. Instead, I find the farm, huge, it is true, but orderly; the corn-fields are laid out with the exact neatness of a Dutch garden. The Sugar Works are run by skilled German workmen. The directors are shrewd and wide-awake. Madame de Fourgon is a fat, commonplace little woman. There are other women — the house swarms with guests — but not an houri among them. Till to-morrow. R. K."

The conclusion was abrupt, but Knight had reached the bottom of the page of his writing-pad. He tore it off, put it in a business-envelope, and mailed it. He and Miss Cramer observed a certain manly disregard to petty conventionalities. He wrote to her on the backs of old envelopes, scraps of wrapping-paper, anything that came first to hand. She liked it. He was poor and she was poor, and they were two good fellows roughing it together. They delighted in expressing their contempt for elegant nick-nackery of any sort, in dress, literature, or religion.

"Give me the honest — the solid!" was Emma Cramer's motto, and Knight thought the sentiment very high and fine. Emma herself was a little person, with an insignificant nose, and a skin, hair, and eyes all of one yellowish tint. A certain fluffiness and piquancy of dress would have made her positively pretty. But she went about in a tightly fitting gray

gown, with a black silk handkerchief knotted about her neck, and her hair in a small knob on top.

But, blunt as she was, she did not like the blunt ending of this letter.

What were the women like who were not houris? He might have known that she would have some curiosity about them. Had they any intellectual training whatever? She supposed they could dance and sing and embroider like those poor things in harems —

Miss Cramer lived on a farm near the Massachusetts village of Throop. That evening, after she had finished her work, she took the letter over to read to Mrs. Knight. There were no secrets in any letter to her from Robert which his mother could not share. They were all intimate friends together, Mrs. Knight being, perhaps, the youngest and giddiest of the three. The Knights knew how her uncle overworked the girl, for Emma was an orphan, and dependent on him. They knew all the kinds of medicine she took for her dyspepsia, and exactly how much she earned by writing book-reviews for a Boston paper. Emma, too, could tell to a dollar what Robert's yearly expenses had been at college. They had all shared in the terrible anxiety lest no position should offer for him, and rejoiced together in this opening in Louisiana.

Mrs. Knight ran to meet her. "Oh, you have had a letter, too? Here is mine!"

She read the letter with nervous nods and laughs of exultation, the butterfly-bow of yellow ribbon in her cap fluttering as if in triumph. Emma sat down on the steps of the porch with an odd, chilled feeling that she was somehow shut out from the victory.

"The 'Bed of Flowers'? What a peculiar name for a farm! And how odd it was in this Mr. de Fourgon to ask Robert to stay at his house! Do you suppose he will charge him boarding, Emma?"

"No, I think not."

"Well, Robert will save nothing by that. He must make it up somehow. I wouldn't have him under obligation to the man for his keep. I've written to him to put his salary in the Throop Savings Bank till he wants to invest it. He will have splendid chances for investment, travelling over the country — East, West, South — everywhere! House full of women? I hope he will not be falling in love in a hurry. Robert ought to marry well now."

Miss Cramer said nothing. The sun had set, and a cold twilight had settled down over the rocky fields, with their thin crops of hay. To the right was Mrs. Knight's patch, divided into tiny beds of potatoes, corn, and cabbage. As Emma's eyes fell on it she remembered how many years she had helped the widow rake and weed that field, and how they had triumphed in every shilling which they made by the garden-stuff. For Robert — all for Robert!

Now he had laid his hand on the world's neck and conquered it! North and West and that great tropical South, with its flowers and houris — all were open to him! She looked around the circle of barren fields. He had gone out of doors, and she was shut in!

Mrs. Knight was watching her with her vague gray eyes. She felt a certain pity for the girl. "Take a rose, Emma," she said, plucking one which was a little worm-eaten.

Emma thanked her, bade her good-night, and went down the darkening road homeward. She looked at the rose, laughed, and threw it away. What a fool she was! The fact that Robert had a good salary could not change the whole order of the world in a day. Her comradeship with Knight, their plans, their sympathy — this was the order of the world which seemed eternal and solid to poor Emma.

"I am his friend," she told herself now. "If he had twenty wives, none of them could take my place."

Now, Knight had not hinted at the possibility of wiving in his letter. There had never been a word or glance of love-making between him and Emma; yet she saw him, quite distinctly now, at the altar, and beside him a black-eyed houri.

She entered the farm-house by the kitchen-way. There was the cold squash pie ready to cut for breakfast, and the clothes dampened for ironing. Up in her own bare chamber were paper and ink and two books for review — "Abstract of Greek Philosophy" and "Sub-drainage."

These reviews were one way in which she had tried to interest him. Interest him! Greek philosophy! Drainage!

She threw the books on the floor, and, running to the glass, unloosened her hair and ran her fingers through it, tore the handkerchief from her neck, scanned with a breathless eagerness her pale eyes, her freckled skin, and shapeless nose, and then, burying her face in her hands, turned away into the dark.

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The night air that was so thin and chilly in Throop blew over the Lit de Fleurs wet and heavy with the scents, good and bad, of the Gulf marshes. Madame de Fourgon's guests had left the supper-table, and were seated on the low gallery which ran around the house, or lounged in the hammocks that swung under the huge magnolias on the lawn. There were one or two women of undoubted beauty among them; but Robert Knight was not concerned, that night, with the good- or ill-looks of any woman, either in Throop or Louisiana. He was amused by a new companion, a Monsieur Tirar, who had ridden over from a neighboring plantation. Knight at first took him for an overgrown boy; but on coming close to him, he perceived streaks of gray in the close-cut hair and beard.

Tirar had recited and acted a comic story, after dinner, at which the older men laughed as at the capers of a monkey. While they were at cards he played croquet with the children. The women sent him on errands. "José, my thimble is in the library!" "José, do see where the nurse has taken baby!" etc.

A chair had been brought out now for M. de Fourgon's aunt, an old woman with snowy hair and delicate, high features. José flew to bring her a shawl and wrapped it about her. She patted him on his fat cheek, telling Knight, as he capered away, how invaluable was the *cher enfant*.

"He made that Creole sauce to-day. Ah, the *petit gourmand* has many secrets of crabs and soups. He says the *chefs* in Paris confide in him, but they are original, monsieur; they are born in José's leetle brain" — tapping her own forehead.

"Ah, hear him now! 'Tis the voice of a seraph!" She threw up her hands, to command silence in earth and sky; leaning back and closing her eyes, while the little man, seated with his guitar at the feet of a pretty girl, sang. Even Knight's sluggish nerves were thrilled. He had never heard such a voice as this. It wrung his heart with its dateless pain and pathos. Ashamed of his emotion, he turned to go away. But there was a breathless silence about him. The Creoles all love music, and José's voice was famous throughout the Gulf parishes. Even the negro nurses stood staring and open-mouthed.

The song ended and Tirar lounged into the house.

"Queer dog!" said M. de Fourgon. "He will not touch a guitar again perhaps for months."

"He would sing if I ask it," said the old lady. "He has reverence for the age."

M. de Fourgon, behind her, lifted his eyebrows. "José," he said, aside to Knight, "is a good fellow enough up here among the women and babies; but he has had the *jeunesse orageuse:* with his own crew, at the St. Charles, there is no more rakehelly scamp in New Orleans."

"Is he a planter?" asked the curious New Englander.

Madame Dessaix's keen ears caught the question.

"Ah, the poor lad! he has no land, not an acre! His father was a Spaniard, Ruy Tirar, who married Bonaventura Soult. The Soult and Tirar plantations were immense on the Bayou Sara. José's father had his share. But crevasse — cards — the war — all gone!" — opening wide her hands. "When your gov-

ernment declared peace, it left our poor José, at twenty, with the income of a beggar."

"But that was twenty years ago," said Knight. "Could he not retrieve his fortune by his profession — business? What does he do?"

"Do? do?" — she turned an amazed, perplexed face from one to the other. "Does he think that José shall work? José? *Mon Dieu!*"

"Tirar," said M. de Fourgon, laughing, "is not precisely a business man, Mr. Knight. He has countless friends and kinsfolk. We are all cousins of the Tirars or Soults. He is welcome everywhere."

"Oh!" said Knight, with a significant nod. Even in his brief stay in this neighborhood, he had found other men than José living in absolute idleness in a community which was no longer wealthy. They were neither old, ill, nor incapable. It was simply not their humor to work. They were supported, and as carefully guarded as pieces of priceless porcelain. It is a lax, extravagant feature of life, as natural to Louisiana as it is impossible to Connecticut.

It irritated Knight, yet attracted him, as any novelty does a young man. He turned away from his companions, and sauntered up and down in the twilight. To live without work on those rich, prodigal prairies, never to think of to-morrow, to give without stint, even to lazy parasites — there was something royal about that. It touched his fancy. He had known, remember, nothing but Throop and hard work for twenty-two years.

The air had grown chilly. Inside, M. Tirar had kindled a huge fire on the hearth. He was kneeling,

fanning it with the bellows, while a young girl leaned indolently against the mantel, watching the flames, and now and then motioning to José to throw on another log. The trifling action startled Knight oddly. How they wasted that wood! All through his boyhood he had to gather and save every twig and chip. How often he had longed to make one big, wasteful fire, as they were doing now.

The young lady was a Miss Venn, who had been civil to him. It occurred to him that she was the very embodiment of the lavish life of this place. He did not, then or afterward, consider whether she was beautiful or not. But the soft, loose masses of reddish hair, and the large, calm, blue eyes, must, he thought, belong to a woman who was a generous spendthrift of life.

Perhaps Knight was at heart a spendthrift. At all events, he suddenly felt a strange eagerness to become better acquainted with Miss Venn. He sought her out, the next morning, among the groups under the magnolias. There could be no question that she was stupid. She had read nothing but her Bible and the stories in the newspapers, and had no opinions about either. But she confessed to ignorance of nothing, lying with the most placid, innocent smile.

"'Hamlet?' Oh, yes; I read that when it first came out. But those things slip through my mind like water through a sieve."

To Robert, whose mind had long been rasped by Emma's prickly ideas, this dulness was as a downy bed of ease. Emma was perpetually struggling after progress with every power of her brain. It never occurred

to Lucretia Venn to plan what she would do to-morrow, or at any future time. In Throop, too, there was much hard prejudice between the neighbors. To be clever was to have a sharp acerbity of wit; Emma's sarcasms cut like a thong. But these people were born kind; they were friendly to all the world, while in Lucretia there was a soft affluence of nature which made her the centre of all this warm, pleasant life. The old people called her by some pet name, the dogs followed her, the children climbed into her lap. Knight with her felt like a traveller who has been long lost on a bare, cold marsh and has come into a fire-lighted, hospitable room.

One afternoon he received the card of M. José Tirar y Soult, who came to call upon him formally. The little fop was dazzling in white linen, diamond solitaires blazing on his breast and wrists.

"You go to ride?" he said, as the horses were brought round. "Lucrezia, my child, you go to ride? It portends rain"—hopping to the edge of the gallery. "You will take cold!"

"There is not a cloud in the sky," said M. de Fourgon. "Come, Lucretia, mount! José always fancies you on the edge of some calamity."

"It goes to storm," persisted Tirar. "You must wear a heavier habit, *ma petite*."

Miss Venn laughed, ran to her own room, and changed her habit.

"What way shall you ride?" José anxiously inquired of Knight.

"To the marshes."

"It is very dangerous there, Monsieur. There are

herds of wild cattle, and slippery ground" — fuming up and down the gallery. "Chut! Tirar himself will go. I will not see the child's life in risk — me!"

Knight was annoyed. "What relation does Monsieur Tirar hold to Miss Venn?" he asked his host, apart. "He assumes the control of a father over her."

"He is her cousin. He used to nurse the child on his knee, and he does not realize that she has grown to be a woman. Oh, yes, the poor little man loves her as if she were his own child! When their grandfather, Louis Soult, died, two years ago, he left all his estate to Lucretia, and not a dollar to José. It was brutal! But José was delighted. 'A woman must have money, or she is cold in the world,' he said. 'But to shorn lambs, like me, every wind is tempered.'"

Mr. Knight was thoughtful during the first part of the ride. "I did not know," he said, presently, to young McCann, from St. Louis, a stranger like himself, "that Miss Venn was a wealthy woman."

"Oh, yes, the largest land-holder in this parish, and ten thousand a year, clear, besides."

Ten thousand a year! And Emma drudging till midnight for two or three dollars a column! Poor Emma! A gush of unwonted tenderness filled his heart. The homely, faithful soul!

Ten thousand a year? Knight would have been humiliated to think that this money could change his feeling to the young woman who owned it. But it did change it. She was no longer only a dull, fascinating appeal to his imagination. She was a power; something to be regarded with respect, like a Building

Association or a Pacific Railway. But for some unexplained reason he carefully avoided her during the ride. Miss Venn was annoyed at this desertion, and showed it as a child would do. She beckoned him again and again to look at a heron's nest, or at the water-snakes darting through the edges of the bayou, or at a family of chameleons who were keeping house on a prickly-pear. Finding that he did not stay at her side, she gave up her innocent wiles, at last, and rode on in silence. M. Tirar then flung himself headlong into the breach. He poured forth information about Louisiana for Knight's benefit, with his own flighty opinions tagged thereto. He told stories and laughed at them louder than anybody else, his brown eyes dancing with fun; but through all he kept a furtive watch upon Lucretia, to see the effect upon her.

They had now reached the marshes which lie along the Gulf. They were covered with a thin grass, which shone, bright emerald, in the hot noon. The tide soaked the earth beneath, and drove back the narrow lagoons that were creeping seaward. A herd of raw-boned cattle wandered aimlessly over the spongy surface, doubtful whether the land was water, or the water, land. They staggered as they walked, from sheer weakness; one steer fell exhausted, and as Lucretia's horse passed, it lifted its head feebly, looked at her with beseeching eyes, and dropped it again. A flock of buzzards in the distance scented their prey and began to swoop down out of the clear sky, flashes of black across the vivid green of the prairie, with low and lower dips until they alighted, quivering, on the dying beast and began to tear the flesh from its side.

José rode them down, yelling with rage. He came back jabbering in Spanish and looking gloomily over the vast, empty marsh. "I hate death anywhere, but this is wholesale murder! These wretched Cajans of the marsh raise larger herds than they can feed; they starve by the hundreds. That poor beast is dead — thanks be to God!" After a pause. "Well, well!" he cried, with a shrug, "your syndicate will soon convert this delta into solid ground, Mr. Knight; it is a noble work! Vast fortunes" — with a magniloquent sweep of his arm — "lie hidden under this mud."

"Why don't you take a share in the noble work, then?" asked McCann. "That is, if it would not interfere with your other occupations?"

"Me? I have no occupations! What work should I do?" asked José, with a fillip of his pudgy fingers. Presently he galloped up to Miss Venn's side with an anxious face.

"Lucrezia, my child, has it occurred to you that you would like me better if I were doctor, or lawyer, or something?"

She looked at him, bewildered, but said nothing.

"It has not occurred to *me*," he went on, seriously. "I have three, four hundred dollars every year to buy my clothes. I have the Tirar jewellery. What more do I want? Everything I need comes to me."

"Certainly, why not?" she answered, absently, her eyes wandering in search of something across the marsh.

"Then you do not mind?" he persisted, anxiously. "I wish my little girl to be pleased with old José. As for the rest of the world" — he cracked his thumb contemptuously.

Miss Venn smiled faintly. She had not even heard him. She was watching Knight, who had left the party and was riding homeward alone. José fancied there were tears in her eyes.

"Lucrezia!"

No answer.

"Lucrezia, do not worry! *I* am here."

"You! Oh, *Mon Dieu!* You are always here!" she broke forth, pettishly.

José gasped as if he had been struck, then he reined in his horse, falling back, while Mr. McCann gladly took his place.

M. Tirar, after that day, did not return to the plantation. Once he met M. de Fourgon somewhere in the parish, and with a sickly smile asked if Lucretia were in good health. "Remember, Jean," he added, earnestly, riding with him a little way, "*I* am that little girl's guardian. If she ever marry, it is José who must give her away. So ridiculous in her father to make a foolish young fellow like me her guardian!"

"Not at all! No, indeed! Very proper, Tirar," said M. de Fourgon, politely, at which José's face grew still paler and more grave.

One day he appeared about noon on the gallery. His shoes were muddy, his clothes the color of a bedraggled moth.

"Ah, *mon enfant!*" cried Madame Dessaix, kindly, from her chair in a shady corner. "What is wrong? No white costume this day, no diamonds, no laugh? What is it, José?"

"Nothing, madame," said the little man, drearily.

"I grow old. I dress no more as a young man. I accommodate myself to the age — the wrinkles."

"'Wrinkles'? Bah! Come and sit by me. For whom is it that you look?"

"But — I thought I heard Lucrezia laugh as I rode up the levee?"

Madame Dessaix nodded significantly and, putting her fingers on her lips, with all the delight that a Frenchwoman takes in lovers, led him, on tip-toe, to the end of the gallery and, drawing aside the vines, showed him Lucretia in a hammock under a gigantic pecan-tree. A mist of hanging green moss closed about her. She lay in it as a soft, white bird in a huge nest. Knight stood leaning against the trunk of the tree, looking down at her, his thin face intent and heated. He had spoken to her, but she did not answer. She smiled lazily, as she did when the children patted her on the cheek.

"*Voilà!*" whispered Madame Dessaix, triumphantly. Then she glanced at M. Tirar, finding that he looked on in silence. He roused himself, with a queer noise in his throat.

"Yes, yes! Now — what does she answer him?"

"*Mère de Dieu!* What can she answer? He is young. He is a man who has his own way. He will have no answer but the one! We consider the affair finished!"

Tirar made no comment. He turned and walked quickly down to the barnyard, where the children were, and stood among them and the cows for awhile. The stable-boys, used to jokes and picayunes from him, turned hand-springs and sky-larked under his

feet. Finding that he neither laughed nor swore at them, they began to watch him more narrowly, and noticed his shabby clothes with amazed contempt.

"Don José seek, ta-ta!" they whispered. "Don José, yo' no see mud on yo' clo'es?"

But he stood leaning over the fence, deaf and blind to them.

His tormentors tried another point of attack. "Don José no seek, but his mare seek. Poor Chiquita! She old horse now."

"It's a damned lie!" Tirar turned on the boy with such fury that he jumped back. "She's not old. Bring her out!"

The negroes tumbled over each other in their fright. The little white mare was led out. José patted her with trembling hands. Whatever great trouble had shaken him turned for the moment into this petty outlet.

"There is not such a horse in Attakapas!" he muttered to himself. "I am old, but she is young!" The mare whinnied with pleasure as he stroked her and mounted.

As he rode from the enclosure a clumsy bay horse was led out of the stable. Knight came down the levee to meet it. José scanned it with fierce contempt. "Ah, the low-born beast! And its master is no otherwise! But who can tell what shall please the little girl?"

But Tirar could not shut his eyes to the fact that the figure on the heavy horse was manly and fine. The courage in his heart was at its lowest ebb.

"José is old and fat — fat. That is a young fellow —

he is like a man!" His chin quivered like a hysteric woman's. The next minute he threw himself on the mare's neck.

"I have only you now, Chiquita! Nobody but you!"

She threw back her ears and skimmed across the prairie with the hoof of a deer. When he passed Knight, M. Tirar saluted him with profound courtesy.

"Funny little man," said Robert to McCann, who had joined him. "You might call him a note of exaggeration in the world. But that is a fine horse that he rides."

"Yes; a famous racer in her day, they tell me. Tirar talks of her as if she were a blood-relation. I wish we had horses of her build just now. That brute of yours sinks in the mud with every step."

"It is deeper than usual to-day. I don't understand it. We have had no rain."

They separated in a few minutes, Knight taking his way to the sea-marshes.

The marshes were always silent, but there was a singular, deep stillness upon them to-day. The sun was hidden by low-hanging mists, but it turned them into tent-like veils of soft, silvery brilliance. The colors and even the scents of the marshes were oddly intensified beneath them; the air held the strong smells of the grass and roses motionless; the lagoons, usually chocolate-colored, were inky black between their fringes of yellow and purple flags; the countless circular pools of clear water seemed to have increased in number, and leaped and bubbled as if alive.

If poor Emma could but turn her eyes from the

barren fields of Throop to this strange, enchanted plain!

He checked himself. What right had he to wish for Emma? Lucretia —

But Lucretia would see nothing in it but mud and weeds!

Lucretia was a dear soul; but after all, he thought, with a laugh, her best qualities were those of an amiable cow. That very day he had brought himself to make love to her with as much force as his brain could put into words, and she had listened with the amused, pleased, ox-like stare of one of these cattle when its sides were tickled by the long grass. She had given him no definite answer.

Knight ploughed his way through the spongy prairie, therefore, in a surly ill-humor, which the unusual depth of mud did not make more amiable. He was forced to ride into the bayoux every few minutes to wash the clammy lumps from the legs of his horse.

Where M. Tirar went that day, he himself, when afternoon came, could not have told distinctly. He had a vague remembrance that he had stopped at one or two Acadian farm-houses for no purpose whatever. He was not a drinking man, and had tasted nothing but water all day, yet his brain was stunned and bruised, as if he was rousing from a long debauch. When he came to himself he was on the lower marshes. Chiquita had suddenly stopped, planted her legs apart like a mule, and refused to budge an inch farther. What ailed this bayou? It, too, had come to a halt, and had swollen into a stagnant black pond.

José was altogether awake now. He understood

what had happened. A heavy spring tide in the Gulf had barred all outlet for the bayoux, which cut through the marshes. The great river, for which they were but mouths, was already forcing its way over their banks and oozing through all the spongy soil. There was no immediate danger of his drowning; but unless he made instant escape, there was a certainty that he would be held and sucked into the vast and rapidly spreading quicksands of mud until he did drown.

If Chiquita — ?

He wheeled her head to the land and called to her. She began to move with extreme caution, testing each step, now and then leaping to a hummock of solid earth. Twice she stopped and changed her course. José dismounted several times and tried to lead her. But he soon was bogged knee-deep. He saw that the instinct of the horse was safer than his judgment, and at last sat quietly in the saddle. At ordinary times he would have sworn and scolded, and, perhaps, being alone, have shed tears, for José was at heart a coward and dearly loved his life.

But to-day it was low tide in the little man's heart. The bulk of life had gone from him with Lucretia. His love for her had given him dignity in his own eyes; without her he was a poor buffoon, who carried his jokes from house to house in payment for alms.

He did what he could, however, to save his life, rationally enough — threw off his heavy boots, and the Spanish saddle, to lighten the load on the mare, patted her, sang and laughed to cheer her. Once, when the outlook was desperate, he jumped off. "She shall

not die!" he said, fiercely. He tried to drive her away, but she stood still, gazing at him wistfully.

"Aha!" shouted José, delighted, nodding to some invisible looker-on. "Do you see that? *She* will not forsake me! So, my darling! You and Tirar will keep together to the last." He mounted again.

Chiquita, after that, made slow but steady progress. She reached a higher plateau. Even there the pools were rapidly widening; the oozing jetty water began to shine between the blades of grass. In less than an hour this level also would be in the sea.

But in less than an hour Chiquita would have brought him to dry ground.

José talked to her incessantly now, in Spanish, arguing as to this course or that.

"Ha! What is that?" he cried, pulling her up. "That black lump by the bayou? A man — no! A horse and man! They are sinking — held fast!"

He was silent a moment, panting with excitement. Then — "It is Knight!" he shouted. "Caught like a rat in a trap! He will die — thanks be to God!"

If Knight were dead, Lucretia would be his own little girl again.

The thought was the flash of a moment. Knight's back was toward him. José, unseen, waited irresolute.

After the first murderous triumph he hoped Robert could be saved. Tirar was a coward, but at bottom he was a man — how much of a man remained to be proved. The longer he looked at the engineer, the more he hated him, with a blind, childish fury.

"But I am not murderer — I!" he said to himself, mechanically, again and again.

Chiquita pawed, impatient to be off. The water was rising about her hoofs. It sparkled now everywhere below the reeds. Death was waiting for both the men — a still, silent, certain death — the more horrible because there was no fury or darkness in it. The silvery mist still shut the world in, like the walls of a tent; the purple and yellow flags shone tranquilly in the quiet light; overhead, the black, darting buzzards swooped lower and lower. Tirar, seeing them, gnashed his teeth.

Chiquita could save one man, and but one.

The Tirars and Soults had been men of courage and honor for generations. Their blood was quickening in his fat little body.

A thought struck him like a stab from a knife. "If Knight dies, it will break her heart. But me!" Then he cracked his thumb contemptuously. "What does she care for poor old José?"

We will not ask what passed in his heart during the next ten minutes.

He and his God were alone together.

He came up to Knight and tapped him on the shoulder. "Hello! What's wrong?"

"I'm bogged. This brute of a horse is sinking in the infernal mud."

"Don't jerk at him! I'll change the horses with you, if you are in a hurry to reach the plantation. Chiquita can take you more quickly than he."

"But you? — I don't understand you. What will you do?"

"I am in no hurry."

"This horse will not carry you. It seems to me that the mud is growing deeper."

"I understand the horses and mud of our marshes better than you. Come, take Chiquita. Go!"

Knight alighted and mounted the mare, with a perplexed face. He had begun to think himself in actual danger, and was mortified to find that José made so light of the affair.

"Well, good day, Monsieur Tirar!" he said. "It is very kind in you to take that confounded beast off my hands. I'll sell him to-morrow if I can." He nodded to José, and jerked the bridle sharply. "Come, get up!" he said, touching Chiquita with a whip.

José leaped at him like a cat. "Damnation! Don't dare to touch her!"—wrenching the whip from his hand, and raising it to strike him. "Pardon, Monsieur," stiffening himself, "my horse will not bear a stroke. Do not speak to her and she will carry you safely." His hand rested a moment on the mare's neck. He muttered something to her in Spanish, and then he turned his back that he might not see her go away.

Mr. Knight reached the upper marshes in about two hours. He caught sight of a boat going down the bayou, and recognizing M. de Fourgon and some other men from the plantation in it, rode down to meet them.

"Thank God, you are safe, Knight!" exclaimed M. de Fourgon. "How's that? Surely that is Chiquita you are riding! Where did you find her?"

"That queer little Mexican insisted that I should swap horses with him. My nag was bogged, and —"

The men looked at each other.

"Where did you leave him?"

"In the sea-marsh, near the mouth of this bayou. Why, what do you mean? Is he in danger? Stop!" he shouted, as they pulled away without a word. "For God's sake, let me go with you!" He left Chiquita on the bank and leaped into the boat, taking an oar.

"You do not mean that he has risked his life for mine?" he said.

"It looks like it," McCann replied. "And yet I could have sworn that he disliked you, especially."

"The old Tirar blood has not perished from off the earth," said M. de Fourgon, in a low voice. "Give way! Together now! I fear we are too late."

The whole marsh was under water before they reached it. They found José's body submerged, but wedged in the crotch of a pecan-tree, into which he had climbed. It fell like a stone into the boat.

M. de Fourgon laid his ear to his heart, pressed his chest, and rose, replying by a shake of the head to their looks. He took up his oar and rowed in silence for a few minutes.

"Pull, gentlemen!" he said, hoarsely. "The night is almost upon us. We will take him to my house."

But Knight did not believe that José was dead. He stripped him, and rubbed and chafed the sodden body in the bottom of the boat. When they reached the house, and, after hours of vain effort, even the physician gave up, Knight would not listen to him.

"He shall not die, I tell you! Why should his life be given for mine? I did not even thank him, brute that I am!"

It was but a few minutes after that, that he looked up from his rubbing, his face growing suddenly white. The doctor put his hand on Tirar's breast. "It beats!" he cried, excitedly. "Stand back! Air — brandy!"

At last José opened his eyes, and his lips moved. "What is it, my dear fellow?" they all cried, crowding around him. But only Knight caught the whisper. He stood up, an amazed comprehension in his eyes.

Drawing M. de Fourgon aside, he said: "I understand now! I see why he did it!" and hurried away abruptly, in search of Miss Venn.

The next morning M. Tirar was carried out in an easy-chair to the gallery.

He was the hero of the day. The whole household, from Madame Dessaix to the black picaninnies, buzzed about him. Miss Venn came down the gallery, beaming, flushed, her eyes soft with tears. She motioned them all aside and sat down by him, stroking his cold hand in her warm ones.

"It is me that you want, José? Not these others? Only me?"

"If you can spare for me a little time, Lucrezia?" he said, humbly.

She did not reply for so long that he turned and looked into her face.

"A little time? *All* of the time," she whispered.

José started forward. His chilled heart had scarcely seemed to beat since he was taken from the water. Now it sent the blood hot through his body.

"What do you mean, child?" he said, sternly. "Think what you say. It is old José. Do you mean —?"

"Yes; and I always meant it," she said, quietly. "Why, there are only us left — you and me. And Chiquita," she added, laughing.

* * * * * * * *

A week later Mrs. Knight received a letter from Robert, with the story of his rescue. She cried over it a good deal.

"Though I don't see why he thinks it such an extraordinary thing in that little man to do!" she reflected. "Anybody would wish to save Robert, even a wild Mexican. And, why upon earth, because his life was in danger, he should have written to offer it to Emma Cramer, beats me! She hasn't a dollar."

Through the window, presently, she saw the girl crossing the fields, with quick, light steps.

"She's heard from him! She's coming to tell me. Well, I did think Robert would have married a woman of means, having his pick and choice — "

But the widow's heart had been deeply moved. "Poor Emma! She's been as faithful as a dog to Robert. If she has no money, she will save his as an heiress would not have done. Providence orders all things right," she thought, relenting. "If that girl has not put on her best white dress on a week-day! How glad she must be! I'll go and meet her, I guess. She has no mother now, to kiss her, or say God bless her, poor child!" And she hurried to the gate.

WALHALLA

A FEW years ago a young English artist, named Reid, who was travelling through this country, stopped for a day or two at Louisville, having found an old friend there.

He urged this gentleman to go with him into the mountainous region of Tennessee and North Carolina.

"The foliage," he said, "will be worth study in September; and besides, I have an errand there for my brother. He is a house-decorator in New York, and when he was in the Alps last summer, he was told that a wood-carver, whose work he once saw in Berne, and fancied, had emigrated to America two or three years ago, turned farmer, and joined a small German colony in these mountains. I am to find this colony if I can, and if there is any workman of real skill in it, to offer him regular work and good wages in New York. My brother is in immediate need of a panel-carver."

"He could have imported a dozen from Berne."

"Certainly," said Reid, with a shrug; "but Tom has his whims. He fancied that he detected a delicacy, a spirit in this man's work — an undiscovered genius, in fact. His name, unfortunately, slipped Tom's mem-

ory. Where do you suppose the fellow is hidden, Pomeroy? Do you know of any such colony?"

"No, and I hardly can believe that there are any thrifty Germans among those impregnable mountains. Why, access to many of the counties is only to be had on mules, and at the risk of your neck. Your German must have a market for his work; he would find none there."

They were talking in the breakfast room of the hotel. A man at the same table looked up and nodded.

"Beg pardon, but couldn't help overhearing. Think the place you want is in South Carolina. Name of Walhalla. Village. Queer little corner. Oconee county."

"Oh, thanks, much!" said Reid, eying him speculatively, as probably a new specimen of the American. "Any Swiss there, do you know?"

"That I can't tell you, sir," said the stranger, expanding suddenly into the geniality of an old acquaintance. "They're Germans, I take it. Shut out of the world by the mountains as completely as if the place was a 'hall of the dead,' as they call it. There it is, with German houses and German customs, dropped down right into the midst of Carolina snuff-rubbers, and Georgian clay-eaters. I found the village five years ago, while I was buying up skins in the mountains. I'm a fur dealer. Cincinnati. One of my cards, gentlemen?"

* * * * * * * *

To Walhalla, therefore, Mr. Reid and his friend went. They tried to strike a bee-line to it, through a wilderness of mountain ranges, by trails known only

to the trappers; taking them as their guides, and sleeping in their huts at night. After two weeks of climbing among the clouds, of solitary communion with Nature, of unmitigated dirt, fried pork, and fleas, they came in sight of Walhalla.

They had reached Macon county, North Carolina, where the Appalachian range, which stretches like a vast bulwark along the eastern coast of the continent, closes abruptly in walls of rock, jutting like mighty promontories into the plains of Georgia.

Reid and Pomeroy stopped one morning on one of these heights, to water their mules at a spring, from which two streams bubbled through the grass and separated, one to flow into the Atlantic, the other into the Gulf of Mexico, so narrow and steep was the ridge on which they stood. The wind blew thin and cold in their faces; the sun shone brightly about them; but below, great masses of cumulus clouds were driven, ebbing like waves, out toward the horizon. Far down in the valley a rain-storm was raging. It occupied but small space, and looked like a motionless cataract of gray fog, torn at times by yellow, jagged lightning.

Not far from the spring a brown mare was tethered, and near it a stout young man in blue homespun was lying, stretched lazily out on the dry, ash-colored moss, his chin in his palms, watching the storm in the valley. An empty sack had served as a saddle for the mare; slung about the man's waist was a whiskey flask and a horn. He was evidently a farmer, who had come up into the mountains to salt his wild cattle.

Reid took note of the clean jacket, the steady blue eyes, the red rose in his cap.

"Swiss," he said to Pomeroy. "Where is Walhalla, my friend?"

The man touched his cap, and pointed to a wisp of smoke at the base of the mountain. As they rode on, his dog snuffed curiously at their horses' heels, but Hans did not raise his head to look after them.

"That is the first man I have seen in America," said Reid, "who took time to look at the world he lived in."

When they were gone, Hans lay watching the cloud below soften from a metallic black mass into pearly haze; then it drifted up into films across the green hills. On the nearer plain below, he could now see the white-bolled cotton-fields, wet and shining after the shower; threads of mist full of rainbow lights traced out the water-courses; damp, earthy scents came up to the height from the soaked forests. After a long while he rose leisurely, his eyes filled with satisfaction, as one who has had a good visit in the home of a friend. He mounted the mare and rode down the trail; the sun shone ruddily on the peaks above him, but there was a damp, shivering twilight in the gorges. Both seemed holiday weather to the young fellow; his mare whinnied when he patted her neck; the dog ran, barking and jumping upon him; it was a conversation that had been going on for years among old friends.

Mr. Reid reached Walhalla just before sundown. As his mule went slowly down the wide street, he looked from side to side with pleased surprise.

"It is a street out of some German village," he said. "I have not seen such thrift or homely comfort in this country."

"It is only the sudden contrast to the grandeur and dirt behind us," said Pomeroy. "If you miss the repose and exaltation of the lofty heights which you talked of, you will find scrubbed floors and flea-less beds a solid consolation."

The sleepy hamlet consisted of but one broad street, lined by quaint wooden houses, their stoops covered with grape-vines or roses. Back of these houses stretched trim gardens, gay with dahlias and yellow wall-flowers; back of these, again, were the farms. Along the middle of the street, at intervals, were shaded wells, public scales, a platform for town meetings. The people were gathered about one of the wells, in their old German fashion, the men with their pipes, the women with their knitting.

Reid remained in Walhalla for two or three days. He found that there were several Swiss families and that many of the men had been wood-carvers at home. He hit upon a plan to accomplish his purpose. He gave a subject for a panel, — the Flight into Egypt, — and announced that any one who chose might undertake the work; that he would return in a month (he had found there was access to Columbia by railway through the valley), and would then buy the best panel offered at a fair price, and, if the skill shown in the work satisfied him, would send the carver to New York free of expense, and insure him high and steady wages.

On the day that he left, all the village collected about the well to talk the matter over. Here was a strange gust from the outer world blowing into their dead calm! Most of them had forgotten that there

was a world outside of Walhalla. They tilled their farms and bartered with the mountaineers. Twice a year Schopf went to Charlotte for goods to fill his drowsy shop. New York? Riches? Fame? The blast of a strange trumpet, truly. The blood began to quicken. Such of them as had been wood-carvers felt their fingers itch for the knife.

"No doubt it is George Heller who will win it," everybody said. "That fellow has ambition to conquer the world. Did you see how he followed the Englishmen about? He could talk to them in their own fashion. George is no ordinary man!"

"If Hans had but his wit now!" said one, nodding as Hans on his mare came down the street. "Hans is a good fellow. But he will never make a stir in the world. Now, George's fingers used to be as nimble as his tongue."

Heller's tongue, meanwhile, was wagging nimbly enough at the other side of the well. He was a little, wiry, red-haired, spectacled fellow, with a perpetual movement and sparkle about him, as if his thoughts were flame.

"That's the right sort of talk. Fame — big profit! Why should we always drag behind the world here at Walhalla? Plough and dig, plough and dig! The richest man in New York left Germany a butcher's son, with his wallet strapped on his back; and what is a butcher to an artist? Just give me a foothold in New York and I'll show you what a baker's son can do, let Hans Becht laugh as he chooses!" For Hans, who had come down to the well, was listening with a quizzical twinkle in his eye. He filled his pipe,

laughed, sat down and said nothing. Everybody knew Hans to be the most silent man in Walhalla.

The pretty girls gathered shyly closer to Heller; and the boys thrust their hands in their pockets and stared admiringly up at him. Hans was their especial friend, but what a stout, common-place creature he was beside this brilliant fellow!

"A man only needs a foothold in this world!" George said, adjusting his spectacles and looking nervously toward a bench where a young girl sat holding her baby brother. The child was a solid lump of flesh, but she looked down at him with the tenderest eyes in the world. The sight of her drove the blood through Heller's veins almost as hotly as the smell of a glass of liquor would do. "Oh, if I win, I'll take a wife from Walhalla!" he cried, laughing excitedly, looking at her and not caring that the whole village saw his look. "I'll come back for the girl I love!" He fancied that the shy eyes had caught the fire from his own and answered with a sudden flash.

Hans thought so, too; his pipe went out in his mouth. When she rose to go home, he took the heavy boy out of her arms, and walked beside her. Heller's shrill voice sounded behind them like a vehement fife.

"Success . . . dollars . . . dollars!"

Hans looked anxiously down into her face.

"They are good things," she said; "very good things."

Hans's tongue was tied as usual. He dropped Phil in the cradle in the kitchen, and then came out and led Christine down to the garden of his own house.

What was New York — money, to *home?* Surely

she must see that! He led her slowly past the well-built barn and piggeries, past the bee-hives hidden behind the cherry-trees, and seated her on the porch. He thought these things would speak for him. Hans clung as closely to his home as Phil yonder to his mother's breast. But Christine looked sullen.

Hans said nothing.

"A man should not be satisfied with a kitchen garden," she said sharply.

They sat on the porch steps. The night air was warm and pure, the moon hung low over the rice fields to the left, throwing fantastic shadows that chased each other like noiseless ghosts as the wind swayed the grain. To the right, beyond the valley, the mountains pierced the sky. They were all so friendly, but dumb — dumb as himself. If they could only speak and say of how little account money was, after all! It seemed to Hans as if they were always just going to speak!

But Christine did not look at sky, or mountains, or sleeping valley. She looked at the gravel at her feet, and gave it a little kick.

"No doubt George Heller will succeed. I hope he will, too!" she said vehemently. "If a man has the real stuff in him let him show it to the world! I'll go home now, Mr. Becht."

