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Flamsted Quarries



Mary E. Waller

To Those Who Toil

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FLAMSTED QUARRIES

BOOKS BY
MARY E. WALLER

THE WOOD-CARVER OF 'LYMPUS

A DAUGHTER OF THE RICH

THE LITTLE CITIZEN

SANNA

OUR BENNY

A YEAR OUT OF LIFE

FLAMSTED QUARRIES

THROUGH THE GATES OF THE

NETHERLANDS



“She sang straight on, verse after verse without pause”

FRONTISPIECE. See p. 10

FLAMSTED QUARRIES

BY

MARY E. WALLER

Author of "The Wood-carver of 'Lymus'"

"Through the Gates of the Netherlands"

"A Daughter of the Rich," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

G. PATRICK NELSON

BOSTON

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TO THOSE WHO TOIL

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Googe’s cry, as he knelt before Aileen” “ 467

Flamsted Quarries

*“Abysmal deeps repose
Beneath the stout ship’s keel whereon we glide;
And if a diver plunge far down within
Those depths and to the surface safe return,
His smile, if so it chance he smile again,
Outweighs in worth all gold.”*

The Battery in Lieu of a Preface

A FEW years ago, at the very tip of that narrow rocky strip of land that has been well named "the Tongue that laps the Commerce of the World," the million-teeming Island of Manhattan, there was daily presented a scene in the life-drama of our land that held in itself, as in solution, a great national ideal. The old heroic "Epic of the Nations" was still visible to the naked eye, and masquerading here among us of the then nineteenth century in the guise of the arrival of the immigrant ship.

The scenic setting is in this instance incomparably fine. As we lean on the coping of the sea wall at the end of the green-swarded Battery, in the flush of a May sunset that, on the right, throws the Highlands of the Navesink into dark purple relief and lights the waters of Harbor, River, and Sound into a softly swelling roseate flood, we may fix our eyes on the approach to The Narrows and watch the incoming shipping of the world: the fruit-laden steamer from the Bermudas, the black East Indiaman heavy with teakwood and spices, the lumberman's barge awash behind the tow, the old three-masted schooner, low in the water, her decks loaded with granite from the far-away quarries of Maine. We may see, if we linger,

the swift approach of a curiously foreshortened ocean steamship, her smokestack belching blackness, and the slower on-coming of a Norwegian bark, her sails catching the sunset light and gleaming opaline against the clear blue of the southern horizon. These last are the immigrant ships.

An hour later in old Castle Garden the North and South of Europe clasp hands on the very threshold of America. Four thousand feet are planted on the soil of the New World. Four thousand hands are knocking at its portals. Two thousand hearts are beating high with hope at prospect of the New, or palpitating with terror at contact with the Strange.

A thousand tragedies, a thousand comedies are here enacted before our very eyes: hopes, fears, tears, laughter, shrieks, groans, wailings, exultant cries, welcoming words, silent all-expressing hand-clasp, embrace, despairing wide-eyed search, hopeless isolation, the befriended, the friendless, the home-welcomed, the homeless — all commingled.

But an official routine soon sorts, separates, pairs, locates; speaks in Norwegian, speaks in Neapolitan. An hour passes; the dusk falls; the doors are opened; the two thousand, ticketed, labelled, are to enter upon the new life. The confusing chatter grows less and less. A child wails, and is hushed in soft Italian — a Neapolitan lullaby — by its mother as she sits on a convenient bench and for the first time gives her little one the breast in a strange land. An old Norwegian, perhaps a lineal descendant of our Viking visitors some thousand years ago, makes his way to the door, bent beneath a sack-load of bedding; his right hand holds his old wife's left. They are the last to leave.

The dusk has fallen. To the sea wall again for air after the thousands of garlic-reeking breaths in old Castle Garden. The sea is dark. The heavens are deep indigo; against them flashes the Liberty beacon; within them are set the Eternal Lights. Upon the waters of the harbor the illumined cabin windows of a multitude of river craft throw quivering rays along the slow glassy swell.

For a moment on River, and Harbor, and Sound, there is silence. But behind us we hear the subdued roar and beat of the metropolis, a sound comparable to naught else on earth or in heaven: the mighty systole and dyastole of a city's heart, and the tramp, tramp of a million homeward bound toilers—the marching tune of Civilization's hosts, to which the feet of the newly arrived immigrants are already keeping time, for they have crossed the threshold of old Castle Garden and entered the New World.

PART FIRST

A Child from the Vaudeville

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I

THE performance in itself was crude and commonplace, but the demonstration in regard to it was unusual. Although this scene had been enacted both afternoon and evening for the past six weeks, the audience at the Vaudeville was showing its appreciation by an intent silence.

The curtain had risen upon a street scene in the metropolis at night. Snow was falling, dimming the gas jets at the corner and half-veiling, half-disclosing the imposing entrance-porch of a marble church. The doors were closed; the edifice dark. As the eyes of the onlookers became accustomed to the half-lights, they were aware of a huddle of clothes against the iron railing that outlined the curve of the three broad entrance-steps. As vision grew keener the form of a child was discernible, a little match girl who was lighting one by one a few matches and shielding the flame with both hands from the draught. Suddenly she looked up and around. The rose window above the porch was softly illumined; the light it emitted transfused the thickly falling snow. Low organ tones became audible, although distant and muffled.

The child rose; came down the centre of the stage to the lowered footlights and looked about her, first at

the orchestra, then around and up at the darkened house that was looking intently at her — a small ill-clad human, a spiritual entity, the only reality in this artificial setting. She grasped her package of matches in both hands; listened a moment as if to catch the low organ tones, then began to sing.

She sang as a bird sings, every part of her in motion: throat, eyes, head, body. The voice was clear, loud, full, strident, at times, on the higher notes from over-exertion, but always childishly appealing. The gallery leaned to catch every word of "The Holy City."

She sang straight on, verse after verse without pause. There was no modulation, no phrasing, no interpretation; it was merely a steady fortissimo outpouring of a remarkable volume of tone for so small an instrument. And the full power of it was, to all appearance, sent upwards with intent to the gallery. In any case, the gallery took the song unto itself, and as the last words, "*Hosanna for evermore*" rang upward, there was audible from above a long-drawn universal "Ah!" of satisfaction.

It was followed by a half minute of silence that was expressive of latent enthusiasm. The child was still waiting at the footlights, evidently for the expected applause from the higher latitudes. And the gallery responded — how heartily, those who were present have never forgotten: roar upon roar, call upon call, round after round of applause, cries of approbation couched in choice Bowery slang, a genuine stampede that shook the spectators in their seats. It was an irresistible, insatiable, unappeasable, overwhelming clamor for more. The infection of enthusiasm was communicated to floors, balconies, boxes; they answered, as it were, antiphonally. Faces were seen peeking from the wings;

hands were visible there, clapping frantically. In the midst of the tumultuous uproar the little girl smiled brightly and ran off the stage.

The lights were turned on. A drop-scene fell; the stage was transformed, for, in the middle distance, swelling green hills rose against a soft blue sky seen between trees in the foreground. Sunshine lay on the landscape, enhancing the haze in the distance and throwing up the hills more prominently against it. The cries and uproar continued.

Meanwhile, in the common dressing-room beyond the wings, there was being enacted a scene which if slightly less tumultuous in expression was considerably more dangerous in quality. A quick word went the round of the stars' private rooms; it penetrated to the sanctum of the Japanese wrestlers; it came to the ear of the manager himself: "The Little Patti's struck!" It sounded ominous, and, thereupon, the Vaudeville flocked to the dressing-room door to see — what? Merely a child in a tantrum, a heap of rags on the floor, a little girl in white petticoats stamping, dancing, pulling away from an old Italian woman who was trying to robe her and exhorting, imploring, threatening the child in almost one and the same breath.

The manager rushed to the rescue for the house was losing its head. He seized the child by the arm. "What's the matter here, Aileen?"

"I ain't goin' ter dance a coon ter-night — not ter-night!" she cried defiantly and in intense excitement; "he's in the box again, an' I'm goin' to give him the Sunday-night song, like as I did before when he give me the flowers, so now!"

Nonna Lisa, the old Italian, slipped the white dress deftly over the mutinous head, so muffling the half-

shriek. The manager laughed. "Hurry up then — on with you!" The child sprang away with a bound. "I've seen this too many times before" he added; "it's an attack of 'the last night's nerves.' — Hark!"

The tumult was drowning the last notes of the orchestral intermezzo, as the little girl, clad now wholly in white, ran in upon the stage and coming again down the centre raised her hand as if to command silence. With the gallery to see was to obey; the floor and balconies having subsided the applause from above died away.

The child, standing in the full glare of the footlights with the sunny skyey spaces and overlapping blue hills behind her, half-faced the brilliant house as, without accompaniment, she began to sing:

"There is a green hill far away
Without a city wall."

The childish voice sustained the simple melody perfectly, and it was evident when the little girl began the second verse that she was singing wholly to please herself and some one in a proscenium box. Before the close of the first stanza the gallery experienced a turn, the audience as a whole a sensation. Night after night the gallery gods had made it a point to be present at that hour of the continuous performance when the Little Patti — such was the name on the poster — sang either her famous Irish song "Oh, the praties they are small", or "The Holy City", and followed them by a coon dance the like of which was not to be seen elsewhere in New York; for into it the child threw such an abandonment of enthusiasm that she carried herself and her audience to the verge of extravagance — the one in action, the other in expression.

And now this!

A woman sobbed outright at the close of the second verse. The gallery heard — it hated hysterics — and considered whether it should look upon itself as cheated and protest, or submit quietly to being coerced into approval. The scales had not yet turned, when someone far aloft drew a long breath in order to force it out between closed teeth, and this in sign of disapproval. That one breath was, in truth, indrawn, but whether or no there was ever an outlet for the same remained a question with the audience. A woollen cap was deftly and unexpectedly thrust between the malevolent lips and several pair of hands held it there until the little singer left the stage.

What appeal, if any, that childish voice, dwelling melodiously on the simple words, made to the audience as a whole, cannot be stated because unknown; but that it appealed powerfully by force of suggestion, by the power of imagination, by the law of association, by the startling contrast between the sentiment expressed and the environment of that expression, to three, at least, among the many present is a certainty.

There is such a thing in our national life — a constant process, although often unrecognized — as social anastomosis: the intercommunication by branch of every vein and veinlet of the politico-social body, and thereby the coming into touch of lives apparently alien. As a result we have a revelation of new experiences; we find ourselves in subjection to new influences of before unknown personalities; we perceive the opening-up of new channels of communication between individual and individual as such. We comprehend that through it a great moral law is brought into operation both in the individual and the national life. And in recogni-

tion of this natural, though oft hidden process, the fact that to three men in that audience — men whose life-lines, to all appearance, were divergent, whose aims and purposes were antipodal — the simple song made powerful appeal, and by means of that appeal they came in after life to comprehend something of the workings of this great natural law, need cause no wonderment, no cavilling at the so-called prerogative of fiction. The laws of Art are the laws of Life, read smaller on the obverse.

The child was singing the last stanza in so profound a silence that the fine snapping of an overcharged electric wire was distinctly heard:

“Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do.”

The little girl waited at the footlights for — something. She had done her best for an encore and the silence troubled her. She looked inquiringly towards the box. There was a movement of the curtains at the back; a messenger boy came in with flowers; a gentleman leaned over the railing and motioned to the child. She ran forward, holding up the skirt of her dress to catch the roses that were dropped into it. She smiled and said something. The tension in the audience gave a little; there was a low murmur of approval which increased to a buzz of conversation; the conductor raised his baton and the child with a courtesy ran off the stage. But there was no applause.

During the musical intermezzo that followed, the lower proscenium box was vacated and in the first balcony one among a crowd of students rose and made his way up the aisle.

"Lien's keller, Champ?" said a friend at the exit, putting a hand on his shoulder; "I'm with you."

"Not to-night." He shook off the detaining hand and kept on his way. The other stared after him, whistled low to himself and went down the aisle to the vacant seat.

At the main entrance of the theatre there was an incoming crowd. It was not late, only nine. The drawing-card at this hour was a famous Parisian singer of an Elysée *café chantant*. The young fellow stepped aside, beyond the ticket-office railing, to let the first force of the intrushing human stream exhaust itself before attempting egress for himself. In doing so he jostled rather roughly two men who were evidently of like mind with him in their desire to avoid the press. He lifted his hat in apology, and recognized one of them as the occupant of the proscenium box, the gentleman who had given the roses to the little singer. The other, although in citizen's dress, he saw by the tonsure was a priest.

The sight of such a one in that garb and that environment, diverted for the moment Champney Gooze's thoughts from the child and her song. He scanned the erect figure of the man who, after immediate and courteous recognition of the other's apology, became oblivious, apparently, of his presence and intent upon the passing throng.

The crowd thinned gradually; the priest passed out under the arch of colored electric lights; the gentleman of the box, observing the look on the student's face, smiled worldly-wisely to himself as he, too, went down the crimson-carpeted incline. Champney Gooze's still beardless lip had curled slightly as if his thought were a sneer.

II

THE priest, after leaving the theatre, walked rapidly down Broadway past the marble church, that had been shown on the stage, and still straight on for two miles at the same rapid gait, past the quiet churchyards of St. Paul's and Trinity into the comparative silence of Battery Park and across to the sea wall. There he leaned for half an hour, reliving in memory not only the years since his seven-year old feet had crossed this threshold of the New World, but recalling something of his still earlier childhood in his native France. The child's song had been an excitant to the memory in recalling those first years in Auvergne.

"There is a green hill far away
Without a city wall."

How clearly he saw that! and his peasant father and mother as laborers on or about it, and himself, a six-year old, tending the goats on that same green hill or minding the geese in the meadows at its foot.

All this he saw as he gazed blankly at the dark waters of the bay, saw clearly as if visioned in crystal. But of subsequent movings and wanderings there was a blurred reflection only, till the vision momentarily brightened, the outlines defined themselves again as he saw his tired drowsy self put to bed in a tiny room that was filled with the fragrance of newly baked

bread. He remembered the awakening in that small room over a bread-filled shop; it belonged to a distant great-uncle baker on the mother's side, a personage in the family because in trade. He could remember the time spent in that same shop and the brick-walled, brick-floored, brick-oven room behind it. He recalled having stood for hours, it might have been days, he could not remember — for then Time was forever and its passing of no moment — before the deep ovens with a tiny blue-eyed slip of a girl. *P'tite Truite*, Little Trout, they called her, the great-uncle baker's one grandchild.

And the shop — he remembered that, so light and bright and sweet and clean, with people coming and going — men and women and children — and the crisp yard-long loaves carried away in shallow baskets on many a fine Norman head in the old seaport of Dieppe. And always the Little Trout was by his side, even when the great-uncle placed him in one of the huge flat-bottomed bread baskets and drew the two up and down in front of the shop. Then all was dim again; so dim that except for the lap and backward sucking of the waters against the sea wall, whereon he leaned, he had scarcely recalled a ship at the old pier of Dieppe, and the Little Trout standing beside her grandfather on the stringer, frantically waving her hand as the ship left her moorings and the prow nosed the first heavy channel sea that washed against the bulkhead and half-drowned her wailing cry:

“Jean — mon Jean!”

The rest was a blank until he landed here almost on this very spot in old Castle Garden and, holding hard by his father's hand, was bidden to look up at the flag flying from the pole at the top of the

queer round building — a brave sight even for his young eyes: all the red and white and blue straining in the freshening wind with an energy of motion that made the boy dance in sympathetic joy at his father's side. —

And what next?

Again a confusion of journeyings, and afterwards quiet settlement in a red brick box of a house in a mill town on the Merrimac. He could still hear the clang of the mill-gates, the ringing of the bells, the hum and whir and roar of a hundred thousand spindles, the clacking crash of the ponderous shifting frames. He could still see with the inner eye the hundreds of windows blazing in the reflected fires of the western sun, or twinkling with numberless lights that cast their long reflections on the black waters of the canal. There on the bank, at the entrance to the foot-bridge, the boy was wont to take his stand regularly at six o'clock of a winter's day, and wait for the hoisting of the mill-gates and the coming of his father and mother with the throng of toilers.

So he saw himself — himself as an identity emerging at last from the confusion of time and place and circumstance; for there followed the public school, the joys of rivalry, the eager outrush for the boy's Ever New, the glory of scrimmage and school-boy sports, the battle royal for the little Auvergnat when taunted with the epithet "Johnny Frog" by the belligerent youth, American born, and the victorious outcome for the "foreigner"; the Auvergne blood was up, and the temperament volcanic like his native soil where subterranean heats evidence themselves in hot, outwelling waters. And afterwards, at home, there were congratulations and comfortings, plus applications

of vinegar and brown butcher's paper to the severely smitten nose of this champion of his new Americanhood. But at school and in the street, henceforth there was due respect and a general atmosphere of "let bygones be bygones."

Ah, but the pride of his mother in her boy's progress! the joy over the first English-French letter that went to the great-uncle baker; the constant toil of both parents that the savings might be sufficient to educate their one child — that the son might have what the parents lacked. Already the mother had begun to speak of the priesthood: she might yet see her son Jean a priest, a bishop, and archbishop. Who could tell? America is America, and opportunities infinite — a cardinal, perhaps, and the gift of a red hat from the Pope, and robes and laces! There was no end to her ambitious dreaming.

But across the daydreams fell the shadow of hard times: the shutting down of the mills, the father's desperate illness in a workless winter, his death in the early spring, followed shortly by that of the worn-out and ill-nourished mother — and for the twelve-year-old boy the abomination of desolation, and world and life seen dimly through tears. Dim, too, from the like cause, that strange passage across the ocean to Dieppe — his mother's uncle having sent for him to return — a weight as of lead in his stomach, a fiery throbbing in his young heart, a sickening craving for some expression of human love. The boyish tendrils, although touched in truth by spring frosts, were outreaching still for some object upon which to fasten; yet he shrank from human touch and sympathy on that voyage in the steerage lest in his grief and loneliness he scream aloud.

Dieppe again, and the Little Trout with her grandfather awaiting him on the pier; the Little Trout's arms about his neck in loving welcome, the boy's heart full to bursting and his eyelids reddened in his supreme effort to keep back tears. Dependent, an orphan, and destined for the priesthood — those were his life lines for the next ten years. And the end? Revolt, rebellion, partial crime, acquittal under the law, but condemnation before the tribunal of his conscience and his God.

There followed the longing to expiate, to expiate in that America where he was not known but where he belonged, where his parents' dust mingled with the soil; to flee to the Church as to a sanctuary of refuge, to be priest through expiation. And this he had been for years while working among the Canadian rivermen, among the lumbermen of Maine, sharing their lives, their toil, their joys and sorrows, the common inheritance of the Human. For years subsequent to his Canadian mission, and after his naturalization as an American citizen, he worked in town and city, among high and low, rich and poor, recognizing in his catholicity of outlook but one human plane: that which may be tested by the spirit level of human needs. Now, at last, he was priest by conviction, by inner consecration.

He stood erect; drew a long full breath; squared his shoulders and looked around him. He noticed for the first time that a Staten Island ferryboat had moved into the slip near him; that several passengers were lingering to look at him; that a policeman was pacing behind him, his eye alert — and he smiled to himself, for he read their thought. He could not blame them for looking. He had fancied himself alone with the

sea and the night and his thoughts; had lost himself to his present surroundings in the memory of those years; he had suffered again the old agony of passion, shame, guilt, while the events of that pregnant, preparatory period in France, etched deep with acid burnings into his inmost consciousness, were passing during that half hour in review before his inner vision. Small wonder he was attracting attention!

He bared his head. A new moon was sinking to the Highlands of the Navesink. The May night was mild, the sea breeze drawing in with gentle vigor. He looked northwards up the Hudson, and southwards to the Liberty beacon, and eastwards to the Sound. "God bless our Land" he murmured; then, covering his head, bowed courteously to the policeman and took his way across the Park to the uptown elevated station.

Yes, at last he dared assert it: he was priest by consecration; soul, heart, mind, body dedicate to the service of God through Humanity. That service led him always in human ways. A few nights ago he saw the poster: "The Little Patti". A child then? Thought bridged the abyss of ocean to the Little Trout. Some rescue work for him here, possibly; hence his presence in the theatre.

III

THAT the priest's effort to rescue the child from the artificial life of the stage had been in a measure successful, was confirmed by the presence, six months later, of the little girl in the yard of the Orphan Asylum on —nd Street.

On an exceptionally dreary afternoon in November, had any one cared to look over the high board fence that bounds three sides of the Asylum yard, he might have seen an amazing sight and heard a still more amazing chorus:

“Little Sally Waters
Sitting in the sun,
Weeping and crying for a young man;
Rise, Sally, rise, Sally,
Wipe away your tears, Sally;
Turn to the east
And turn to the west,
And turn to the one that you love best!”

Higher and higher the voices of the three hundred orphans shrilled in unison as the owners thereof danced frantically around a small solitary figure in the middle of the ring of girls assembled in the yard on —nd Street. Her coarse blue denim apron was thrown over her head; her face was bowed into her hands that rested on her knees. It was a picture of woe.

The last few words “you love best” rose to a shriek of exhortation. In the expectant silence that followed,

“Sally” rose, pirouetted in a fashion worthy of a ballet dancer, then, with head down, fists clenched, arms tight at her sides, she made a sudden dash to break through the encircling wall of girls. She succeeded in making a breach by knocking the legs of three of the tallest out from under them; but two or more dozen arms, octopus-like, caught and held her. For a few minutes chaos reigned: legs, arms, hands, fingers, aprons, heads, stockings, hair, shoes of three hundred orphans were seemingly inextricably entangled. A bell clanged. The three hundred disentangled themselves with marvellous rapidity and, settling aprons, smoothing hair, pulling up stockings and down petticoats, they formed in a long double line. While waiting for the bell to ring the second warning, they stamped their feet, blew upon their cold fingers, and freely exercised their tongues.

“Yer dass n’t try that again!” said the mate in line with the obstreperous “Sally” who had so scorned the invitation of the hundreds of girls to “turn to the one that she loved best”.

“I dass ter!” was the defiant reply accompanied by the protrusion of a long thin tongue.

“Yer dass n’t either!”

“I dass t’ either!”

“Git out!” The first speaker nudged the other’s ribs with her sharp elbow.

“Slap yer face for two cents!” shrieked the insulted “Sally”, the Little Patti of the Vaudeville, and proceeded to carry out her threat. Whereupon Freckles, as she was known in the Asylum, set up a howl that was heard all along the line and turned upon her antagonist tooth and nail. At that moment the bell clanged a second time. A hush fell upon the multi-

tude, broken only by a suppressed shriek that came from the vicinity of Freckles. A snicker ran down the line. The penalty for breaking silence after the second bell was "no supper", and not one of the three hundred cared to incur that — least of all Flibbertigibbet, the "Sally" of the game, who had forfeited her dinner, because she had been caught squabbling at morning prayers, and was now carrying about with her an empty stomach that was at bottom of her ugly mood.

"One, two — one, two." The monitor counted; the girls fell into step, all but Flibbertigibbet — the Asylum nickname for the "Little Patti" — who contrived to keep out just enough to tread solidly with hobnailed shoe on the toes of the long-suffering Freckles. It was unbearable, especially the last time when a heel was set squarely upon Freckles' latest bunion.

"Ou, ou — oh, au — wau!" Freckles moaned, limping.

"Number 207 report for disorder," said the monitor.

Flibbertigibbet giggled. Number 207 stepped out of the line and burst into uncontrollable sobbing; for she was hungry, oh, so hungry! And the matron had chalked on the blackboard "hot corn-cakes and molasses for Friday". It was the one great treat of the week. The girl behind Flibbertigibbet hissed in her ear:

"Yer jest pizen mean; dirt ain't in it."

A back kick worthy of a pack mule took effect upon the whisperer's shin. Flibbertigibbet moved on unmolested, underwent inspection at the entrance, and passed with the rest into the long basement room which was used for meals.

Freckles stood sniffing disconsolately by the door

as the girls filed in. She was meditating revenge, and advanced a foot in hope that, unseen, she might trip her tormentor as she passed her. What, then, was her amazement to see Flibbertigibbet shuffle along deliberately a little sideways in order to strike the extended foot! This manœuvre she accomplished successfully and fell, not forward, but sideways out of line and upon Freckles. Freckles pushed her off with a vengeance, but not before she heard a gleeful whisper in her ear:

“Dry up — watch out — I’ll save yer some!”

That was all; but to Freckles it was a revelation. The children filed between the long rows of wooden benches, that served for seats, and the tables. They remained standing until the sister in charge gave the signal to be seated. When the three hundred sat down as one, with a thud of something more than fifteen tons’ weight, there broke loose a Babel of tongues — English as it is spoken in the mouths of children of many nationalities.

It was then that Freckles began to “watch out.”

Flibbertigibbet sat rigid on the bench, her eyes turned neither to right nor left but staring straight at the pile of smoking corn-meal cakes trickling molasses on her tin plate. She was counting: “One, two, three, four, five,” and the prospect of more; for on treat nights, which occurred once a week, there was no stinting with corn-meal cakes, hulled corn, apple sauce with fried bread or whatever else might be provided for the three hundred orphans at the Asylum on —nd Street, in the great city of New York.

Freckles grew nervous as she watched. What *was* Flibbertigibbet doing? Her fingers were busy untying the piece of red mohair tape with which her heavy

braid was fastened in a neat loop. She put it around her apron, tying it fast; then, blousing the blue denim in front to a pouch like a fashion-plate shirt waist, she said in an undertone to her neighbor on the right:

“Gee — look! Ain’t I got the style?”

“I ain’t a-goin’ ter look at yer, yer so pizen mean — dirt ain’t in it,” said 206 contemptuously, and sat sideways at such an angle that she could eat her cakes without seeing the eyesore next her.

“Stop crowdin’!” was the next command from the bloused bit of “style” to her neighbor on the left. Her sharp elbow emphasized her words and was followed by a solid thigh-to-thigh pressure that was felt for the length of at least five girls down the bench. The neighbor on the left found she could not withstand the continued pressure. She raised her hand.

“What is the trouble with 205?” The voice from the head of the table was one of controlled impatience.

“Please ’um —”; but she spoke no further word, for the pressure was removed so suddenly that she lost her balance and careened with such force towards her torment of a neighbor that the latter was fain to put her both arms about her to hold her up. This she did so effectually that 205 actually gasped for breath.

“I’ll pinch yer black an’ blue if yer tell!” whispered Flibbertigibbet, relaxing her hold and in turn raising her hand.

“What’s wanting now, 208?”

“A second helpin’, please ’um.”

The tin round was passed up to the nickel-plated receptacle, that resembled a small bathtub with a cover, and piled anew. Flibbertigibbet viewed its return with satisfaction, and Freckles, who had been watching every move of this by-play, suddenly doubled

up from her plastered position against the wall. She saw Flibbertigibbet drop the cakes quick as a flash into the low neck of her apron, and at that very minute they were reposing in the paunch of the blouse and held there by the mohair girdle. Thereafter a truce was proclaimed in the immediate vicinity of 208. Her neighbors, right and left, their backs twisted towards the tease, ate their portions in fear and trembling. After a while 208's hand went up again. This time it waved mechanically back and forth as if the owner were pumping bucketfuls of water.

"What is it now, 208?" The voice at the head of the table put the question with a note of exasperation in it.

"Please 'um, another helpin'."

The sister's lips set themselves close. "Pass up 208's plate," she said. The empty plate, licked clean of molasses on the sly, went up the line and returned laden with three "bloomin' beauties" as 208 murmured serenely to herself. She ate one with keen relish, then eyed the remaining two askance and critically. Freckles grew anxious. What next? Contrary to all rules 208's head, after slowly drooping little by little, lower and lower, dropped finally with a dull thud on the edge of the table and a force that tipped the plate towards her. Freckles doubled up again; she had seen through the manoeuvre: the three remaining cakes slid gently into the open half-low apron neck and were safely lodged with the other four.

"Number 208 sit up properly or leave the table."

The sister spoke peremptorily, for this special One Three-hundredth was her daily, almost hourly, thorn in the flesh. The table stopped eating to listen. There

was a low moan for answer, but the head was not lifted. Number 206 took this opportunity to give her a dig in the ribs, and Number 205 crowded her in turn. To their amazement there was no response.

“Number 208 answer at once.”

“Oh, please, 'um, I've got an awful pain — oo — au —.” The sound was low but piercing.

“You may leave the table, 208, and go up to the dormitory.”

208 rose with apparent effort. Her hands were clasped over the region where hot corn-meal cakes are said to lie heavily at times. Her face was screwed into an expression indicative of excruciating inner torment. As she made her way, moaning softly, to the farther door that opened into the cheerless corridor, there was audible a suppressed but decided giggle. It proceeded from Freckles. The monitor warned her, but, unheeding, the little girl giggled again.

A ripple of laughter started down the three tables, but was quickly suppressed.

“Number 207,” said the much-tried and long-suffering sister, “you have broken the rule when under discipline. Go up to the dormitory and don't come down again to-night.” This was precisely what Freckles wanted. She continued to sniff, however, as she left the room with seemingly reluctant steps. Once the door had closed upon her, she flew up the two long flights of stairs after Flibbertigibbet whom she found at the lavatory in the upper dormitory, cleansing the inside of her apron from molasses.

Oh, but those cakes were good, eaten on the broad window sill where the two children curled themselves to play at their favorite game of “making believe about the Marchioness”!

"But it 's hot they be!" Freckles' utterance was thick owing to a large mouthful of cake with which she was occupied.

"I kept 'em so squeezin' 'em against my stommick."
"Where the pain was?"

"M-m," her chum answered abstractedly. Her face was flattened against the window in order to see what was going on below, for the electric arc-light at the corner made the street visible for the distance of a block.

"I've dropped a crumb," said Freckles ruefully.

"Pick it up then, or yer'll catch it — Oh, my!"

"Wot?" said Freckles who was on her hands and knees beneath the window searching for the crumb that might betray them if found by one of the sisters.

"Git up here quick if yer want to see — it's the Marchioness an' another kid. Come on!" she cried excitedly, pulling at Freckles' long arm. The two little girls knelt on the broad sill, and with faces pressed close to the window-pane gazed and whispered and longed until the electric lights were turned on in the dormitory and the noise of approaching feet warned them that it was bedtime.

Across the street from the Asylum, but facing the Avenue, was a great house of stone, made stately by a large courtyard closed by wrought-iron gates. On the side street looking to the Asylum, the windows in the second story had carved stone balconies; these were filled with bright blossoms in their season and in winter with living green. There was plenty of room behind the balcony flower-boxes for a white Angora cat to take her constitutional. When Flibbertigibbet entered the Asylum in June, the cat and the flowers were the first objects outside its walls to attract her attention and that of her chum, Freckles. It was

not often that Freckles and her mate were given, or could obtain, the chance to watch the balcony, for there were so many things to do, something for every hour in the day: dishes to wash, beds to make, corridors to sweep, towels and stockings to launder, lessons to learn, sewing and catechism. But one day Flibbertigibbet — so Sister Angelica called the little girl from her first coming to the Asylum, and the name clung to her — was sent to the infirmary in the upper story because of a slight illness; while there she made the discovery of the “Marchioness.” She called her that because she deemed it the most appropriate name, and why “appropriate” it behooves to tell.

Behind the garbage-house, in the corner of the yard near the railroad tracks, there was a fine place to talk over secrets and grievances. Moreover, there was a knothole in the high wooden fence that inclosed the lower portion of the yard. When Flibbertigibbet put her eye to this aperture, it fitted so nicely that she could see up and down the street fully two rods each way. Generally that eye could range from butcher’s boy to postman, or ‘old clothes’ man; but one day, having found an opportunity, she placed her visual organ as usual to the hole — and looked into another queer member that was apparently glued to the other side! But she was not daunted, oh, no!

“Git out!” she commanded briefly.

“I ain’t in.” The Eye snickered.

“I’ll poke my finger into yer!” she threatened further.

“I’ll bite your banana off,” growled the Eye.

“Yer a cross-eyed Dago.”

“You’re another — you Biddy!” The Eye was positively insulting; it winked at her.

Flibbertigibbet was getting worsted. She stamped her foot and kicked the fence. The Eye laughed at her, then suddenly vanished; and Flibbertigibbet saw a handsome-faced Italian lad sauntering up the street, hands in his pockets, and singing — oh, how he sang! The little girl forgot her rage in listening to the song, the words of which reminded her of dear Nonna Lisa and her own joys of a four weeks' vagabondage spent in the old Italian's company. All this she confessed to Freckles; and the two, under one pretence or another, managed to make daily visits to the garbage house knothole.

That hole was every bit as good as a surprise party to them. The Eye was seen there but once more, when it informed the other Eye that it belonged to Luigi Poggi, Nonna Lisa's one grandson; that it was off in Chicago with a vaudeville troupe while the other Eye had been with Nonna Lisa. But instead of the Eye there appeared a stick of candy twisted in a paper and thrust through; at another time some fresh dates, strung on a long string, were found dangling on the inner side of the fence — the knothole having provided the point of entrance for each date; once a small bunch of wild flowers graced it on the yard side. Again, for three months, the hole served for a circulating library. A whole story found lodgement there, a chapter at a time, torn from a paper-covered novel. Flibbertigibbet carried them around with her pinned inside of her blue denim apron, and read them to Freckles whenever she was sure of not being caught. Luigi was their one boy on earth.

The Marchioness of Isola Bella, that was the name of the story; and if Flibbertigibbet and Freckles on their narrow cots in the bare upper dormitory of the

Orphan Asylum on —nd Street, did not dream of sapphire lakes and snow-crowned mountains, of marble palaces and turtledoves, of lovely ladies and lordly men, of serenades and guitars and ropes of pearl, it was not the fault either of Luigi Poggi or the *Marchioness of Isola Bella*. But at times the story-book marchioness seemed very far away, and it was a happy thought of Flibbertigibbet's to name the little lady in the great house after her; for, once, watching at twilight from the cold window seat in the dormitory, the two orphan children saw her ladyship dressed for a party, the maid having forgotten to lower the shades.

Freckles and Flibbertigibbet dared scarcely breathe; it was so much better than the *Marchioness of Isola Bella*, for this one was real and alive — oh, yes, very much alive! She danced about the room, running from the maid when she tried to catch her, and when the door opened and a tall man came in with arms opened wide, the real Marchioness did just what the story-book marchioness did on the last page to her lover: gave one leap into the outstretched arms of the father-lover.

While the two children opposite were looking with all their eyes at this unexpected *dénouement*, the maid drew the shades, and Freckles and Flibbertigibbet were left to stare at each other in the dark and cold. Flibbertigibbet nodded and whispered:

“That takes the cake. The *Marchioness of Isola Bella* ain't in it!”

Freckles squeezed her hand. Thereafter, although the girls appreciated the various favors of the knot-hole, their entire and passionate allegiance was given to the real Marchioness across the way.

IV

ONE day, it was just after Thanksgiving, the Marchioness discovered her opposite neighbors. It was warm and sunny, a summer day that had strayed from its place in the Year's procession. The maid was putting the Angora cat out on the balcony among the dwarf evergreens. The Marchioness was trying to help her when, happening to look across the street, she saw the two faces at the opposite window. She stared for a moment, then taking the cat from the window sill held her up for the two little girls to see. Flibbertigibbet and her mate nodded vigorously and smiled, making motions with their hands as if stroking the fur.

The Marchioness dropped the cat and waved her hand to them; the maid drew her back from the window; the two girls saw her ladyship twitch away from the detaining hand and stamp her foot.

"Gee!" said Flibbertigibbet under her breath, "she's just like us."

"Oh, wot's she up ter now?" Freckles whispered.

Truly, any sane person would have asked that question. The Marchioness, having gained her point, was standing on the window seat by the open window, which was protected by an iron grating, and making curious motions with her fingers and hands.

"Is she a lunny?" Freckles asked in an awed voice.

Flibbertigibbet was gazing fixedly at this apparition and made no reply. After watching this pantomime a few minutes, she spoke slowly:

“She’s one of the dumb uns; I’ve seen ’em.”

The Marchioness was now making frantic gestures towards the top of their window. She was laughing too.

“She’s a lively one if she is a dumber,” said Freckles approvingly. Flibbertigibbet jumped to her feet and likewise stood on the window sill.

“Gee! She wants us to git the window open at the top. Here — pull!” The two children hung their combined weight by the tips of their fingers from the upper sash, and the great window opened slowly a few inches; then it stuck fast. But they both heard the gleeful voice of their opposite neighbor and welcomed the sound.

“I’m talking to you — it’s the only way I can — the deaf and dumb — ”

The maid lifted her down, struggling, from the window seat, and they heard the childish voice scolding in a tongue unknown to them.

Flibbertigibbet set immediately about earning the right to learn the deaf-and-dumb alphabet; she hung out all monitor Number Twelve’s washing — dish towels, stockings, handkerchiefs — every other day for two weeks in the bitter December weather. She knew that this special monitor had a small brother in the Asylum for Deaf Mutes; this girl taught her the strange language in compensation for the child’s time and labor. It was mostly “give and take” in the Asylum.

“That child has been angelic lately; I don’t know what’s going to happen.” Long-suffering Sister Agatha heaved a sigh of relief.

“Oh, there is a storm brewing you may be sure; this calm is unnatural,” Sister Angelica replied, smiling at sight of the little figure in the yard dancing in the midst of an admiring circle of blue-nosed girls. “I believe they would rather stand and watch her than to run about and get warm. She is as much fun for them as a circus, and she learns so quickly! Have you noticed her voice in chapel lately?”

“Yes, I have”; said Sister Agatha grumpily, “and I confess I can’t bear to hear her sing like an angel when she is such a little fiend.”

Sister Angelica smiled. “Oh, I’m sure she’ll come out all right; there’s nothing vicious about her, and she’s a loyal little soul, you can’t deny that.”

“Yes, to those she loves,” Sister Agatha answered with some bitterness. She knew she was no favorite with the subject under discussion. “See her now! I should n’t think she would have a whole bone left in her body.”

They were playing “Snap-the-whip”. Flibbertigibbet was the snapper for a line of twenty or more girls. As she swung the circle her legs flew so fast they fairly twinkled, and her hops and skips were a marvel to onlookers. But she landed right side up at last, although breathless, her long braid unloosened, hair tossing on the wind, cheeks red as American beauty roses, and gray eyes black with excitement of the game. Then the bell rang its warning, the children formed in line and marched in to lessons.

The two weeks in December in which Flibbertigibbet had given herself to the acquisition of the new language, proved long for the Marchioness. Every day she watched at the window for the reappearance of the two children at the bare upper window opposite;

but thus far in vain. However, on the second Saturday after their first across-street meeting, she saw to her great joy the two little girls curled up on the window sill and frantically waving to attract her attention. The Marchioness nodded and smiled, clapped her hands, and mounted upon her own broad window seat in order to have an unobstructed view over the iron grating.

“She sees us, she sees us!” Freckles cried excitedly, but under her breath; “now let’s begin.”

Flibbertigibbet chose one of the panes that was cleaner than the others and putting her two hands close to it began operations. The Marchioness fairly hopped up and down with delight when she saw the familiar symbols of the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, and immediately set her own small white hands to work on her first sentence:

“Go slow.”

Flibbertigibbet nodded emphatically; the conversation was begun again and continued for half an hour. It was in truth a labor as well as a work of love. The spelling in both cases was far from perfect and, at times, puzzling to both parties; but little by little they became used to each other’s erratic symbols together with the queer things for which they stood, and no conversation throughout the length and breadth of New York — yes, even of our United States — was ever more enjoyed than by these three girls. Flibbertigibbet and the Marchioness did the finger-talking, and Freckles helped with the interpretation. In the following translation of this first important exchange of social courtesies, the extremely peculiar spelling, and wild combinations of vowels in particular, are omitted; but the questions and answers are given exactly as they were constructed by the opposite neighbors.

“Go slow.” This as a word of warning from the Marchioness.

“You bet.”

“Is n’t this fun?”

“Beats the band.”

“What is your name?”

Flibbertigibbet and her chum looked at each other; should it be nickname or real name? As they were at present in society and much on their dignity they decided to give their real names.

“Aileen Armagh.” Thereupon Flibbertigibbet beat upon her breast to indicate first person singular possessive. The Marchioness stared at her for a minute, then spelled rather quickly:

“It’s lovely. We call you something else.”

“Who’s we?”

“Aunt Ruth and I.”

“What do you call me?”

“Flibbertigibbet.”

“Git off!” cried Flibbertigibbet, recklessly shoving Freckles on to the floor. “Gee, how’d she know!” And thereupon she jumped to her feet and, having the broad window sill to herself, started upon a rather restricted coon dance in order to prove to her opposite neighbor that the nickname belonged to her by good right. Oh, but it was fun for the Marchioness! She clapped her hands to show her approval and catching up the skirt of her dainty white frock, slowly raised one leg at a right angle to her body and stood so for a moment, to the intense admiration of the other girls.

“That’s what they call me here,” said Flibbertigibbet when they got down to conversation again.

“What is hers?” asked the Marchioness, pointing to Freckles.

“Margaret O’Dowd, but we call her Freckles.”

How the Marchioness laughed! So hard, indeed, that she apparently tumbled off the seat, for she disappeared entirely for several minutes, much to the girls’ amazement as well as chagrin.

“It’s like she broke somethin’,” whimpered Freckles; “a bone yer know — her nose fallin’ that way when she went over forrard.”

“She ain’t chany, I tell yer; she’s jest Injy rubber,” said Flibbertigibbet scornfully but with a note of anxiety in her voice. At this critical moment the Marchioness reappeared and jumped upon the seat. She had a curious affair in her hand; after placing it to her eyes, she signalled her answer:

“I can see them.”

“See what?”

“The freckles.”

“Wot’s she givin’ us?” Freckles asked in a perplexed voice.

“She’s all right,” said Flibbertigibbet with the confidence of superior knowledge; “it’s a tel’scope; yer can see the moon through, an’ yer freckles look to her as big as pie-plates.”

Freckles crossed herself; it sounded like witches and it had a queer look.

“Ask her wot’s her name,” she suggested.

“What’s your name?” Flibbertigibbet repeated on her fingers.

“Alice Maud Mary Van Ostend.”

“Gee whiz, ain’t that a corker!” Flibbertigibbet exclaimed delightedly. “How old are you?” She proceeded thus with her personal investigation prompted thereto by Freckles.

“Most ten; — you?”

“Most twelve.”

“And Freckles?” The Marchioness laughed as she spelled the name.

“Eleven.”

“Ask her if she’s an orphan,” said Freckles.

“Are you an orphan, Freckles says.”

“Half,” came the answer. “What are you?”

“Whole,” was the reply. “Which is your half?”

“I have only papa — I’ll introduce him to you sometime when —”

This explanation took fully five minutes to decipher, and while they were at work upon it the maid came up behind the Marchioness and, without so much as saying “By your leave”, took her down struggling from the window seat and drew the shades. Whereupon Flibbertigibbet rose in her wrath, shook her fist at the insulting personage, and vowed vengeance upon her in her own forceful language:

“You’re an old cat, and I’ll rub your fur the wrong way till the sparks fly.”

At this awful threat Freckles looked alarmed, and suddenly realized that she was shivering, the result of sitting so long against the cold window. “Come on down,” she pleaded with the enraged Flibbertigibbet; and by dint of coaxing and the promise of a green woollen watch-chain, which she had patiently woven, and so carefully, with four pins and an empty spool till it looked like a green worm, she succeeded in getting her away from the dormitory window.

IF the *Marchioness of Isola Bella* had filled many of Flibbertigibbet's dreams during the last six months, the real Alice Maud Mary Van Ostend now filled all her waking hours. Her sole thought was to contrive opportunities for more of this fascinating conversation, and she and Freckles practised daily on the sly in order to say more, and quickly, to the real Marchioness across the way.

By good luck they were given a half-hour for themselves just before Christmas, in reward for the conscientious manner in which they made beds, washed dishes, and recited their lessons for an entire week. When Sister Angelica, laying her hand on Flibbertigibbet's shoulder, had asked her what favor she wanted for the good work of that week, the little girl answered promptly enough that she would like to sit with Freckles in the dormitory window and look out on the street, for maybe there might be a hurdy-gurdy with a monkey passing through.

"Not this cold day, I'm sure," said Sister Angelica, smiling at the request; "for no monkey could be out in this weather unless he had an extra fur coat and a hot water bottle for his toes. Yes, you may go, but don't stay too long in the cold."

But what if the Marchioness were to fail to make her appearance! They could not bear to think of this, and amused themselves for a little while by blowing upon the cold panes and writing their names and the

Marchioness' in the vapor. But, at last — oh, at last, there she was! The fingers began to talk almost before they knew it. In some respects it proved to be a remarkable conversation, for it touched upon many and various topics, all of which proved of equal interest to the parties concerned. They lost no time in setting about the exchange of their views.

"I'm going to a party," the Marchioness announced, smoothing her gown.

"What time?"

"Five o'clock, but I'm all ready. I am going to dance a minuet."

This was a poser; but Flibbertigibbet did not wish to be outdone, although there was no party for her in prospect.

"I can dance too," she signalled.

"I know you can — lovely; that's why I told you."

"I wish I could see you dance the minute."

The Marchioness did not answer at once. Finally she spelled "Wait a minute," jumped down from the broad sill and disappeared. In a short time she was back again.

"I'm going to dance for you. Look downstairs — when it is dark — and you'll see the drawing-room lighted — I'll dance near the windows."

The two girls clapped their hands and Flibbertigibbet jumped up and down on the window sill to express her delight.

"When do you have to go to bed?" was the next pointed question from Alice Maud Mary.

"A quarter to eight."

"Who puts you in?"

This was another poser for even Flibbertigibbet's quick wits.

“Wot does she mane?” Freckles demanded anxiously.

“I dunno; anyhow, I’ll tell her the sisters.”

“The sisters,” was the word that went across the street.

“Oh, how nice! Do you say your prayers to them too?”

Freckles groaned. “Wot yer goin’ to tell her now?”

“Shut up now till yer hear me, an’ cross yerself, for I mane it.” Such was the warning from her mate.

“No; I say them to another lady — Our Lady.”

“Oh gracious!” Freckles cried out under her breath and began to snicker.

“What lady?” The Marchioness looked astonished but intensely interested.

“The Holy Virgin. I’ll bet she don’t know nothin’ ’bout Her,” said Flibbertigibbet in a triumphant aside to Freckles. The Marchioness’ eyes opened wider upon the two children across the way.

“That is the mother of Our Lord, is n’t it?” she said in her dumb way. The two children nodded; no words seemed to come readily just then, for Alice Maud Mary had given them a surprise. They crossed themselves.

“I never thought of saying my prayers to His mother before, but I shall now. He always had a mother, had n’t he?”

Flibbertigibbet could think of nothing to say in answer, but she did the next best thing: she drew her rosary from under her dress waist and held it up to the Marchioness who nodded understandingly and began to fumble at her neck. In a moment she brought forth a tiny gold chain with a little gold cross hanging

from it. She held it up and dangled it before the four astonished eyes opposite.

"Gee! Yer can't git ahead of *her*, an' I ain't goin' to try. She's just a darlint." Flibbertigibbet's heart was very full and tender at that moment; but she giggled at the next question.

"Do you know any boys?"

One finger was visible at the dormitory window. The Marchioness laughed and after telling them she knew ever so many began to count on her fingers for the benefit of her opposite neighbors.

"One, two, three, four, five," she began on her right hand —

"I don't believe her," said Freckles with a suspicious sniff.

Flibbertigibbet turned fiercely upon her. "I'd believe her if she said she knew a thousand, so now, Margaret O'Dowd, an' yer hold yer tongue!" she cried; but in reprimanding Freckles for her want of faith she lost count of the boys.

"I must go now," said the Marchioness; "but when the drawing-room downstairs is lighted, you look in — there'll be one boy there to dance with me. Be sure you look." Suddenly the Marchioness made a sign that both girls understood, although it was an extra one and the very prettiest of all in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet of the affections: she put her fingers to her lips and blew them a kiss.

"Ain't she a darlint!" murmured Flibbertigibbet, tossing the same sign across the street. When the Marchioness had left the window, the two girls spent the remaining minutes of their reward in planning how best to see the dance upon which they had set their hearts. They thought of all the places available, but

were sure they would not be permitted to occupy them. At last Flibbertigibbet decided boldly, on the strength of a good conscience throughout one whole week, to ask at headquarters.

“I’m goin’ straight to Sister Angelica an’ ask her to let us go into the chapel; it’s the only place. Yer can see from the little windy in the cubby-hole where the priest gits into his other clothes.”

Freckles looked awestruck. “She’ll never let yer go in there.”

Her mate snapped her fingers in reply, and catching Freckles’ hand raced her down the long dormitory, down the two long flights of stairs to the schoolroom where Sister Angelica was giving a lesson to the younger girls.

“Well, Flibbertigibbet, what is it now?” said the sister smiling into the eager face at her elbow. When Sister Angelica called her by her nickname instead of by the Asylum number, Flibbertigibbet knew she was in high favor. She nudged Freckles and replied:

“I want to whisper to you.”

Sister Angelica bent down; before she knew it the little girl’s arms were about her neck and the child was telling her about the dance at the stone house across the way. The sister smiled as she listened to the rush of eager words, but she was so glad to find this mad-cap telling her openly her heart’s one desire, that she did what she had never done before in all her life of beautiful child-consecrated work: she said “Yes, and I will go with you. Wait for me outside the chapel door at half-past four.”

Flibbertigibbet squeezed her around the neck with such grateful vigor that the blood rushed to poor Sister Angelica’s head. She was willing, however, to be a

martyr in such a good cause. The little girl walked quietly to the door, but when it had closed upon her she executed a series of somersaults worthy of the Madison Square Garden acrobats. "What'd I tell yer, what'd I tell yer!" she exclaimed, pirouetting and somersaulting till the slower-moving Freckles was a trifle dizzy.

Within a quarter of an hour the three were snugly ensconced in the window niche of the "cubby-hole," so Flibbertigibbet termed the robing-room closet, and looking with all their eyes across the street. They were directly opposite what Sister Angelica said must be the drawing-room and on a level with it. As they looked, one moment the windows were dark, in the next they were filled with soft yet brilliant lights. The lace draperies were parted and the children could see down the length of the room.

There she was! Hopping and skipping by the side of her father-lover and drawing him to the central window. Behind them came the lovely young lady and the Boy! The two were holding hands and swinging them freely as they laughed and chatted together.

"That's the Boy!" cried Flibbertigibbet, wild with excitement.

"And that must be the Aunt Ruth she told about — oh, ain't she just lovely!" cried Freckles.

"Watch out now, an' yer'll see the minute!" said Flibbertigibbet, squeezing Sister Angelica's hand; Sister Angelica squeezed back, but kept silence. She was learning many things before unknown to her. The four came to the middle window and looked out, up, and all around. But although the two children waved their hands wildly to attract their attention, the good people opposite failed to see them because

the little window suffered eclipse in the shadow of the large electric arc-light's green cap.

"She's goin' to begin!" cried Flibbertigibbet, clapping her hands.

The young lady sat down at the piano and began to play. Whether Flibbertigibbet expected a variation of a "coon dance" or an Irish jig cannot be stated with certainty, but that she was surprised is a fact; so surprised, indeed, that for full two minutes she forgot to talk. To the slow music, for such it was — Flibbertigibbet beat time with her fingers on the pane to the step — the Marchioness and the Boy, pointing their daintily slippered feet, moved up and down, back and forth, swinging, turning, courtesying, bowing over the parquet floor with such childishly stately yet charming grace that their rhythmic motions were as a song without words.

The father-lover stood with his back to the mantel and applauded after an especially well executed flourish or courtesy; Aunt Ruth looked over her shoulder, smiling, her hands wandering slowly over the keys. At last, the final flourish, the final courtesy. The Marchioness' dress fairly swept the floor, and the Boy bowed so low that — well, Flibbertigibbet never could tell how it happened, but she had a warm place in her heart for that boy ever after — he quietly and methodically stood head downwards on his two hands, his white silk stockings and patent leathers kicking in the air.

The Marchioness was laughing so hard that she sat down in a regular "cheese" on the floor; the father lover was clapping his hands like mad; the lady swung round on the piano stool and shook her forefinger at the Boy who suddenly came right side up at last, hand on his heart, and bowed with great dignity to the little

girl on the floor. Then he, too, laughed and cut another caper just as a solemn-faced butler came in with wraps and furs. But by no means did he remain solemn long! How could he with the Boy prancing about him, and the Marchioness playing at "Catch-me-if-you-can" with her father-lover, and the lady slipping and sliding over the floor to catch the Boy who was always on the other side of the would-be solemn butler? Why, he actually swung round in a circle by holding on to that butler's dignified coat-tails!

Nor were they the only ones who laughed. Across the way in one of the Orphan Asylum windows, Sister Angelica and the children laughed too, in spirit joining in the fun, and when the butler came to the window to draw the shades there were three long "Ah's," both of intense disappointment and supreme satisfaction.

"Watch out, now," said Flibbertigibbet excitedly on the way down into the basement for supper and dish-washing, for it was their turn this week, "an' yer'll see me dance yer a minute in the yard ter-morrow."

"Yer can't dance it alone," replied doubting Freckles; "yer've got to have a boy."

"I don't want one; I'll take you, Freckles, for a boy." Clumsy Freckles blushed with delight beneath her many beauty-spots at such promise of unwonted graciousness on the part of her chum, and wondered what had come over Flibbertigibbet lately.

A few hours afterwards when they went up to bed, they whispered together again concerning the dance, and begged Sister Angelica to let them have just one peep from the dormitory window at their house of delight — a request she was glad to grant. They opened one of the inside blinds a little way, and ex-

claimed at the sight. It was snowing. The children oh'ed and ah'ed under their breath, for a snowstorm at Christmas time in the great city is the child's true joy. At their opposite neighbor's a faint light was visible in the balcony room; the wet soft flakes had already ridged the balustrade, powdered the dwarf evergreens, topped the cap of the electric arc-light and laid upon the concrete a coverlet of purest white.

The long bare dormitory filled with the children — the fatherless and motherless children we have always with us. Soon each narrow cot held its asylum number; the many heads, golden, brown, or black, busied all of them with childhood's queer unanchored thoughts, were pillowed in safety for another night.

And without the snow continued to fall upon the great city. It graced with equal delicacy the cathedral's marble spires and the forest of pointed firs which made the numberless Christmas booths that surrounded old Washington Market. It covered impartially, and with as pure a white, the myriad city roofs that sheltered saint and sinner, whether among the rich or the poor, among the cherished or castaways. It fell as thickly upon the gravestones in Trinity's ancient churchyard as upon the freshly turned earth in a corner of the paupers' burying ground; and it set upon black corruption wherever it was in evidence the seal of a transient stainlessness.

VI

“**R**EALLY, I am discouraged about that child,” said Sister Agatha just after Easter. She was standing at one of the schoolroom windows that overlooked the yard; she spoke as if thoroughly vexed,

“What is it now — 208 again?” Sister Angelica looked up from the copybook she was correcting.

“Oh, yes, of course; it’s always 208.”

“Oh, she does n’t mean anything; it’s only her high spirits; they must have some vent.”

“It’s been her ruin being on the stage even for those few weeks, and ever since the Van Ostends began to make of her and have her over for that Christmas luncheon and the Sunday nights, the child is neither to have nor to hold. What with her ‘make believing’ and her ‘acting’ she upsets the girls generally. She ought to be set to good steady work; the first chance I get I’ll put her to it. I only wish some one would adopt her —”

“I heard Father Honoré —”

“Look at her now!” exclaimed Sister Agatha interrupting her.

Sister Angelica joined her at the window. They could not only see but hear all that was going on below. With the garbage house as a stage-setting and background to the performance, Flibbertigibbet was court-eying low to her audience; the skirt of her scant

gingham dress was held in her two hands up and out to its full extent. The orphans crouched on the pavement in a triple semi-circle in front of her.

"All this rigmarole comes of the theatre," said Sister Agatha grimly.

"Well, where's the harm? She is only living it all over again and giving the others a little pleasure at the same time. Dear knows, they have little enough, poor things."

Sister Agatha made no reply; she was listening intently to 208's orders. The little girl had risen from her low courtesy and was haranguing the assembled hundreds:

"Now watch out, all of yer, an' when I do the minute yer can clap yer hands if yer like it; an' if yer want some more, yer must clap enough to split yer gloves if yer had any on, an' then I'll give yer the coon dance; an' then if yer like *that*, yer can play yer gloves are busted with clappin' an' stomp yer feet —"

"But we can't," Freckles entered her prosaic protest, "'cause we're squattin'."

"Well, get up then, yer'll have to; an' then if you stomp awful, an' holler 'On-ko — on-ko!' — that's what they say at the thayertre — I'll give yer somethin' else —"

"Wot?" demanded 206 suspiciously.

"Don't yer wish I'd tell!" said 208, and began the minuet.

It was marvellous how she imitated every graceful movement, every turn and twist and bow, every courtesy to the imaginary partner — Freckles had failed her entirely in this rôle — whose imaginary hand she held clasped high above her head; her clumsy shoes slid over the flagging as if it had been a waxed floor under

dainty slippers. There was an outburst of applause; such an outburst that had the audience really worn gloves, every seam, even if French and handsewed, must have cracked under the healthy pressure.

208 beamed and, throwing back her head, suddenly flung herself into the coon dance which, in its way, was as wild and erratic as the minuet had been stately and methodical. Wilder and wilder grew her gyrations — head, feet, legs, shoulders, hair, hands, arms, were in seemingly perpetual motion. The audience grew wildly excited. They jumped up, shouting “On-ko — on-ko!” and accompanied their shouts with the stamping of feet. A dexterous somersault on the dancer’s part ended the performance; her cheeks were flushed with exercise and excitement, her black mane was loosened and tossed about her shoulders. The audience lost their heads and even 206 joined in the prolonged roar:

“On-ko, 208 — on-ko-o-o-oor! On-ko, Flibbertigibbet — some more — some more!”

“It’s perfectly disgraceful,” muttered Sister Agatha, and made a movement to leave the window; but Sister Angelica laid a gently detaining hand on her arm.

“No, Agatha, not that,” she said earnestly; “you’ll see that they will work all the better for this fun — Hark!”

There was a sudden and deep silence. 208 was evidently ready with her encore, a surprise to all but the performer. She shook back the hair from her face, raised her eyes, crossed her two hands upon her chest, waited a few seconds until a swift passenger train on the track behind the fence had smothered its roar in the tunnel depths, then began to sing “The Holy City.” Even Sister Agatha felt the tears spring

as she listened. A switch engine letting off steam drowned the last words, and there was no applause. Flibbertigibbet looked about her inquiringly; but the girls were silent. Such singing appeared to them out of the ordinary — and so unlike 208! It took them a moment to recover from their surprise; they gathered in groups to whisper together concerning the performance.

Meanwhile Flibbertigibbet was waiting expectantly. Where was the well earned applause? And she had reserved the best for the last! Ungrateful ones! Her friends in the stone house always praised her when she did her best, — but these girls —

She stamped her foot, then dashed through the broken ranks, making faces as she ran, and crying out in disgust and anger:

“Catch me givin’ yer any more on-kos, yer stingy things!” and with that she ran into the basement followed by Freckles who was intent upon appeasing her.

The two sisters, pacing the dim corridor together after chapel that evening, spoke again of their little wilding.

“I did n’t finish what I was going to tell you about 208,” said Sister Angelica. “I heard the Sister Superior tell Father Honoré when he was here the other day that Mr. Van Ostend had been to see her in regard to the child. It seems he has found a place for her in the country with some of his relations, as I understand it. He said his interest in her had been roused when he heard her for the first time on the stage, and that when he found Flibbertigibbet was the little acquaintance his daughter had made, he determined to further the child’s interests so far as a home is concerned.”

“Then there is a prospect of her going,” Sister

Agatha drew a breath of relief. "Did you hear what Father Honoré said?"

"Very little; but I noticed he looked pleased, and I heard him say, 'This is working out all right; I'll step across and see Mr. Van Ostend myself.' — I shall miss her so!"

Sister Agatha made no reply. Together the two sisters continued to pace the dim corridor, silent each with her thoughts; and, pacing thus, up and down, up and down, the slender, black-robed figures were soon lost in the increasing darkness and became mere neutral outlines as they passed the high bare windows and entered their respective rooms.

Even so, a few weeks later when Number 208 left the Orphan Asylum on —nd Street, they passed quietly out of the child's actual life and entered the fitfully lighted chambers of her childish memory wherein, at times, they paced with noiseless footsteps as once in the barren halls of her orphanage home.

PART SECOND

Home Soil

PART SECOND

Home Soil

I

A LAND of entrancing inner waters, our own marvellous Lake Country of the East, lies just behind those mountains of Maine that sink their bases in the Atlantic and are fitly termed in Indian nomenclature *Waves-of-the-Sea*. Bight and bay indent this mountainous coast, in beauty comparable, if less sublime yet more enticing, to the Norwegian fjords; within them are set the islands large and small whereon the sheep, sheltered by cedar coverts, crop the short thick turf that is nourished by mists from the Atlantic. Above bight and bay and island tower the mountains. Their broad green flanks catch the earliest eastern and the latest western lights. Their bare summits are lifted boldly into the infinite blue that is reflected in the waters which lap their foundations.

Flamsted lies at the outlet of Lake Mesantic, on the gentle northward slope of these *Waves-of-the-Sea*, some eighteen miles inland from Penobscot Bay. Until the last decade of the nineteenth century it was unconnected with the coast by any railroad; but at that time a branch line from Hallsport on the Bay, encouraged by the opening of a small granite quarry in the Flamsted Hills, made its terminus at The Corners

— a sawmill settlement at the falls of the Rothel, a river that runs rapidly to the sea after issuing from Lake Mesantic. A mile beyond the station the village proper begins at its two-storied tavern, The Greenbush.

From the lower veranda of this hostelry, one may look down the shaded length of the main street, dignified by many an old-fashioned house, to The Bow, an irregular peninsula extending far into the lake and containing some two hundred acres. This estate is the ancestral home of the Champneys, known as Champ-au-Haut, in the vernacular "Champo." At The Bow the highway turns suddenly, crosses a bridge over the Rothel and curves with the curving pine-fringed shores of the lake along the base of the mountain until it climbs the steep ascent that leads to Gooze's Gore, the third division of the town of Flamsted.

As in all New England towns, that are the possessors of "old families," so in Flamsted;— its inhabitants are partisans. The result is, that it has been for years as a house divided against itself, and heated discussion of the affairs of the Googes at the Gore and the Champneys at The Bow has been from generation to generation an inherited interest. And from generation to generation, as the two families have ramified and intermarriages occurred more and more frequently, party spirit has run higher and higher and bitter feelings been engendered. But never have the factional differences been more pronounced and the lines of separation drawn with a sharper ploughshare in this mountain-ramparted New England town, than during the five years subsequent to the opening of the Flamsted Quarries which brought in its train the railroad and the immigrants. This event was looked upon by the inhabitants as the Invasion of the New.

The interest of the first faction was centred in Champ-au-Haut and its present possessor, the widow of Louis Champney, old Judge Champney's only son. That of the second in the Googes, Aurora and her son Champney, the owners of Googe's Gore and its granite outcrop.

The office room of The Greenbush has been for two generations the acknowledged gathering place of the representatives of the hostile camps. On a cool evening in June, a few days after the departure of several New York promoters, who had formed a syndicate to exploit the granite treasure in The Gore and for that purpose been fully a week in Flamsted, a few of the natives dropped into the office to talk it over.

When Octavius Buzzby, the factotum at Champ-au-Haut and twin of Augustus Buzzby, landlord of The Greenbush, entered the former bar-room of the old hostelry, he found the usual Saturday night frequenters. Among them was Colonel Milton Caukins, tax collector and assistant deputy sheriff who, never quite at ease in the presence of his long-tongued wife, expanded discursively so soon as he found himself in the office of The Greenbush. He was in full flow when Octavius entered.

"Hello, Tave," he cried, extending his hand in easy condescension, "you're well come, for you're just in time to hear the latest; the deal's on — an A. 1 sure thing this time. Aurora showed me the papers to-day. We're in for it now — government contracts, state houses, battle monuments, graveyards; we've got 'em all, and things 'll begin to hum in this backwater hole, you bet!"

Octavius looked inquiringly at his brother. Augustus answered by raising his left eyebrow and plac-

idly closing his right eye as a cautionary signal to lie low and await developments.

It was the Colonel's way to boom everything, and simply because he could not help it. It was not a matter of principle with him, it was an affair of temperament. He had boomed Flamsted for the last ten years — its climate, its situation, its scenery, its water power, its lake-shore lands as prospective sites for mansion summer cottages, and the treasures of its unopened quarries. So incorrigible an optimist was Milton Caukins that any slight degree of success, which might attend the promotion of any one of his numerous schemes, caused an elation that amounted to hilarity. On the other hand, the deadly blight of non-fulfilment, that annually attacked his most cherished hopes for the future development of his native town, failed in any wise to depress him, or check the prodigal casting of his optimistic daily bread on the placid social waters where, as the years multiplied, his enthusiasms scarce made a ripple.

“I see Mis' Gooze yisterd'y, an' she said folks hed been down on her so long for sellin' thet pass'l of paster for the first quarry, thet she might ez well go the hull figger an' git 'em down on her for the rest of her days by sellin' the rest. By Andrew Jackson! she's got the grit for a woman — and the good looks too! She can hold her own for a figger with any gal in this town. I see the syndicators a-castin' sheeps' eyes her ways the day she took 'em over The Gore prospectin'; but, by A. J.! they hauled in their lookin's when she turned them great eyes of her 'n their ways. — What's the figger for the hull piece? Does anybody know?”

It was Joel Quimber, the ancient pound-master,

who spoke, and the silence that followed proved that each man present was resenting the fact that he was not in a position to give the information desired.

"I shall know as soon as they get it recorded, that is, if they don't trade for a dollar and if they ever do get it recorded." The speaker was Elmer Wiggins, druggist and town clerk for the last quarter of a century. He was pessimistically inclined, the tendency being fostered by his dual vocation of selling drugs and registering the deaths they occasionally caused.

Milton Caukins, or the Colonel, as he preferred to be called on account of his youthful service in the state militia and his present connection with the historical society of The Rangers, took his cigar from his lips and blew the smoke forcibly towards the ceiling before he spoke.

"She's got enough now to put Champ through college. The first forty acres she sold ten years ago will do that."

"I ain't so sure of thet." Joel Quimber's tone implied obstinate conviction that his modestly expressed doubt was a foregone conclusion. "Champ's a devil of a feller when it comes to puttin' through anything. He's a chip of the old block. He'll put through more'n his mother can git out if he gits in any thicker with them big guns — race hosses, ortermobillies, steam yachts an' fancy fixin's. He could sink the hull Gore to the foundations of Old Time in a few of them suppers I've heerd he gin arter the show. I heerd he gin ten dollars a plate for the last one — some kind of primy-donny, I heerd. But Champ's game though. I heerd Mr. Van Ostend talkin' 'bout him to one of the syndicators — mebbe they're goin' to work him in with them somehow; anyway, I guess Aurory don't begrutch

him a little spendin' money seein' how easy it come out of the old sheep pasters. Who'd 'a' thought a streak of granite could hev made sech a stir!"

"It's a stir that'll sink this town in the mud." Mr. Wiggins' voice was what might be called thorough-bass, and was apt to carry more weight with his townspeople than his opinions, which latter were not always acceptable to Colonel Caukins. "Look at it now! This town has never been bonded; we're free from debt and a good balance on hand for improvements. Now along comes three or four hundred immigrants to begin with — trade following the flag, I suppose *you* call it, Colonel," (he interpolated this with cutting sarcasm) — "a hodge-podge of Canucks, and Dagos, and Polacks, and the Lord knows what — a darned set of foreigners, foreign to our laws, our ways, our religion; and behind 'em a lot of men that would be called windbags if it was n't for their money-bags. And between 'em our noses are going to be held right down on the grindstone. I tell you we'll have to bond this town to support the schooling for these foreign brats, and there's a baker's dozen of 'em every time; and there'll be tooting and dancing and singing and playing on Sunday with their foreign gimcranks, — mandolin-banjoes and what-all —"

"Good heavens, my dear fellow!" the Colonel broke in with an air of impatience, "can't you see that it's this very 'stir,' as you term it, that is going to put this town into the front rank of the competing industrial thousands of America?"

The Colonel, when annoyed at the quantity of cold water thrown upon his red-hot enthusiasm, was apt to increase the warmth of his patronizing address by an endearing term.

"I see farther than the front ranks of your 'competing industrial thousands of America,' Milton Caukins; I see clear over 'em to the very brink, and I see a struggling wrestling mass of human beings slipping, sliding to the bottomless pit of national destitution, helped downwards by just such darned boomers of what you call 'industrial efficiency' as you are, Milton Caukins." He paused for breath.

Augustus Buzzby, who was ever a man of peace, tried to divert this raging torrent of speech into other and personal channels.

"I ain't nothin' 'gainst Mis' Gooze as a woman, but she played me a mean trick when she sold that first quarry. It killed my trade as dead as a door nail. You can't hire them highflyers to put themselves into a town their money's bankin' on to ruin in what you might call a summer-social way. I found *that* out 'fore they left this house last week."

"Yes, and she's played a meaner one now." Mr. Wiggins made the assertion with asperity and looked at the same time directly at Octavius Buzzby. "I know all about their free dispensaries that'll draw trade away from my very counter and take the bread and butter out of my mouth; and as for the fees — there won't be a chance for recording a homestead site; there is n't any counting on such things, for they're a homeless lot, always moving from pillar to post with free pickings wherever they locate overnight, just like the gypsies that came through here last September."

"It's kinder queer now, whichever way you've a mind to look at it," Joel Quimber remarked meditatively. His eyes were cast up to the ceiling; his forefingers and thumbs formed an acute triangle over the

bridge of his nose; the arms of his chair supported his elbows. "Queer that it's allus them upper tens an' emigrants that keep a-movin' on, fust one place then t'other. Kinder looks ez if, arter all, there war n't no great real difference when it comes to bein' restless. Take us home folks now, we're rooted in deep, an' I guess if we was to be uprooted kinder suddin', p'raps we'd hev more charity for the furriners. There's no tellin'; I ain't no jedge of sech things, an' I'm an out-an-out American. But mebbe my great-great-great-granther's father could hev' told ye somethin' wuth tellin'; he an' the Champneys was hounded out of France, an' was glad 'nough to emigrate, though they called it refugeein' an' pioneerin' in them days."

Augustus Buzzby laid his hand affectionately on the old man's shoulder. "You're a son of the soil, Joel; I stand corrected. I guess the less any of us true blue Americans say 'bout flinging stones at furriners the safer 't will be for all on us."

But Mr. Wiggins continued his diatribe: "There ain't no denying it, the first people in town are down on the whole thing. Did n't the rector tell me this very day that 't was like ploughing up the face of nature for the sake of sowing the seeds of political and social destruction — his very words — in this place of peace and happy homes? He don't blame Mrs. Champney for feeling as she does 'bout Aurora Googe. He said it was a shame that just as soon as Mrs. Champney had begun to sell off her lake shore lands so as her city relatives could build near her, Mrs. Googe must start up and balk all her plans by selling two hundred acres of old sheep pasture for the big quarry."

"Humph!" It was the first sound that Octavius

Buzzby had uttered since his entrance and general greeting. Hearing it his brother looked warningly in his direction, for he feared that the factional difference, which had come to the surface to breathe in his own and Elmer Wiggins' remarks, might find over-heated expression in the mouth of his twin if once Tave's ire should be aroused. But his brother gave no heed and, much to Augustus' relief, went off at a tangent.

"I heard old Judge Champney talk on these things a good many times in his lifetime, an' he was wise, wiser'n any man here." He allowed himself this one thrust at Mr. Wiggins and the Colonel. "He used to say: 'Tavy, it's all in the natural course of things, and it's got to strike us here sometime; not in my time, but in my boy's. No man of us can say he owns God's earth, an' set up barriers an' fences, an' sometimes breastworks, an' holler "hands off" to every man that peeks over the wall, "this here is mine or that is ours!" because 't is n't in the natural order of things, and what is n't in the natural order is n't going to be, Tavy.' That's what the old Judge said to me more 'n once."

"He was right, Tavy, he was right," said Quimber eagerly and earnestly. "I can't argify, an' I can't convince; but I know he was right. I've lived most a generation longer'n any man here, an' I've seen a thing or two an' marked the way of nater jest like the Jedge. I've stood there where the Rothel comes down from The Gore in its spring freshet, rarin', tearin' down, bearin' stones an' rocks along with its current till it strikes the lowlands; then a racin' along, catchin' up turf an' mud an' sand, an' foam'n' yaller an' brown acrost the medders, leavin' mud a quarter of an inch thick on the lowlands; and then a-rushin' into the

lake ez if 't would turn the bottom upside down — an' jest look what happens! Stid of kickin' up a row all along the banks it jest ain't nowhere when you look for it! Only the lake riled for a few furlongs off shore an' kinder humpin' up in the middle. An' arter a day or two ye come back an' look agin, an' where's the rile? All settled to the bottom, an' the lake as clear as a looking-glass. An' then ye look at the medders an' ye see thet, barrin' a big boulder or two an' some stuns thet an ox-team can cart off, an' some gullyin' out long the highroad, they ain't been hurt a mite. An' then come 'long 'bout the fust of July, an' ye go out an' stan' there and look for the silt — an' what d' ye see? Why, jest thet ye're knee deep in clover an' timothy thet hez growed thet high an' lush jest on account of thet very silt!

“Thet's the way 't is with nateral things; an' thet's what the old Judge meant. This furrin flood's a-comin'; an' we've got to stan' some scares an' think mebbe The Gore dam'll bust, an' the boulders lay round too thick for the land, an' the mud'll spile our medders, an' the lake show rily so's the cattle won't drink — an' we'll find out thet in this great free home of our 'n, thet's lent us for a while, thet there's room 'nough for all, an', in the end — not in my time, but in your'n — our Land, like the medders, is goin' to be the better for it.”

“Well put, well put, Quimber,” said the Colonel who had been showing signs of restlessness under the unusual and protracted eloquence of the old pound-master. “We're making the experiment that every other nation has had to make some time or other. Take old Rome, now — what was it started the decay, eh?”

As no one present dared to cope with the decline of so large a subject, the Colonel had the floor. He looked at each man in turn; then waved the hand that held his cigar airily towards the ceiling. "Just inbreeding, sir, inbreeding. That's what did it. We Americans, are profiting by the experience of the centuries and are going to take in fresh blood just as fast as it can attain to an arterial circulation in the body politic, sir; an arterial circulation, I say—" the Colonel was apt to roll a fine phrase more than once under his tongue when the sound thereof pleased him,—"and in the course of nature—I agree perfectly with the late Judge Champney and our friend, Quimber—there may be, during the process, a surcharge of blood to the head or stomach of the body politic that will cause a slight attack of governmental vertigo or national indigestion. But it will pass, gentlemen, it will pass; and I assure you the health of the Republic will be kept at the normal, with nothing more than passing attacks of racial hysteria which, however undignified they may appear in the eyes of all right-minded citizens, must ever remain the transient phenomena of a great nation in the making."

The Colonel, having finished his peroration with another wave of his cigar towards the ceiling, lowered his feet from their elevated position on the counter, glanced anxiously at the clock, which indicated a quarter of nine, and remarked casually that, as Mrs. Caukins was indisposed, he felt under obligations to be at home by half-past nine.

Joel Quimber, whom such outbursts of eloquence on the Colonel's part in the usual town-meeting left in a generally dazed condition of mind and politics, remarked that he heard the whistle of the evening

train about fifteen minutes ago, and asked if Augustus were expecting any one up on it.

“No, but the team’s gone down to meet it just the same. Maybe there’ll be a runner or two; they pay ’bout as well as the big guns after all; and then there’s a chance of one of the syndicators coming in on me at any time now. — There’s the team.”

He went out on the veranda. The men within the office listened with intensified interest, strengthened by that curiosity which is shown by those in whose lives events do not crowd upon one another with such overwhelming force, that the susceptibility to fresh impressions is dulled. They heard the landlord’s cordial greeting, a confusion of sounds incident upon new arrivals; then Augustus Buzzby came in, carrying bags and travelling shawl, and, following him, a tall man in the garb of a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. Close at his side was a little girl. She was far from appearing shy or awkward in the presence of strangers, nodding brightly to Octavius, who sat nearest the door, and smiling captivatively upon Joel Quimber, whereupon he felt immediately in his pockets for a peppermint which, to his disappointment, was not there.

The Colonel sprang to his feet when the guests entered, and quickly doffed his felt hat which was balancing in a seemingly untenable position on the side of his head. The priest, who removed his on the threshold, acknowledged the courtesy with a bow and a keen glance which included all in the room; then he stepped to the desk on the counter to enter his name in the ponderous leather-backed registry which Augustus opened for him. The little girl stood beside him, watching his every movement.



“Those present loved in after years to recall this scene”

The Flamstedites saw before them a man in the prime of life, possibly forty-five. He was fully six feet in height, noticeably erect, with an erectness that gave something of the martial to his carriage, spare but muscular, shoulders high and square set, and above them a face deeply pockmarked, the features large but regular, the forehead broad and bulging rather prominently above the eyes. The eyes they could not see; but the voice made itself heard, and felt, while he was writing. The men present unconsciously welcomed it as a personality.

“Can you tell me if Mrs. Louis Champney lives near here?” he said, addressing his host.

“Yes, sir; just about a mile down the street at The Bow.”

“Oh, please, yer Riverence, write mine too,” said the child who, by standing on tiptoe at the high counter, had managed to follow every stroke of the pen.

The priest looked at the landlord with a frankly interrogatory smile.

“To be sure, to be sure. Ain’t you my guest as long as you’re in my home?” Augustus replied with such whole-souled heartiness that the child beamed upon him and boldly held out her hand for the pen.

“Let me write it,” she said decidedly, as if used to having her way. Colonel Caukins sprang to place a high three-legged stool for the little registree, and was about to lift her on, but the child, laughing aloud, managed to seat herself without his assistance, and forthwith gave her undivided attention to the entering of her name.

Those present loved in after years to recall this scene: the old bar, the three-legged stool, the little girl perched on top, one foot twisted over the round —

so busily intent upon making a fine signature that a tip of her tongue was visible held tightly against her left cheek — the coarse straw hat, the clean but cheap blue dress, the heavy shoes that emphasized the delicacy of her ankles and figure; and above her the leaning priest, smiling gravely with fatherly indulgence upon this firstling of his flock in Flamsted.

The child looked up for approval when she had finished and shaken, with an air of intense satisfaction, a considerable quantity of sand over the fresh ink. Evidently the look in the priest's eyes was reward enough, for, although he spoke no word, the little girl laughed merrily and in the next moment hopped down rather unexpectedly from her high place and busied herself with taking a survey of the office and its occupants.

The priest took an envelope from his pocket and handed it to Augustus, saying as he did so:

“This is Mr. Buzzby, I know; and here is a letter from Mr. Van Ostend in regard to this little girl. Her arrival is premature; but the matron of the institution, where she has been, wished to take advantage of my coming to Flamsted to place her in my care. Mr. Van Ostend would like to have her remain here with you for a few days if Mrs. Champney is not prepared to receive her just now.”

There was a general movement of surprise among the men in the office, and all eyes, with a question-mark visible in them, were turned towards Octavius Buzzby. Upon him, the simple announcement had the effect of a shock; he felt the need of air, and slipped out to the veranda, but not before he received another bright smile from the little girl. He waited outside until he saw Augustus show the newcomers upstairs; then he

re-entered the office and went to the register which was the speculative focus of interest for all the others. Octavius read :

June 18, 1889 — FR. JOHN FRANCIS HONORÉ, NEW YORK.
AILEEN ARMAGH, ORPHAN ASYLUM, NEW
YORK CITY.

The Colonel was in a state of effervescing hilarity. He rubbed his hands energetically, slapped Octavius on the back, and exclaimed in high feather :

“How’s this for the first drops of the deluge, eh, Tave?”

Octavius made no reply. He waited, as usual, for the evening’s mail. The carrier handed him a telegram from New York for Mrs. Champney. It had just come up on the train from Hallsport. He wondered what connection its coming might have with the unexpected arrival of this orphan child?

II

ON his way home Octavius Buzzby found himself wondering, as he had wondered many times before on occasion, how he could checkmate this latest and most unexpected move on the part of the mistress of Champ-au-Haut. His mind was perturbed and he realized, while making an effort to concentrate his attention on ways and means, that he had been giving much of his mental strength during the last twenty years to the search for ulterior motives on the part of Mrs. Louis Champney, a woman of sixty now, a Googe by birth (the Googes, through some genealogical necromancy, traced their descent from Sir Ferdinando Gorges. The name alone, not the blood, had, according to family tradition, suffered corruption with time), and the widow of Louis Champney, the late Judge Champney's only son.

The Champneys had a double strain of French blood in their veins, Breton and Flemish; the latter furnished the collateral branch of the Van Ostends. This intermixture, flowing in the veins of men and women who were Americans by the birthright of more than two centuries' enjoyment of our country's institutions, had produced for several generations as fine a strain of brains and breeding as America can show.

Louis Champney, the last of the line in direct descent, was looked upon from his boyhood up as the culmination of these centuries' flowering. When, at forty, he died without having fulfilled in any wise the great ex-

pectations of his townspeople and relations, the interest of the community, as well as of the family, centred in the prospects of Louis Champney Googe, his namesake, and nephew on his wife's side. Here, again, numerous family interests as well as communal speculations were disappointed. The Champney estate was left entire to the widow, Almeda Googe Champney, to dispose of as she might deem fit. Her powers of administratrix were untrammelled save in one respect: Octavius Buzzby was to remain in his position as factotum on the Champney estate and adviser for its interests.

It was at this juncture, when Louis Champney died without remembering his nephew-in-law by so much as a book from his library and the boy was ten years old, that a crisis was discovered to be imminent in the fortunes of the Googe-Champney families, the many ramifications of which were intricately interwoven in the communal life of Flamsted. This crisis had not been averted; for Aurora Googe, the sister-in-law of Mrs. Champney and mother of young Champney, sold a part of her land in The Gore for the first granite quarry, and in so doing changed for all time the character and fortunes of the town of Flamsted.

For many years Octavius Buzzby had championed openly and in secret the cause of Aurora Googe and her only son. To-night, while walking slowly homewards, he was pondering what attitude of mind he must assume, before he could deal adequately with the momentous event which had been foreshadowed from the moment he learned from the priest's lips that Mr. Van Ostend was implicated in the coming of this orphan child. He recalled that little Alice Van Ostend prattled much about this same child during the

week she had spent recently with her father at Champ-au-Haut.

Was the mistress of Champ-au-Haut going to adopt her?

Almeda Champney had never wanted the blessing of a child, and, contrary to her young husband's wishes — he was her junior by twelve years — she had had her way. Her nature was so absorbingly tenacious of whatever held her narrow interests, that a child at Champ-au-Haut would have broken, in a measure, her domination of her weaker-willed husband, because it would have centred in itself his love and ambition to "keep up the name." That now, eleven years after Louis Champney's death, she should contemplate the introduction into her perfectly ordered household of a child, an alien, was a revelation of appalling moment to Octavius. He scouted the idea that she would enter the house as an assistant. None was needed; and, moreover, those small hands could accomplish little in the next ten years. She meant to adopt her then! An alien was to inherit the Champney property! Octavius actually shivered at the thought.

Was it, could it be an act of spite against Aurora Googe? Was it a final answer to any expectations of her nephew, Champney Googe, her husband's namesake and favorite? Was this little alien waif to be made a catspaw for her revenge? She was capable of such a thing, was Almeda Champney. *He* knew her; none better! Had not her will, thus far in her life, bent everything with which it had come in contact; crushed whatever had opposed it; broken irrevocably whosoever for a while had successfully resisted it?

His thin lips drew to a straight line. All his man-

hood's strength of desire for fair play, a desire he had been fated to see unfulfilled during the last twenty years, rose in rebellion to champion the cause of the little newcomer who smiled on him so brightly in the office of The Greenbush. Nor did he falter in his resolution when he presented himself at the library door with the telegram in his hand.

"Come in, Octavius; was there any mail?"

"Only a telegram from New York." He handed it to her.

She opened and read it; then laid it on the table. She removed her eyeglasses, for she had grown farsighted with advancing years, in order to look at the back of the small man who was leaving the room. If he had seen the smile that accompanied the action, he might well have faltered in his resolution to champion any righteous cause on earth.

"Wait a moment, Octavius."

"Now it's coming!" he thought and faced her again; he was bracing himself mentally to meet the announcement.

"Did you see the junk man at The Corners to-day about those shingle nails?"

In the second of hesitation before replying, he had time inwardly to curse her. She was always letting him down in this way. It was a trick of hers when, to use his own expression, she had "something up her sleeve."

"Yes; but he won't take them off our hands."

"Why not?" She spoke sharply as was her way when she suspected any thwarting of her will or desire.

"He says he won't give you your price for they ain't worth it. They ain't particular good for old iron anyway; most on 'em's rusty and crooked. You know

they've been on the old coach house for good thirty years, and the Judge used to say —"

"What will he give?"

"A quarter of a cent a pound."

"How many pounds are there?"

"Fifty-two."

"Fifty-two — hm-m; he sha'n't have them. They're worth a half a cent a pound if they're worth anything. You can store them in the workshop till somebody comes along that does want them, and will pay." He turned again to leave her.

"Just a moment, Octavius." Once more he came back over the threshold.

"Were there any arrivals at The Greenbush to-night?"

"I judged so from the register."

"Did you happen to see a girl there?"

"I saw a child, a little girl, smallish and thin; a priest was with her."

"A priest?" Mrs. Champney looked nonplussed for a moment and put on her glasses to cover her surprise. "Did you learn her name, the girl's?"

"It was in the register, Aileen Armagh, from an orphan asylum in New York."

"Then she's the one," she said in a musing tone but without the least expression of interest. She removed her glasses. Octavius took a step backwards. "A moment more, Octavius. I may as well speak of it now; I am only anticipating by a week or two, at the most, what, in any case, I should have told you. While Mr. Van Ostend was here, he enlisted my sympathy in this girl to such an extent that I decided to keep her for a few months on trial before making any permanent arrangement in regard to her. I want to

judge of her capability to assist Ann and Hannah in the housework; Hannah is getting on in years. What do you think of her? How did she impress you? Now that I have decided to give her a trial, you may speak freely. You know I am guided many times by your judgment in such matters."

Octavius Buzzby could have ground his teeth in impotent rage at this speech which, to his accustomed ears, rang false from beginning to end, yet was cloaked in terms intended to convey a compliment to himself. But, instead, he smiled the equivocal smile with which many a speech of like tenor had been greeted, and replied with marked earnestness:

"I would n't advise you, Mrs. Champney, to count on much assistance from a slip of a thing like that. She's small, and don't look more 'n nine, and —"

"She's over twelve," Mrs. Champney spoke decidedly; "and a girl of twelve ought to be able to help Ann and Hannah in some of their work."

"Well, I ain't no judge of children as there's never been any of late years at Champo." He knew his speech was barbed. Mrs. Champney carefully adjusted her glasses to the thin bridge of her straight white nose. "And if there had been, I should n't want to say what they could do or what they could n't at that age. Take Romanzo, now, he's old enough to work if you watch him; and now he's here I don't deny but what you had the rights of it 'bout my needing an assistant. He takes hold handy if you show him how, and is willing and steady. But two on 'em — I don't know;" he shook his head dubiously; "a growing boy and girl to feed and train and clothe — seems as if —" Octavius paused in the middle of his sentence. He knew his ground, or thought he knew it.

“You said yourself she was small and thin, and I can give her work enough to offset her board. Of course, she will have to go to school, but the tuition is free; and if I pay school taxes, that are increasing every year, I might as well have the benefit of them, if I can, in my own household.”

There seemed no refutation needed to meet such an argument, and Octavius retreated another step towards the door.

“A moment more, Octavius,” she said blandly, for she knew he was longing to rid her of his presence; “Mr. Emlie has been here this evening and drawn up the deeds conveying my north shore property to the New York syndicate. Mr. Van Ostend has conducted all the negotiations at that end, and I have agreed to the erection of the granite sheds on those particular sites and to the extension of a railroad for the quarries around the head of the lake to The Corners. The syndicate are to control all the quarry interests, and Mr. Van Ostend says in a few years they will assume vast proportions, entailing an outlay of at least three millions. They say there is to be a large electric plant at The Corners, for the mill company have sold them the entire water power at the falls. — I hope Aurora is satisfied with what she has accomplished in so short a time. Champney, I suppose, comes home next month?”

Octavius merely nodded, and withdrew in haste lest his indignation get the upper hand of his discretion. It behooved him to be discreet at this juncture; he must not injure Aurora Gooch's cause, which he deemed as righteous a one as ever the sun shone upon, by any injudicious word that might avow his partisanship.

Mrs. Champney smiled again when she saw his precipitous retreat. She had freighted every word with ill will, and knew how to raise his silent resentment to the boiling point. She rose and stepped quickly into the hall.

"Tavy," she called after him as he was closing the door into the back passage. He turned to look at her; she stood in the full light of the hall-lamp. "Just a moment before you go. Did you happen to hear who the priest is who came with the girl?"

"His name was in the ledger. The Colonel said he was a father — Father Honoré, I can't pronounce it, from New York."

"Is he stopping at The Greenbush?"

"He's put up there for to-night anyway."

"I think I must see this priest; perhaps he can give me more detailed information about the girl. That's all."

She went back into the library, closing the door after her. Octavius shut his; then, standing there in the dimly lighted passageway, he relieved himself by doubling both fists and shaking them vigorously at the panels of that same door, the while he simulated, first with one foot then with the other, a lively kick against the baseboard, muttering between his set teeth:

"The devil if it's all, you devilly, divelly, screwy old —"

The door opened suddenly. Simultaneously with its opening Octavius had sufficient presence of mind to blow out the light. He drew his breath short and fumbled in his pocket for matches.

"Why, Tavy, you here!" (How well she knew that the familiar name "Tavy" was the last turn of the thumbscrew for this factotum of the Champneys!

She never applied it unless she knew he was thoroughly worsted in the game between them.) "I was coming to find you; I forgot to say that you may go down to-morrow at nine and bring her up. I want to look her over."