That evening Hans's violin was silent. He used to play until late in the night; but he was sharpening his long unused knives, with a pale face. He, too, was beginning a Flight into Egypt.

During the next two weeks a tremendous whittling went on in Walhalla. Some old fellows, who had

never cut anything but paper-knives and match-boxes, were fired with the universal frenzy. Why should not Stein, the cobbler, or Fritz, the butcher, chip his way to wealth, fame, and New York? There is not a butcher or cobbler of us all who does not secretly believe himself a genius equal to the best — barred down by circumstance. George Heller kept his work secret, but he was mightily stirred by it in soul and body. Twice, in a rage, he broke the panel into bits, and came out pale and covered with perspiration; he walked about muttering to himself like one in a dream; he went to Godfrey Stein's inn and drank wine and brandy, and then more brandy, and forgot to pay. Genius is apt to leave the lesser virtues in the lurch. He kicked the dogs out of the way, cursed the children, and was insolent to his old father who still fed and clothed him.

"He's no better than a wolf's whelp!" said Stein. "But he's got the true artist soul. He'll win!" Now if anybody knew the world, it was Godfrey Stein.

Nobody thought Hans Becht would win but his old mother. She was sure of it. She sat beside him with her knitting, talking all the time. Why did he not give himself more time? The rice-field must be flooded? Let the rice go this year. He spent three hours in the cotton this morning. And what with foddering the stock, and rubbing down even the pigs —. What were cotton and pigs to this chance? It would come but once a life-time.

Meanwhile, Hans, when free from pigs and rice and cotton, sat by the window and cut, cut, and

whistled softly. The door of the kitchen stood open, and the chickens came picking their way on to the white floor. A swift stream of water ran through the millet field and across the garden, shining in the sun. The red rhododendrons nodded over it, and the rowan bushes, scarlet with berries. Beyond the millet field, there was a rampart of rolling hills, bronzed with the early frost; but here blazed the crimson leaves of the shonieho, and there a cucumber tree thrust its open golden fruit, studded with scarlet seeds, through the dull back-ground. Beyond this rising ground were the peaks, indistinct as gray shadows, holding up the sky.

Sometimes Mother Becht caught Hans with his knife idle, looking at these far off heights, or at the minnows glancing through the brook near at hand. There was a great pleasure in his eyes.

"You are a fool to throw away your time," she cried. "Can you cut that red weed or the sky into your wood? You could not even paint them."

"God forbid that anybody should try!" thought Hans.

"Stick to your work! work counts. The things that count in the world are those which push you up among your neighbors."

Hans began to cut a tip to Joseph's nose.

"The things which count in the world—" he queried to himself. He did his thinking very slowly. His blind father sat outside in the sun; he came in every hour or two to hear how the work was going on, and then went to Schopf's shop to report. His wife told him that there was no doubt that Hans would succeed.

"Joseph is good, and Mary is very fine," she said. "But the mule is incomparable. If you could only see the mule! When Hans goes to New York, do you think he will take us at once, or send for us in the spring? I think it would be safer to make the journey in the spring. But it will not matter to passengers in palace cars — no emigrant train for us, then, father! He will be taking three of us — "

"Eh? How's that? Three?"

"Christine," she said, with a significant chuckle. "Oh, she'll be glad enough to take our Hans, then! She's had to work her fingers to the bone. She knows the weight of a full purse."

"Hans is welcome to bring her home whether he wins or not," said Father Becht. "He earns the loaf, and it's big enough for four. There's not a sweeter voice in Walhalla than Christy Vogel's."

"She's well enough," said Mrs. Becht, cautiously. "Vogel's tobacco brought half a cent in the pound more than ours, and it was Christine's raising and drying. Her beer's fair, too. I've tasted it." She went in and talked to Hans. "Only win, and Christine will marry you. She'll follow the full purse."

"She'll follow the man she loves, and that is not I," thought Hans, and he stopped whistling. His mother's voice sounded on, click-click.

"When we are rich — when we are in the city — when we drive in a carriage — "

"She, too?" he considered, looking out thoughtfully about him at the fat farm-lands, the pleasant house, the cheery fire, and then away to the scarlet rowan burning in the brown undergrowth, and the misty, heaven-reaching heights.

Even his mother counted these things as nothing beside fame, New York, money. Was he then mad or a fool?

Nobody thought he would win. Yet, everybody stopped to look in the window, with "good-luck, Hans!"

"See what a favorite you are, my lad," said his mother. "There's not a man or a woman in Walhalla to whom you have not done a kindness. Do you think the Lord does not know you deserve success? If He does not give you the prize instead of that drunken Heller, there's no justice in heaven!"

At last the Englishman returned. The decision was to be made that night. Hans had finished his panel that very day. He did not know whether it was bad or good. He had cut away at it as faithfully as he had rubbed down his pigs. He wrapped it up that evening and went down to the inn, stopping at Vogel's on the way. The old people were at the well; Christine had cooked the supper, milked the cows, and now she was up in her chamber singing little Phil to sleep. Her voice came down to Hans below full of passion and sadness.

"Who is it she loves in that way?" he wondered. He stood in the path of the little yard, listening. Heller, coming across the street, eyed the square-jawed, heavy figure. What an awkward figure it was, to be sure. How the linen clothes bagged about it! He glanced down at his own natty little legs and shining boots, and tossed his head jerkily. He carried his panel wrapped in cloth, and came in, banging the gate after him.

"Is that you, Becht? Been whittling, too?" he said, with an insolent chuckle.

Hans looked at him steadfastly, not hearing a word that he said. Was it Heller that she loved? If he were sure of it, he would not speak a word for himself. No matter what became of him, if she were content. He was hurt to the core.

Christine came down. She wore some stuff of pale blue, and had fastened a bunch of wild roses in her bosom. She was so silent and cold with both the young men that one could hardly believe that it was the woman who had sung with such passionate longing over the child.

"Now you shall see my panel!" cried Heller, nervously adjusting his spectacles. He set it on the bench and dragged off the cloth.

"Ah-h!" cried Christine, clasping her hands; then she turned anxiously to Hans.

Hans was not ready with his words. His eyes filled with tears. He laid his hand on Heller's shoulder with hearty good-will. The work gave him keen pleasure. In the face of the mother bending over the child there was that inscrutable meaning which he found in the quiet valleys, the far heights. But Heller, oddly, did not seem to see it.

"Yes, very nice bits of chipping there!" pulling at his red moustache. "I shall ask fifty dollars for that."

Christine turned her searching eyes on him.

"Yes, fifty," he repeated, feeling that he had impressed her.

Hans, too, looked at him wondering. How could

this paltry sot compel the secret into his work, which to him was but a holy dream? Christine was watching him anxiously.

"Is that your panel?" she said at last.

Hans nodded, hesitated a moment, and then broke the thin bit of wood in two and flung it into the road.

"It was nothing but a fairly cut mule," he said.

Heller laughed loud.

"Well, time to be off. Wish me good luck, Christine!"

She smiled, and walked with him to the gate. Hans followed, but she did not once look at Hans. As she opened the gate, Heller laid his hand quickly on hers; a rose fell from her dress; he caught it and pressed it to his lips. His breath was rank with liquor. Hans thrust him back and strode between them.

"This must end. Christine, you must choose between this man and me."

"I can easily do that," she said, quickly.

Heller laughed. Hans gulped down a lump in his throat.

"Not to-night," he said.

By to-morrow, no doubt, Heller would be known as successful, the man whose purse would always be full. Christine must know precisely what she was choosing. It was like Hans to think of these things. If, in spite of it all, she came to him —

"There is another rose on your breast. Send it to-morrow to the man you love," he said.

"I will." She did not look at him. She was as pale as himself. He went down the street, leaving her with Heller.

Two hours afterward he went to the inn where Reid was, and sat on a bench at the door. Half the village was inside waiting to hear the decision. His heart beat rebelliously against his breast. What if, after all, there had been great hidden merit in his panel? It was only natural that Christine should be won by clap-trap of success and money — she was only a woman. "But no," he answered himself, "what I am — I am. I want no varnish of praise or dollars."

Out came the crowd.

"I knew it!" "The most worthless lout in Walhalla!" "A drunkard for luck!" "He goes to New York next week."

"Then he must come back for his wife," said Stein. "He told me to-night he was betrothed to Christy."

Hans stood up, and nodded good night to them as he pushed through the crowd. He did not go home. A damp breeze blew up the valley. Down yonder were the far-reaching meadows, the lapping streams, the great friendly trees. He went to them as a child goes to its mother in trouble.

* * * * * * * *

About six miles from Walhalla lies the trunk line of the Atlanta and Richmond railroad. At ten o'clock that evening, the moon being at the full, the engineer of the express train, going north, saw a man at a turn of the road signalling him vehemently to stop. Now, a way train in that leisurely region will pull up for any signal. But this engineer looked out in calm contempt.

"Reckon he don't know the express!" he said. A little child in the cars saw the man gesticulating wildly and laughed at him through the open window.

The man disappeared over the brow of the hill. The road made a long circuit around its base. When the engine came around this bend, the engineer, Hurst, saw on the track in front a prison hand-car used to transport the convict laborers from one division to another. The convicts had been taken to the stockade for the night, and the driver of the car was inside of it, dead drunk.

Hurst had been twenty years in his business; he understood the condition of affairs at a glance. He knew it meant death to all those people in the crowded cars behind him, to him first of all. He whistled down brakes, but he knew that it was of no use. The brakes were of the old kind, and before the train could be slackened it would be upon the solid mass in front.

"We're done for, Zack," he said to the fireman. He did not think of jumping off his engine. It is noticeable how few common-place men try to shirk death when in the discharge of duty.

The brakes were of no use. The engine swept on, hissing, shrieking.

Suddenly Hurst saw that the car was backing!—creeping like a snail; but assuredly, backing.

"Y-ha!" yelled Zack.

Hurst saw the man who had warned him standing on the platform of the car, working it. Now, it required at least four men to work that car.

In another minute the engine would be upon him.

"God! You'll be killed!" shouted Hurst. The terrible hardihood of the man stunned him into forgetting that anybody else was in danger. At that

instant from the train came a frightful shriek — women's voices. The passengers for the first time saw their danger.

It was but a point of time, yet it seemed like an hour. The train did not abate its speed. The man, a short fellow of powerful build, threw the strength of a giant into his straining muscles, his white face with its distended eyes was close in front in the red glare of the engine.

Hurst shut his eyes. He muttered something about Joe — Joe was his little boy.

The train jarred with a long scrunching rasp, and — stopped. They were saved.

"Great God!" prayed Hurst. "Tight squeak for your life, Zack," he said aloud, wetting his lips with his tongue.

The people poured out of the train. They went up to the car, some laughing, some swearing. But every man there felt as if Death had taken his soul into his hold for a moment, and then let it go.

Three stout men tried to move the car. They could not do it.

"Who is that fellow?"

"A workman on the road?"

"No," said Hurst.

"Where is he?" asked several.

For he had vanished as if the earth had swallowed him up.

"He was a youngish, light-complexioned fellow," said Zack. "Most likely a Deutcher from Walhalla."

"Whoever he may be, he saved our lives," said a

director of the road. "I never saw such desperate courage. I vote for a testimonial."

The American soul exults in testimonials, and the Southerner is free with his money. There happened, too, to be a delegation of New York merchants on board, who valued their lives at a pretty figure. More than all, there was a widow from California, the owner of millions and of the pretty boy who had looked out of the window. "He saved my baby," she said with a sob, as she took the paper.

The testimonial grew suddenly into a sum which made Hurst wink with amazement when he heard of it. "That fellow will be king in Walhalla," he said.

It was near morning when Hans came home. He went to his room, said his prayers, and slept heavily. The next morning the village was on fire with excitement. The inn was full of passengers from the train; the story was in everybody's mouth. The director of the road had driven over from the station. When Hans went down to the pasture that morning he saw a placard stating the facts and the sum subscribed, and requesting the claimant to present himself at the station that evening for identification by Hurst.

Hans went on to the pasture. When he came back and was at work in the garden, he could hear through the paling the people talking as they went by.

"He will be the richest man in Walhalla."

"The director says the company will give him a situation for life. So they ought!"

Nothing else was talked of. The contests of yesterday and all the Flights into Egypt were forgotten.

"Ah, that fellow is lucky, whoever he is!" he heard

his mother say on the sidewalk. "And there's Heller! Some people are born to luck!" looking over the palings with bitter disappointment at Hans, digging potatoes.

But blind Father Becht listened in silence. He knew but one man in the world brave enough for such a deed. "I give that lad my blessing!" he said, striking his cane on the ground. He, too, turned toward Hans, digging potatoes.

"Heller is packing to be off to New York," somebody said. "They say Vogel's pretty daughter is to follow in the spring."

Hans stuck his spade into the ground and went to his mother. "I am going to salt the cattle on the north mountain," he said.

"Very well. He does not even care to know who this brave lad is," she said to his father. "He's a good boy, but dull—dull. They tell me there is a woman from California at the inn. She says she must see the man who saved her boy's life. She is rich and has her whims, no doubt."

Night came, but the man had not presented himself. The next day the director, who was of a generous, impatient temper, offered a reward to anybody who could make him known. It was certain he had told nobody what he had done, or they now would have come forward for the reward. The excitement grew with every hour. Hans returned late in the next day. He went to his spade and began to dig the rest of the potatoes. His mother followed.

"Well," she exclaimed, "he is not found! The story is gone by telegraph to all parts of the country. Here are fame and riches waiting for him. Some people

certainly are born on lucky Sundays. There is Heller, the drunken beast, gone off to New York. And you must dig potatoes! There's no justice in heaven!"

She clicked away, knitting as she went.

Now I may as well say here that although this happened years ago, the missing man is not yet found. He is the mystery and pride of all that region. The director put the money out at compound interest, but it is yet unclaimed.

Concerning Hans, however, who digs his potatoes in the same patch, we have something more to tell. When he had finished digging that morning he went into the house. The stout fellow had lost his ruddy color, as though he had lately gone through some heavy strain of body or soul. He sat on the kitchen steps and played a soft air on his violin. The earth he had been digging lay in moist, black heaps. He liked the smell of it. How like a whispering voice was the gurgle of the stream through the roots of the sumachs! Yonder was a Peruvian tree, raising its trunk and branches in blood-red leaves against the still air; far beyond were the solemn heights. He had just come from there. He knew how quiet it was yonder near the sky — how friendly. All these things came, as he played, into the music and spoke through it, and a great stillness and peace shone in his eyes.

And at that moment — he never forgot it in all his life — a woman's hand brushed his cheek, and a red rose came before his eyes.

"You did not come for the rose, so I brought it to you," said Christine.

Later in the morning they went to the well together;

all their neighbors were there, and it was soon known they were betrothed. Everybody took Hans by the hand. He had never guessed he had so many friends. "There is no better fellow in the world," they said to one another. "He deserves luck."

"That is why I was impatient with you," whispered Christine. "I could not bear to see that miserable Heller carry away all the praise and the money."

"These are not the things in the world that count," said Hans, quietly.

Presently an open carriage drove through the street.

"That is the lady who was in the train," the people whispered. "That is her boy. She says she will not go until she finds the man who saved them."

The lady, smiling, held her baby up that it might see the women. She was greatly amused and interested by the quaint German village. When the boy caught sight of Hans he laughed and held out his hands. The mother nodded kindly. "The brave man who saved us also wore a workman's dress, I am told," she said. "My boy saw him as he passed."

Hans took the child in his arms for a moment, and kissed him. When he gave him back to his mother his eyes were full of tears. Then the carriage drove on.

He stood at the door of the home that was so dear to him. Christine held his hand, the sun shone cheerfully about him.

"To think," said his mother, "that we are not to know who that brave fellow is!"

His blind father took Hans's other hand softly in his.

"*God knows,*" he said.

But no one heard him.

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE

DR. NOYES married, I think, somewhere about '68 or '9. There is very little to be said about his wife. Mrs. Sarah Fanning, indeed, gave a decisive verdict upon her at first sight. "She is one of the rank and file of Humanity," said she; "one of the weightless molecules that go to make up the mass." Mrs. Fanning was that brilliant little woman from Andover, Massachusetts, who essayed to take the well-known Mrs. Rush's place in Philadelphia that winter. She used to give weekly reunions — without supper; she cannot understand, even now, why she could not "form a literary nucleus" there.

Nobody contradicted her verdict; she always claimed Humanity as her own pre-empted property; and besides, there really was so little to say about the Doctor's wife! Mrs. Fanning remarked that "an American woman, if no other, ought to have some salient points, good or bad, to justify her right to live, and this woman was an American of the Americans, descended on one side from a colonial Maryland family, and on the other, of Pennsylvania Quaker stock, a race of reformers, who lived only for great ideas. But there

was absolutely nothing in the creature — nothing! It was inexplicable, by all the rules of race!" The little lady's specialty, by the bye, was "race" and "strains of blood." She could lay her finger on the very great-grandfather from whom you inherited your long upper-lip or gluttonous propensities, and reason for you, out of these inheritances, such sequences of fatalism that your Christianity tottered quite to its foundations.

Now there had been no salient points about the Doctor's wife when she was a fat baby, or a girl at school. Dode Mear was daily set down as a dunce in every class in Madame Latouché's private school, from spelling up to International Law, and daily took up her book with a cheerful "It really *is* too bad in me," and went out in the evening with fresh zeal to skate and run races with the boys, — her cousins. If she had been one of the delicate "Lilys" and "Violets" whom the other girls set apart to adore, her lack of brains could have been overlooked; but she was a short, thickset little body, with a shock of red hair tied back from a freckled face which was lighted by laughing blue eyes, — eyes in which there was an undeniable cast. She never, however, gave a hint of her opinion of herself, and always seemed to be in high good humor with her lot in life, stupidity and squint included. A certain indefinable something about the girl would prevent any one from hinting a disagreeable truth to her. The same impalpable reserve or old-fashioned courtesy in her, too, made the boys who skated and raced with her treat her with a respect which they did not show to the Lilys and Violets. Her condition on graduation-day would have been

pitiable if her placid good humor had not made it exasperating. One of the class was going to sail as Missionary to Africa: we all made a paragon and martyr of her; we all looked forward with hysteric enthusiasm to speedily becoming famous authors, leaders in society, or at least, wives and mothers. Clergymen and faculty spoke and prayed at us, the very air kindled with hope and fervor; and there sat that plump little dunce at the foot of the bench, smelling a bunch of the red Burgundy roses, of which she was so fond, quite contented to be nobody now and in the future!

Here she was again, Dr. Noyes's wife, shapeless and freckled and bright-eyed as ever: but the ugly hair was always delicately coiffured, and her simple dress a marvel of exquisite art. She did not care in the least that everybody believed that she had sold herself for an establishment. Why else should a girl of her age marry a cynical, soured widower of fifty, with a half dozen hobble-de-hoys of sons?

"Dr. Noyes," Mrs. Fanning said, "was an ambitious man, thwarted in his aims, by the drudgery of supporting a family. He should have chosen an intellectual woman as his second wife, who could have helped him to regain his lost ground."

The Doctor's mistake was soon apparent in his wife's course. The faded carpets and hair-cloth sofas were swept out of the dreary old house. The money spent in making it bright and pretty, as Mrs. Fanning said, would have kept open a soup house all winter: Noyes's old friends, instead of smoking their meerschaums in his dusty office, came in now to cosey dinners, where

each man found his favorite dish: his wife had a fine taste in cookery, it appears: in that, as in everything else she took life with zest and joyously: the Noyes boys, who had begun to hang round Variety theatres and engine-houses, gave a series of dancing parties and private theatricals at home, to which girls of their own class came.

Now all these things bring in bills: the Doctor's long-hoarded money was spent like water. It was an inscrutable mystery to our society leaders why he and his boys, and in fact, all other men, clustered around Mrs. Dode, as they called her, affectionately, like bees about honey. She never said anything worth remembering for five minutes: she made no professions of love or friendship. Some of us, who remembered how the whole school used to pause to hear her read her Bible verse, thought the charm lay in her pleasant voice, or could there be any magic in the clean, spicy scent of Burgundy roses with which the house was always filled? The men, when questioned, really seemed to have no definite idea of the woman: one "liked her because she was quiet," another because "her handshake was as firm as a man's," another for her merry laugh.

In the meantime they all carried their secrets to her: the very classmates of the Noyes boys wrote to her about their college scrapes that she might "see father and mother about it, and beg them off." She had a queer "following" of women too, shabby widows and fashionable belles and poor sempstresses — you were just as likely to find one at her table as the other. She had not the least perception of class distinctions, owing

perhaps to those Quaker grandfathers who measured the world and all in it by ideas. She had, too, different rates of value from ours with regard to other things. Mrs. Fanning unconsciously ranked herself high in the scale of being because of her priceless bric-a-brac, and portfolio of proofs before letters. Mrs. Dode also surrounded herself with old china and pictures, but was indifferent about it: she did not carry her little luxuries with the uneasy vanity of a workman in his Sunday shirt. Art and wealth had been ordinary appliances of her mother's people in Maryland for generations. She took no more notice as to whether a man was rich or poor in such things than whether he came to her gloved or ungloved.

Somebody was sure to bring every foreign traveller to the Doctor's house; whether it was prince, novelist, or poet, Mrs. Dode welcomed them to her ordinary table and habits, not concerning herself to inquire if they were used to a palace or hovel: and they in turn forgot to notice whether the courses were served in Russian or French fashion, or how she dealt with her a's.

"I wish you to judge of us by our representative women," Mrs. Fanning said to one of these tourists while they were dining at the Doctor's, "and not by negative characters."

But he could look at nobody but the homely little woman at the head of the table. "Ah, madam," he cried, "there are so many representative women! But the old story tells us of how Prince Charming married the good fairy, and by her had a family of but few children, all of whom were born in the light of the

moon; and I meet one now and then in this country or in that. When I find one of them, then I look no farther."

It was quite natural that Mrs. Dode, having lived in so negative a way, without making any mark or bruit in the world, should die in the same fashion. It appears that while she seemed in health some secret symptoms led her to consult a physician. She went to New York to do this, saying nothing to her husband, and there learned that she had but a short time to live. Whatever grief she may have felt, she showed none and told nobody her secret. When she came back, the home life went on in its usual merry fashion. Dick and Joe both brought their brides home that winter. Dr. Noyes, who had grown younger and more energetic every year since his marriage, was busied with some experiments in electricity, which added greatly to his reputation. Mrs. Dode did not change her habits in the least. She never had been a constant church-goer, nor a member of any charitable society, and she did not become one now. It was remembered afterwards that she remained out longer in the mornings on her rounds among the poor, and that she had a print which was in her chamber, re-hung, so that she could see it when she first woke in the morning. (It was the Head crowned with thorns.)

In June her husband was invited to Baltimore to an anniversary celebration, in which he always took a keen delight. She clung to him and cried when he was going.

"If you need me, Dode, I will stay with you," he said, tenderly.

She hesitated a little, and then raised herself, smiling. "No, it will be pleasanter for you there," said she, "only good-bye once more, dear."

She went to bed as usual that night. In the morning they found her dead, her cheek resting on her hand, a half smile on the freckled face: her other hand, tight closed, was lying on her heart, and they found in it a bit of the hair of the little dead-born baby that came to her years ago, whose head had never rested on her bosom.

The morning sun shone brightly over her, and the room was filled with the perfume of fresh roses.

ANNE

IT was a strange thing, the like of which had never before happened to Anne. In her matter-of-fact, orderly life mysterious impressions were rare. She tried to account for it afterward by remembering that she had fallen asleep out-of-doors. And out-of-doors, where there is the hot sun and the sea and the teeming earth and tireless winds, there are perhaps great forces at work, both good and evil, mighty creatures of God going to and fro, who do not enter into the little wooden or brick boxes in which we cage ourselves. One of these, it may be, had made her its sport for the time.

Anne, when she fell asleep, was sitting in a hammock on a veranda of the house nearest to the water. The wet bright sea-air blew about her. She had some red roses in her hands, and she crushed them up under her cheek to catch the perfume, thinking drowsily that the colors of the roses and cheek were the same. For she had had great beauty ever since she was a baby, and felt it, as she did her blood, from her feet to her head, and triumphed and was happy in it. She had a wonderful voice too. She was silent now, being

nearly asleep. But the air was so cold and pure, and the scent of the roses so strong in the sunshine, and she was so alive and throbbing with youth and beauty, that it seemed to her that she was singing so that all the world could hear, and that her voice rose — rose up and up into the very sky.

Was that George whom she saw through her half-shut eyes coming across the lawn? And Theresa with him? She started, with a sharp wrench at her heart.

But what was Theresa to George? Ugly, stupid, and older than he, a woman who had nothing to win him — but money. *She* had not cheeks like rose leaves, nor youth, nor a voice that could sing at heaven's gate. Anne curled herself, smiling, down to sleep again. A soft warm touch fell on her lips.

"George!"

The blood stopped in her veins; she trembled even in her sleep. A hand was laid on her arm.

"Bless grashus, Mrs. Palmer! hyah's dat coal man wants he's money. I's been huntin' you low an' high, an' you a-sleepin' out'n dohs!"

Anne staggered to her feet.

"Mother," called a stout young man from the tan-bark path below, "I must catch this train. Jenny will bring baby over for tea. I wish you would explain the dampers in that kitchen range to her."

The wet air still blew in straight from the hazy sea horizon; the crushed red roses lay on the floor.

But she —

There was a pier-glass in the room beside her. Going up to it, she saw a stout woman of fifty with

grizzled hair and a big nose. Her cheeks were yellow.

She began to sing. Nothing came from her mouth but a discordant yawp. She remembered that her voice left her at eighteen, after she had that trouble with her larynx. She put her trembling hand up to her lips.

George had never kissed them. He had married Theresa more than thirty years ago. George Forbes was now a famous author.

Her fingers still lay upon her lips. "I thought that he —" she whispered, with a shudder of shame through all of her stout old body.

But below, underneath that, her soul flamed with rapture. Something within her cried out, "*I* am here — Anne! I am beautiful and young. If this old throat were different, my voice would ring through earth and heaven."

"Mrs. Palmer, de coal man —"

"Yes, I am coming, Jane." She took her account-book from her orderly work-basket and went down to the kitchen.

When she came back she found her daughter Susan at work at the sewing-machine. Mrs. Palmer stopped beside her, a wistful smile on her face. Susan was so young: she would certainly take an interest in this thing which had moved her so deeply. Surely some force outside of nature had been thrust into her life just now, and turned it back to its beginnings!

"I fell asleep out on the porch awhile ago, Susy," she said, "and I dreamed that I was sixteen again. It was very vivid. I cannot even now shake off the

impression that I am young and beautiful and in love."

"Ah, yes! poor dear papa!" Susy said, with a sigh, snipping her thread. She wished to say something more, something appropriate and sympathetic, about this ancient love of her parents; but it really seemed a little ridiculous, and besides, she was in a hurry to finish the ruffle. Jasper was coming up for tea.

Mrs. Palmer hesitated, and then went on into her own room. She felt chilled and defeated. She had thought Susy would take an interest, but— Of course she could not explain to her that it was not of her poor dear papa that she had dreamed. After all, was it quite decent in a middle-aged respectable woman to have such a dream? Her sallow jaws reddened as she shut herself in. She had been very foolish to tell Susy about it at all.

Mrs. Nancy Palmer was always uncomfortably in awe of the hard common-sense of her children. They were both Palmers. When James was a baby he had looked up one day from her breast with his calm attentive eyes, and she had quailed before them. "I never shall be as old as he is already," she had thought. But as they grew up they loved their mother dearly. Her passionate devotion to them would have touched hearts of stone, and the Palmers were not at all stony-hearted, but kindly, good-humored folk, like their father.

The neighborhood respected Mrs. Palmer as a woman of masculine intellect because, after her husband's death, she had managed the plantation with remarkable energy and success. She had followed his exact,

methodical habits in peach-growing and in the management of house, had cleared the property of debt, and then had invested in Western lands so shrewdly as to make herself and the children rich.

But James and Susan were always secretly amused at the deference paid to their mother by the good Delaware planters. She was the dearest woman in the world, but as to a business head —

All her peach crops, her Dakota speculations, and the bank stock which was the solid fruit thereof went for nothing as proofs to them of adult good sense. They were only dear mamma's lucky hits. How could a woman have a practical head who grew so bored with the pleasant church sociables, and refused absolutely to go to the delightful Literary Circle? who would listen to a hand-organ with tears in her eyes, and who had once actually gone all the way up to Philadelphia to hear an Italian stroller named Salvini? Neither of them could understand such childish outbreaks. Give a Palmer a good peach farm, a comfortable house, and half a dozen servants to worry him, and his lines of life were full. Why should their mother be uneasy inside of these lines?

That she was uneasy to-day, Susy soon perceived. A letter came from Pierce and Wall, her consignees in Philadelphia; but Mrs. Palmer threw it down unopened, though she had shipped three hundred crates of Morris Whites last Monday.

She was usually a most careful house-keeper, keeping a sharp eye on the careless negroes, but she disappeared for hours this afternoon, although Jasper Tyrrell was coming for tea, and Jane was sure to

make a greasy mess of the terrapin if left to herself.

Jasper certainly had paid marked attention to Susy lately, but she knew that he was a cool, prudent young fellow, who would look at the matter on every side before he committed himself. The Tyrrells were an old, exclusive family, who would exact perfection from a bride coming among them, from her theology to her tea biscuit.

"A trifle of less importance than messy terrapin has often disgusted a man," thought Susy, her blue eyes dim with impatience.

Just before sunset Mrs. Palmer came up the road, her hands full of brilliant maple leaves. Susy hurried to meet and kiss her; for the Palmers were a demonstrative family, who expressed their affection by a perpetual petting and buzzing about each other. The entire household would shudder with anxiety if a draught blew on mamma's neck, and fall into an agony of apprehension if the baby had a cold in its head. Mrs. Palmer, for some reason, found that this habit of incessant watchfulness bored her just now.

"No, my shoes are *not* damp, Susy. No, I did not need a shawl. I am not in my dotage, child, that I cannot walk out without being wrapped up like an Esquimau. One would think I was on the verge of the grave."

"Oh, no, but you are not young, darling mamma. You are just at the age when rheumatisms and lumbagoes and such things set in if one is not careful. Where have you been?"

"I took a walk in the woods."

"Woods! No wonder your shoulders are damp. Come in directly, dear. Four grains of quinine and a hot lemonade going to bed. Walking in the woods! Really, now, that is something I cannot understand," — smiling at her mother as though she were a very small child indeed. "Now I can walk any distance to church, or to shop, or for any reasonable motive, but to go wandering about in the swampy woods for no earthly purpose — I'll press those leaves for you," checking herself.

"No; I do not like to see pressed leaves and grasses about in vases. It is like making ornaments of hair cut from a dead body. When summer is dead, let it die." She threw down the leaves impatiently, and the wind whirled them away.

"How queer mamma and the people of that generation are — so little self-control!" thought Susy. "It is nearly time for Mr. Tyrrell to be here," she said aloud. "Can Jane season the terrapin?"

"Oh, I suppose so," said Mrs. Palmer, indifferently, taking up a book.

She was indifferent and abstracted all evening. Peter clattered the dishes as he waited at the supper-table, and the tea was lukewarm. Jasper was lukewarm too, silent and critical.

James's wife, Jenny, had come over for supper, and finding her mother-in-law so absent and inattentive, poured forth her anecdotes of baby to Mr. Tyrrell. Jenny, like most young mothers, gave forth inexhaustibly theories concerning the sleep, diet, and digestion of infants. Jasper, bored and uneasy, shuffled in his chair. He had always thought Mrs. Palmer was

charming as a hostess, full of tact, in fine rapport with every one. Couldn't she see how this woman was bedevilling him with her croup and her flannels? She was apparently blind and deaf to it all.

Mrs. Palmer's vacant eyes were turned out of the window. Susy glanced at her with indignation. Was mamma deranged?

How petty the pursuits of these children were! thought the older woman, regarding them as from a height. How cautious and finical Tyrrell was in his love-making! Susy too — six months ago she had carefully inquired into Jasper's income.

Tea biscuit and flannels and condensed milk! At seventeen *her* horizon had not been so cramped and shut in. How wide and beautiful the world had been! Nature had known her and talked to her, and in all music there had been a word for her, alone and apart. How true she had been to her friends! how she had hated her enemies! how, when love came to her — Mrs. Palmer felt a sudden chill shiver through her limbs. She sat silent until they rose from table. Then she hurried to her own room. She did not make a light. She told herself that she was absurdly nervous, and bathed her face and wrists in cold water. But she could not strike a light. This creature within her, this Anne, vivid and beautiful and loving, was she to face the glass and see the old yellow-skinned woman?

She ought to think of that old long-ago self as dead.

But it was not dead.

"If I had married the man I loved," this something within her cried, "I should have had my true life. He would have understood me."

How ridiculous and wicked it all was!

"I was a loyal, loving wife to Job Palmer," she told herself, resolutely lighting the lamp and facing the stout figure in the glass with its puffy black silk gown. "My life went down with his into the grave."

But there was a flash in the gray pleading eyes which met her in the glass that gave her the lie.

They were Anne's eyes, and Anne had never been Job Palmer's wife.

Mrs. Palmer did not go down again that night. A wood fire blazed on her hearth, and she put on her wrapper and drew her easy-chair in front of it, with the little table beside her on which lay her Bible and prayer-book and à Kempis. This quiet hour was usually the happiest of the day. James and Jenny always came in to kiss her good-bye, and Susy regularly crept in when the house was quiet to read a chapter with her mother and to tuck her snugly into bed.

But to-night she locked her door. She wanted to be alone. She tried to read, but pushed the books away, and turning out the light, threw herself upon the bed. Not à Kempis nor any holy saint could follow her into the solitudes into which her soul had gone. Could God Himself understand how intolerable this old clumsy body had grown to her?

She remembered that when she had been ill with nervous prostration two years ago she had in an hour suddenly grown eighty years old. Now the blood of sixteen was in her veins. Why should this soul within her thus dash her poor brain from verge to verge of its narrow range of life?

The morbid fancies of the night brought her by

morning to an odd resolution. She would go away. Why should she not go away? She had done her full duty to husband, children, and property. Why should she not begin somewhere else, live out her own life? Why should she not have her chance for the few years left? Music and art and the companionship of thinkers and scholars. Mrs. Palmer's face grew pale as she named these things so long forbidden to her.

It was now dawn. She hastily put on a travelling dress, and placed a few necessary articles and her check-book in a satchel.

"Carry this to the station," she said to Peter, who, half asleep, was making up the fires.

"Gwine to Philadelphy, Mis' Palmer? Does Miss Susy know?"

"No. Tell her I have been suddenly called away."

As she walked to the station she smiled to think how Susy would explain her sudden journey by the letter from Pierce and Wall, and would look to find whether she had taken her overshoes and chamois jacket. "I hate overshoes, and I would like to tear that jacket into bits!" she thought as she took her seat in the car. She was going to escape from it all. She would no longer be happed and dosed and watched like a decrepit old crone. She was an affectionate mother, but it actually did not occur to her that she was leaving Susy and James and the baby. She was possessed with a frenzy of delight in escaping. The train moved. She was free! She could be herself now at last!

It could be easily arranged. She would withdraw her certificates and government bonds from the vaults

of the trust company in Philadelphia. The children had their own property secure.

Where should she go? To Rome? Venice? No. There were so many Americans trotting about Europe. She must be rid of them all. Now there was Egypt and the Nile. Or if another expedition were going to Iceland? Up there in the awful North among the glaciers and geysers, and sagas and Runic relics, one would be in another world, and forget Morris Whites and church sociables and the wiggling village gossip.

"There are people in this country who live in a high pure atmosphere of thought, who never descend to gossip or money-making," she thought, remembering the lofty strains of George Forbes's last poem. "If I had been his wife I too might have thought great thoughts and lived a noble life."

She tried angrily to thrust away this idea. She did not mean to be a traitor to her husband, whom she had loved well and long.

But the passion of her youth maddened her. Job had been a good commonplace man. But this other was a Seer, a Dictator of thought to the world.

The train rolled into Broad Street station. Mrs. Palmer went to the Trust company and withdrew her bonds. She never before had come up to the city alone; Susy always accompanied her to "take care of dear mamma." Susy, who had provincial ideas as to "what people in our position should do," always took her to the most fashionable hotel, and ordered a dinner the cost of which weighed upon her conscience for months afterward. Mrs. Palmer now went to a cheap little café in a back street, and ate a chop with

the keen delight of a runaway dog gnawing a stolen bone. A cold rain began to fall, and she was damp and chilled when she returned to the station.

Where should she go? Italy — the Nile — Heavens! there were the Crotons from Dover getting out of the train! She must go somewhere at once to hide herself; afterward she could decide on her course. A queue of people were at the ticket window. She placed herself in line.

"Boston?" said the agent.

She nodded. In five minutes she was seated in a parlor car, and thundering across the bridge above the great abattoir. She looked down on the cattle in their sheds. "I do wonder if Peter will give Rosy her warm mash to-night?" she thought, uneasily.

There were but three seats occupied in the car. Two men and a lady entered together and sat near to Mrs. Palmer, so that she could not but hear their talk, which at first ran upon draughts.

"You might open your window, Corvill," said one of the men, "if Mrs. Ames is not afraid of neuralgia."

Corvill? Ames? Mrs. Palmer half rose from her seat. Why, Corvill was the name of the great figure-painter! She had an etching of his "Hagar." She never looked into that woman's face without a wrench at her heart. All human pain and longing spoke in it as they did in George Forbes's poems. Mrs. Ames, she had heard, was chairman of the Woman's National Society for the Examination of Prisons. Mrs. Palmer had read her exposé of the abominations of the lessee system — words burning with a fiery zeal for humanity. There had been a symposium in Philadelphia,

she remembered, of noted authors and artists this week.

No doubt these were two of those famous folk. Mrs. Palmer drew nearer, feeling as if she were creeping up to the base of Mount Olympus. This was what happened when one cut loose from Morris Whites and terrapin and that weary Jane and Peter! The Immortals were outside, and she had come into their company.

"Oh, open the window!" said Mrs. Ames, who had a hoarse voice which came in bass gusts and snorts out of a mouth mustached like a man's. "Let's have some air! The sight of those emigrants huddled in the station nauseated me. Women and babies all skin and bone and rags."

Now Mrs. Palmer had just emptied her purse and almost cried over that wretched group. That sick baby's cry would wring any woman's heart, she thought. Could it be that this great philanthropist had pity only for the misery of the masses? But the man who painted "Hagar" surely would be pitiful and tender?

"Sorry they annoyed you," he was saying. "Some very good subjects among them. I made two sketches," pulling out a note-book. "That half-starved woman near the door — see? — eh? Fine slope in the chin and jaw. I wanted a dying baby for my 'Exiles,' too. I caught the very effect I wanted. Sick child."

Mrs. Palmer turned her revolving chair away. It was a trifling disappointment, but it hurt her. She was in that strained, feverish mood when trifles hurt sharply. These were mere hucksters of art and hu-

manity. They did not belong to the high pure level on which stood great interpreters of the truth — such, for instance, as George Forbes. The little quake which always passed through her at this man's name was increased by a shiver from the damp wind blowing upon her. She sneezed twice.

Mrs. Ames stared at her insolently, and turned her back, fearing that she might be asked to put down the window.

Mr. Corvill was talking about the decoration of the car. "Not bad at all," he said. "There is great tenderness in the color of that ceiling, and just look at the lines of the chairs! They are full of feeling."

Mrs. Palmer listened, bewildered. But now they were looking at the landscape. If he found feeling in the legs of a chair, what new meanings would he not discover in that vast stretch of lonely marsh with the narrow black lagoons creeping across it?

"Nice effect," said Mr. Corvill — "the lichen on that barn against the green. I find little worth using in the fall this year, however. Too much umber in the coloring."

Could it be, she thought, that these people had made a trade of art and humanity until they had lost the perception of their highest meanings?

"I should think," continued Corvill, turning to the other man, "you could find *matériel* for some verses in these flats. Ulalume, or The Land of Dolor. Something in that line. Eh, Forbes?"

Forbes! Her breath stopped. That fat hunched man with the greasy black whiskers and gaudy chain! Yes, that was his voice; but had it always that tone of vulgar swagger?

"I've stopped verse-writing," he said. "Poetry's a drug in the market. My infernal publishers shut down on it five years ago."

He turned, and she then saw his face — the thin hard lips, the calculating eye.

Was this man "George"? Or had that George ever lived except in her fancy?

"Mr. Forbes." She rose. The very life in her seemed to stop; her knees shook. But habit is strong. She bowed as she named him, and stood there, smiling, the courteous, thorough-bred old lady whose charm young Tyrrell had recognized. Some power in the pathetic gray eyes startled Forbes and brought him to his feet.

"I think I knew you long ago," she said. "If it is you —?"

"Forbes is my name, ma'am. Lord bless me! you can't be — Something familiar in your eyes. You remind me of Judge Sinclair's daughter Fanny."

"Anne was my name."

"Anne. To be sure. I knew it was Nanny or Fanny. I ought to remember, for I was spoons on you myself for a week or two. You know you were reckoned the best catch in the county, eh? Sit down, ma'am, sit down; people of our weight aren't built for standing."

"Is — your wife with you?"

"You refer to the first Mrs. Forbes — Theresa Stone? I have been married twice since her decease. I am now a widower." He put his hand to his mouth and coughed, glancing at the crape on his hat. His breath crossed her face. It reeked of heavy feeding

and night orgies; for Forbes, though avaricious, had gross appetites.

Suddenly Job Palmer stood before her, with his fine clear-cut face and reasonable eyes. He knew little outside of his farm perhaps; but how clean was his soul! How he had loved her!

The car at that moment swayed violently from side to side; the lamps went out. "Hello!" shouted Forbes. "Something wrong! We must get out of this!" rushing to the door. She braced herself against her chair.

In the outside darkness the rushing of steam was heard, and shrieks of women in mortal agony. A huge weight fell on the car, crushing in the roof. Mrs. Palmer was jammed between two beams, but unhurt. A heavy rain was falling.

"I shall not be burned to death, at any rate," she thought, and then fortunately became insensible.

In half an hour she was cut out and laid on the bank, wet and half frozen, but with whole bones. She tried to rise, but could not; every joint ached with rheumatism; her gown was in tatters, the mud was deep under her, and the rain pelted down. She saw the fire burning on her hearth at home, and the easy-chair in front of it, and the Bible and à Kempis.

Some men with lanterns came up and bent over her.

"Great God, mother!" one of them cried. It was James, who had been on the same train, going to New York.

The next day she was safely laid in her own bed. The fire was burning brightly, and Susy was keeping guard that she might sleep. Jenny had just brought

a delicious bowl of soup and fed it to her, and baby had climbed up on the bed to hug her, and fallen asleep there. She held him in her arm. James came in on tiptoe, and bent anxiously over her. She saw them all through her half-shut eyes.

"My own — flesh of my flesh!" she thought, and thanked God from her soul for the love that held her warm and safe.

As she dozed, Susy and James bent over her. "Where could she have been going?" said Susy.

"To New York; no doubt to make a better contract than the one she has with Pierce and Wall — to make a few more dollars for us. Or, an investment: her bonds were all in her satchel. Poor dear unselfish soul! Don't worry her with questions, Susy — don't speak of it."

"No, I will not, Jim," said Susy, wiping her eyes. "But if she only had taken her chamois jacket!"

James himself, when his mother was quite well, remarked one day, "We had a famous fellow-traveller in that train to New York — Forbes, the author."

"A most disagreeable, underbred person!" said Mrs. Palmer, vehemently. "I would not have you notice such people, James — a mere shopman of literature!"

* * * * * * * *

Susy married Jasper Tyrrell that winter. They live in the homestead now, and Mrs. Palmer has four or five grandchildren about her, whom she spoils to her heart's content. She still dabbles a little in mining speculations; but since her accident on the

cars she is troubled with rheumatism, and leaves the management of the farm and house to Jasper and Susy. She has a quiet, luxurious, happy life, being petted like a baby by all of the Palmers. Yet sometimes in the midst of all this comfort and sunshine a chance note of music or the sound of the restless wind will bring an expression into her eyes which her children do not understand, as if some creature unknown to them looked out of them.

At such times Mrs. Palmer will say to herself, "Poor Anne!" as of somebody whom she once knew that is dead.

Is she dead? she feebly wonders; and if she is dead here, will she ever live again?

AN IGNOBLE MARTYR

OLD Aaron Pettit, who had tried to live for ten years with half of his body dead from paralysis, had given up at last. He was altogether dead now, and laid away out of sight in the three-cornered lot where the Pettits had been buried since colonial days. The graveyard was a triangle cut out of the wheat field by a certain Osee Pettit in 1695. Many a time had Aaron, while ploughing, stopped to lean over the fence and calculate how many bushels of grain the land thus given up to the dead men would have yielded.

"They can keep it. I'll not plough it up," he would mumble to himself with conscious virtue. "But land was to be hed for the fencin' then, evidently, or no Pettit would have wasted it on corpses that might as well have lain in the churchyard."

Now, Aaron himself was in the wasted triangle, and as his daughter Priscilla saw his coffin lowered into it she felt a wrench of pity for him, because he never again could see the wheat grow in the lot around him, nor count how many dollars profit it would yield that year to pay the interest on the mortgage. It was nat-

ural that she should feel that he was really dead in just that way, for the wheat lot was the only property owned by the Pettits, and that mortgage their only active interest in life.

When the funeral was over, the neighbors, as is the custom in North Leedom, came back to the house, and sat in silence for half an hour in the little parlor. The undertaker had given the silver plate from the coffin lid to Prue, as the oldest child, and she hung it up now with a sad pride over the mantel-shelf. There were six other coffin plates there, the only decorations on the parlor wall.

Her younger brother, who had left "the mourners" and was in the kitchen, called her out impatiently. "Are you going to put that horrible thing up there, Prissy?" he said.

"Horrible!" said Prue, aghast. "It is very handsome, Bowles. It cost three dollars and sixty-three cents. And why should I show disrespect to father?"

"Oh, if it is counted disrespect! — Prue, can't we give these people a cup of tea? There are the Waces, they have come ten miles, and they have to go back without any dinner. And the Fords. Some tea and doughnuts?" He looked anxiously into her face.

The heat rose into Prue's cheeks, and her eyes shone. There was something delightful to her in this bold proposal, for she had, unknown to herself, a hospitable soul. She had never seen a stranger break bread under their roof. But on such an occasion as this —

"What would mother say?" she whispered. "Oh, no, no, Bowles! I can't do it. There are ten of

them" — peering into the parlor — "ten. It would take a quarter of a pound of tea; and then the sugar. Oh no, we couldn't afford it!" and she went back and sat down again with the mourners, comforting herself that nobody would expect to be fed. In North Leedom the folks did not eat in each others' houses. It would have been thought a wicked waste to "treat to victuals," as, it was reported, was the common custom in larger towns.

This was no time, Prue felt, for her to appear eccentric or extravagant; and it would have been extravagant. Tea and cakes for ten would have made a big break in the money to be saved for the fall payment on the mortgage.

The Pettits during the next week took up the thread of their daily life unbroken. The little four-roomed house had, of course, a thorough cleaning. Undertakers and neighbors had left dust behind them. Mrs. Pettit had grace to help her bear the pains which death had left; but dirt she would not put up with. The furniture was all taken out into the yard to be sunned; the stair carpet, with its hundred neat patches, was washed, dried, and tacked down again. The furniture in the house was of the cheapest kind, but it had belonged to Mrs. Pettit's grandmother, and had always been cared for with a tender reverence, not because of its associations, but for its money value. Indeed, so much of the lives of the Pettit women for generations had gone into the care of these speckless chairs and tables that one might suspect a likeness between the condition of their souls and that of the filthy Fijian who worships the string of bones which he polishes incessantly.

Bowles despised the tables and chairs. But the mortgage! That was another thing — a thing so serious that it seemed to overshadow, to choke his whole life. John Pettit, his grandfather, in some great emergency, had put the house under a mortgage, had worked for twenty years to clear it off, and died, leaving the task to Aaron. Aaron had accepted it as a sacred trust; every penny he could save had gone to it. Now he was dead, and there was still a thousand dollars due on it.

Mrs. Pettit was too nearly blind to work. Prue sewed on men's seersucker coats for a factory in Boston. She was paid sixty cents a dozen for them. This paid the taxes and bought their clothes.

Bowles knew that his mother and sister and all of the village expected him to take up the payment of this mortgage as the work of his life.

The minister, old Mr. Himms, had said as much to him after the funeral.

"It is a noble ambition, my boy," he said, "for a man to own the home of his fathers free of debt. In our New England towns there are thousands of men and women struggling in dire poverty all their lives with this aim before them."

This aim! What aim?

Bowles, sitting one evening under the old elm-tree as the sun was going down, looked at the ugly, bare little house and hated it. Had life nothing more for him than — *that?*

He looked about him. North Leedom was made up of just such ugly, clean, bare houses. There were no trees on the sidewalks, no flowers in the yards.

The people had been poor for generations, and they had reduced the economy of their Puritan ancestors to an art so hard and cruel that it dominated them now in body and soul. To save was no longer a disagreeable necessity for them; it had become the highest of duties.

The Pettits had always crept along in the same rut with their neighbors. They would not buy sufficient food to satisfy their craving stomachs. With each generation they grew leaner and weaker; the sallow skin clung more tightly to their bones; the men became victims of dyspepsia, the women of nervous prostration.

Each generation, too, carried the niggardly economy a little farther. They "could not afford time" for flowers nor for music; they could not afford to buy books nor newspapers. They came at last in their fierce zeal for saving to begrudge smiles and welcomes to each other or kisses and hugs to their children.

They stripped their lives of all the little kindly amenities, the generosities of feeling and word which make life elsewhere cheerful and tender. If their starved hearts, sometimes, like their bodies, gave signs of hunger, they were only mortified at their own lack of self-control. Their history was that of countless families in New England villages.

Bowles Pettit, thinking over the lives of his neighbors and family, tried to judge fairly of his own. But he was ashamed to find that he could scarcely think at all, he was so hungry. He was a big, raw-boned, growing boy; the nervous strain of the last week had been severe on him. He needed food, and he knew

he would not have enough to-day. He could not remember the day when he had had enough. He knew how it would be. Presently the cracked tea bell would ring, and he would go in to eat a small slice of cold, soggy pie, washed down with a glass of cold water. To-morrow morning for breakfast more cold pie and a doughnut. For dinner, potatoes and cold milk only. On Mondays, when Prue had to make a fire for the washing, two pounds of cheap meat were boiled, which furnished dinner for three days.

Bowles had no trade. He was what was called in North Leedom "a helper." He could do a bit of carpenter or mason work, or paint a door, or plough a field when called upon, for which he received a few pennies. There was no opening in the dead village for any regular business. It was out of these occasional few pennies that he must support the family and save the thousand dollars for the mortgage.

There was a slight quiver on the boy's cleft chin as he sat staring at the mortgaged house. He had the eager brain and fine instincts of the New Englander. It was not a dull beast of burden on whom this yoke for life was to be laid, but a nervous, high-bred animal, fit for the race-course.

"Ah-ha, Bowles, my son!" a subdued voice whispered over the fence.

He started up. It was Mr. Rameaux, an agent for some orange planters in Mississippi, who had found boarding for his little daughter in North Leedom that summer, while he travelled about the country. He was so short and stout that his fat smiling face barely reached to the top of the fence. He thrust his chubby

ringed fingers through the rails and wrung the lad's hands.

"My dear boy, I came down from Boston this afternoon, and Lola met me with this terrible news. What can I say? Your worthy father! *Il est chez le bon Dieu!* But you — poor child! It is thirty years since my own father left me, and still — I — " He choked, and real tears stood in the twinkling black eyes.

Bowles pulled him through the gate. The boy said nothing. He had not shed a tear when his father died. He had never learned how to talk or to shed tears. But this little man's volubility, his gestures, his juicy rich voice, with its kindly and sweet inflections, affected Bowles as the sudden sight of tropical plants might a half-frozen Laplander. He had hung about Rameaux all summer whenever he was in the village.

"I came to make my condolences to madame *votre mère*. And Lola — she also" — dragging after him a child in a white gown and huge red sash, of the age when girls are principally made up of eyes, legs, and curiosity.

Together they entered the kitchen, where Mrs. Pettit and Prue sat knitting, one on either side of the cold black stove. The little man poured forth his "condolences" to the widow. Aaron's virtues, her own grief, the joys of heaven, the love of *le bon Dieu*, were all jumbled *en masse*, and hurled at her with affectionate zeal. Prue dropped her knitting in her lap; a red heat rose in her thin cheeks as she listened. But Mrs. Pettit's large gray eyes scanned the pursy little agent with cold disapproval. What did the man mean?

None of Aaron's neighbors, not she herself, had wept for him, nor talked much of his virtues, or his entrance into heaven. Why should this play-acting fellow be sorry for her? She resented his affectionate tone, his fat body, his red necktie, the unnecessary width of brim of his felt hat. It was all unnecessary, redundant — a waste.

She waited until he stopped for breath, then nodded without a word, and taking up her knitting, began to count the stitches. Rameaux, shocked and discomfited, stood pulling at his moustache and shuffling uneasily from one foot to the other. Lola, in the mean time, had crept to Prue's side, and put her arm around her waist.

The Rameaux were not of good caste in Mississippi; they were by no means well-bred people. The agent's oaths and jokes, when alone with men, were not always of the cleanest. But they came from a community where men carried the kindness and pity of their hearts ready for constant use in their eyes and lips. Even the ungainly child now was giving to Prue eager caresses such as she had never in her whole life received from father or mother.

"Your father is dead," Lola whispered. "My mamma died two — two years — " and then she burst into sobs, and dropped her head on the woman's lap. Prue, with a scared glance at her mother, patted her gently.

"Poor lonely little thing!" she thought. Then she noticed that the child's gaudy sash was spotted with grease, and that the holes in her black stockings were drawn up with white thread. "Tut! tut! poor *dear*

child!" she whispered, a motherly throb rising in her own flat breast.

Mr. Rameaux, bewildered at his rebuff, was turning to the door, but Bowles stopped him.

"You promised to speak to her," he whispered, excitedly.

"Not now, my boy."

"Yes, now! Now!"

The little man dropped into a chair, fanning himself with his ridiculous hat. He too was excited. He spoke to Mrs. Pettit, but his eyes wandered to Prue. "Madam, there is a subject — Your son, Mr. Bowles here, and I have talked of it. If I may intrude upon your grief — But I must first tell you something of my home."

"Indeed? Your home, Mr. Rammy," said Mrs. Pettit, in her dry, shrill tone, "is the least of my concerns." Then she turned her back on him. "Light the candle, Priscilla."

Rameaux rose, red and angry.

"Mother," said Bowles, sharply, "I wish you to listen to this man."

There was a meaning in his voice new to her. She stared at him, and at the agent, who, after a moment's hesitation, went on, growing fluent as an auctioneer as he proceeded.

"There was a reason for speaking of Lamonte to you, madam. It is a village near the gulf. That is a rich country — the ground, fat, black; the trees, giants; the woods full of birds, and the waters of fish. A man has but to set his traps and drop his lines and lie down to sleep, and nature feeds him. And the

air — so warm and sweet!" He took a step nearer to Prue, who was listening. His eyes were on hers. They were kind eyes, he thought — mother's eyes. Miss Prue had a soft voice too. Her cheeks were lean, but there was a pretty color coming and going in them, and the lips were red and kissable. He and Lola had a lonely life of it. "The air," he repeated, awkward and bewildered, "is sweet with flowers. You would like my house, Miss Prue, on the beach. At night the wind in the magnolias and the waves plashing on the shore make a very pleasant sound — a — very pleasant sound." He quite broke down here, but his little black eyes held hers, and it seemed to her that he was still talking rapidly, passionately saying something that she never had listened to before.

"You told me about the place before, Mr. Rammy," she stammered. "You said that the flowers — "

"Hola! chut! I had forgotten!" he exclaimed, tugging at his pocket. "I sent for these. They came to-day. You said you never had seen any." He pulled out a small paper box. When she opened it, a strange and wonderful fragrance startled the chill New England air.

"Orange blossoms!" explained Rameaux, with a significant chuckle.

Prue said nothing. She took her box to the window. The blood grew cold in all of her gaunt body. What did it mean?

She had scarcely ever thought of love. She had known but two women of her age in the village who had been courted and married. The others had all

grown into old maids like herself. She never had thought that *she* — He had paid thirty cents postage on that box! And for her!

That wonderful life down there — little work, and plenty to eat! — the warm, sweet air! the plashing waves! In the mean time, the strange, creamy flowers, with their heavy fragrance, seemed actually to talk to her of this life and this man.

What was that he was saying? Urging her mother to sell the house and go to Lamonte, where there was a fine chance for Bowles!

"There is no opening for the boy here, madam," he persisted. "I speak as a business man. Lamonte is a live place. I go to start a cypress-wood mill, a cotton-seed-oil factory. It is a boom. A young man with Northern energy shall make money fast. Or, if you will not sell the homestead, why not rent it? Bowles, once settled in Lamonte, in two years — in two months perhaps, if this boom lasted — could clear off the mortgage." Rameaux spoke as he did when driving a bargain — clearly, and to the point. "I will give you this to consider," he said. "I will state the matter now to Miss Prue from another point of the view." He strode quickly across to her, and led her authoritatively out of the kitchen.

"Mother, do you understand?" said Bowles, in a high, sharp tone. "I can make money there hand over hand. I will clear off the mortgage dretful fast. I won't have to drudge here like a nigger slave till I'm as old as father."

The face which Mrs. Pettit turned on him was set and strained as it had not been when she looked at her husband dead.

"You want to — *go?*" she said.

"Yes, I want to go. I must get out of here. I want enough to do; I want enough to eat!"

She looked at the hunger-bitten face and starving eyes of the boy, a tragic sight enough if she had understood it. But she was simply bewildered. Most of the people in North Leedom had that clayey color and restless look which result from an ill-fed body and a strong brain condemned for life to work upon trifles. But they did not know what ailed them. Nor did Mrs. Pettit.

"Want to leave North Leedom?" she repeated, with a contemptuous laugh. "Sech fancies! You always was ridickelous, Bowles, but I didn't think you was quite sech a fool. Draw some water, child. It's high time we was lockin' up an' makin' ready for bed," looking at Lola, who was coiled up on a chair, her big black eyes curiously turning from one to the other.

The door into the yard opened, and Prue came hurrying in. Her mother stared at her. She had never seen her face burn nor her eyes shine in that way, except when she had the typhoid fever twelve years ago.

"Lola," she said, going up to the girl and catching her by the shoulders — "Lola!"

"Yes," said Lola, standing up.

Miss Prue pulled the child toward her as if to kiss her. Her thin face worked; she panted for breath. She caught sight of her mother's amazed face, and pushed Lola away.

"Your — your papa wants you, dear," she said, in

a low whisper, every tone of which was a caress. "I'll take you to him."

"You stop right here, Priscilla. Bowles can take his daater to the play-actor," snapped Mrs. Pettit.

Priscilla dared not disobey. She was thirty, but she was as submissive and timid as when she was six. But she did follow Lola out on to the porch. The girl stopped her there peremptorily, and stretching up on her tiptoes, threw her arms around her neck.

"You're coming home with us? Papa said so. Yes? Oh, goody! You'll come?"

"Hush-h!"

Priscilla dropped on her knees in the dark, and strained the child tight to her breast. The blood burned hotly through her whole body as she pressed a light shamed kiss upon her lips, and then springing up, ran back into the kitchen.

Bowles walked sulkily with Lola down to the road where her father was waiting. She thrust her arm in his and hung on it; she rolled her beautiful eyes coquettishly; she spoke to him with profound awe and timidity. Lola, like many Southern girls of her class, had given much of her short life to thought of "the boys," and of how to manage them. She managed Bowles now completely. Her homage thrilled him with triumph and self-conceit, which her father's eager talk increased. His mother treated him as a child. These people appreciated him, recognized him as the shrewd Northern man who would make money hand over hand in the South. He laughed loudly with Rameaux, even tried to joke a little.

His sister, through the kitchen window, saw them

standing by the gate. The moon had risen. Lola leaned sleepily against the fence. Rameaux's sultry black eyes, while he talked to Bowles, searched every window in the house.

"*For me?*"

Priscilla's knees shook under her. She hurried to her mother, who was beginning to grope her way up the stairs, and took the candle from her, trembling so that she could scarcely speak. It seemed as if she must cry and laugh out loud.

"Mr. Rameaux tells me that his house is all on one floor. You will have no stairs to climb if you go there, mother," she said.

Mrs. Pettit stared at her. "*I* go? Bowles's brain is addled enough, but he's not so mad as that."

She had reached her room by this time. Prue hurried in after her.

"Mother, it's not Bowles; it's me. If there was a chance for me to go down yonder and give you a comfortable providin', would you go?"

Mrs. Pettit paid no attention to her. She was unbuttoning her shoes, and had found a thin place in one of them. She rubbed it with alarm, held it close to her purblind eyes, set it down with a groan. "It ought to hev lasted two year more," she muttered.

"Would you go?" said Prue, stooping over her with a breathless gasp. "You should have as many shoes as you chose, and the hot air even in winter, and full and plenty to eat and wear."

Mrs. Pettit turned her dull calm face on her. "Why, Priscilla Pettit! You've been listenin' to that Rammy's crazy talk too! For a fool, give me an old

maid!" She took up the worn shoe anxiously again. "Think of *me* goin' outside of North Leedom!" she said, with a hoarse, rasping laugh.

Priscilla, as she looked at her, could not think of it. It was an impossibility; as impossible as to make the dead alive.

"Tut! tut! It's worn near through to the counter."

"Give it to me. I'll mend it," said Miss Prue.

"Your hands are like ice," said her mother, as she took the shoe. "You'd better get to bed. There's that lot of coats to begin on in the morning. You'll have to be up by four."

"Yes," said Prue. She carried the shoe down stairs. The coats lay in heaps in the corner, tied together by twine. Their raw edges stuck out. Prue thought they would not have been so hateful if it had not been for those raw edges.

Bowles was waiting for her. His eyes shone; he looked bigger and stouter than before; the very down on his lip seemed coarser and browner.

"You are going too," he said. "Rameaux told me. Lord! such luck to come to us!"

"Mother will never go, Bowles."

"Then leave her. Other sons and daughters marry and go away. Cousin Sarah can take care of her. We'll pay the mortgage, and pay Sarah for tendin' her. Mother's rugged. She may live twenty year yet. 'Tisn't fair you should slave forever."

He said much more, but Prue scarcely heard him. She sat in the kitchen without moving long after he had gone to bed. Somehow the raw-edged seer-sucker coats seemed to fill up her mind, and to bulk

down, down, through her whole life. Rameaux had pointed to them angrily last night, and said, "Send that trash back to-morrow."

He wanted her to marry him to-morrow; to pack up their things, and start for Lamonte next Monday. He would stop in New York to buy her some gowns to please his own taste. "A red silk gown and a black-plumed hat."

"Think of me in red silk and plumes!" thought Priscilla, tears of sheer delight standing in her eyes.

Her mother coughed hard, and called to her several times, while she sat there, to bring her medicine. She always needed care in the night. Cousin Sarah was a high-tempered woman and slept heavily.

* * * * * * * *

When Bowles came down in the morning, he found his slice of leaden pie and greasy doughnut, as usual, on a plate on the bare table. Prue was at the machine, a heap of finished seersucker coats beside her.

"I guess you were at work all night?" he said.

"I couldn't sleep," she answered.

"Are you goin' to finish all them things?"

She nodded, turning her wheel faster.

He looked at her face for a minute or two, and then, for some reason, walked behind her, where he could not see it. "Prue," he said, "are you always goin' on makin' coats?"

The wheel stopped, the thread broke. Bowles waited, silent.

"Yes," she said, in a low voice. Then she threaded her needle again.

"What else should she do?" said Mrs. Pettit, coming into the kitchen.

Neither of her children answered her; but presently Prue got up suddenly, and going to her, gave her a fond hug and kiss.

Mrs. Pettit started, amazed. It was a new thing in her life; but, on the whole, she liked it.

Ten days later Bowles left North Leedom for Mississippi. His hopes were more than answered there. Lamonte did have the promised boom, and he made money fast. In a few years he married Lola. But long before that time he paid off the mortgage. He did it for Prue's sake. Had not his life been successful, while hers was a miserable failure? His heart ached with pity for her.

But we are not sure that her life was at all miserable. From that night in which she made her choice, a singular change came over her. For thirty years she had done her dull duty faithfully, because, in fact, there was nothing else to do.

Then, as it seemed to her, the gates were opened, the kingdoms of the world were laid at her feet.

Of her own will she had given them up.

God only knew what the sacrifice cost her, but after it she was a different and a live creature. She was like a woman who has given birth to a child. She had struck her note in life, and it was not a mean one. She now looked out on the world with authoritative, understanding eyes; even her step became firm and decided.

When one climbs a height, the pure air expands the lungs ever after. We always carry with us down in

the valley the wide outlook which we have seen but once.

Prue had now a life quite outside of North Leedom and the raw-edged coats. When the pain and soreness had passed, her struggle began to exert pleasant and tender influences on her. Stout, jolly Rameaux, with his twinkling black eyes and black moustache, began to take on the graces and charms of all the heroes of romance. When she read in the magazines a poem or love story, her eyes would fill with a tender light, and she would whisper, "I, too; I, too!"

When she saw mothers caress their children, she fancied she felt Lola's head again on her breast, and her heart throbbed with happiness.

After her mother died, she tried to bring into her life some of the things of which Bowles had told her of his home in Lamonte. She planted roses in the yard; she covered her table with a white cloth; and sometimes a bit of savory meat found its way to it. She visited her neighbors; she read novels; she joked in a scared way.

On the occasion of her one visit to New Bedford she went alone to a retail shop, and, blushing, asked to be shown some crimson silk and black-plumed hats. She fingered them wistfully.

"Are they for a young lady?" asked the shopman.

"Yes — for a young lady," said Prue, in a low voice. She held them a moment longer, and then, with a sigh, went out.

Soon after this, Bowles, who was a bad correspondent, suddenly appeared one day, bringing one of his

girls, Prissy, with him. "Yes, she looks peaked," he said that night as they sat on the porch, after Prue had lovingly put the child to sleep in her own bed. "The doctor said she ought to have bracing air for a year or two. I told him I'd bring her to you. We've got four, and she's your namesake. She does not look like the Pettits, though."

"Her eyes are like Lola's father's," said Prue, hesitating. "Is Mr. Rameaux well?"

"God bless me! Didn't I tell you the old gentleman was gone? Died in Cuba last spring."

"Died — last spring?"

Bowles, who was about to add that too much bad whiskey had hastened his end, caught sight of her face, and with a sudden remembrance stopped short, and softly whistled to himself.

"Yes, in Cuba," he said, awkwardly. "Well, Prue, I was all right in bringing Prissy to you? You'll take care of the chick?"

"As if she were my own," she said. "I thank you, Bowles."

Soon afterward she went to her own room, and kneeling by the bed, kissed the child's face and hands passionately.

"She is very like him," she thought, opening, as she did every night, a little box in which were some yellow flowers. She fancied there was still a faint fragrance breathing from them. "We will know each other in heaven," she said, with a sigh, as she closed the box.

But it may be as well, perhaps, that in this too she will be disappointed.

ACROSS THE GULF.

THE Reverend William Imlay found a seat for his mother in the Desbrosses Street ferry-boat and placed her neat satchel and umbrella beside her. "I think," he said, "I will go forward into the fresh air at the bow."

"Take care of the draughts, William."

He folded his big yellow silk neckerchief more closely about his throat, lifted his hat, and left her. The other women were bothering their escorts as to the chances of catching the train for Philadelphia, but Mrs. Imlay was calm. Neither she nor William had ever been late for a train or a meal: a glance at her would tell you that. Smooth gray hair, inquisitive black eyes, close-fitting black travelling-dress, white cuffs, jet brooch and buttons, — there she was, a neat, compact package of fulfilled duties. She would be smiling, efficient, and confident by a sick-bed, or in her pantry, or leading a prayer-meeting; and you could not but fancy that if Death tapped at the little lady's door the call would not flurry her at all, as it does disorderly people, but would fit nicely into her methodic life, and she would trip on into heaven still smiling, efficient, and confident.

Mr. Imlay came back presently, a faint curiosity kindling his handsome features: "Mother, the famous actress is on board, — Mlle. Clemence. That is she, coming this way. I thought you would like to see her."

"So I should, William," hastily putting on her spectacles. "The tall woman in the seal-skin ulster? Dear! dear! That ulster would cost as much as your salary for two years! Satan's wages are high nowadays."

"Yes."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" said his mother. This was one of the women, she thought, of whom Solomon wrote, who stand in wait to drag men down into hell. Still, she could not forget that she *was* a woman and when a child had perhaps been innocent.

"She is very handsome," said Mr. Imlay. His mother moved uneasily. Of course, she saw the creature's beauty; but she ought to have been nothing to William but a lost soul. "Something in her features reminds me of Miss Lowry," he said, deliberately bridging his nose with his eye-glasses.

"Oh, William! Clara Lowry is one of the loveliest of Christian characters! And yet — Really, there *is* something about the chin — For pity's sake, never tell Clara of it!"

"Of course not."

The boat thumped into the pier, and the crowd poured through the station into the waiting train. Mrs. Imlay, on her son's arm, peered curiously about for the seal-skin ulster. The sight of this woman had strangely fluttered her. It was a glimpse into that

brilliant wicked hell below the decorous world in which she lived, to which pertained all of Satan's doings, — cards, fashion, dancing, and, above all, theatres. "Where did she go, William?" she asked, as he seated her in a car.

"Into a parlor-car behind. There were two or three gentlemen with her. Leading people. Congressmen."

"Oh, I suppose so," with a shudder. "Sit down, dear. Well, I'm really glad to have seen her. One ought to be reminded that there are such depths, here, just about us. I do wonder what she was thinking of then?" It was the very question she had asked about the sea-lion in the Park yesterday.

"She made a very pretty picture, at any rate," said Mr. Imlay. "Remarkably good nose."

"You think a great deal too much of her nose. I mean — I beg your pardon, my dear. But one hardly expects a clergyman to regard such creatures from the stand-point of their noses."

Mr. Imlay lifted his brow with mild complacency. "They are entirely outside of our world," he explained. "A person in my position must either try to convert them or else simply regard them æsthetically as part of the world's furniture. I could not convert Mlle. Clemence on the boat, so I regard her quite as I would a tree or a bit of china. I approve their shape or color, and I approve her nose. Do I make myself clear?"

"Oh, quite, — quite so, William," hastily rejoined Mrs. Imlay as soon as the gentle dogmatic ripple stopped. She had not heard him: she was always sure William would say the right thing. She was

counting the cost of that dress, — ulster, gold-mounted satchel — why, the boots, even, could not be bought under twenty dollars! What would Clara Lowry say when told about it? "I always gain new ideas when I leave home, William," she said. "Travel is so — so broadening."

"I wish you would go oftener with me, mother," he replied, affectionately wrapping her shawl about her and rising. "Now, if you will excuse me, I will go and look for Mr. Fordyce; he is somewhere on the train."

Mr. Imlay could not find his fellow-minister, but he sat down in a rear car. He wished to think over his sermon, for it would be late before he reached Baltimore. He smiled to himself again at his mother's idea of travel. A trip to New York! She was shut in too much to her little round; church, the sewing-circle, Ann the cook, — there was her world.

Mr. Imlay had gone twice to the great Church Conventions; he had been as far south as Louisville, and as far west as Chicago: so that he could justly claim to know something of the world and of life. He wanted to know more. His own mild dogmatizing, his mother's amiable gossip, the squabbles between the choir and congregation, even the discussion about the new organ, grew stale and cramping to him. If he could get outside, into the creeds, the unbelief, the passions, the action, out there, he fancied he could understand Christ and His errand better. Still, there was great peril in such ventures. As now, for instance, when he buttoned up his coat to hide his white cravat and began to talk to a gentle-

man in a mulberry velveteen waistcoat about beet-sugar, he felt that he was boldly treading on dangerous ground. To hide the cravat, to give up the precedence of his holy calling, to talk as one ordinary man with another, — was not this compounding with Mammon?

But he soon became keenly interested in his beet-sugar friend and his companions. He gathered that they were a family or party of friends on their way to celebrate somebody's birthday. All of them, even to the grandmother, had the air of happy folk out on a frolic. There were a couple of lads who swaggered like old sportsmen, though neither blood nor powder had ever soiled their guns or embroidered game-bags. There were young girls with rosy faces under furry caps, chattering and giggling, peeping at each other's skates. There was a dumpling of a baby, which the nurse carried about perpetually from one set of cousins to another. There was a white-whiskered old gentleman on the next seat to him, who scolded because the stove-door was shut, or because the ventilators were open, or because the banana-boy dropped books on his knee. Mr. Imlay could not at first understand the patience of the whole party toward this disagreeable old fellow: they were as gentle with him as with the baby; but presently he saw that he was blind.

He finally turned his ill-humor on Mr. Imlay's companion. "Beet-sugar now, Sperry?" he snapped. "Last year it was tea-plants; and the year before, silkworms. If it was only your own money that was wasted, less matter. But you must always have somebody to ride your hobbies. Here's Mrs. Finn,

now! To my knowledge, she gave up two acres once to your tea-plants."

A little woman wearing black and a widow's cap looked up and laughed: "And, to my knowledge, Uncle Shannon, many a cup of tea you had from them."

"Poor stuff, Emily, poor stuff! You're a shrewd farmer; but you'll never make tea pay. Nor any of John Sperry's whims. Mushrooms! That was another craze of his."

Mr. Sperry patted the old man on the back, and winked apologetically to Mr. Imlay as for an ill-mannered child: "Yes, mushrooms. There's no better paying crop. I set Frazier at them in San Diego, and Cobb in Honolulu, and old Rice in Australia. I may say I have girdled the earth with mushrooms." Then, in a deprecating whisper to the clergyman: "One of the best-tempered men alive until—" touching his own eyes significantly. Mr. Imlay nodded, smiled, and rose to go with a regretful glance about the car. How many good Christian people there were in the world to whom one must give a touch and go-by!

When he reached the door only the engine was in front of him. The rest of the cars, and his mother in them, had vanished.

"Just divided the train at Newark," curtly explained the conductor. "Other section's twenty minutes ahead."

"But I have a lady in my charge."

"Can't help that, sir. You ought to have looked out for the lady."

Mr. Imlay stared at the man, opened his mouth irresolutely, and feebly pulled at his whiskers.

"What is it? what is it?" cried the blind man. "Some new trick of that infernal corporation?"

Mr. Sperry came up, pulling down his waistcoat with a business air, and suggested a telegram; the girls looked sympathetic; Mrs. Finn timidly ventured an anxious word or two.

"It's really of no consequence," said Mr. Imlay with awkward dignity. "My mother has her ticket and check." But secretly he was greatly pleased. He had suddenly become of importance. By virtue of his misfortune, he was adopted by this demonstrative family as one of themselves.

While he talked to the conductor his seat had been taken by a boy and a tall, distinguished-looking girl. The blind man put his hand on her head: "Is this you, Janey? Did you get on at Newark? Why don't you make room for me?"

"I'll go in the smoking-car," the boy said, jumping up.

"No, Bob. You'll stay just here." The young lady drew her father into the seat, and took Bob on her lap, looking laughingly into his eyes as with her firm white fingers she poked a cigar out of his pocket.

Bob chuckled sheepishly, but soon recovered himself: "Father, I'm going to take Janey out rabbit-hunting to-morrow. I'll lend her my boots for the deep snow."

Mr. Shannon gave an impatient grunt: "Your sister will have no time for such capers, sir. All my clothes need mending." He settled himself with his head on her shoulder and was soon asleep, while Bob sat, giggling and scowling, on her knees.

Sperry saw that Mr. Imlay was watching the group. "Pitiful sight, sir," he whispered. "D'ye know that since Mr. Shannon lost his sight that girl has supported both him and the boy? Carries them both right along. They're helpless as two babies."

"How does she do it? She is very young."

"Earns barely ten dollars a week. She's with Kneedles. His plan is, work your people to death like cart-horses and fling the carcasses out. Oh, I suppose everybody's heard of Dan Kneedles? We're all going to Mrs. Finn's farm to celebrate her birthday, and I wrote to Dan to beg Janey for a day or two. Well, sir, I had to pay him her full week's salary! But she knows nothing of that."

Kneedles? Mr. Imlay had a feminine relish for gossip. Was there not a Kneedles female college near Newark? The young lady was dressed like an ill-paid teacher. She coughed, too, now and then, and had a hectic flush; but there was something steadfast and durable about her, from the firm wrist which held Bob quiet, to the dark, slow-moving eyes.

While he was looking at her, there was a rasping crash: girl, old man, seats, roof, tilted, disappeared. Mr. Imlay clutched wildly at Sperry, missed him, and was hurled forward. When he came to his senses he was in absolute darkness, his right leg clinched tightly; beside him he felt broken planks and something soft and movable like a human body. A wind of heat blew over his leg. The train had fallen from a trestle bridge, and he was fastened in a car that was on fire. He had read of people fastened in just that way. They had been roasted to death. "Great God!

This thing is happening to me! *Me!*" thought Mr. Imlay. He had been so coddled and petted by his mother from the days of his swaddling-clothes up into his clerical coat and necktie, that blank amazement was his principal emotion at finding himself in a ditch of mud to the chin, with a fire close to his legs. At a distance on the snowy field, he saw black figures moving; he heard shouts and cries. He shouted, but his voice piped thin like a woman's. The body beside him — whether man's or woman's he did not know — struggled.

"Are they coming to us?" said a voice sounding oddly calm to his frenzy. He replied only by fresh shrieks. "Oh, they'll come," cheerfully. "I saw Bob help father out. They'll come back for me."

It was the teacher, then? He did not care who it was. He shrieked on. "The fire is gaining," he said at last, exhausted, "and my leg iswedged in tight."