She closed the door. Octavius, without stopping to relight the lamp, hurried up to his room in the ell, fearful lest he be recalled a fifth time — a test of his powers of mental endurance to which he dared not submit in his present perturbed state.

Mrs. Champney walked swiftly down the broad main hall, that ran through the house, to the door opening on the north terrace whence there was an unobstructed view up the three miles' length of Lake Mesantic to the Flamsted Hills; and just there, through a deep depression in their midst, the Rothel, a rushing brook, makes its way to the calm waters at their gates. At this point, where the hills separate like the opening sepals of a gigantic calyx, the rugged might of Katahdin heaves head and shoulder into the blue.

The irregular margin of the lake is fringed with pines of magnificent growth. Here and there the shores rise into cliffs, seamed at the top and inset on the face with slim white lady birches, or jut far into the waters as rocky promontories sparsely wooded with fir and balsam spruce.

Mrs. Champney stepped out upon the terrace. Her accustomed eyes looked upon this incomparable, native scene that was set in the full beauty of mid-summer's moonlight. She advanced to the broad stone steps, that descend to the level of the lake, and, folding her arms, her hands resting lightly upon them, stood immovable, looking northwards to the Flamsted Hills — looking, but not seeing; for her thoughts were leaping

upwards to The Gore and its undeveloped resources; to Aurora Googe and the part she was playing in this transitional period of Flamsted's life; to the future years of industrial development and, in consequence, her own increasing revenues from the quarries. She had stipulated that evening that a clause, which would secure to her the rights of a first stockholder, should be inserted in the articles of conveyance.

The income of eight thousand from the estate, as willed to her, had increased under her management, aided by her ability to drive a sharp bargain and the penuriousness which, according to Octavius, was capable of "making a cent squeal", to twelve thousand. The sale of her north shore lands would increase it another five thousand. Within a few years, according to Mr. Van Ostend — and she trusted him — her dividends from her stock would net her several thousands more. She was calculating, as she stood there gazing northwards, unseeing, into the serene night and the hill-peace that lay within it, how she could invest this increment for the coming years, and casting about in her mathematically inclined mind for means to make the most of it in interest per cent. She felt sure the future would show satisfactory results. — And after?

That did not appeal to her.

She unfolded her arms, and gathering her skirt in both hands went down the steps and took her stand on the lowest. She was still looking northwards. Her skirt slipped from her left hand which she raised half mechanically to let a single magnificent jewel, that guarded the plain circlet of gold on her fourth finger, flash in the moonlight. She held it raised so for a moment, watching the play of light from the facets.

Suddenly she clinched her delicate fist spasmodically; shook it forcibly upwards towards the supreme strength of those silent hills, which, in comparison with the human three score and ten, may well be termed "everlasting", and, muttering fiercely under her breath, "*You* shall never have a penny of it!", turned, went swiftly up the steps, and entered the house.

III

HAD the mistress of Champ-au-Haut stood on the terrace a few minutes longer, she might have seen with those far-sighted eyes of hers a dark form passing quickly along the strip of highroad that showed white between the last houses at The Bow. It was Father Honoré. He walked rapidly along the highway that, skirting the base of the mountain, follows the large curve of the lake shore. Rapid as was the pace, the quickened eyes were seeing all about, around, above. In passing beneath a stretch of towering pines, he caught between their still indefinite foliage the gleam of the lake waters. He stopped short for a full minute to pommel his resonant chest; to breathe deep, deep breaths of the night balm. Then he proceeded on his way.

That way led northwards along the lake shore; it skirted the talus that had fallen from the cliff which rose three hundred feet above him. He heard the sound of a rolling stone gathering in velocity among the rubble. He halted in order to listen; to trace, if possible, its course. The dull monotone of its rumbling rattle started a train of thought: perhaps his foot, treading the highway lightly, had caused the sensitive earth to tremble just sufficiently to jar the delicately poised stone and send it from its resting place! He went on. Thoughts not to be uttered crowded to the forefront of consciousness as he neared the cleft in

the Flamsted Hills, whence the Rothel makes known to every wayfarer that it has come direct from the heart of The Gore, and brought with it the secrets of its granite veins.

The road grew steeper; the man's pace did not slacken, but the straight back was bent at an angle which showed the priest had been accustomed to mountain climbing. In the leafy half-light, which is neither dawn nor twilight, but that reverential effulgence which is made by moonlight sifting finely through midsummer foliage, the Rothel murmured over its rocky bed; once, when in a deep pool its babble wholly ceased, an owl broke the silence with his "witti-hoo-hoo-hoo".

Still upwards he kept his way and his pace until he emerged into the full moonlight of the heights. There he halted and looked about him. He was near the apex of The Gore. To the north, above the foreground of the sea of hilltops, loomed Katahdin. At his right, a pond, some five acres in extent, lay at the base of cliff-like rocks topped with a few primeval pines. Everywhere there were barren sheep pastures alternating with acres of stunted fir and hemlock, and in sheltered nooks, adjacent to these coverts, he could discern something which he judged to be stone sheep-folds. Just below him, on the opposite side of the road and the Rothel, which was crossed by a broad bridging of log and plank, stood a long low stone house, to the north of which a double row of firs had been planted for a windbreak. Behind him, on a rise of ground a few rods from the highway, was a large double house of brick with deep granite foundations and white granite window caps. Two shafts of the same stone supported the ample white-painted en-

trance porch. Ancestral elms over-leafed the roof on the southern side. One light shone from an upper window. Beyond the elms, a rough road led still upwards to the heights behind the house.

The priest retraced his steps; turned into this road, for which the landlord of The Greenbush had given him minute instructions, and followed its rough way for an eighth of a mile; then a sudden turn around a shoulder of the hill — and the beginning of the famous Flamsted granite quarries lay before him, gleaming, sparkling in the moonlight — a snow-white, glistening patch on the barren hilltop. Near it were a few huts of turf and stone for the accommodation of the quarrymen. This was all. But it was the scene, self-chosen, of this priest's future labors; and while he looked upon it, thoughts unutterable crowded fast, too fast for the brain already stimulated by the time and environment. He turned about; retraced his steps at the same rapid pace; passed again up the highroad to the head of The Gore, then around it, across a barren pasture, and climbed the cliff-like rock that was crowned by the ancient pines. He stood there erect, his head thrown back, his forehead to the radiant heavens, his eyes fixed on the pale twinklings of the seven stars in the northernmost constellation of the Bear — rapt, caught away in spirit by the intensity of feeling engendered by the hour, the place. Then he knelt, bowing his head on a lichened rock, and unto his Maker, and the Maker of that humanity he had elected to serve, he consecrated himself anew.

Ten minutes afterwards, he was coming down The Gore on his way back to The Greenbush. He heard the agitated ringing of a bell-wether; then the soft huddling rush of a flock of sheep somewhere in the distance. A

sheep dog barked sharply; a hound bayed in answer till the hills north of The Gore gave back a multiple echo; but the Rothel kept its secrets, and with inarticulate murmuring made haste to deposit them in the quiet lake waters.

IV

“**B**UT, mother — ”

There was an intonation in the protest that hinted at some irritation. Champney Googe emptied his pipe on the grass and knocked it clean against the porch rail before he continued.

“Won’t it make a lot of talk? Of course, I can see your side of it; it’s hospitable and neighborly and all that, to give the priest his meals for a while, but, — ” he hesitated, and his mother answered his thought.

“A little talk more or less after all there has been about the quarry won’t do any harm, and I’m used to it.” She spoke with some bitterness.

“It *has* stirred up a hornet’s nest about your ears, that’s a fact. How does Aunt Meda take this latest move? Meat-axey as usual? I did n’t see her when I went there yesterday; she’s in Hallsport for two days on business, so Tave says.”

His mother smiled. “I have n’t see her since the sale was concluded, but I hear she has strengthened the opposition in consequence. I get my information from Mrs. Caukins.”

At the mention of that name Champney laughed out. “Good authority, mother. I must run over and see her to-night. Well, we don’t care, do we? I mean about the feeling. Mother, I just wish you were a man for one minute.”

“Why?”

“Because I’d like to go up to you, man fashion, grip your hand, slap you on the back, and shout ‘By Jove, old man, you’ve made a deal that would turn the sunny side of Wall Street green with envy!’ How did you do it, mother? And without a lawyer! I’ll bet Emlie is mad because he did n’t get a chance to put his finger in your pie.”

“I was thinking of you, of your future, and how you have been used by Almeda Champney; and that gave me the confidence, almost the push of a man — and I dealt with them as a man with men; but I felt unsexed in doing it. I’ve wondered what they think of me.”

“Think of you! I can tell you what one man thinks of you, and that’s Mr. Van Ostend. I had a note from him at the time of the sale asking me to come to his office, an affidavit was necessary, and I found he had had eyes in his head for the most beautiful woman in the world — ”

“Champney!”

“Fact; and, what’s more, I got an invitation to his house on the strength of his recognition of that fact. I dined with him there; his sister is a stunning girl.”

“I’m glad such homes are open to you; it is your right and — it compensates.”

“For what, mother?”

“Oh, a good many things. How do they live?”

“The Van Ostends?”

“Yes.”

Champney Gooze hugged his knees and rocked back and forth on the step before he answered. His merry face seemed to lengthen in feature, to harden in line. His mother left her chair and sewing to sit down on the step beside him. She looked up inquiringly.

“Just as *I* mean to live sometime, mother,” — his fresh young voice rang determined and almost hard; his mother’s eyes kindled; — “in a way that expresses Life — as you and I understand it, and don’t live it, mother; as you and I have conceived of it while up here among these sheep pastures.” He glanced inimically for a moment at the barren slopes above them. “I have you to thank for making me comprehend the difference.” He continued the rocking movement for a while, his hands still clasping his knees. Then he went on:

“As for his home on the Avenue, there is n’t its like in the city, and as a storehouse of the best in art it has n’t its equal in the country; it’s just perfect from picture gallery to billiard room. As for adjuncts, there’s a shooting box and a *bona fide* castle in the Scottish Highlands, a cottage at Bar Harbor with the accessory of a steam yacht, and a racing stud on a Long Island farm. As a financier he’s great!”

He sat up straight, and freely used his fists, first on one knee then on the other, to emphasize his words: “His right hand is on one great lever of interstate traffic, his left on the other of foreign trade, and two continents obey his manipulations. His eye exacts trained efficiency from thousands; his word is a world event; Wall Street is his automaton. Oh, the power of it all! I can’t wait to get out into the stream, mother! I’m only hugging the shore at present; that’s what has made me kick against this last year in college; it has been lost time, for I want to get rich quick.”

His mother laid her hand on his knee. “No, Champney, it’s not lost time; it’s one of your assets as a gentleman.”

He looked up at her, his blue eyes smiling into her dark ones.

“I can be a gentleman all right without that asset; you said father did n’t go.”

“No, but the man for whom you are named went, and he told me once a college education was a ‘gentleman’s asset.’ That expression was his.”

“Well, I don’t see that the asset did him much good. It did n’t seem to discount his liabilities in other ways. Queer, how Uncle Louis went to seed — I mean, did n’t amount to anything along any business or professional line. Only last spring I met the father of a second-year man who remembers Uncle Louis well, said he was a classmate of his. He told me he was banner man every time and no end popular; the others did n’t have a show with him.”

His mother was silent. Champney, apparently unheeding her unresponsiveness, rose quickly, shook himself together, and suddenly burst into a mighty laughter that is best comparable to the inextinguishable species of the blessed gods. He laughed in arpeggios, peal on peal, crescendo and diminuendo, until, finally, he flung himself down on the short turf and in his merriment rolled over and over. He brought himself right side up at last, tears in his eyes and a sigh of satisfying exhaustion on his lips. To his mother’s laughing query:

“What is it now, Champney?” He shook his head as if words failed him; then he said huskily:

“It’s Aunt Meda’s *protégée*. Oh, Great Scott! She’ll be the death by shock of some of the Champo people if she stays another three months. I hear Aunt Meda has had her Waterloo. Tavy buttonholed me out in the carriage house yesterday, and told me the whole thing — oh, but it’s rich!” He chuckled again. “He got me to feel his vest; says he can lap it three inches already and she has only been here two weeks; and

as for Romanzo, he's neither to have nor to hold when the girl's in sight — wits topsy-turvy, actually, oh, Lord!" — he rolled over again on the grass — "what do you think, mother! She got Roman to scour down Jim — you know, the white cart-horse, the Percheron — with Hannah's cleaning powder, and the girl helped him, and together they got one side done and then waited for it to dry to see how it worked. Result: Tave dead ashamed to drive him in the cart for fear some one will see the yellow-white calico-circus horse, that the two rascallions have left on his hands, and does n't want Aunt Meda to know it for fear she'll turn down Roman. He says he's going to put Jim out to grass in the Colonel's back sheep pasture, and when Aunt Meda comes home lie about sudden spavin or something. And the joke of it is Roman takes it all as a part of the play, and has owned up to Tave that, by mistake, he blacked Aunt Meda's walking boots, before she went to Hallsport, with axle grease, while the girl was 'telling novels' to him! Tave said Roman told him she knew a lot of the nobility, marchionesses and 'sich'; and now Roman struts around cocksure, high and mighty as if he'd just been made K.C.B., and there's no getting any steady work out of him. You should have seen Tave's face when he was telling me!"

His mother laughed. "I can imagine it; he's worried over this new move of Almeda's. I confess it puzzles me."

"Well, I'm off to see some of the fun — and the girl. Tave said he did n't expect Aunt Meda before to-morrow night, and it's a good time for me to rubber round the old place a little on my own hook; — and, mother," — he stooped to her; Aurora Googe raised

her still beautiful eyes to the frank if somewhat hard blue ones that looked down into hers; a fine color mounted into her cheeks, — “take the priest for his meals, for all me. It’s an invasion, but, of course, I recognize that we’re responsible for it on account of the quarry business. I suppose we shall have to make some concessions to all classes till we get away from here for good and all — then we’ll have our fling, won’t we, mother?”

He was off without waiting for a reply. Aurora Googe watched him out of sight, then turned to her work, the flush still upon her cheeks.

CHAMPNEY leaned on the gate of the paddock at Champ-au-Haut and looked about him. The estate at The Bow had been familiar to him throughout his childhood and boyhood. He had been over every foot of it, and at all seasons, with his Uncle Louis. He was realizing that it had never seemed more beautiful to him than now, seen in the warm light of a July sunset. In the garden pleasance, that sloped to the lake, the roses and lilies planted there a generation ago still bloomed and flourished, and in the elm-shaded paddock, on the gate of which he was leaning, filly and foal could trace their pedigree to the sixth and seventh generation of deep-chested, clean-flanked ancestors.

The young man comprehended in part only, the reason of his mother's extreme bitterness towards Almeda Champney. His uncle had loved him; had kept him with him much of the time, encouraging him in his boyish aims and ambitions which his mother fostered — and Louis Champney was childless, the last in direct descent of a long line of fine ancestors —.

Here his thought was checked; those ancestors were his, only in a generation far removed; the Champney blood was in his mother's veins. But his father was Almeda Champney's only brother — why then, should not his mother count on the estate being his in the end? He knew this to have been her hope,

although she had never expressed it. He had gained an indefinite knowledge of it through old Joel Quimber and Elmer Wiggins and Mrs. Milton Caukins, a distant relative of his father's. To be sure, Louis Champney might have left him his hunting-piece, which as a boy he had coveted, just for the sake of his name —

He stopped short in his speculations for he heard voices in the lane. The cows were entering it and coming up to the milking shed. The lane led up from the low-lying lake meadows, knee deep with timothy and clover, and was fenced on both sides from the apple orchards which arched and overshadowed its entire length. The sturdy over-reaching boughs hung heavy with myriads of green balls. Now and then one dropped noiselessly on the thick turf in the lane, and a noble Holstein mother, ebony banded with ivory white, her swollen cream-colored bag and dark-blotched teats flushed through and through by the delicate rose of a perfectly healthy skin, lowered her meek head and, snuffing largely, caught sideways as she passed at the enticing green round.

At the end of this lane there swung into view a tall loose-jointed figure which the low strong July sunshine threw into bold relief. It was Romanzo Caukins, one of the Colonel's numerous family, a boy of sixteen who had been bound out recently to the mistress of Champ-au-Haut upon agreement of bed, board, clothes, three terms of "schooling" yearly, and the addition of thirty dollars to be paid annually to the Colonel.

The payment of this amount, by express stipulation, was to be made at the end of each year until Romanzo should come into his majority. By this arrangement, Mrs. Champney assured to herself the interest on the aforesaid thirty dollars, and congratulated herself on

the fact that such increment might be credited to Milton Caukins as a minus quantity.

Champney leaped the bars and went down the lane to meet him.

“Hello, Roman, how are you?”

The boy’s honest blue eyes, that seemed always to be looking forward in a chronic state of expectancy for the unexpected, beamed with goodness and goodwill. He wiped his hands on his overalls and clasped Champney’s.

“Hullo, Champ, when ’d you come?”

“Only yesterday. I did n’t see you about when I was here in the afternoon. How do you like your job?”

The youth made an uncouth but expressive sign towards the milk shed. “Sh — Tave’ll hear you. He and I ain’t been just on good terms lately; but ’tain’t my fault,” he added doggedly.

At that moment a clear childish voice called from somewhere below the lane:

“Romanzo — Romanzo!”

The boy started guiltily. “I’ve got to go, Champ; she wants me.”

Champney seized him with a strong hand by the suspenders. “Here, hold on! Who, you gump?”

“The girl — le’ me go.” But Champney gripped him fast.

“No, you don’t, Roman; let her yell.”

“Ro—man—zo-o-o-o!” The range of this peremptory call was two octaves at least.

“By gum — she’s up to something, and Tave won’t stand any more fooling — le’ me go!” He writhed in the strong grasp.

“I won’t either. I have n’t been half-back on our

team for nothing; so stand still." And Romanzo stood still, perforce.

Another minute and Aileen came running up the lane. She was wearing the same heavy shoes, the same dark blue cotton dress, half covered now with a gingham apron — Mrs. Champney had not deemed it expedient to furnish a wardrobe until the probation period should have decided her for or against keeping the child. She was bareheaded, her face flushed with the heat and her violent exercise. She stopped short at a little distance from them so soon as she saw that Romanzo was not alone. She tossed back her braid and stamped her foot to emphasize her words:

"Why did n't yer come, Romanzo Caukins, when I cried ter yer!"

"'Coz I could n't; he would n't let me." He spoke anxiously, making signs towards the shed. But Aileen ignored them; ignored, also, the fact that any one was present besides her slave.

Champney answered for himself. He promptly bared his head and advanced to shake hands; but Aileen jerked hers behind her.

"I'm Mr. Champney Googe, at your service. Who are you?"

The little girl was sizing him up before she accepted the advance; Champney could tell by the "East-side" look with which she favored him.

"I'm Miss Aileen Armagh, and don't yer forget it! — at your service." She mimicked him so perfectly that Champney chuckled and Romanzo doubled up in silent glee.

"I sha'n't be apt to, thank you. Come, let's shake hands, Miss Aileen Armagh-and-don't-yer-forget-it, for we've got to be friends if you're to stay here with

my aunt." He held out both hands. But the little girl kept her own obstinately behind her and backed away from him.

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"'Coz they're all stuck up with spruce gum and Octavius said nothing would take it off but grease, and—" she turned suddenly upon Romanzo, blazing out upon him in her wrath — "I hollered ter yer so's yer could get some for me from Hannah, and you was just dirt mean not to answer me."

"Champ would n't let me go," said Romanzo sulkily; "besides, I dass n't ask Hannah, not since I used the harness cloth she gave to clean down Jim."

"Yer 'dass n't!' Fore I'd be a boy and say 'I dass 'n't!'" There was inexpressible scorn in her voice. She turned to Champney, her eyes brimming with mischief and flashing a challenge:

"And yer dass n't shake hands with me 'coz mine are all stuck up, so now!"

Champney had not anticipated this *pronunciamento*, but he accepted the challenge on the instant. "Dare not! You can't say that to me! Here, give me your hands." Again he held out his shapely well-kept members, and Aileen with a merry laugh brought her grimy sticky little paws into view and, without a word, laid them in Champney's palms. He held them close, purposely, that they might adhere and provide him with some fun; then, breaking into his gay laugh he said:

"Clear out, Roman; Tave 'll be looking for the milk pails. As for you, Miss Aileen Armagh-and-don't-yer-forget-it, you can't pull away from me now. So, come on, and we'll get Hannah to give us some lard and then

we'll go down to the boat house where it is cool and clean up. Come on!"

Holding her by both hands he raced her down the long lane, through the vegetable garden, all *chassez*, down the middle, swing your partner — Aileen wild with the fun — up the slate-laid kitchen walk to the kitchen door. His own laughter and the child's, happy, merry, care-free, rang out peal on peal till Ann and Hannah and Octavius paused in their work to listen, and wished that such music might have been heard often during their long years of faithful service in childless Champ-au-Haut.

"I hear you are acquainted with some of the nobility, marchionesses and so forth," said Champney; the two were sitting in the shadow of the boat house cleaning their fingers with the lard Hannah had provided. "Where did you make their acquaintance?"

Aileen paused in the act of sliding her greasy hands rapidly over and over in each other, an occupation which afforded her unmixed delight, to look up at him in amazement. "How did yer know anything 'bout her?"

"Oh, I heard."

"Did Romanzo Caukins tell yer?" she demanded, as usual on the defensive.

"No, oh no; it was only hearsay. Do tell me about her. We don't have any round here."

Aileen giggled and resumed the rapid rotary motion of her still unwashed hands. "If I tell yer 'bout her, yer'll tell her I told yer. P'raps sometime, if yer ever go to New York, yer might see her; and she would n't like it."

"How do you know but what I have seen her? I've just come from there."

Aileen looked her surprise again. "That's queer, for I've just landed from New York meself."

"So I understood; does the marchioness live there too?"

She shook her head. "I ain't going to tell yer; but I'll tell yer 'bout some others I know."

"That live in New York?"

"Wot yer giving me?" She laughed merrily; "they live where the Dagos live, in Italy, yer know, and —"

"Italy? What are they doing over there?"

"— And — just yer wait till I'll tell yer — they live on an island in a be-ee-u-tiful lake, like this;" she looked approvingly at the liquid mirror that reflected in its rippleless depths the mountain shadow and sunset gold; "and they live in great marble houses, palaces, yer know, and flower gardens, and wear nothing but silks and velvet and pearls, ropes, — yer mind? — ropes of 'em; and the lords and ladies have concerts, yer know, better 'n in the thayertre —"

"What do you know about the theatre?" Champney was genuinely surprised; "I thought you came from an orphan asylum."

"Yer did, did yer!" There was scorn in her voice. "Wot do I know 'bout the thayertre? — Oh, but yer green!" She broke into another merry laugh which, together with the patronage of her words and certain unsavory memories of his own, nettled Champney more than he would have cared to acknowledge.

"Better 'n the thayertre," she repeated emphatically; "and the lords serenade the ladies — Do yer know wot a serenade is?" She interrupted herself to ask the question with a strong doubt in the interrogation.

"I've heard of 'em," said Champney meekly; "but I don't think I've ever seen one."

“I’ll tell yer ’bout ’em. The lords have guitars and go out in the moonlight and stand under the ladies’ windys and play, and the ladies make believe they have n’t heard; then they look up all round at the moon and sigh *awful*, —” she sighed in sympathy, — “and then the lords begin to sing and tell ’em they love ’em and can’t live without a — a token. I’ll bet yer don’t know wot that is?”

“No, of course I don’t; I’m not a lord, and I don’t live in Italy.”

“Well, I’ll tell yer.” Her tone was one of relenting indulgence for his ignorance. “Sometimes it’s a bow that they make out of the ribbon their dresses is trimmed with, and sometimes it’s a flower, a rose, yer know; and the lord sings again — can yer sing?”

Her companion repressed a smile. “I can manage a tune or two at a pinch.”

“And the lady comes out on the balcony and leans over — like this, yer know;” she jumped up and leaned over the rail of the float, keeping her hands well in front of her to save her apron; “and she listens and keeps looking, and when he sings he’s going to die because he loves her so, she throws the token down to him to let him know he must n’t die ’coz she loves him too; and he catches it, the rose, yer know, and smells it and then he kisses it and squeezes it against his heart —” she forgot her greasy hands in the rapture of this imaginative flight, and pressed them theatrically over her gingham apron beneath which her own little organ was pulsing quick with the excitement of this telling moment; “— and then the moon shines just as bright as silver and — and she marries him.”

She drew a deep breath. During the recital she had lost herself in the personating of the favorite char-

acters from her one novel. While she stood there looking out on the lake and the Flamsted Hills with eyes that were still seeing the gardens and marble terraces of Isola Bella, Champney Gooze had time to fix that picture on his mental retina and, recalling it in after years, knew that the impression was "more lasting than bronze."

She came rather suddenly to herself when she grew aware of her larded hands pressed against her clean apron.

"Oh, gracious, but I'll catch it!" she exclaimed ruefully. "Wot'll I do now? She said I'd got to keep it clean till she got back, and she'll fire me and — and I want to stay awful; it's just like the story, yer know." She raised her gray eyes appealingly to his, and he saw at once that her childish fear was real. He comforted her.

"I'll tell you what: we'll go back to Hannah and she'll fix it for you; and if it's spoiled I'll go down and get some like it in the village and my mother will make you a new one. So, cheer up, Miss Aileen Armagh and-don't-yer-forget-it! And to-morrow evening, if the moon is out, we'll have a serenade all by ourselves; what do you say to that?"

"D' yer mane it?" she demanded, half breathless in her earnestness.

He nodded.

Aileen clapped her hands and began to dance; then she stopped suddenly to say: "I ain't going to dance for yer now; but I will sometime," she added graciously. "I've got to go now and help Ann. What time are yer coming for the serenade?"

"I'll be here about eight; the moon will be out by then and we must have a moon."

She started away on the run, beckoning to him with her unwashed hands: "Come on, then, till I show yer my windy. It's the little one over the dining-room. There ain't a balcony, but — see there! there's the top of the bay windy and I can lean out — why did n't yer tell me yer could play the guitar?"

"Because I can't."

"A harp, belike?"

"No; guess again."

"Yer no good; — but yer'll come?"

"Shurre; an' more be token it's at eight 'o the clock Oi'll be under yer windy." He gave the accent with such Celtic gusto that the little girl was captivated.

"Ain't you a corker!" she said admiringly and, waving her hand again to him, ran to the house. Champney followed more slowly to lay the case before Ann and Hannah.

On his way homeward he found himself wondering if he had ever seen the child before. As she leaned on the rail and looked out over the lake, a certain grace of attitude, which the coarse clothing failed to conceal, the rapt expression in the eyes, the *timbre* of her voice, all awakened a dim certainty that he had seen her before at some time and place distinctly unusual; but where? He turned the search-light of concentrated thought upon his comings and goings and doings during the last year and more. Where had he seen just such a child?

He looked up from the roadway, on which his eyes had been fixed while his absent thought was making back tracks over the last twelve months, and saw before him the high pastures of The Gore. In the long after-glow of the July sunset they enamelled the barren heights with a rich, yellowish green. In a flash it

came to him: "The green hill far away without a city wall"; the child singing on the vaudeville stage; the hush in the audience. He smiled to himself. He was experiencing that satisfaction which is common to all who have run down the quarry of a long-hunted recollection.

"She's the very one," he said to himself; "I wonder if Aunt Meda knows."

VI

THAT which proves momentous in our lives is rarely anticipated, seldom calculated. Its factors are for the most part unknown quantities; if not prime in themselves they are, at least, prime to each other. It cannot be measured in terms of time, for often it lies between two infinities. But the momentous decision, event, action, which reacts upon the life of a man or woman and influences that life so long as it is lived here on earth, is on the surface sufficiently finite for us to say: It was on such a day I made my decision; to such and such an event I can look back as the cause of all that has followed. The *How* thereof remains traceable to our purblind eyes for a month, a term of years, one generation, possibly two; the *Where* and *When* can generally be defined; but the *Why* we ask blindly, and are rarely answered satisfactorily.

Had young Googe been told, while he was walking homewards up The Gore, that his life line, like the antenna of the wireless, was even then the recipient and transmitter of multiple influences that had been, as it were, latent in the storage batteries of a generation; that what he was to be in the future was at this very hour in germ for development, he would have scouted the idea. His young self-sufficiency would have laughed the teller to scorn. He would have maintained as a man his mastership of his fate and fortunes, and whistled as carelessly as he whistled now for the puppy,

an Irish terrier which he had brought home with him, for training, to come and meet him.

And the puppy, whose name was Ragamuffin and called Rag for short, came duly, unknowing, like his young master, to meet his fate. He wriggled broadside down the walk as a puppy will in his first joy till, overpowered by his emotions, he rolled over on his back at Champney's feet, the fringes of his four legs waving madly in air.

"Champney, I'm waiting for you." It was his mother calling from the door. He ran in through the kitchen, and hurried to make himself presentable for the table and their guest whom he saw on the front porch.

As he entered the dining-room, his mother introduced him: "Father Honoré, my son, Champney."

The two men shook hands, and Mrs. Gooze took her seat. The priest bowed his head momentarily to make the sign of the cross. Champney Gooze shot one keen, amazed look in his direction. When that head was lifted Champney "opened fire," so he termed it to himself.

"I think I've seen you before, sir." It was hard for him to give the title "Father." "I got in your way, did n't I, at the theatre one evening over a year ago?"

His mother looked at him in amazement and something of anxiety. Was her son in his prejudice forgetting himself?

"Indeed, I think it was the other way round. I was in your way, for I remember thinking when you ran up against me 'that young fellow has been half-back on a football team.'"

Champney laughed. There was no withstanding this man's voice and the veiled humor of his introductory remarks.

“Did I hit hard? I did n’t think for a moment that you would recognize me; but I knew you as soon as mother introduced us. I see by your face, mother, that you need enlightening. It was only that I met Father Honoré” — he brought that out with no hesitation — “at the entrance to one of the New York theatres over a year ago, and in the crowd nearly ran him down. No wonder, sir, you sized me up by the pressure as a football fiend. That’s rich!” His merry laugh reassured his mother; she turned to Father Honoré.

“I don’t know whether all my son’s acquaintances are made at the theatre or not, but it is a coincidence that the other day he happened to mention the fact that the first time he saw Mr. Van Ostend he saw him there.”

“It’s my strong impression, Mrs. Googe, that Mr. Googe saw us both at the same place, at the same time. Mr. Van Ostend spoke to me of your son just a few days before I left New York.”

“Did he?” Champney’s eager blue eyes sought the priest’s. “Do you know him well?”

“As we all know him through his place in the world of affairs. Personally I have met him only a few times. You may know, perhaps, that he was instrumental in placing little Aileen Armagh, the orphan child, — you know whom I mean? — at Mrs. Champney’s, your aunt, Mrs. Googe tells me.”

“I was just going to ask you if you would be willing to tell us something about her,” said Mrs. Googe. “I’ve not seen her, but from all I hear she is a most unusual child, most interesting — ”

“Interesting, mother!” Champney interrupted her rather explosively; “she’s unique, the only and ever

Aileen Armagh." He turned again to Father Honoré. "Do tell us about her; I've been so blockheaded I could n't put two and two together, but I'm beginning to see daylight at last. I made her acquaintance this afternoon. That's why I was a little late, mother."

How we tell, even the best of us, with reserves! Father Honoré told of his interest being roused, as well as his suspicions, by the wording of the poster, and of his determination to see for himself to what extent the child was being exploited. But of the thought-lever, the "Little Trout", that raised that interest, he made no mention; nor, indeed, was it necessary.

"You see there is a class of foreigners on the East side that receive commissions for exploiting precocious children on the stage; they are very clever in evading the law. The children themselves are helpless. I had looked up a good many cases before this because it was in my line of work, and in this particular one I found that the child had been orphaned in Ireland almost from her birth; that an aunt, without relatives, had emigrated with her only a few months before I saw her on the stage, and the two had lived in an east side tenement with an old Italian. The child's aunt, a young woman about twenty-eight, developed quick consumption during the winter and died in the care of the Italian, Nonna Lisa they call her. This woman cared for the little girl, and began to take her out with her early in March on the avenues and streets of the upper west side. The old woman is an itinerant musician and plays the guitar with real feeling—I've heard her—and, by the way, makes a decent little living of her own. She found that Aileen had a good voice and could sing several Irish songs. She

learned the accompaniments, and the two led, so far as I can discover, a delightful life of vagabondage for several weeks. It seems the old Italian has a grandson, Luigi, who sings in vaudeville with a travelling troop. He was in the west and south during the entire time that Aileen was with his grandmother; and through her letters he learned of the little girl's voice. He spoke of this to his manager, and he communicated with the manager of a Broadway vaudeville — they are both in the vaudeville trust — and asked him to engage her, and retain her for the troop when they should start on their annual autumn tour. But Nonna Lisa was shrewd. — It's wonderful, Mrs. Googe, how quickly they develop the sixth sense of cautious speculation after landing! She made a contract for six weeks only, hoping to raise her price in the autumn. So I found that the child was not being exploited, except legitimately, by the old Italian who was caring for her and guarding her from all contamination. But, of course, that could not go on, and I had the little girl placed in the orphan asylum on —nd Street —” He interrupted himself to say half apologetically:

“I am prolix, I fear, but I am hoping you will be personally interested in this child whose future life will, I trust, be spent here far away from the metropolitan snares. I am sure she is worth your interest.”

“I know she is,” said Champney emphatically; “and the more we know of her the better. You'll laugh at my experience when you have heard it; but first let us have the whole of yours.”

“You know, of course, where Mr. Van Ostend lives?” Champney nodded. “Did you happen to notice the orphan asylum just opposite on —nd Street?”

“No; I don’t recall any building of that sort.”

He smiled. “Probably not; that is not in your line and we men are apt to see only what is in the line of our working vision. It seems that Mr. Van Ostend has a little girl —”

“I know, that’s the Alice I told you of, mother; did you see her when she was here last month?”

“No; I only met Mr. Van Ostend on business. You were saying —?” She addressed Father Honoré.

“His little daughter told him so much about two orphan children, with whom she had managed to have a kind of across-street-and-window acquaintance, that he proposed to her to have the children over for Christmas luncheon. The moment he saw Aileen, he recognized in her the child on the vaudeville stage to whom he had given the flowers — You remember that incident?”

“Don’t I though!”

“— Because she had sung his wife’s favorite hymn. He was thoroughly interested in the child after seeing her, so to say, at close range, and took the first opportunity to speak with the Sister Superior in regard to finding for her a suitable and permanent home. The Sister Superior referred him to me. As you know, he came to Flamsted recently with this same little daughter; and the child talked so much and told so many amusing things about Aileen to Mrs. Champney, that Mr. Van Ostend saw at once this was an opportunity to further his plans, although he confided to me his surprise that his cousin, Mrs. Champney, should be willing to have so immature a child, in her house. Directly on getting home, he telephoned to me that he had found a home for her with a relation of his in Flamsted. You may judge of my surprise and pleasure,

for I had received the appointment to this place and the work among the quarrymen only a month before. This is how the little girl happened to come up with me. I hear she is making friends."

"She can't help making them, and a good deal more besides; for Romanzo Caukins, our neighbor's son, and Octavius Buzzby, my aunt's *chargé d'affaires*, are at the present time her abject slaves," said Champney, rising from the table at a signal from his mother. "Let's go out on the porch, and I'll tell you of the fun I've had with her — poor Roman!" He shook his head and chuckled.

He stepped into the living-room as he passed through the hall and reached for his pipe in a rack above the mantel. "Do you smoke," he asked half-hesitatingly, but with an excess of courtesy in his voice as if he were apologizing for asking such a question.

"Sometimes; a pipe, if you please." He held out his hand; Champney handed him a sweetbrier and a tobacco pouch. "You permit, Madam?" He spoke with old world courtesy. Aurora Googe smiled permission. She saw with satisfaction her son's puzzled look of inquiry as he noted the connoisseurship with which Father Honoré handled his after-supper tools.

Mrs. Milton Caukins, their neighbor in the stone house across the bridge over the Rothel, stood for several minutes at her back door listening to Champney's continued arpeggios and wondered whose was the deep hearty laugh that answered them. In telling his afternoon's experience Champney, also, had his reserves: of the coming serenade he said never a word to the priest.

"He's O.K. and a man, mother," was his comment on their guest, as he bade her good night. Aurora

Googe answered him with a smile that betokened content, but she was wise enough not to commit herself in words. Afterwards she sat long in her room, planning for her son's future. The twenty thousand she had just received for the undeveloped quarry lands should serve to start him well in life.

VII

ON the following day, mother and son constituted themselves a committee of ways and means as to the best investment of the money in furtherance of Champney's interests. Her ambition was gratified in that she saw him anxious to take his place in the world of affairs, to "get on" and, as he said, make his mark early in the world of finance.

The fact that, during his college course, he had spent the five thousand received from the sale of the first quarry, plus the interest on the same without accounting for a penny of it, seemed to his mother perfectly legitimate; for she had sold the land and laid by the amount paid for it in order to put her son through college. Since he was twelve years old she had brought him up in the knowledge that it was to be his for that purpose. From the time he came, through her generosity, into possession of the property, she always replied to those who had the courage to criticise her course in placing so large a sum at the disposal of a youth:

"My son is a man. I realize I can suggest, but not dictate; moreover I have no desire to."

She drew the line there, and rarely had any one dared to expostulate further with her. When they ventured it, Aurora Googe turned upon them those dark eyes, in which at such times there burned a

seemingly unquenchable light of self-feeding defiance, and gave them to understand, with a repelling dignity of manner that bordered hard on haughtiness, that what she and her son might or might not do was no one's concern but their own. This self-evident truth, when it struck home to her well-wishers, made her no friends. Nor did she regret this. She had dwelt, as it were, apart, since her marriage and early widowhood — her husband had died seven months before Champney was born — on the old Gooze estate at The Gore. But she was a good neighbor, as Mrs. Caukins could testify; paid her taxes promptly, and minded her flocks, the source of her limited income, until wool-raising in New England became unprofitable. An opportunity was presented when her boy was ten years old to sell a portion of the barren sheep pastures for the first quarry. She counted herself fortunate in being able thus to provide for Champney's four college years.

In all the village, there were only three men, whom Aurora Gooze named friend. These men, with the intimacy born of New England's community of interest, called her to her face by her Christian name; they were Octavius Buzzby, old Joel Quimber, and Colonel Caukins. There had been one other, Louis Champney, who during his lifetime promised to do much for her boy when he should have come of age; but as the promises were never committed to black and white, they were, after his death, as though they had never been.

"If only Aunt Meda would fork over some of hers!" Champney exclaimed with irritation. They were sitting on the porch after tea. "All I want is a seat in the Stock Exchange — and the chance to start in.

I believe if I had the money Mr. Van Ostend would help me to that."

"You did n't say anything to him about your plans, did you?"

"Well, no; not exactly. But it is n't every fellow gets a chance to dine at such a man's table, and I thought the opportunity was too good to be wasted entirely. I let him know in a quiet way that I, like every other fellow, was looking for a job." Champney laughed aloud at the shocked look on his mother's face. He knew her independence of thought and action; it brooked no catering for favors.

"You see, mother, men *have* to do it, or go under. It's about one chance in ten thousand that a man gets what he wants, and it's downright criminal to throw away a good opportunity to get your foot on a round. Run the scaling ladder up or down, it does n't much matter — there are hundreds of applicants for every round; and only one man can stand on each — and climb, as I mean to. You don't get this point of view up here, mother, but you will when you see the development of these great interests. Then it will be each for himself and the devil gets the hindermost. Should n't I take every legitimate means to forge ahead? You heard what the priest said about Mr. Van Ostend's mentioning me to him? Let me tell you such men don't waste one breath in mentioning anything that does not mean a big interest per cent, *not one breath*. They can't, literally, afford to; and I'm hoping, only hoping, you know —", he looked up at her from his favorite seat on the lowest step of the front porch with a keen hard expectancy in his eyes that belied his words, "— that what he said to Father Honoré means something definite. Anyhow,

we'll wait a while till we see how the syndicate takes hold of this quarry business before we decide on anything, won't we, mother?"

"I'm willing to wait as long as you like if you will only promise me one thing."

"What's that?" He rose and faced her; she saw that he was slightly on the defensive.

"That you will never, *never*, in any circumstances, apply to your Aunt Almeda for funds, no matter how much you may want them. I could n't bear that!"

She spoke passionately in earnest, with such depth of feeling that she did not realize her son was not giving her the promise when he said abruptly, the somewhat hard blue eyes looking straight into hers:

"Mother, *why* are you so hard on Aunt Meda? She's a stingy old screw, I know, and led Uncle Louis round by the nose, so everybody says; but why are *you* so down on her?"

He was insistent, and his insistence was the one trait in his character which his mother had found hardest to deal with from his babyhood; from it, however, if it should develop happily into perseverance, she hoped the most. This trait he inherited from his father, Warren Googe, but in the latter it had deteriorated into obstinacy. She always feared for her self-control when she met it in her son, and just now she was under the influence of a powerful emotion that helped her to lose it.

"Because," she made answer, again passionately but the earnestness had given place to anger, "I am a woman and have borne from her what no woman bears and forgets, or forgives! Are you any the wiser now?" she demanded. "It is all that I shall tell you; so don't insist."

The two continued to look into each other's eyes, and something, it could hardly be called inimical, rather an aloofness from the tie of blood, was visible to each in the other's steadfast gaze. Aurora Googe shivered. Her eyes fell before the younger ones.

"Don't Champney! Don't let's get upon this subject again; I can't bear it."

"But, mother," he protested, "you mentioned it first."

"It was what you said about Almeda's furnishing you with money that started it. Don't say anything more about it; only promise me, won't you?"

She raised her eyes again to his, but this time in appeal. At forty-one Aurora Googe was still a very beautiful woman, and her appeal, made gently as if in apology for her former vehemence, rendered that beauty potent with her son's manhood.

"Let me think it over, mother, before I promise." He answered her as gently. "It's a hard thing to exact of a man, and I don't hold much with promises. What did Uncle Louis' amount to?"

The blood surged into his mother's face, and tears, rare ones, for she was not a weak woman neither was she a sentimental one, filled her eyes. Her son came up the steps and kissed her. They were seldom demonstrative to this extent save in his home-comings and leave-takings. He changed the subject abruptly.

"I'm going down to the village now. You know I have the serenade on my program, at eight. Afterwards I'll run down to The Greenbush for the mail and to see my old cronies. I have n't had a chance yet." He began to whistle for the puppy, but cut himself short, laughing. "I was going to take Rag, but he won't fit in with the serenade. Keep him tied

up while I'm gone, please. Anything you want from the village, mother?"

"No, not to-night."

"Don't sit up for me; I may be late. Joel is long-winded and the Colonel is booming The Gore for all it is worth and more too; I want to hear the fun. Good night."

VIII

THE afterglow of sunset was long. The dilated moon, rising from the waters of the Bay, shone pale at first; but as it climbed the shoulder of the mountain *Wave-of-the-Sea* and its light fell upon the farther margin of the lake, its clear disk was pure argent.

Champney looked his approval. It was the kind of night he had been hoping for. He walked leisurely down the road from The Gore for the night was warm. It was already past eight, but he lingered, purposely, a few minutes longer on the lake shore until the moonlight should widen on the waters. Then he went on to the grounds.

He entered by the lane and crossed the lawn to an arching rose-laden trellis near the bay window; beneath it was a wooden bench. He looked up at the window. The blinds were closed. So far as he could see there was no light in all the great house. Behind the rose trellis was a group of stately Norway spruce; he could see the sheen of their foliage in the moonlight. He took his banjo out of its case and sat down on the bench, smiling to himself, for he was thoroughly enjoying, with that enjoyment of youth, health, and vitality which belongs to twenty-one, this rustic adventure. He touched the strings lightly with preliminary thrumming. It was a toss-up between "Annie Rooney" and "Oft in the stilly night." He

decided for the latter. Raising his eyes to the closed blinds, behind which he knew the witch was hiding, he began the accompaniment. The soft *thrum-thrum*, vibrating through the melody, found an echo in the whirring wings of all that ephemeral insect life which is abroad on such a night. The prelude was almost at an end when he saw the blinds begin to separate. Champney continued to gaze steadily upwards. A thin bare arm was thrust forth; the blinds opened wide; in the dark window space he saw Aileen, listening intently and gazing fixedly at the moon as if its every beam were dropping liquid music.

He began to sing. His voice was clear, fine, and high, a useful first tenor for two winters in the Glee Club. When he finished Aileen deigned to look down upon him, but she made no motion of recognition. He rose and took his stand directly beneath the window.

“I say, Miss Aileen Armagh-and-don’t-yer-forget-it, that is n’t playing fair! Where’s my token?”

There was a giggle for answer; then, leaning as far out as she dared, both hands stemmed on the window ledge, the child began to sing. Full, free, joyously light-hearted, she sent forth the rollicking Irish melody and the merry sentiment that was strung upon it; evidently it had been adapted to her, for the words had suffered a slight change:

“Och! laughin’ roses are my lips,
Forget-me-nots my ee,
It’s many a lad they’re drivin’ mad;
Shall they not so wi’ ye?
Heigho! the morning dew!
Heigho! the rose and rue!
Follow me, my bonny lad,
For I’ll not follow you.