She began to tug wildly at the leg: it did not stir. Then steps came near, and a dozen men crowded up, peering in at the window.

The fire sent a sharp lash of flame across Mr. Imlay's foot. "Help, help! Take me out!" he yelled.

"There's a woman in there," cried somebody outside.

"Janey! Janey Shannon!" shouted Sperry.

"I'm here! All right! I'm not hurt!"

Her cheerful tone maddened Mr. Imlay. "For God's sake, save me!" he cried; "I'm roasting to death!"

"Here, Janey!" Mr. Sperry smashed in the window. "Now, men, out with the lady!"

But she pushed Mr. Imlay forward: "His leg is fast. He's burning! Get this beam off his leg!" she cried, tugging at it herself.

Mr. Sperry had an axe; the men grappled the beam; it shook and moved. Mr. Imlay dragged at his leg. "Oh, it's broken!" he moaned.

A flap of fierce flame struck between him and the window, shutting him into this horrible death. He hurled himself forward like a madman, thrusting back the woman: "Save me!"

He heard himself. It was a woman that he was pushing back into the fire, — he, William Imlay. "Take her out," he said, in a voice that was almost cool, helping to push her out himself. He was unconscious when they got him through the window.

When he opened his eyes it was with a nausea of pain. He lay in a large, gayly-furnished chamber. A red-haired little man was at work at his leg. Miss Shannon stood beside him, holding bandages, while Mr. Sperry, a kerosene lamp in one hand, with the fat fingers of the other patted him consolingly: "Tut, tut! Come to yourself, eh? Nearly through with your leg. Bad sprain. No bones broken."

"Where am I?"

"At Emily Finn's. You ought to thank the good God you're anywhere." He stopped for a second, then went on cheerfully: "Two of us were killed, — the baby and Tom: the little chap with the gun, you know? Well, well! they were fitter to go than us old sinners, I reckon. Bob had his head cut. So we brought you and him here."

"It's very kind of Mrs. Finn," glancing about for

her in his writhings of pain with dignified politeness.

"Bah! What else would you have the woman do? She's in the kitchen, making you a hot toddy. Nothing like hot toddy after a shock."

"Steady with that light," snapped the Doctor. — "Now," to Jane, "drop the lotion."

The lotion fell cool on the crackled skin. Jane watched each drop anxiously. The bed was soft: a delicious sense of repose, of being cared for, stole over him. The one lesson of his life, so far, had been that he ought to be cared for.

The Doctor, before he left, gave his directions to Jane. Sperry began to blow up the wood-fire upon the hearth. Mr. Imlay asked for a drink of water, and Jane brought it to him. Her gown was still soaked with the mud of the ditch, but her head and throat seemed to him purer and finer from the dirty folds out of which they rose. Instead of taking the drink, he stared at her. "You tried to make them pull me out first," he said. "I heard you."

"Did I?" smiling. "It's all a blur to me. Nobody knew what they did."

"You, at any rate, did the right thing." She had forgotten his part in the affair, then? Should he keep quiet and let it go at that? He took the water and drank it. But he could not be quiet. Something within him (not the immaculate William Imlay) was crying out in an agony of shame and degradation. As he gave her back the glass he looked her full in the face: "I acted like a hound down there. I think I must have been mad. I wish you could forget it."

She fairly stammered in her hurry to stop him: "Hush! hush! Don't blame yourself. The fire, and you fastened in, — it was enough to craze anybody."

What a noble creature she was! He would never forget how she had tugged at that beam. If Jane had been forty, and lean and scrawny, probably he might have forgotten it.

Mr. Sperry caught an inkling of what they were saying. After Jane was gone he came up: "Most unselfish soul alive. She'd have done just the same for you if you had been a tramp or a darky. What would you like for supper?"

"I want no supper," said Mr. Imlay curtly, turning over.

Would she have done the same for a tramp or a darky? He did not believe it.

It was not the pain in his leg that kept him awake that night, nor even the shame of having acted like a brute before these good Christian people, though that was sore too. It was the sudden sight of the brute within him, which he saw for the first time in his life. He tried to put it out of sight, to recall that Reverend William Imlay whom he had known so long, walking into the chancel of St. Basil, irreproachable, from the Greek features, set in neat English whiskers, to the sermon that he preached. Well, what was this man Imlay? He preached generosity, self-sacrifice, high thinking and living, to others, and went home to be pampered by his mother and Ann, to find the day spoiled if his toast was too dry or his shirt-collar too limp. Was he nothing but a cheat and a hypocrite, then? Had he never learned Christ? The poor gen-

tleman took himself by the throat that night, and was as miserable as any of us would be if we could push aside our respectability and circumstance and face the naked self inside with all of its possible meannesses and antics.

Usually, when he woke in the morning, the consciousness of himself, impregnable in respectability, good taste, and piety, was an armor of proof to him: other people touched him as through a brass plate; but to-day he was cowed and beaten, — a worm, and no man. These strangers about him seemed to him to have abnormal good qualities, — tenderness and generosity. He was full of gratitude and admiration. He did not notice Mr. Sperry's red necktie and blazing diamond scarf-pin when he helped him to dress and wheeled his lounge into the wide low-ceiled parlor. When, too, Mrs. Finn flew to heap his pillows and to pat and purr over his ankle, it did not occur to him that her soft crimson gown and airy manner would not have been seen on any widow of fifty in St. Basil's.

The lounge was drawn up to the wood-fire; a great tiger-skin lay in front of it; the breakfast-table, gay with amber-tinted napery and red porcelain, stood in the middle of the room; outside, the snow lay in lonely unbroken stretches for miles. While Mrs. Finn buzzed about him, Jane patiently waited on her father and Bob, who were both cross and grumpish, teasing, joking with them, forcing them to laugh. Mr. Imlay could not take his eyes from her when she was in the room. This strange woman seemed more womanly to him than any that he had ever seen. His interest in

her, he told himself, was wholly due to her having tried to save his life. Still, he did observe the soft curves of her figure as she stooped over the coffee-urn, and her dark questioning eyes.

Mr. Imlay presently sent a telegram to his mother. "Tell her," he said, "what has happened, and that I am safe in the care of kind Christian friends."

Mr. Sperry wrote it, and then read it to Mrs. Finn outside in the hall. "Add a message from me," she said quickly. "Invite her to come to us at once: she must be very anxious."

"No, Emily. It would not do. I saw the old lady. She would not get on with the profession at all. She would think her boy was Samson in the hands of Delilah and the Philistines."

Mrs. Finn tossed her chin and laughed, the color rising in her cheeks.

"Of course she would," persisted Sperry. "Suppose she had seen you rehearsing your old Juliet at him over his toast just now? Lord, Em! d'ye mind when you first went on as Juliet, twenty years ago, in Richmond?"

"Yes, indeed! Shives was Romeo. He went into Biggs's Minstrel Combination just after I married John Finn. Do you know, this young man reminds me of Shives?"

"You could make just such a fool of him, for all your forty years, if you put your mind to it. How that donkey used to go dangling round the country after you! And this young man —"

"That will do, Uncle George. I'm too old for that sort of talk," gravely.

"Well, I was only going to say you had better let Janey entertain him. She'll never damage any man's heart. She stands and sings with her eyes on the footlights, as solid as the gallery-posts."

Mrs. Finn accordingly sent Jane in to read to Mr. Imlay, and called in the farmer, to talk over the early crops with him. But the angry heat still burned in her face. Delilah, indeed! George Sperry's jokes were always coarse. Mrs. Finn (or, as she was known in "the profession," Belle de Vere) might have had certain too salient points in her history thirty years ago, but in the meantime she had been a faithful, hard-working wife to John Finn. She was now a shrewd farmer and manager, anxiously scraping the dollars together to give her big boys a start in life. When she had opened her house, with her heart full of pity, to take in this wounded minister of the gospel, why could not his mother come into it without fear of soiling her skirts? Delilah! Mrs. Finn's heart was bitter within her against George Sperry as she sat talking to Botts about celery-troughs.

Jane went in unwillingly to entertain Mr. Imlay. She had her work to do. She carried in a big basketful of Bob's clothes to patch, and, giving her patient a magazine, soon forgot that he was there. The girl had neither the culture nor the ready tongue of Emily Finn. Beyond a child's schooling, she had been taught only to sing, dance, and the business of the stage. She knew nobody but her father and a half dozen other players, and them only in a business way. The young girl's brain was not very nimble nor strong, and the task of bringing clothes and food for three

persons out of ten dollars a week had thus far taxed it to the extent of its powers.

Mr. Imlay watched her over his book. What wretched old clothes she mended! How anxious she was about them! Her one good winter dress was wet last night, and she wore a faded gown which she had long outgrown. It better showed the white arms and the shapely foot, but it touched Mr. Imlay's heart with pity. He had a nice taste in clothes. What patience and tenderness were in this poor teacher's lovely face! How it kindled at sight of her father and the boy! Mr. Imlay wondered how long she would have to carry that heavy burden. If he could secure her a position somewhere, higher than in Kneedles's school?

Presently he began to talk to her, and naturally, of the subject most interesting to him, — himself and his sermons. "I had intended to preach on St. John's life to-morrow," he said, "and I think I had a new view of it."

Jane dropped her sewing; her eyes turned on him with a timid surprise and excitement which flattered him greatly. It was the first time she had ever met a clergyman, and that he should actually talk to her of his sermon amazed and delighted her. If she could only get Bob in to hear! She was so anxious to make a good boy of Bob. Though Jane knew nothing of clergymen or church doctrines, and had sometimes heard a good deal of ugly talk in the wings, she was a decent, pure girl, and had naturally a devout soul. She knew that her mother had been an Episcopalian, and, wherever the troupe might be on Sundays, she would steal off to a chapel and there join in the prayers, and

in the afternoon would read to Bob out of an old prayer-book and show him their mother's name on the fly-leaf.

"How are they getting along?" asked Mrs. Finn presently of Mr. Sperry, who had paid a flying visit to their patient.

"Oh, capitally! He is explaining apostolic succession, and Jane listens breathless as if it was to Kean in 'Shylock.'"

So it came about that for a week Mr. Imlay and Bob were left to Jane's care. Mrs. Finn, who was to play the Queen in "Hamlet" next week, was busy trimming her robes with imitation ermine, and Mr. Sperry, who was the heavy villain in a stock company in New York, came and went every day.

During one of these visits Mr. Imlay began to talk to him of Jane with his usual awkward dignity: "It may seem intrusive in me, sir. But Miss Shannon has been most kind and considerate. Some steps should be taken to relieve her of this crushing weight of responsibility. I regret to speak of details, Mr. Sperry. But her salary in that school is absurdly small, and I observe — I observe that — her self-sacrifice amounts to actual suffering. Why, her gowns really seem inadequate to protect her from the cold."

"Well, what can be done?" said Mr. Sperry, with a puzzled, searching glance at him. "One could hardly offer Janey clothes."

"Certainly not!" Mr. Imlay's face burned hotly. "But if some permanent relief could be devised — There is a Home for the Blind in Philadelphia, to which, by a little influence, her father could be

admitted. I think I could manage that. Robert could be placed at school. Then the child could breathe."

"Why, you're a regular brick!" Mr. Sperry gave him a tremendous clap on the back.

"I beg your pardon!" Mr. Imlay drew himself up stiffly.

"I beg yours. But men of your cloth are not often such hearty good fellows, and you really took me by surprise. Well, suppose the old gentleman and Bob out of the way, what do you want done with Janey? Ten dollars a week is not much; but, you see, it's a certainty with Kneedles."

Mr. Imlay was silent. The question raised a sudden unexpected storm of emotion within him which frightened him. What did he want done with Janey? What on earth was Janey to him?

Mr. Sperry, after pouring out a flood of opinions, postponed the subject and hurried away to catch his train. Miss Shannon was in the outer room, sewing. "I say, little girl," he said, halting, "there's no need of your telling your patient in there that you or we belong to the profession. Heh? It might make him uncomfortable."

"Very well. I don't want to make him uncomfortable," said Jane indifferently, measuring her work.

"Kneedles will let you stay until Wednesday. On full salary."

"Then I can finish these shirts," smiling and pleased. "I have not had such a chance to sew for years."

Mrs. Finn followed him out. "I'll buy her off from Kneedles till Wednesday," he explained anx-

iously. "She has made an influential friend in there. Perhaps —" nodding significantly.

"There is nothing in that," said Emily Finn decisively. "She does not care a straw for him. Her head is full of her shirts."

Mr. Imlay was curt and dry with his nurse all day. What was this Jane Shannon to him? He read over again a letter which had arrived from Miss Clara Lowry. Mr. Imlay was not engaged to Miss Lowry, but all St. Basil's Church expected him to marry her. There really was no reason why he should not marry her. She was handsome, refined, dignified; his mother was fond of her; there was no better blood in the State than that of the Lowrys; she had a settled income. She was already energetic in the church: she managed all the fairs, taught the men's Bible-class. He tried to think of her as his wife, sitting by his study table, planning out his sermon, — which, indeed, Clara was quite competent to do. What had Janey's rosy, eager face to do in the picture? Why did he seem to feel continually her firm, light touch on his ankle? He was angry at her and himself. He dressed his foot himself that afternoon, and then, the moment she came in, he asked her to adjust the bandages. Imagine the high-bred decorous Miss Lowry dressing a man's bare foot. But this warm-hearted, tender girl would do it, if need be, for a tramp or a darky, as Sperry had said.

He turned his back on Jane and pretended to be asleep, and then furtively watched her as she sat by the window, in the fast-fading light, stooping over her work. How thin her oval cheek was! and her breath,

too, came quick and short. He did not like that. She had said once that her mother had died of consumption. If she had an easy life, she might be saved. If she could go a little farther south with some one who would watch and care for her —

If — Mr. Imlay flushed hotly from head to foot. He started up on the sofa. It seemed to him as if all the world must have heard his thought.

In the meantime, it had grown so dark that Jane had dropped her work and was singing to herself some pathetic ditty about a dead child. Mr. Imlay had not heard her sing before: he listened with astonishment. Presently he forgot to be astonished: his throat choked; the tears crept down his cheeks. Deep, wordless meanings were in the voice. Surely the girl's soul spoke in it, and spoke to his. How rapt was the look in her eyes as she sang!

Jane was amused when she saw his tears, but good-naturedly sang on. She was used to see people cry when she sang that ballad, — the fine ladies in the boxes and the boys in the gallery. For herself, she did not like the song: she had such trouble with the high C. As for the rapt expression, she was wondering just then whether Bob could possibly pull through the winter with that overcoat.

As the poor young fellow on the sofa listened, passions and hopes such as he had never known surged up within him. It was not the dead baby that wrenched his heart and drew the hopeless longing tears to his eyes. It was the girl yonder sitting in the yellow light; it was something in her which had been lost out of his own life. He must have it! No matter

what St. Basil's or his mother or Miss Lowry thought, he must have it.

He called to her. She rose and came quickly up to him. "Jane!" he said. He was hoarse: he coughed to control his voice. He was quite right in what he was going to do. It would not do for him to be swept away by any flood of passion, but Jane was the only real thing to him in the world. Even if you reasoned about it, there was a fibre, a genuineness, about her: her hard work, her unselfishness, even her fun and laughter, made Miss Lowry seem like a chilly shadow. He took her hand. "*Jane,*" he said again, looking up into her face.

"What is it? Can I give you anything, Mr. Imlay?"

"You can give me—" he began passionately, then he coughed—"a cup of tea. No,—water."

"He does not know his own mind half a minute," thought Jane, amused. She brought both the tea and water, laughing at him, making playful, girlish jokes about his whims which would have shocked Miss Lowry.

Mr. Imlay did not know his own mind on that day, or on Monday or Tuesday. On Wednesday he was to go home. One hour he felt himself possessed by a demon, an honest, fierce creature who must have Jane, who could not live without Jane; the next, he was the calm and critical William Imlay, making contemptuous pictures of himself bringing home this bride. She would be expected to take the leading part in the religious and literary sociables and the æsthetic teas of church society,—Jane, who had but one shabby merino gown, who adored chromos,

who asked the other day if the Europeans were generally pagans. He was a fool, — a mad fool. And yet — yet —

Finally, he determined to do nothing until he had consulted his mother. She was wise: she always looked after his best interests. He would lay the whole matter before her.

When he was ready to start on Wednesday morning, he found, to his surprise, the whole household prepared to take the train with him.

"Mr. Sperry and I have business in Philadelphia," explained Mrs. Finn, "and Janey joins Kneedles there."

For an hour and a half longer, therefore, he would have her in sight. He felt an absurd boyish rapture of which he was ashamed. She was with her father in the front of the car: the old man was unusually kind and protecting in his manner to her, and she seemed tired and depressed. Mr. Imlay sat watching her. What rare distinction was in her face and figure! St. Basil's had never seen anything like that. If he should bring her among them, it would be like setting up the Venus of Milo beside fashion-plates!

When the train stopped at Philadelphia he hobbled up to her. She looked up. "Is it really time to say 'Good-bye'?" she said, her chin quivering a little. Jane was an affectionate creature, and very few people had been kind to her. The quiver of the chin meant just so much, — nothing more. But it touched Mr. Imlay to the quick.

"No. I am not going on to Baltimore to-night. I will stay here, — with you," he said, speaking thick

and fast. As he handed her from the car his fingers were icy cold.

Jane watched him, wondering, as he sat opposite to her in the carriage, stiff and silent, a pillar of propriety in his high hat and upright collar, beside Mr. Sperry, fat, joking, and, as usual, many hued as to clothes. Yet there was a new meaning in the quick furtive glances of the younger man which made her breath come quicker with a pleased terror. It was not altogether an attraction of the blood which held Mr. Imlay there bound to this woman. There was a certain force and directness in her character and life which was totally new to him. He knew nothing of the world outside of books and the calm society of wealthy people whose manners and religion alike were pliable, inoffensive, and elegant. There were plenty of gentle, prettily-dressed girls in his church, singing hymns sweetly, working beautiful Bible mottoes. But this shabby teacher, tottering through her youth with this selfish old man and boy on her back, — the sight stirred him like high distant music.

The carriage stopped at the door of a boarding-house on a side-street. A lean, pimply man, smelling strongly of brandy, was standing smoking on the steps. He hurried out, tapped Janey familiarly on the back as she alighted, and went with her into the house.

"Business!" said Mr. Sperry. "That's Kneedles. He's sharp on the trigger, I tell you!"

"But that is not a gentleman!" said the clergyman, his pale face flushed. "He is not a fit person to have control of — of a school for young ladies. Miss Shannon must sever her connection with him at once. I insist — "

"Don't insist on anything just now," said Sperry with a worried look. "Come in; come in. She'll be out presently."

Mr. Imlay waited in the hall until Jane came out of the parlor. Mr. Kneedles preceded her. He stared at the clergyman's white neck-cloth, nodded to Sperry, and turned to the door. "You'll come down at once?" he said authoritatively to Jane.

"Oh, immediately!" She was excited and pleased. Her eyes sparkled; that peculiar fine smile was on her lips which had become so dear to William Imlay.

As she went out on the steps he followed her: "I will go with you. I have something to say to you."

"As you please." But she hardly noticed him as she tripped lightly on, looking as if she could scarcely keep from singing or laughing. The slanting evening light struck through the quiet street. He observed with keen pleasure that the passers-by invariably glanced a second time at the radiant face under the picturesque wide hat. If this delicate rare creature were his own!

"Mr. Kneedles is going to double my salary!" she broke out at last. "I shall have more work; but that's nothing. Twenty dollars a week. And we stay here all winter! There are schools that I can afford to send Bob to now, where he will be with gentlemen's sons. And there are lots of dear little houses for thirty dollars a month, — bath-room, gas, marble facings, — simply perfect! I always wanted to keep house. I'm a first-rate cook, Mr. Imlay. Gracious! It's too good to be true!" She swung her umbrella and laughed out loudly from sheer gladness. Mr.

Imlay shuddered. But no matter! These trifling *gaucheries* would soon be cured.

They were passing an open square filled with aisles of leafless trees. The snow lay deep and untrodden beneath. On the other side of the pavement was a high brick wall covered with flaming placards. It was a quiet place; he would speak to her here: "You speak as if this man Kneedles were to control your future. I think that I — Come away! Why do you look at those things?" he cried, interrupting himself; for she had stopped in front of a great poster and was examining it with beaming eyes. It represented a frowzy female of gigantic proportions, with a liberal display of neck and arms, being dragged by the hair to a precipice by a stalwart villain. Below, enormous red letters notified the public that this was Miss Violet Dupont in her great and world-renowned *rôle* of the Rose of the Prairie.

"You should not look at those vile things," he repeated gently, laying his hand on her arm.

She drew back so that his hand dropped. "Vile?" she said in a low tone. "Vile?" She grew excessively pale as she stood looking at him steadily. "You do not understand, Mr. Imlay. I am Violet Dupont."

He did not understand even now, nor until she had gone on speaking for some time. He was always unready of apprehension. He stared alternately at her and at the placard.

"Mr. Sperry said not to tell you that we were actors: you had prejudices. But — '*vile*'? I did not think anybody — " She put the back of her shut hand up

to her mouth with a choking sound, turned, and walked quickly away.

Mr. Imlay followed at a distance for several squares; then he came up to her side. Whatever battle was raging within him, the almost unconscious habit of stiff politeness was still dominant. "I am sorry if I appeared rude," he said. "That picture is really gross, vulgar; and you — you seemed the purest thing on God's earth to me. I cannot associate you with it." His eyes, as he spoke, were fixed on her with the same vacant, amazed survey as when she had first dealt the blow.

"You may associate me with it, then," said Jane tartly: "I am Violet Dupont. I suppose that picture isn't very pretty, — I don't think, myself, it's a flattering likeness of me, — but it's worth a good deal to me in my business. I never had my name on the posters before, and I did not expect to have my picture billed for years to come." And the soft lovely eyes glanced at it with triumph.

For there it was facing them again. On every blank wall, in the windows of the barber-shops and beer-saloons, Violet Dupont, with her bare neck and brawny arms, stared out at him. He turned to the woman whom half an hour ago he had meant to make his wife. There could be no doubt of it: there was an appalling likeness to her in it, and she was delighted with that horrible notoriety. Yet how pure she looked! He stopped, shuddering. She passed on, and he almost ran to overtake her.

As for Jane, she neither saw him lag behind nor run after her. She had forgotten that he was there.

Twenty dollars and her picture billed! If this sort of thing went on, Bob could go to college. And Mr. Sperry had wanted to put him to a trade! There was a sweet little house with lace curtains at the windows: something like that, now could be managed; and a new suit for her father. Her own street-dress was terribly shabby. She anxiously eyed the gown of every pretty girl who passed her. There was not one of them whose heart was filled with more innocent desires than was poor Jane's; but how was Mr. Imlay to know that? The vulgar publicity which would have been loathsome to him undeniably thrilled her with triumph. She stopped at the back entrance to the theatre.

"Is this the place?"

"Oh, Mr. Imlay! I thought you had gone. Yes, this is the place. I am to be a super to-night, but I rehearse for the Rose to-morrow," laughing to herself at the alarm and horror in his face. "You won't come in? No. I know: you have prejudices. Good-bye, then. I shall see you at dinner."

Prejudices? As she passed down the dark little alley-way a gulf opened between them impassable as death. Yet he would drag her back over it. This good pure girl tottering on the edge of hell, — should he not put out his hand to save her?

The terrible emergency almost forced William Imlay to know his own mind. He wandered about the streets until nightfall. Once a brother-minister met him, and overwhelmed him with congratulations on his escape in the train: "*En route* to Baltimore, eh? No, no: come and take tea with us, and spend the

night. It is our lecture-evening: perhaps you will make a few remarks to my people?"

"I have business," pleaded the wretched man. "There are friends whom I must see."

If Dr. McLeod knew that his friends were strolling players, and his business to marry one of them!

The good Doctor went home to his wife greatly troubled. "I met William Imlay just now," he said, "and he is completely shattered by that accident. I don't like his looks at all: his mind seems unhinged. I wish I had made him come home with me."

"I wish you had: we have a very nice tea. It would kill Mary Imlay if anything should happen to that boy," said his wife.

About ten o'clock Mr. Sperry ran against the clergyman behind the scenes of the theatre: "How! what! Mr. Imlay? How did you come here?" he exclaimed, shocked at his wild, haggard face. "Come into this room," for the young people were staring and laughing at the clerical necktie, which he had taken no pains to hide.

"No. I will stay here. I must see Jane. I must make her give up this life."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Sperry soothingly. "But if you would talk to her to-morrow —"

Mr. Imlay shook his head obstinately. "McLeod," he muttered, "wanted me to preach to-night. But my work is here. He that saves a soul alive —"

"Very well. Janey will be off presently." Mr. Sperry was hurried, and proceeded to make up his face at a glass, by means of cork and burnt umber and a gray wig. It was an anxious, not unskilful bit of work.

Mr. Imlay, left to himself, was startled by the fact that this was all work that was going on about him. A theatre, he had supposed, was a brilliant, bewildering fairy-land, the haunt of wild dissipation; players were lost souls who spent their time in idle jollity and open sin. There was no enchantment and no vice which it would have surprised him to see behind that fatal curtain. What he did see was a dusty floor and the plank backs of trees an inch thick, dirty canvas castles and stormy seas, a table set with tin goblets and a dish of cotton ice-cream. Where were the enchantment, the wicked sirens, the deluded lovers, that everybody knows revel behind the scenes? Half a dozen workmen with their sleeves rolled up pushed the heavy board screens about; in an inner room some men and women, mostly middle-aged, were ranged on wicker settees, many of them with paper books in their hands, which they studied assiduously until they were called. They seldom spoke to each other, and looked worn and fagged. The players who ran off the stage with a laugh or song seated themselves instantly, dull and silent. Mr. Imlay's mind may have been unhinged, but he had sense enough to see that this was not hellish sport from which he had come to take Jane, but work, — hard, steady drudgery. The fun, the gayety, belonged to the audience: behind the curtain there were few jokes or laughs. The only idle person was Jane's blind father, who sat dozing in the corner.

"He always brings Janey and takes her away," explained Mr. Sperry. "I bet you that fellow Kneedles will make her work now for her twenty dollars! She

has three super's parts to-night, — nothing to say, but changes her dress ten times. Worst of it is, she goes right out of a heavy witch's costume, — fur cloak, and wraps over her head, — wet with perspiration, into a ball-dress, bare neck and arms. You've no idea of the draughts on that stage. I shiver even in my cloth clothes. Here she is."

How superbly beautiful she was! But nobody but himself seemed to think of her beauty.

Mrs. Finn, in trailing cotton-velvet robes and gilt crown, hurried after her: "Put this shawl round you. You are shivering, and your head is like fire. — This must be stopped, George Sperry, at once," she continued angrily. "If you don't speak to Kneedles, I will, though I break my engagement by it. It is sheer murder for a girl with delicate lungs."

Jane, who was coughing violently, checked herself with a laugh: "Nonsense, Emily! Never was better in my life! I can't expect to be paid twenty dollars for doing nothing. The truth is," she added vehemently, "I never can play a speaking part: that's the truth, and you know it. All that I can earn must be by posing. Don't speak to Kneedles. Don't take our bread and butter away."

Mr. Imlay stepped forward. But the life seemed to be suddenly sapped out of his arguments. He had meant to snatch this soul from the edge of hell. But was she on the edge of hell? "I came," he said formally enough, "to persuade you to leave this mode of life. It does not seem to me — "

"I understand all that," said Jane impatiently, standing very erect. "You have your prejudices

against our profession, Mr. Imlay, but it is my trade. It is all I can do. I have myself and — and others to support. I cannot teach, nor write, nor paint. What other work is there that would bring me in twenty dollars a week?"

Was it really a trade, a mere question of work and wages?

"The temptation—" he faltered.

"*I* don't think," said Mrs. Finn sharply, "that Janey is exposed to more temptation here than if she were a shop-girl obliged to dress decently and feed herself on three dollars a week. — There, George! curtain's up."

A shrill boy's voice squeaked out something at the door, and in a moment the room was empty. Only Jane was left. She looked at Mr. Imlay, hesitated, and then went directly up to him and laid her hand on his arm. There was little intellect in her dark eyes, but there was an almost motherly affectionateness, a common-sense which seemed to the irresolute man before her strangely durable and strong. "You are very kind to me," she said. "But you had better go away now. Clergymen don't come here. Don't worry about me. It's hard work, but the pay is good. It's the right thing, —" she stopped, then repeated with emphasis, — "it's the right thing for me to stay with Kneedles."

She urged him gently toward the door. He had not asked her to be his wife, — she did not know that he loved her: "One moment, Jane!" stopping on the threshold.

"No. They are calling me. Good-bye." She smiled

and kissed her hand. He fancied that the tears stood in her eyes. "It is the right thing for me to do — to stay just here." Then the door closed on her, and he found his way out into the dark street.

* * * * * * * *

One day a year later the Reverend William Imlay with his wife passed the theatre in Baltimore.

"'Miss Gertie Swan in her original *rôle* of the Rose of the Prairies. Kneedles's great Combination!'" he read. "I wonder where —" He stopped abruptly. Young Mrs. Imlay turned, smiling, but when she looked at him she stopped abruptly. She had fine tact, and seldom asked questions.

A moment later they met, coming out of the theatre, a stout man and a pretty little woman in a Gainsborough hat. Mr. Imlay stopped and held out both hands. (He was a firmer, more decided, stronger man now in every way than when they had known him.) "Clara, here are some old friends of mine," he said. — "Mrs. Finn, my wife. — Mrs. Imlay, Mr. Sperry."

There was a good deal of hand-shaking and curious glances on both sides. The handsome bride was very courteous and affable, though her nerves were greatly shaken. Actors! William's friends! Could she touch pitch and not be defiled? Though, indeed, these poor players really seemed to talk and look quite like other human beings.

Just before they separated, her husband said, "Mr. Kneedles, I see, has another Rose. Is — ?"

"You did not hear about Janey?" said Mr. Sperry

with a sudden sobering of his pompous manner. "No! — Tell him, Emily."

Mrs. Finn did not speak. There was an awkward silence.

"No, I did not hear," said Mr. Imlay loudly. Something in his tone made his wife look at him. She put her hand quickly on his arm, but he did not see nor feel her.

"Janey is gone," said Mrs. Finn briefly.

"Yes," said Sperry. "It was that infernal Kneedles. He saw the child was ambitious to earn twenty dollars a week for her father and Bob, and piled on the work. She took cold the night you left. Me and Emily warned her, but she wouldn't give up. Lung-trouble. It only lasted a week. It was pitiful to hear her worry about those two, — Bob's schooling and the old man's overcoat, — everything. But the profession took it up; raised enough to get the old man in an asylum and to send Bob to college. Emily, here, has taken him home with her boys. So the poor child died content. Yes, sir," said Sperry, after he had looked around and waited for somebody to speak, lifting his hat with a little dramatic flourish. "Yes, sir. Poor Janey has saluted the world!"

"Come, George!" said Mrs. Finn abruptly. "We have a train to make. You forget."

Mr. Sperry was very hearty in his adieux, shook hands twice with the bride (to whom Mrs. Finn only bowed with great stateliness), and drew Mr. Imlay aside to say, "I'm sorry I told you about poor Janey. I'd no idea it would knock you up so. But it's all right with her now."

"Yes," said Mr. Imlay with deliberation. "It is all right with her now."

His wife did not speak to him until they had walked a long time through the quiet streets. Then she said gently, "That was a sad story. Very sad."

He made no answer.

"But what," she persisted, "can we do in such a case? There is such a wide gulf between us and them."

"Is there?" said Mr. Imlay, looking at her vacantly.

She thought he had not understood her, and said nothing more.

A WAYSIDE EPISODE

A YEAR or two after the war, Mr. Edwin Wootton, of New York, with his wife and a gay party of young people, made an exploring journey through the South. It was his own idea, — open spring wagon, camping-equipments, guns, fishing-tackle, and all, — or, rather, he thought and told everybody that it was his own idea. Now and then his wife had a habit of mentioning some plan as utterly impracticable, whereupon he would instantly seize on it and work himself into a fever to prove to her that nothing could be easier. After they had carried it out successfully, he would cackle over her in triumph for months as a convert to his own original scheme.

"I never did expect," said Mrs. Penryn-Clay on her return from France, "to find Emily Wootton so dominated by that fussy little imbecile that she has married. She is as silent, mild, and gentle as one of those model, cow-like wives that one sees in a farce, but nowhere else in America. I thought Emily rather clever as a girl."

"She thought herself clever," replied Mr. Franciscus (Miss Fanny, the young people called him) who

dropped in every day now to talk over all that had happened in their set while she had been gone. "She thought herself immensely clever, I assure you. Why, Mrs. Clay, Emily Souders at seventeen set out to be eccentric, — an Advanced Female! Oh, she did!"

He giggled, settled himself comfortably back in his easy chair, and pushed his beard caressingly up through his hand: "She left the convent where all the girls were who were to be *débutantes* that winter, and went to a Methodist Female College. It's a fact, — Methodist! Plunged into Latin and the sciences. But the Methodists soon proved to her that she was a dunce. Then she fancied that she was an artist, and coaxed old Souders to take her to Italy. It took her a year to find out she was fit for nothing at that: so she came home, when her mother took her in hand and married her to little Neddy Wootton. The old lady had planned that match when Emily was ten years old and Neddy inherited his uncle's money."

"I am surprised to hear that of Emily. The Souders always have been conventional to the last degree. They never take a step out of line," said Mrs. Penryn-Clay, whose chief glory it was that her position lifted her above all rules.

Mr. Franciscus poised the tips of his long fingers together, looking at them thoughtfully, his face sobering into a look of ferret-like sagacity. He had a sleuth-hound acuteness for nosing into the personal peculiarities of his friends. "Now, I don't think," he said deliberately, "that that is true of Emily. She is a radical. There's fermentation going on under that demure face of hers. I suspect that it is she who

keeps Neddy uneasy and perpetually drives him into such queer starts, while the little man is so horribly afraid of violating propriety. He is running about now trying to find out what everybody thinks of this Southern trip. 'Of course,' he says, 'the proper thing for us all to do this summer would be to build at Newport. But the cads are creeping in even at Newport. I'm going to trees and mountains. You are in no danger from cads when trees and mountains are your companions.'"

The old lady laughed: "'Cads'? Poor Edwin! Of course your memory does not go back so far, but I remember the grandfather Wootton distinctly, — a retail grocer. I have heard that he went out himself for orders, — white apron, cart, and all. But I never saw that. His son, Neddy's uncle, did something in sugar which brought in their millions."

"Ned knows all that, and knows that we know it. Yet only yesterday he remarked to me — actually to me — that blue and silver had always been the colors of the Wootton liveries."

"I thought there was a compact among all Americans to keep up these little illusions for each other," said Mrs. Clay, smiling up into the eyes of the ancient beau, with a most significant lack of significance in her face. He tittered uneasily, knowing perfectly well that she was thinking of his uncle Job Franciscus, who is a tanner in New Jersey to this day.

As soon as Mr. Wootton found that his expedition was approved by "Miss Fanny," who echoed the opinions of society, he buzzed happily about his preparations. Underneath his snobbishness he was a generous, thoughtful little man.

"We will take my sister Jane," he said to his wife. "Poor Jane! she abhors fashionable watering-places ever since her deafness came on. And there's your father: it will be just the thing for your father's liver."

"People will mistake the wagon for an ambulance, and you for an agent of the Sanitary Commission," said his wife dryly.

"Tut, tut! Well, I suppose that is true," with a forced laugh. He watched her uncomfortably for a few minutes. "I thought, Emmy, you would like to feel that you were helping somebody by my wild-goose-chase. But it's too bad to bore you with a lot of invalids."

She said nothing, and he turned to his paper discontentedly. A year ago you could not have bored her by invalids. She spent half of her time visiting orphan asylums and blind old paupers and teaching in industrial schools for beggars' children. But she had shut her door on them all one day, and her heart, too, apparently, on all pity or tenderness.

"Really, I thought you would have liked that plan," he said presently, returning to the charge.

"Two or three boys and girls would be made perfectly happy by such a journey," she said indifferently, "but it would be impossible to take them. The trouble would be endless."

"No trouble at all!" bouncing up. "The very thing! Your cousin Zack, and Will and Louis Pettrow, and the Perry girls! None of them over fourteen. It will be a four-weeks picnic! I tell you, Em, that's the best idea I have had yet!"

He carried it out. The children were nearer his own grade of intellect than men and women would have been; and as for Mrs. Wootton, she was very happy with them. She was an indolent young woman at home, but on this journey she was a middle-aged, motherly matron, fussing about their wet feet, doctoring the boys for coughs, putting her arms around the girls' waists whenever they came near her. She had never had a child of her own.

The ravages of the war, especially in Virginia, were then fresh, and stared them in the face at every stage of the journey. Mr. Wootton, who had been fiercely loyal while the struggle was going on, was just as intemperate now in his sympathy for the South.

"I swear, Emily, I feel personally responsible for every burned barn or new-made grave," he said. He was perpetually offering money on all sides and being snubbed for his offers. Another trouble he had, quite as heavy as the desolation of the South, — which was the fear that the planters would mistake him and his party for ordinary folk. He fraternized readily with the mountaineers or guides, and kept his own importance carefully out of sight. But when they came near a town or a handsome dwelling he brought Simon the valet into full view. Simon wore the blue-and-silver livery.

"And I am so thankful I had the Wootton crest put on all our trunks!" he said. "It is unusual, to be sure, but it impresses people at once. You are not careful enough about these things, Emily."

The young people laughed at him among themselves, but paid that exaggerated homage to his wife which

boys and girls are apt to give to a woman of beauty who is a social leader in the world which they will soon enter.

"She is too indifferent to be a leader anywhere," said Dora Perry. "She is too indifferent even to lead her husband or to feel contempt for him. He would simply drive *me* mad."

They had stopped at a little inn at the opening of a gap in the mountains in Southwestern Virginia, and the girls were on a porch looking up the misty defile. Mrs. Wootton joined them before Dora had finished speaking. The others grew silent, uneasily, but Dora said readily, "We were just talking of the qualities necessary to make a leader in society. What do you think they are, Mrs. Wootton?"

Emily looked down at the little girl's keen, intelligent features, already under better control than her own, and laughed.

"You will soon answer that question better than I, Dora," she said, seating herself beside them. "As for society, as you call it, when I think of it here it reminds me of one of those glass boxes which you see in an apothecary's window, in which a few gold-fishes and minnows swim round and round, eying each other year in and year out, and bumping their noses against the sides."

"You speak as if it was a sort of jail!" cried Dora indignantly.

Mrs. Wootton answered only with that pretty set smile which they thought so charming.

"It seems to me the most desirable place in the world," persisted the girl; "I mean, of course," smiling, "the glass case where only the gold-fish swim."

"Yes. You, probably, will never bump against the sides," said the lady carelessly.

Dora looked at her perplexed a minute, and then said tartly, "How far is Mr. Wootton going to take us into these dreary hills? We are leaving the large plantations quite behind us; and I did want to see something of the upper class in Virginia. Nelly Hunter spent a winter in Richmond before the war, and she says they were so delightfully exclusive. Money counted for nothing. She gave me letters of introduction to half a dozen of the old families. She said, even if I wasn't out, I might be making desirable social connections for the future."