"Wi' heart in mout', in hope and doubt,
 My lovers come and go:
 My smiles receive, my smiles deceive;
 Shall they not serve you so?
 Heigho! the morning dew!
 Heigho! the rose and rue!
 Follow me, my bonny lad,
 For I'll not follow you."

It was a delight to hear her.

"There now, I'll give yer my token. Hold out yer hands!"

Champney, hugging his banjo under one arm, made a cup of his hands. Carefully measuring the distance, she dropped one rosebud into them.

"Put it on yer heart now," was the next command from above. He obeyed with exaggerated gesture, to the great delight of the serenadee. "And yer goin' to keep it?"

"Forever and a day." Champney made this assertion with a hyper-sentimental inflection of voice, and, lifting the flower to his nose, drew in his breath —

"Confound you, you little fiend —" he sneezed rather than spoke.

The sneeze was answered by a peal of laughter from above and a fifteen-year-old's cracked "Haw-haw-haw" from the region of the Norway spruces. Every succeeding sneeze met with a like response — roars of laughter on the one hand and peal upon peal on the the other. Even the kitchen door began to give signs of life, for Hannah and Ann made their appearance.

The strong white pepper, which Romanzo managed to procure from Hannah, had been cunningly secreted by Aileen between the imbricate petals, and then tied, in a manner invisible at night, with a fine thread of

pink silk begged from Ann. It was now acting and re-acting on the lining of the serenader's olfactory organ in a manner to threaten final decapitation. Champney was still young enough to resent being made a subject of such practical joking by a little girl; but he was also sufficiently wise to acknowledge to himself that he had been worsted and, in the end, to put a good face on it. It is true he would have preferred that Romanzo Caukins had not been witness to his defeat.

The sneezing and laughter gradually subsided. He sat down again on the bench and taking up his banjo prepared, with somewhat elaborate effort, to put it into its case. He said nothing.

"Say!" came in a sobered voice from above; "are yer mad with me?"

Ignoring both question and questioner, he took out his handkerchief, wiped his face and forehead and, returning it to his pocket, heaved a sigh of apparent exhaustion.

"I say, Mr. Champney Googe, are yer mad with me?"

To Champney's delight, he heard an added note of anxiety. He bowed his head lower over the banjo case and in silence renewed his simulated struggle to slip that instrument into it.

"Champney! Are yer *rale* mad with me?" There was no mistaking the earnestness of this appeal. He made no answer, but chuckled inwardly at the audacity of the address.

"Champ!" she stamped her foot to emphasize her demand; "if yer don't tell me yer ain't mad with me, I'll lave yer for good and all — so now!"

"I don't know that I'm mad with you," he spoke at last in an aggrieved, a subdued tone; "I simply

did n't think you could play me such a mean trick when I was in earnest, dead earnest."

"Did yer mane it?"

"Why, of course I did! You don't suppose a man walks three miles in a hot night to serenade a girl just to get an ounce of pepper in his nose by way of thanks, do you?"

"I thought yer did n't mane it; Romanzo said yer was laughing at me for telling yer 'bout the lords and ladies a-making love with their guitars." The voice indicated some dejection of spirits.

"He did, did he! I'll settle with Romanzo later." He heard a soft brushing of branches in the region of the Norway spruces and knew that the youth was in retreat. "And I'll settle it with you, too, Miss Aileen Armagh-and-don't-you-forget-it, in a way that'll make you remember the tag end of your name for one while!"

This threat evidently had its effect.

"Wot yer going to do?"

He heard her draw her breath sharply.

"Come down here and I'll tell you."

"I can't. She might catch me. She told me I'd got to stay in my room after eight, and she's coming home ter-night. Wot yer going to do?"

Champney laughed outright. "Don't you wish you might know, Aileen Armagh!" He took his banjo in one hand, lifted his cap with the other and, standing so, bareheaded in the moonlight, sang with all the simulated passion and pathos of which he was capable one of the few love songs that belong to the world, "Kathleen Mavoureen"; but he took pains to substitute "Aileen" for "Kathleen." Even Ann and Hannah, listening from the kitchen porch, began to

feel sentimentally inclined when the clear voice rendered with tender pathos the last lines:

“Oh! why art thou silent, thou voice of my heart?
Oh! why art thou silent, Aileen Mavoureen?”

Without so much as another glance at the little figure in the window, he ran across the lawn and up the lane to the highroad.

IX

ON his way to The Greenbush he overtook Joel Quimber, and without warning linked his arm close in the old man's. At the sudden contact Joel started.

"Uncle Jo, old chap, how are you? This seems like home to see you round."

"Lord bless me, Champ, how you come on a feller! Here, stan' still till I get a good look at ye; — growed, growed out of all notion. Why, I hain't seen ye for good two year. You war n't to home last summer?"

"Only for a week; I was off on a yachting cruise most of the time. Mother said you were up on the Bay then at your grandniece's — pretty girl. I remember you had her down here one Christmas."

The old man made no definite answer, but cackled softly to himself: "Yachting cruise, eh? And you remember a pretty girl, eh?" He nudged him with a sharpened elbow and whispered mysteriously: "Devil of a feller, Champ! I've heerd tell, I've heerd tell — chip of the old block, eh?" He nudged him knowingly again.

"Oh, we're all devils more or less, we men, Uncle Jo; now, honor bright, are n't we?"

"You've hit it, Champ; more or less — more or less. I heerd you was a-goin' it strong: primy donny suppers an' ortermobillies —"

"Now, Uncle Jo, you know there's no use believing all you hear, but you can't plunge a country raised boy

into a whirlpool like New York for four years and not expect him to strike out and swim with the rest. You've got to, Uncle Jo, or you're nobody. You'd go under."

"Like 'nough you would, Champ; I can't say, fer I hain't ben thar. Guess twixt you an' me an' the post, I won't hev ter go thar sence Aurory's sold the land fer the quarries. I hear it talked thet it'll bring half New York right inter old Flamsted; I dunno, I dunno — you 'member 'bout the new wine in the old bottles, Champ? — highflyers, emigrants, Dagos and Polacks — Come ter think, Mis' Champney's got one on 'em now. Hev you seen her, Champ?"

Champney's hearty laugh rang out with no uncertain sound. "Seen her! I should say so. She's worth any 'primy donny', as you call them, that ever drew a good silver dollar out of my pockets. Oh, it's too good to keep! I must tell you; but you'll keep mum, Uncle Jo?"

"Mum's the word, ef yer say so, Champ." They turned from The Greenbush and arm in arm paced slowly up the street again. From time to time, for the next ten minutes, Augustus Buzzby and the Colonel in the tavern office heard from up street such unwonted sounds of hilarity and so long continued, that Augustus looked apprehensively at the Colonel who was becoming visibly uneasy lest he fail to place the joke.

When the two appeared at the office door they bore unmistakable signs of having enjoyed themselves hugely. Augustus Buzzby gave them his warmest welcome and seated Uncle Joel in his deepest office chair, providing him at the same time with a pipe and some cut leaf. The Colonel was in his glory. With one arm thrown affectionately around young Gooze's neck, he expatiated

on the joy of the community as a whole in again welcoming its own.

“Champney, my dear boy, — you still permit me the freedom of old friendship? — this town is already looking to you as to its future deliverer; I may say, as to a Moses who will lead us into the industrial Canaan which is even now, thanks to my friend, your honored mother, beckoning to us with its promise of abundant plenty. Never, in my wildest dreams, my dear boy, have I thought to see such a consummation of my long-cherished hopes.”

It was always one of Champney’s prime youthful joys to urge the Colonel, by judiciously applied excitants, to a greater flowering of eloquence; so, now, as an inducement he wrung his neighbor’s hand and thanked him warmly for his timely recognition of the new Flamsted about to be.

“Now,” he said, “the thing is for all of us to fall into line and forge ahead, Colonel. If we don’t, we’ll be left behind; and in these times to lag is to take to the backwoods.”

“Right you are, my dear fellow; deterioration can only set in when the members of a community, like ours, fail to present a solid front to the disintegrating forces of a supine civilization which — ”

“At it again, Milton Caukins!” It was Mr. Wiggins who, entering the office, interrupted the flow, — “dammed the torrent”, he was wont to say. He extended a hand to young Googe. “Glad to see you, Champney. I hear there is a prospect of your remaining with us. Quimber tells us he heard something to the effect that a position might be offered you by the syndicate.”

“It’s the first I’ve heard of it. How did you hear,

Uncle Jo?" He turned upon the old man with a keen alertness which, taken in connection with the Colonel's oratory, was both disconcerting and confusing.

"How 'd I hear? Le' me see; Champ, what was we just talking 'bout up the street, eh?"

"Oh, never mind that now," he answered impatiently; "let's hear what you heard. I'm the interested party just now." But the old man looked only the more disturbed and was not to be hurried.

"'Bout that little girl —" he began, but was unceremoniously cut short by Champney.

"Oh, damn the girl, just for once, Uncle Jo. What I want to know is, how you came to hear anything about me in connection with the quarry syndicate."

The old man persisted: "I'm a-tryin' to get a-holt of that man's name that got her up here —"

"Van Ostend," Champney suggested; "is that the name you want?"

"That's him, Van Ostend; that's the one. He an' the rest was hevin' a meetin' right here in this office 'fore they went to the train, an' I was settin' outside the winder an' heerd one on 'em say: 'Thet Mis' Gooze's a stunner; what's her son like, does any one know?' An' I heerd Mr. Van Ostend say: 'She's very unusual; if her son has half her executive ability' — them's his very words — 'we might work him in with us. It would be good business policy to interest, through him, the land itself in its own output, so to speak, besides being something of a courtesy to Mis' Gooze. I've met him twice.' Then they fell to discussin' the lay of The Gore and the water power at The Corners."

"Bully for you, Uncle Jo!" Champney slapped the rounded shoulders with such appreciative heartiness

that the old man's pipe threatened to be shaken from between his toothless gums. "You have heard the very thing I've been hoping for. Tave never let on that he knew anything about it."

"He did n't, only what I told him." Old Quimber cackled weakly. "I guess Tave's got his hands too full at Champo to remember what's told him; what with the little girl an' Romanzo — no offence, Colonel." He looked apologetically at the Colonel who waved his hand with an airiness that disposed at once of the idea of any feeling on his part in regard to family revelations. "I heerd tell that the little girl hed turned his head an' Tave could n't git nothin' in the way of work out of him."

"In that case I must look into the matter." The Colonel spoke with stern gravity. "Both Mrs. Caukins and I would deplore any undue influence that might be brought to bear upon any son of ours at so critical a period of his career."

Mr. Wiggins laughed; but the laugh was only a disguised sneer. "Perhaps you'll come to your senses, Colonel, when you've got an immigrant for a daughter-in-law. Own up, now, you did n't think your 'competing industrial thousands' might be increased by some half-Irish grandchildren, now did you?"

Champney listened for the Colonel's answer with a suspended hope that he might give Elmer Wiggins "one," as he said to himself. He still owed the latter gentleman a grudge because in the past he had been, as it were, the fountain head of all in his youthful misery in supplying ample portions of the never-to-be-forgotten oil of the castor bean and dried senna leaves. He felt at the present time, moreover, that he was inimical to his mother and her interests. And Milton

Caukins was his friend and hers, past, present, and future; of this he was sure.

The Colonel took time to light his cigar before replying; then, waving it towards the ceiling, he said pleasantly:

“My young friend here, Champney, to whom we are looking to restore the pristine vigor of a fast vanishing line of noble ancestors, is both a Googe *and* a Champney. *His* ancestors counted themselves honored in making alliances with foreigners — immigrants to our all-welcoming shores; ‘a rose’, Mr. Wiggins, ‘by any other name’; I need not quote.” His chest swelled; he interrupted himself to puff vigorously at his cigar before continuing: “My son, sir, is on the spindle side of the house a *Googe*, and a *Googe*, sir, has the blood of the Champneys and the Lord knows of how many noble *immigrants*” (the last word was emphasized by a fleeting glance of withering scorn at the small-headed Wiggins) “in his veins which, fortunately, cannot be said of you, sir. If, at any time in the distant future, my son should see fit to ally himself with a scion of the noble and long-suffering Hibernian race, I assure you” — his voice was increasing in dimensions — “both Mrs. Caukins and myself would feel honored, sir, yes, honored in the breach!”

After this wholly unexpected ending to his peroration, he lowered his feet from their accustomed rest on the counter of the former bar and, ignoring Mr. Wiggins, remarked to Augustus that it was time for the mail. Augustus, glad to welcome any diversion of the Colonel’s and Mr. Wiggins’s asperities, said the train was on time and the mail would be there in a “few minutes.

“Tave’s gone down to meet Mis’ Champney,” he added turning to Champney. “She’s been in Hallsport for two days. I presume you ain’t seen her.”

“Not yet. If you can give me my mail first I can drive up to Champ-au-Haut with her to-night. There’s the mail-wagon.”

“To be sure, to be sure, Champney; and you might take out Mis’ Champney’s; Tave can’t leave the hosses.”

“All right.” He went out on the veranda to see if the Champ-au-Haut carriage was in sight. A moment later, when it drove up, he was at the door to open it.

“Here I am, Aunt Meda. Will this hold two and all those bundles?”

“Why, Champney, you here? Come in.” She made room for him on the ample seat; he sprang in, and bent to kiss her before sitting down beside her.

“Now, I call this luck. This is as good as a confessional, small and dark, and ’fess I’ve got to, Aunt Meda, or there ’ll be trouble for somebody at Campo.”

Had the space not been so “small and dark” he might have seen the face of the woman beside him quiver painfully at the sound of his cheery young voice and, when he kissed her, flush to her temples.

“What devilry now, Champney?”

“It’s a girl, of course, Aunt Meda — your girl,” he added laughing.

“So you’ve found her out, have you, you young rogue? Well, what do you think of her?”

“I think you’ll have a whole vaudeville show at Champ-au-Haut for the rest of your days — and gratis.”

“I’ve been coming to that conclusion myself” said Mrs. Champney, smiling in turn at the recollection of some of her experiences during the past three weeks. “She amuses me, and I’ve concluded to keep her. I’m going to have her with me a good part of the time.

I've seen enough since she has been with me to convince me that my people will amount to nothing so long as she is with them." There was an edge to her words the sharpness of which was felt by Octavius on the front seat.

"I can't blame them; I could n't. Why Tave here is threatened already with a quick decline — sheer worry of mind, is n't it Tave?" Octavius nodded shortly; "And as for Romanzo there's no telling where he will end; even Ann and Hannah are infected."

"What do you mean, Champney?" She was laughing now.

"Just wait till I run in and get the mail for us both, and I'll tell you; it's my confession."

He sprang out, ran up the steps and disappeared for a moment. He reappeared thrusting some letters into his pocket. Evidently he had not looked at them. He handed the other letters and papers to Octavius, and so soon as the carriage was on the way to The Bow he regaled his aunt with his evening's experience under the bay window.

"Serves you right," was her only comment; but her laugh told him she enjoyed the episode. He went into the house upon her invitation and sat with her till nearly eleven, giving an account of himself — at least all the account he cared to give which was intrinsically different from that which he gave his mother. Mrs. Champney was what he had once described to his mother as "a worldly woman with the rind on," and when he was with her, he involuntarily showed that side of his nature which was best calculated to make an impression on the "rind." He grew more worldly himself, and she rejoiced in what she saw.

WHILE walking homewards up The Gore, he was wondering why his mother had shown such strength of feeling when he expressed the wish that his aunt would help him financially to further his plans. He knew the two women never had but little intercourse; but with him it was different. He was a man, the living representative of two families, and who had a better right than he to some of his Aunt Meda's money? A right of blood, although on the Champney side distant and collateral. He knew that the community as a whole, especially now that his mother had become a factor in its new industrial life, was looking to him, as once they had looked to his Uncle Louis, to "make good" with his inheritance of race. To this end his mother had equipped him with his university training. Why should n't his aunt be willing to help him? She liked him, that is, she liked to talk with him. Sometimes, it is true, it occurred to him that his room was better than his company; this was especially noticeable in his young days when he was much with his aunt's husband whom he called "Uncle Louis." Since his death he had never ceased to visit her at Champ-au-Haut — too much was at stake, for he was the rightful heir to her property at least, if not Louis Champney's. She, as well as his father, had inherited twenty thousand from the estate in The Gore. His father, so he was told, had squan-

dered his patrimony some two years before his death. His aunt, on the contrary, had already doubled hers; and with skilful manipulation forty thousand in these days might be quadrupled easily. It was wise, whatever might happen, to keep on the right side of Aunt Meda; and as for giving that promise to his mother he neither could nor would. His mind was made up on this point when he reached The Gore. He told himself he dared not. Who could say what unmet necessity might handicap him at some critical time? — this was his justification.

In the midst of his wonderings, he suddenly remembered the evening's mail. He took it out and struck a match to look at the hand-writing. Among several letters from New York, he recognized one as having Mr. Van Ostend's address on the reverse of the envelope. He tore it open; struck another match and, the letter being type-written, hastily read it through with the aid of a third and fourth pocket-lucifer; read it in a tumult of expectancy, and finished it with an intense and irritating sense of disappointment. He vehemently voiced his vexation: "Oh, damn it all!"

He did not take the trouble to return the letter to its cover, but kept flirting it in his hand as he strode indignantly up the hill, his arms swinging like a young windmill's. When he came in sight of the house, he looked up at his mother's bedroom window. Her light was still burning; despite his admonition she was waiting for him as usual. He must tell her before he slept.

"Champney!" she called, when she heard him in the hall.

"Yes, mother; may I come up?"

"Of course." She opened wide her bedroom door

and stood there, waiting for him, the lamp in her hand. Her beauty was enhanced by the loose-flowing cotton wrapper of pale pink. Her dark heavy hair was braided for the night and coiled again and again, crown fashion, on her head.

“Aunt Meda never could hold a candle to mother!” was Champney Gooze’s thought on entering. The two sat down for the usual before-turning-in-chat.

He was so full of his subject that it overflowed at once in abrupt speech.

“Mother, I’ve had a letter from Mr. Van Ostend —”

“Oh, Champney!” There was the joy of anticipation in her voice.

“Now, mother, don’t — don’t expect anything,” he pleaded, “for you’ll be no end cut up over the whole thing. Now, listen.” He read the letter; the tone of his voice indicated both disgust and indignation.

“Now, look at that!” He burst forth eruptively when he had finished. “Here we’ve been banking on an offer for some position in the syndicate, at least, something that would help clear the road to Wall Street where I should be able to strike out for myself without being dependent on any one — I did n’t mince matters that day of the dinner when I told him what I wanted, either! And here I get an offer to go to Europe for five years and study banking systems and the Lord knows what in London, Paris, and Berlin, and act as a sort of super in his branch offices. Great Scott! Does he think a man is going to waste five years of his life in Europe at a time when twenty-four hours here at home might make a man! He’s a donkey if he thinks that, and I’d have given him credit for more common sense — ”

“Now, Champney, stop right where you are. Don’t boil over so.” She repressed a smile. “Let’s talk business and look at matters as they stand.”

“I can’t;” he said doggedly; “I can’t talk business without a business basis, and this here,” — he shook the letter much as Rag shook a slipper, — “it’s just slop! What am I going to do over there, I’d like to know?” he demanded fiercely; whereupon his mother took the letter from his hand and, without heeding his grumbling, read it carefully twice.

“Now, look here, Champney,” she said firmly; “you must use some reason. I admit this is n’t what you wanted or I expected, but it’s something; many would think it everything. Did n’t you tell me only yesterday that in these times a man is fortunate to get his foot on any round of the ladder —”

“Well, if I did, I did n’t mean the rung of a banking house fire-escape over in Europe.” He interrupted her, speaking sulkily. Then of a sudden he laughed out. “Go on, mother, I’m a chump.” His mother smiled and continued the broken sentence:

“— And that ten thousand fail where one succeeds in getting even a foothold — to climb, as you want to?”

“But how can I climb? That’s the point. Why, I shall be twenty-six in five years — if I live,” he added lugubriously.

His mother laughed outright. The splendid specimen of health, vitality, and strength before her was in too marked contrast to his words.

“Well, I don’t care,” he muttered, but joining heartily in her laugh; “I’ve heard of fellows like me going into a decline just out of pure homesickness over there.”

"I don't think you will be homesick for Flamsted; I saw no traces of that malady while you were in New York. On the contrary, I thought you accepted every opportunity to stay away."

"New York is different," he replied, a little shame-faced in the presence of the truth he had just heard. "But, mother, you would be alone here."

"I'm used to it, Champney;" she spoke as it were perfunctorily; "and I am ambitious to see you succeed as you wish to. I want to see you in a position which will fulfil both your hopes and mine; but neither you nor I can choose the means, not yet; we have n't the money. For my part, I think you should accept this offer; it's one in ten thousand. Work your way up during these five years into Mr. Van Ostend's confidence, and I am sure, *sure*, that by that time he will have something for you that will satisfy even your young ambition. I think, moreover, it is a necessity for you to accept this, Champney."

"You do; why?"

"Well, for a good many reasons. I doubt, in the first place, if these quarries can get under full running headway for the next seven years, and even if you had been offered some position of trust in connection with them, you have n't had an opportunity to prove yourself worthy of it in a business way. I doubt, too, if the salary would be any larger; it is certainly a fair one for the work he offers." She consulted the letter. "Twelve hundred for the first year, and for every succeeding year an additional five hundred. What more could you expect, inexperienced as you are? Many men have to give their services gratis for a while to obtain entrance into such offices and have their names, even, connected with such a financier. This

opportunity is a business asset. I feel convinced, moreover, that you need just this discipline."

"Why?"

"For some other good reasons. For one, you would be brought into daily contact with men, experienced men, of various nationalities —"

"You can be that in New York. There is n't a city in the world where you can gain such a cosmopolitan experience." He was still protesting, still insisting. His mother made no reply, nor did she notice the interruption.

"— Learn their ways, their point of view. All this would be of infinite help if, later on, you should come into a position of great responsibility in connection with the quarry syndicate. — It does seem so strange that hundreds will make their livelihood from our barren pastures!" She spoke almost to herself, and for a moment they were silent.

"And look at this invitation to cross in his yacht with his family! Champney, you know perfectly well nothing could be more courteous or thoughtful; it saves your passage money, and it shows plainly his interest in you personally."

"I know; that part is n't half bad." He spoke with interest and less reluctance. "I saw the yacht last spring lying in North River; she's a perfect floating palace they say. Of course, I appreciate the invitation; but supposing — only supposing, you know," — this as a warning not to take too much for granted, — "I should accept. How could I live on twelve hundred a year? He spends twice that on a cook. How does he think a fellow is going to dress and live on that? 'T was a tight squeeze in college on thirteen hundred."

His mother knew his way so well, that she recognized in this insistent piling of one obstacle upon another the budding impulse to yield. She was willing to press the matter further.

“Oh, clothes are cheaper abroad and living is not nearly so dear. You could be quite the gentleman on your second year’s salary, and, of course, I can help out with the interest on the twenty thousand. You forget this.”

“By George, I did, mother! You’re a trump; but I don’t want you to think I want to cut any figure over there; I don’t care enough about ’em. But I want enough to have a ripping good time to compensate for staying away so long.”

“You need not stay five consecutive years away from home. Look here, Champney; you have read this letter with your eyes but not with your wits. Your boiling condition was not conducive to clear-headedness.”

“Oh, I say mother! Don’t rap a fellow too hard when he’s down.

“You’re not down; you’re up,” — she held her ground with him right sturdily, — “up on the second round already, my son; only you don’t know it. Here it is in black and white that you can come home for six weeks after two years, and the fifth year is shortened by three months if all goes well. What more do you want?”

“That’s something, anyway.”

“Now, I want you to think this over.”

“I wish I could run down to New York for a day or two; it would help a lot. I could look round and possibly find an opening in the direction I want. I want to do this before deciding.”

“Champney, I shall lose patience with you soon. You know you can’t run down to New York for even a day. Mr. Van Ostend states the fact baldly: ‘Your decision I must have by telegraph, at the latest, by Thursday noon.’ That’s day after to-morrow. ‘We sail on Saturday.’ Mr. Van Ostend is not a man to waste a breath, as you have said.”

Champney had no answer ready. He evaded the question. “I’ll tell you to-morrow, mother. It’s late; you must n’t sit up any longer.” He looked at his watch. “One o’clock. Good night.”

“Good night, Champney. Leave your door into the hall wide open; it’s so close.”

She put out her light and sat down by the window. The night was breathless; not a leaf of the elm trees quivered. She heard the Rothel picking its way down the rocky channel of The Gore. She gave herself up to thought, far-reaching both into the past and the future. Soon, mingled with the murmur of the brook, she heard her son’s quiet measured breathing. She rose, walked noiselessly down the hall and stood at his bedroom door, to gaze — mother-like, to worship. The moonlight just touched the pillow. He lay with his head on his arm; the full white chest was partly bared; the spare length of the muscular body was outlined beneath the sheet. Her eyes filled with tears. She turned from the door, and, noiselessly as she had come, went back to her room and her couch.

How little the pending decision weighed on his mind was proven by his long untroubled sleep; but directly after a late breakfast he told his mother he was going out to prospect a little in The Gore; and she, understanding, questioned him no further. He

whistled to Rag and turned into the side road that led to the first quarry. There was no work going on there. This small ownership of forty acres was merged in the syndicate which had so recently acquired the two hundred acres from the Googe estate. He made his way over the hill and around to the head of The Gore. He wanted to climb the cliff-like rocks and think it out under the pines, landmarks of his early boyhood. He picked his way among the boulders and masses of sheep laurel; he was thinking not of the quarries but of himself; he did not even inquire of himself how the sale of the quarries might be about to affect his future.

Champney Googe was self-centred. The motives for all his actions in a short and uneventful life were the spokes to his particular hub of self; the tire, that bound them and held them to him, he considered merely the necessary periphery of constant contact with people and things by which his own little wheel of fortune might be made to roll the more easily. He was following some such line of thought while turning Mr. Van Ostend's plan over and over in his mind, viewing it from all sides. It was not what he wanted, but it might lead to that. His eyes were on the rough ground beneath him, his thoughts busy with the pending decision, when he was taken out of himself by hearing an unexpected voice in his vicinity.

"Good morning, Mr. Googe. Am I poaching on your preserve?"

Champney recognized the voice at once. It was Father Honoré's hailing him from beneath the pines. He was sitting with his back against one; a violin lay on its cover beside him; on his lap was a drawing-board with rule and compass pencil. Champney realized

on the instant, and with a feeling of pleasure, that the priest's presence was no intrusion even at this juncture.

"No, indeed, for it is no longer my preserve," he answered cheerily, and added, with a touch of earnestness that was something of a surprise to himself, "and it would n't be if it were still mine."

"Thank you, Mr. Googe; I appreciate that. You must find it hard to see a stranger like myself preëmpting your special claim, as I fancy this one is."

"It used to be when I was a youngster; but, to tell the truth, I have n't cared for it much of late years. The city life spoils a man for this. I love that rush and hustle and rubbing-elbows with the world in general, getting knocked about — and knocking." He laughed merrily, significantly, and Father Honoré, catching his meaning at once, laughed too. "But I'm not telling you any news; of course, you've had it all."

"Yes, all and a surfeit. I was glad to get away to this hill-quiet."

Champney sat down on the thick rusty-red matting of pine needles and turned to him, a question in his eyes. Father Honoré smiled. "What is it?" he said.

"May I ask if it was your own choice coming up here to us?"

"Yes, my deliberate choice. I had to work for it, though. The superior of my order was against my coming. It took moral suasion to get the appointment."

"I don't suppose they wanted to lose a valuable man from the city," said Champney bluntly.

"The question of value is not, happily, a question of environment. I simply felt I could do my best work here in the best way."

"And you did n't consider yourself at all?" Champney put the question, which voiced his thought, squarely.

“Oh, I’m human,” he answered smiling at the questioner; “don’t make any mistake on that point; and I don’t suppose many of us can eliminate self wholly in a matter of choice. I did want to work here because I believe I can do the best work, but I also welcomed the opportunity to get away from the city — it weighs on me, weighs on me,” he added, but it sounded as if he were merely thinking aloud.

Champney failed to comprehend him. Father Honoré, raising his eyes, caught the look on the young man’s face and interpreted it. He said quietly:

“But then you’re twenty-one and I’m forty-five; that accounts for it.”

For a moment, but a moment only, Champney was tempted to speak out to this man, stranger as he was. Mr. Van Ostend evidently had confidence in him; why should n’t he? Perhaps he might help him to decide, and for the best. But even as the thought flashed into consciousness, he was aware of its futility. He was sure the man would repeat only what his mother had said. He did not care to hear that twice. And what was this man to him, that he should ask his opinion, appeal to him for advice in directing this step in his career? He changed the subject abruptly.

“I think you said you had met Mr. Van Ostend?”

“Yes, twice in connection with the orphan child, as I told you, and once I dined with him. He has a charming family: his sister and his little daughter. Have you met them?”

“Only once. He has just written me and asked me to join them on his yacht for a trip to Europe.” Champney felt he was coasting on the edge, and enjoyed the sport.

"And of course you're going? I can't imagine a more delightful host." Father Honoré spoke with enthusiasm.

But Champney failed to respond in like manner. The priest took note of it.

"I have n't made up my mind;" he spoke slowly; then, smiling merrily into the other's face, "and I came up here to try to make it up."

"And I was here so you could n't do it, of course!" Father Honoré exclaimed so ruefully that Champney's hearty laugh rang out. "No, no; I did n't mean for you to take it in that way. I'm glad I found you here — I liked what you said about the 'value'."

Father Honoré looked mystified for a moment; his brow contracted in the effort to recall at the moment what he had said about "value", and in what connection; but instead of any further question as to Champney's rather incoherent meaning, he handed him the drawing-board.

"This is the plan for my shack, Mr. Googe. I have written to Mr. Van Ostend to ask if the company would have any objection to my putting it here near these pines. I understand the quarries are to be opened up as far as the cliff, and sometime, in the future, my house will be neighbor to the workers. I suppose then I shall have to 'move on'. I'm going to build it myself."

"All yourself?"

"Why not? I'm a fairly good mason; I've learned that trade, and there is plenty of material, good material, all about." He looked over upon the rock-strewn slopes. "I'm going to use some of the granite waste too." He put his violin into its case and held out his hand for the board. "I'm going now, Mr. Googe;

I shall be interested to know your decision as soon as you yourself know about it."

"I'll let you know by to-morrow. I've nearly a day of grace. You play? You are a musician?" he asked, as Father Honoré rose and tucked the violin and drawing-board under his arm.

"My matins," the priest answered, smiling down into the curiously eager face that with the fresh unlined beauty of young manhood was upturned to his. "Good morning." He lifted his hat and walked rapidly away without waiting for any further word from Champney.

"Sure-footed as a mountain goat!" Champney said to himself as he watched him cross the rough hill-top. "I'd like to know where he gets it all!"

He stretched out under the pines, his hands clasped under his head, and fell to thinking of his own affairs, into the as yet undecided course of which the memory of the priest's words, "The question of value is not, happily, a question of environment" fell with the force of gravity.

"I might as well go it blind," he spoke aloud to himself: "it's all a matter of luck into which ring you shy your hat; I suppose it's the 'value', after all, that does it in the end. Besides —"

He did not finish that thought aloud; but he suddenly sat bolt upright, a fist pressed hard on each knee. His face hardened into determination. "By George, what an ass I've been! If I can't do it in one way I can in another. — Hoop! Hooray!"

He turned a somersault then and there; came right side up; cuffed the dazed puppy goodnaturedly and bade him "Come on", which behest the little fellow obeyed to the best of his ability among the rough ways of the sheep walks.

He did not stop at the house, but walked straight down to Flamsted, Rag lagging at his heels. He sent a telegram to New York. Then he went homewards in the broiling sun, carrying the exhausted puppy under his arm. His mother met him on the porch.

“I’ve just telegraphed Mr. Van Ostend, mother, that I’ll be in New York Friday, ready to sail on Saturday.”

“My dear boy!” That was all she said then; but she laid her hand on his shoulder when they went in to dinner, and Champney knew she was satisfied.

Two days later, Champney Googe, having bade good-bye to his neighbors, the Caukineses large and small, to Octavius, Ann and Hannah, — Aileen was gone on an errand when he called last at Champ-au-Haut but he left his remembrance to her with the latter — to his aunt, to Joel Quimber and Augustus, to Father Honoré and a host of village well-wishers who, in their joyful anticipation of his future and his fortunes, laid aside all factional differences, said, at last, farewell to Flamsted, to The Corners, The Bow, and his home among the future quarries in The Gore.

PART THIRD

In the Stream

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I

MRS. MILTON CAUKINS had her trials, but they were of a kind some people would call "blessed torments." The middle-aged mother of eight children, six boys, of whom Romanzo was the eldest, and twin girls, Elvira Caukins might with justice lay claim to a superabundance of a certain kind of trial. Every Sunday morning proved the crux of her experience, and Mrs. Caukins' nerves were correspondingly shaken. To use her own words, she "was all of a tremble" by the time she was dressed for church.

On such occasions she was apt to speak her mind, preferably to the Colonel; but lacking his presence, to her family severally and collectively, to 'Lias, the hired man, or aloud to herself when busy about her work. She had been known, on occasion, to acquaint even the collie with her state of mind, and had assured the head of the family afterwards that there was more sense of understanding of a woman's trials in one wag of a dog's tail than in most men's head-pieces.

"Mr. Caukins!" she called up the stairway. She never addressed her husband in the publicity of domestic life without this prefix; to her children she spoke of him as "your pa"; to all others as "the Colonel."

“Yes, Elvira.”

The Colonel's voice was leisurely, but muffled owing to the extra heavy lather he was laying about his mouth for the Sunday morning shave. His wife's voice shrilled again up the staircase:

“It's going on nine o'clock and the boys are no-where's near ready; I have n't dressed the twins yet, and the boys are trying to shampoo each other — they've got your bottle of bay rum, and not a single shoe have they greased. I wish you'd hurry up and come down; for if there's one thing you know I hate it's to go into church after the beginning of the first lesson with those boys squeaking and scrunching up the aisle behind me. It makes me nervous and upsets me so I can't find the place in my prayer book half the time.”

“I'll be down shortly.” The tone was intended to be conciliatory, but it irritated Mrs. Caukins beyond measure.

“I know all about your ‘shortlies,’ Mr. Caukins; they're as long as the rector's sermon this very Whitsunday — the one day in the whole year when the children can't keep still any more than cows in fly time. Did you get their peppermints last night?”

“Gad, my dear, I forgot them! But really —”, his voice was degenerating into a mumble owing to the pressure of circumstances, “ — matters of such — er — supreme importance — came — er — to my knowledge last evening that — that — ”

“That what?”

“ — That — that — mm — mm — ” there followed the peculiar noise attendant upon a general clearing up of much lathered cuticle, “ — I forgot them.”

“What matters were they? You did n't say any-

thing about 'supreme importance' last night, Mr. Caukins."

"I'll tell you later, Elvira; just at present I —"

"Was it anything about the quarries?"

"Mm —"

"*What* was it?"

"I heard young Gooze was expected next week."

"Well, I declare! I could have told you that much myself if you'd been at home in any decent season. It seems pretty poor planning to have to run down three miles to The Greenbush every Saturday evening to find out what you could know by just stepping across the bridge to Aurora's. She told me yesterday. Was that all?"

"N — no —"

"For mercy's sake, Mr. Caukins, don't keep me waiting here any longer! It's almost church time."

"I was n't aware that I was detaining you, Elvira." The Colonel's protest was mild but dignified. There were sounds above of renewed activity.

"Dulcie," said Mrs. Caukins, turning to a little girl who was standing beside her, listening with erected ears to her mother's questions and father's answers, "go up stairs into mother's room and see if Doosie's getting ready, there's a good girl."

"Doosie is with me, Elvira; I would let well enough alone for the present, if I were you," said the Colonel admonishingly. His wife wisely took the hint. "Come up, Dulcie," he called, "father's ready." Dulcie hopped up stairs.

"You have n't said what matters of importance kept you last night." Mrs. Caukins returned to her muttons with redoubled energy.

"Champney came home unexpectedly last evening,

and the syndicate has offered him a position, a big one, in New York — treasurer of the Flamsted Quarries Company; and our Romanzo's got a chance too — ”

“You don't say! What is it?” Mrs. Caukins started up stairs whence came sounds of an obstreperous bootjack.

“Paymaster, here in town; I'll explain in more propitious circumstances. Has 'Lias harnessed yet, Elvira?”

Without deigning to answer, Mrs. Caukins freed her mind.

“Well, Mr. Caukins, I must say you grow more and more like that old ram of 'Lias's that has learned to butt backwards just for the sake of going contrary to nature. I believe you'd rather tell a piece of news backwards than forwards any day! Why did n't you begin by telling me about Romanzo? If your own child that's your flesh and blood and bone is n't of most interest to you, I'd like to know what is!”

The Colonel's reply was partly inaudible owing to a sudden outbreak of altercation among the boys in the room below. Mrs. Caukins, who had just reached the landing, turned in her tracks and hurried to the rescue.

The Colonel smiled at the rosy, freshly-shaved face reflected in the mirror of the old-fashioned dressing-case, and, at the same time, caught the reflection of another image — that of his hired man, 'Lias, who was crossing the yard. He went to the window and leaned out, stemming his hands on the sill.

“There seems to be the usual Sunday morning row going on below, 'Lias. I fear the boys are shampooing each other's heads with the backs of their brushes from the sounds.”

'Lias smiled, and nodded understandingly.

“Just look in and lend a hand in case Mrs. Caukins should be outnumbered, will you? I'm engaged at present.” And deeply engaged he was to the twins' unspeakable delight. Whistling softly an air from “Il Trovatore,” he rubbed some orange-flower water on his chin and cheeks; then taking a fresh handkerchief, dabbed several drops on the two little noses that waited upon him weekly in expectation of this fragrant boon. He was rewarded by a few satisfactory kisses.

“Now run away and help mother — coach leaves at nine forty-five *pre-cisely*. I forgot the peppermints, but — ” he slapped his trousers' pockets significantly.

The twins shouted with delight and rushed away to impart the news to the boys.

“I wish you would tell me the secret of your boys' conduct in church, Colonel Caukins; it's exemplary. I don't understand it, for boys will be boys,” said the rector one Sunday several years before when all the boys were young. He had taken note of their want of restlessness throughout the sermon.

The Colonel's mouth twitched; he answered promptly, but avoided his wife's eyes.

“All in the method, I assure you. We Americans have spent a generation in experimenting with the inductive, the subjective method in education, and the result is, to all intents and purposes, a dismal failure. The future will prove the value of the objective, the deductive — which is mine,” he added with a sententious emphasis that left the puzzled rector no wiser than before.

“Whatever the method, Colonel, you have a fine family; there is no mistake about that,” he said heartily.

The Colonel beamed and responded at once:

“ ‘Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full’ — ”

At this point Mrs. Caukins surreptitiously poked the admonitory end of her sunshade between the Colonel's shoulder blades, and the Colonel, comprehending, desisted from further quotation of scripture. It was not his strong point. Once he had been known to quote, not only unblushingly but triumphantly, during a touch-and-go discussion of the labor question in the town hall: — “The ass, gentlemen, is worthy of his hire”; and in so doing had covered Mrs. Caukins with confusion and made a transient enemy of every wage-earner in the audience.

But his boys behaved — that was the point. What boys would n't when their heart's desire was conveyed to them at the beginning of the sermon by a secret-service-under-the-pew process wholly delightful to the young human male? Who would n't be quiet for the sake of the peppermints, a keen three-bladed knife, or a few gelatine fishes that squirmed on his warm moist palm in as lively a manner as if just landed on the lake shore? Their father had been a boy, and at fifty had a boy's heart within him — this was the secret of his success.

Mrs. Caukins appeared at last, radiant in the consciousness of a new chip hat and silk blouse. Dulcie and Doosie in white lawn did their pains-taking mother credit in every respect. The Colonel gallantly presented his wife with a small bunch of early roses — an attention which called up a fine bit of color into her still pretty face. 'Lias helped her into the three-seated wagon, then lifted in the twins; the boys piled in afterwards; the Colonel took the reins. Mrs. Caukins

waved her sunshade vigorously at 'Lias and gave a long sigh of relief and satisfaction.

"Well, we're off at last! I declare I miss Maggie every hour in the day. I don't know what I should have done all these years without that girl!"

The mention of "Maggie" emphasizes one of the many changes in Flamsted during the six years of Champney Googe's absence. Mrs. Caukins, urged by her favorite, Aileen, and advised by Mrs. Googe and Father Honoré, had imported Margaret O'Dowd, the "Freckles" of the asylum, as mother's helper six months after Aileen's arrival in Flamsted. For nearly six years Maggie loyally seconded Mrs. Caukins in the care of her children and her household. Slow, but sure and dependable, strong and willing, she made herself invaluable in the stone house among the sheep pastures; her stunted affections revived and flourished apace in that household of well-cared-for children to whom both parents were devoted. It cost her a heart-ache to leave them; but six months ago burly Jim McCann, one of the best workmen in the sheds — although of unruly spirit and a source of perennial trouble among the men — began to make such determined love to the mother's helper that the Caukinses found themselves facing inevitable loss. Maggie had been married three months; and already McCann had quarrelled with the foreman, and, in a huff, despite his wife's tears and prayers, sought of his own accord work in another and far distant quarry.

"Maggie told me she'd never leave off teasing Jim to bring her back," said the fifth eldest Caukins. — "Oh, look!" he cried as they rumbled over the bridge; "there's Mrs. Googe and Champney on the porch waving to us!"

The Colonel took off his hat with a flourish; the boys swung theirs; Mrs. Caukins waved her sunshade to mother and son.

"I declare, I'd like to stop just a minute," she said regretfully, for the Colonel continued to drive straight on. "I'm so glad for Aurora's sake that he's come home; I only hope our Romanzo will do as well."

"It would be an intrusion at such a time, Elvira. The effusions of even the best-intentioned friends are injudicious at the inopportune moment of domestic reunion."

Mrs. Caukins subsided on that point. She was always depressed by the Colonel's grandiloquence, which he usually reserved for The Greenbush and the town-meeting, without being able to account for it.

"He'll see a good many changes here; it's another Flamsted we're living in," she remarked later on when they passed the first stone-cutters' shed on the opposite shore of the lake; and the family proceeded to comment all the way to church on the various changes along the route.

It was in truth another Flamsted, the industrial Flamsted which the Colonel predicted six years before on that memorable evening in the office of The Greenbush.

To watch the transformation of a quiet back-country New England village into the life-centre of a great and far-reaching industry, is in itself a liberal education, not only in economics, but in inherited characteristics of the human race. Those first drops of "the deluge," the French priest and the Irish orphan, were followed by an influx of foreigners of many nationalities: Scotch,

Irish, Italians, Poles, Swedes, Canadian French; and with these were associated a few American-born.

Their life-problem, the earning of wages for the sustenance of themselves and their families, was one they had in common. Its solution was centred for one and all in their work among the granite quarries of The Gore and in the stone-cutters' sheds on the north shore of Lake Mesantic. These two things the hundreds belonging to a half-dozen nationalities possessed in common — these, and their common humanity together with the laws to which it is subject. But aside from this, their speech, habits, customs, religions, food, and pastimes were polyglot; on this account the lines of racial demarkation were apt, at times, to be drawn all too sharply. Yet this very fact of differentiation provided hundreds of others — farmers, shopkeepers, jobbers, machinists, mechanics, blacksmiths, small restaurant-keepers, pool and billiard room owners — with ample sources of livelihood.

This internal change in the community of Flamsted corresponded to the external. During those six years the very face of nature underwent transformation. The hills in the apex of The Gore were shaved clean of the thin layer of turf, and acres of granite laid bare to the drill. Monster derricks, flat stone-cars, dummy engines, electric motors, were everywhere in evidence. Two glittering steel tracks wound downwards through old watercourses to the level of the lake, and to the huge stone-cutting sheds that stretched their gray length along the northern shore. Here the quarried stones, tons in weight, were unloaded by the great electric travelling crane which picks up one after the other with automatic perfection of silence and accuracy, and deposits them wherever needed by the workmen.

A colony of substantial three-room houses, two large boarding-houses, a power house and, farther up beyond the pines, a stone house and a long low building, partly of wood, partly of granite waste cemented, circled the edges of the quarry.

The usual tale of workmen in the fat years was five hundred quarrymen and three hundred stone-cutters. This population of working-men, swelled to three thousand by the addition of their families, increased or diminished according as the years and seasons proved fat or lean. A ticker on Wall Street was sufficient to give to the great industry abnormal life and activity, and draw to the town a surplus working population. A feeling of unrest and depression, long-continued in metropolitan financial circles, was responded to with sensitive pulse on these far-away hills of Maine and resulted in migratory flights, by tens and twenties, of Irish and Poles, of Swedes, Italians, French Canucks, and American-born to more favorable conditions. "Here one day and gone the next"; even the union did not make for stability of tenure.