"Very true," said Emily. "But, unfortunately, Mr. Wootton intends to go up farther into the hills."

Dora went into the house. Mrs. Wootton sat looking up the gorge, over which the sun threw slanting yellow streaks, like flame, from behind the opposite peak. The path was narrow, and the overhanging hemlocks on either side nearly covered it. It led up into the ranges of the mountains beyond, which towered mysterious and inscrutable. Mrs. Wootton's face was turned toward them, and Zack Souders sat at her feet, watching her. Zack had that admiration for her which a romantic boy of fifteen usually cherishes for some woman old enough to be his mother. She took the place of all the heroines of whom he had ever read in poem and novel who were lonely and unrecognized in the world. His dislike for her good-natured, insignificant little husband was the more bitter because he had no opportunity to show it. If he could only have proof that he tyrannized over

Emily! If he had any chance for an outbreak to relieve her from his cruelty! Instead of that, Neddy was sure to come tiptoeing along presently, smiling and offering them an open box of caramels. Zack was always impatient, too, with Emily's neat, undramatic dress. Its calm propriety never expressed any emotion whatever. If her hair were ever dishevelled, or if she would only stretch out her white arms wearily occasionally, like all the unhappy married women in modern novels.

"What is it you are looking for?" he said at last. "Your eyes always seem to me to be searching, — searching for something you have lost out of your life."

Emily laughed. "Don't be melo-dramatic, Zack," she said, looking down kindly at the boy.

"Is it anything that *I* can help you to gain?" he persisted, his face lightening with excitement. "Tell me what you were wishing for then."

"What was I wishing? That I was a squirrel, or fox, or wolf, — some wild creature that could go up that path into the woods and stay there. I should like to know what the life of an animal has in it."

At that moment a man came out from under the porch on which they stood, and cast a quick, curious glance up at her, then passed up the street of the drowsy little hamlet. He had a tall, sinewy figure, and was clothed in a hunting-shirt made of deer-skin, and short breeches of the same, covered with dust; on his feet were leather soles strapped like sandals; his knees and throat were bare and tanned the color of the leather; his long red hair and beard were untrimmed,

and on his head was a cap made from the skin of a coyote. He went with a steady, loping stride up the gorge, not once looking back, — though the sight of a beautiful, richly-dressed woman in that corner of the earth must have been startling enough.

The hunting-shirt and wolf-skin cap summarily knocked Zack headlong out of his sentiment. "Hello!" he shouted wildly. "Is that one of the bear-hunters from Tennessee you told me about?" leaning over the railing of the porch to call to the innkeeper below.

"No, it ain't. They hain't no such lookin' beasts as that. He's no hunter. He's a rank stranger. Nobody knows whar *he* belongs."

"Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes; onct he come along hyar, about a year ago. He stays up in the mountings. Don't bring down fish, nor skins, nor nothin'. Hain't no call up thar, as I kin see."

"An escaped criminal, perhaps," said Zack to Emily.

Night had fallen with a suddenness startling to Emily, who had never lived among the mountains. She strained her eyes to look into the gorge, when out of it came a shout something between a yodel and the bay of a hound nearing its prey. She fancied that it broke out of the sheer ecstasy of the man at plunging again into the woods, and had an odd feeling that it was sent back to her. It ended in a high musical note that cut through the night-air and left it more dead than before.

"Hark to that fellow!" said Zack. "There is your wish fulfilled, Mrs. Wootton. How do you like it? He is finding out what an animal's life is like, pretty

fairly. But I can't imagine you, clothed in skins like the cave-women, climbing mountains or swimming rivers."

"No," said Emily, smiling. But what ailed her? As she sat leaning over the railing, her chin in her palm, her thoughts rushed out beyond her control. Usually she held them in check, even without her own knowledge. The man yonder, — there was no law, no rule of propriety, to hamper him: he could lose himself in the woods and shut the world out, — wholly out. If a man could lie on the grass at night, with nothing but the rustling trees and stars overhead, he would know if they had anything to say to him; that is, if there was anything to say anywhere.

Down below her, Dora and Louis were talking over their last letters from New York, — how the Courtneys had married Anne at last to a rich Californian, and how Betty Matton had a new idea at her reception in the way of floral pillars, and how the Perots had gone to Paris for draperies for their drawing-room. Had life anything to say to her but this, — receptions and floral pillars and draperies? She had heard of nothing else since her childhood. She was walled into this little world of society, of gossip, of insignificant competition and more insignificant ideas, as into a jail-cell. For one day to be alone, to climb the mountains, plunge into the rivers, to be man, beast, anything that was free to gratify its own instincts and passions, good or bad! No river had water enough to cool the heat in her blood. She had heard in church something of the water of life. God knows, there was in her a horrible thirst. She fancied

if she could shake herself loose from every tie and go back to nature it would be quenched. She sat quite motionless, the pretty smile fixed on her mouth. It did not even occur to her to fear what Neddy would think if he should find out his real wife under the charming leader of society whom he knew. He never would find her out. She always felt as if she were wrapped in countless folds of deceit when she talked to him.

Emily Wootton was not only a fashionable woman, but by inheritance a strict sectarian. She had been run, when a child, into a mould of doctrines, church-going, and propriety. Her creed, like her grammar, her gowns, and her touch on the piano, had been modelled on the highest standard of the decorous and pious suburban town where she was born. Her Scotch-Irish father (whom she always remembered as seated by the lamp, reading Barnes' Notes, in his tightly-buttoned coat, his gold spectacles across his Roman nose), — was it any of his blood in her that prompted her to run wild like a stag or a satyr?

Emily laughed. She had a keen sense of the ridiculous, unlike most women, especially when it touched herself.

"Did you read that story of the Maori chief the other day?" she said suddenly, turning to Zack. "He had been converted to houses and clothes and civilization, when one day a paper collar tickled his ear. He dragged it off and trampled it under foot. 'It's a little lie!' he shouted. 'And all your clothes are lies! And your compliments and houses and trade and talk of religion! All little lies!' And he rushed back to the wilderness again."

Zack looked with a shrewd speculation into her face. "After he turned savage was he satisfied?" he said. "Did he find what he wanted?"

"There is the supper-bell," said Mrs. Wootton, rising and brushing the fallen leaves from her dress. "Will you ask Simon to bring some of the older sherry from the wagon, Zack? Mr. Wootton did not like that which we had for dinner."

In a week, Mr. Wootton had pitched his camp up among the mountains, far beyond the reach of civilized intruders. He built a hut for Emily and the girls, with the help of Simon, who, when his livery was laid aside, turned out to be a very handy Connecticut Yankee. Neddy and the boys kept up a watch-fire, and slept over it in turn every night, supposing that they were keeping guard against bears and panthers. They lived in ecstatic expectation of a leap, a growl, and a fight for life.

"Every man likes to go back and be a savage at times," said Neddy, rubbing his ringed fingers as they sat around the camp-fire one evening. "Now, you, Emily, care nothing for nature: I can see that. You are bored. You want to feel lace about your wrists, and carpets under your feet, to be comfortable."

"Yes," said his wife.

It was true that she was disappointed. Nature had no mysterious message for her. She was often left alone here with the towering hills about her, and the gray old trees whispering together, and the dome of air above full of color and life and motion. She saw that there was an infinite quiet and content in them all. But she was not quieted nor contented by it. What-

ever this awful secret was, she had no hold upon it. It was with her precisely as when her heart swelled with a song that ought to silence heaven itself to listen and she uttered a cracked piping falsetto, or as when, years ago, she felt herself inspired with a poem, and had written miserable rhymes — vapid and pretentious.

"Yes; I am sure," she said to Neddy, "nature and I have nothing in common."

"It is because you do not go to work rationally, my dear. If you would study geology, now! Or I could give you a few facts about trees, for example, that would make the woods seem like a new world to you. There is that cedar, for instance. That is the wood out of which the clothes-chests are made. Capital preventive of moths. Or that yellow pine. It is exported for flooring to — Halloo! What is that?"

A man plunging through the thicket crossed the light of the fire. He carried on his back half of a deer freshly killed. Mr. Wootton and the boys hurried to meet him. "You've had good luck today?" said Neddy, in the hearty, brotherly fashion with which he met men who were hopelessly below his class.

"Oh, fairish," slinging down the venison and wiping his face. It was the man of the wolf-skin cap.

Edwin examined the meat: "Perhaps you have more than you want of this venison? I wish you would sell me some of it."

"Sell?" he laughed. "Up here money counts for nothing. But," hesitating, "I'll willingly give you the venison for half a dozen cigars such as that which you are smoking."

"Bring some cigar-boxes, Simon."

"The antlers are fine. Will you have them?" he said, turning to Zack after he had chosen the cigars.

"Oh, thank you. But the price? I don't smoke."

"And I am not in trade. Pray take them." And, with a smile and a nod, he disappeared in the thicket.

"He speaks English like an educated man," said Zack.

"He is educated in cigars, at least," said Neddy. "He chose the finest brand. He's in hiding from the police, I suppose. Murder or burglary, no doubt. What else could drive such a fellow to live like a beast? But one can't send word to the authorities," staring with his mouth a little open up to the tree-tops for the telegraph-wires which were not there.

The next day Mrs. Wootton walked up the ravine with her sketching-book. Simon was in sight in the camp. The others had gone down the mountain to fish. After she had been at work awhile, she heard a step behind her, and, raising her head, saw the stranger.

"I hope I did not startle you, madam," he said, removing his cap. "I have something here which I thought you might use. If you would allow me?" — waiting for permission before he came near enough to hand it to her. It was a feather from an eagle's wing. "I'll tell you the truth," he added hurriedly: "I made this the excuse to see you again. It is three years since I have spoken to a woman."

Emily's breeding did not fail her, even in the presence of a possible murderer in this solitude. She held out her hand for the feather as though she had

not heard his last words, her eyes brightening as she took it. "I will have it made into a pen," she said, examining it deliberately. "It was good of you to bring it to me. Will you sit down?"

He took his seat on the rocks before her. They looked at each other a moment, not with the crude curiosity of a savage and a fine lady brought face to face, but as equals hesitate in a drawing-room, secretly and swiftly gauging each other before they speak. Emily fully appreciated the difference. The man, despite his uncouth clothes, was clean, and his skin ruddy. He had a cool, controlled eye.

"Did you shoot the eagle in this range?"

"I did not shoot it. Whatever I may be, I have not the blood of a bird on my soul, thank God. I pulled the feather from its wing."

"You climbed to its nest to do it!"

"Oh, that is nothing," moving uneasily. "Any boy in these mountains can do that."

She was silent a moment. There were no small ideas common to herself and this man of the woods.

"You do not scruple to kill deer?"

"I only shoot one now and then to keep myself alive. A bit of meat satisfies me for weeks. There is plenty of food in the growth of the woods, if you know how to find it. Then you have the satisfaction of getting your living as animals do, direct from the earth." He watched her as he spoke, as if trying the effect of his words on her. She remembered now that he had overheard her outburst to Zack. It had made a kind of secret understanding between this man and herself, which gave meaning to his words. It was

this which had brought him back. Evidently he was comparing his life and thoughts with what he guessed of hers. "I," he added, "came to the woods because there is nothing to be sold or bought here, nothing to be made or lost. A man here owes no duty to any other man; he can find himself out; he gets back to his original conditions."

"I always supposed," said Emily, in her most indifferent voice, working diligently at her sketch, though she was burning with curiosity to drag out his secret, "that only the fervor of religion or a great grief could drive a man to live as you are doing."

"I had no grief. As for religion —" He stopped short. Presently, with a significant laugh, he said, "Why should not a man go to the woods instead of to Europe to hide? I have no doubt the men of your party believe that I am here to escape the penitentiary or the gallows."

Mrs. Wootton looked up sharply, her pencil uplifted in her fingers ready to make a stroke, and scanned his face steadily for a full minute.

"*I* do not believe it," she said quietly, and finished shading her leaf. But her heart thumped hard under her shawl. He was no criminal. As honest a soul as her own looked back out of his eyes, but there was an uncertain gleam in them now which frightened her. He did not speak for some time, and she did not look up again. Then he got up and leaned against a tree, restlessly pulling down the branches and tearing off the leaves.

"I am here because I was tired. I tried one business after another. I was a bad artist, and an

editor, and a teacher; then I went to help Walker out with his fight in Nicaragua. I was one of the first to go to gold-digging in California. I threw up the claim just as it began to pay. I got so tired I couldn't stay to see it out. Then I fought in the war with Sherman. When the army disbanded, my people got me into business in Philadelphia. Oh, they thought I was in luck! It was such a fine opening for a poor devil! But, great God! who could stand *that?*"

Emily began to speak, but he hurried on without heeding her:

"Drudge, drudge, day in and day out! Give up your whole big life to earn the food to live with! And the straight streets, and the rows of red houses, and the crowds of people all drudging to keep themselves alive! I was sick of the whole miserable business in a month's time. The sight of the crowd going by — the same man and the same woman, with different noses and eyes, a million times repeated — came to be a horrible nightmare to me."

"What did you do?"

"I broke away from them. I came here. You don't stare at me or think me mad, as they did?"

"No," she said calmly, rubbing out a false stroke.

"Yet even in the woods," he said, after a minute's silence, "one must strut and bear a part. I wear this ridiculous stagey toggery because it keeps men away. The good folks down in the villages look on me as a Cain, and even the revenue officers fly if they catch sight of me." He laughed, and looked for the moment like a hearty good fellow who cracked many a joke with himself alone under the sky.

"You do not mean to stay here? You will not spend your life in the woods?"

"God knows. I cannot tell what I may do to-morrow, any more than any other animal."

Emily closed her book. Her fingers shook, and a queer suffocation came into her throat. It was so new a thing to her artificial life to come face to face with any human being in this way. If she could stretch out her hand to help him? What did it matter to her whether guilt or madness had driven him out of the world?

"You cannot waste your life here," she said, involuntarily showing her excitement in her voice. "I can see that you are a man of power and of education. You have duties —"

"Duties?" he laughed ironically. "If I went back to the world to-day I should find you all glad to be rid of your duties, if you had my courage to throw them off. Don't I remember 'society'? Is it any different now? Don't men, generation after generation, sink themselves and give up their talents and ambition for their children, who turn out smaller and meaner than they half the time? Don't clever women tire of their stupid husbands and grope about for congenial souls?"

"You are right," said Emily, rising, with a nervous laugh. "Undoubtedly you are right." She did not know what she was saying. When she heard his last words, she felt as if the man had come close to her and put his hands upon her. Edwin was coming up the hill, and hurried forward, smiling. She did not hear what he said. She saw him talking to the stran-

ger, and that they laughed. She herself spoke. But it was all far off from her, as though she were asleep.

Clever women tiring of their husbands, and groping about for — ?

She went down through the camp to a great rock by the creek and hid behind it. Now she was alone. Nobody could drag out her naked soul in public here.

Was it *that* which ailed her? Was she tired of her husband and groping about for a stronger man to love? And it was apparent to even this half-mad vagabond?

Emily Wootton was a worldly woman, but she had been as pure and stern in her wifely creed as Lucretia. The blood of generations of Scotch Presbyterians flowed thin and tepid in her veins. She had never flirted when she was a school-girl. There had not been a spark of coquetry in her nature when coquetry would have become her age. Now, when she was a middle-aged woman, she was groping for a congenial soul! It was but yesterday that she had read a popular novel in which the American fashionable married woman was depicted as a church-going Ninon, enacting dramas of passion with every man she met except her husband, and she had flamed into righteous indignation at it as an indecent libel. Now this ghastly portrait was set up before her as her own likeness. Was it true?

Mrs. Wootton sat hidden by the thicket. She peeped out at her husband as he fussed over the camp-fire, as if she feared to look at him. He was fussy and contemptible in many ways. She had never told herself so before. But she saw it now. She had never

realized that she had married a man less than herself. She knew it now.

Was it this that had ailed her? This horrible emptiness of life, — was it only the want of a real support, of a live love? If it were so? —

The supper was ready long before Mrs. Wootton came up into camp.

"You are fagged out, Emmy. Your clothes are wet with the dew," buzzed Edwin. "Take some coffee and go directly to bed. Zack and Perry went down to the cross-roads and brought up the mail. I'll come and read the letters to you."

"I don't care for letters. No, I want no coffee," she snapped fretfully, and crept off into her tent. She despised him, but she loathed herself. He was petty and shallow, perhaps, but she — she was like the rest of American Ninons, ready for her drama of love with some other man.

After an hour or two the miserable woman began to cry. "I did not know that I was so bad," she told herself. "I'm sure there never was anybody else. But it's all so empty, — empty!" She lay awake through the night, with her hands over her face, unconscious of how the time passed, until she was suddenly aware that the dawn was breaking and that Edwin had not come into the tent. She started up, threw on her wrapper, and looked out, her heart heavy with guilt. The camp-fire was built some five yards distant. It burned brightly, and her husband sat beside it on a log, a note-book open on his knee. She went up to him. "Why are you here, Edwin?" she said, her voice hoarse. "You wish to avoid me? You think

we are unsuited to each other? You are happier alone?"

"Bless my soul, my dear, wake up! You don't know what you are talking about." He laughed, quickly closing the note-book and putting it into his pocket. "Come, go back to the tent, Emily. It is chilly and wet here." He rose to lead her back, and wrapped his coat about her. Something in his manner struck her. It had never been so quiet or authoritative. There was a sense of relief in it to the hysterical woman.

"Let me sit with you here awhile."

"Very well."

He piled up the logs, wrapped a rug over her feet, and sat down again: "Do you see that saffron tinge on the fog below? Just there the sun comes up."

But his wife, with her back to the fog, was peering into his face: "Something has happened, Edwin, that you are keeping from me. What is it?"

He half rose, sat down again, put his hand into his pocket for the note-book, and pushed it back: "You have keen eyes, Emily. It is only a matter of business. I will talk it over with you when we reach home," he said, in the quieting tone which a man uses to a fretful child.

"No, now," she persisted. She saw by the kindling fire how pinched his features looked. "If it is trouble, let me share it. You have always kept trouble from me before," with a sudden glow of gratitude when she remembered how entirely he had done it.

"That is only what every man does, of course. This, — this —" He began to speak once or twice,

and stopped, keeping an eager, anxious watch on her face. "It is Payes and Burtman, Emily. They have failed. I was a silent partner."

"Oh! Then you have lost — a great deal?"

"Everything."

"Had you no investments in Western lands? You told me so once."

"In Nevada. Mining. But I sold out in May. No; absolutely every dollar I own will be swept away. The partners are each responsible for the obligations of the firm. I never should have gone into it. I see that now. But it was done for the best."

"I am sure of that, Edwin," she said cordially. All her strength and loyalty rose to support him. Through the day that followed she was eager, energetic, and gay, helping with the hurried preparations for return. It did not once occur to her to question whether she loved her husband or not, or to criticise him. She had too much else to think of. They were going to be wretchedly poor. There was all that blank future to paint in her thoughts. Mrs. Wootton had no data to help her in this work. Between the starved women with baskets and shawls over their heads who came to the back-area door at night, and the mechanic's fat wife in her stingy purple silk and cotton gloves in the back pews at church, there was a vague range of life down there below like the circles in Dante's hell. She was about to plunge down into it. So far, she felt nothing but exhilaration, — a keen sense of adventure, as if it were a journey to Labrador, or a descent into a coal-pit. Of only one point she was certain: she must learn something of business. Being

the stronger of the two, much of the direction of their future course would naturally fall to her. Edwin would be crushed by this fatal mistake and the consciousness of his weakness and incompetency. She thought with delight how generous she would be, how self-sacrificing. No matter how hard their strait of poverty, not a word of reproach should ever pass her lips.

To-day Edwin certainly was not crushed. She found herself, like the others, working under his direction. How prompt and firm and cheerful he was! She found time to say to him, "As soon as we reach New York, your better plan would be to place your affairs wholly in my father's hands. He can bring order out of them, if possible." Mr. Wootton glanced at her. Her tone was slightly authoritative. "He will keep you from making any more such slips," she added, smiling pleasantly.

"Very well, Emmy. We shall see."

Zack Souders was near them, on his knees, packing a gun-case. When Edwin turned away, he blurted out his thoughts, as usual: "You don't know, I see, how Mr. Wootton became entangled with Payes and Burtman, or you would not have said that. I heard it from my father a year ago."

"What do you mean?" said Emily.

"When you and he were up the Nile, he left his affairs in your father's hands, with power of attorney, and so on. Mr. Souders believed Payes and Burtman were going to make millions in the China trade, so he sold out the Nevada investments and put all your husband's money into their concern."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure. I heard my father say then it was a terrible mistake, and one which Mr. Wootton himself would never have made. He said, too, that there was no man in New York with a clearer head for business than Edwin Wootton. I tell you," said the boy, his face flushing hotly, "because I know I have sometimes myself hardly been fair to Mr. Wootton."

"He never told me that it was my father that had ruined him. And he never would have told me," said Emily quietly. But throughout the day the boy saw that she was under the influence of stronger excitement than could be accounted for by her father's act. Her husband, who had always been grateful for the most chilly signs of affection from her, was perplexed by the silent, humble, deprecatory manner with which she hung about him. It increased after they reached New York and conferences between him and his partners took place, at some of which she was present. Could this keen, clear-headed, inexorably honest man be finical, snobbish little Neddy Wootton? It is not often that a wife sees her husband as men see him. When she does, it has a lasting effect upon her for good or ill. Emily had known that Mr. Wootton was a kindly, generous fellow: she thought of it as part of his weakness. She had not known of the broad, wise charities which now first came to light when funds to carry them on had failed, nor had she recognized the prudence that managed them, nor the simple, devout faith which had prompted them.

She waited for months before she told him that she knew her father's share in the matter, simply to watch

his expedients to conceal it from her and to save her from pain or mortification. She felt a keen delight at his tender care of her, understanding for the first time that it had been always about her.

"Why did you hide that from me, Edwin?" she said, when at last she spoke of it.

"I knew it would hurt you less to think me in fault than your father," he replied simply; "and of course I wish to save you all the hurt I can now, Emily."

If she really had been groping about her for a stronger man to lean upon, she knew now that she had found him. Fortunately, Neddy was just then too busy to fuss about his sciatic nerve or to wonder what people thought of him; and as for the coat of arms and liveries, he had forgotten them in whetstones. His old friend J. C. Tobias, of Connecticut, had discovered an opening for his whetstones in California, and proposed to Neddy to go out as agent, promising him a partnership if he could make the thing go.

* * * * * * * *

Ten years later, some Eastern capitalists who were visiting the Pacific slope drove with a party of San Francisco men one afternoon out to inspect the Wootton seed-farm.

"Not Neddy Wootton that I used to know?" said one of the visitors. "He was no end of a swell, — a poor fal-fal creature, with not an idea beyond his tandem and waxed moustache."

"Edwin Wootton this man's name is, and he is from New York. But he is a long-headed fellow; —

never has failed to see a good chance nor to use it. California brings out the stuff in a man, if there is any. He's not one of our rich men, but he's a solid one."

There was the usual collation and speech-making, and then the visitors scattered about the grounds. A party of them met Mrs. Wootton in the garden, and were presented to her. She showed them the poultry-yards and colonies of bees that were now a sort of corollary to the farm, but she did not say that they had been begun by herself to help her husband when every dollar counted in their weekly income. Her little son trotted along beside her, holding her hand: it was easy to see that they were comrades. She was a tall, slow-moving woman, with a low, feminine voice, and seemed for some reason to impress the visitors more than anything they saw, as it was only of her they spoke as they drove back.

"That is a solitary life for a woman of that kind," said one. "She is wasted there."

"I doubt if she thinks so," replied a friend of her husband. "There is always that singularly steady, tranquil look shining in her eyes."

Somebody on the back seat answered more energetically than the occasion seemed to require: "Because she has what she needed, — work and children. A woman at a certain age wants a baby to nurse and something to do. That is nature. It is usually women that have neither who go groping about for congenial souls or female suffrage, or some other devilment to fill up the gap in their lives."

"You speak as if you had known Mrs. Wootton before?" said the man beside him.

"Yes," he said, with a certain sharp bitterness: the tone did not encourage any farther questioning

A singular thing happened to Mrs. Wootton that evening. The visitors had all been business-men, dressed in the usual morning garb of gentlemen, and strictly conventional in their behavior; yet, when she thought of them, a steep mountain-pass, a grotesque skin-clad figure, and a sad face under a coyote cap would rise before her, and she felt the old rebellious tug of pity and kinship at her heart.

"He could not have been among them," she thought uneasily, for she had deep down a secret sense that this vagabond had read her with keener eyes than husband or child would ever do.

She wondered if the poor creature had found what he sought in the world. Then she hastily told herself that no doubt he had died of cold and hunger in some of those gorges long ago. In any case, what did it matter to her?

Yet she had for some time afterward a vague hope and dread of meeting him in some unexpected place, for she was sure that he was not in any ordinary groove of life. She scanned the faces of the gangs of miners when she passed them on the streets, and took to studying the features of the noted murderers, Arctic heroes, and brilliant authors which were reproduced in the illustrated journals. But, not finding him, he soon died wholly out of her memory; for Mrs. Wootton was too much absorbed in her children to give much thought to anything else.

MADEMOISELLE JOAN

SEVERAL years ago, (so ran the school-master's story,) my doctor ordered me to break up all old associations, find my way into some quiet place, and there rest for a year or two. Accordingly, I left the United States, and hurry, and money-making behind me, crossed the St. Lawrence, and, after long and lazy loiterings through Canada, settled down in the obscure little hamlet of St. Robideaux upon the shore of the Saguenay. My chief business was to think of nothing, and to sleep. I lived there, if you choose to call it living, for a year. St. Robideaux was quiet and hushed as any moor-hen's nest in the reeds. Nothing more active than dreams was ever there hatched into life.

The village, a cluster of gray cottages with steep red and yellow roofs, lay in a hollow of the hills, up the sides of which wheat-fields and orchards stretched, trying to warm themselves in the chilled sunlight. The river, cool and dark, flowed lazily alongside of the grassy road, which we called Rue Honoré. There is a mystery, as all the world knows, in this river. It flows between solid walls of rock from its spring to

its mouth. There are but few breaks in these walls. One was at St. Robideaux, and there the sunshine and smiling fields crept down to the edge of the gloomy water. Sometimes a lumberman floated down on his raft from the great pine forests above. You could hear him shouting to the boys, or singing, "Ay! ay! Douce sœur Doré!" until he was out of sight. The little *auberge*, with Repos des Voyageurs thrust out upon a creaking sign from the sycamore in front, stood close to the river. Vain hospitality! No *voyageur* except myself came to St. Robideaux in that year. Madame Baltarre, when she had finished her work and mixed her *pot-au-feu*, sat, with her knitting, on the gallery of the house, like the other women, and watched the sun from day to day as it ripened the peas in her garden below, or tinged and purpled the pale green grapes on the wall. She had abundance of leisure. She would look for hours at the low, bellying clouds swooping down all day long over the ramparts of the hills, to disappear in the gorge below.

The old curé and M. Demy came up every afternoon to bear me company on my end of the gallery. We were all, I think, of good accord: hence we talked but little.

I had brought several different kinds of tobacco with me. It was a solemn event when we opened a new package. We puffed our pipes in silence awhile, and, if the flavor was good, we nodded to each other and loved the world better than before.

"There were three live people in St. Robideaux before you came, monsieur," Père Droûot would say,

— "our friend Olave Demy, here, St. Labadie and myself. Now there are four. When we talk with you on literature and affairs, I feel that my hand is on the wheel of the great machine yonder."

The "literature" which we discussed was an occasional two months old copy of the London "Times" which the curé produced to enliven my exile.

"I have a friend in Quebec who occasionally sends me this great sheet," he would say. "You will have heard, perhaps, that it is called the 'Thunderer' in England? Ah, *ça, ça!* What a world we live in! The sweep of it quite takes away my breath!" and he would gaze with awe at the yellow page, fold it carefully, put it into his pocket, and light his pipe again.

The "affairs" which occupied us were the ripening of the curé's corn or the condition of the hay in St. Robideaux parish. In the morning we usually sat under the great cedar in the curé's garden, to discuss the effect of that day's weather on these crops; and in the afternoon, when the sun came around to the gallery of the inn, we migrated to it and talked it all over again. No one was offended if the others occasionally dropped into a doze.

Sometimes, but not often, we spoke of the river, but then we lowered our voices. It seemed, for some strange reason, a live, malignant thing which it might be as well not to offend.

"It does not seem to me," M. Demy said once, "to belong to God's world."

The curé laughed. "Ah! that is the story you heard when you were a child!" he said. Then with sudden gravity he remarked, "It is quite true, mon-

sieur, that it is like no other water on earth. It is fathomless in certain parts; absolutely bottomless. Hence there has arisen a suspicion that it may lead in these crevices to the under world. That we are nearer the — the land of the unblessed here than anywhere else in the world."

The brief hot summer crept in these friendly confidences slowly away, and the briefer high-colored autumn began to be whitened with frost. M. Labadie now came sometimes to smoke a pipe with us. His summer's work was over; his harvest having gone down the river in two great cases on the last raft. All the village assembled to see it go, and most of the lookers-on fervently threw the sign of the cross after it for good luck. Everybody was a friend to M. Labadie.

"There is no such honey in all America," said Madame Baltarre. "It is the pure juice of the flowers."

The little farm of the bee-grower lay a mile or two north of the village: its only crops were white clover and violets. The old gray house with its steep red roof rose out of the gardens. The sun always shone there, and the air was heavy with perfume; there was no sound but the buzzing of the black, gold-banded Italian bees, darting here and there through the sweet clover. Nature in St. Robideaux slept, with long, full, quiet breaths; but in the old bee-farm she woke with a cheerful smile.

M. Labadie, according to Père Drouôt, was the only one of the inhabitants "of education." He was even more silent than the other slow-speaking villagers;

but in the matter of bees, at least, I found him learned, full of facts and humorous, keen observations. His bees were entirely human to him, always spoken of as "Messieurs"; a shrewd, intelligent race, with whom he had been allied by business relations and friendship for forty years.

On Sundays I used to watch for the tall, stooping figure of the bee-grower, clothed in a brown frogged surtout made twenty years ago, as he came down the road to church, leading his girls, Rose and Josephine, by the hand. After mass was over the three would stop to shake hands and chatter with their neighbors, and then they would betake themselves to a sunny corner of the churchyard, where a grave, apart from all others, was covered with white clover and violets. The bees hummed over it all day long. They would kneel there to say a prayer; and then seat themselves on a low stone bench, near by, to eat their little *gâteaux* for the noon meal.

I joined them one warm afternoon, and observed that when anything of interest was said they glanced eagerly to the grave, as if some unseen listener hid there. Little Josephine, with whom I had an old friendship, whispered to me, nodding downward, —

"C'est ma chère mère She expects us on the Sunday afternoon."

Then M. Labadie, his gnarled face a shade paler, explained to me in laborious English that it would have been their comfort to keep *her* at home: in the garden, *par exemple*, which was her joy, or in the orchard, where were her seat and work-table under the great plum-tree for thirty years. But that was

not ground consecrated. "So it is that she lies here, monsieur," waving both hands downward. "But it is her own violets and clover that grow here; and *mes amis*," looking at the bees and lowering his voice, "they do not forget; they are always with her."

A few weeks after this, one cold November day, M. Labadie consented to remain with my other friends, to share my supper of a fricassee of bacon, potatoes, and chives, and brown bread. Madame Baltarre's coffee was hot and delicious, and we sat about the table, which she had drawn up to the great open fire after supper, sipping it thoughtfully, while she removed the dishes and set the apartment to rights. There was another fireplace in the long, low room, and when she had finished she pinned a fresh white apron over her snuff-colored gown, and sat down beside it, at her sewing. The red glow of the firelight twinkled on the white floor, the old mahogany *armoire*, the picture of the Child Jesus with a bleeding heart, and the shelves full of red cups and plates. A heavy snow had fallen that day, and the lonely white stretches outside of the window and the flat graying sky made the warmth and snugness within more cheerful. We all felt it. The curé flung another log on the fire, opening up red deeps of heat; we pulled our chairs closer. Olave Demy was persuaded to tell about the October bear-hunt again; the curé sang a plaintive ballad in Canadian *patois*, with a voice like a fine cracked flute; and I adroitly turned the talk so as to bring in some of my own best stories. They had immense success. The French habitant has a hungry curiosity about everything belonging to "the States."

It is to him what Europe is to the untravelled American.

"M. Labadie," said the curé, "is the only person in St. Robideaux who has been to the States. Before you came, monsieur, he used every day to give us of his experience in that great country."

M. Labadie adjusted his waistcoat and looked into his cup with a vain attempt at unconsciousness.

"You travelled in the West, monsieur, — in the South?"

"I did not penetrate so far as I had purposed," he said gravely, for the subject was too weighty to be approached carelessly. After sipping his coffee critically awhile, he continued: "It was not I, monsieur. Madame Labadie, my little Jeannette, she had ambitions for me. She said when we were first married, 'You must visit the States. You must see the world, Georges.' But the children came fast, — one, four, six, eleven. I had then but few colonies of Messieurs my friends, to keep soup in the pot. Sometimes there was no soup. But Jeannette still cries, 'You must go to see the world. There are bee-farms in Massachusetts, in Cincinnati, in California. You must visit them all.'

"*Bien*, the children, they grow, they leave us, they sicken and come home, some of them, to die. We have only Rose and Josephine left. But in all these years Jeannette lays by money secretly, sou by sou. Then she gives it to me. 'Go, mon ami,' she says, — 'go to California, to Florida. See all the bee-farms in that great country.' I could not balk her, monsieur. She had worked for it for thirty years. I went."

"To California?"

"No; I did not even reach Le Niagarra, which I had hoped much to see." He set down his cup nervously. "Travelling in the States is more expensive than we supposed. I was careful, most careful. But when I reached Utica, on the second day, I found my money would just take me back home again. But I had already seen much in the States to please and benefit my family."

"And your neighbors!" exclaimed the curé zealously.

"That you did, monsieur. How many winter nights have we sat here, hearing of that journey!" added Olave.

M. Labadie stood up to go, still smiling and pleased with these compliments. The night had fallen while we talked. As he drew on his old shawl and tied it about him, an odd thing happened. Since nightfall the wind had risen, fitful and gusty. It blew now suddenly through the gorge with a shrill cry.

M. Labadie, at the sound, stopped, listening. His pleased face became strained and ghastly. The curé and M. Demy, too, hearing this most commonplace natural noise, had started forward to the old beegrower, as if to protect him. They stood breathless a moment, watching the window, which was now but a square patch of gray darkness, as though they expected to see a face there.

While I looked on, astonished, the wind boisterously rattled the window-panes and the creaking sign outside. The curé and M. Demy gave uneasy, foolish laughs, and sat down, apparently relieved. But M.

Labadie was greatly shaken. His lower jaw trembled like that of a paralytic.

"It is only the wind, ha? It had — it had the effect of a call. I thought I heard my name."

"Ah, bah, monsieur! You heard no call. It was that villainous norther. I will walk home with you, if you will allow me. Only to stretch my legs," said Olave Demy. After they had said adieu, he tucked the old man's arm under his own, and led him away.

"What does it all mean?" I asked, after the curé and I had puffed away at our pipes awhile in silence.

He answered reluctantly: "It is an old story, a singular occurrence."

Madame Baltarre came up close beside us. Her fat, placid face was pinched and blue, as with cold.

"You had better leave your stories and singular occurrences until daylight," she muttered angrily; "nobody knows who hears you now." She threw out her fore-fingers, crossing them.

Père Drouôt shot one uncomfortable glance at the window, and then asserted his position.

"Il ne faut pas faire les cornes. Go to rest, my daughter. Be tranquil. We will await M. Demy's return."

Madame bade us good night, and, gathering up her sewing, went quickly clattering up the stairs.

We smoked on without speaking, the curé reflectively watching the smoke from his pipe as it drifted into the chimney; and it was not until M. Demy had returned and taken his seat that he broke the silence, speaking, as he always did when much moved, in Canadian French.

"It certainly was a singular occurrence, monsieur; possibly, easy to explain by some scientific law, but *I* never have been able to explain it. I should like to lay it before you for your opinion. It happened in this way: —

"Six years ago, in April, a voyageur arrived, like yourself, in St. Robideaux, — a woman, a widow, of about forty or fifty years; an unpleasantly white woman, with puffy fair skin which looked as if water was below it, light gray eyes, faded yellow hair. La Veuve Badleigh lodged here with Madame Baltarre. She was soon known to all the village. In every house I would find this fat person, in her unclean yellow gown, with big paste diamonds in her ears, pouring out flatteries to women and men with the gestures of an excitable young girl, while her cold eyes kept a keen watch from under their thick, half-shut lids. All my people cried out, 'Oh how pious, how friendly, she is, this Veuve Badleigh!' But, monsieur, when I see the finger-nails of a woman not clean, and her shoe-laces untied," — the good father shook his head, — "something is wrong in her soul. Bien! The one place where I found her most often was on the gallery of M. Labadie's house. There she sat in the sun. She was enraptured with the sun, with the old house, with the fields of white clover and violets; she lapped up honey as a cat does cream; she caressed Rose and Josephine. I protest, monsieur, my flesh crept when I saw her thick fingers paddling with the little hands of the children. M. Labadie sat beside her, telling her of Messieurs the bees, of the witty sayings of Rose and Josephine, and of his wife, poor

Jeannette, with tears streaming from his eyes. Well, well, monsieur, you know what occurs when a man talks to another woman of his wife, with the tears streaming! In September they were married." Père Drouôt shrugged his shoulders, spreading out both hands. "Ah-a! No sooner was Veuve Badleigh established in the easy-chair on the porch, in the sun, mistress of the house, the bees, the little girls, and poor M. Labadie, than presto! all is changed!

"I know not what went on there. Nobody has ever known. M. Labadie was poor, as all we others. One does not raise and clothe and feed and nurse and bury so many little ones by the help only of a few bees, and meantime live on meat and white bread, like a governor-general. My faith, no! The table and clothes of our friend had always been scant and poor. But he was never in debt, not a penny. Yet in six months after his second marriage he had mortgaged his farm to raise money for the new yellow gowns and rich *plats* of madame! Ah, monsieur, it was execrable! St. Robideaux was convulsed with rage and pity. But we kept silent, such regard have we for M. Labadie.

"Alas! this was nothing to that which was to come. A young man appeared in the village, a vulgar fellow, lean, pimpled, loud-talking, dressed in the New York fashion. His oaths and his jokes made the very air of the street filthy. He was Paul Badleigh, son of madame. She had not told M. Labadie of this son until he appeared. He swaggers about the bee-farm, he makes servants of Rose and Josephine, he swears at their father. Was he her son? Ah, monsieur,

how can I tell? Sometimes I think he is a thief, a *vaurien.* I know him to be a drunkard and a gambler, and she, perhaps, is an accomplice. But how can I tell?

"So the autumn goes, and the winter comes. Paul Badleigh had been drinking hard, and was not able to leave the farm. The Veuve Badleigh (I never could bring myself to call her Madame Labadie) came into the village at times, more unclean, more watchful, than ever. She did not take the trouble now to flatter the poor villagers; she had reaped her harvest.