In this ceaseless tidal ebb and flow of industrials, the original population of Flamsted managed at times to come to the surface to breathe; to look about them; to speculate as to "what next?" for the changes were rapid and curiosity was fed almost to satiety. A fruitful source of speculation was Champney Googe's long absence from home, already six years, and his prospects when he should have returned. Speculation was also rife when Aurora Googe crossed the ocean to spend a summer with her son; at one time rumors were afloat that Champney's prospective marriage with a relation of the Van Ostends was near at hand, and

this was said to be the cause of his mother's rather sudden departure. But on her return, Mrs. Gooze set all speculation in this direction at rest by denying the rumor most emphatically, and adding the information for every one's benefit that she had gone over to be with Champney because he did not wish to come home at the time his contract with Mr. Van Ostend permitted.

Once during the past year, the village wise heads foregathered in the office of The Greenbush to discuss the very latest:—the coming to Flamsted of seven Sisters, Daughters of the Mystic Rose, who, foreseeing the suppression of their home institution in France, had come to prepare a refuge for their order on the shores of America and found another home and school among the quarrymen in this distant hill-country of the new Maine — an echo of the old France of their ancestors. This was looked upon as an undreamed-of innovation exceeding all others that had come to their knowledge; it remained for old Joel Quimber to enter the lists as champion of the newcomers, their cause, and their school which, with Father Honoré's aid, they at once established among the barren hills of The Gore.

“Hounded out er France, poor souls, just like my own great-great-great-granther's father!” he said, referring to the subject again on that last Saturday evening when the frequenters of The Greenbush were to be stirred shortly by the news they considered best of all: Champney Gooze's unexpected arrival. “I was up thar yisterd'y an' it beats all how snug they're fixed! The schoolroom's ez neat as a pin, an' pitchers on the walls wuth a day's journey to see. They're havin' a room built onto the farther end — a kind of er

relief hospital, so Father Honoré told me — ter help out when the quarrymen git a jammed foot er finger, so's they need n't be took home to muss up their little cabins an' worrit their wives an' little 'uns. I heerd Aileen hed ben goin' up thar purty reg'lar lately for French an' sich; guess Mis' Champney's done 'bout the right thing by her, eh, Tave?"

Octavius nodded. "And Aileen's done the right thing by Mrs. Champney. 'T is n't every young girl that would stick to it as Aileen's done the last six years — not in the circumstances."

"You're right, Tave. I heerd not long ago thet she was a-goin' on the stage when she'd worked out her freedom, and by A. J. she's got the voice for it! But I'd hate ter see *her* thar. She's made a lot er sunshine in this place, and I guess from all I hear there's them thet would stan' out purty stiff agin it; they say Luigi Poggi an' Romanzo Caukins purty near fit over her t' other night."

"You need n't believe all you hear, Joel, but you can believe me when I tell you there'll be no going on the stage for Aileen — not if I know it, or Father Honoré either."

He spoke so emphatically that his brother Augustus looked at him in surprise.

"What's up, Tave?" he inquired.

"I mean Aileen's got a level head and is n't going to leave just as things are beginning to get interesting. She's stood it six year and she can stand it six more if she makes up her mind to it, and I'd ought to know, seeing as I've lived with her ever since she come to Flamsted."

"To be sure, Tave, to be sure; nobody knows better'n you, 'bout Aileen, an' I guess she's come to

look on you, from all I hear, as her special piece of property." His brother spoke appeasingly.

Octavius smiled. "Well, I don't deny but she lays claim to me most of the time; it's 'Octavius' here and 'Octavius' there all day long. Sometimes Mrs. Champney ruffs up about it, but Aileen has a way of smoothing her down, generally laughs her out of it. Is that the Colonel?" He listened to a step on the veranda. "Don't let on 'bout anything 'twixt Romanzo and Aileen before the Colonel, Joel."

"You don't hev ter say thet to me," said old Quimber resentfully; "anybody can see through a barn door when thar's a hole in it. All on us know Mis' Champney's a-breakin'; they do say she's hed a shock, least-wise I heerd so, an' Aileen'll look out for A No. 1. I ain't lived to be most eighty in Flamsted for nothin', an' I've seen an' heerd more'n I've ever told, Tave; more'n even you know 'bout some things. You don't remember the time old Square Googe took Aurory inter his home to bring up an' Judge Champney said he was sorry he'd got ahead of him for he wanted to adopt her for a daughter himself; them's his words; I heerd him. An' I can tell more 'n —"

"Shut up, Quimber," said Octavius shortly; and Joel Quimber "shut up," but, winking knowingly at Augustus Buzzby, continued to chuckle to himself till the Colonel entered who, beginning to expatiate upon the subject of Champney Googe's prospects when he should have returned to the home-welcome awaiting him, was happily interrupted by the announcement of that young man's unexpected arrival on the evening train.

II

CHAMPNEY GOOGE was beginning to realize, as he stood on the porch with his mother and waved to his old neighbors, the Caukinsees, the changed conditions he was about to face. He was also realizing that he must change to meet these conditions. On his way up from the train Saturday evening, he noted the power house at The Corners and the substantial line of comfortable cottages that extended for a mile along the highroad to the entrance of the village. He found Main Street brilliant with electric lights and lined nearly its entire length with shops, large and small, which were thronged with week-end purchasers. An Italian fruit store near The Greenbush bore the proprietor's name, Luigi Poggi; as he drove past he saw an old Italian woman bargaining with smiles and lively gestures over the open counter. Farther on, from an improvised wooden booth, the raucous voice of the phonograph was jarring the night air and entertaining a motley group gathered in front of it. Across the street a flaunting poster announced "Moving Picture Show for a Nickel." Vehicles of all descriptions, from a Maine "jigger" to a "top buggy," were stationary along the village thoroughfare, their various steeds hitched to every available stone post. In front of the rectory some Italian children were dancing to the jingle of a tambourine.

On nearing The Bow the confusion ceased; the polyglot sounds were distinguishable only as a murmur.

In passing Champ-au-Haut, he looked up at the house; here and there a light shone behind drawn shades. Six years had passed since he was last there; six years — and time had not dulled the sensation of that white pepper in his nostrils! He smiled to himself. He must see Aileen before he left, for from time to time he had heard good reports of her from his mother with whom she had become a favorite. He thought she must be mighty plucky to stand Aunt Meda all this time! He gathered from various sources that Mrs. Champney was growing peculiar as she approached three score and ten. Her rare letters to him, however, were kind enough. But he was sure Aileen's anomalous place in the household at Champ-au-Haut — neither servant nor child of the house, never adopted, but only maintained — could have been no sinecure. Anyway, he knew she had kept the devotion of her two admirers, Romanzo Caukins and Octavius Buzzby. From a hint in his aunt's last letter, he drew the conclusion that Aileen and Romanzo would make a match of it before long, when Romanzo should be established. At any rate, Aileen had wit enough, he was sure, to know on which side her bread was buttered, and from all he heard by the way of letters, Romanzo Caukins was not to be sneezed at as a prospective husband — a steady-going, solid sort of a chap who, he was told, had a chance now like himself in the quarry business. He must credit Aunt Meda with this one bit of generosity, at least; Mr. Van Ostend told him she had applied to him for some working position for Romanzo in the Flamsted office, and not in vain; he was about to be put in as paymaster.

As he drove slowly up the highroad towards The Gore, he saw the stone-cutters' sheds stretching dim and gray in the moonlight along the farther shore. A

standing train of loaded flat-cars gleamed in the electric light like a long high-piled drift of new-fallen snow. Here and there, on approaching The Gore, an arc-light darkened the hills round about and sent its blinding glare into the traveller's eyes. At last, his home was in sight — his home! — he wondered that he did not experience a greater thrill of homecoming — and behind and above it the many electric lights in and around the quarries produced hazy white reflections concentrated in luminous spots on the clear sky.

His mother met him on the porch. Her greeting was such that it caused him to feel, and for the first time, that where she was, there, henceforth, his true home must ever be.

“It will be hard work adjusting myself at first, mother,” he said, turning to her after watching the wagonload of Caukineses out of sight, “harder than I had any idea of. A foreign business training may broaden a man in some ways, but it leaves his muscles flabby for real home work here in America. You make your fight over there with gloves, and here only bare knuckles are of any use; but I'm ready for it!” He smiled and squared his shoulders as to an imaginary load.

“You don't regret it, do you, Champney?”

“Yes and no, mother. I don't regret it because I have gained a certain knowledge of men and things available only to one who has lived over there; but I do regret that, because of the time so spent, I am, at twenty-seven, still hugging the shore — just as I was when I left college. After all these years I'm not ‘in it’ yet; but I shall be soon,” he added; the hard determined ring of steadfast purpose was in his voice.

He sat down on the lower step: his mother brought forward her chair.

“Champney,” she spoke half hesitatingly; she did not find it easy to question the man before her as she used to question the youth of twenty-one, “would you mind telling me if there ever was any truth in the rumor that somehow got afloat over here three years ago that you were going to marry Ruth Van Ostend? Of course, I denied it when I got home, for I knew you would have told me if there had been anything to it.”

Champney clasped his hands about his knee and nursed it, smiling to himself, before he answered:

“I suppose I may as well make a clean breast of the whole affair, which is little enough, mother, even if I did n’t cover myself with glory and come out with colors flying. You see I was young and, for all my four years in college, pretty green when it came to the real life of those people — ”

“You mean the Van Ostends?”

“Yes, their kind. It’s one thing to accept their favors, and it’s quite another to make them think you are doing them one. So I sailed in to make Ruth Van Ostend interested in me as far as possible, circumstances permitting — and you’ll admit that a yachting trip is about as favorable as they make it. You know she’s three years older than I, and I think it flattered and amused her to accept my devotion for a while, but then — ”

“But, Champney, did you love her?”

“Well, to be honest, mother, I had n’t got that far myself — don’t know that I ever should have; any way, I wanted to get her to the point before I went through any self-catechism on that score.”

“But, Champney!” She spoke with whole-hearted protest.

He nodded up at her understandingly. "I know the 'but', mother; but that's how it stood with me. You know they were in Paris the next spring and, of course, I saw a good deal of them — and of many others who were dancing attendance on the heiress to the same tune that I was. But I caught on soon, and saw all the innings were with one special man; and, well — I did n't make a fool of myself, that's all. As you know, she was married the autumn after your return, three years ago."

"You're sure you really did n't mind, Champney?"

He laughed out at that. "Mind! Well, rather! You see it knocked one of my little plans higher than a kite — a plan I made the very day I decided to accept Mr. Van Ostend's offer. Of course I minded."

"What plan?"

"Wonder if I'd better tell you, mother? I'd like to stand well in your good graces —"

"Oh, Champney!"

"Fact, I would. Well, here goes then: I decided — I was lying up under the pines, you know that day I did n't want to accept his offer?" — she nodded confirmatorily — "that if I could n't have an opportunity to get rich quick in one way, I would in another; and, in accepting the offer, I made up my mind to try for the sister and her millions; if successful, I intended to take by that means a short cut to matrimony and fortune."

"Oh, Champney!"

"Young and fresh and — hardened, was n't it, mother?"

"You were so young, so ignorant, so unused to that sort of living; you had no realization of the difficulties of life — of love —"

She began speaking as if in apology for his weakness, but ended with the murmured words "life — love", in a voice so tense with pain that it sounded as if the major dominant of youth and ignorance suddenly suffered transcription into a haunting minor.

Her son looked up at her in surprise.

"Why, mother, don't take it so hard; I assure you I did n't. It brought me down to bed rock, for I was making a conceited ass of myself that's all, in thinking I could have roses for fodder instead of thistles — and just for the asking! It did me no end of good. I shall never rush in again where even angels fear to tread except softly — I mean the male wingless kind — worth a couple of millions; she has seven in her own right. — But we're the best of friends."

He spoke without bitterness. His mother felt, however, at the moment, that she would have preferred to hear a note of keen disappointment in his explanation rather than this tone of lightest persiflage.

"I don't see how —" she began, but checked herself. A slight flush mounted in her cheeks.

"See how what, mother? Please don't leave me dangling; I'm willing to take all you can give. I deserve it."

"I was n't going to blame you, Champney. I'm the last one to do that — Life teaches each in her own way. I was only thinking I did n't see how any girl *could* resist loving you, dear."

"Oh, ho! Don't you, mother mine! Well, commend me to a doting —"

"I'm *not* doting, Champney," she protested, laughing; "I know your faults better than you know them yourself."

“A doting mother, I say, to brace up a man fallen through his pride. Do you mean to say” —, he sprang to his feet, faced her, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, his face alive with the fun of the moment, — “do you mean to say that if you were a girl I should prove irresistible to you? Come now, mother, tell me, honor bright.”

She raised her eyes to his. The flush faded suddenly in her cheeks, leaving them unnaturally white; her eyes filled with tears.

“I should worship you,” she said under her breath, and dropped her head into her hands. He sprang up the steps to her side.

“Why, mother, mother, don’t speak so. I’m not worthy of it — it shames me. Here, look up,” he took her bowed head tenderly between his hands and raised it, “look into my face; read it well — interpret, and you will cease to idealize, mother.”

She wiped her eyes, half-smiling through her tears. “I’m not idealizing, Champney, and I did n’t know I could be so weak; I think — I think the telegram and your coming so unexpectedly — ”

“I know, mother,” he spoke soothingly, “it was too much; you’ve been too long alone. I’m glad I’m at home at last and can run up here almost any time.” He patted her shoulder softly, and whistled for Rag. “Come, put on your shade hat and we’ll go up to the quarries. I want to see them; do you realize they are the largest in the country? It’s wonderful what a change they’ve made here! After all, it takes America to forge ahead, for we’ve got the opportunities and the money to back them — and what more is needed to make us great?” He spoke lightly, expecting no answer.

She brought her hat and the two went up the side road under the elms to the quarry.

Ay, what more is needed to make us great? That is the question. There comes a time when a man, whose ears are not wholly deafened by the roar of a trafficking commercialism, asks this question of himself in the hope that some answer may be vouchsafed to him. If it come at all, it comes like the "still small voice" *after the whirlwind*; and the man who asks that question in the expectation of a response, must first have suffered, repented, struggled, fought, at times succumbed to fateful overwhelming circumstance, before his soul can be attuned so finely that the "still small voice" becomes audible. Youth and that question are not synchronous.

"I've not been so much alone as you imagine, Champney," said his mother. They were picking their way over the granite slopes and around to Father Honoré's house. "Aileen and Father Honoré and all the Caukineses and, during this last year, those sweet women of the sisterhood have brought so much life into my life up here among these old sheep pastures that I've not had the chance to feel the loneliness I otherwise should. And then there is that never-to-be-forgotten summer with you over the ocean—I feed constantly on the remembrance of all that delight."

"I'm glad you had it, mother."

"Besides, this great industry is so many-sided that it keeps me interested in every new development in spite of myself."

"By the way, mother, you wrote me that you had invested most of that twenty thousand from the quarry lands in bank stock, did n't you?"

“Yes; Mr. Emlie is president now; he is considered safe. The deposits have quadrupled these last two years, and the dividends have been satisfactory.”

“Yes, I know Emlie’s safe enough, but you don’t want to tie up your money so that you can’t convert it at once into cash if advisable. You know I shall be on the inside track now and in a position to use a little of it at a time judiciously in order to increase it for you. I’d like to double it for you as Aunt Meda has doubled her inheritance from grandfather — Who’s that?”

He stopped short and, shading his eyes with his hat, nodded in the direction of the sisterhood house that stood perhaps an eighth of a mile beyond the pines. His mother, following his look, saw the figure of a girl dodge around the corner of the house. Before she could answer, Rag, the Irish terrier, who had been nosing disconsolately about on the barren rock, suddenly lost his head. With one short suppressed yelp, he laid his heels low to the slippery granite shelves and scuttled, scurried, scrambled, tore across the intervening quarry hollow like a bundle of brown tow driven before a hurricane.

Mrs. Googe laughed. “No need to ask ‘who’ when you see Rag go mad like that! It’s Aileen; Rag has been devoted to her ever since you’ve been gone. I wonder why she is n’t at church?”

The girl disappeared in the house. Again and again Champney whistled for his dog but Rag failed to put in an appearance.

“He’ll need to be re-trained. It is n’t well, even for a dog, to be under such petticoat government as that; it spoils him. Only I’m afraid I sha’n’t be at home long enough to make him hear to reason.”

“Aileen has him in good training. She knows the dog adores her and makes the most of it. Oh, I forgot to tell you I sent word to Father Honoré this morning to come over to tea to-night. I knew you would like to see him, and he has been anticipating your return.”

“Has he? What for I wonder. By the way, where did he take his meals after he left you?”

“Over in the boarding-house with the men. He stayed with me only three months, until his house was built. He has an old French Canadian for housekeeper now.”

“He’s greatly beloved, I hear.”

“The Gore would n’t be The Gore without him,” Mrs. Gooze spoke earnestly. “The Colonel” — she laughed as she always did when about to quote her rhetorical neighbor — “speaks of him to everyone as ‘the heart of the quarry that responds to the throb of the universal human,’ and so far as I know no one has ever taken exception to it, for it’s true.”

“I remember — he was an all round fine man. I shall be glad to see him again. He must find some pretty tough customers up here to deal with, and the Colonel’s office is no longer the soft snap it was for fifteen years, I’ll bet.”

“No, that’s true; but, on the whole, there is less trouble than you would expect among so many nationalities. Is n’t it queer? — Father Honoré says that most of the serious trouble comes from disputes between the Hungarians and Poles about religious questions. They are apt to settle it with fists or something worse. But he and the Colonel have managed well between them; they have settled matters with very few arrests.”

“I can’t imagine the Colonel in that rôle.” Champney laughed. “What does he do with all his rhetorical

trumpery at such times? I've never seen him under fire — in fact, he never had been when I left."

"I know he does n't like it. He told me he should n't fill the office after another year. You know he was obliged to do it to make both ends meet; but since the opening of the quarries he has really prospered and has a market right here in town for all the mutton he can raise. I'm so glad Romanzo's got a chance."

They rambled on, crossing the apex of The Gore and getting a good view of the great extent of the opened quarries. Their talk drifted from one thing to another, Champney questioning about this one and that, until, as they turned homewards, he declared he had picked up the many dropped stitches so fast, that he should feel no longer a stranger in his native place when he should make his first appearance in the town the next day. He wanted to renew acquaintance with all the people at Champ-au-Haut and the old habitués of The Greenbush.

III

HE walked down to Champ-au-Haut the next afternoon. Here and there on the mountain side and along the highroad he noticed the massed pink and white clusters of the sheep laurel. Every singing bird was in full voice; thrush and vireo, robin, meadow lark, song-sparrow and catbird were singing as birds sing but once in the whole year; when the mating season is at its height and the long migratory flight northwards is forgotten in the supreme instinctive joy of the ever-new miracle of procreation.

When he came to The Bow he went directly to the paddock gate. He was hoping to find Octavius somewhere about. He wanted to interview him before seeing any one else, in regard to Rag who had not returned. The recalcitrant terrier must be punished in a way he could not forget; but Champney was not minded to administer this well-deserved chastisement in the presence of the dog's protectress. He feared to make a poor first impression.

He stopped a moment at the gate to look down the lane — what a beautiful estate it was! He wondered if his aunt intended leaving anything of it to the girl she had kept with her all these years. Somehow he had received the impression, whether from Mr. Van Ostend or his sister he could not recall, that she once said she did not mean to adopt her. His mother never mentioned the matter to him; indeed, she shunned all mention, when possible, of Champ-au-Haut and its owner.

In his mind's eye he could still see this child as he saw her on the stage at the Vaudeville, clad first in rags, then in white; as he saw her again dressed in the coarse blue cotton gown of orphan asylum order, sitting in the shade of the boat house on that hot afternoon in July, and rubbing her greasy hands in glee; as he saw her for the third time leaning from the bedroom window and listening to his improvised serenade. Well, he had a bone to pick with her about his dog; that would make things lively for a while and serve for an introduction. He reached over to unlatch the gate. At that moment he heard Octavius' voice in violent protest. It came from behind a group of apple trees down the lane in the direction of the milking shed.

"Now don't go for to trying any such experiment as that, Aileen; you'll fret the cow besides mussing your clean dress."

"I don't care; it'll wash. Now, please, do let me, Tave, just this once."

"I tell you the cow won't give down her milk if you take hold of her. She'll get all in a fever having a girl fooling round her." There followed the rattle of pails and a stool.

"Now, look here, Octavius Buzzby, who knows best about a cow, you or I?"

"Well, seeing as I've made it my business to look after cows ever since I was fifteen year old, you can't expect me to give in to you and say *you* do."

Her merry laugh rang out. Champney longed to echo it, but thought best to lie low for a while and enjoy the fun so unexpectedly provided.

"Tavy, dear, that only goes to prove you are a mere man; a dear one to be sure — but then! Don't you

flatter yourself for one moment that you, or any other man, really know any creature of the feminine gender from a woman to a cow. You simply can't, Tavy, because you are n't feminine. *Can* you comprehend that? Can you say on your honor as a man that you have ever been able to tell for certain what Mrs. Champney, or Hannah, or I, for instance, or this cow, or the cat, or Bellona, when she has n't been ridden enough, or the old white hen you've been trying to force to sit the last two weeks, is going to do next? Now, honor bright, have you?"

Octavius was grumbling some reply inaudible to Champney.

"No, of course you have n't; and what's more you never will. Not that it's your fault, Tavy, dear, it's only your misfortune." Exasperating patronage was audible in her voice. Champney noted that a trace of the rich Irish brogue was left. "Here, give me that pail."

"I tell you, Aileen, you can't do it; you've never learned to milk."

"Oh, have n't I? Look here, Tave, now no more nonsense; Romanzo taught me how two years ago — but we both took care you should n't know anything about it. Give me that pail." This demand was peremptory.

Evidently Octavius was weakening, for Champney heard again the rattle of the pails and the stool; then a swish of starched petticoat and a cooing "There, there, Bess."

He opened the gate noiselessly and closing it behind him walked down the lane. The golden light of the June sunset was barred, where it lay upon the brilliant green of the young grass, with the long shadows of the

apple-tree trunks. He looked between the thick foliage of the low-hanging branches to the milking shed. The two were there. Octavius was looking on dubiously; Aileen was coaxing the giant Holstein mother to stand aside at a more convenient angle for milking.

“Hold her tail, Tave,” was the next command.

She seated herself on the stool and laid her cheek against the warm, shining black flank; her hands manipulated the rosy teats; then she began to sing:

“O what are you seeking my pretty colleen,
So sadly, tell me now!” —
“O’er mountain and plain
I’m searching in vain
Kind sir, for my Kerry cow.”

The milk, now drumming steadily into the pail, served for a running accompaniment to the next verses.

“Is she black as the night with a star of white
Above her bonny brow?
And as clever to clear
The dykes as a deer?” —
“That’s just my own Kerry cow.”

“Then cast your eye into that field of wheat
She’s there as large as life.” —
“My bitter disgrace!
Howe’er shall I face
The farmer and his wife?”

What a voice! And what a picture she made leaning caressingly against the charmed and patient Bess! She was so slight, yet round and supple — strong, too, with the strength of perfect health! The thick fluffed black hair was rolled away from her face and gathered into a low knot in the nape of her neck. Her



“What a picture she made leaning caressingly against the charmed and patient Bess” *Page 176*

dress cut low at the throat enhanced the white purity of her face and the slim round grace of her neck which showed to advantage against the ebony flank of the mother of many milky ways. Her lips were red and full; the nose was a saucy stub; the eyes he could not see; they were downcast, intent upon her filling pail and the rising creamy foam; but he knew them to be an Irish blue-gray.

“Since the farmer’s unwed you’ve no cause to dread
From his wife, you must allow.
And for kisses three —
'T is myself is he —
The farmer will free your cow.”

The song ceased; the singer was giving her undivided attention to her self-imposed task. Octavius took a stool and began work with another cow. Champney, nothing loath to prolong the pleasure of looking at the improvised milkmaid, waited before making his presence known until she should have finished.

And watching her, he could but wonder at the ways of Chance that had cast this little piece of foreign flotsam upon the shores of America, only to sweep it inland to this village in Maine. He could not help comparing her with Alice Van Ostend — what a contrast! What an abyss between the circumstances of the two lives! Yet this one was decidedly charming, more so than the other; for he was at once aware that Aileen was already in possession of her womanhood’s dower of command over all poor mortals of the opposite sex — her manner with Octavius showed him that; and Alice when he saw her last, now nearly six months ago, would have given any one the impression of something still unfledged — a tall, slim, overgrown girl of

sixteen, and somewhat spoiled. This was indeed only natural, for her immediate world of father, aunt, and relations had circled ever since her birth in the orbit of her charming wilfulness. Champney acknowledged to himself that he had done her bidding a little too frequently ever since the first yachting trip, when as a little girl she attached herself to him, or rather him to her as a part of her special goods and chattels. At that time their common ground for conversation was Aileen; the child was never tired of his rehearsing for her delight the serenade scene. But in another year she lost this interest, for many others took its place; nor was it ever renewed.

The Van Ostends, together with Ruth and her husband, had been living the last three winters in Paris, Mr. Van Ostend crossing and recrossing as his business interests demanded or permitted. Champney was much with them, for their home was always open to him who proved an ever welcome guest. He acknowledged to himself, while participating in the intimacy of their home life, that if the child's partiality to his companionship, so undisguisedly expressed on every occasion, should, in the transition periods of girlhood and young womanhood, deepen into a real attachment, he would cultivate it with a view to asking her in marriage of her father when the time should show itself ripe. In his first youthful arrogance of self-assertion he had miscalculated with Ruth Van Ostend. He would make provision that this "undeveloped affair" — so he termed it — with her niece should not miscarry for want of caution. He intended while waiting for Alice to grow up — a feat which her aunt was always deploring as an impossibility except in a physical sense — to make himself necessary in this young life. Thus

far he had been successful; her weekly girlish letters conclusively proved it.

While waiting for the milk to cease its vigorous flow, he was conscious of reviewing his attitude towards the "undeveloped affair" in some such train of thought, and finding in it nothing to condemn, rather to commend, in fact; for not for the fractional part of a second did he allow a thought of it to divert his mind from the constant end in view: the making for himself a recognized place of power in the financial world of affairs. He knew that Mr. Van Ostend was aware of this steadfast pursuit of a purpose. He knew, moreover, that the fact that the great financier was taking him into his New York office as treasurer of the Flamsted Quarries, was a tacit recognition not only of his six years' apprenticeship in some of the largest banking houses in Europe, but of his ability to acquire that special power which was his goal. In the near future he would handle and practically control millions both in receipt and disbursement. Many of the contracts, already signed, were to be filled within the next three years — the sound of the milking suddenly ceased.

"My, how my wrists ache! See, Tave, the pail is almost full; there must be twelve or fourteen quarts in all."

She began to rub her wrists vigorously. Octavius muttered: "I told you so. You might have known you could n't milk steady like that without getting all tuckered out."

Champney stepped forward quickly. "Right you are, Tave, every time. How are you, dear old chap?" He held out his hand.

"Champ — Champney — why — " he stammered rather than spoke.

"It's I, Tave; the same old sixpence. Have I changed so much?"

"Changed? I should say so! I thought — I thought —" he was wringing Champney's hand; some strange emotion worked in his features — "I thought for a second it was Mr. Louis come to life." He turned to Aileen who had sprung from her stool. "Aileen, this is Mr. Champney Googe; you've forgotten him, I dare say, in all these years."

The rich red mantled her cheeks; the gray eyes smiled up frankly into his; she held out her hand. "Oh, no, I've not forgotten Mr. Champney Googe; how could I?"

"Indeed, I think it is the other way round; if I remember rightly you gave me the opportunity of never forgetting you." He held her hand just a trifle longer than was necessary. The girl smiled and withdrew it.

"Milky hands are not so sticky as spruce gum ones, Mr. Googe, but they are apt to be quite as unpleasant."

Champney was annoyed without in the least knowing why. He was wondering if he should address her as "Aileen" or "Miss Armagh," when Octavius spoke:

"Aileen, just go on ahead up to the house and tell Mrs. Champney Mr. Googe is here." Aileen went at once, and Octavius explained.

"You see, Champney — Mr. Googe —"

"Have I changed so much, Tave, that you can't use the old name?"

"You've changed a sight; it don't come easy to call you Champ, any more than it did to call Mr. Louis by his Christian name. You look a Champney every inch of you, and you act like one." He spoke emphatically; his small keen eyes dwelt admiringly on the face and figure of the tall man before him. "I

thought 't was better to send Aileen on ahead, for Mrs. Champney's broken a good deal since you saw her; she can't stand much excitement — and you're the living image." He called for the boy who had taken Romanzo's place. "I'll go up as far as the house with you. How long are you going to stay?"

"It depends upon how long it takes me to investigate these quarries, learn the ropes. A week or two possibly. I am to be treasurer of the Company with my office in New York."

"So I heard, so I heard. I'm glad it's come at last — no thanks to *her*," he added, nodding in the direction of the house.

"Do you still hold a grudge, Tave?"

"Yes, and always shall. Right's right and wrong's wrong, and there ain't a carpenter in this world that can dovetail the two. You and your mother have been cheated out of your rights in what should be yours, and it's ten to one if you ever get a penny of it."

Champney smiled at the little man's indignation. "All the more reason to congratulate me on my job, Tave."

"Well, I do; only it don't set well, this other business. She ain't helped you any to it?" He asked half hesitatingly.

"Not a red cent, Tave. I don't owe her anything. Possibly she will leave some of it to this same Miss Aileen Armagh. Stranger things have happened." Octavius shook his head.

"Don't you believe it, Champney. She likes Aileen and well she may, but she don't like her well enough to give her a slice off of this estate; and what's more she don't like any living soul well enough to part with a dollar of it on their account."

“Is there any one Aunt Meda ever did love, Tave? From all I remember to have heard, when I was a boy, she was always bound up pretty thoroughly in herself.”

“Did she ever love any one? Well she did; that was her husband, Louis Champney, who loved you as his own son. And it’s my belief that’s the reason you don’t get your rights. She was jealous as the devil of every word he spoke to you.”

“You’re telling me news — and late in the day.”

“Late is better than never, and I’d always meant to tell you when you come to man’s estate — but you’ve been away so long, I’ve thought sometimes you was never coming home; but I hoped you would for your mother’s sake, and for all our sakes.”

“I’m going to do what I can, but you must n’t depend too much on me, Tave. I’m glad I’m at home for mother’s sake although I always felt she had a good right hand in you, Tave; you’ve always been a good friend to her, she tells me.”

Octavius Buzzby swallowed hard once, twice; but he gave him no reply. Champney wondered to see his face work again with some emotion he failed to explain satisfactorily to himself.

“There’s Mrs. Champney on the terrace; I won’t go any farther. Come in when you can, won’t you?”

“I shall be pretty apt to run in for a chat almost any-time on my way to the village.” He waved his hand in greeting to his aunt and sprang up the steps leading to the terrace.

He bent to kiss her and was shocked by the change in her that was only too apparent: the delicate features were sharpened; the temples sunken; her abundant light brown hair was streaked heavily with

white; the hands had grown old, shrunken, the veins prominent.

“Kiss me again, Champney,” she said in a low voice, closing her eyes when he bent again to fulfil her request. When she opened them he noticed that the lids were trembling and the corners of her mouth twitched. But she rallied in a moment and said sharply:

“Now, don’t say you’re sorry — I know all about how I look; but I’m better and expect to outlive a good many well ones yet.”

She told Aileen to bring another chair. Champney hastened to forestall her; his aunt shook her finger at him.

“Don’t begin by spoiling her,” she said. Then she bade her make ready the little round tea-table on the terrace and serve tea.

“What do you think of her?” she asked him after Aileen had entered the house. She spoke with a directness of speech that warned Champney the question was a cloak to some other thought on her part.

“That she does you credit, Aunt Meda. I don’t know that I can pay you or her a greater compliment.”

“Very well said. You’ve learned all that over there — and a good deal more besides. There have been no folderols in her education. I’ve made her practical. Come, draw up your chair nearer and tell me something of the Van Ostends and that little Alice who was the means of Aileen’s coming to me. I hear she is growing to be a beauty.”

“Beauty — well, I should n’t say she was that, not yet; but ‘little.’ She is fully five feet six inches with the prospect of an additional inch.”

“I did n’t realize it. When are they coming home?”

“Early in the autumn. Alice says she is going to come out next winter, not leak out as the other girls in her set have done; and what Alice wants she generally manages to have.”

“Let me see — she must be sixteen; why that’s too young!”

“Seventeen next month. She’s very good fun though.”

“Like her?” She looked towards the house where Aileen was visible with a tea-tray.

“Well, no; at least, not along her lines I should say. She seems to have Tave pretty well under her thumb.”

Mrs. Champney smiled. “Octavius thought he could n’t get used to it at first, but he’s reconciled now; he had to be. — Call her Aileen, Champney; you must n’t let her get the upper hand of you by making her think she’s a woman grown,” she added in a low tone, for the girl was approaching them, slowly on account of the loaded tray she was carrying.

Champney left his seat and taking the tea-things from her placed them on the table. Aileen busied herself with setting all in order and twirling the tea-ball in each cup of boiling water, as if she had been used to this ultra method of making tea all her life.

“By the way, Aileen — ”

He checked himself, for such a look of amazement was in the quickly lifted gray eyes, such a surprised arch was visible in the dark brows, that he realized his mistake in hearing to his aunt’s request. He felt he must make himself whole, and if possible without further delay.

“Oh, I see that it must still be Miss Aileen Armagh-and-don’t-you-forget-it!” he exclaimed, laughing to cover his confusion.

She laughed in turn; she could not help it at the memories this title called to mind. "Well, it's best to be particular with strangers, is n't it?" Down went the eyes to search in the bottom of a teacup.

"I fancied we were not wholly that; I told Aunt Meda about our escapade six years ago; surely, that affair ought to establish a common ground for our continued acquaintance. But, if that's not sufficient, I can find another nearer at hand — where's my dog?"

This brought her to terms.

"Oh, I can't do anything with Rag, Mr. Googe; I'm so sorry. He's over in the coach house this very minute, and Tave was going to take him home to-night. Just think! That seven-year-old dog has to be carried home, old as he is!"

"If it's come to that, I'll take him home under my arm to-night — that is, if he won't follow; I'll try that first."

"But you're not going to punish him! — and simply because he likes me. That would n't be fair!"

She made her protest indignantly. Champney looked at his aunt with an amused smile. She nodded understandingly.

"Oh, no; not simply because he likes you, but because he is untrue to me, his master."

"But that is n't fair!" she exclaimed again, her cheeks flushing rose red; "you've been away so long that the dog has forgotten."

"Oh, no, he has n't; or if he has I must jog his memory. He's Irish, and the supreme characteristic of that breed is fidelity."

"Well, so am I Irish," she retorted pouting; she began to make him a second cup of tea by twirling the

silver tea-ball in the shallow cup until the hot water flew over the edge; "but I should n't consider it necessary to be faithful to any one who had forgotten and left me for six years."

"You would n't?" Champney's eyes challenged hers, but either she did not understand their message or she was too much in earnest to heed it.

"No I would n't; what for? I like Rag and he likes me, and we have been faithful to each other; it would be downright hypocrisy on his part to like you after all these years."

"How about you?" Champney grew bold because he knew his aunt was enjoying the girl's entanglement as much as he was. She was amused at his daring and Aileen's earnestness. "Did n't you tell me in Tave's presence only just now that you could n't forget me? How is that for fidelity? And why excuse Rag on account of a six years' absence?"

"Well, of course, he's your dog," she said loftily, so evading the question and ignoring the laugh at her expense.

"Yes, he's my dog if he is a backslider, and that settles it." He turned to his aunt. "I'll run in again to-morrow, Aunt Meda, I must n't wear my welcome out in the first two days of my return."

"Yes, do come in when you can. I suppose you will be here a month or two?"

"No; only a week or two at most; but I shall run up often; the business will require it." He looked at Aileen. "Will you be so kind as to come over with me to the coach house, Miss Armagh, and hand my property over to me? Good-bye, Aunt Meda."

Aileen rose. "I'll be back in a few minutes, Mrs. Champney, or will you go in now?"

“There’s no dew, and the air is so fresh I’ll sit here till you come.”

The two went down the terrace steps side by side. Mrs. Champney watched them out of sight; there was a kindling light in her faded eyes.

“Now, we’ll see,” said Champney, as they neared the coach house and saw in the window the bundle of brown tow with black nose flattened on the pane and eyes filled with longing under the tangled topknot. The stub of a tail was marking time to the canine heartbeats. Champney opened the door; the dog scurried out and sprang yelping for joy upon Aileen.

“Rag, come here!” The dog’s day of judgment was in that masculine command. The little terrier nosed Aileen’s hand, hesitated, then pressed more closely to her side. The girl laughed out in merry triumph. Champney noted that she showed both sets of her strong white teeth when she laughed.

“Rag, dear old boy!” She parted with caressing fingers the skein of tow on the frowsled head.

“Come on, Rag.” Champney whistled and started up the driveway. The terrier fawned on Aileen, slavered, snorted, sniffed, then crept almost on his belly, tail stiff, along the ground after Champney who turned and laid his hand on him. The dog crouched in the road. He gently pulled the stumps of ears — “Now come!”

He went whistling up the road, and the terrier, recognizing his master, trotted in a lively manner after him.

Champney turned at the gate and lifted his hat. “How about fidelity now, Miss Armagh?” He wanted to tease in payment for that amazed look she gave him for taking a liberty with her Christian name.

“Well, of course, he’s your dog,” she called merrily after him, “but *I* would n’t have done it if I’d been Rag!”

Champney found himself wondering on the homeward way if she really meant what she said.

IV

IT was a careless question, carelessly put, and yet — Aileen Armagh, before she returned to the house, was also asking herself if she meant what she said, asking it with an unwonted timidity of feeling she could not explain. On coming in sight of the terrace, she saw that Mrs. Champney was still there. She hesitated a moment, then crossed the lawn to the boat house. She wanted to sit there a while in the shade, to think things out with herself if possible. What did this mean — this strange feeling of timidity?

The course of her life was not wholly smooth. It was inevitable that two natures like hers and Mrs. Champney's should clash at times, and the impact was apt to be none of the softest. Twice, Aileen, making a confidant of Octavius, threatened to run away, for the check rein was held too tightly, and the young life became restive under it. When the child first came to Champ-au-Haut, its mistress recognized at once that in her mischief, her wilfulness, her emphatic assertion of her right of way, there was nothing vicious, and to Octavius Buzzby's amazement, she dealt with her, on the whole, leniently.

"She amuses me," she would say when closing an eye to some of Aileen's escapades that gave a genuine shock to Octavius in the region of his local prejudices.

There had been, indeed, no "folderols" in her education. Sewing, cooking, housework she was taught root and branch in the time not spent at school, both gram-

mar and high. During the last year Mrs. Champney permitted her to learn French and embroidery in a systematic manner at the school established by the gentle Frenchwomen in The Gore; but she steadily refused to permit the girl to cultivate her voice through the medium of proper instruction. This denial of the girl's strongest desire was always a common subject of dissension and irritation; however, after Aileen was seventeen a battle royal of words between the two was a rare occurrence.

At the same time she never objected to Aileen's exercising her talent in her own way. Father Honoré encouraged her to sing to the accompaniment of his violin, knowing well that the instrument would do its share in correcting faults. She sang, too, with Luigi Poggi, her "knothole boy" of the asylum days; and, as seven years before, Nonna Lisa often accompanied with her guitar. The old Italian, who had managed to keep in touch with her one-time *protégée*, and her grandson Luigi, made their appearance in the village one summer after Aileen had been two years in Flamsted. Luigi, now that his vaudeville days were over, was in search of work at the quarries; his grandmother was to keep house for him till he should be able to establish himself in trade — the goal of so many of his thrifty countrymen.

These two Italians were typical of thousands of their nationality who come to our shores; whom our national life, through naturalization and community of interests, is able in a marvellously short time to assimilate — and for the public good. Intelligent, business-like, keen at a bargain, but honest and graciously gentle and friendly in manner, Luigi Poggi soon established himself in the affections of Flamsted — in no one's

more solidly than in Elmer Wiggins', strange to say, who capitulated to the "foreigner's" progressive business methods — and after three years of hard and satisfactory work at the quarries and in the sheds, by living frugally and saving thriftily he was able to open the first Italian fruit stall in the quarry town. The business was flourishing and already threatened to overrun its quarters. Luigi was in a fair way to become fruit capitalist; his first presidential vote had been cast, and he felt prepared to enjoy to the full his new Americanhood.

But with his young manhood and the fulfilment of its young aspirations, came other desires, other incentives for making his business a success and himself a respected and honored citizen of these United States. Luigi Poggi was ready to give into Aileen's keeping — whenever she might choose to indicate by a word or look that she was willing to accept the gift — his warm Italian heart that knew no subterfuge in love, but gave generously, joyfully, in the knowledge that there would be ever more and more to bestow. He had not as yet spoken, save with his dark eyes, his loving earnestness of voice, and the readiness with which, ever since his appearance in Flamsted he ran and fetched and carried for her.

Aileen enjoyed this devotion. The legitimate pleasure of knowing she is loved — even when no response can be given — is a girl's normal emotional nourishment. Through it the narrows in her nature widen and the shallows deepen to the dimensions that enable the woman's heart to give, at last, even as she has received, — ay, even more than she can ever hope to receive. This novitiate was now Aileen's.

As a foil, against which Luigi's silent devotion

showed to the best advantage, Romanzo Caukins' dogged persistence in telling her on an average of once in two months that he loved her and was waiting for a satisfactory answer, served its end. For six years, while Romanzo remained at Champ-au-Haut, the girl teased, cajoled, tormented, amused, and worried the Colonel's eldest. Of late, since his twenty-first birthday, he had turned the tables on her, and was teasing and worrying her with his love-blind persistence. That she had given him a decided answer more than once made no impression on his determined spirit. In her despair Aileen went to Octavius; but he gave her cold comfort.

"What'd I tell you two years ago, Aileen? Did n't I say you could n't play with even a slow-match like Roman, if you did n't want a fire later on? And you would n't hear a word to me."

"But I did n't know, Tave! How could I think that just because a boy tags round after you from morning till night for the sake of being amused, that when he gets to be twenty-one he is going to keep on tagging round after you for the rest of his days? I never saw such a leech! He simply won't accept the fact once for all that I won't have him; but he's got to — so now!"

Octavius smiled at the sudden little flurry; he was used to them.

"I take it Roman does n't think you know your own mind."

"He does n't! Well, he'll find out I do, then. Oh, dear, why could n't he just go on being Romanzo Caukins with no nonsense about him, and not make such a goose of himself! Anyway, I'm thankful he's gone; it got so I could n't so much as tell him to harness

up for Mrs. Champney, that he did n't consider it a sign of 'yielding' on my part!" She laughed out. "Oh, Tavy dear, what should I do without you!— Now if I could make an impression on you, it might be worth while," she added mischievously.

Octavius would have failed to be the man he was had he not felt flattered; he smiled on her indulgently. "Well, I should n't tag round after you much if I was thirty year younger; 't ain't my way. But there's one thing, Aileen, I want to say to you, and if you've got any common sense you'll heed me this time: I want you to be mighty careful how you manage with Luigi. You've got no slow-match to play with this time, let me tell you; you've got a regular sleeping volcano like some of them he was born near; and it won't do, I warn you. He ain't Romanzo Caukins — Roman's home made; but t'other is a foreigner; they're different."

"Oh, don't preach, Octavius." She always called him by his unabbreviated name when she was irritated. "I like well enough to sing with Luigi, and go rowing with him, and play tennis, and have the good times, but it's nonsense for you to think he means anything serious. Why, he never spoke a word of love to me in his life!"

"Humph! — that silent kind's the worst; you don't give him a chance."

"And I don't mean to — does that satisfy you?" she demanded. "If it does n't, I'll tell you something — but it's a secret; you won't tell?"

"Not if you don't want me to; I ain't that kind."

"I know you're not, Tave; that's why I'm going to tell you. Here, let me whisper — "; she bent to his ear; he was seated on a stool in the coach house mending a strap; " — I've waited all this time for that prince to

come, and do you suppose for one moment I'd look at any one else?"

"Now that ain't fair to fool me like that, Aileen!"

Octavius was really vexed, but he spoke the last words to empty air, for the girl caught up her skirt and ran like a deer up the lane. He could hear her laughing at his discomfiture; the sound grew fainter and fainter; when it ceased he resumed his work, from time to time shaking his head ominously and talking to himself as a vent for his outraged feelings.

But Aileen spoke the truth. Her vivid imagination, a factor in the true Celtic temperament, provided her with another life, apart from the busy practical one which Mrs. Champney laid out for her. All her childish delights of day-dreaming and joyous romancing, fostered by that first novel which Luigi Poggi thrust through the knothole in the orphan asylum fence, was at once transferred to Alice Van Ostend and her surroundings so soon as the two children established their across-street acquaintance. Upon her arrival in Flamsted, the child's adaptability to changed circumstances and new environment was furthered by the play of this imagination that fed itself on what others, who lack it, might call the commonplace of life: the house at Champ-au-Haut became her lordly palace; the estate a park; she herself a princess guarded only too well by an aged duenna; Octavius Buzzby and Romanzo Caukins she looked upon as life-servitors.

Now and then the evidence of this unreal life, which she was leading, was made apparent to Octavius and Romanzo by some stilted mode of speech. At such times they humored her; it provided amusement of the richest sort. She also continued to invent "novels" for Romanzo's benefit, and many a half-hour the two

spent in the carriage house — Aileen aglow with the enthusiasm of narration, and Romanzo intent upon listening, charmed both with the tale and the narrator. In these invented novels, there was always a faithful prince returning after long years of wandering to the faithful princess. This was her one theme with variations.

Sometimes she danced a minuet on the floor of the stable, with this prince as imaginary partner, and Romanzo grew jealous of the bewitching smiles and coquetries she bestowed upon the vacant air. At others she would induce the youth to enter a box stall, telling him to make believe he was at the theatre, and then, forgetting her rôle of princess, she was again the Aileen Armagh of old — the child on the vaudeville stage, dancing the coon dance with such vigor and abandonment that once, when Aileen was nearly sixteen, Octavius, being witness to this flaunting performance, took her severely to task for such untoward actions now that she was grown up. He told her frankly that if Romanzo Caukins was led astray in the future it would be through her carryings-on; at which Aileen looked so dumbfounded that Octavius at once perceived his mistake, and retreated weakly from his position by telling her if she wanted to dance like that, she'd better dance before him who understood her and her intentions.

At this second speech Aileen stared harder than ever; then going up to him and throwing an arm around his neck, she whispered:

“Tave, dear, are you mad with me? What have I done? — Is it really anything so awful?”

Her distress was so unfeigned that Octavius, not being a woman, comforted her by telling her he was a

great botcher. Inwardly he cursed himself for an A No. 1 fool. Aileen never danced the "coon" again, but thereafter gave herself such grown-up and stand-off airs in Romanzo's presence, that the youth proceeded in all earnest to lose both head and heart to the girl's gracious blossoming womanhood. Octavius, observing this, groaned in spirit, and henceforth held his tongue when he heard the girl carolling her Irish love songs in the presence of the ingenuous Caukins.

After this, the girl's exuberance of spirits and the sustaining inner life of the imagination helped her wonderfully during the three following years of patient waiting on a confirmed invalid. Of late, Mrs. Champney had come to depend more and more on the girl's strong youth; to demand more and more from her abundant vitality and lively spirits; and Aileen, although recognizing the anomalous position she held in the Champ-au-Haut household — neither servant nor child, neither companion nor friend — gave of herself; gave as her Irish inheritance prompted her to give: ungrudgingly, faithfully, without reward save the knowledge of a duty performed towards the woman who, in taking her into her household and maintaining her there, had placed her in a position to make friends — such friends!

When the soil is turned over carefully, enriched and prepared perfectly for the seed; when rain is abundant, sunshine plenteous and mother-earth's spring quickening is instinctive, is it to be wondered at that the rootlet delves, the plantlet lifts itself, the bud forms quickly, and unexpectedly spreads its petal-star to the sunlight which enhances its beauty and fructifies its work of reproduction? The natural laws, in this case,

work to their prescribed end along lines of favoring circumstance — and Love is but the working out of the greatest of all Nature's laws. When conditions are adverse, there is only too often struggle, strife, wretchedness. The result is a dwarfing of the product, a lowering of the vital power, a recession from the type. But, on the contrary, when all conditions combine to further the working of this law, we have the rapid and perfect flowering, followed by the beneficent maturity of fruit and seed. Thus Life, the ever-new, becomes immortal.

Small wonder that Aileen Armagh, trying to explain that queer feeling of timidity, should suddenly press her hand hard over her heart! It was throbbing almost to the point of suffocating her, so possessed was it by the joy of a sudden and wonderful presence of love.

The knowledge brought with it a sense of bewildering unreality. She knew now that her day dreams had a substantial basis. She knew now that she had *not* meant what she said.

For years, ever since the night of the serenade, her vivid imagination had been dwelling on Champney Gooze's home-coming; for years he was the central figure in her day dreams, and every dream was made half a reality to her by means of the praises in his behalf which she heard sounded by each man, woman, and child in the ever-increasing circle of her friends. It was always with old Joel Quimber: "When Champ gits back, we'll hev what ye might call the head of a fam'ly agin." Octavius Buzzby spent hours in telling her of the boy's comings and goings and doings at Champ-au-Haut, and the love Louis Champney bore him. Romanzo Caukins set him on the pedestal of his boyish enthusiasm. The Colonel himself was not

less enthusiastic than his first born; he never failed to assure Aileen when she was a guest in his house — an event that became a weekly matter as she grew older — that her lot had fallen in pleasant places; that to his friend, Mrs. Googe, and her son, Champney, she was indebted for the new industrial life which brought with it such advantages to one and all in Flamsted.

To Aurora Googe, the mother of her imaginative ideal, Aileen, attracted from the first by her beauty and motherly kindness towards an orphan waif, gave a child's demonstrative love, afterwards a girl's adoration. In all this devotion she was abetted by Elvira Caukins to whom Aurora Googe had always been an ideal of womanhood. Moreover, Aileen came to know during these years of Champney Googe's absence that his mother worshipped in reality where she herself worshipped in imagination.

Thus the ground was made ready for the seed. Small wonder that the flowering of love in this warm Irish heart was immediate, when Champney Googe, on the second day after his home-coming, questioned her with that careless challenge in his eyes:

“You would n't?”

The sun set before she left the boat house. She ran up the steps to the terrace and, not finding Mrs. Champney there, sought her in the house. She found her in the library, seated in her easy chair which she had turned to face the portrait of her husband, over the fireplace.

“Why did n't you call me to help you in, Mrs. Champney? I blame myself for not coming sooner.”

“I really feel stronger and thought I might as well

try it; there is always a first time — and you were with Champney, were n't you?"

"I? Why no — what made you think that?" Mrs. Champney noticed the slight hesitation before the question was put so indifferently, and the quick red that mounted in the girl's cheeks. "Mr. Googe went off half an hour ago with Rag tagging on behind."

"Then he conquered as usual."

"I don't know whether I should call it 'conquering' or not; Rag did n't want to go, that was plain enough to see."

"What made him go then?"

Aileen laughed out. "That's just what I'd like to know myself."

"What do you think of him?"

"Who? — Rag or Mr. Googe?"

She was always herself with Mrs. Champney, and her daring spirit of mischief rarely gave offence to the mistress of Champ-au-Haut. But by the tone of voice in which she answered, Aileen knew that, without intention, she had irritated her.

"You know perfectly well whom I mean — my nephew, Mr. Googe."

Aileen was silent for a moment. Her young secret was her own to guard from all eyes, and especially from all unfriendly ones. She was standing on the hearth, in front of Mrs. Champney. Turning her head slightly she looked up at the portrait of the man above her — looked upon almost the very lineaments of him whom at that very moment her young heart was adoring: the fine features, the blue eyes, the level brows, the firm curving lips, the abundant brown hair. It was as if Champney Googe himself were smiling down upon her. As she continued to look, the lovely light

in the girl's face — a light reflected from no sunset fires over the Flamsted Hills, but from the sunrise of girlhood's first love — betrayed her to the faded watchful eyes beside her.

"He looks just like your husband;" she spoke slowly; her voice seemed to linger on the last word; "when Tave saw him he said he thought it was Mr. Champney come to life, and I think —"

Mrs. Champney interrupted her. "Octavius Buzzby is a fool." Sudden anger hardened her voice; a slight flush came into her wasted cheeks. "Tell Hannah I want my supper now, let Ann bring it in here to me. I don't need you; I'm tired."

Aileen turned without another word — she knew too well that tone of voice and what it portended; she was thankful to hear it rarely now — and left the room to do as she was bidden.

"Little fool!" Almeda Champney muttered between set teeth when the door closed upon the girl. She placed both hands on the arms of her chair to raise herself; walked feebly to the hearth where a moment before Aileen had stood, and raising her eyes to the smiling ones looking down into hers, confessed her woman's weakness in bitter words that mingled with a half-sob:

"And I, too, was a fool — all women are with such as you."

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Champney remained the only one who read Aileen Armagh's secret, yet even she asked herself as the summer sped if she read aright.

During the three weeks in which her nephew was making himself familiar with all the inner and outer workings of the business at The Gore and in the sheds, she came to anticipate his daily coming to Champ-au-Haut, for he brought with him the ozone of success. His laugh was so unaffectedly hearty; his interest in the future of Flamsted and of himself as a factor in its prosperity so unfeigned; his enjoyment of his own importance so infectious, his account of the people and things he had seen during his absence from home so entertaining that, in his presence, his aunt breathed a new atmosphere, the life-giving qualities of which were felt as beneficial to every member of the household at The Bow.

Mrs. Champney took note that he never asked for Aileen. If the girl were there when he ran in for afternoon tea on the terrace or an hour's chat in the evening, — sometimes it happened that the day saw him three times at Champ-au-Haut — her presence to all appearance afforded him only an opportunity to tease her goodnaturedly; he delighted in her repartee. Mrs. Champney, keenly observant, failed to detect in the girl's frank joyousness the least self-consciousness; she was just her own merry self with him, and the

“give and take” between them afforded Mrs. Champney a fund of amusement.

On the evening of his departure for New York, she was witness to their merry leave-taking. Afterwards she summoned Octavius to the library.

“You may bring all the mail for the house hereafter to me, Octavius; now that I am feeling so much stronger, I shall gradually resume my customary duties in the household. You need not give any of the mail to Aileen to distribute — I’ll do it after to-night.”

“What the devil is she up to now!” Octavius said to himself as he left the room.

But no letter from New York came for Aileen. Mrs. Champney tried another tack: the next time her nephew came to Flamsted, later on in the autumn, she asked him to write her in detail concerning his intimacy with her cousins, the Van Ostends, and of their courtesies to him. Champney, nothing loath — always keeping in mind the fact that it was well to keep on the right side of Aunt Meda — wrote her all she desired to know. What he wrote was retailed faithfully to Aileen; but the frequent dinners at the Van Ostends’, and the prospective coming-out reception and ball to be given for Alice and scheduled for the late winter, called forth from the eagerly listening girl only ejaculations of delight and pleasant reminiscence of the first time she had seen the little girl dressed for a party. If, inwardly she asked herself the question why Alice Van Ostend had dropped all her childish interest in her whom she had been the means of sending to Flamsted, why she no longer inquired for her, her common sense was apt to answer the question satisfactorily. Aileen Armagh was keen-eyed and quick-witted, possessing, without actual experience in the so-called other world

of society, a wonderful intuition as to the relative value of people and circumstances in this ordinary world which already, during her short life, had presented various interesting phases for her inspection; consequently she recognized the abyss of circumstance between her and the heiress of Henry Van Ostend. But, with an intensity proportioned to her open-minded recognition of the first material differences, her innate womanliness and pride refused to acknowledge any abyss as to their respective personalities. Hence she kept silence in regard to certain things; laughed and made merry over the letters filled with the Van Ostends' doings — and held on her own way, sure of her own status with herself.

Aileen kept her secret, and all the more closely because she was realizing that Champney Googe was far from indifferent to her. At first, the knowledge of the miracle of love, that was wrought so suddenly as she thought, sufficed to fill her heart with continual joy. But, shortly, that was modified by the awakening longing that Champney should return her love. She felt she charmed him; she knew that he timed his coming and going that he might encounter her in the house or about the grounds, whenever and wherever he could — sometimes alone in her boat on the long arm of the lake, that makes up to the west and is known as "lily-pad reach"; and afterwards, during the autumn, in the quarry woods above The Gore where with her satellites, Dulcie and Doosie Caukins, she went to pick checkerberries.

Mrs. Champney was baffled; she determined to await developments, taking refuge from her defeat in the old saying "Love and a cough can't be hidden." Still, she could but wonder when four months of the

late spring and early summer passed, and Champney made no further appearance in Flamsted. This hiatus was noticeable, and she would have found it inexplicable, had not Mr. Van Ostend written her a letter which satisfied her in regard to many things of which she had previously been in doubt; it decided her once for all to speak to Aileen and warn her against any passing infatuation for her nephew. For this she determined to bide her time, especially as Champney's unusual length of absence from Flamsted seemed to have no effect on the girl's joyous spirits. In July, however, she had again an opportunity to see the two together at Champ-au-Haut. Champney was in Flamsted on business for two days only, and so far as she knew there was no opportunity for Aileen to see her nephew more than once and in her presence. She managed matters in such a way that Aileen's services were in continual demand during Champney's two days' stay in his native town.

But after that visit in July, the singing voice was heard ringing joyfully at all times of the day in the house and about the grounds of The Bow. Sometimes the breeze brought it to Octavius from across the lake waters — Luigi's was no longer with it — and he pitied the girl sincerely because the desire of her heart, the cultivation of such a voice, was denied her. Mrs. Champney, also, heard the clear voice, which, in this the girl's twentieth year, was increasing in volume and sweetness, carolling the many songs in Irish, English, French and Italian. She marvelled at the light-heartedness and, at the same time, wondered if, now that Romanzo Caukins could no longer hope, Aileen would show enough common sense to accept Luigi Poggi in due time, and through him make for herself

an established place in Flamsted. Not that she was yet ready to part with her — far from it. She was too useful a member of the Champ-au-Haut household. Still, if it were to be Poggi in the end, she felt she could control matters to the benefit of all concerned, herself primarily. She was pleasing herself with the idea of such prospective control of Aileen's matrimonial interests one afternoon, just after Champney's flying visit in July, when she rose from her chair beneath the awning and, to try her strength, made her way slowly along the terrace to the library windows; they were French casements and one of them had swung outwards noiselessly in the breeze. She was about to step through, when she saw Aileen standing on the hearth before the portrait of Louis Champney. She was gazing up at it, her face illumined by the same lovely light that, a year before, had betrayed her secret to the faded but observant eyes of Louis Champney's widow.

This was enough; the mistress of Champ-au-Haut was again on her guard — and well she might be, for Aileen Armagh was in possession of the knowledge that Champney Googe loved her. In joyful anticipation she was waiting for the word which, spoken by him when he should be again in Flamsted, was to make her future both fair and blest.

VI

IN entering on his business life in New York, Champney Googe, like many another man, failed to take into account the "minus quantities" in his personal equation. These he possessed in common with other men because he, too, was human: passions in common, ambitions in common, weaknesses in common, and last, but not least, the pursuance of a common end—the accumulation of riches.

The sum of these minus quantities added to the total of temperamental characteristics and inherited traits left, unfortunately, in balancing the personal equation a minus quantity. Not that he had any realization of such a result—what man has? On the contrary, he firmly believed that his inherited obstinate perseverance, his buoyant temperament, his fortunate business connection with the great financier, his position as the meeting-point of the hitherto divided family interests in Flamsted, his intimacy with the Van Ostends—the distant tie of blood confirming this at all points—plus his college education and cosmopolitan business training in the financial capitals of Europe, were potent factors in finding the value of x —this representing to him an, as yet, unknown quantity of accumulated wealth.

He had not yet asked himself how large a sum he wished to amass, but he said to himself almost daily, "I have shown my power along certain lines to-day,"

these lines converging in his consciousness always to monetary increment.

He worked with a will. His energy was tireless. He learned constantly and much from other men powerful in the world of affairs — of their methods of speculation, some legitimate, others quite the contrary; of their manipulation of stocks, weak and strong; of their strengthening the market when the strengthening was necessary to fill a threatened deficit in their treasury and of their weakening a line of investment to prevent over-loading and consequent depletion of the same. He was thoroughly interested in all he heard and saw of the development of mines and industries for the benefit of certain banking cliques and land syndicates. If now and then a mine proved to have no bottom and the small investor's insignificant sums dropped out of sight in this bottomless pit, that did not concern him — it was all in the game, and the game was an enticing one to be played to the end. The two facts that nothing is certain at all times, and that everything is uncertain at some time, added the excitement of chance to his business interest.

At times, for instance when walking up the Avenue on a bracing October day, he felt as if he owned all in sight — a condition of mind which those who know from experience the powerful electro-magnetic current generated by the rushing life of the New York metropolis can well understand. He struck out into the stream with the rest, and with overweening confidence in himself — in himself as master of circumstances which he intended to control in his own interests, in himself as the pivotal point of Flamsted affairs. The rapidity of the current acted as a continual stimulus to exertion. Like all bold swimmers, he knew in a

general way that the channel might prove tortuous, the current threaten at times to overpower him; but, carried rapidly out into mid-stream with that gigantic propulsive force that is the resultant of the diverse onward-pressure of the metropolitan millions, he suddenly found himself one day in that mid-stream without its ever having occurred to him that he might not be able to breast it. Even had he thought enough about the matter to admit that certain untoward conditions might have to be met, he would have failed to realize that the shore towards which he was struggling might prove in the end a quicksand.

Another thing: he failed to take into account the influence of any cross current, until he was made to realize the necessity of stemming his strength against it. This influence was Aileen Armagh.

Whenever in walking up lower Broadway from the office he found himself passing Grace Church, he realized that, despite every effort of will, he was obliged to relive in thought the experience of that night seven years ago at the Vaudeville. Then for the first time he saw the little match girl crouching on the steps of the stage reproduction of this same marble church. The child's singing of her last song had induced in him then — wholly unawares, wholly unaccountably — a sudden mental nausea and a physical disgust at the course of his young life, the result being that the woman "who lay in wait for him at the corner" by appointment, watched that night in vain for his coming.

In reliving this experience, there was always present in his thought the Aileen Armagh as he knew her now — pure, loyal, high-spirited, helpful, womanly in all her household ways, entertaining in her originality, endowed with the gift of song. She was charming;

this was patent to all who knew her. It was a pleasure to dwell on this thought of her, and, dwelling upon it too often at off-times in his business life, the desire grew irresistible to be with her again; to chat with her; to see the blue-gray eyes lifted to his; to find in them something he found in no others. At such times a telegram sped over the wires to Aurora Gooze, and her heart was rejoiced by a two days' visit from her son.

Champney Gooze knew perfectly well that this cross current of influence was diametrically opposed to his own course of life as he had marked it out for himself; knew that this was a species of self-gratification in which he had no business to indulge; he knew, moreover, that from the moment he should make an earnest effort to win Alice Van Ostend and her accompanying millions, this self-gratification must cease. He told himself this over and over again; meanwhile he made excuse — a talk with the manager of the quarries, a new order of weekly payments to introduce and regulate with Romanzo Caukins, the satisfactory paymaster in the Flamsted office, a week-end with his mother, the consideration of contracts and the erection of a new shed on the lake shore — to visit Flamsted several times during the autumn, winter, and early spring.

At last, however, he called a halt.

Alice Van Ostend, young, immature, amusing in her girlish abandon to the delight of at last "coming out", was, nevertheless, rapidly growing up, a condition of affairs that Champney was forced rather unwillingly to admit just before her first large ball. As usual he made himself useful to Alice, who looked upon him as a part of her goods and chattels. It was in the selection of the favors for the german to be given in

the stone house on the occasion of the coming-out reception for its heiress, that his eyes were suddenly opened to the value of time, so to say; for Alice was beginning to patronize him. By this sign he recognized that she was putting the ten years' difference in their ages at something like a generation. It was not pleasing to contemplate, because the winning of Alice Van Ostend was, to use his own expression, in a line coincident with his own life lines. Till now he believed he was the favored one; but certain signs of the times began to be provocative of distrust in this direction.

He asked boldly for the first dance, for the cotillon, and the privilege of giving her the flowers she was to wear that night. He assumed these favors to be within his rights; she was by no means of his way of thinking. It developed during their scrapping — Champney had often to scrap with Alice to keep on a level with her immaturity — that there was another rival for the cotillon, another, a younger man, who desired to give her the special flowers for this special affair. The final division of the young lady's favors was not wholly reassuring to Mr. Googe. As a result of this awakening, he decided to remain in New York without farther visits to Flamsted until the Van Ostends should have left the city for the summer.

But in the course of the spring and summer he found it one thing to call a halt and quite another to make one. The cross current of influence, which had its source in Flamsted, was proving, against his will and judgment, too strong for him. He knew this and deplored it, for it threatened to carry him away from the shore towards which he was pushing, unawares that this apparently firm ground of attainment might prove treacherous in the end.

“Every man has his weakness, and she’s mine,” he told himself more than once; yet in making this statement he was half aware that the word “weakness” was in no sense applicable to Aileen. It remained for the development of his growing passion for her to show him that he was wholly in the wrong — she was his strength, but he failed to realize this.

Champney Googe was not a man to mince matters with himself. He told himself that he was not infatuated; infatuation was a thing to which he had yielded but few times in his selfish life. He was ready to acknowledge that his interest in Aileen Armagh was something deeper, more lasting; something that, had he been willing to look the whole matter squarely in the face instead of glancing askance at its profile, he would have seen to be perilously like real love — that love which first binds through passionate attachment, then holds through congenial companionship to bless a man’s life to its close.

“She suits me — suits me to a T;” such was his admission in what he called his weak moments. Then he called himself a fool; he cursed himself for yielding to the influence of her charming personality in so far as to encourage what he perceived to be on her part a deep and absorbing love for him. In yielding to his weakness, he knew he was deviating from the life lines he had laid with such forethought for his following. A rich marriage was the natural corollary of his determination to advance his own interests in his chosen career. This marriage he still intended to make, if possible with Alice Van Ostend; and the fact that young Ben Falkenburg, an old playmate of Alice’s, just graduated from college, the “other man” of the cotillon favors, was the first invited guest for the prospective

cruise on Mr. Van Ostend's yacht, did not dovetail with his intentions. It angered him to think of being thwarted at this point.

"Why must such a girl cross my path just as I was getting on my feet with Alice?" he asked himself, manlike illogically impatient with Aileen when he should have lost patience with himself. But in the next moment he found himself dwelling in thought on the lovely light in the eyes raised so frankly to his, on the promises of loyalty those same eyes would hold for him if only he were to speak the one word which she was waiting to hear — which she had a right to hear after his last visit in July to Flamsted.

If he had not kissed her that once! With a girl like Aileen there could be no trifling — what then?

He cursed himself for his heedless folly, yet — he knew well enough that he would not have denied himself that moment of bliss when the girl in response to his whispered words of love gave him her first kiss, and with it the unspoken pledge of her loving heart.

"I'm making another ass of myself!" he spoke aloud and continued to chew the end of a cold cigar.

The New York office was deserted in these last days of August except for two clerks who had just left to take an early train to the beach for a breath of air. The treasurer of the Flamsted Quarries Company was sitting idle at his desk. It was an off-time in business and he had leisure to assure himself that he was without doubt the quadruped alluded to above — "An ass that this time is in danger of choosing thistles for fodder when he can get something better."

Only the day before he had concluded on his own account a deal, that cost him much thought and required an extra amount of a certain kind of courage,

with a Wall Street firm. Now that this was off his hands and there was nothing to do between Friday and Monday, when he was to start for Bar Harbor to join the Van Ostends and a large party of invited guests for a three weeks' cruise on the Labrador coast, he had plenty of time to convince himself that he possessed certain asinine qualities which did not redound to his credit as a man of sense. In his idle moments the thought of Aileen had a curious way of coming to the surface of consciousness. It came now. He whirled suddenly to face his desk squarely; tossed aside the cold cigar in disgust; touched the electric button to summon the office boy.

"I'll put an end to it — it's got to be done sometime or other — just as well now." He wrote a note to the head clerk to say that he was leaving two days earlier for his vacation than he intended; left his address for the next four days in case anything should turn up that might demand his presence before starting on the cruise; sent the office boy off with a telegram to his mother that she might expect him Saturday morning for two days in Flamsted; went to his apartment, packed grip and steamer trunk for the yacht, and left on the night express for the Maine coast.

VII

“**I** JUST saw Mr. Googe driving down from The Gore, Aileen, so he’s in town again.”

Octavius was passing the open library window where Aileen was sitting at her work, and stopped to tell her the news.

“Is he?”

The tone was indifferent, but had she not risen quickly to shake some threads of embroidery linen into the scrap-basket beneath the library table, Octavius might have seen the quick blood mount into her cheeks, the red lips quiver. It was welcome news for which she had been waiting already six weeks.

Octavius spoke again but in a low voice:

“You might mention it to Mrs. Champney when she comes down; it don’t set well, you know, if she ain’t told everything that’s going on.” He passed on without waiting for an answer.

The girl took her seat again by the window. Her work lay in her lap; her hands were folded above it; her face was turned to the Flamsted Hills. “Would he come soon? When and where could she see him again, and alone?” Her thoughts were busy with conjecture.

Octavius recrossing the terrace called out to her:

“You going up to Mrs. Caukins’ later on this afternoon?”

“Yes; Mrs. Champney said she did n’t need me.”

“I’ll take you up.”

“Thank you, Tave, not to-day. I’m going to row up as far as the upper shed. I promised the twins to meet them there; they want to see the new travelling crane at work. We’ll go up afterwards to The Gore together.”

“It’s pretty hot, but I guess you’re all three seasoned by this time.”

“Through and through, Tave; and I’m not coming home till after supper — it’s lovely then — there’s Mrs. Champney coming!”

She heard her step in the upper hall and ran upstairs to assist her in coming down.

“Will you go out on the terrace now?” she asked her on entering the library.

“I’ll wait a while; it’s too warm at this hour.”

Aileen drew Mrs. Champney’s arm chair to the other casement window. She resumed her seat and work.

“How are you getting on with the napkins?” the mistress of Champ-au-Haut inquired after a quarter of an hour’s silence in which she was busied with some letters.

“Fine — see?” She held up a corner for her inspection. “This is the tenth; I shall soon be ready for the big table cloth.”

“Bring them to me.”

Aileen obeyed, and showed her the monogram, A C, wrought by her own deft fingers in the finest linen.

“There’s no one like a Frenchwoman to teach embroidery; you’ve done them credit.” Aileen dropped a mock courtesy. “Which one taught you?”

“Sister Ste. Croix.”

“Is she the little wrinkled one?”

"Yes, but I've fallen in love with every wrinkle, she's a perfect dear —"

"I did n't imply she was n't." Mrs. Champney was apt to snap out at Aileen when, according to her idea, she was "gushing" too much. The girl had ceased to mind this; she was used to it, especially during her three years of attendance on this invalid. "Who designed this monogram?"

"She did; she can draw beautifully."

Mrs. Champney put on her glasses to examine in detail the exquisite lettering, A C.

Aileen leaned above her, smiling to herself. How many loving thoughts were wrought into those same initials! How many times, while her fingers were busy fashioning them, she had planned to make just such for her very own! How often, as she wrought, she had laid her lips to the A C, murmuring to herself over and over again, "Aileen — Champney, Champney — Aileen," so filling and satisfying with the sound of this pleasing combination her every loving anticipation!

She was only waiting for the "word", schooling herself in these last six weeks to wait patiently for it — the "word" which should make these special letters her legitimate own!

The singing thoughts that ring in the consciousness of a girl who gives for the first time her whole heart to her lover; the chanted prayers to her Maker, that rise with every muted throb of the young wife's heart which is beating for two in anticipation of her first motherhood — who shall dare enumerate them?

The varied loving thoughts in this girl's quick brain, which was fed by her young pulsing heart — a heart single in its loyalty to one during all the years since her orphan childhood, were intensified and illumined by

the inherent quickening power of a vivid imagination, and inwrought with these two letters that stood, at present, for their owner, Almeda Champney. Aileen's smile grew wonderfully tender, almost tremulous as she continued to lean above her work. Mrs. Champney looking up suddenly caught it and, in part, interpreted it. It angered her both unreasonably and unaccountably. This girl must be taught her place. She aspiring to Champney Googe! She handed her back the work.

"Ann said just now she heard Octavius telling you that my nephew, Champney Googe, is in town — when did he come?"

"I don't know — Tave did n't say."

"I wonder Alice Van Ostend did n't mention that he was coming here before going on the yachting cruise they've planned. I had a letter from her yesterday — I know you'd like to hear it."

"Of course I should! It's the first one she has written you, is n't it? — Where is it?" She spoke with her usual animated interest.

"I have it here."

She took up one of several letters in her lap, opened it, turned it over, adjusted her glasses and began to read a paragraph here and there. Aileen listened eagerly.

"I suppose I may as well read it all — Alice would n't mind you," said Mrs. Champney, and proceeded to give the full contents. It was filled with anticipations of the yachting cruise, of a later visit to Flamsted, of Champney and her friends. Champney's name occurred many times, — Alice's attitude towards the possessor of it seemed to be that of private ownership, — but everything was written with the frankness of

an accepted publicity of the fact that Mr. Googe was one of her social appendages. Aileen was amused at the whole tone of the rather lengthy epistle; it gave her no uneasiness.

Mrs. Champney laid aside her glasses; she wanted to note the effect of the reading on the girl.

"You can see for yourself from this how matters stand between these two; it need n't be spoken of in Flamsted outside the family, but it's just as well for you to know of it — don't you think so?"

Aileen parried; she enjoyed a little bout with Champney Googe's aunt.

"Of course, it's plain enough to see that they're the best of friends —"

"Friends!" Mrs. Champney interrupted her; there was a scornful note in her voice which insensibly sharpened; "you have n't your usual common sense, Aileen, if you can't read between these lines well enough to see that Miss Van Ostend and my nephew are as good as engaged."

Aileen smiled, but made no reply.

"What are you laughing at?" The tone was peremptory and denoted extreme irritation. Aileen put down her work and looked across to her interrogator.

"I was only smiling at my thoughts."

"Will you be so good as to state what they are? They may prove decidedly interesting to me — at this juncture," she added emphatically.

Aileen's look of amusement changed swiftly to one of surprise.

"To be honest, I was thinking that what she writes about Mr. Googe does n't sound much like love, that was all —"

"That was all!" Mrs. Champney echoed sarcasti-

cally; "well, what more do you need to convince you of facts I should like to know?"

Aileen laughed outright at this. "Oh, Mrs. Champney, what's the use of being a girl, if you can't know what other girls mean?"

"Please explain yourself."

"Won't you please read that part again where she mentions the people invited for the cruise."

Mrs. Champney found the paragraph and re-read it aloud.

"Falkenburg — that's the name — Ben Falkenburg."

"How did you ever hear of this Ben Falkenburg?"

"Oh, I heard of him years ago!" The mischief was in her voice and Mrs. Champney recognized it.

"Where?"

"When I was in New York — in the asylum; he's the one that danced the minuet with the Marchioness; I told you about it years ago."

"How do you know he was the boy?"

"Because Alice told me his name then, and showed me the valentine and May-basket he sent her — just read the postscript again; if you want to crack a letter for its kernel, you'll generally find it in a postscript, that is with girls of Alice's age."

She spoke as if there were years of seniority on her part. Mrs. Champney turned to the postscript again.

"I see nothing in this — you're romancing again, Aileen; you'd better put it aside; it will get you into trouble sometime."

"Oh, never fear for me, Mrs. Champney; I'll take care of all the romancing as well as the romances — but can't you see by those few words that it's Mr. Ben Falkenburg who is going to make the yachting trip for Miss Van Ostend, and not your nephew?"

"No, I can't," Mrs. Champney answered shortly, "and neither could you if your eyes were n't blinded by your infatuation for him."

Aileen rolled up her work deliberately. If the time had come for open war to be declared between the two on Champney Googe's account, it was best to fight the decisive battle now, before seeing him again. She rose and stood by the window.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Champney?" Her temper was rising quickly as it always did when Mrs. Champney went too far. She had spoken but once of her nephew in a personal way to Aileen since she asked that question a year ago, "What do you think of him?"

"I mean what I say." Her voice took on an added shrillness. "Your infatuation for my nephew has been patent for a year now — and it's time you should be brought to your senses; I can't suppose you're fool enough to think he'll marry you."

Aileen set her lips close. After all, it was not best to answer this woman as she deserved to be answered. She controlled the increasing anger so far as to be able to smile frankly and answer lightly:

"You've no need to worry, Mrs. Champney; your nephew has never asked me to be his wife."

"His wife!" she echoed scornfully; "I should say not; and let me tell you for your own benefit — sometime you'll thank me for it — and mark my words, Aileen Armagh, he never will ask you to be his wife, and the sooner you accept this unvarnished truth the better it will be for you. I suppose you think because you've led Romanzo Caukins and young Poggi a chase, you can do the same with Champney Googe — but you'll find out your mistake; such men are n't

led — they lead. He is going to marry Alice Van Ostend.”

“Do you *know* this for a fact, Mrs. Champney?” She turned upon her sharply. She was, at last, at bay; her eyes were dark with anger; her lips and cheeks white.

“It’s like you to fly off at a tangent, Aileen, and doubt a person’s word simply because it happens to contain an unpleasant truth for you — here is the proof,” she held up a letter; “it’s from my cousin, Henry Van Ostend; he has written it out in black and white that my nephew has already asked for his daughter’s hand. Now disabuse your mind of any notion you may have in regard to Champney Googe — I hope you won’t disgrace yourself by crying for the moon after this.”

The girl’s eyes fairly blazed upon her.

“Mrs. Champney, after this I’ll thank you to keep your advice and your family affairs to yourself — I did n’t ask for either. And you’ve no need to tell me I’m only Aileen Armagh — for I know it perfectly well. I’m only an orphan you took into your home seven years ago and have kept, so far, for her service. But if I am only this, I am old enough to do and act as I please — and now you may mark *my* words: it’s not I who will disgrace you and yours — not I, remember that!” Her anger threatened to choke her; but her voice although husky remained low, never rising above its level inflection. “And let me tell you another thing: I’m as good any day as Alice Van Ostend, and I should despise myself if I thought myself less; and if it’s the millions that make the difference in the number of your friends — may God keep me poor till I die!” She spoke with passionate earnestness.

Mrs. Champney smiled to herself; she felt her purpose was accomplished.

"Are you going up to Mrs. Caukins'?" she asked in a matter-of-fact voice that struck like cold iron on the girl's burning intensity of feeling.

"Yes, I'm going."

"Well, be back by seven."

The girl made no reply. She left the library at once, closing the door behind her with a force that made the hall ring. Mrs. Champney smiled again, and proceeded to re-read Alice Van Ostend's letter.

Aileen went out through the kitchen and across the vegetable garden to the boat house. She cast loose one of the boats in the float, took her seat and rowed out into the lake — rowed with a strength and swiftness that accurately gauged her condition of mind. She rounded the peninsula of The Bow and headed her boat, not to the sheds on the north shore, but towards the west, to "lily-pad reach." To get away from that woman's presence, to be alone with herself — that was all she craved at the moment. The oars caught among the lily-pads; this gave her an excuse for pulling and wrenching at them. Her anger was still at white heat — not a particle of color as yet tinged her cheeks — and the physical exertion necessary to overcome such an obstacle as the long tough stems she felt to be a relief.

"It is n't true — it is n't true," she said over and over again to herself. She kept tugging and pulling till by sheer strength she forced the boat into the shallow water among the tall arrowhead along the margin of the shore.

She stepped out on the landing stones, drew up the boat, then made her way across the meadow to the

shade of the tall spreading willows. Here she threw herself down, pressing her face into the cool lush grass, and relived in thought that early morning hour she had spent alone with him, only a few weeks ago, on the misty lake among the opening water lilies.

She had been awakened that morning in mid-July by hearing him singing softly beneath her open window that same song which seven years ago made such an unaccountable impression on her child's heart. He had often in jest threatened to repeat the episode of the serenade, but she never realized that beneath the jest there was any deeper meaning. Now she was aware of that meaning in her every fibre, physical and spiritual.

“Aileen Mavoureen, the gray dawn is breaking —”

And hearing that, realizing that the voice was calling for her alone in all the world, she rose; dressed herself quickly; beckoned joyously to him from the window; noiselessly made her way down the back stairs; softly unbolted the kitchen porch door —

He was there with hands outstretched for hers; she placed them in his, and again, in remembrance of their fun and frolic seven years before, he raced with her down the slate-laid garden walk, across the lawn to the boat house where his own boat lay moored.

It was four o'clock on that warm midsummer morning. The mists lay light but impenetrable on the surface of the lake. The lilies were still closed.

They spoke but little.

“I knew no one could hear me — they all sleep on the other side, don't they?”

“Yes, all except the boy, and he sleeps like a log —

Tave has to wake him every morning; alarm clocks are no good."

"Have you ever seen the lilies open, Aileen?"

"No, never; I've never been out early in the morning, but I've often seen them go to sleep under the starlight."

"We will row round then till they open — it's worth seeing."

The sun rose in the low-lying mists; it transfused them with crimson. It mounted above them; shot them through and through with gold and violet — then dispersed them without warning, and showed to the girl's charmed eyes and senses the gleaming blue of the lake waters blotched with the dull green of the lily-pads, and among them the lilies expanding the fragrant white of their corollas to its beneficent light and warmth. . . .

When she left the boat his kiss was on her lips, his words of love ringing in her ears. One more of her day dreams was realized: she had given to the man she loved with all her heart her first kiss — and with it, on her part, the unspoken pledge of herself.

A movement somewhere about the house, the lowing of the cattle, the morning breeze stirring in the trees — something startled them. They drew apart, smiling into each other's eyes. She placed her finger on her lips.

"Hush!" she whispered. She was off on a run across the lawn, turning once to wave her hand to him. — And now *this!*

How could this then that she had just been told be true?

Her whole being revolted at the thought that he was

tampering with what to her was the holiest in her young life — her love for him. In the past six weeks it never once occurred to her that he could prove unworthy of such trust as hers; no man would dare to be untrue to her — to her, Aileen Armagh, who never in all her wilfulness and love of romance had given man or boy occasion to use either her name or her lightly! How dared he do this thing? Did he not know with whom he had to deal? Because she was only Aileen Armagh, and at service with his relation, did he think her less the true woman?

Suspicion was foreign to her open nature; doubt, distrust had no place in her young life; but like a serpent in the girl's Eden the words of the mistress of Champ-au-Haut, "He never will ask you to be his wife," dropped poison in her ears.

She sat up on the grass, thrust back her hair from her forehead —

"Let him dare to hint even that what he said was love for me was not what — what —"

She buried her face in her hands.

Aileen — Aileen — where are you?"

That voice, breaking in upon her wretched thought of him, brought her to her feet.

VIII

“**M**OTHER, don't you think Aunt Meda might open her purse and do something for Aileen Armagh now that the girl has been faithful to her interests so long?”

He had remained at home since his arrival in the morning, and was now about to drive down into the town.

His mother looked up from her sewing in surprise.

“What put that into your mind? I was thinking the same thing myself not a week ago; she has such a wonderful voice.”

“It seems unjust to keep her from utilizing it for herself so far as an income is concerned and to deprive others of the pleasure of hearing her voice after it is trained. But, of course, she can't do it herself.”

“I only wish I could do it for her.” His mother spoke with great earnestness. “But even if I could help, there would be no use offering so long as she remains with Almeda.”

“Perhaps not; anyway, I'm going down there now, and I shall do what I can to sound Aunt Meda on this point.”

“Good luck!” she called after him. He turned, lifted his hat, and smiled back at her.

He found Mrs. Champney alone on the terrace; she was sitting under the ample awning that protected her from the sun but was open on all sides for air.

“All alone, Aunt Meda?” he inquired cheerfully, taking a seat beside her.

“Yes; when did you come?”

“This morning.”

“Is n't it rather unexpected?” She glanced sideways rather sharply at him.

“My coming here is; I'm really on my way to Bar Harbor. The Van Ostends are off on Tuesday with a large party and I promised to go with them.”

“So Alice wrote me the other day. It's the first letter I have had from her. She says she is coming here on her way home in October, that she's 'just crazy' to see Flamsted Quarries—but I can read between the lines even if my eyes are old.” She smiled significantly.

Champney felt that an answering smile was the safe thing in the circumstances. He wondered how much Aunt Meda knew from the Van Ostends. That she was astute in business matters was no guaranty that she would prove far-sighted in matrimonial affairs.

“I've known Alice so long that she's gotten into the habit of taking me for granted—not that I object,” he added with a glance in the direction of the boat house. Mrs. Champney, whom nothing escaped, noticed it.

“I should hope not,” she said emphatically. “I may as well tell you, Champney, that Mr. Van Ostend has not hesitated to write me of your continued attentions to Alice and your frankness with him in regard to the outcome of this. So far as I see, his only objection could be on account of her extreme youth—I congratulate you.” She spoke with great apparent sincerity.

“Thank you, Aunt Meda,” he said quietly; “your

congratulations are premature, and the subject so far as Alice and I are concerned is taboo for three years — at Mr. Van Ostend's special request."

"Quite right — a girl does n't know her own mind before she is twenty-five."

"Faith, I know one who knows her own mind on all subjects at twenty!" — he laughed heartily as if at some amusing remembrance — "and that's Aileen; by the way, where is she, Aunt Meda?"

"She was going up to Mrs. Caukins'. I suppose she is there now — why?"

"Because I want to talk about her, and I don't want her to come in on us suddenly."

"What about Aileen?" She spoke indifferently.

"About her voice; you've never been willing, I understand, to have it cultivated?"

"What if I have n't?"

"That's just the 'what', Aunt Meda," he said pleasantly but earnestly; "I've heard her singing a good many times, and I've never heard her that I did n't wish some one would be generous enough to such talent to pay for cultivating it."

"Do you know why I have n't been willing?"

"No, I don't — and I'd like to know."

"Because, if I had, she would have been on the stage before now — and where could I get another? I don't intend to impoverish myself for her sake — not after what I've done for her." She spoke emphatically. "What was your idea in asking me about her?"

"I thought it was a pity that such a talent should be left to go to seed. I wish you could look at it from my standpoint and give her the wherewithal to go to Europe for three or four years in order to cultivate it — she can take care of herself well enough."

“And you really advise this?” She asked almost incredulously.

“Why not? You must have seen my interest in the girl. I can’t think of a better way of showing it than to induce you to put her in the way of earning her livelihood by her talent.”

Mrs. Champney made no direct reply. After a moment’s silence she asked abruptly:

“Have you ever said anything to her about this?”

“Never a word.”

“Don’t then; I don’t want her to get any more new-fangled notions into her head.”

“Just as you say; but I wish you would think about it — it seems almost a matter of justice.” He rose to go.

“Where are you going now?”

“Over to the shed office; I want to see the foreman about the last contract. I’ll borrow the boat, if you don’t mind, and row up — I have plenty of time.” He looked at his watch. “Can I do anything for you before I go?” he asked gently, adjusting an awning curtain to shut the rays of the sun from her face.

“Yes; I wish you would telephone up to Mrs. Caukins and tell her to tell Aileen to be at home before six; I need her to-night.”

“Certainly.”

He went into the house and telephoned. He did not think it necessary to return and report Mrs. Caukins’ reply that Aileen “had n’t come up yet.” He went directly to the boat house, wondering in the mean time where she was.

One of the two boats was already gone; doubtless she had taken it — where could she be?

He stepped into the boat, and pulled slowly out into

the lake, keeping in the lee of the rocky peninsula of The Bow. He was fairly well satisfied with his effort in Aileen's behalf and with himself because he had taken a first step in the right direction. Neither his mother nor Aunt Meda could say now that he was not disinterested; if Father Honoré came over, as was his custom, to chat with him on the porch for an hour or two in the evening, he would broach the subject again to him who was the girl's best friend. If she could go to Europe there would be less danger —

Danger? — Yes; he was willing to admit it, less danger for them both; three years of absence would help materially in this matter in which he felt himself too deeply involved. Then, in the very face of this acknowledgment, he could not help a thought that whitened his cheek as it formulated itself instantaneously in his consciousness: if she were three years in Europe, there would be opportunity for him to see her sometime.

He knew the thought could not be uttered in the girl's pure presence; yet, with many others, he held that a woman, if she loves a man absorbingly, passionately, is capable of any sacrifice — would she? Hardly; she was so high-spirited, so pure in thought — yet she loved him, and after all love was the great Subduer. But no — it could never be; this was his decision. He rowed out into the lake.

Why must a man's action prove so often the slave of his thought!

He was passing the arm of Mesantic that leads to "lily-pad reach." He turned to look up the glinting curve. Was she there? — should he seek her?

He backed water on the instant. The boat responded like a live thing, quivered, came to a partial rest —

stopped, undulating on the surface roughened by the powerful leverage of the oars. Champney sat motionless, the dripping blades suspended over the water. He knew that in all probability the girl was there in "lily-pad reach." Should he seek her? Should he go? — Should he?

The hands that held the steady oars quivered suddenly, then gripped them as in a vise; the man's face flushed; he bent to the right oar, the craft whirled half way on her keel; the other oar fell — swiftly and powerfully the boat shot ahead up "lily-pad reach."

Reason, discretion, judgment razed in an instant from the table of consciousness; desire rampant, the desire of possession to which intellect, training, environment, even that goodward-turning which men under various aspects term religion, succumb in a moment like the present one in which Champney Googe was bending all his strength to the oars that he might be the sooner with the girl he loved.

He did not ask himself what next? He gave no thought to aught but reaching the willows as soon as he could. His eye was on the glinting curve before him; he rounded it swiftly — her boat was there tied to the stake among the arrowhead; his own dragged through the lily-pads beside it; he sprang out, ran up the bank —

"Aileen — Aileen — where are you?" he called eagerly, impatiently, and sought about him to find her.

Aileen Armagh heard that call, and doubt, suspicion, anger dropped away from her. Instead, trust, devotion, anticipation clothed her thought of him; he was coming to speak the "word" that was to make her future fair and plain — the one "word" that should set him forever in her heart, enthrone him in

her life. That word was not "love", but the sacrament of love; the word of four letters which a woman writes large with legitimate loving pride in the face of the world. She sprang to her feet and waited for him; the willows drooped on either side of her — so he saw her again.

He took her in his arms. "Aileen — Aileen," he said over and over again between the kisses that fell upon her hair, forehead, lips.