"Rose and Josephine came in to mass, the thin, scared little creatures. When they met their old friends, they ran past like guilty things. The shame of that woman and of her foul son was upon the children."

"As to M. Labadie," interrupted Olave Demy, "he never came into the village, not even for mass. The humiliation was too heavy upon him."

"I met him once on the road, near the church," said Père Drouôt; "but he crept out of sight, as if he were the thief and gambler. When he passed the churchyard he turned his head, that he might not see his poor Jeannette's grave." He sighed, sipped his coffee, and continued: —

"It was about this time, monsieur, that my friend Olave and myself were sitting here by the fire, just as now, one cold evening. The wind was blowing a hurricane. Suddenly it sounded, as to-night, with a shriek down the gorge, and then came a sharp tap on the window, another and another, as of a person in great haste. Then the door was pushed open, and a

woman entered, throwing quick, keen glances before her. She was a dark, lean little body —"

"Clean," said M. Demy emphatically, between the puffs of his pipe.

"Yes, noticeably clean and trig. She always looked like an officer buckled up for action. She ordered supper and a room, and then she stood by the fire knocking off the snow, sharply scanning M. Demy and myself.

"'You are a priest,' she said presently. 'You know the people among these hills. Have you by chance met a woman named Badleigh, in your journeys?'

"Madame Baltarre carried the word from me. 'She is here,' said she, nodding with meaning.

"'Ah! here?' The woman looked from one to the other. She waited as if she expected bad news, a charge or accusation.

"'She is married,' said madame, 'to M. Labadie, one of the oldest and foremost citizens of St. Robideaux.'

"'God pity us!' cried the stranger. 'Married! This is too much!'

"As she stood looking into the fire, I noted her closely. She had the expression of an honest, right-minded woman. But the obstinacy, the determination, in her insignificant features! Monsieur, she could have driven a hundred men before her into battle.

"She coughed violently now and then. I am something of mediciner, and I saw that her hold on life was weak and would be short.

"Olave went home presently, and Madame Baltarre left the room. Then she turned on me.

"'You are a man of God,' she said. 'You ought to help me. What has she done here? There is no time for mincing matters. I am her sister Joan. I am responsible for her.' She rubbed her wrists nervously as she talked, exposing her thin, bloodless arms. 'I have not much time left in which to control her.'

"I answered her gently that I knew nothing definite of the Veuve Badleigh, but that I feared the marriage had not been a happy one for M. Labadie and his little girls.

"'There are children? And little girls!' she cried, starting up. 'Come! I must go at once. You will show me the way?'

"It was a cold night, but the road was free from snow. She hurried on in silence, but the quick motion brought on a racking cough. 'You are not fit for this work, mademoiselle,' I said, kindly.

"The poor creature was touched. She began to cry, like any sick, tired woman. 'It is all I have to do now. But I shall be done with it all and go soon,' she said. We did not speak again until we reached the gate before M. Labadie's house. A man's voice was howling out some drunken song within. She stopped. 'Who is that?'

"'It is her son, M. Paul Badleigh,' I said.

"She stood quite still a moment. 'I must go in alone. It is worse than I thought,' she said.

"I watched until the door shut behind her, and came home, sure of but one thing, — that whatever she had

to do must be done quickly. She was marked with death.

"The next day Madame Baltarre sent up her portmanteau, which came with her on the boat, and we heard nothing more from the bee-farm for a month. Then, one evening, little Rose came for me. Mademoiselle Joan was dying. The child cried: the woman had been kind to her, and she needed kindness. 'She is not Catholic, but she will see you, father,' the little one said, holding my hand as she trotted along by my side.

"The Veuve Badleigh sat at one side of the bed, and her son at the other, watching every breath of the dying woman with ill-suppressed triumph. She pulled her life together to speak to me. 'They think they will be free now,' she whispered, pointing to them. 'My sister has done great harm in the world, but I—'

"Veuve Badleigh thrust a cup to her mouth. 'Drink this medicine,' she said. The flabby white creature trembled with fear of exposure.

"I put her back, and lifted her sister, that she might get her breath. 'God forgive them!' she cried.

"This was an hour before she died. In that time I gathered from her that for ten years she had held these two in check; that after she was gone it was their purpose to bring some nameless disaster on the children, Rose and Josephine; that she had sent for me to warn me of their danger. She lay still for some moments; she had almost ceased to breathe. A look of satisfaction and relief, terrible to see, came into both the faces bent over her.

"Her eyes opened; she saw it.

"Monsieur, she was a small, insignificant woman, but the soul going out of her body was inexorable. It was that of a great fighter. She held them with her eyes; she raised herself slowly in the bed.

"'You shall not hurt those children. You shall both — *come with me.*'

"Before the words passed she was pulseless. It was as if the soul had spoken out of a dead body."

* * * * * * * *

"Is that the end?" I asked; for the curé had stopped, and was mechanically puffing his pipe, which had gone out.

"No," said M. Demy, "it is not all, monsieur. But that which follows is so strange, so incredible, that one fears to tell of it. All the village know it to be true, yet it is never mentioned among us."

I waited in silence, and after a while the curé said: —

"I will tell you briefly the facts, monsieur, and you must make from them your opinion. I interfered on behalf of the children, but M. Labadie was obstinate. No harm was coming to them, he averred. His wife wanted their companionship. I had no proof against her or her son; only the vague accusations of a dying woman, which, after all, might be prejudice. Two weeks passed when — M. Demy, you will correct me if I mistake in the facts?"

M. Demy rose nervously, and stood in front of the fire. "You are correct so far, father. It was just two weeks, — a cold, still night."

"Not a breath of wind blowing," said the curé.

"We were sitting about the fire here with two or three other neighbors. Paul Badleigh lay on that bench yonder. He had been drinking heavily, and was asleep. Suddenly a high, keen wind swept down the gorge, with a shrill sound like a cry. Badleigh stopped snoring, and sat up, staring. Then, monsieur, there was a stroke on the window; another, and another, sharp, — decisive. We all heard it —"

"And words," amended M. Demy.

"And words. What they were none of us could make out, but Badleigh understood them. He got up, and went staggering to the door.

"'I am coming,' he said.

"We never saw him alive again. The next morning he was found at the foot of the Peak Jené, miles from the village, dead."

"It appears to me," I ventured, after a pause, "that this could be explained without any reference to a supernatural cause. The man was terrified by the noise made by the wind, and, stupid from drink, lost his way."

The curé bowed his head gravely. "I have not finished, monsieur. Four days after Paul Badleigh's death, M. Labadie came to the village, like a man whose reason was shattered. His children were gone! His wife had enticed them out for a walk, and had boarded a boat which was descending the river. She had taken her jewels and all the money she could find. They had been gone some hours.

"Monsieur, every man in the village went to work as though his own child had been stolen. The three boats in St. Robideaux were manned by the strongest

oarsmen. I was in the first, with Olave, here, and M. Labadie. We overtook the fugitives at nightfall. They had landed, and the woman and children were in an auberge, in the village of Pont de Josef. She was very quiet and cool, smiled and jested, saying she had but meant to give the little demoiselles a glimpse of the world, and would have returned to-morrow. M. Labadie had not a word for her. He clung to his children as if they had come back safe out of hell to him; he would not lose his hold on them, — no, not for a minute.

"It was impossible that we could return that night. We must remain at the auberge, where the Veuve Badleigh had ordered for herself the only chamber. I went out to the gallery, and walked up and down. I could see through the windows M. Labadie with his little girls on his knees, Olave and the other men, and quite apart, by herself, the fat white woman, with her cheap jewelry shining in her ears, leering stupidly about her. The sun had just gone down, and the snow lay white on the ground. The moon hung low in the red sky. It was still so clear that I could have seen a moth in the air. But, monsieur, as I stood for a moment, something passed me by that I did not see. It had a rushing force like the wind, but it was not the wind. It was nothing which I had ever felt before. I cried out on God, and my heart died in me. I looked to the lighted room within. What had happened I knew not. But they were standing, haggard, waiting, like men who had heard the call of death."

"It was a sound that we heard," said M. Demy,

"like a cry, and then there were three sharp strokes on the window and a voice. But no one understood the words but the Veuve Badleigh. She got up and walked to the door, as one that is dragged, step by step."

"I saw her," continued the curé, "as she passed me, going across the gallery into her own chamber. She had the face of one who had been fighting a battle all through her life, and was defeated at last. Yet the miserable, leering smile was there still. She went in and shut the door." He stopped abruptly.

"In the morning," said M. Demy, breaking the silence, "she was found there dead. She had taken an overdose of opium. She was buried at Pont de Josef." He added, after a pause, "Only think, monsieur, what a will that little woman had! She could thrust her hand out of the grave and drag those two creatures after her. I am truly glad," knocking the ashes out of his pipe reflectively, "that I know no one who is dead who has a will like that."

We smoked in silence a while longer. Then the curé, glancing at the clock, which told midnight, rose to go.

"That is the end of the history, monsieur," he said. "M. Labadie came back to his happy, quiet life again, gradually paid off his debts, and has almost forgotten his sore trouble. He has but one fear. There are times when he thinks that his call to go may come in the same manner, and that he will find the Veuve Badleigh, her son Paul, and Mademoiselle Joan waiting for him beyond."

* * * * * * * *

The next Sunday was one of those clear, balmy days which come in November, even in Canada.

After mass I waited near the church, watching the villagers as they leisurely climbed the rocky street and disappeared in the vine-covered cottages. The balsam scent from the neighboring forests was heavy on the sunlit air; a soft strain from the organ still came fitfully through the silence; around the close horizon the tender blue of the sky melted into the blue of the mountains. It was surely but a thin veil which hid heaven from earth to-day.

I saw M. Labadie, with his little Rose and Josephine, seated on the stone bench beside the grave, as usual; they had eaten their *goûter*, and were talking and laughing together, as if their dead had really come back to them, and made them the happier for coming.

They made room for me beside them.

"It seems to me, monsieur," said M. Labadie, presently, "as if to-day those who are gone come closer to us than at other times. The soft air and the clear light give to one that thought."

"It may be so, monsieur."

"My children," he said gently, after a silence, "are scattered in their graves over all Canada. But I think they have found each other there beyond. We always know that the mother is with us here every Sunday, but to-day it seems as if they all were with her, — all of us here together."

He softly patted Josephine's hand on his knee, looking beyond her to those whom she could not see.

A rising wind rustled the trees over our heads. He half rose, looking about uneasily.

"Run away, *mes petites.* See if the good father is still in the church." When they were out of hearing, he leaned forward, and said to me, "There are some others besides Jeannette and my children whom I know yonder. Do you think I shall have to go to them? Can they claim me?"

"It is a wide country, M. Labadie," I ventured to say, "and they are not of your kind. They have no claim upon you."

He nodded gravely two or three times, the light kindling again in his eyes as he looked over the grave into the far, soft haze. "You are right," he said at last. "But Jeannette and the children are of my kind. Something tells me that those others will never find me there. It is a wide country, monsieur, — a wide country. But we go there — to our own."

THE END OF THE VENDETTA

IT was the second day of Lucy Coyt's journey from home. For years she had looked forward to the time when she should set out to earn her living in that mysterious "South" which, before the war, was like a foreign land to most Northern women. At that time families of the class to which Lucy belonged frequently trained their keen-witted daughters as teachers to go to the cotton States, precisely as they now fit their sons to go to Colorado or Dakota. In any case they could earn a better livelihood than at home, and they might open up a gold mine in the shape of a rich widower or susceptible young planter. Two or three of Miss Coyt's classmates had disappeared victoriously in this way. She fancied them as reigning over a legion of slaves, and adored by a swarthy, fiery Don Furioso; and naturally the possibility of such a fate for herself glimmered hazily in the distance. Though, of course, it was wrong to hold slaves; at least, she was feebly confident that was her belief ever since David Pettit had talked to her about it the other evening. The Reverend David had brought some queer new notions back with him from the theological school.

"He'll wait a long time for a call in our Presbytery if they suspect he's an abolitionist," thought Lucy as the train whizzed swiftly on. "I wish I'd given him a hint; though he wouldn't have taken it. Dave was a nice sort of a girl-boy when he used to help me skim the cream. But he has grown real coarse and conceited, with his white cravat and radical talk." She drew a book from her bag which he had slipped into her hand just as the stage was starting. "Imitation of Christ!" eying the cross on the back suspiciously. "It reads like sound doctrine enough. But Dave will have to be on his guard. If he brings any papistical notions into our Presbytery, his chance for a call is over."

She leaned back, uneasily feeling that if she could have stayed and watched him, poor Miss Daisy (as the Fairview boys used to call him) would have had a better chance, when the train suddenly stopped. Miss Coyt had been expecting adventures ever since they started. Now they had begun. The train (she was on a railway in Lower Virginia) was rushing across a trestle bridge, when, with a shrill screech of steam, it stopped. Half of the men in the car crowded to the door, where a brakeman stood barring the way.

"Run over a cow?"

"No. Hush-h! Don't skeer the ladies!"

Miss Coyt laughed to herself. Jake Carr, the brakeman on the Fairview road, would have thrust his head in and yelled, "Keep your seats, gents!" These Southerners were ridiculously gentle and soft whenever they came near a woman. This brakeman was mild-mannered enough to have kept sheep in

Arcadia. It was plain that Fairview was many hundred miles away; this was a different world. Lucy's quick eyes had noted all the differences, although she was miserably abashed by the crowd — so abashed, indeed, that she had been parched with thirst since morning, and could not summon courage to go to the water-cooler for a drink.

Looking out of the window, she saw on the bank below the bridge a hunched heap of gray flannel and yellow calico. The men from the train ran toward it. "Something's wrong. I'd better take right hold at once," thought Miss Coyt. She took her purse out of her bag and put it in her pocket, lest there might be a thief in the car, and then hurried out after the men. She had a very low opinion of the intelligence of men in any emergency. At home, she always had pulled the whole household of father and brothers along. She was the little steam-tug; they the heavy scows, dragged unwillingly forward.

She reached the quivering heap on the bank. It was a woman. Miss Coyt straightened her clothes, kneeled down and lifted her head. The gray hair was clotted with blood. "Why, she's old! Her hair's white!" cried Lucy, excitedly, catching the head up to her breast. "Oh dear! oh dear!"

"It's old Mis' Crocker!" said a train man. "Yon's her cabin down on the branch. I see her on the bridge, 'n' she heerd the train comin', 'n' she jumped, 'n' — "

"Don't stand there chattering. Go for a doctor!" said Miss Coyt.

"I am a doctor," said one of the passengers, quietly,

stooping to examine the woman. "She is not dead. Not much hurt. An arm broken."

The men carried Mrs. Crocker to her cabin. She had caught Lucy's hand, and so led her along. The other women craned their necks out of the car watching her. They were just as sorry as Lucy, but they, being Southern, were in the habit of leaving great emergencies in the hands of men.

"What can that bold gyurl do?" they said. "The gentlemen will attend to it."

The men, having seen Mrs. Crocker open her eyes, straggled back to the train.

"Time's up, doctor!" shouted the conductor. "Express is due in two minutes."

The doctor was leisurely cutting away Mrs. Crocker's flannel sleeve. "I shall want bandages," he said, without looking up. Lucy looked about the bare little cabin, half drew out her handkerchief, and put it back. It was one of her dozen newest and best. Then she espied a pillow cover, and tore it into strips. The doctor dressed the arm as composedly as if the day was before him. Miss Coyt kept her eye on the puffing engine. All the clothes she had in the world were in her trunk on that train. What intolerable dawdlers these Virginians were! There! They were going! She could not leave the woman — But her clothes!

There was a chorus of shouts from the train, a puff of steam, and then the long line of cars shot through the hills, leaving but a wisp of smoke clinging to the closing forest. The doctor fastened his last bandage. Miss Coyt, with a choking noise in her throat, rushed

to the door. The doctor looked at his companion for the first time. Then he quickly took off his hat, and came up to her with that subtle air of homage which sets the man in that region so thoroughly apart from the woman.

"I beg of you not to be alarmed," he said.

"But they are gone!"

"You have your ticket? There will be another train before night, and you will find your trunks awaiting you at Abingdon."

"Oh, thank you!" gasped Lucy, suddenly ashamed of her tear-dabbled face. "It was very silly in me. But I never travelled alone before."

The doctor had always supposed Northern women to be as little afflicted with timidity as life-assurance agents. His calm eyes rested an instant on Miss Coyt as he folded his pocket-book. "It was my fault that you were detained, madam," he said. "If you will permit me, I will look after your luggage when we reach Abingdon."

Lucy thanked him again, and turned to help Mrs. Crocker, who was struggling to her feet. How lucky she was to meet this good-natured, fatherly doctor in this adventure! It might have been some conceited young man. The doctor, too, was of a very different human species from the ox-like Fairview farmers whom she had left behind, or neat, thin-blooded Davy Pettit. Miss Coyt had known no other men than these. But in the intervals of pie-making and milking on the farm she had gone to the Fairview Female Seminary, and had read Carlyle, and the Autocrat in the "Atlantic," and "Beauties of German Authors";

and so felt herself an expert in human nature, and quite fitted to criticise any new types which the South might offer to her.

Mrs. Crocker went out to the doctor, who was sitting on the log which served as a step. She looked at the bridge.

"Mighty big fall thet wur," she said, complacently. "Ther's not another woman in Wythe County as could hev done it athout breakin' her neck."

"Ah, you've twenty good years of life in you yet, mother," he said, good-humoredly, glancing at her muscular limbs, and skin tanned to a fine leather-color by wind and sun.

"Oh, I'm tough enough. Brought up eleven children right hyar on the branch. All gone — dead or married. I helped build this hyar house with my own hands twelve year ago. What d'ye think o' thet corn? Ploughed and hoed every hill of it."

"It's outrageous!" said Lucy, authoritatively. "At your age a woman's children should support her. I would advise you to give up the house at once, divide the year among them, and rest."

"No, missy; I never war one for jauntin' round. Once, when I wur a gyurl, I wur at Marion. But I wur born right hyar on the branch seventy year back, 'n' I reckon I'll make an end on't hyar."

"Seventy years! — here!" thought Lucy. Her eyes wandered over the gorge lined with corn, the pig-pen, the unchinked, dirty cabin. The doctor watched her expressive face with an amused smile. Mrs. Crocker went in to stir the fire.

"Better, you think, not to live at all?" he replied to her looks.

"I do not call it living," she said, promptly. "I've seen it often on farms. Dropping corn and eating it; feeding pigs and children until both were big enough to be sent away; and that for seventy years! It is no better life than that fat worm's there beside you."

The doctor laughed, and lazily put down his hand that the worm might crawl over it. "Poor old woman! Poor worm!" he said. "There is nothing as merciless as a woman — like you," hesitating, but not looking up. "She would leave nothing alive that was not young and beautiful and supreme as herself. You should consider. The world was not made for the royal family alone. You must leave room in it for old women, and worms, and country doctors."

Lucy laughed, but did not reply. She did not understand this old gentleman, who was bestowing upon her very much the same quizzical, good-humored interest which he gave to the worm.

"I don't know how you can touch the loathsome thing, anyhow," she said, tartly. "It creeps up into your hand as if it knew you were taking its part."

"It does know. If I wanted it for bait, it would not come near me. I fancy all creatures know their friends. Watch a moment."

He walked a few steps into the edge of the woods, and threw himself down into the deep grass, his face upward. Whether he made signs or whistled Lucy could not tell, but presently a bird from a neighboring bough came circling down and perched beside him; another and another followed, until, when he rose, it seemed to her that the whole flock hovered about him, chirping excitedly. He stopped by the bee-hives as

he came back, and the bees, disturbed, swarmed about him, settling black on his head and shoulders. Lucy ran to him, as he stood unhurt, gently brushing them off, pleased and flushed with his little triumph.

"One would really think you knew what they said."

"I wish I did!" he said, looking thoughtfully at the birds flying upward. There was a certain sentimentalism, a straining after scenic pose and effect, which would have seemed ridiculous to her in Dave Pettit; but she found it peculiarly attractive now.

"You have no charm?"

"No. Only that I have been friends with them all since I was a child, and they know it. I remember when I was a baby sitting with the black pickaninnies on the ground playing with frogs. Even then" (with the same touch of grandiloquence in his tone) "I did not find anything that was alive loathsome or unfriendly. I beg your pardon," suddenly. "I did not mean to bore you with the history of my infancy."

"Bore me! Why, I never met with so singular a trait in anybody before!"

Miss Coyt was now satisfied that this was not only a most extraordinary man in intellect, but in goodness. She could imagine what life and strength, living so close to nature as he did, he would carry to a sick or dying bed! It was like the healing power of the old saints.

There was the advantage of travel! How long would she have lived in Fairview without meeting anybody with traits so abnormal and fine! She began to have a sense of ownership in this her discovery. Now that she examined the doctor, he was

not even middle-aged: how could she have thought him old? What womanish tenderness was in the cut of his mouth! Indeed, this astute young woman found the close-shaven jaws indicated a benevolence amounting to weakness. The eyes were less satisfactory: they were gray and bright, but they said absolutely nothing to her, no more than if they belonged to a species of animal which was unknown to her. This only whetted her interest. Was he married? Was he a church member? What would he probably think of that favorite passage of hers in Jean Paul? This young woman, we should have stated earlier, was neither engaged nor in love. She intended to be in love some day, however; and there were certain tests which she applied as she went through life to each man whom she met, just as she might idly try to set different words to some melody known only to herself.

The man (who was not in want of a mate) had quite forgotten the woman. He had gone into the kitchen, and finding some bacon and fresh mountain trout, had set about cooking dinner as if he were in camp. A mess was already simmering on the fire. He fastened a towel before him for an apron, lifted the lid from the frying-pan and dropped something into it from a case of vials which he took out of his pocket.

"Always carry my own sauces," he said as Lucy came up. "Smell that!" sniffing up the savory steam with an unctuous smile. "Ah-h!"

Lucy ate the dinner when it was ready in a kind of fervor. She had never met a gourmand before. Here was a fine individual trait in this exceptional character.

This fair-haired, stout doctor, with his birds and his cookery and his jokes and his pale impenetrable eyes, seemed to her for some reason a bigger and more human man than any she had ever guessed were in the world. If she were only a man and could make a comrade of him! She had never made a comrade of her father or brothers; they were always taken up with pigs, or politics, or county railroad business. And the ideal companion she had picked out for herself from religious novels was unsatisfactory — as a matter of fact. She looked speculatively at the broad-backed linen duster in the doorway. She was as unconscious of the speculation in her eyes as the polyp fastened to a rock is of the movement of its tentacles groping through the water for food.

The doctor had no curiosity about her. When Mrs. Crocker questioned her as to her name and age, he whistled to the farm dog, not listening to the answer.

"What you doin' hyar in Vuhginny, ennyhow?"

"I came from Pennsylvania to teach a school in a place called Otoga, in Carolina," said Lucy.

"Hev some friends in these parts, I reckon?"

"No, none at all. Unless I may call you one, Mrs. Crocker," with a nervous laugh.

"Reckon you'll not see much more o' me, ma'am. Otoga, hey? My son Orlando lives thar. 'Pears to me I'd keep clar o' thet town ef I wur a young woman 'thout pertection. Orlan's tole me a heap about it."

"Why, what is the matter with Otoga?" exclaimed Lucy, rising uncertainly. "I must go there. My engagement — "

"Matter? Nothin', only it's ther the Van Cleves hev gone to live. You've heerd o' them, o' course?"

"No. Van Cleves?"

The doctor came up to the open door, watch in hand.

"The train will be due in twenty minutes."

"I am ready. Who are these people, Mrs. Crocker? I must live among them."

"They won't hurt *you*, I reckon. Ther's no higher toned people than the Van Cleves and the Suydams. Only it's sort of unpleasant whar they are, sometimes. You see," leisurely lighting her pipe with a brand, "them two famblies swore death agin each other nigh a hundred year ago, an' since then ther's not a man of them hes died in his bed. They lived in Tennessee. Orlan he tole me the rights of it. Four brothers of the Van Cleves barricaded some of the Suydams up in ther house for five weeks, an' when they were fairly starved an' crep out, they shot them dead. Thet wur the grandfathers o' this present stock. But they hev kep at it stiddy. Not a man o' them but died in his boots. Ther's but one Suydam left, 'n' thet's Cunnel Abram. His father wur shot by the Van Cleves. So when Abram wur a boy, he says, says he, 'Now I'm gwine to put a final eend to this whole thing.' So he went at it practisin' with his pistol, 'n' when he thought he were ready he challenges Jedge Van Cleve, 'n' shoots him plumb through the head. Oh, Orlan says it wur a fah dooel, no murder. Ther wur two Van Cleves left, jess boys, nepheys of the jedge, 'n' they'd gone to Californy. But Cunnel Abram he followed them, 'n' shot one on the deck of a ship bound for Chiny. T'other he dodged him somehow 'n' come back, 'n' is livin' in Otoga. But he'll be found. Cunnel Abram'll track him down," wagging her head with the zest of horror.

"But is there no law at all here?" cried Lucy. "I can't believe such a wretch would go unhung anywhere."

The doctor tapped on the window. "The train is in sight. You must bid our friend good-by."

Lucy shook hands hurriedly with the old woman. She had some money in her hand to give her, but, after a moment's hesitation, dropped it back into her pocket, and handed her a tract instead. "Religion will do her more real good," she thought afterward, quieting an uneasy inward twinge; "at least it ought to."

When they had boarded the train the doctor arranged her seat with gentle, leisurely movements, and brought her last week's Richmond paper. He did not, as she expected, take the vacant seat beside her, but disappeared, only returning when the train reached Abingdon.

"This carriage will take you to the inn, madam. I have written a note to the landlord, who will show you every attention. No, no thanks," shutting her in, his fat, agreeable face showing an instant smiling over the door. He did not offer his hand, as all the men whom Lucy had known would have done. He lifted his hat, hesitating a moment before he added, half reluctantly: "It is probable that I may meet you again. My business calls me to Carolina."

Miss Coyt bowed civilly, but as the carriage rattled up the street she laughed aloud and blushed. She herself did not know why. It was certainly very lonely and dangerous for a woman adventuring among murderers and assassins.

* * * * * * * *

Three days after she left Abingdon, Lucy, rumbling along the mountain-side in an old wagon, came in sight of a dozen gray, weather-beaten houses huddled on the edge of a creek in the gorge below.

"Yon's Otoga," said the driver, pointing with his whip.

"Hi, Dumfort!" shouted a man's voice. "Hold on thar!" and a big young fellow in butternut flannel appeared in the underbush. "You cahn't go to Otoga. Yellow Jack's thar afore you. Six men dead since yes'day mawnin'."

"The devil!" Dumfort pulled up his mules.

"So I say. Six. I an' my wife hev been on the lookout for you since mawnin'."

"'Bleeged, captain. Six? That about halves them down thar. T! T! I dunno's ever I was more interruptid than this afore!" snapping his whip meditatively.

Lucy, peeping through the oil-skin blind, could see the bold, merry face of the young countryman. He stood pulling his red beard and frowning with decent regret for his neighbors. Of course he was sorry, but he had so much life and fun in him that he could not help being happy and comfortable if the whole State of Carolina were dead with yellow fever.

"I've got the mail, too. An' a passenger," said Dumfort, jerking his head back to the wagon. "What in the mischief am I to do?"

"The mail'll keep. Drive right up to my house, an' my wife'll give you an' the other man shakedowns till the mawnin'."

"'Tain't another man."

The young man stepped quickly forward, with an instantaneous change of manner. He jerked off his quilted wide-rimmed hat ("made out of his wife's old dress," thought Lucy.) — "I did not know that ther' was a lady inside," he said. "I was too rough with my news. Come up to my house. My wife'll tell you there's no danger."

"I shall be very glad to go," said Miss Coyt.

Dumfort drove up a rutted mountain road and stopped before a log cabin. Of all houses in the world, it was plainly the first venture in life of two poor young people. Lucy read the whole story at a glance. There was the little clearing on the mountain-side; the patch of corn and potatoes (just enough for two); the first cow; the house itself, walls, ceiling, and floor made of planed planks of the delicately veined poplar; the tidy supper table, with its two plates; the photographs of the bride's father and mother hung over the mantel-shelf in frames which she had made of bits of mica from the mine yonder. Here was a chair made out of a barrel and trimmed with pink muslin, there a decorated ginger jar, a chromo of the Death of Andrew Jackson on the wall. Lucy was on the same rung of the ladder of culture as her hostess.

"She has a very refined taste," she thought. "That tidy stitch was just coming in at Fairview." Hurrying in from the field, her baby in her arms, came a plump, freckled, blue-eyed woman.

"Mistress Thomas," said Dumfort, ponderously, "let me make you acquainted with Miss Coyt. She war a-goin' to Otoga to teach school."

The two women exchanged smiles and keen glances. "Baby's asleep," whispered the mother. "I'll shake hands when I lay him down."

Lucy ran to turn down the crib quilt. "He's tremendously big," she whispered, helping to tuck him in.

"Now, Dorcas, let's have supper," called the farmer from the door, where he sat smoking with Dumfort. "Our friends must be hungry as b'ars."

Dorcas smiled, and with intolerably lazy slowness tucked up her sleeves from her white arms and began the inevitable chicken frying. Lucy suddenly remembered how unbusinesslike was the whole proceeding. She went up to her hostess, who was stooping over the big log fire.

"What do you charge for board?" she said. "I should like to stay here until the sickness is over in Otoga. That is, if your charges are reasonable," eying her keenly. Her rule always was to make her bargain before buying, then she never was cheated.

Mrs. Dorcas's fair face burned red. "We *don't* take folks in to *board*," she drawled in her sweet voice, looking at Lucy curiously. "But we'll be *mighty* glad if you'll stay's long's you can. It's powerful lonesome hyah on the mountains. We'll take it as *very* kyind in you to stay."

"It is you who are kind," said Lucy, feeling miserably small and vulgar. But how could she have known? They did not use strangers in this ridiculously generous way in Fairview.

Mistress Dorcas shot an amused, speculative glance after her, and went on with her frying. Miss Coyt,

presently finding the baby awake, took him up and went out to the steps where his father and Dumfort still smoked and gossipped in the slanted yellow beams of the lowering sun. The baby, who was freckled and soft-eyed as his mother, replied to Lucy's cooing and coddling by laughing and thrusting his tiny fat fist into her eyes. Lucy stooped and kissed him furtively. She felt lonely and far from home just then.

"What do you call baby?" she asked.

Mrs. Dorcas came to the door. "His real name is Humpty. But he was baptized Alexander — Alexander Van Cleve."

Lucy sprang to her feet. "Van Cleve!" staring at the farmer. "I thought your name was Thomas?"

"Thomas Van Cleve," smiling. "Why, what's wrong with that?"

Lucy felt as though a blow had been struck at her, which made her knees totter. "They told me in Virginia that the Suydams were on your track."

There was a sudden silence, but Miss Coyt, being greatly shaken, stumbled on. "I did not expect to come in your way — I'm not used to such things — and this poor baby," hugging it passionately. "It's a Van Cleve too!"

The young man took the boy. "Quiet yourself. Humpty will not be hurt by — any one," he said, and putting him up on his shoulder he walked down to the chicken-yard. His wife went in without a word, and shut the door. Lucy sat down. After a long time she said to Dumfort:

"I have made a mistake."

"Yes. But you couldn't be expected to know. I

never heerd a Suydam's name mentioned to a Van Cleve afore. It was so surprisin' it didn't seem decent, somehow."

"I don't understand why," groaned Lucy.

"No? Ther's things what ain't never talked of. Now ther's the Peterses in the Smoky Mountings. There used to be a disease in the Peters fambly which attacked one leg. But it turned out to be true Asiatic leprosy. Well, it isn't reckoned civil hyarabouts to speak of legs afore a Peters. Now this fambly's got a — a discussion hangin' on with the Suydams for a hundred year, as onfortinit 's leprosy. An' — well, probably you're the first person's ever mentioned it to them."

They relapsed into silence until they were called in to supper. Lucy felt as if a thin glaze of ice had risen between her and the Van Cleves. They were afraid of her. As for her, her food choked her. But after supper Mrs. Dorcas brought out a flannel slip which she was making for baby, and Lucy insisted on trying it on. She was fond of babies. She had a sacque in her trunk which she had been braiding for her brother Joe's child.

"I'll bring it down to give you the idea," she said, and ran up for it.

Van Cleve looked at it over his wife's shoulder when it came. "Try that thing on Humpty, Miss Coyt," he said, and when it was on he held the boy up on his outstretched arm. "Pretty's a picture, hey, Dumfort?"

"I'll finish it for him," exclaimed Lucy, with a gush of generosity. "I can make Sam another."

Mrs. Dorcas broke into a delighted flood of thanks. She jumped up to fit and button it on the boy, while her husband, quite as vain and pleased as she, held him. It seemed incredible to Lucy that this ghastly horror, which never could be mentioned, stood like a shadow behind the three; that this commonplace, jolly little family went to bed, rose, sat down to eat, with Death as their perpetual companion, dumb, waiting to strike.

The next morning was that of an April day. The whole world was swathed in fog and gray dampness, and the next moment it flashed and sparkled in the sunlight, every leaf quivering back in brilliance. Young Van Cleve had set off by daylight, whistling behind his steers. Before noon he came up the mountain, his head sunk, silent and morose. Even the ruddy color was gone; his thick-featured, jolly face was nipped as with age.

Dorcas ran to meet him. "Are you sick, Tom?"

"No."

"Have you" — she glanced swiftly around — "have you heard — anything?"

"Nothing. I thought it best to throw off work to-day."

He drove the steers into the inclosure. As he unyoked them he sent keen, furtive glances into the darkening woods. Meanwhile the sky had lowered. Clouds walled in the mountain plateau; the day had grown heavy and foreboding.

Dumfort came to Lucy, who was sitting on the steps with the baby.

"Thomas has hed a warnin'," he said, in a low tone. "Cunnel Abram's on his track."

"He has seen him!" She started up, catching up Humpty in her arms. "He is coming here?"

"So I think. But Thomas hain't seen him. He's ben warned. I've heerd that them Van Cleves allays kin tell when a Suydam is near them."

"Nonsense!" Lucy set the child down again.

"Jess as some men," pursued Dumfort, calmly, "kin tell when there's a rattlesnake in the grass nigh: an' others creep with cold ef a cat's in the room."

Miss Coyt, still contemptuous, watched Van Cleve sharply as he passed into the house. "Dorcas," he said, quietly, as he passed, "bring Humpty in. Keep indoors to-day." He went up to the loft, closing the trap-door behind him, and Lucy fancied that she heard the click of fire-arms.

Dumfort's pipe went out in his mouth with his smothered excitement. "He's loadin'! Suydam's comin'!" he whispered. "Thomas ain't the same man he was this mawnin'! He's layin' to, 'n' waitin'."

"To murder another man! And he calls himself a Christian! He had family prayers this morning!"

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Dumfort, fiercely. "Thomas's got his dooty laid out. He's got the murderer of his brother to punish. The law's left it to them two famblies to settle with each other. God's left it to them. Them old Jews sent the nearest of kin to avenge blood. The Suydams hev blood to avenge." He got up abruptly and walked uneasily up and down the barnyard. Dorcas had left her work, and with Humpty in her arms sat by the window, her keen eyes fixed on the thicket of pines that fenced in the house, black and motionless in the breathless air.

No rain had fallen as yet, but the forest, the peaks of the mountains beyond, the familiar objects in the barnyard, had drawn closer with that silent hush and peculiar dark distinctness that precedes a storm. They, too, listened and waited. Lucy heard a step in the house. Van Cleve came heavily down from the loft and seated himself, his face turned toward the road by which a stranger must approach.

Lucy stood irresolute for a few minutes; she felt as if she could not draw her breath; the air was full of death. Pulling the hood of her waterproof over her head, she crossed the stile and walked down the road. "I will be first to meet the wolf," she said aloud, laughing nervously.

The road wound through the unbroken forest down to the creek. As she came nearer to the water she heard the plash of a horse's feet crossing the ford. She tried to cry out that he was coming, to warn them, but her mouth would not make a sound; her legs shook under her; she caught by a tree, possessed by childish, abject fear. When the horse and rider came into sight she laughed hysterically.

It was the good-humored doctor. He turned quietly at her cry, and smiled placidly. Nothing would startle that phlegmatic mass of flesh. He alighted, tied his horse, and came to her with the leisurely, noiseless movements peculiar to him.

"You are frightened. What are you afraid of, Miss Coyt?"

"Oh, of a monster!" — laughing feebly — "a human beast of prey that is in these mountains. Every time a branch moved I expected to see his murderous face coming toward his victim."

She wanted to pour out the whole story, but he stood stolid and incurious, asking no questions. She hesitated and stopped.

"I saw nobody," he said, composedly.

Whether he was interested or not, she must tell him. He was so wise and kind; he was a man used to control others. If he would interfere he could doubtless put an end to it all.

"It is a vendetta," she began. "You heard of it the time of the accident."

"You should not allow yourself to be excited by the gossip of the mountains," he interrupted, gently; but his eyes, smiling down at her, suddenly seemed to her as hard and impenetrable as granite. "I fear I must leave you. I must reach Otoga before noon."

"You must not go to Otoga," catching him by the arm. "The yellow fever is there. Half of the population are dead."

"Worse than that, I am afraid," he said, gravely. "We heard this morning that there was now neither doctor, nurse, nor anybody to bury the dead."

"And you are going to help them?" drawing back with a kind of awe.

"I am a doctor," he said, indifferently, "and I can nurse in a fashion, and if the worst comes to the worst, I can dig a grave."

"I'm sure it is — very heroic," gasped Lucy. The tears came to her eyes.

He frowned irritably. "Nothing of the kind. Somebody must go, of course. The physicians in Abingdon are married men. I am a stranger, and have nobody. There is nothing to keep me in this

world but a little business which I have to do, and that lies in Otoga. I really must ride on. But I will take you safely home first. Where are you staying?"

"At the cabin yonder. Behind the pines. Thomas Van Cleve's."

The doctor had stepped before her to bend aside the bushes. He stopped short, and stood motionless a moment, his back to her. When he turned there was an alteration in his face which she could not define. The actor was gone; the real man looked out for an instant from behind the curtain.

"Young Van Cleve lives in that cabin?"

"Yes, with his wife and child."

"A child? Is it a boy?"

"Yes, the dearest little fellow. Why do you ask?"

A smile, or it might have been a nervous contortion, flickered over the fat, amiable face. His tones became exceedingly soft and lazy.

"It is with Van Cleve I had business to settle. I have been looking for him a long time."

"Then you will come to the house with me?"

She would have passed on, but stopped, troubled and frightened, she knew not why. The man had not heard her; he stood slowly stroking his heavy chin, deliberating. Certainly there was nothing dramatic in the stout figure in its long linen coat, low hat, and boots sunk in the mud — there was not a trace of emotion on the flabby, apathetic features, yet Lucy cowered as though she had been brought face to face with a naked soul in the crisis of its life.

"I have been looking for him a long time," he

repeated, consulting with himself. "But there is Otoga. They need me in Otoga."