She yielded herself to his embrace, passionately given and returned with all a girl's loving ardor and joy in the loved man's presence. Between the kisses she waited for the "word."

It was not forthcoming.

She drew away from him slightly and looked straight into his eyes that were devouring her face and form. The unerring instinct of a pure nature warned her against that look. He caught her to him — but she stemmed both hands against his breast to repulse him.

"Let me go, Champney," she said faintly.

"Why should I let you go? Aileen, my Aileen, why should I ever let you go?" A kiss closed the lips that were about to reply — a kiss so long and passionate that the girl felt her strength leaving her in the close embrace.

"He will speak the 'word' now surely," she told herself. Between their heart-throbs she listened for it.

The "word" was not spoken.

Again she stemmed her hands against him, pressing them hard against his shoulders. "Let me go, Champney." She spoke with spirit.

The act of repulsion, the ring in her voice half angered him; at the same time it added fuel to desire.

“I will not let you go — you love me — tell me so — ”

He waited for no reply but caught her close; the girl struggled in his arms. It was dawning on her undaunted spirit that this, which she was experiencing with Champney Googe, the man she loved with all her heart, was not love. Of a sudden, all that brave spirit rose in arms to ward off from herself any spoken humiliation to her womanhood, ay more, to prevent the man she loved from deepening his humiliation of himself in her presence.

“Let me go” she said, but despite her effort for control her voice trembled.

“You know I love you — why do you repel me so?”

“Let me go” she said again; this time her voice was firm, the tone peremptory; but she made no further struggle to free herself from his arms. — “Oh, what are you doing!”

“I am making the attempt to find out if you love me as I love you — ”

“You have no right to kiss me so — ”

“I have the right because I love you — ”

“But I don’t love you.”

“Yes you do, Aileen Armagh — don’t say that again.”

“I do not love you — let me go, I say.”

He let her go at last. She stood before him, pale, but still undaunted.

“Do you know what you are saying?” he demanded almost fiercely under his breath. He took her head between his hands and bent it back to close her lips with another kiss.

“Yes, I know. I do not love you — don’t touch

me!" She held out her hands to him, palm outwards, as if warding off some present danger.

He paid no heed to her warning, but caught her to him again. "Tell me now you don't love me, Aileen," he whispered, laying his cheek to hers.

"I tell you I do not love you," she said aloud; her voice was clear and firm.

He drew back then to look at her in amazement; turned away for a moment as if half dazed; then, holding her to his side with his left arm he laid his ear hard over her heart. What was it that paled the man's flushed cheeks?

The girl's heart was beating slowly, calmly, even faintly. He caught her wrist, pressing his fingers on her pulse — there was not the suspicion of a flutter. He let her go then. She stood before him; her eyes were raised fearlessly to his.

"I'm going to row back now — no, don't speak — not a word —"

She turned and walked slowly down to the boat; cast it off; poled it with one oar out of the tall arrow-head and the thick fringe of lily-pads; took her seat; fitted the oars to the rowlocks, dipped them, and proceeded to row steadily down the reach towards The Bow.

Champney Gooze stood where she had left him till he watched her out of sight around the curve; then he went over to the willows and sat down. It took time for him to recover from his debauch of feeling. He made himself few thoughts at first; but as time passed and the shadows lengthened on the reach, he came slowly to himself. The night fell; the man still sat there, but the thoughts were now crowding fast, uncomfortably fast. He dropped his head into his hands,

so covering his face in the dark for very shame that he had so outraged his manhood. He knew now that she knew he had not intended to speak that "word" between them; but no finer feeling told him that she had saved him from himself.

In that hour he saw himself as he was — unworthy of a good woman's love.

He saw other things as well; these he hoped to make good in the near future, but this — but this!

He rowed back under cover of the dark to Champ-au-Haut. Octavius, who was wondering at his non-appearance with the boat, met him with a lantern at the float.

"Here's a telegram just come up; the operator gave it to me for you. I told him you was out in the boat and would be here 'fore you went up home."

"All right, Tave." He opened it; read it by the light of the lantern.

"I've got to go back to New York — it's a matter of business. It's all up with my vacation and the yachting cruise now," — he looked at his watch, — "seven; I can get the eight-thirty accommodation to Hallsport, and that will give me time to catch the Eastern express."

"Hold on a minute and I'll get your trap from the stable — it's all ready for you."

"No, I'll get it myself — good-bye, Tave, I'm off."

"Good-bye, Champney."

"Champ's worried about something," he said to himself; he was making fast the boat. "I never see him look like that — I hope he has n't got hooked in with any of those Wall Street sharks."

In a few minutes he heard the carriage wheels on

the gravel in the driveway. He stopped on his way to the stable to listen.

“He’s driving like Jehu,” he muttered. He was still listening; he heard the frequent snorting of the horse, the rapid click of hoofs on the highroad — but he did not hear what was filling the driver’s ears at that moment: the roar of an unseen cataract.

Champney Googe was realizing for the first time that he was in mid-stream; that he might not be able to breast the current; that the eddying water about him was in fact the whirlpool; that the rush of what he had deemed mere harmless rapids was the prelude to the thunderous fall of a cataract ahead.

IX

FOR several weeks after her nephew's visit, Mrs. Champney occupied many of her enforced leisure half-hours in trying to put two and two together in their logical combination of four; but thus far she had failed. She learned through Octavius that Champney had returned to New York on Saturday evening; that in consequence he was obliged to give up the cruise with the Van Ostends; from Champney himself she had no word. Her conclusion was that there had been no chance for him to see Aileen during the twelve hours he was in town, for the girl came home as requested shortly before six, but with a headache, and the excuse for it that she had rowed too far in the sun on the way up to the sheds.

“My nephew told me he was going to row up to the sheds, too — did you happen to meet him there?” she inquired. She was studying the profile of the girl's flushed and sunburned face. Aileen had just said good night and was about to leave Mrs. Champney's room. She turned quickly to face her. She spoke with sharp emphasis:

“I did *not* meet your nephew at the sheds, Mrs. Champney, nor did I see him there — and I'll thank you, after what you said to me this morning, to draw no more conclusions in regard to your nephew's seeing or meeting me at the sheds or anywhere else — it's not worth your while; for I've no desire either to see or meet him again. Perhaps this will satisfy you.” She

left the room at once without giving Mrs. Champney time to reply.

A self-satisfied smile drew apart Mrs. Champney's thin lips; evidently the girl's lesson was a final and salutary one. She would know her place after this. She determined not to touch on this subject again with Aileen; she might run the risk of going too far, and she desired to keep her with her as long as possible. But she noticed that the singing voice was heard less and less frequently about the house and grounds. Octavius also noticed it, and missed it.

"Aileen, you don't sing as much as you did a while ago — what's the matter?" he asked her one day in October when she joined him to go up street after supper on an errand.

"Matter? — I've sung out for one while; I'm taking a rest-cure with my voice, Tave."

"It ain't the kind of rest-cure that'll agree with you, nor I guess any of us at Champo. There ain't no trouble with her that's bothering you?" He pointed with a backward jerk of his thumb to the house.

"No."

"She's acted mad ever since I told her Champney had to go back that night and tend to business; guess she'd set her heart on his making a match on that yachting cruise — well, 't would be all in the family, seeing there's Champney blood in the Van Ostends, good blood too, — there's no better," he added emphatically.

"Oh, Tave, you're always blowing the Champneys' horn —"

"And why should n't I?" — he was decidedly nettled. "The Champneys are my folks, my townspeople, the founders of this town, and their interests have

always been mine — why should n't I speak up for 'em, I'd like to know? You won't find no better blood in the United States than the Champneys'."

Aileen made no reply; she was looking up the street to Poggi's fruit stall, where beneath a street light she saw a crowd of men from the quarries.

"Romanzo said there was some trouble in the sheds — do you know what it is?" she asked.

"No, I can't get at the rights of it; they did n't get paid off last week, so Romanzo told me last night, but he said Champney telegraphed he'd fix it all right in another week. He says dollars are scarce just at this time — crops moving, you know, and market dull."

She laughed a little scornfully. "You seem to think Mr. Gooze can fix everything all right, Tave."

"Champney's no fool; he's 'bout as interested in this home work as anybody, and if he says it'll be all right, you may bet your life it will be — There's Jo Quimber coming; p'raps he's heard something and can tell us."

"What's that crowd up to, Uncle Jo?" said Aileen, linking her arm in the old man's and making him right about face to walk on with them.

"Talkin' a strike. I heerd 'em usin' Champ's name mighty free, Tave, just now — guess he'd better come home an' calm 'em down some, or there'll be music in the air thet this town never danced to yet. By A. J., it riles me clear through to hear 'em!"

"You can't blame them for wanting their pay, Uncle Jo." There was a challenge in the girl's voice which Uncle Jo immediately accepted.

"So ye've j'ined the majority in this town, hev ye, Aileen? I don't say ez I'm blamin' anybody fer wantin' his pay; I'm jest sayin' it don't set well on me

the way they go at it to get it. How's the quickest way to git up a war, eh? Jest keep talkin' it up — talkin' it up, an' it's sure to come. They don't give a man like Champ a chance — talkin' behind his back and usin' a good old Flamsted name ez ef 't wuz a mop rag!" Joel's indignation got the better of his discretion; his voice was so loud that it began to attract the attention of some men who were leaving Poggi's; the crowd was rapidly dispersing.

"Sh — Joel! they 'll hear you. You've been standing up for everything foreign that's come into this town for the last seven years — what's come over you that you're going back on all your preaching?"

"I ain't goin' back on nothin'," the old man replied testily; "but a man's a man, I don't keer whether he's a Polack or a 'Merican — I don't keer nothin' 'bout thet; but ef he's a man he knows he'd oughter stop backbitin' and hittin' out behind another man's back — he'd oughter come out inter the open an' say, 'You ain't done the right thing by me, now let's both hev it out', instead of growlin' and grumblin' an' spittin' out such all-fired nonsense 'bout the syndicators and Champ — what's Champ got to do with it, anyway? He can't make money for 'em."

The crowds were surging past them; the men were talking together; their confused speech precluded the possibility of understanding what was said.

"He's no better than other men, Uncle Jo," the girl remarked after the men had passed. She laughed as she spoke, but the laugh was not a pleasant one; it roused Octavius.

"Now, look here, Aileen, you stop right where you are —"

She interrupted him, and her voice was again both

merry and pleasant, for they were directly opposite Luigi's shop: "I'm going to, Tave; I'm going to stop right here; Mrs. Champney sent me down on purpose to get some of those late peaches Luigi keeps; she said she craved them, and I'm going in this very minute to get them —"

She waved her hand to both and entered the shop.

Old Quimber caught Octavius by the arm to detain him a moment before he himself retraced his steps up street.

"What d'ye think, Tave? — they goin' to make a match on't, she an' Poggi? I see 'm together a sight."

"You can't tell 'bout Aileen any more'n a weather-cock. She might go farther and fare worse."

"Thet's so, Tave; Poggi's a man, an' a credit to our town. I guess from all I hear Romanzo's 'bout give it up, ain't he?"

"Romanzo never had a show with Aileen," Octavius said decidedly; "he ain't her kind."

"Guess you're right, Tave — By A. J. there they go now!" He nudged Octavius with his elbow. Octavius, who had passed the shop and was standing on the sidewalk with old Quimber, saw the two leave it and walk slowly in the direction of The Bow. He listened for the sound of Aileen's merry laugh and chat, but he heard nothing. His grave face at once impressed Joel.

"Something's up 'twixt those two, eh, Tave?" he whispered.

Octavius nodded in reply; he was comprehending all that old man's words implied. He bade Quimber good night and walked on to The Greenbush. The Colonel found him more taciturn than usual that evening. . . .

"I can't, Luigi, — I can't marry you," she answered almost irritably. The two were nearing the entrance to Champo; the Italian was pleading his cause. "I can't — so don't say anything more about it."

"But, Aileen, I will wait — I can wait; I've waited so long already. I believe I began to love you through that knothole, you remember?"

"I have n't forgotten;" she half smiled at the remembrance; "but that seems so long ago, and things have changed so — I've changed, Luigi."

The tone of her voice was hard. Luigi looked at her in surprise.

"What has changed you, Aileen? Tell me — can't you trust me?"

"Luigi!" — she faced him suddenly, looking straight up into his handsome face that turned white as he became aware that what she was about to say was final — "I'd give anything if I could say to you what you want me to — you deserve all my love, if I could only give it to you, for you are faithful and true, and mean what you say — it would be the best thing for me, I know; but I can't, Luigi; I've nothing to give, and it would be living a lie to you from morning till night to give you less than you deserve. I only blame myself that I'm not enough like other girls to know a good man when I see him, and take his love with a thankful heart that it's mine — but it's no use — don't blame me for being myself —" Her lips trembled; she bit the lower one white in her effort to steady it.

For a moment Luigi made no reply. Suddenly he leaned towards her — she drew away from him quickly — and said between his teeth, all the long-smouldering fire of southern passion, passion that is founded on jealousy, glowing in his eyes:

“Tell me, Aileen Armagh, is there another man you love? — tell me —”

Rag who had been with her all the afternoon moved with a quick threatening motion to her side and a warning *gurr — rrrr* for the one who should dare to touch her.

“No.” She spoke defiantly. Luigi straightened himself. Rag sprang upon her fawning and caressing; she shoved him aside roughly, for the dog was at that moment but the scapegoat for his master; Rag cowered at her feet.

“Ah —” It was a long-drawn breath of relief. Luigi Poggi’s eyes softened; the fire in them ceased to leap and blaze; something like hope brightened them.

“I could bear anything but that — I was afraid —” He hesitated.

“Afraid of what?” She caught up his words sharply, and began to walk rapidly up the driveway.

He answered slowly: “I was afraid you were in love with Mr. Googe — I saw you once out rowing with him — early one morning —”

“I in love with Mr. Googe!” she echoed scornfully, “you need n’t ever be afraid of that; I — I hate him!”

Luigi stared at her in amazement. He scarce could keep pace with her rapid walk that was almost a run. Her cheeks were aflame; her eyes filled with tears. All her pent up wretchedness of the last two months, all her outraged love, her womanhood’s humiliation, a sense of life’s bitter injustice and of her impotence to avenge the wrong put upon her affections, found vent in these three words. And Luigi, seeing Aileen Armagh changed into something that an hour before he would not have believed possible, was gripped by a sudden fear, — he must know the truth for his own peace of

mind, — and, under its influence, he laid his hand on her arm and brought her to a standstill.

Rag snarled another warning; Aileen thrust him aside with her foot.

“What has he done to you to make you hate him so?”

Because he spoke slowly, Aileen thought he was speaking calmly. Had she not been carried away by her own strength of feeling, she would have known that she might not risk the answer she gave him.

“Done to me? — nothing; what could he do? — but I hate him — I never want to see his face again!”

She was beside herself with anger and shame. It was the tone of Luigi’s voice that brought her to her senses; in a flash she recalled Octavius Buzzby’s warning about playing with “volcanic fires.” It was too late, however, to recall her words.

“Luigi, I’ve said too much; you don’t understand — now let’s drop it.” She drew away her arm from beneath his hand, and resumed her rapid walk up the driveway, Rag trotting after her.

“And you mean what you say — you never want to see him again?” He spoke again slowly.

“Never,” she said firmly.

Luigi made no reply. They were nearing the house. She turned to him when they reached the steps.

“Luigi,” — she put out her hand and he took it in both his, — “forget what I’ve said about another and forgive me for what I’ve had to say to yourself — we’ve always been such good friends, that now — ”

She was ready with the smile that captivated him, but it was a tremulous one for she smiled through tears; she was thinking of the contrast.

“And always will be, Aileen, when we both know for good and all that we can be nothing more to each other,” he answered gently.

She was grateful to him; but she turned away and went up the steps without saying good-bye.

X

“ ’ **G**AD, I wish I was well out of it !”

For the first time within the memory of Elmer Wiggins and Lawyer Emlie, who heard the Colonel’s ejaculation, his words and tone proclaimed the fact that he was not in his seemingly unflinching good spirits. He was standing with the two at the door of the drug shop and watching the crowds of men gathered in groups along the main street.

It was Saturday afternoon and the men were idle, a weekly occurrence the Colonel had learned to dread since his incumbency as deputy sheriff and, in consequence of his office, felt responsible for the peace of the community at large until Monday morning.

Something unusual was in the air, and the three men were at once aware of it. The uneasiness, that had prevailed in the sheds and at The Gore during the past month, was evidently coming to a crisis now that the men’s pay was two weeks overdue.

Emlie looked grave on replying, after a pause in which the three were busy taking note of the constantly increasing crowd in front of the town hall :

“ I don’t blame you, Colonel ; there’ll be the deuce to pay if the men don’t get paid off by Monday noon. They’ve been uneasy now so long about the piece work settlement, that this last delay is going to be the match that fires the train — and no slow match either from the looks ; I don’t understand this delay. When did Romanzo send his last message ?”

“About an hour ago, but he has n’t had any answer yet,” replied the Colonel, shading his eyes with his hat to look up street at the town hall crowd. “He has been telephoning and telegraphing off and on for the last two weeks; but he can’t get any satisfaction — corporations, you know, don’t materialize just for the rappings.”

“What does Champney say?” inquired Mr. Wiggins.

“State of the market,” said the Colonel laconically.

The men did not look at one another, for each was feeling a certain degree of indignation, of humiliation and disappointment that one of their own, Champney Gooze, should go back on Flamsted to the extent of allowing the “market” to place the great quarry interests, through non-payment of the workers, in jeopardy.

“Has Romanzo heard direct from him to-day?” asked Emlie.

“No; the office replied he was out of the city for Saturday and Sunday; did n’t give his address but asked if we could keep the men quiet till the middle of next week when the funds would be forwarded.”

“I wired our New York exchange yesterday,” said Emlie, “but they can’t give us any information — answered things had gone to pot pretty generally with certain securities, but Flamsted was all right, — not tied up in any of them. Of course, they know the standing of the syndicate. There’ll have to be some new arrangement for a large reserve fund right here on home soil, or we’ll be kept in hot water half the time. I don’t believe in having the hands that work in one place, and the purse that holds their pay in another; it gets too ticklish at such times when the market drops and a plank or two at the bottom falls out.”

"Neither do I;" Mr. Wiggins spoke emphatically. "The Quarries Company's liabilities run up into the millions on account of the contracts they have signed and the work they have undertaken, and there ought to be a million of available assets to discount panics like this one that looks pretty threatening to us away off here in Maine. Our bank ought to have the benefit of some of the money."

"Well, so far, we've had our trouble for nothing, you might say. You, as a director, know that Champney sends up a hundred thousand say on Thursday, and Romanzo draws it for the pay roll and other disbursements on Saturday morning; they hold it at the other end to get the use of it till the last gun is fired." He spoke with irritation.

"It looks to me as if some sort of a gun had been fired already," said Mr. Wiggins, pointing to the increasing crowd before the hall.

"Something's up," said Emlie, startled at the sight of the gathering hundreds.

"Then there's my place," said the Colonel — the other two thought they heard him sigh — and started up the street.

Emlie turned to Mr. Wiggins.

"It's rough on the Colonel; he's a man of peace if ever there was one, and likes to stand well with one and all. This rough and tumble business of sheriff goes against the grain; his time is up next month; he'll be glad enough to be out of it. I'll step over to the office for the paper, I see they've just come — the men have got them already from the stand —"

Elmer Wiggins caught his arm.

"Look!" he cried under his breath, pointing to the crowd and a man who was mounting the tail of an ex-

press wagon that had halted on the outskirts of the throng. "That's one of the quarrymen — he's ring-leader every time — he's going to read 'em something — hark!"

They could hear the man haranguing the ever-increasing crowd; he was waving a newspaper. They could not hear what he was saying, but in the pauses of his speechifying the hoarse murmur of approval grew louder and louder. The cart-tail orator pointed to the headlines; there was a sudden deep silence, so deep that the soft scurrying of a mass of fallen elm leaves in the gutter seemed for a moment to fill all the air. Then the man began to read. They saw the Colonel on the outside of the crowd; saw him suddenly turn and make with all haste for the post-office; saw him re-appear reading the paper.

The two hurried across the street to him.

"What's the matter?" Emlie demanded.

The Colonel spoke no word. He held the sheet out to them and with shaking forefinger pointed to the headlines:

BIG EMBEZZLEMENT BY FLAMSTED
QUARRIES CO. OFFICIAL

GUILTY MAN A FUGITIVE FROM
JUSTICE

SEARCH WARRANTS OUT

DETECTIVES ON TRAIL

"New York — Special Despatch: L. Champney Googe, the treasurer of the Flamsted Quarries Co. —"
etc. etc.

The men looked at one another. There was a moment of sickening silence; not so much as a leaf whirled in the gutter; it was broken by a great cheer from the assembled hundreds of workmen farther up the street, followed by a conglomerate of hootings, cat-calls, yells and falsetto hoorays from the fringe of small boys. The faces of the three men in front of the post-office grew white at their unspoken thought. Each waited for the other.

“His mother — ” said Emlie at last.

Elmer Wiggins' lips trembled. “You must tell her, Colonel — she must n't hear it this way — ”

“My God, how can I!” The Colonel's voice broke, but only for a second, then he braced himself to his martyrdom. “You're right; she must n't hear it from any one but me — telephone up at once, will you, Elmer, that I'm coming up to see her on an important matter? — Emlie, you'll drive me up in your trap — we can get there before the men have a chance to get home — keep a watch on the doings here in the town, Elmer, and telephone me if there's any trouble — there's Romanzo coming now, I suppose he's got word from the office — if you happen to see Father Honoré, tell him where I am, he will help — ”

He stepped into the trap that had been hitched in front of the drug store, and Emlie took the reins. Elmer Wiggins reached up his hand to the Colonel, who gripped it hard.

“Yes, Elmer,” he said in answer to the other's mute question, “this is one of the days when a man, who is a man, may wish he'd never been born — ”

They were off, past the surging crowds who were now thronging the entire street, past The Bow, and over the bridge on their way to The Gore.

XI

“**R**UN on ahead, girlies,” said Aileen to the twins who were with her for their annual checkerberry picnic, “I’ll be down in a few minutes.”

They were on the edge of the quarry woods which sheltered the Colonel’s outlying sheep pastures and protected from the north wind the two sheepfolds that were used for the autumn and early spring. Dulcie and Doosie, obedient to Aileen’s request, raced hand in hand across the short-turfed pastures, balancing their baskets of red berries.

The late afternoon sunshine of the last of October shone clear and warm upon the fading close-cropped herbage that covered the long slopes. The sheep were gathering by flocks at the folds. The collie, busy and important, was at work with ’Lias rounding up the stragglers. Aileen’s eyes were blinded to the transient quiet beauty of this scene, for she was alive to but one point in the landscape — the red brick house with granite trimmings far away across the Rothel, and the man leaving the carriage which had just stopped at the front porch. She could not distinguish who it was, and this fact fostered conjecture — Could it be Champney Googe who had come home to help settle the trouble in the sheds?

How she hated him! — yet her heart gave a sudden sick throb of expectation. How she hated herself for her weakness!

"You look tired to death, Aileen," was Mrs. Caukins' greeting a few minutes afterwards, "come in and rest yourself before supper. Luigi was here just now and I've sent Dulcie over with him to Aurora's to get the Colonel; I saw him go in there fifteen minutes ago, and he's no notion of time, not even meal-time, when he's talking business with her. I know it's business, because Mr. Emlie drove up with him; he's waiting for him to come out. Romanzo has just telephoned that he can't get home for supper, but he'll be up in time to see you home."

Mrs. Caukins was diplomatic; she looked upon herself as a committee of one on ways and means to further her son's interest so far as Aileen Armagh was concerned; but that young lady was always ready with a check to her mate.

"Thank you, Mrs. Caukins, but I'll not trouble him; Tave is coming up to drive me home about eight; he knows checkerberry picking is n't easy work."

Mrs. Caukins was looking out of the window and did not reply.

"I declare," she exclaimed, "if there is n't Octavius this very minute driving up in a rush to Aurora's too — and Father Honoré's with him! — Why, what —"

Without waiting to finish her thought, she hurried to the door to call out to Dulcie, who was coming back over the bridge towards the house, running as fast as she could:

"What's the matter, Dulcie?"

"Oh, mother — mother —" the child panted, running up the road, "father wants you to come over to Mrs. Gooze's right off, as quick as you can — he says not to stop for anything —"

The words were scarcely out of her mouth before

Mrs. Caukins, without heeding Aileen, was hurrying down the road. The little girl, wholly out of breath, threw herself down exhausted on the grass before the door. Aileen and Doosie ran out to her.

“What is it, Dulcie — can’t you tell me?” said Aileen.

Between quickened breaths the child told what she knew.

“Luigi stopped to speak to Mr. Emlie — and Mr. Emlie said something dreadful for Flamsted — had happened — and Luigi looked all of a sudden so queer and pale,” — she sat up, and in the excitement and importance of imparting such news forgot her over-exertion, — “and Mr. Emlie said father was telling Mrs. Gooze — and he was afraid it would kill her — and then father came to the door looking just like Luigi, all queer and pale, and Mr. Emlie says, ‘How is she?’ and father shook his head and said, ‘It’s her death blow,’ then I squeezed Luigi’s hand to make him look at me, and I asked him what it was Mrs. Gooze’s was sick of, for I must go and tell mother — and he looked at Mr. Emlie and he nodded and said, ‘It’s town talk already — it’s in the papers.’ And then Luigi told me that Mr. Champney Gooze had been stealing, Aileen! — and if he got caught he’d have to go to prison — then father sent me over home for mother and told me to run, and I’ve run so — Oh, Aileen!”

It was a frightened cry, and her twin echoed it. While Aileen Armagh was listening with shortened breaths to the little girl, she felt as if she were experiencing the concentrated emotions of a lifetime; as a result, the revulsion of feeling was so powerful that it affected her physically; her young healthy nerves, capable at other times of almost any tension, suddenly played her

false. The effect upon her of what she heard was a severe nervous shock. She had never fainted in her life, nor had she known the meaning of an hysterical mood; she neither fainted nor screamed now, but began to struggle horribly for breath, for the shocked heart began beating as it would, sending the blood in irregular spurts through the already over-charged arteries. From time to time she groaned heavily as her struggle continued.

The two children were terrified. Doosie raced distractedly across the pastures to get 'Lias, and Dulcie ran into the house for water. Her little hand was trembling as she held the glass to Aileen's white quivering lips that refused it.

By the time, however, that 'Lias got to the house, the crisis was past; she could smile at the frightened children, and assure 'Lias that she had had simply a short and acute attack of indigestion from eating too many checkerberries over in the woods.

"It serves me right," she said smiling into the woe-begone little faces so near to hers; "I've always heard they are the most indigestible things going — now don't you eat any more, girlies, or you'll have a spasm like mine. I'm all right, 'Lias; go back to your work, I'll just help myself to a cup of hot water from the tea-kettle and then I'll go home with Tave — I see him coming for me — I did n't expect him now."

"But, Aileen, won't you stay to supper?" said the twins at one and the same time; "we always have you to celebrate our checkerberry picnic."

"Dear knows, I've celebrated the checkerberries enough already," she said laughing, — but 'Lias noticed that her lips were still colorless, — "and I think, dearies, that it's no time for us to be celebrat-

ing any more to-day when poor Mrs. Googe is in such trouble."

"What 's up?" said 'Lias.

The twins' eagerness to impart their knowledge of recent events to 'Lias was such that the sorrow of parting was greatly mitigated; moreover, Aileen left them with a promise to come up again soon.

"I'm ready, Tave," she said as he drew up at the door. 'Lias helped her in.

"Come again soon, Aileen — you've promised," the twins shouted after her.

She turned and waved her hand to them. "I'll come," she called back in answer.

They drove in silence over the Rothel, past the brick house where Emlie's trap was still standing, but now hitched. Octavius Buzzby's face was gray; his features were drawn.

"Did you hear, Aileen?" he said, after they had driven on a while and begun to meet the quarrymen returning from Flamsted, many of whom were talking excitedly and gesticulating freely.

"Yes — Dulcie told me something. I don't know how true it is," she answered quietly.

"It's true," he said grimly, "and it'll kill his mother."

"I don't know about that;" she spoke almost indifferently; "you can stand a good deal when it comes to the point."

Octavius turned almost fiercely upon her.

"What do you know about it?" he demanded. "You're neither wife nor mother, but you might show a little more feeling, being a woman. Do you realize what this thing means to us — to Flamsted — to the family?"

"Tave," she turned her gray eyes full upon him, the pupils were unnaturally enlarged, "I don't suppose I do know what it means to all of you — but it makes me sick to talk about it — please don't — I can't bear it — take me home as quick as you can."

She grew whiter still.

"Ain't you well, Aileen?" he asked in real anxiety, repenting of his hard word to her.

"Not very, Tave; the truth is I ate too many checkerberries and had an attack of indigestion — I shall be all right soon — and they sent over for Mrs. Caukins just at that time, and when Dulcie came back she told me — it's awful — but it's different with you; he belongs to you all here and you've always loved him."

"Loved him!" — Octavius Buzzby's voice shook with suppressed emotion — "I should say loved him; he's been dear to me as my own — I thank God Louis Champney is n't living to go through this disgrace!"

He drew up in the road to let a gang of workmen separate — he had been driving the mare at full speed. Both he and Aileen caught fragments of what they were saying.

"It's damned hard on his mother —"

"They say there's a woman in the case —"

"Generally is with them highflyers —"

"I'll bet he'll make for the old country, if he can get clear he'll —"

"Europe's full of 'em — reg'lar cesspool they say —"

"Any reward offered?"

"The Company'll have to fork over or there'll be the biggest strike in Flamsted that the stone-cutting business has seen yet —"

"The papers don't say what the shortage is —"

“What’s Van Ostend’s daughter’s name, anybody know? — they say he was sweet on her — ”

“She’s a good haul,” a man laughed hoarsely, insultingly, “but she did n’t bite, an’ lucky for her she did n’t.”

“You’re ’bout right — them high rollers don’t want to raise nothing but game cocks — no prison birds, eh?”

The men passed on, twenty or more. Octavius Buzzby, and the one who in the last hour had left her girlhood behind her, drove homewards in silence. Her eyes were lowered; her white cheeks burned again, but with shame at what she was obliged to hear.

XII

THE strike was averted; the men were paid in full on the Wednesday following that Saturday the events of which brought for a time Flamsted, its families, and its great industry into the garish light of undesirable publicity. In the sheds and the quarries the routine work went on as usual, but speculation was rife as to the outcome of the search for the missing treasurer. A considerable amount of money was put up by the sporting element among the workmen, that the capture would take place within three weeks. Meanwhile, the daily papers furnished pabulum for the general curiosity and kept the interest as to the outcome on the increase. Some reports had it that Champney Googe was already in Europe; others that he had been seen in one of the Central American capitals. Among those who knew him best, it was feared he was already in hiding in his native State; but beyond their immediate circle no suspicion of this got abroad.

Among the native Flamstedites, who had known and loved Champney from a child, there was at first a feeling of consternation mingled with shame of the disgrace to his native town. They felt that Champney had played false to his two names, and through the honored names of Googe and Champney he had brought disgrace upon all connections, whether by ties of blood or marriage. To him they had looked to be a leader in the new Flamsted that was taking its place in the world's work. For a few days it seemed as if

the keystone of the arch of their ambition and pride had fallen and general ruin threatened. Then, after the first week passed without news as to his whereabouts, there was bewilderment, followed on the second Monday by despair deepened by a suspense that was becoming almost unbearable.

It was a matter of surprise to many to find the work in sheds and quarries proceeding with its accustomed regularity; to find that to the new comers in Flamsted the affair was an impersonal one, that Champney Googe held no place among the workmen; that his absconding meant to them simply another one of the "high rollers" fleeing from his deserts. Little by little, during that first week, the truth found its way home to each man and woman personally interested in this erring son of Flamsted's old families, that a man is but one working unit among millions, and that unit counts in a community only when its work is constructive in the communal good.

At a meeting of the bank directors the telling fact was disclosed that all of Mrs. Googe's funds — the purchase money of the quarry lands — had been withdrawn nine months previous; but this, they ascertained later, had been done with her full consent and knowledge.

Romanzo was summoned with the Company's books to the New York office. The Colonel seemed to his friends to have aged ten years in seven days. He wore the look of a man haunted by the premonition of some impending catastrophe. But he confided his trouble to no one, not even to his wife. Aurora Googe's friends suffered with her and for her; they began, at last, to fear for her reason if some definite word should not soon be forthcoming.

The tension in the Champ-au-Haut household became almost intolerable as the days passed without any satisfaction as to the fugitive's whereabouts. After the first shock, and some unpleasant recrimination on the part of Mrs. Champney, this tension showed itself by silently ignoring the recent family event. Mrs. Champney found plausible excuse in the state of her health to see no one. Octavius Buzzby attended to his daily duties with the face of a man who has come through a severe sickness; Hannah complained that "he did n't eat enough to keep a cat alive." His lack of appetite was an accompaniment to sleepless, thought-racked nights.

Aileen Armagh said nothing — what could she say? — but sickened at her own thoughts. She made excuse to be on the street, at the station, in The Gore at the Caukineses', with Joel Quimber and Elmer Wiggins, as well as among the quarrymen's families, whose children she taught in an afternoon singing class, in the hope of hearing some enlightening word; of learning something definite in regard to the probabilities of escape; of getting some inkling of the whole truth. She gathered a little here, a little there; she put two and two together, and from what she heard as a matter of speculation, and from what she knew to be true through Mrs. Caukins via Romanzo in New York, she found that Champney Googe had sacrificed his honor, his mother, his friends, and the good name of his native town for the unlawful love of gain. She was obliged to accept this fact, and its acceptance completed the work of destruction that the revelation of Champney Googe's unfaith, through the declaration of a passion that led to no legitimate consummation in marriage, had wrought in her young buoyant spirit. She was broken

beneath the sudden cumulative and overwhelming knowledge of evil; her youth found no abiding-place either for heart or soul. To Father Honoré she could not go — not yet!

On the afternoon of Monday week, a telegram came for the Colonel. He opened it in the post office. Octavius coming in at the same time for his first mail noticed at once the change in his face — he looked stricken.

“What is it, Colonel?” he asked anxiously, joining him.

For answer Milton Caukins held out the telegram. It was from the State authorities; its purport that the Colonel was to form a posse and be prepared to aid, to the extent of his powers, the New York detectives who were coming on the early evening train. The fugitive from justice had left New York and been traced to Hallsport.

“I’ve had a premonition of this — it’s the last stroke, Tave — here, in his home — among us — and his mother! — and, in duty bound, I, of all others, must be the man to finish the ugly job — ”

Octavius Buzzby’s face worked strangely. “It’s tough for you, Colonel, but I guess a Maine man knows his whole duty — only, for God’s sake, don’t ask me!” It was a groan rather than an ejaculation. The two continued to talk in a low tone.

“I shall call for volunteers and then get them sworn in — it means stiff work for to-night. We’ll keep this from Aurora, Tave; she must n’t know *this*.”

“Yes, if we can. Are you going to ask any of our own folks to volunteer, Milton?” In times of great stress and sorrow his townspeople called the Colonel by his Christian name.

"No; I'm going to ask some of the men who don't know him well — some of the foreigners; Poggi's one. He'll know some others up in The Gore. And I don't believe, Tave, there's one of our own would volunteer, do you?"

"No, I don't. We can't go that far; it would be like cutting our own throats."

"You're right, Tave — that's the way I feel; but " — he squared his shoulders — "it's got to be done and the sooner it's over the better for us all — but, Tave, I hope to God he'll keep out of our way!"

"Amen," said Octavius Buzzby.

The two stood together in the office a moment longer in gloomy silence, then they went out into the street.

"Well, I must get to work," said the Colonel finally, "the time's scant. I'll telephone my wife first. We can't keep this to ourselves long; everybody, from the quarrymen to the station master, will be keen on the scent."

"I'm glad no reward was offered," said Octavius.

"So am I." The Colonel spoke emphatically. "The roughscuff won't volunteer without that, and I shall be reasonably certain of some good men — God! and I'm saying this of Champney Gooze — it makes me sick; who'd have thought it — who'd have thought it —"

He shook his head, and stepped into the telephone booth. Octavius waited for him.

"I've warned Mrs. Caukins," he said when he came out, "and told her how things stand; that I'd try to get Poggi, and that I sha'n't be at home to-night. She says tell Aileen to tell Mrs. Champney she will esteem it a great favor if she will let her come up to-night; she has one of her nervous headaches and does n't want to be

alone with the children and 'Lias. You could take her up, could n't you?"

"I guess she can come, and I'll take her up 'fore supper; I don't want to be gone after dark," he added with meaning emphasis.

"I understand, Tave; I'm going over to Poggi's now."

The two parted with a hand-clasp that spoke more than any words.

XIII

ABOUT four, Octavius drove Aileen up to the Colonel's. He said nothing to her of the coming crucial night, but Aileen had her thoughts. The Colonel's absence from home, but not from town, coupled with yesterday's New York despatch which said that there was no trace of the guilty man in New York, and affirmed on good authority that the statement that he had not left the country was true, convinced her that something unforeseen was expected in the immediate vicinity of Flamsted. But he would never attempt to come here!—She shivered at the thought. Octavius, noticing this movement, remarked that he thought there was going to be a black frost. Aileen maintained that the rising wind and the want of a moon would keep it off.

Although Octavius was inclined to take exception to the feminine statement that the moon, or the want of it, had an effect on frost, nevertheless this apparently innocent remark on Aileen's part recalled to him the fact that the night was moonless—he wondered if the Colonel had thought of this—and he hoped with all his soul that it would prove to be starless as well. "Champney knows the Maine woods—knows 'em from the Bay to the head of Moosehead as well as an Oldtown Indian, yes and beyond." So he comforted himself in thought.

Mrs. Caukins met them with effusion.

"I declare, Aileen, I don't know what I should have done if you could n't have come up; I'm all of a-

tremble now and I've got such a nervous headache from all I've been through, and all I've got to, that I can't see straight out of my eyes. — Won't you stop to supper, Tave?"

"I can't to-night, Elvira, I —"

"I'd no business to ask you, I know," she said, interrupting him; "I might have known you'd want to be on hand for any new developments. I don't know how we're going to live through it up here; you don't feel it so much down in the town — I don't believe I could go through it without Aileen up here with me, for the twins are n't old enough to depend on or to be told everything; they're no company at such times, and of course I sha'n't tell them, they would n't sleep a wink; I miss my boys dreadfully —"

"Tell them what? What do you mean by 'to-night'?" Aileen demanded, a sudden sharpness in her voice.

"Why, don't you know?" — She turned to Octavius, "Have n't you told her?"

Her appeal fell on departing and intentionally deaf ears; for Octavius, upon hearing Aileen's sudden and amazed question, abruptly bade them good-night, spoke to the mare and was off at a rapid pace before Mrs. Caukins comprehended that the telling of the latest development was left to her.

She set about it quickly enough, and what with her nervousness, her sympathy for that mother across the Rothel, her anxiety for the Colonel, her fear of the trial to which his powers of endurance were about to be put, and the description of his silent suffering during the last week, she failed to notice that Aileen said nothing. The girl busied herself with setting the table and preparing tea, Mrs. Caukins, meanwhile, rocking com-

fortably in her chair and easing her heart of its heavy burden by continual drippings of talk after the main flow of her tale was exhausted.

Presently, just after sunset, the twins came rushing in. Evidently they were full of secrets — they were always a close corporation of two — and their inane giggles and breathless suppression of what they were obviously longing to impart to their mother and Aileen, told on Mrs. Caukins' already much worn nerves.

“I wish you would n't stay out so long after sundown, children, you worry me to death. I don't say but the quarries are safe enough, but I do say you never can tell who's round after dusk, and growing girls like you belong at home.”

She spoke fretfully. The twins exchanged meaning glances that were lost on their mother, who was used to their ways, but not on Aileen.

“Where have you been all this time, Dulcie?” she asked rather indifferently. Her short teaching experience had shown her that the only way to gain children's confidence is not to display too great a curiosity in regard to their comings and goings, their doings and undoings. “Tave and I did n't see you anywhere when we drove up.”

The twins looked at each other and screwed their lips into a violently repressive contortion.

“We've been over to the sheepfolds with 'Lias.”

“Why, 'Lias has been out in the barn for the last half hour — what were you doing over there, I'd like to know?” Their mother spoke sharply, for untruth she would not tolerate.

“We did stay with 'Lias till he got through, then we played ranchmen and made believe round up the cattle the way the boys wrote us they do.” Two of their

brothers were in the West trying their fortune on a ranch and incidentally "dovetailing into the home business," as the Colonel defined their united efforts along the line of mutton raising.

"Well, I never!" their mother ejaculated; "I suppose now you'll be making believe you're everything the other boys are going to be."

The little girls giggled and nodded emphatically.

"Well, Aileen," she said as she took her seat at the table, "times have changed since I was a girl, and that is n't so very long ago. Then we used to content ourselves with sewing, and housework, and reading all the books in the Sunday school library, and making our own clothes, and enjoying ourselves as much as anybody nowadays for all I see, what with our picnics and excursions down the Bay and the clam bakes and winter lecture course and the young folks 'Circle' and two or three dances to help out — and now here are my girls that can't be satisfied to sit down and hem good crash towels for their mother, but must turn themselves into boys, and play ranchmen and baseball and hockey on the ice, and Wild West shows with the dogs and the pony — and even riding him a-straddle — and want to go to college just because their two brothers are going, and, for all I know, join a fraternity and have secrets from their own mother and a football team!" She paused long enough to help the twins bountifully.

"Sometimes I think it's their being brought up with so many boys, and then again I'm convinced it's the times, for all girls seem to have caught the male fever. What with divided skirts, and no petticoats, and racing and running and tumbling in basket ball, and rowing races, and entering for prize championships in golf and

the dear knows what, it'll be lucky if a mother of the next generation can tell whether she's borned girls or boys by the time her children are ten years old. The land knows it's hard enough for a married woman to try to keep up with one man in a few things, but when it comes to a lot of old maids and unmarried girls trying to catch up all the time with the men in *everything*, and catch on too, I must say *I*, for one, draw the line."

Aileen could not help smiling at this diatribe on "the times." The twins laughed outright; they were used to their mother by this time, and patronized her in a loving way.

"We were n't there *all* the time," Doosie said meaningly, and Dulcie added her little word, which she intended should tantalize her mother and Aileen to the extent that many pertinent questions should be forthcoming, and the news they were burning to impart would, to all appearance, be dragged out of them — a process in which the twins revelled.

"We met Luigi on the road near the bridge."

"What do you suppose Luigi's doing up here at this time, I'd like to know," said Mrs. Caukins, turning to Aileen and ignoring the children.

"He come up on an errand to see some of the quarrymen," piped up both the girls at the same time.

"Oh, is that all?" said their mother indifferently; then, much to the twins' chagrin, she suddenly changed the subject. "I want you to take the glass of wine jell on the second shelf in the pantry over to Mrs. Googe's after you finish your supper — you can leave it with the girl and tell her not to say anything to Mrs. Googe about it, but just put some in a saucer and give it to her with her supper. Maybe it'll tempt her to taste it, poor soul!"

The twins sat up very straight on their chairs. A look of consternation came into their faces.

"We don't want to go," murmured Dulcie.

"Don't want to go!" their mother exclaimed; decided irritation was audible in her voice. "For pity's sake, what is the matter now, that you can't run on an errand for me just over the bridge, and here you've been prowling about in the dusk for the last hour around those lonesome sheepfolds and 'Lias nowheres near — I declare, I could understand my six boys even if they were terrors when they were little. You could always count on their being somewheres anyway, even if 't was on the top of freight cars at The Corners or at the bottom of the pond diving for pebbles that they brought up between their lips and run the risk of choking besides drowning; and they did think the same thoughts for at least twenty-four hours on a stretch, when they were set on having things — but when it come to my having two girls, and I forty at the time, I give it up! They don't know their own minds from one six minutes to the next. — Why don't you want to go?" she demanded, coming at last to the point. Aileen was listening in amused silence.

"'Coz we got scared — awful scared," said Dulcie under her breath.

"Scared most to death," Doosie added solemnly.

Both Mrs. Caukins and Aileen saw at once that the children were in earnest.

"You look scared!" said Mrs. Caukins with withering scorn; "you've eaten a good supper if you were 'scared' as you say. — What scared you?"

The twins looked down into their plates, the generally cleared-up appearance of which seemed fully to warrant their mother's sarcasm.

“Luigi told us not to tell,” said Dulcie in a low voice.

“Luigi told you not to tell!” echoed their mother. “I’d like to know what right Luigi Poggi has to tell my children not to tell their mother anything and everything!” She spoke with waxing excitement; every motherly pin-feather was erect.

“He was ’fraid it would scare you,” ventured Doosie.

“Scare me! He must have a pretty poor opinion of a woman that can raise six boys of her own and then be ‘scared’ at what two snips of girls can tell her. You’ll tell me now, this very minute, what scared you — this all comes of your being away from the house so far and so late — and I won’t have it.”

“We saw a bear — ”

“A big one — ”

“He was crawling on all fours — ”

“Back of the sheepfold wall — ”

“He scrooched down as if he was nosing for something — ”

“Just where the trees are so thick you can’t see into the woods — ”

“And we jumped over the wall and right down into the sheep, and they made an awful fuss they were so scared too, huddling and rushing round to get out — ”

“Then we found the gate — ”

“But I *heard* him — ” Dulcie’s eyes were very big and bright with remembered terror.