There was not a sound. Not the fall of a leaf. Even the incessant sough of the wind through the gorges was still. The world seemed to keep silence.

He looked up at the cabin; it was but a step. He had been following Van Cleve for years.

He drew his breath quickly, thrust the bushes aside, and began to climb the rock.

The sun suddenly flashed out; a bird fluttered up from the thicket, and perched on a bough close beside him, sending out a clear trill of song. He stopped short, a quick, pleased heat coming to his face.

"Pretty little thing, hey? It knows me, d'ye see? It's watching me."

He waited a moment until the song ceased, and then nervously adjusted his hat.

"I'll go to those poor devils in Otoga. I reckon that's the right thing to do." And turning, he hastily mounted his horse.

Lucy felt that he was going to his death, and he seemed like an old friend. She ran across the road and put her hands up on the horse's neck.

"Good-by," she said.

"Good-by, Miss Coyt."

"I will never see you again! God bless you!"

"*Me?*" He looked at her, bewildered. "God? Oh yes. Well, perhaps so." He rode down the road, and the stout figure and flapping linen coat disappeared in the fog.

* * * * * * * *

Four days passed. Dumfort, who appeared to be a man of leisure, lounged about the cabin, helping with the work, and occasionally bringing news from Otoga, gathered from some straggler who was flying from the fever. He came in one morning and beckoned Van Cleve out.

"There's one of them poor wretches fallen by the wayside. He's got the plague. It's my belief there's not an hour's life in him."

"I'll come." Van Cleve hastily gathered some simple remedies; he had not heroism enough to leave his family and sacrifice his life for his neighbors, but he was a kindly fellow, and could not turn back from any dying creature creeping to his door. The two men went down the mountain together.

"I wanted," said Dumfort, "to pull him under a rock. But he said, 'No, let me die out-of-doors.'"

"That was a queer notion."

"Yes." Dumfort glanced askance at his companion. "He's ben down doctorin' them pore souls in Otoga. Went there voluntarily. I hearn of him two days ago." After an embarrassed pause, he added, "He wants to see you, Thomas. You, personally."

"Me? Who is he?" halting.

Dumfort lowered his voice to a quick whisper. "It's the man that's ben follerin' you an' your'n, Thomas."

Van Cleve uttered an oath, but it choked on his lips. "An' he's dying? What does he want of me?"

"God knows. I don't." The men stood silent. "He's been doctorin' them pore souls in Otoga," ventured Dumfort, presently.

Still Van Cleve did not move. Then, with a jerk, he started down-hill. "I'll go to him. Bring them other medicines, Dumfort."

But when he reached the dying man he saw that it was too late for medicines. He kneeled beside him and lifted his head, motioning Dumfort to stand back out of hearing.

What passed between them no one but God ever knew.

As the sun was setting that day Van Cleve came to the cabin. He was pale and haggard, but he tried to speak cheerfully.

"It was a poor fellow, Dorcas, down in the woods as died of the fever. Dumfort an' I have buried him. But I'd like you an' Miss Coyt to come to the grave. It'd seem kinder, somehow." He carried the baby in his arms, and when they reached the place — it was a patch of sunny sward, where the birds sang overhead — he said: "Humpty, I wish you'd kneel down on the grave an' say your little prayer. I think he'd know, an 'd feel better of it; an' — there's another reason."

* * * * * * * *

The next week Miss Coyt received a letter which, with very red cheeks, she told Dorcas would compel her immediate return home. Mr. Pettit, of whom she had told her, had received a call, and had asked her to be his wife, and this would put an end to her experiment of teaching in the South. In a day or two Dumfort drove her back to Abingdon, and the little family in the cabin returned to their usual quiet routine of life.

A FADED LEAF OF HISTORY

ONE quiet, winter's afternoon I found in a dark corner of an old library a curious pamphlet. It fell into my hands like a bit of old age and darkness itself. The pages were coffee-colored and worn thin and ragged at the edges, like rotting leaves in fall; they had grown clammy to the touch, too, from the grasp of so many dead years. There was a peculiar smell of herbs about the book which it had carried down from the days when young William Penn went up and down the clay paths of his village of Philadelphia, stopping to watch the settlers fishing in the clear ponds or to speak to the gangs of yellow-painted Indians coming in with peltry from the adjacent forest.

The leaves were scribbled over with the name of John, — "John," in a cramped, childish hand. His father's book, no doubt, and the writing a bit of boyish mischief. Outside now, in the street, the boys were pelting each other with snowballs, just as this John had done in the clay paths. But for nearly two hundred years his bones had been crumbled into lime and his flesh gone back into grass and roots. Yet

here he was, a boy; here was the old pamphlet and the scrawl in yellowing ink, with the smell of herbs about it still.

Printed by Rainier Janssen, 1698. I turned over the leaves, expecting to find some "Report of the Condition of the Principalities of New Netherland, or New Sweden, for the Use of the Lords High Proprietors thereof" (for of such precious dead dust this library is full); but I found, instead, wrapped in weighty sentences and backed by the gravest and most ponderous testimony, the story of a baby, "a Sucking Child six Months old." It was like a live seed in the hand of a mummy. The story of a baby and a boy and an aged man, in "the devouring Waves of the Sea; and also among the cruel devouring Jaws of inhuman Canibals." There were, it is true, other divers persons in the company, by one of whom the book is written. But the divers persons seemed to be only part of that endless caravan of ghosts that has been crossing the world since the beginning; they never can be anything but ghosts to us. If only to find a human interest in them, one would rather they had been devoured by inhuman cannibals than not. But a baby and a boy and an aged man!

All that afternoon, through the dingy windows I could see the snow falling soft and steadily, covering the countless roofs of the city, and, fancying the multitude of comfortable happy homes which these white roofs hid and the sweet-tempered, gracious women there, with their children close about their knees, I thought I would like to bring this

little live baby back to the others, with its strange, pathetic story, out of the buried years where it has been hidden with dead people so long, and give it a place and home among us all again.

I have left the facts of the history unaltered, even in the names; and I believe them to be, in every particular, true.

On the 22d of August, 1696, this baby, a puny, fretful boy, was carried down the street of Port Royal, Jamaica, and on board the "barkentine" *Reformation*, bound for Pennsylvania; a Province which, as you remember, Du Chastellux, a hundred years later, described as a most savage country which he was compelled to cross on his way to the burgh of Philadelphia, on its border. To this savage country our baby was bound. He had by way of body-guard, his mother, a gentle Quaker lady; his father, Jonathan Dickenson, a wealthy planter, on his way to increase his wealth in Penn's new settlement; three negro men, four negro women, and an Indian named Venus, all slaves of the said Dickenson; the captain, his boy, seven seamen, and two passengers. Besides this defence, the baby's ship was escorted by thirteen sail of merchantmen under convoy of an armed frigate. For these were the days when, to the righteous man, terror walked abroad. The green, quiet coasts were but the lurking-places of savages, and the green, restless seas more treacherous with pirates. Kidd had not yet buried his treasure, but was prowling up and down the eastern seas, gathering it from every luckless vessel that fell in his way. The captain, Kirle, debarred from fighting by cowardice,

and the Quaker Dickenson, forbidden by principle, appear to have set out upon their perilous journey, resolved to defend themselves by suspicion, pure and simple. They looked for treachery behind every bush and billow; the only chance of safety lay, they maintained, in holding every white man to be an assassin and every red man a cannibal until they were proved otherwise.

The boy was hired by Captain Kirle to wait upon him. His name was John Hilliard, and he was precisely what any of these good-humored, mischievous fellows outside would have been, hired on a brigantine two centuries ago; disposed to shirk his work in order to stand gaping at Black Ben fishing, or to rub up secretly his old cutlass for the behoof of Kidd, or the French when they should come, while the Indian Venus stood by, looking on, with the baby in her arms.

The aged man is invariably set down as chief of the company, though the captain held all the power and the Quaker all the money. But white hair and a devout life gave an actual social rank in those days, obsolete now, and Robert Barrow was known as a man of God all along the coast-settlements from Massachusetts to Ashly River, among whites and Indians. Years before, in Yorkshire, his inward testimony (he being a Friend) had bidden him go preach in this wilderness. He asked of God, it is said, rather to die; but was not disobedient to the Heavenly Call, and came and labored faithfully. He was now returning from the West Indies, whither he had carried his message a year ago.

The wind set fair for the first day or two; the sun was warm. Even the grim Quaker Dickenson might have thought the white-sailed fleet a pretty sight scudding over the rolling green plain, if he could have spared time to his jealous eyes from scanning the horizon for pirates. Our baby saw little of sun or sea; for having hardly vitality enough to live from day to day, it was kept below, smothered in the finest of linens and the softest of paduasoy.

One morning when the fog lifted, Dickenson's watch for danger was rewarded. They had lost their way in the night; the fleet was gone, the dead blue slopes of water rolled up to the horizon on every side and were met by the dead blue sky, without the break of a single sail or the flicker of a flying bird. For fifteen days they beat about without any apparent aim other than to escape the enemies whom they hourly expected to leap out from behind the sky line. On the sixteenth day, friendly signs were made to them from shore. "A fire made a great Smoak, and People beckoned to us to putt on Shoar," but Kirle and Dickenson, seized with fresh fright, put about and made off as for their lives, until nine o'clock that night, when seeing two signal-lights, doubtless from some of their own convoy, they cried out, "The French! the French!" and tacked back again as fast as might be. The next day, Kirle being disabled by a jibing boom, Dickenson brought his own terrors into command, and for two or three days whisked the unfortunate barkentine up and down the coast, afraid of both sea and shore, until finally, one night, he run her aground on a sand-bar on the Florida reefs.

Wondering much at this "judgment of God," Dickenson went to work. Indeed, to do him justice, he seems to have been always ready enough to use his burly strength and small wit, trusting to them to carry him through the world wherein his soul was beleaguered by many merciless judgments of God and the universal treachery of his brother-man.

The crew abandoned the ship in a heavy storm. A fire was kindled in the bight of a sand-hill and protected as well as might be with sails and palmetto branches; and to this, Dickenson, with "Great trembling and Pain of Hartt," carried his baby in his own arms and laid it in its mother's breast. Its little body was pitiful to see from leanness, and a great fever was upon it. Robert Barrow, the crippled captain, and a sick passenger shared the child's shelter. "Whereupon two Cannibals appeared, naked, but for a breechcloth of plaited straw, with Countenances bloody and furious, and foaming at the Mouth"; but on being given tobacco, retreated inland to alarm the tribe. The ship's company gathered together and sat down to wait their return, expecting cruelty, says Dickenson, and dreadful death. Christianity was now to be brought face to face with heathenness, which fact our author seems to have recognized under all his terror. "We began by putting our trust in the Lord, hoping for no Mercy from these bloody-minded Creatures; having too few guns to use except to enrage them, a Motion arose among us to deceive them by calling ourselves Spaniards, that Nation having some influence over them"; to which lie all consented, except Robert Barrow. It is instructive to observe how these early

Christians met the Indians with the same weapons of distrust and fraud which have proved so effective in civilizing them since.

In two or three hours the savages appeared in great numbers, bloody and furious, and in their chronic state of foaming at the mouth. "They rushed in upon us, shouting 'Nickalees?' (*Inglese ?*) To which we replied 'Espania.' But they cried the more fiercely, 'No Espania, Nickalees!' and being greatly enraged thereat, seized upon all Trunks and Chests and our cloathes upon our Backs, leaving us each only a pair of old Breeches, except Robert Barrow, my wife, and child from whom they took nothing." The king, or Cassekey, as Dickenson calls him, distinguished by a horsetail fastened to his belt behind, took possession of their money and buried it, at which the good Quaker spares not his prayers for punishment on all pagan robbers, quite blind to the poetic justice of the burial, as the money had been made on land stolen from the savages. The said Cassekey also set up his abode in their tent; kept all his tribe away from the woman and child and aged man; kindled fires; caused, as a delicate attention, the only hog remaining on the wreck to be killed and brought to them for a midnight meal; and, in short, comported himself so hospitably and with such kindly consideration toward the broad-brimmed Quaker, that we are inclined to account him the better gentleman of the two, in spite of his scant costume of horsetail and belt of straw. As for the robbery of the ship's cargo, no doubt the Cassekey had progressed far enough in civilization to know that to the victors

belong the spoils. Florida, for two years, had been stricken down from coast to coast by a deadly famine, and in all probability these cannibals returned thanks to whatever god they had for this windfall of food and clothes devoutly as our forefathers were doing at the other end of the country for the homes which they had taken by force. There is a good deal of kinship among us in circumstances after all, as well as in blood. The chief undoubtedly recognized a brother in Dickenson, every whit as tricky as himself, and would fain, savage as he was, have proved him to be something better; for, after having protected them for several days, he came into their tent and gravely and with authority set himself to asking the old question, "Nickalees?"

"To which, when we denied, he directed his Speech to the Aged Man, who would not conceal the Truth, but answered in Simplicity, 'Yes.' Then he cried in Wrath 'Totus Nickalees!' and went out from us. But returned in great fury with his men and stripped all Cloathes from us."

However, the clothes were returned, and the chief persuaded them to hasten on to his own village. Dickenson, suspecting foul play as usual, insisted on going to Santa Lucia. There, the Indian told him, they would meet fierce savages and undoubtedly have their throats cut, which kindly warning was quite enough to drive the Quaker to Santa Lucia headlong. He was sure of the worst designs on the part of the cannibal, from a strange glance which he fixed upon the baby as he drove them before him to his village, saying with a treacherous laugh, that after they had

gone there for a purpose he had, they might go to Santa Lucia as they would.

It was a bleak, chilly afternoon as they toiled mile after mile along the beach, the Quaker woman far behind the others with her baby in her arms, carrying it, as she thought, to its death. Overhead, flocks of dark-winged grakles swooped across the lowering sky, uttering from time to time their harsh foreboding cry; shoreward, as far as the eye could see, the sand stretched in interminable yellow ridges, blackened here and there by tufts of dead palmetto trees; while on the other side the sea had wrapped itself in a threatening silence and darkness. A line of white foam crept out of it from horizon to horizon, dumb and treacherous, and licked the mother's feet as she dragged herself heavily after the others.

From time to time the Indian stealthily peered over her shoulder, looking at the child's thin face as it slept upon her breast. As evening closed in, they came to a broad arm of the sea thrust inland through the beach, and halted at the edge. Beyond it, in the darkness, they could distinguish the yet darker shapes of the wigwams, and savages gathered about two or three enormous fires that threw long red lines of glare into the sea-fog. "As we stood there for many Hour's Time," says Jonathan Dickenson, "we were assured these Dreadful Fires were prepared for us."

Of all the sad little company that stand out against the far-off dimness of the past, in that long watch upon the beach, the low-voiced, sweet-tempered Quaker lady comes nearest to us.

The sailors had chosen a life of peril years ago; her

husband, with all his suspicious bigotry, had, when pushed to extremes, an admirable tough courage with which to face the dangers of sea and night and death; and the white-headed old man, who stood apart and calm, had received, as much as Elijah of old, a Divine word to speak in the wilderness, and the life in it would sustain him through death. But Mary Dickenson was only a gentle, commonplace woman, whose life had been spent on a quiet farm, whose highest ambition was to take care of her snug little house, and all of whose brighter thoughts of romance or passion began and ended in this staid Quaker and the baby that was a part of them both. It was only six months ago that this first-born child had been laid in her arms; and as she lay on the white bed looking out on the spring dawning day after day, her husband sat beside her telling her again and again of the house he had made ready for her in Penn's new settlement. She never tired of hearing of it. Some picture of this far-off home must have come to the poor girl as she stood now in the night, the sea-water creeping up to her naked feet, looking at the fires built, as she believed, for her child.

Toward midnight a canoe came from the opposite side, into which the chief put Barrow, Dickenson, the child, and its mother. Their worst fears being thus confirmed, they crossed in silence, holding each other by the hand, the poor baby moaning now and then. It had indeed been born tired into the world, and had gone moaning its weak life out ever since.

Landing on the farther beach, the crowd of waiting Indians fled from them as if frightened, and halted in

the darkness beyond the fires. But the Cassekey dragged them on toward a wigwam, taking Mary and the child before the others. "Herein," says her husband, "was the Wife of the Canibal, and some old Women sitting on a Cabbin made of Sticks about a Foot high, and covered with a Matt. He made signs for us to sitt down on the Ground, which we did. The Cassekey's Wife looking at my Child and having her own Child in her lapp, putt it away to another Woman, and rose upp and would not bee denied, but would have my Child. She took it and suckled it at her Breast, feeling it from Top to Toe, and viewing it with a sad Countenance."

The starving baby, being thus warmed and fed, stretched its little arms and legs out on the savage breast comfortably and fell into a happy sleep, while its mother sat apart and looked on.

"An Indian did kindly bring to her a Fish upon a Palmetto Leaf and set it down before her; but the Pain and Thoughts within her were so great that she could not eat."

The rest of the crew having been brought over, the chief set himself to work and speedily had a wigwam built, in which mats were spread, and the shipwrecked people, instead of being killed and eaten, went to sleep just as the moon rose, and the Indians began "A Consert of hideous Noises," of welcome.

Dickenson and his band remained in this Indian village for several days, endeavoring all the time to escape, in spite of the kind treatment of the chief, who appears to have shared all that he had with them. The Quaker kept a constant, fearful watch, lest there

might be death in the pot. When the Cassekey found they were resolved to go, he set out for the wreck, bringing back a boat which was given to them, with butter, sugar, a rundlet of wine, and chocolate; to Mary and the child he also gave everything which he thought would be useful to them. This friend in the wilderness appeared sorry to part with them, but Dickenson was blind both to friendship and sorrow, and obstinately took the direction against which the chief warned him, suspecting treachery, "though we found afterward that his counsell was good."

Robert Barrow, Mary, and the child, with two sick men, went in a canoe along the coast, keeping the crew in sight, who, with the boy, travelled on foot, sometimes singing as they marched. So they began the long and terrible journey, the later horrors of which I dare not give in the words here set down. The first weeks were painful and disheartening, although they still had food. Their chief discomfort arose from the extreme cold at night and the tortures from the sand-flies and mosquitoes on their exposed bodies, which they tried to remedy by covering themselves with sand, but found sleep impossible.

At last, however, they met the fiercer savages of whom the chief had warned them, and practised upon them the same device of calling themselves Spaniards. By this time, one would suppose, even Dickenson's dull eyes would have seen the fatal idiocy of the lie. "Crying out 'Nickalees No Espanier,' they rushed upon us, rending the few Cloathes from us that we had; they took all from my Wife, even tearing her Hair out, to get at the Lace, wherewith it was

knotted." They were then dragged furiously into canoes and rowed to the village, being stoned and shot at as they went. The child was stripped, while one savage filled its mouth with sand.

But at that the chief's wife came quickly to Mary and protected her from the sight of all, and took the sand out of the child's mouth, entreating it very tenderly, whereon the mass of savages fell back, muttering and angry.

The same woman brought the poor naked lady to her wigwam, quieted her, found some raw deerskins, and showed her how to cover herself and the baby with them.

The tribe among which they now were had borne the famine for two years; their emaciated and hunger-bitten faces gave fiercer light to their gloomy, treacherous eyes. Their sole food was fish and palmetto berries, both of which were scant. Nothing could have been more unwelcome than the advent of this crowd of whites, bringing more hungry mouths to fill; and, indeed, there is little reason to doubt that the first intention was to put them all to death. But, after the second day, Dickenson relates that the chief "looked pleasantly upon my Wife and Child"; instead of the fish entrails and filthy water in which the fish had been cooked which had been given to the prisoners, he brought clams to Mary, and kneeling in the sand showed her how to roast them. The Indian women, too, carried off the baby, knowing that its mother had no milk for it, and handed it about from one to the other, putting away their own children that they might give it their food. At which the child,

who, when it had been wrapped in fine flannel and embroidery had been always nigh to death, began to grow fat and rosy, to crow and laugh as it had never done before, and kick its little legs sturdily about under their bit of raw skin covering. Mother Nature had taken the child home, and was breathing new lusty life into it, out of the bare ground and open sky, the sun and wind, and the breasts of these her children; but its father saw in the change only another inexplicable miracle of God. Nor does he seem to have seen that it was the child who had been a protection and shield to the whole crew and saved them through this their most perilous strait.

We can imagine what the journey on foot along the bleak coast in winter, through tribe after tribe of hostile savages, must have been to delicately nurtured men and women, naked but for a piece of raw deerskin, and utterly without food save for the few nauseous berries or offal rejected by the Indians. In their ignorance of the coast they wandered farther and farther out of their way into those morasses which an old writer calls "the refuge of all unclean birds and the breeding-fields of all reptiles." Once a tidal wave swept down into a vast marsh where they had built their fire, and air and ground slowly darkened with the swarming living creatures, whirring, creeping about them through the night, and uttering gloomy, dissonant cries. Many of these strange companions and some savages found their way to the hill of oyster-shells where the crew fled, and remained there for the two days and nights in which the flood lasted.

Our baby accepted all fellow-travellers cheerfully;

made them welcome, indeed. Savage or slave or beast were his friends alike, his laugh and outstretched hands were ready for them all. The aged man, too, Dickenson tells us, remained hopeful and calm, even when the slow-coming touch of death had begun to chill and stiffen him, and in the presence of the cannibals assuring his companions cheerfully of his faith that they would yet reach home in safety. Even in that strange, forced halt, when Mary Dickenson could do nothing but stand still and watch the sea closing about them, creeping up and up like a visible death, the old man's prayers and the baby's laugh must have kept the thought of her far home near and warm to her.

They escaped the sea to fall into worse dangers. Disease was added to starvation. One by one strong men dropped exhausted by the way, and were left unburied, while the others crept feebly on; stout Jonathan Dickenson taking as his charge the old man, now almost a helpless burden. Mary, who, underneath her gentle, timid ways, seems to have had a gallant heart in her little body, carried her baby to the last, until the milk in her breast was quite dried and her eyes grew blind, and she too fell one day beside the poor negress who, with her unborn child, lay frozen and dead, saying that she was tired, and that the time had come for her too to go. Dickenson lifted her and struggled on.

The child was taken by the negroes and sailors. These coarse, famished men, often fighting like wild animals with each other, staggering under weakness and bodily pain, carried the heavy baby, never com-

plaining of its weight, thinking, it may be, of some child of their own whom they would never see or touch again.

We can understand better the mystery of that Divine Childhood that was once in the world, when we hear how these poor slaves, unasked, gave of their dying strength to this child; how, in tribes through which no white man had ever travelled alive, it was passed from one savage mother to the other, tenderly handled, nursed at their breasts; how a gentler, kindlier spirit seemed to come from the presence of the baby and its mother to the crew; so that, while at first they had cursed and fought their way along, they grew at the last helpful and tender with each other, often going back, when to go back was death, for the comrade who dropped by the way, and bringing him on until they too lay down, and were at rest together.

It was through the baby that deliverance came to them at last. The story that a white woman and a beautiful child had been wandering all winter through the deadly swamps was carried from one tribe to another until it reached the Spanish fort at St. Augustine. One day, therefore, when near their last extremity, they "saw a Perre-augoe approaching by sea filled with soldiers, bearing a letter signifying the governor of St. Augustine's greatt Care for our Preservation, of what Nation soever we were." The journey, however, had to be made on foot; and it was more than two weeks before Dickenson, the old man, Mary and the child, and the last of the crew, reached St. Augustine.

"We came thereto," he says, "about two hours

before Night, and were directed to the governor's house, where we were led up a pair of stairs, at the Head whereof stood the governor, who ordered my Wife to be conducted to his Wife's Apartment."

There is something in the picture of poor Mary, after her months of starvation and nakedness, coming into a lady's chamber again, "where was a Fire and Bath and Cloathes," which has a curious pathos in it to a woman.

Robert Barrow and Dickenson were given clothes, and a plentiful supper set before them.

St. Augustine was then a collection of a few old houses grouped about the fort; only a garrison, in fact, half supported by the king of Spain and half by the Church of Rome. Its three hundred male inhabitants were either soldiers or priests, dependent for supplies of money, clothing, or bread upon Havana; and as the famine had lasted for two years, and it was then three since a vessel had reached them from any place whatever, their poverty was extreme. They were all, too, the "false Catholicks and hireling Priests" whom, beyond all others, Dickenson distrusted and hated. Yet the grim Quaker's hand seems to tremble as he writes down the record of their exceeding kindness; of how they welcomed them, looking, as they did, like naked furious beasts, and cared for them as if they were their brothers. The governor of the fort clothed the crew warmly, and out of his own great penury fed them abundantly. He was a reserved and silent man, with a grave courtesy and odd gentle care for the woman and child that make him quite real to us. Dickenson does not even

give his name. Yet it is worth much to us to know that a brother of us all lived on that solitary Florida coast two centuries ago, whether he was pagan, Protestant, or priest.

When they had rested for some time, the governor furnished canoes and an escort to take them to Carolina, — a costly outfit in those days, — whereupon Dickenson, stating that he was a man of substance, insisted upon returning some of the charges to which the governor and people had been put as soon as he reached Carolina. But the Spaniard smiled and refused the offer, saying whatever he did was done for God's sake. When the day came that they must go, "he walked down to see us embark, and taking our Farewel, he embraced some of us, and wished us well saying that *We should forget him when we got amongst our own nation;* and I also added that *If we forgot him, God would not forget him,* and thus we parted."

The mischievous boy, John Hilliard, was found to have hidden in the woods until the crew were gone, and remained ever after in the garrison with the grave Spaniards, with whom he was a favorite.

The voyage to Carolina occupied the month of December, being made in open canoes, which kept close to the shore, the crew disembarking and encamping each night. Dickenson tells with open-eyed wonder how the Spaniards kept their holiday of Christmas in the open boat and through a driving northeast storm; praying, and then tinkling a piece of iron for music, and singing, and also begging gifts from the Indians, who begged from them in their turn; and what one gave to the other, that they gave

back again. Our baby at least, let us hope, had Christmas feeling enough to understand the laughing and hymn-singing in the face of the storm.

At the lonely little hamlet of Charleston (a few farms cut out of the edge of the wilderness) the adventurers were received with eagerness; even the Spanish escort were exalted into heroes, and entertained and rewarded by the gentlemen of the town. Here too Dickenson and Kirle sent back generous gifts to the soldiers of St. Augustine, and a token of remembrance to their friend, the governor. After two months' halt, "on the eighteenth of the first month, called March," they embarked for Pennsylvania, and on a bright cold morning in April came in sight of their new home of Philadelphia. The river was gay with a dozen sail, and as many brightly painted Indian pirogues darting here and there; a ledge of green banks rose from the water's edge dark with gigantic hemlocks, and pierced with the caves in which many of the settlers yet lived; while between the bank and the forest were one or two streets of mud-huts and of low hipped-roofed stone houses sparkling with mica, among which gray-coated, silent Friends went up and down.

The stern Quaker had come to his own people again; the very sun had a familiar home look for the first time in his journey. We can believe that he rejoiced in his own protesting way; gave thanks that he had escaped the judgments of God, and closed his righteous gates thereafter on aught that was alien or savage.

The aged man rejoiced in a different way; for being

carried carefully to the shore by many friends, they knowing that he was soon to leave them, he "put out his hand, ready to embrace them in much love, and in a tender frame of spirit, saying gladly that the Lord had answered his desire, and brought him home to lay his bones among them." From the windows of this dusky library, I can see the spot now, where, after his long journey, he rested for a happy day or two, looking upon the dear familiar faces and waving trees and the sunny April sky, and then gladly bade them farewell and passed out of sight.

Mary had come at last to the pleasant home that had been waiting so long for her, and there, no doubt, she nursed her baby, and clothed him in soft fooleries again, and, let us hope, out of the fulness of her soul, not only prayed, but, Quaker as she was, sang idle, joyous songs, when her husband was out of hearing.

But the baby, who knew nothing of the judgments of God, and who could neither pray nor sing, only had learned in these desperate straits to grow strong in the touch of sun and wind, and to hold out its arms to friend or foe, slave or savage, sure of a welcome, and so came closer to God than any of them all.

Jonathan Dickenson became a power in the new principality; there are vague traditions of his strict rule as mayor, his stately equipages and vast estates. No doubt, if I chose to search among the old musty records, I could find the history of his son. But I do not choose; I will not believe that he ever grew to be a man, or died.

He will always be to us simply a baby; a live,

laughing baby, sent by his Master to the desolate places of the earth with the old message of love and universal brotherhood to His children; and I like to believe too, that as he lay in the arms of his savage foster-mothers, taking life from their life, Christ so took him into His own arms and blessed him.

THE YARES OF THE BLACK MOUNTAINS

A TRUE STORY

"OLD FORT!"

The shackly little train jolted into the middle of an unploughed field and stopped. The railway was at an end. A group of Northern summer-tourists, with satchels and water-proofs in shawl-straps, came out of the car and looked about them. It was but a few years after the war, and the South was unexplored ground to them. They had fallen together at Richmond, and by the time they had reached this out-of-the-way corner of North Carolina were the best of boon companions, and wondered why they had never found each other out in the world before. Yet, according to American habit, it was a mere chance whether the acquaintance strengthened into lifelong friendship or ended with a nod in the next five minutes.

It bade fair just now to take the latter turn.

Nesbitt, who had been in consultation with two men who were ploughing at the side of the station, came hurrying up: "Civilization stops here, it appears. Thirty miles' staging to Asheville, and after that carts and mules. The mails come, like the weather, at the

will of Providence. I think I shall explore no farther. When does your train go back, conductor?"

"The scenery disappoints me," said Miss Cook, bridging her nose with her eye-glasses. "It lacks the element of grandeur."

"You'll find it lacking in more than that beyond," said a Detroit man who had come down to speculate in lumber. "Nothing but mountains, and balsam timber as spongy as punk. A snake couldn't get his living out of ten acres of it."

Across the field was a two-roomed wooden house, over which a huge board was mounted whereon was scrawled with tar, "Dinner and BAR-ROOM." They all went, stumbling over the lumpy meadow, toward it. Miss Cook, who was always good-humored except on æsthetic questions, carried the baby's satchel with her own.

"Shall you go on?" she asked the baby's mother. "The conductor says the mountains are inaccessible to women."

"Of course. Why, he has slept every night since we came on to high land."

"I doubt very much whether the cloud-effects will be as good as in the White Mountains. The sky is too warm." This was said thoughtfully.

"He has one stomach-tooth almost through. The balsam-air will be such a tonic! We'll go up if it is on foot, won't we, Charley?" And she buried her face in the roll of blanket.

There was a fine odor of burnt beans and whiskey in the hot little parlor of the house, with its ragged horsehair chairs and a fly-blown print of the "Death

of Robert E. Lee" on the wall. On the other side of the hall was the bar-room, where a couple of red-faced Majors in homespun trousers and shirts were treating the conductor. It was a domestic-looking bar-room after all, in spite of red noses and whiskey: there were one or two geraniums in the window, and a big gray cat lay asleep beside them on the sill.

One of the Majors came to Baby's mother in the parlor. "There is a rocking-chair in the — the opposite apartment," he said, "and the air will be better there for the child. A very fine child, madam! very fine, indeed!"

She said yes, it was, and followed him. He gave Baby a sprig of geranium, bowed and went out, while the other men began to discuss a Methodist camp-meeting, and the barkeeper shoved a newspaper over his bottles and worked anxiously at his daybook. The other passengers all went to dinner, but Nesbitt was back at her side in five minutes.

"I'm glad you stayed here," he said. "There is a bare wooden table set in a shed out yonder, and a stove alongside where the cooking goes on. You would not have wanted to taste food for a month if you had seen the fat pork and corn-bread which they are shovelling down with iron forks. Now, if I thought — if we were going to rough it in the mountains — camp-fire, venison, trout cooked by ourselves, and all that sort of thing, I'd be with you. But this civilized beastliness I don't like — never did. I'll take this train back, and strike the trunk-line at Charlotte, and try Texas for my summer holiday. I must be off at once."

"Good-bye, then, Mr. Nesbitt. I am sorry you are not going: you've been so kind to Charley."

"Not at all. Good-bye, and God bless you, little chap!" stopping to put his finger in the baby's thin hand. He was quite sure the little woman in black would never bring her child back from the mountains.

"I'm glad he's gone," said Miss Cook, coming in from the shed. "It's absurd, the row American men make about their eating away from home. They want Delmonico's table set at every railway-station."

"You will go up into the mountains, then?"

"Yes. I've only three weeks' vacation, and I can get farther from my usual rut, both as to scenery and people, here than anywhere else. I've been writing on political economy lately, and my brain needs complete change of idea. You know how it is yourself."

"No, I—" She unlocked her satchel, and as she took out Baby's powder looked furtively at Miss Cook. This tight little person, buckled snugly into a waterproof suit, her delicate face set off by a brown hat and feather, talking political economy and slang in a breath, was a new specimen of human nature to her.

She gave the powder, and then the two women went out and deposited themselves and their wraps in a red stage which waited at the door. A fat, jolly-faced woman, proprietor of the shed and cooking-stove, ran out with a bottle of warm milk for the child, the Carolinian majors and barkeeper took off their hats, the Detroit man nodded with his on his head, and with a crack of the whip the stage rolled away with them. It lurched on its leather springs, and luffed

and righted precisely like a ship in a chopping sea, and threw them forward against each other and back into dusty depths of curled hair, until even the baby laughed aloud.

Miss Cook took out her notebook and pencil, but found it impossible to write. "There is nothing to make note of, either," she said after an hour or two. "It is the loneliest entrance to a mountain-region I ever saw. These glassless huts we see now and then, the ruins of cabins, make it all the more forlorn. I saw a woman ploughing with an ox just now on the hillside, where it was so steep I thought woman, plough, and ox would roll down together. — Is there no business, no stir of any sort, in this country?" she called sharply to the driver, who looked in at the window at that minute.

"I don't know," he said leisurely. "Come to think on't, it's powerful quiet ginerally."

"No mining — mills?"

"Thar war mica-mines. But ther given over. An' thar war a railroad. But that's given over too. I was a-goin' to ask you ladies ef you'd wish to git out an' see whar the traveller was murdered last May, up the stream a bit. I kin show you jest whar the blood is yet; which, they do say, was discovered by the wild dogs a-gnawin' at the ground."

The baby's mother held it closer, with her lips unusually pale. "No, thank you," she said cheerfully. "Probably we can see it as we come back."

"Well, jest as *you* please," he replied, gathering up the reins with a discontented air. "Thar's been no murder in the mountings for five years, an' 'tisn't likely there'll be another."

A few miles farther on he stopped to water his horses at a hill-spring. "Thar's a house yonder, ef you ladies like to rest an hour," he said, nodding benignantly.

"But the mail? — you carry the mail?"

"Oh, the mail won't trouble itself," taking out his pipe and filling it. "That thar child needs rest, I reckon."

The two women hurried up the stony field to the large log hut, where the mistress and a dozen black-haired children stood waiting for them.

"Something to eat?" cried Miss Cook. "Yes, indeed, my good soul; and the sooner the better. Finely-cut face, that," sketching it rapidly while the hostess hurried in and out. "Gallic. These mountaineers were all originally either French Huguenots or Germans. She would be picturesque, under a Norman peasant's coif and red umbrella, but in a dirty calico wrapper — bah!"

The house also was dirty and bare, but the table was set with fried chicken, rice, honey, and delicious butter.

"And how — how much are we to pay for all this?" said Miss Cook before sitting down.

"If ten cents each would not be too much?" hesitated the woman.

Miss Cook nodded: her very portemonnaie gave a click of delight in her pocket. "I heard that these people were miserably poor!" she muttered rapturously. "Don't look so shocked. If you earned your bread by your brains, as I do, you'd want as much bread for a penny as possible."

The sky began to darken before they rose from the table, and, looking out through the cut in the wall which served for a window, they saw that the rain was already falling heavily. A girl of sixteen, who had been spinning in the corner, drew her wheel in front of the window: the square of light threw her delicately lined face and heavy yellow hair into relief. She watched the baby with friendly smiles as she spun, giving it a bit of white wool to hold.

"What a queer tribe we have fallen among!" said Miss Cook in scarcely lowered tones. "I never saw a spinning-wheel before, except Gretchen's in Faust, and there is a great hand-loom. Why, it was only Tuesday I crossed Desbrosses Ferry, and I am already two centuries back from New York. Very incurious, too, do you observe? The women don't even glance at the shape of our hats, and nobody has asked us a question as to our business here. People who live in the mountains or by the sea generally lack the vulgar curiosity of the ordinary country farmer."

"Do they? I did not know. These are the kindest people *I* ever met," said the little woman in black with unwonted emphasis.

"Oh, they expect to make something out of you. Travellers are the rarest of game in this region, I imagine," observed Miss Cook carelessly, and then stopped abruptly with a qualm of conscience, remarking for the first time the widow's cap which her companion wore. These people had perhaps been quicker than she in guessing the story of the little woman — that the child, dying as it seemed, was all that was left to her, and that this journey to the balsam mountains was the last desperate hope for its life.

She looked with a fresh interest at the thin, anxious face, the shabby black clothes, and then out of the window to where the high peaks of the Black Range were dimly visible like cones of sepia on the gray horizon. She had read a paper in some magazine on the inhospitable region yonder, walled by the clouds. It was "almost unexplored, although so near the seaboard cities"; the "haunt of beasts of prey"; the natives were "but little raised above the condition of Digger Indians." All this had whetted Miss Cook's appetite. She was tired of New York and New Yorkers, and of the daily grinding them up into newspaper correspondence wherewith to earn her bread. To become an explorer, to adventure into the lairs of bears and wolves, at so cheap a cost as an excursion ticket over the Air-line Railroad, was a rare chance for her. As it rained now, she gathered her skirts up from the dirty floor and confided some of these thoughts to her companion, who only said absently, "She did not know. Doctor Beasly — perhaps Miss Cook had heard of Doctor Beasly? — had said Charley must have mountain air, and that the balsams were tonics in themselves. She did not suppose the Diggers or animals would hurt *her*."

The truth was, the little woman had been fighting Death long and vainly over a sick-bed. She knew his terrors there well enough: she had learned to follow his creeping, remorseless fingers on clammy skin and wasted body, and to hear his coming footsteps in the flagging beats of a pulse. She had that dry, sapless, submissive look which a woman gains in long nursing — a woman that nurses a patient

who holds part of her own life and is carrying it with him, step by step, into the grave. The grave had closed over this woman's dead, and all that he had taken with him from her: even to herself she did not dare to speak of him as yet. The puny little boy in her arms was the only real thing in life to her. There was a chance in these mountains of keeping him — a bare chance. As for wild beasts or wild people, she had thought of them no more than the shadows on the road which passed with every wind.

The rain beat more heavily on the roof: the driver presented himself at the door, dripping. "Ef we don't go on, night'll catch us before we make Alexander's," he said. "Give me that little feller under my coat. I'll kerry him to the stage."

Miss Cook shivered in the chilly wind that rushed through the open door. "Who would believe that the streets in New York were broiling at 105° this minute?"

"That baby's not wrapped warm enough for a night like this," said the woman of the house, and forthwith dragged out of a wooden box a red flannel petticoat, ragged but clean, and pinned it snugly about him.

"She'll charge you a pretty price for it," whispered Miss Cook; "and it's only a rag."

"No, no," laughed the woman, when the widow drew out her portemonnaie. "Joe kin bring it back some day. That's all right."

"You seem as touched by that as though it were some great sacrifice," said Miss Cook tartly after they were settled again in the stage.

"It was all she had." Adding after a pause, "I

have been living in New York for five years. My baby was born there, and — and I had trouble. But we came strangers, and were always strangers. I knew nobody but the doctor. I came to look upon the milkman and baker who stopped at the door as friends. People are in such a hurry there. They have no time to be friendly."

The stage tossed and jolted, the rain pelted against the windows. Miss Cook snored and wakened with jumps, and the baby slept tranquilly. There was a certain purity in the cold damp air that eased his breathing, and the red petticoat was snug and warm. The touch of it seemed to warm his mother too. The kind little act of giving it was something new to her. It seemed as if in the North she too had been in a driving hurry of work since her birth, and had never had time to be friendly. If life here was barbarous, it was at ease, unmoving, kindly. She could take time to breathe.

It was late in the night when the stage began to rattle over the cobble-stoned streets of the little hill-village of Asheville. It drew up in front of an inn with wooden porches sheltered by great trees: there were lights burning inside, and glimpses of supper waiting, and a steam of frying chicken and coffee pervading the storm. One or two men hurried out from the office with umbrellas, and a pretty white-aproned young girl welcomed them at the door.

"Supper is ready," she said. "Yours shall be sent to your room, madam. We have had a fire kindled there on account of the baby."

"Why, how *could* you know Charley was coming?" cried the widow breathlessly.

"Oh, a week ago, madam. While you stopped at Morganton. The conductor of the Salisbury train sent on a note, and afterward the clergyman at Linville. We have been warned to take good care of you," smiling brightly.

The baby's mother said nothing until she was seated in her room before a wood-fire which crackled and blazed cheerfully. The baby lay on her lap, its face red with heat and comfort.

"Since I left Richmond one conductor has passed me on to another," she said solemnly to Miss Cook. "The baby was ill at Linville, and the train was stopped for an hour, and the ladies of the village came to help me. And now these people. It is just as though I were coming among old friends."

"Pshaw! They think you have money. These Southerners are impoverished by the war, and they have an idea that every Northern traveller is overloaded with wealth, and is fair game."

"The war? I had forgotten that. One would forgive them if they were churlish and bitter."

The woman was a weak creature evidently, and inclined to drivel. Miss Cook went off to bed, first jotting down in her notebook some of the young girl's queer mistakes in accent, and a joke on her yellow dress and red ribbons. They would be useful hereafter in summing up her estimate of the people. The girl and the widow meantime had grown into good friends in undressing the boy together. When his mother lay down at last beside him the firelight threw a bright glow over the bed, and the pretty young face came again to the door to nod good-night.

It was only an inn, and outside a strange country and strange people surrounded her. But she could not rid herself of the impression that she had come home to her own friends.

The sun rose in a blue dappled sky, but before he was fairly above the bank of wet clouds Miss Cook was out, notebook in hand. She had sketched the outline of the mountains that walled in the table-land on which the village stood; had felt the tears rise to her eyes as the purple shadow about Mount Pisgah flamed into sudden splendor (for her tears and emotions responded quickly to a beautiful sight or sound); she had discovered the grassy public square in which a cow grazed and a woman was leisurely driving a steer that drew a cart; she had visited four emporiums of trade — little low-ceiled rooms which fronted on the square, walled with calicoes and barrels of sugar, and hung overhead with brown crockery and tin cups; she had helped two mountaineers trade their bag of flour for shoes; had talked to the negro women milking in the sheds, to the gallant Confederate colonel hoeing his corn in a field, to a hunter bringing in a lot of peltry from the Smoky Range. As they talked she portioned out the facts as material for a letter in the *Herald*. The quaint decaying houses, the swarming blacks, the whole drowsy life of the village set high in the chilled sunshine and bound by its glittering belt of rivers and rampart of misty mountain-heights, were sketched in a sharp, effective bit of word-painting in her mind.

She trotted back to the Eagle Hotel to put it on paper; then to breakfast; then off again to look up schools, churches, and editors.

Late in the afternoon, tramping along a steep hill-path, she caught sight of two women in a skiff on a lonely stream below. It was the baby's mother and the pretty girl from the inn. No human being was in sight; the low sunlight struck luminous bars of light between the trunks of the hemlocks into the water beneath the boat as it swung lazily in the current; long tangled vines of sweetbrier and the red trumpet-creeper hung from the trees into the water; the baby lay sound asleep on a heap of shawls at his mother's feet, while she dipped the oars gently now and then to keep in the middle of the stream.

"How lazy you look!" called Miss Cook. "You might have been made out of the earth of these sleepy hills. Here, come ashore. D'ye see the work I've done?" fluttering a sheaf of notes. "I've just been at the jail. A den! an outrage on the civilization of the nineteenth century! Men have been branded here since the war. Criminals in this State are actually secured in iron cages like wild beasts! I shall use that fact effectively in my book on the 'Causes of the Decadence of the South': one chapter shall be given to 'The Social and Moral Condition of North Carolina.'"

"You will need so many facts!" ejaculated the little woman, awestruck, yet pityingly. "It will take all your summer's holiday to gather them up."

Miss Cook laughed with cool superiority: "Why, child, I have them all now — got them this morning. Oh, I can evolve the whole state of society from half a dozen items. I have the faculty of generalizing, you see. No," folding up her papers decisively,

"I've done the mountains and mountaineers. Between slavery and want of railroads, humanity has reached its extremest conditions here. I should not learn that fact any better if I stayed a week."

"You are not going back?"

"Back? Yes. I go to Georgia to-morrow morning. This orange I have sucked dry."

Miss Cook posted to the inn and passed the night in making sketches to illustrate her article from a bundle of photographic views which she found in possession of the landlady.

Looking out of the parlor-window next morning, she saw half the inmates of the house gathered about an ox-cart in which sat the widow and Charley. A couple of sacks of flour lay at her feet, and a middle-aged man, a giant as to height and build, dressed in butternut homespun, cracked his long whip at the flies.

"Where can she be going?" asked Miss Cook of a young woman from Georgia whom she had been pumping dry of facts all the morning. The Georgian wore a yellow dress with a coarse frill about her swarthy neck: she sat at the piano and played "Love's Chidings."

The man, she said, was Jonathan Yare, a hunter in the Black Mountains. Her brother had told her his terrible history. Her brother had once penetrated into the mountains as far as the hut where the Yares lived, some thirty miles from here. Beyond that there were no human beings: the mountains were given up to wild beasts. As for these Yares, they had lived in the wilderness for three generations, and, by all accounts, like the beasts.

Miss Cook rushed out: political economist though she might be, she had a gossip's keen enjoyment in a piece of bad news. "Do you know these Yares?" she whispered. "They have a terrible history: they live like wild beasts."

The little woman's color left her. Her head filled instantly with visions of the Ku-Klux. "I never asked what they were," she gasped. "I only wanted to take Charley among the balsams."

The man looked back at this moment, and seeing that the valise and box and baby's bottle of milk were in the cart, cracked his long whip over the near ox, and the next moment the widow and her baby were jolting up the rocky hill-street.

She felt a sudden spasm of fear. When Death laid his hand on her child she had taken him up and fled to these mountains without a second thought, as the women in the times of the apostles carried their dead and dying to be cured by miraculous aid. But she was a woman like the rest of us, used to jog along the conventional paths to church, to market, to the shops; her only quarrels with the departed David had been about his unorthodox habits in business and politics; and she never could be easy until she was sure that her neighbors liked her new bonnet. What would her neighbors — any neighbor — David himself, have said at seeing her in league with this desperate character, going into frightful solitudes?

The man spoke to her once or twice, but she answered with an inaudible little chirp, after which he fell into silence, neither whistling nor speaking to his oxen, as she noticed.

She could not help observing how unusually clear the light about her was from the thinness of the air, although the sun was out of sight in a covered, foreboding sky, and black, ragged fragments of cloud from some approaching thunderstorm were driven now and then across the horizon. The road, if road you chose to call it, crept along beside the little crystal-clear Swannanoa River, and persisted in staying beside it, sliding over hills of boulders, fording rushing mountain-streams and dank, snaky swamps, digging its way along the side of sheer precipices, rather than desert its companion. The baby's mother suddenly became conscious that the river was a companion to whom she had been talking and listening for an hour or two. It was narrow, deep, and clear as the air above it: it flowed with a low, soothing sound in which there came to her somehow an assurance of security and good-will.

Multitudes of trailing vines hedged in the river; they covered the banks, and threw long, clutching branches into the water; they crept out on projecting trees on either side and leaped across the stream, ridging it with arches of wreaths and floating tendrils. There were the dark, waving plumes of the American ivy, the red cornucopias of the trumpet-creeper, morning-glories with great white blossoms, the passion-flower trailing its mysterious purple emblems through the mud beneath the oxen's feet, — all creeping or turning in some way toward the river.

Surely there were airy affections, subtle friendlinesses, among these dumb living creatures! They all seemed alive to her, though she was a prosaic

woman, who had read little beyond her cookery-book and Bible. It was as though she had come unbidden into Nature's household and interrupted the inmates talking together. The Carolina rose stretched in masses for miles along the road — the very earth seemed to blush with it: here and there a late rhododendron hung out its scarlet banner. The tupelo thrust its white fingers out of the shadow like a maiden's hand, and threw out into the air the very fragrance of the lilies-of-the-valley which used to grow in the garden she made when she was a little girl. The silence was absolute, except when a pheasant rose with a whirr or a mocking-bird sounded its melancholy defiant call in the depths of the forest. Long habit of grief had left her heart tender and its senses keen: these things, which were but game or specimens for the naturalist, were God's creatures to her, and came close to her. Charley woke, and looking up saw her smiling down on him with warm cheeks. She did not know the name of a plant or tree or bird, but she felt the friendliness and welcome of the hills, just as she used to be comforted and lifted nearer to God by distant church music, although she could not hear a word of the hymn.

Leaving the road, they entered deep silent gorges, and followed the bed of mountain-streams through cañons walled in by gray frowning rocks, over which the sky bent more darkly each moment. At last there was a break in the gorge. About her was a world of gigantic mountains. There was no sign of human habitation — nothing but interminable forests that climbed the heights, and, failing half-way, left them bare to pierce the clouds.

She had started on this journey with a vague notion of reaching some higher land where balsam trees grew, the air about which would be wholesome for Charley. She had penetrated to the highest summits of the Appalachian Range, the nursery or breeding-place from which descend the Blue Ridge, the Alleghanies, the Nantahela — all the great mountain-bulwarks that wall the continent on its eastern coast. The mighty peaks rose into the sky beyond her sight, while the gathering storm-clouds clung to their sides, surging and eddying with the wind. How petty and short-lived was wind or storm! She looked up at the fixed, awful heights, forgetting even the child on her knee. It was as if God had taken her into one of the secret places where He dwelt apart.

She came to herself suddenly, finding that the cart had stopped and the driver was standing beside her examining the baby's milk.

"I reckon," he said, "it's sour, and the little chap's hungry. I'll get some fresh, an' you kin look at the mountings."

He went into the laurel, and with a peculiar whistle brought some of the wild cattle to him, and proceeded to milk one of the cows, returning with a cupful of foaming warm milk. Now, one of the Ku-Klux would hardly go to milking cows, she thought; and there was something in the man's steady grave eyes that looked as if he too understood the meaning of the "mountings." They jogged on in silence.

Half an hour later the clouds closed about them and the rain fell heavily. The cart was dragged through the bed of a mountain-stream, and then stopped in

front of a low log house built into a ledge of the mountain. A room on either side opened into a passage, through which a wagon might be driven, and where the rain and wind swept unchecked. An old woman stood in it looking up the stream. Her gray hair hung about her sallow face, her dress was a dirty calico, her feet were bare. Behind her was the kitchen, a large forlorn space scarcely enclosed by the log and mud walls. A pig ran unnoticed past her into it. Another woman, tall and gaunt, was fording the stream: she was dripping wet, and carried a spade. Surely, thought the baby's mother, human nature could reach no lower depths of squalor and ignorance than these.

"Mother," said Jonathan Yare, "here is a friend that has come with her baby to stay with us a while."

The old woman turned and instantly held out her arms for the child. "Come in — come to the fire," she said cordially. "I am glad Jonathan brought you to us."

If a princess had been so taken by surprise, her courtly breeding could not have stood her in better stead.

She took the baby and its mother into a snug boarded room with half a dozen pictures from the illustrated papers on the walls, and a fire of great logs smouldering on the hearth. When they were warmed and dry they went into the kitchen. Supper was ready, and two or three six-foot mountaineers stood by the table.

"We are waiting for father," said the woman who had carried the spade. Both men and women had

peculiar low voices. One could never grow used to hearing such gentle tones from these great sons of Anak. At the same moment an old man of eighty, whose gigantic build dwarfed all of his sons, came into the doorway. His eyes were closed, and he groped with his staff. The widow, as soon as she saw his face, went directly up to him and took his hand.

"My name is Denby," she said. "I brought my baby here to be cured. He is all I have, sir."

"You did right to come." She guided his hand to Charley's, and he felt his skin, muscles, and pulse, asking questions with shrewder insight than any physician had done. Then he led her to the table. "Boys, Mistress Denby will like to sit beside me, I think," he said.

She had an odd feeling that she had been adopted by some ancient knight, although the old man beside her wore patched trousers that left his hairy ankles and feet bare. Before the meal was over another strange impression deepened on her. She saw that these people were clothed and fed as the very poorest poor; she doubted whether one of them could read or write; they talked little, and only of the corn, or the ox that had gone lame; but she could not rid herself of the conviction that she had now, as never in her life, come into the best of good company. Nature does not always ennoble her familiars. Country-people usually are just as uneasy and vulgar in their cheap and ignorant efforts at display or fashion as townsmen. But these mountaineers were absolutely unconscious that such things were. A man was a

man to them — a woman, a woman. They had never perhaps heard either estimated by their money or house or clothes. The Yares were, in fact, a family born with exceptionally strong intellects and clean, fine instincts: they had been left to develop both in utter solitude; and the result was the grave self-control of Indians and a truthful directness of thought and speech which grew out of the great calm Nature about them as did the trees and the flowing water.

These were the first human beings whom the widow had ever met between whom and herself there came absolutely no bar of accident — no circumstance of social position or clothes or education: they were the first who could go straight to something in her beneath all these things. She soon forgot (what they had never known) how poor they were in all these accidents.

Charley and his mother were at once adopted into the family. At night, when the child was asleep, the old hunter always sat with her and his wife beside the fire, telling stories of bear-hunts, of fights with panthers, of the mysterious Rattlesnake Valley, near which no hunter ventures. He had been born in this house, and passed the whole of his eighty years in the mountains of the Black Range. One night, noticing the scars which his encounters with bears had left on him, she said, "It is no wonder that the townspeople in Asheville talked to me of the 'terrible history of the Yares.'"

The old man smiled quietly, but did not answer. When he had gone to bed his wife said with great

feeling, "It was not their fights with wolves and bears that turned the people of Asheville agen the name of my boys and their father. They were the ony men anigh hyar that stood out fur the Union from first to last. They couldn't turn agen the old flag, you see, Mistress Denby."

"They should have gone into the Federal army and helped to free the slaves," cried the widow with rising color, for she had been a violent abolitionist in her day.

"Waal, we never put much vally on the blacks, that's the truth. We couldn't argy or jedge whether slavery war wholesomest or not. It was out of our sight. My lads, bein' known as extraordinar' strong men an' powerful bear-fighters, hed two or three offers to join Kirk's Loyal Rangers in Tennessee. But they couldn't shed the blood of their old neighbors."

"Then they fought on neither side? Their old neighbors most probably called them cowards."

"Nobody would say that of the Yares," the woman said simply. "But when they wouldn't go into the Confederit army, they was driv out — four of them, Jonathan first — from under this roof, an' for five years they lay out on the mountings. It began this a-way: Some of the Union troops, they came up to the Unaka Range, and found the house whar the Grangers lived — hunters like us. The soldiers followed the two Granger lads who was in the rebel army, an' had slipped home on furlough to see their mother. Waal, they shot the lads, catchin' them out in the barnyard, which was to be expected, p'raps; an' when their ole father came runnin' out they killed him too.

His wife, seein' that, hid the baby (as they called him, though he was nigh onto eight year old) under a loose board of the floor. But he, gettin' scart, runs out and calls, 'Gentlemen, I surrender,' jest like a man. He fell with nine bullets in his breast. His mother sees it all. There never was a woman so interrupted as that pore woman that day. She comes up to us, travellin' night an' day, talkin' continual under her breath of the lads and her ole man's gray hair lyin' in a pool of blood. She's never hed her right mind sence. When Jonathan heard that from her, he said, 'Mother, not even for the Union will I join in sech work as this agen my friends.' He knowed ony the few folks on the mountings, but he keered for them as if they war his brothers. Yet they turned agen him at the warnin' of a day, and hunted him as if he was a wild beast. He's forgot that now. But his sister, she's never forgot it for him agen them. Jonathan's trouble made a different woman of Nancy."

But Mrs. Denby felt but little interest in the gaunt, silent Nancy.

"You say they hunted your sons through the mountains?"

"Jest as if they war wolves. But the boys knowed the mountings. Thars hundreds of caves and gullies thar whar no man ever ventered but them. Three times a week Nancy went — she war a young girl then: she went up into Old Craggy and the Black miles and miles to app'inted places to kerry pervisions. I've seen her git out of her bed to go (fur she hed her aches and pains like other wimmen), and take that pack on her back, when the gorges war sheeted with

snow and ice, an' ef she missed her footin' no man on arth could know whar she died."

"But five years of idleness for your sons — "

The old woman's high features flushed. "You don't understan', Mistress Denby," she said calmly. "My sons' work in them years was to pertect an' guide the rebel deserters home through the mountings — people at the North don't know, likely, what crowds of them thar war — an' to bring the Union prisoners escaped from Salisbury and Andersonville safe to the Federal lines in Tennessee. One of the boys would be to Salisbury in disguise, an' the others would take them from him and run them into the mountings, an' keep 'em thar, bringin' them hyar when they could at night fur a meal's good victuals. About midnight they used to come. Nancy an' me, we'd hear a stone flung into the river yonder — seemed es ef I'd never stop listenin' fur that stone — an' we'd find them pore starved critters standin' in the dark outside with Jonathan. In ten minutes we'd have supper ready — keepin' the fire up every night — an' they'd eat an' sleep, an' be off before dawn. Hundreds of them hev slep' in this very room, sayin' it was as ef they'd come back to their homes out of hell. They looked as ef they'd been thar, raally."

"In *this* room?" Mrs. Denby stood up trembling. Her husband had been in Salisbury at the same time as Albert Richardson, and had escaped. He might have slept in this very bed where his child lay. These people might have saved him from death. But Mrs. Yare did not notice her agitation.

"Thar was one winter when Major Gee sent guards

from Salisbury to watch the mounting-passes, 'specially about this house, knowin' my boys' work. Then they couldn't come anigh: thar was nigh a year I couldn't hear from them ef they were alive or dead. I'd hear shots, an' the guards 'ud tell me it was 'another damned refugee gone' — p'raps one of my boys. I'd set by that door all night, lookin' up to the clouds coverin' the mounting, wonderin' ef my lads was safe an' well up thar or lyin' dead an' unburied. I'd think ef I could ony see one of my lads for jest once — jest once!" The firelight flashed up over her tall, erect figure. She was standing, and held her arm over her bony breast as if the old pain was intolerable even now.

She said quietly after a while, "But I didn't begrudge them to their work. One night — the soldiers were jest yonder: you could see the campfire in the fog — thar war the stone knockin' in the stream. I says, 'Nancy, which is it?' She says, 'It's Charley's throw. Someut ails Jonathan.' An' Charley hed come to say his brother war dyin' in a cave two mile up: they'd kerried him thar. I found my lad thar, worn to a shadder, an' with some disease no yerbs could tech. Wall, fur a week we came an' went to him, past the guard who war sent to shoot him down when found like a dog; an' thar he was lyin' within call, an' the snow an' sleet driftin' about him. One day Nancy was dumb all day — not a word. I said to father, 'Let her alone: she's a-studyin' powerful. Let her alone.' 'Mother,' she says at night, 'I've been thinkin' about Jonathan. He must hev a house to cover him, or he'll die.'

'Yes, Nancy, but what house?' 'I'll show you,' says she. 'You bide hyar quiet with father. The guard is used to seein' me come an' go with the cattle.' She took an axe an' went out, an' didn't come home till mornin'. In three days she hed cut down logs an' built a hut, six feet by ten, among the laurels yonder, haulin' an' liftin' them logs herself, an' floored it, an' kivered it with brush, an' brought him to it; an' thar she stayed an' nursed him. The snow fell heavy an' hid it. Yes, it seems onpossible for a woman. But not many's got my Nancy's build," proudly. "One day, when Jonathan was growin' better, Colonel Barker rode up: he war a Confederit. 'Mrs. Yare,' says he, 'thar's word come your boys hev been seen hyarbouts, an' the home guard's on its way up.' An' then he tuk to talkin' cattle an' the like with father, an' turned his back on me. An' I went out an' give the signal. An' in ten minutes Nancy came in with the milk-pail as the guard rode up. I knowed the boys war safe. Waal, they sarched the laurel for hours, an' late in the afternoon they came in. 'Colonel,' says they, 'look a-here!' So we went out, an' thar war the house. 'Who built this?' says he. 'I did,' says Nancy, thinkin' the ownin' to it was death. The tears stood in his eyes. 'God help us all!' says he. 'Men, don't touch a log of it.' But they tore it to the ground when he was gone, an' took Nancy down to Asheville, an' kep her in the jail thar for a month, threatenin' to send her to Salisbury ef she'd not tell whar the boys war. They might hev hung her: of course she'd not hev told. But it wore her — it wore her. She'd be a prettier girl now," thoughtfully,

"ony for what she's gone through for her brothers. Then they arrested father an' took him to Richmond, to Libby Prison. As soon as Nancy heard that, she sent for the commandant of the post.

"'Give me,' she says, 'a written agreement that my father shall be released when his four sons come into Richmond, and let me go.' So they did it."

"And the boys went?"

"Of course. They reported themselves at Asheville, hopin' that would release their father sooner. But they hed to be forwarded to Salisbury, an' held thar until he was brought on."

"They were in that prison, there?"

"Yes. But they was well treated, bein' wanted for soldiers. It was in the last year, when the men war desertin' and the drafts war of no use. On the fourth day the lads war brought into the guard-house before the officers.

"'Mr. Yare,' says the major very pleasantly, 'I believe you an' yor brothers are reputed to be onusually daring men.'

"'That I don't know,' says Jonathan.

"'You hev certainly mistaken the object of the war and your duty. At any rate, you hev incurred ten times more risk an' danger in fighting for refugees than you would have done in the army. We have determined to overlook all the offences of your family, and to permit you to bear arms in our service.'

"'I will never bear arms in the Confederit service,' says Jonathan quietly. You know he's a quiet man, an' slow.

"A little man, a young captain, standing by, says

in a heat, 'Bah! Why do you waste words with such fellows? The best use to make of the whole lot is to order them out to be shot.'

"'I agree with you, Mac,' says the colonel. 'It's poor policy, at this stage of the game, to tax the commissariat and put arms into the hands of unwilling soldiers.—But'—then he stopped for a minute—'you have no right to answer for your brothers, Yare,' he said. 'I give you half an hour,' taking out his watch. 'You can consult together. Such of you as are willing to go into the ranks can do so at once: the others—shall be dealt with as Captain McIntyre suggests.'

"They took the lads back into the inside room. When the half hour was up, all but five minutes, they saw a company drawn up in a hollow square outside. They were led out thar, facin' them, an' thar war the officers. It was a sunshiny, clar day, an' Jonathan said he couldn't help but think of the mountings an' his father an' me.

"Charley, he spoke first. 'Jonathan is the oldest,' he says. 'He will answer for us all.'

"'You will go into the service?' says the major.

"'No,' said Jonathan, 'we never will.'

"The major made a sign. My lads walked down and the soldiers took aim, deliberate. The major was lookin' curiously at Jonathan.

"'This is not cowardice,' said he. 'Why will you not go into the ranks? I believe, in my soul, you are a Union man!'

"Jonathan says he looked quick at the guns levelled at him, and couldn't keep his breath from comin' hard.

"'Yes,' he says out loud. 'By God, I am a Union man!'

"Captain McIntyre pushed his sword down with a clatter and turned away. 'I never saw pluck like that before,' he said.

"'Corporal,' said the major, 'take these men back to jail.'

"Two weeks after that Lee surrendered, an' my lads came home."

* * * * * * * *

The women talked often in this way. Mrs. Denby urged them again and again to come out of their solitude to the North. "There are hundreds of men there," she said, "of influence and distinction whose lives your sons have saved at the peril of their own. Here they will always pass their days in hard drudgery and surrounded by danger."

The mother shook her head, but it was Nancy who answered in her gentle, pathetic voice: "The Yares hev lived on the Old Black for four generations, Mistress Denby. It wouldn't do to kerry us down into towns. It must be powerful lonesome in them flat countries, with nothing but people about you. The mountings is always company, you see."

The little townswoman tried to picture to herself these mountaineers actually in the houses of the men whom they had rescued from death — these slow-speaking giants clad in cheap Bowery clothes, ignorant of art, music, books, bric-à-brac, politics. She understood that they would be lonesome, and that

the mountains and they were company for each other.

She lived in their hut all summer. Her baby grew strong and rosy, and the mountains gave to her also of their good-will and comfort.

MARCIA

ONE winter morning a few years ago the mail brought me a roll of MS. (with one stamp too many, as if to bribe the post to care for so precious a thing) and a letter. Every publisher, editor, or even the obscurest of writers receives such packages so often as to know them at a glance. Half a dozen poems or a story — a blur of sunsets, duchesses, violets, bad French, and worse English; not a solid grain of common-sense, not a hint of reality or even of possibility, in the whole of it. The letter — truth in every word: formal, hard, practical, and the meaning of it a woman's cry for bread for her hungry children.

Each woman who writes such a letter fancies that she is the first, that its pathos will move hard-hearted editors, and that the extent of her need will supply the lack of wit, wisdom, or even grammar in her verses or story. Such appeals pour in literally by the thousand every year to every publishing office. The sickly daughter of a poor family; the wife of a drunken husband; a widow; children that must be fed and clothed. What is the critic's honest opinion

of her work? how much will it bring in dollars and cents? etc., etc.

I did not open the letter that day. When we reach middle age we have learned, through rough experiences, how many tragedies there are in our street or under our own roof which will be none the better for our handling, and are apt, selfishly, to try to escape the hearing of them.

This letter, however, when I opened it next morning, proved to be not of a tragical sort. The writer was "not dependent on her pen for support"; she "had vowed herself to literature"; she was "resolved to assist in the Progress of humanity." Scarcely had I laid down the letter when I was told that she waited below to see me. The card she sent up was a bit of the fly-leaf of a book, cut oblong with scissors, and the name — Miss Barr — written in imitation of engraving. Her back was toward me when I came down, and I had time to read the same sham stylishness written all over her thin little person. The sleazy black silk was looped in the prevailing fashion, a sweeping white plume drooped from the cheap hat, and on her hands were washed cotton gloves.

Instead of the wizened features of the "dead beat" which I expected, she turned on me a child's face: an ugly face, I believe other women called it, but one of the most innocent and honest in the world. Her brown eyes met mine eagerly, full of a joyous good-fellowship for everything and everybody alive. She poured out her story, too, in a light-hearted way, and in the lowest, friendliest of voices. To see the girl was to be her ally. "People will do anything for me — but publish my manuscripts," she said.

She came from Mississippi; had been the only white child on a poor plantation on the banks of the Yazoo. "I have only had such teaching as my mother could give: she had but two years with a governess. We had no books nor newspapers, except an occasional copy of a magazine sent to us by friends in the North." Her mother was the one central figure in the world to her then. In our after-intercourse she talked of her continually. "She is a little woman — less than I; but she has one of the finest minds in the world," she would cry. "The sight of anything beautiful or the sound of music sways her as the wind does a reed. But she never was twenty miles from the plantation; she has read nothing, knows nothing. My father thinks women are like mares — only useful to bring forth children. My mother's children all died in babyhood but me. There she has lived all her life, with the swamp on one side and the forest of live-oak on the other: nothing to do, nothing to think of. Oh, it was frightful! With a mind like hers, any woman would go mad, with that eternal forest and swamp, and the graves of her dead babies just in sight! She rubbed snuff a good deal to quiet herself, but of late years she has taken opium."

"And you?"

"I left her. I hoped to do something for us both. My mind is not of as high order as hers, but it is very different from that of most women. I shall succeed some day," in the most matter-of-fact tones. "As soon as I knew that I was a poet I determined to come to Philadelphia and go straight to real publishers and real editors. In my country nobody had ever seen a

man who had written a book. Ever since I came here I find how hard it is to find out anything about the business of authorship. Medicine, or law, or blacksmithing — everybody knows the workings of those trades, but people with pens in their hands keep the secret of their craft like Freemasons," laughing.

"You came alone?"

"Quite alone. I hired a little room over a baker's shop in Pine Street. They are a very decent couple, the baker and his wife. I board myself, and send out my manuscripts. They always come back to me."

"Where do you send them?"

"Oh, everywhere. I can show you printed forms of rejection from every magazine and literary newspaper in the country," opening and shutting again a black satchel on her lap. "I have written three novels, and sent them to the —— s' and —— s'. They sent them back as unavailable. But they never read them. I trick them this a-way: I put a loose blue thread between the third and fourth pages of the manuscript, and it is always there when it comes back." Her voice broke a little, but she winked her brown eyes and laughed bravely.

"How long have you been here?"

"Three years."

"Impossible! You are but a child."

"I am twenty. I had an article published once in a Sunday paper," producing a slip about two inches long.

Three years, and only that little grain of success! She had supported herself meanwhile, as I learned afterward, by sewing men's socks for a firm in Germantown.

"You are ready to give up now?"

"No; not if it were ten years instead of three."

Yet I can swear there was not a drop of New England blood in her little body. One was certain, against all reason, that she would succeed. When even such puny ceatures as this take the world by the throat in that fashion, they are sure to conquer it.

Her books and poems must, I think, have seemed unique to any editor. The spelling was atrocious; the errors of grammar in every line beyond remedy. The lowest pupil in our public schools would have detected her ignorance on the first page. There was, too, in all that she said or wrote an occasional gross indecency, such as a child might show: her life on the plantation explained it. Like Juliet she spoke the language of her nurse. But even Shakspeare's nurse and Juliet would not be allowed nowadays to chatter at will in the pages of a family magazine.

But in all her ignorance, mistakes, and weaknesses there was no trace of imitation. She plagiarized nobody. There was none of the usual talk of countesses, heather, larks, or emotions of which she knew nothing. She painted over and over again her own home on the Yazoo: the hot still sunshine, the silence of noon, the swamp, the slimy living things in the stagnant ponds, the semi-tropical forest, the house and negro quarters, with all their dirt and dreary monotony. It was a picture which remained in the mind strong and vivid as one of Gêrome's deserts or Hardy's moors.

There could be but one kind of advice to give her — to put away pen and ink, and for three years at

least devote herself to hard study. She would, of course, have none of such counsel. The popular belief in the wings of genius, which can carry it over hard work and all such obstacles as ignorance of grammar or even the spelling-book, found in her a marked example. Work was for commonplace talent, not for those whose veins were full of the divine ichor.

Meanwhile she went on sewing socks, and sending off her great yellow envelopes, with stamps to bring them back.

"Stamps and paper count up so fast!" she said, with a laugh, into which had grown a pitiful quaver. She would take not a penny of aid. "I shall not starve. When the time has come for me to know that I have failed, I can go back to my own country and live like the other women there."

Meanwhile her case very nearly reached starvation. I remember few things more pathetic than the damp, forlorn little figure in a shabby water-proof, black satchel in hand, which used to come to our door through the snows and drenching rains that winter. Her shoes were broken, and her hands shrivelled blue with cold. But a plated gilt chain or a scarlet ribbon used to flaunt somewhere over the meagre, scant poverty. Sometimes she brought news with her. She had work given her — to collect a column of jokes for a Sunday paper, by which she made three dollars a week. But she lost it from trying to insert her own matter, which could not well be reckoned as funny sayings. One day she came flushed with excitement. Somebody had taken her through the Academy of Design and a private gallery of engravings then on

exhibition. She had a keen, just eye for form and color, and the feeling of a true artist for both.

"That is what I could have done," she said, after keeping silence a long while. "But what chance had I? I never even saw a picture at home, except those which were cut out of illustrated papers. There seemed to be no way for me but to write."

It was suggested to her that she might find the other way even now. Painting, designing, wood-engraving, were expressions for a woman's mind, even though, like her own, it was "one of the finest in the world."

She did not smile. "It is too late," she said. "I will go on as I have begun. But it is a pity my mother and I had not known of such things."

After that her light-hearted courage seemed to give way. She persevered, but it was with dogged, indomitable resolution, and little hope.

One day in the spring I was summoned to see a visitor on business. I found a tall, lank young man stalking up and down the room, the most noticeable point about him the shock of red hair and whisker falling over his neck and greasy coat collar. The face was that of an ignorant, small-minded man. But it was candid and not sensual.

He came straight toward me. "Is Marcia Barr here?"

"No; she has been gone for an hour."

He damned his luck in a white heat of rage, which must, I thought, have required some time to kindle. Indeed, I found he had been pacing up and down the street half the morning, having seen her come in. She had gone out by a side door.

"I caught a glimpse of her half a mile off. I have come to Philadelphia three times this year to find her. Good God! how rank poor she is! Where does she live?"

I could not tell him, as Marcia had long ago left the baker's, and changed her quarters every month.

"And I reckon I'll have to wait until she comes hyah again. Tell her it's Zack Biron, the overseer's son, on — on business."

He was not long in unveiling his business, which any woman would soon have guessed. He had come to bring Marcia home and marry her. He had always "wanted her," and the old colonel, her father, had promised he should marry her provided he could bring her back from her mad flight. The colonel was dead, and he was now "runnin' the plantation for ole madam. She's no better than a walkin' corpse, with that damned drug she chews. She can't keep still now: walks, walks incessant about the place, with her eyes set an' the skin clingin' to her bones. I couldn't 'a borne it, I ashuah you, but for the sake of findin' Marcia."

Two months passed, in which he haunted the house. But Marcia did not come. She had begun to frequent newspaper offices, and occasionally was given a trifling bit of work by the managers of the reporting corps — a description of the dresses at a Männerchor ball to write, or a puff of some coming play, etc. She came at last to tell me of what she had done.

"It is miserable work. I would rather sew the heels of stockings; but the stocking looms have stopped, and I must live a little longer, at any rate.

I think I have something to say, if people only would hear it."

I told her of Biron and his chase for her.

"I saw him outside the window the last time I was here. That was the reason I went out by the side street. I knew he was looking for me. You will not tell him I have been here?"

"But, Marcia, the man seems honest and kindly —"

"If he found me," in the same quiet tone, "he would marry me and take me back to the plantation."

"And you are not ready to give up?"

"No, I will not give up. I shall get into the right groove at last," with the infectious little laugh which nobody could resist.

The water-proof cloak was worn down quite into the cotton by this time, and the straw hat had been darned around the ragged edge. But there was a cheap red rose in it. Her cheek-bones showed high, and her eyes shone out of black hollows.

"No, I have no cough, and I don't need medicine," she said, irritably, when questioned. "I have had plenty of offers of help. But I'd rather steal than take alms." She rose hastily and buttoned her cloak.

"This man Biron waits only a word to come to you. He is faithful as a dog."

She nodded carelessly. Biron, or a return to her old home, held no part in her world, it was plain to see.

I was out of the city for several months. A few weeks after my return I saw in the evening paper one day, in the usual list of crimes and casualties, an item headed "*Pitiable Case.* — A young woman named

Burr was arrested yesterday on charge of theft, and taken to the Central Station. About eleven o'clock the other women in the cell where she was confined perceiving that she lay on a bench breathing in a stertorous manner, summoned Lieutenant Pardy, who found life to be almost extinct. A physician was called, who discovered that the woman had swallowed some poisonous drug. With her first breath of returning consciousness she protested her innocence of the charge. She appears to have been in an extreme state of want. But little hope is entertained of her recovery. Miss Burr is favorably known, we believe, as a writer of some ability for the daily press."

In spite of the difference of name, it must be Marcia.

When we reached the Central Station we were told that her discharge was already procured. She had friends who knew what wires to work. In the outer room were half a dozen young men, reporters, a foreman of a printing-room, and one or two women, dramatic or musical critics. There is as eager an *esprit de corps* among that clâss of journalists as among actors. They were all talking loudly, and zealous in defence of "Little Marty," as they called her, whom they declared to be "a dunce so far as head went, but pure and guileless as a child."

"I knew she was devilishly hard up," said one, "but never suspected she was starving. She would not borrow a dollar, she had that pride in her."

Marcia was still in the cell, lying on an iron stretcher. The Mississippian, Biron, was with her, kneeling on the floor in his shirt sleeves, chafing her hand. He had taken off his coat to wrap about her.

"I've a good Quaker nurse and a room ready for her at the Continental the minute she can be moved," he whispered. "Look a-here!" turning down the poor bit of lace and red ribbon at her throat, his big hairy hand shaking. "Them bones is a'most through the skin! The doctor says it's hunger — hunger! And *I* was eatin' three solid meals a day — like a beast!"

Hunger had almost done its work. There was but a feeble flicker of life left in the emaciated little body; not enough to know or speak to us when at last she opened her dull eyes.

"None o' them folks need consarn themselves any furder about her," said Biron savagely. "She'll come home to her own now, thank God, and be done with rubbishy book-makers. Mrs. Biron will live like a lady."

Two or three weeks later, the most splendid of hired phaetons stopped at my door, and Mr. and Mrs. Biron sent up their cards. Mr. Biron was glowing with happiness. It asserted itself offensively somehow in the very jingling of his watch chain and tie of his cravat.

"We return immediately to the plantation," he said, grandiloquently. "I reckon largely on the effect of her native air in restorin' Mrs. Biron to health."

Marcia was magnificent in silk and plumes, the costliest that her owner's money could buy. Her little face was pale, however, and she looked nobody in the eye.

"We leave for the South to-morrow," she said, calmly, "and I shall not return to Philadelphia. I have no wish to return."

"Shall I send you books or papers, Marcia?"

"No, I thank you; nothing."

When they rose to go, her husband said, "Mrs. Biron has some — rubbish she wishes to leave with you. Hyah!" calling out of the window. "You nigger, bring that thah bag!"

It was the old black satchel. Marcia took it in her white-gloved hands, half opened it, shut it quickly, came up closer.

"These are my manuscripts," she said. "Will you burn them for me? All; do not leave a line, a word. I could not do it."

I took the satchel, and they departed. Mr. Biron was vehement in his protestations of friendship and invitations to visit the plantation.

But Marcia did not say a word, even of farewell.

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