“And then we climbed over the gate — ’Lias had locked it — and run home lickety-split and most run into Luigi at the bridge — ”

“’Coz we come down the road after we got through the last pasture — ”

“Oh, he was so big!” Doosie shuddered as her

imagination began to work more vigorously with the recital — “bigger’n a man — ”

“What nonsense.”

The twins had been telling all this at the same time, and their mother’s common sense and downright exclamation brought them to a full stop. They looked crestfallen.

“You need n’t tell me there’s a bear between here and Moosehead — I know better. Did you tell Luigi all this?” she questioned sharply.

The two nodded affirmatively.

“And he told you not to tell me?”

Another nod.

“Did he say anything more?”

“He said he’d go up and see.”

“Hm — m — ”

Mrs. Caukins turned a rather white face to Aileen; the two, looking into each other’s eyes, read there a common fear.

“Perhaps you ’ll take the jelly over for me, Aileen; I’ll just step to the back door and holler to ’Lias to bring in the collie and the hound — ’t is n’t always safe to let the dogs out after dark if there *should* happen to be anything stirring in the quarry woods.”

“I’ll go,” said Aileen. She went into the pantry to get the glass of jelly.

“We’ll go with you, we won’t mind a bit with you or Luigi,” chorussed the twins.

“You don’t go one step,” said their mother, entering at that moment from the kitchen, and followed by the two dogs; “you’ll stay right where you are, and what’s more, you’ll both go to bed early to make you remember that I mean what I say about your being out so long another time after sundown — no good comes of it,” she muttered.

The twins knew by the tone of her voice that there was no further appeal to be made.

"You can wash up the dishes while Aileen's gone; my head is so bad. — Don't be gone too long, Aileen," she said, going to the door with her.

"I sha'n't stay unless I can do something — but I'll stop a little while with Ellen, poor girl; she must be tired of all this excitement, sitting there alone so much as she has this last week."

"Of course, but Aurora won't see you; it's as much as ever I can do to get a look at her, and as to speaking a word of comfort, it's out of the question. — Why!" she exclaimed, looking out into the dusk that was settling into night, "they never light the quarries so early, not with all the arc-lights, I wonder — Oh, Aileen!" she cried, as the meaning of the great illumination in The Gore dawned upon her.

The girl did not answer. She ran down the road to the bridge with every nerve in her strained to its utmost.

XIV

SHE hurried over to the brick house across the Rothel; rapped at the kitchen door and, upon the girl's opening it, gave the jelly to her with Mrs. Caukins' message. She assured Ellen, who begged her to come in, that she would run over if possible a little later in the evening. A low whine and prolonged snuffing made themselves audible while the two talked together in low tones at the door. They seemed to proceed from the vicinity of the dining-room door.

"Where 's Rag?" said Aileen, listening intently to the muffled sounds.

"I shut him up in the dining-room closet when I see you come up the walk; he goes just wild to get with you any chance he can, and Mrs. Googe told me she wanted to keep him round the house nights."

"Then be careful he does n't get out to-night — supposing you chain him up just for once."

"Oh, I could n't do that; Mrs. Googe would n't let me; but I'll see he does n't follow you. I do wish you would come in — it's so lonesome," she said again wistfully.

"I can't now, Ellen; but if I can get away after eight, I may run over and sit with you a while. I'm staying with Mrs. Caukins because the Colonel is away to-night."

"So I heard; 'Lias told me just now on his way down to the village. He said he would n't be gone

long, for the Colonel was n't to home. — I wonder what they 've turned on all the lights for?" she said, craning her neck to look farther up the road.

Aileen made no reply. She cautioned her again to keep Rag at home. A series of muffled but agonized yelps followed her down the walk.

She stood still in the road and looked about her. Everywhere the great quarry arc-lights were sending their searching rays out upon the quarries and their approaches.

"What shall I do — oh, what *shall* I do!" was her hopeless unuttered cry.

It seemed to Aileen Armagh, standing there in the road at the entrance to the bridge, as if a powerful X-ray were being directed at that moment upon her whole life so far as she remembered it; and not only upon that, but upon her heart and soul — her thoughts, desires, her secret agony; as if the ray, in penetrating her body and soul, were laying bare her secret to the night: — she still loved him.

"Oh, what shall I do — what *shall* I do!" was the continual inner cry.

Life was showing itself to her in this experience, as seen through the lens of a quickened imagination, in all its hideousness. Never had she experienced such a sense of loneliness. Never had she realized so forcibly that she was without father and mother, without kin in a foreign country, without a true home and abiding-place. Never had it been brought home to her with such keen pain that she was, in truth, a waif in this great world; that the one solid support for her in this world, her affections, had been ruthlessly cut away from under her by the hand of the man she had loved with all the freshness and joy of her young loving heart.

He had been all the more to her because she was alone; the day dreams all the brighter because she believed he was the one to realize them for her — and now!

She walked on slowly.

“What shall I do — what shall I do!” was her inward cry, repeated at intervals. She crossed the bridge. All was chaotic in her thoughts. She had supposed, during the last two months, that all her love was turned to hate, — she hoped it was, for it would help her to bear, — that all her feeling for him, whom she knew she ought to despise, was dead. Why, then, if it were dead, she asked herself now, had she spoken so vehemently to Luigi? And Luigi — where was he — what was he doing?

What was it produced that nervous shock when she learned the last truth from Dulcie Caukins? Was it her shame at his dishonor? No — she knew by the light of the X-ray piercing her soul that the thought of his imprisonment meant absence from her; after all that had occurred, she was obliged to confess that she was still longing for his presence. She hated herself for this confession. — Where was he now?

She looked up the road towards the quarry woods — Thank God, those, at least, were dark! Oh, if she but dared to go! dared to penetrate them; to call to him that the hours of his freedom were numbered; to help — somehow, someday! A sudden thought, overpowering in its intimation of possibilities, stopped her short in the road just a little way beyond the Colonel's; but before she could formulate it sufficiently to follow it up with action, before she had time to realize the sensation of returning courage, she was aware of the sound of running feet on the road above her. On a slight rise of ground the figure of a man showed for a moment

against the clear early dark of the October night; he was running at full speed.

Could it be —?

She braced herself to the shock — he was rapidly nearing her — a powerful ray from an arc-light shot across his path — fell full upon his hatless head —

“*You!* — Luigi!” she cried and darted forward to meet him.

He thrust out his arm to brush her aside, never slackening his pace; but she caught at it, and, clasping it with both hands, hung upon it her full weight, letting him drag her on with him a few feet.

“Stop, Luigi Poggi! — Stop, I tell you, or I’ll scream for help — stop, I say!”

He was obliged to slacken his speed in order not to hurt her. He tried to shake her off, untwist her hands; she clung to him like a leech. Then he stopped short, panting. She could see the sweat dropping from his forehead; his teeth began to chatter. She still held his arm tightly with both hands.

“Let me go —” he said, catching his breath spasmodically.

“Not till you tell me where you’ve been — what you’ve been doing — tell me.”

“Doing —” He brought out the word with difficulty.

“Yes, doing, don’t you hear?” She shook his arm violently in her anxious terror.

“I don’t know —” the words were a long groan.

“Where have you been then? — quick, tell me —”

He began to shake with a hard nervous chill.

“With him — over in the quarry woods — I tried to take him — he fought me —” The chill shook him till he could scarcely stand.

She dropped his arm; drew away from him as if

touching were contamination; then her eyes, dilating with a still greater horror, fixed themselves on the bosom of his shirt — there was a stain —

“Have you killed him —” she whispered hoarsely.

The answer came through the clattering teeth:

“I — I don’t know — you said — you said you — never wanted to see him again —”

Luigi found himself speaking the last words to the empty air; he was alone, in the middle of the road, in the full glare of an electric light. He was conscious of a desire to escape from it, to escape detection — to rid himself of his overpowering misery in the quietest way possible. He gathered himself together; his limbs steadied; the shivering grew less; he went on down the road at a quick walk. Already the quarrymen were coming out in force to see what might be up. He must avoid them at all hazards.

One thought was the motive power which sent Aileen running up the road towards the pastures, by crossing which she could reach in a few minutes the quarry woods: “I must know if he is dead; if he is not dead, I must try to save him from a living death.”

This thought alone sent her speeding over the darkened slopes. She was light of foot, but sometimes she stumbled; she was up and on again — the sheepfold her goal. The quarry woods stood out dark against the clear sky; there seemed to be more light on these uplands than below in The Gore; she saw the sheepfold like a square blot on the pasture slope. She reached it — should she call aloud — call his name? How find him?

She listened intently; the wind had died down; the sheep were huddling and moving restlessly within the

fold; this movement seemed unusual. She climbed the rough stone wall; the sheep were massed in one corner, heads to the wall, tails to the bare centre of the fold; they kept crowding closer and more close.

In that bared space of hoof-trampled earth she saw him lying.

She leaped down, the frightened sheep riding one another in their frantic efforts to get away from the invaders of their peace. She knelt by him; lifted his head on her knee; her hands touched his sleeve, she drew back from something warm and wet.

“Champney — O Champney, what has he done to you!” she moaned in hopeless terror; “what shall I do — ”

“Is it you — Aileen? — help me up — ”

With her aid he raised himself to a sitting posture.

“It must have been the loss of blood — I felt faint suddenly.” He spoke clearly. “Can you help me?”

“Yes, oh, yes — only tell me how.”

“If you could bind this up — have you anything — ”

“Yes, oh, yes — ”

He used his left hand entirely; it was the right arm that had received the full blow of some sharp instrument. “Just tear away the shirt — that’s right — ”

She did as he bade her. She took her handkerchief and bound the arm tightly above the wound, twisting it with one of her shell hairpins. She slipped off her white petticoat, stripped it, and under his directions bandaged the arm firmly.

He spoke to her then as if she were a personality and not an instrument.

“Aileen, it’s all up with me if I am found here — if I don’t get out of this — tell my mother I was trying to see her — to get some funds, I have nothing. I de-

pended on my knowledge of this country to escape — put them off the track — they 're after me now — are n't they?"

“Yes — ”

“I thought so; I should have got across to the house if the quarry lights had n't been turned on so suddenly — I knew they 'd got word when I saw that — still, I might have made the run, but that man throttled me — I must go — ”

He got on his feet. At that moment they both started violently at the sound of something worrying at the gate; there was a rattle at the bars, a scramble, a frightened bleating among the sheep, a joyous bark — and Rag flung himself first upon Aileen then on Champney.

He caught the dog by the throat, choking him into silence, and handed him to Aileen.

“For God's sake, keep the dog away—don't let him come — keep him quiet, or I'm lost — ” he dropped over the wall and disappeared in the woods.

Here and there across the pastures a lantern shot its unsteady rays. The posse had begun their night's work.

The dog struggled frantically to free himself from Aileen's arms; again and again she choked him that he might not bark and betray his master. The terrified sheep bleated loud and long, trampling one another in vain efforts to get through or over the wall.

“Oh, Rag, Rag, — stop, or I must kill you, dear, dear little Rag — oh, I can't choke you — I can't — I can't! Rag, be still, I say — oh — ”

Between his desire to free his limbs, to breathe freely, and the instinctive longing to follow his master, the dog's powerful muscles were doing double work.

“Oh, what shall I do — what shall I do — ” she groaned in her helplessness. The dog’s frantic struggles were proving too much for her strength, for she had to hold him with one hand; the other was on his windpipe. She knew ’Lias would soon be coming home; he could hear the sheep from the road, as she already heard the subdued bay of the hound and the muffled bark of the collie, shut — thanks to Mrs. Caukins’ premonition of what might happen — within four walls. She looked about her — a strip of her white skirt lay on the ground — *Could she — ?*

“No, Rag darling — no, I can’t, I can’t — ” she began to cry. Through her tears she saw something sticking up from the hoof-trampled earth near the strip of cotton — a knife —

She was obliged to take her hand from the dog’s throat in order to pick it up — there was one joyous bark. . . .

“O Rag, forgive me — forgive!” she cried under her breath, sobbing as if her heart would break.

She picked up the piece of skirt, and fled with the knife in her hand — over the wall, over the pastures, that seemed lighter beneath the rising stars, down the highroad into the glare of an arc-light. She looked at the instrument of death as she ran; it was a banana knife such as Luigi used continually in his shop. She crossed the bridge, dropped the knife over the guard into the rushing Rothel; re-crossed the bridge and, throwing back the wings of the Scotch plaid cape she wore, examined in the full light of the powerful terminal lamp her hands, dress, waist, cuffs. — There was evidence.

She took off her cape, wrapped it over head and

shoulders, folded it close over both arms, and went back to the house. She heard carriages coming up the road to The Gore.

Mrs. Caukins, in a quivering state of excitement, called to her from the back porch :

“Come out here, Aileen; 'Lias has n't got back yet — the sheep are making the most awful noise; something's the matter over there, you may depend — and I can see lights, can you?”

“Yes,” she answered unsteadily. “I saw them a few minutes ago. I did n't stay with Ellen, but went up the road a piece, for my head was aching too, and I thought a little air would do me good — and I believe I got frightened seeing the lights — I heard the sheep too — it's dreadful to think what it means.”

Mrs. Caukins turned and looked at her sharply; the light from the kitchen shone out on the porch.

“Well, I must say you look as if you'd seen a ghost; you're all of a shiver; you'd better go in and warm you and take a hot water bag up to bed with you; it's going to be a frosty night. I'm going to stay here till 'Lias comes back. I'm thankful the twins are abed and asleep, or I should have three of you on my hands. Just as soon as 'Lias gets back, I'm going into my room to lie down — I can't sleep, but if I stay up on my feet another hour I shall collapse with my nerves and my head; you can do what you've a mind to.”

Aileen went into the kitchen. When Mrs. Caukins came in, fifteen minutes later, with the information that she could see by the motion of 'Lias' lantern that he was near the house, she found the girl huddled by the stove; she was still wrapped in her cape. A few minutes afterwards she went up to her room for the night.

Late in the evening there was a rumor about town that Champney Gooze had been murdered in the Colonel's sheepfold. Before midnight this was contradicted, and the fact established that 'Lias had found his dog stabbed to death in the fold, and that he said he had seen traces of a terrific struggle. The last news, that came in over the telephone from the quarries, was to the effect that no trace of the fugitive was found in the quarry woods and the posse were now on the county line scouring the hills to the north. The New York detectives, arriving on the evening train, were carried up to join the Flamsted force.

The next day the officers of the law returned, and confirmed the report, already current in the town, that Champney Gooze had outwitted them and made his escape. Every one believed he would attempt to cross the Canada border, and the central detective agency laid its lines accordingly.

SINCE Champney Googe's escape on that October night, two weeks had been added to the sum of the hours that his friends were counting until they should obtain some definite word of his fate. During that time the love of the sensational, which is at the root of much so-called communal interest, was fed by the excitement of the nominal proceedings against Luigi Poggi. On the night of Champney's flight he went to Father Honoré and Elmer Wiggins, and confessed his complicity in the affair at the sheepfold. Within ten days, however, the Italian had been exonerated for his attack on the escaped criminal; nor was the slightest blame attached to such action on his part. He had been duly sworn in by the Colonel, and was justified in laying hands on the fugitive, although the wisdom of tackling a man, who was in such desperate straits, of his own accord and alone was questioned. Not once during the sharp cross examination, to which he was subjected by Emlie and the side-judge, was Aileen's name mentioned — nor did he mention it to Father Honoré. Her secret was to be kept.

During those two weeks of misery and suspense for all who loved Champney Googe, Octavius Buzzby was making up his mind on a certain subject. Now that it was fully made up, his knock on the library door sounded more like a challenge than a plea for admittance.

“Come in, Octavius.”

Mrs. Champney was writing. She pushed aside the

pad and, moving her chair, faced him. Octavius noted the uncompromising tone of voice when she bade him enter, and the hard-set lines of her face as she turned inquiringly towards him. For a moment his courage flagged; then the righteousness of his cause triumphed. He closed the door behind him. This was not his custom, and Mrs. Champney looked her surprise.

“Anything unusual, Octavius?”

“I want a talk with you, Mrs. Champney.”

“Sit down then.” She motioned to a chair; but Octavius shook his head.

“I can say all I’ve got to say standing; it ain’t much, but it ’s to the point.”

Mrs. Champney removed her glasses and swung them leisurely back and forth on their gold chain. “Well, to the point, then.”

He felt the challenge implied in her words and accepted it.

“I’ve served this estate pretty faithful for hard on to thirty-seven years. I’ve served the Judge, and I’ve served his son, and now I’m going to work to save the man that’s named for that son —”

Mrs. Champney interrupted him sharply, decisively.

“That will do, Octavius. There is no occasion for you to tell me this; I knew from the first you would champion his cause — no matter how bad a one. We’ll drop the subject; you must be aware it is not a particularly pleasant one to me.”

Octavius winced. Mrs. Champney smiled at the effect of her words; but he ignored her remark.

“I like to see fair play, Mrs. Champney, and I’ve seen some things here in Champo since the old Judge died that’s gone against me. Right’s right and wrong’s wrong, and I’ve stood by and kept still when I’d ought

to have spoken; perhaps 't would have been better for us all if I had — and I'm including Champney Googe. When his father died —” Mrs. Champney started, leaned forward in her chair, her hands tightly grasping the arms.

“His father —” she caught up her words, pressed her thin lips more closely together, and leaned back again in her chair. Octavius looked at her in amazement.

“Yes,” he repeated, “his father, Warren Googe; who else should I mean?”

Mrs. Champney made no reply, and Octavius went on, wetting his lips to facilitate articulation, for his throat was going dry:

“His father made me promise to look out for the child that was a-coming; and another man, Louis Champney, your husband,” — Mrs. Champney sat up rigid, her eyes fixed in a stare upon the speaker's lips, — “told me when the boy come that he'd father him as was fatherless —”

She interrupted him again, a sneering smile on her lips:

“You know as well as I, Octavius Buzzby, what Mr. Champney's will was — too feeble a thing to place dependence on for any length of time; if he said that, he did n't mean it — not as you think he did,” she added in a tone that sent a shiver along Octavius' spine. But he did not intend to be “downed,” as he said to himself, “not this time by Almeda Champney.” He continued undaunted:

“I do know what he meant better 'n anybody living, and I know what he was going to do for the boy; and I know, too, Mrs. Champney, who hindered him from having his will to do for the boy; and right's right, and

now's your time to make good to his memory and intentions — to make good your husband's will for Champney Gooze and save your husband's name from disgrace and more besides. *You* know — but you never knew I did till now — what Louis Champney promised to do for the boy — and he told me more than once, Mrs. Champney, for he trusted *me*. He told me he was going to educate the boy and start him well in life, and that he was n't going to end there; he told me he was going to leave him forty thousand dollars, Mrs. Champney — and he told me this not six weeks before he died; and the interest on forty thousand has equalled the principal by this time, — and you know best *why* he has n't had his own — I ain't blind and nobody else here in Flamsted. And now I've come to ask you, if you've got a woman's heart instead of a stone in your bosom, to make over that principal and interest to the Quarry Company and save the boy Louis Champney loved; he told me once what I knew, that his blood flowed in that child's veins —”

“That's a lie — take that back!” she almost shrieked under her breath. She started to her feet, trembling in every limb, her face twitching painfully.

Octavius was appalled at the effect of his words; but he dared not falter now — too much was at stake — although fearful of the effect of any further excitement upon the woman before him. He spoke appeasingly:

“I can't take that back, for it's true, Mrs. Champney. You know as well as I do that far back his mother was a Champney.”

“Oh — I forgot.” She dropped into her chair and drew a long breath as of exhaustion. “What were you saying?” She passed her hand slowly over her eyes, then put on her glasses. Octavius saw by that one

movement that she had regained her usual control. He, too, felt relieved, and spoke more freely:

“I said I want you to make good that eighty thousand dollars —”

“Don’t be a fool, Octavius Buzzby,” — she broke in upon him coldly, a world of scornful pity in her voice, — “you mean well, but you’re a fool to think that at my time of life I’m going to impoverish myself and my estate for Champney Googe. You’ve had your pains for nothing. Let him take his punishment like any other man — he’s no better, no worse; it’s the fault of his bringing up; Aurora has only herself to thank.”

Octavius took a step forward. By a powerful effort he restrained himself from shaking his fist in her face. He spoke under his breath:

“You leave Aurora’s name out of this, Mrs. Champney, or I’ll say things that you’ll be sorry to hear.” His anger was roused to white heat and he dared not trust himself to say more.

She laughed out loud — the forced, mocking laugh of a miserable old age. “I knew from the first Aurora Googe was at the bottom of this —”

“She does n’t know anything about this, I came of —”

“You keep still till I finish,” she commanded him, her faded eyes sending forth something from behind her glasses that resembled blue lightning; “I say she’s at the bottom of this as she’s been at the bottom of everything else in Flamsted. She’ll never have a penny of my money, that was Louis Champney’s, to clear either herself or her state’s-prison brat! Tell her that for me with my compliments on her son’s career. — And as for you, Octavius Buzzby, I’ll repeat what you said: I’m not blind and nobody else is in Flamsted, and I

know, and everybody here knows, that you've been in love with Aurora Googe ever since my father took her into his home to bring up."

She knew that blow would tell. Octavius started as if he had been struck in the face by the flat of an enemy's hand. He stepped forward quickly and looked her straight in the eyes.

"You she-devil," he said in a low clear voice, turned on his heel and left the room. He closed the door behind him, and felt of the knob to see that he had shut it tight. This revelation of a woman's nature was sickening him; he wanted to make sure that the library door was shut close upon the malodorous charnel house of the passions. He shivered with a nervous chill as he hurried down the hall and went upstairs to his room in the ell.

He sat down on the bed and leaned his head on his hands, pressing his fingers against his throbbing temples. Half an hour passed; still he sat there trying to recover his mental poise; the terrible anger he had felt, combined with her last thrust, had shocked him out of it.

At last he rose; went to his desk; opened a drawer, took out a tin box, unlocked it, and laid the papers and books it contained one by one on the table to inspect them. He selected a few, snapped a rubber about the package and thrust it into the inner breast pocket of his coat. Then he reached for his hat, went downstairs, left word with Ann that he was going to drive down for the mail but that he should not be back before ten, proceeded to the stable, harnessed the mare into a light driving trap and drove away. He took the road to The Gore.

On approaching the house he saw a light in Aurora's bedroom. He drove around to the kitchen door and

tied the mare to the hitching-post. His rap was answered by Ellen, a quarryman's daughter whom Mrs. Googe employed for general help; but she spoke behind the closed door:

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Octavius Buzzby."

She drew the bolt and flung open the door. "Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Buzzby? I've got so nervous these last three weeks, I keep the door bolted most of the time. Have you heard anything?" she asked eagerly, speaking under her breath.

"No," said Octavius shortly; "I want to see Mrs. Googe. Tell her I must see her; it's important."

The girl hesitated. "I don't believe she will — and I hate to ask her — she looks awful, Mr. Buzzby. It scares me just to see her goin' round without saying a word from morning to night, and then walking half the night up in her room. I don't believe she's slept two hours a night since — you know when."

"I guess she'll see me, Ellen; you go and ask her, anyway. I'll stay in the lower hall."

He heard her rap at the bedroom door and deliver the message. There followed the sharp click of a lock, the opening of the door and the sound of Aurora's voice:

"Tell him to come up."

Octavius started upstairs. He had seen her but once in the past three weeks; that was when he went to her on the receipt of the news of Champney's flight; he vowed then he would not go again unless sent for; the sight of the mother's despair, that showed itself in speechless apathy, was too much for him. He could only grasp her hand at that time, press it in both his, and say: "Aurora, if you need me, call me; you know me. We'll help all we can — both of you —"

But there was no response. He tiptoed out of the room as if leaving the presence of the dead.

Now, as he mounted the stairs, he had time to wonder what her attitude would be after these three weeks of suspense. A moment more and he stood in her presence, mute, shocked, heartsick at the change that this month of agony had wrought in her. Her face was ghastly in its pallor; deep yellowish-purple half-circles lay beneath her sunken eyes; every feature, every line of the face was sharpened, and on each cheek bone burned a fever spot of vivid scarlet; her dry eyes also burned with unnatural and fevered brightness, the heavy eyelids keeping up a continuous quivering, painful to see. The hand she held out to him throbbed quick and hard in his grasp.

“Any news, Tave?” Her voice was dull from despair.

He shook his head; the slow tears coursed down his cheeks; he could not help it.

“Sit down, Tave; you said it was important.”

He controlled his emotion as best he could. “Aurora, I’ve been thinking what can be done when he’s found —”

“If he ever is! Oh, Tave, Tave — if I could only know something — where he is — if living; I can’t sleep thinking —” She wrung her clasped hands and began to walk nervously back and forth in the room.

“Aurora, I feel sure he’s living, but when he’s found — then ’s the time to help.”

“How?” She turned upon him almost savagely; it looked as if her primitive mother-passion were at bay for her young. “Where’s help to come from? I’ve nothing left.”

“But I have.” He spoke with confidence and took

out the package from his breast pocket. He held it out to her. "See here, Aurora, here's the value of twenty thousand dollars — take it — use it as your own."

She drew away from it. — "Money!" She spoke almost with horror.

"Yes, Aurora, honest money. Take it and see how far 't will go towards saving prosecution for him."

"You mean —," she hesitated; her dry eyes bored into his that dropped before her unwavering gaze, "— you mean you're giving your hard-earned wages to me to help save my boy?"

"Yes, and glad to give them — if you knew how glad, Aurora —"

She covered her face with her hands. Octavius took her by the arm and drew her to a chair.

"Sit down," he said gently; "you're all worn out."

She obeyed him passively, still keeping her hands before her face. But no sooner was she seated than she began to rock uneasily back and forth, moaning to herself, till suddenly the long-dried fount was opened up; the merciful blessing of tears found vent. She shook with uncontrollable sobbing; she wept for the first time since Champney's flight, and the tears eased her brain for the time of its living nightmare.

Octavius waited for her weeping to spend itself. His heart was wrung with pity, but he was thankful for every tear she shed; his gratefulness, however, found a curious inner expression.

"Damn her — damn her — damn her —" he kept saying over and over to himself, and the mere repetition seemed to ease him of his overpowering surcharge of pity. But it was Almeda Champney he had in mind, and, after all, his unuttered inner curses were only a prayer for help, read backwards.

At last, Aurora Googe lifted her face from her hands and looked at Octavius Buzzby. He reddened and rose to go.

“Tave, wait a little while; don’t go yet.”

He sat down.

“I thought — I felt all was lost — no one cared — I was alone — there was no help. You have shown me that I have been wrong — all wrong — such friends — such a friend as you —” Her lips quivered; the tears welled from the red and swollen lids. “I can’t take the money, Tave, I can’t — don’t look so — only on one condition. I’ve been coming to a decision the last two days. I’m going straight to Almeda, Tave, and ask her, beg her, if I have to, on my bended knees to save my boy — she has more than enough — you know, Tave, what Champney should have had —”

Octavius nodded emphatically and found his voice.

“Don’t I know? You may bet your life I know more ’n I’ve ever told, Aurora. Don’t I know how Louis Champney said to me: ‘Tave, I shall see the boy through; forty thousand of mine is to be his’; and that was six weeks before he died; and don’t I know, too, how I did n’t get a glimpse of Louis Champney again till two weeks before his death, and then he was unconscious and did n’t know me or any one else?”

Octavius paused for breath. Aurora Googe rose and went to the closet.

“I must go now, Tave; take me with you.” She took out a cloak and burnous.

“I hate to say it, Aurora, but I’m afraid it won’t do no good; she’s a tough cuss when it comes to money —”

“But she must; he’s her own flesh and blood and she’s cheated him out of what is rightfully his. It’s been my awful pride that kept me from going sooner — and —

oh, Tave, Tave, — I tried to make my boy promise never to ask her for money! I've been hoping all along she would offer —”

“Offer! Almeda Champney offer to help any one with her money that was Louis Champney's!”

“But she has enough of her own, Tave; the money that was my boy's grandfather's.”

“You don't know her, Aurora, not yet, after all you've suffered from her. If you'd seen her and lived with her as I have, year out and year in, you'd know her love of money has eat into her soul and gangrened it. 'T ain't no use to go, I tell you, Aurora.” He put out his hand to detain her, for she had thrown on her cloak and was winding the burnous about her head.

“Tave, I'm going; don't say another word against it; and you must take me down. She is n't the only one who has loved money till it blinded them to duty — I can't throw stones — and after all she's a woman; I am going to ask her to help with the money that is rightfully my boy's — and if she gives it, I will take your twenty thousand to make up the amount.” She pressed the package into his hand.

“But what if she does n't?”

“Then I'll ask Father Honoré to do what he proposed to do last week: go to Mr. Van Ostend and ask him for the money — there's nothing left but that.” She drew her breath hard and led the way from the room, hurriedly, as if there were not a moment to lose. Octavius followed her, protesting:

“Try Mr. Van Ostend first, Aurora; don't go to Mrs. Champney now.”

“Now is the only time. If I had n't asked my own relation, Mr. Van Ostend would have every reason to say, ‘Why did n't you try in your own family first?’”

“But, Aurora, I’m afraid to have you.”

“Afraid! I, of Almeda Champney?”

She stopped short on the stairs to look back at him. There was a trace of the old-time haughtiness in her bearing. Octavius welcomed it, for he was realizing that he could not move her from her decision, and as for the message from Almeda Champney, he knew he never could deliver it — he had no courage.

“You need n’t sit up for me, Ellen,” she said to the surprised girl as they went out; “it may be late before I get home; bolt the back door, I’ll take the key to the front.”

He helped her into the trap, and in silence they drove down to The Bow.

XVI

AURORA GOOGE spoke for the first time when Octavius left her at the door of Champ-au-Haut.

“Tave, don’t leave me; I want you to be near, somewhere in the hall, if she is in the library. I want a witness to what I must say and — I trust you. But don’t come into the room no matter what is said.”

“I won’t, Aurora, and I’ll be there in a few minutes. I’m just going to drive to the stable and send the boy down for the mail, and I’ll be right back. There’s Aileen.”

The girl answered the knock, and on recognizing who it was caught her breath sharply. She had not seen Mrs. Googe during the past month of misery and shame and excitement, and previous to that she had avoided Champney Googe’s mother on account of the humiliation her love for the son had suffered at that son’s hands — a humiliation which struck at the roots of all that was truest and purest in that womanhood, which was drying up the clear-welling spring of her buoyant temperament, her young enjoyment in life and living and all that life offers of best to youth — offers once only.

She started back at the sight of those dark eyes glowing with an unnatural fire, at the haggard face, its pallor accentuated by the white burnous. One thought had time to flash into consciousness before the woman standing on the threshold could speak: here was suffering

to which her own was as a candle light to furnace flame.

"I've come to see Mrs. Champney, Aileen; is she in the library?"

"Yes," — the girl's lips trembled, — "shall I tell her you are here?"

"No." She threw aside her cloak as if in great haste; Aileen took it and laid it on a chair. Mrs. Googe went swiftly to the library door and rapped. Aileen heard the "Come in," and the exclamation that followed: "So you've come at last, have you!"

She knew that tone of voice and what it portended. She put her fingers in her ears to shut out further sound of it, and ran down the hall to the back passageway, closed the door behind her and stood there trembling from nervousness. — Had Mrs. Googe obtained some inkling that she had a message to deliver from that son? — a message she neither could nor would deliver? Did Champney Googe's mother know that she had seen that son in the quarry woods? Mrs. Googe's friends had told her the truth of the affair at the sheep-fold, when it was found that her unanswered suspicions were liable to unsettle her reason. — Could she know of that message? Could any one?

The mere presence in the house of this suffering woman set Aileen's every nerve tingling with sickening despair. She determined to wait there in the dimly lighted back hall until Octavius should make his appearance, be it soon or late; he always came through here on his way to the ell.

Aurora Googe looked neither to right nor left on entering the room. She went straight to the library table, on the opposite side of which Mrs. Champney was still sitting where Octavius had left her nearly two

hours before. She stemmed both hands on it as if finding the support necessary. Fixing her eyes, already beginning to glaze with the increasing fever, upon her sister-in-law, she spoke, but with apparent effort:

“Yes, I ’ve come, at last, Almeda — I ’ve come to ask help for my boy —”

Mrs. Champney interrupted her; she was trembling visibly, even Aurora Googe saw that.

“I suppose this is Octavius Buzzby’s doings. When I gave him that message it was final — *final*, do you hear?”

She raised her voice almost an octave in the intense excitement she was evidently trying to combat. The sound penetrated to Aileen, shut in the back hall, and again she thrust her fingers into her ears. At that moment Octavius entered from the outer door.

“What are you doing here, Aileen?” For the first time in his life he spoke roughly to her.

She turned upon him her white scared face. “What is *she* doing?” she managed to say through chattering teeth.

Octavius repented him, that under the strain of the situation he had spoken to her as he had. “Go to bed, Aileen,” he said firmly, but gently; “this ain’t no place for you now.”

She needed but that word; she was half way up the stairs before he had finished. He heard her shut herself into the room. He hung up his coat, noiselessly opened the door into the main hall, closed it softly behind him and took his stand half way to the library door. He saw nothing, but he heard all.

For a moment there was silence in the room; then Aurora spoke in a dull strained voice:

“I don’t know what you mean — I have n’t had

any message, and — and ” — she swallowed hard — “nothing is final — nothing — not yet — that’s why I’ve come. You must help me, Almeda — help me to save Champney; there is no one else in our family I can call upon or who can do it — and there is a chance — ”

“What chance?”

“The chance to save him from — from imprisonment — from a living death — ”

“Has he been taken?”

“Taken!” — she swayed back from the table, clutching convulsively the edge to preserve her balance — “don’t — don’t, Almeda; it will kill me. I am afraid for him — afraid — don’t you understand? — Help me — let me have the money, the amount that will save my son — free him — ”

She swayed back towards the table and leaned heavily upon it, as fearing to lose her hold lest she should sink to her knees. Mrs. Champney was recovering in a measure from the first excitement consequent upon the shock of seeing the woman she hated standing so suddenly in her presence. She spoke with cutting sarcasm:

“What amount, may I inquire, do you deem necessary for the present to insure prospective freedom for your son?”

“You know well enough, Almeda; I must have eighty thousand at least.”

Mrs. Champney laughed aloud — the same mocking laugh of a miserable old age that had raised Octavius Buzzby’s anger to a white heat of rage. Hearing it again, the man of Maine, without fully realizing what he was doing, turned back his cuffs. He could scarce restrain himself sufficiently to keep his promise to Aurora.

“Eighty thousand? — hm—m; between you and Octavius Buzzby there would be precious little left either at Champ-au-Haut or of it.” She turned in her chair in order to look squarely up into the face of the woman on the opposite side of the table. “And you expect me to impoverish myself for the sake of Champney Googe?”

“It would n’t impoverish you — you have your father’s property and more too; he is of your own blood — why not?”

“Why not?” she repeated and laughed out again in her scorn; “why should I, answer me that?”

“He is your brother, Warren Googe’s son — don’t make me say any more, Almeda Champney; you know that nothing but this, nothing on earth — could have brought me here to ask anything of *you!*”

There was a ring of the old-time haughty independence in her voice; Octavius rejoiced to hear it. “She’s getting a grip on herself,” he said to himself; “I hope she’ll give her one ’fore she gets through with her.”

“Why did n’t my brother save his money for him then — if he’s his son?” she demanded sharply, but breathing short as she spoke the last words in a tone that conveyed the venom of intense hatred.

“Almeda, don’t; you know well enough ‘why’; don’t keep me in such suspense — I can’t bear it; only tell me if you will help.”

She seemed to gather herself together; she swept round the table; came close to the woman in the arm-chair; bent to her; the dark burning eyes fixed the faded blue ones. “Tell me quick, I say, — I can bear no more.”

“Aurora Googe, I sent word to you by Octavius

Buzzby that I would not help your state's-prison bird — fledged from your nest, not mine, — ”

She did not finish, for the woman she was torturing suddenly laid a hot hand hard and close, for the space of a few seconds, over those malevolent lips. Mrs. Champney drew back, turned in her chair and reached for the bell.

Aurora removed her hand.

“Stop there, you've said enough, Almeda Champney!” she commanded her. She pointed to the portrait over the fireplace. “By the love he bore my son — by the love we two women bore him — help —”

Mrs. Champney rose suddenly by great effort from her chair. The two women stood facing each other.

“Go — go!” she cried out shrilly, hoarsely; her face was distorted with passion, her hands were clenched and trembling violently, “leave my sight — leave my house — you — *you* ask *me*, by the love we bore Louis Champney, to save from his just deserts Louis Champney's bastard!”

Her voice rose to a shriek; she shook her fist in Aurora's face, then sank into her chair and, seizing the bell, rang it furiously.

Octavius darted forward, but stopped short when he heard Aurora's voice — low, dull, as if a sickening horror had quenched forever its life:

“You have thought *that* all these years? — O God! — Louis — Louis, what more — ”

She fell before Octavius could reach her. Aileen and Ann, hearing the bell, came running through the hall into the room.

“Help me up stairs, Aileen,” — the old woman was in command as usual, — “give me my cane, Ann; don't stand there staring like two fools.”

Aileen made a sign to Octavius to call Hannah; the two women helped the mistress of Champ-au-Haut up to her room.

Mrs. Googe seemed not to have lost consciousness, for as Hannah bent over her she noticed that her eyelids quivered.

"She's all wore out, poor dear, that's what's the matter," said Hannah, raising her to a sitting position; she passed her hand tenderly over the dark hair.

Aileen came running down stairs bringing salts and cologne. Hannah bathed her forehead and chafed her wrists.

In a few minutes the white lips quivered, the eyes opened; she made an effort to rise. Octavius helped her to her feet; but for Aileen's arm around her she would have fallen again.

"Take me home, Tave." She spoke in a weak voice.

"I will, Aurora," he answered promptly, soothingly, although his hands trembled as he led her to a sofa; "I'll just hitch up the pair in the carryall and Hannah'll ride up with us, won't you, Hannah?"

"To be sure, to be sure. Don't you grieve yourself to death, Mis' Googe," she said tenderly.

"Don't wait to harness into the carryall, Tave — take me now — in the trap — take me away from here. I don't need you, Hannah. I did n't know I was so weak — the air will make me feel better; give me my cloak, Aileen."

The girl wrapped her in it, adjusted the burnous, that had fallen from her head, and went with her to the door. Aurora turned and looked at her. The girl's heart was nigh to bursting. Impulsively she threw her arms around the woman's neck and whispered: "If you need me, do send for me — I'll come."

But Aurora Googe went forth from Champ-au-Haut without a word either to the girl, to Hannah, or to Octavius Buzzby.

For the first two miles they drove in silence. The night was clear but cold, the ground frozen hard; a northwest wind roared in the pines along the highroad and bent the bare treetops on the mountain side. From time to time Octavius heard the woman beside him sigh heavily as from physical exhaustion. When, at last, he felt that she was shivering, he spoke:

“Are you cold, Aurora? I’ve got something extra under the seat.”

“No, I’m not cold; I feel burning up.”

He turned to look at her face in the glare of an electric light they were passing. It was true; the rigor was that of increasing fever; her cheeks were scarlet.

“I wish you’d have let me telephone for the doctor; I don’t feel right not to leave you in his hands to-night, and Ellen has n’t got any head on her.”

“No — no; I don’t need him; he could n’t do me any good — nobody can. — Tave, did you hear her, what she said?” She leaned towards him to whisper her question as if she feared the dark might have ears.

“Yes, I heard her — damn her! I can’t help it, Aurora.”

“And you don’t believe it — you *know* it is n’t true?”

Octavius drew rein for a moment; lifted his cap and passed the back of his hand across his forehead to wipe off the sweat that stood in beads on it. He turned to the woman beside him; her dark eyes were devouring his face in the effort, or so it seemed, to anticipate his answer.

“Aurora, I’ve known you” (how he longed to say “loved you,” but those were not words for him to speak to Aurora Googe after thirty years of silence) “ever since you was sixteen and old Mr. Googe took you, an orphan girl, into his home; and I knew Louis Champney from the time he was the same age till he died. What I’ve seen, I’ve seen; and what I know, I know. Louis Champney loved you better’n he loved his life, and I know you loved him; but if the Almighty himself should swear it’s true what Almeda Googe said, I would n’t believe him — I would n’t!”

The terrible nervous strain from which the woman was suffering lessened under the influence of his speech. She leaned nearer.

“It was not true,” she whispered again; “I know you’ll believe me.”

Her voice sounded weaker than before, and Octavius grew alarmed lest she have another of what Hannah termed a “sinking spell” then and there. He drew rein suddenly, and so tightly that the mare bounded forward and pulled at a forced pace up the hill to The Gore.

“And she thought *that* all these years — and I never knew. That ’s why she hates my boy and won’t help — oh, how could she!”

She shivered again. Octavius urged the mare to greater exertion. If only he could get the stricken woman home before she had another turn.

“How could she?” he repeated with scathing emphasis; “just as any she-devil can set brooding on an evil thought for years till she’s hatched out a devil’s dozen of filthy lies.” He drew the reins a little too tightly in his righteous wrath, and the mare reared

suddenly. "What the dev — whoa, there Kitty, what you about?"

He calmed the resentful beast, and they neared the house in The Gore at a quick trot.

"You don't think she has ever spoken to any one before — not so, do you, Tave? not to Louis ever? —"

"No, I don't, Aurora. Louis Champney would n't have stood that — I know him well enough for that; but she might have hinted at a something, and it's my belief she did. But don't you fret, Aurora; she'll never speak again — I'd take my oath on that — and if I dared, I'd say I wish Almighty God would strike her dumb for saying what she has."

They had reached the house. She lifted her face to the light burning in her bedroom.

"Oh, my boy — my boy —" she moaned beneath her breath. Octavius helped her out, and holding the reins in one hand, with the other supported her to the steps; her knees gave beneath her. — "Oh, where is he to-night — what shall I do! — Think for me, Tave, act for me, or I shall go mad —"

Octavius leaned to the carriage and threw the reins around the whipstock.

"Aurora," he grasped her firmly by the arm, "give me the key."

She handed it to him; he opened the door; led her in; called loudly for Ellen; and when the frightened girl came hurrying down from her room, he bade her see to Mrs. Googe while he went for the doctor.

XVII

“THE trouble is she has borne up too long.”

The doctor was talking to Father Honoré while untying the horse from the hitching-post at the kitchen porch.

“She has stood it longer than I thought she could; but without the necessary sleep even her strong constitution and splendid physique can’t supply sufficient nerve force to withstand such a strain — it’s fearful. Something had to give somewhere. Practically she has n’t slept for over three weeks, and, what’s more, she won’t sleep till — she knows one way or the other. I can’t give her opiates, for the strain has weakened her heart — I mean functionally.” He stepped into the carriage. “You have n’t heard anything since yesterday morning, have you?”

“No; but I’m inclined to think that now he has put them off the track and got them over the border, he will make for New York again. It’s my belief he will try to get out of the country by that door instead of by way of Canada.”

“I never thought of that.” He gathered up the reins, and, leaning forward from the hood, looked earnestly into the priest’s eyes. “Make her talk if you can — it’s her only salvation. She has n’t opened her lips to me, and till she speaks out — you understand — I can do nothing. The fever is only the result of the nerve-strain.”

“I wish it were in my power to help her. I may as

well tell you now — but I'd like it to remain between ourselves, of course I've told the Colonel — that I determined last night to go down to New York and see if I can accomplish anything. I shall have two private detectives there to work with me. You know the city agency has its men out there already?"

"No, I did n't. I thought all the force was centred here in this State and on the Canada line. It strikes me that if she could know you were going — and for what — she might speak. You might try that, and let me know the result.

"I will."

The doctor drove off. Father Honoré stood for a few minutes on the back porch; he was thinking concentratedly: — How best could he approach the stricken mother and acquaint her with his decision to search for her son?

He was roused by the sound of a gentle voice speaking in French:

"Good-morning, Father Honoré; how is Mrs. Googe? I have just heard of her illness."

It was Sister Ste. Croix from the sisterhood home in The Gore.

The crisp morning air tinged with a slight color her wrinkled and furrowed cheeks; her eyelids, also, were horribly wrinkled, as could be plainly seen when they drooped heavily over the dark blue eyes. Yet Sister Ste. Croix was still in middle life.

"There is every cause for great anxiety, I grieve to say. The doctor has just gone."

"Who is with her, do you know?"

"Mrs. Caukins, so Ellen says."

"Do you think she would object to having me nurse her for a while? She has been so lovely to me ever

since I came here, and in one way and another we have been much together. I have tried again and again to see her during these dreadful weeks, but she has steadily refused to see me or any of us — just shut herself out from her friends.”

“I wish she would have you about her; it would do her good; and surely Mrs. Caukins can’t leave her household cares to stay with her long, nor can she be running back and forth to attend to her. I am going to make the attempt to see her, and if I succeed I will tell her that you are ready to come at any minute — and only waiting to come to her.”

“Do; and won’t you tell Ellen I will come down and see her this afternoon? Poor girl, she has been so terrified with the events of these last weeks that I have feared she would not stay. If I’m here, I feel sure she would remain.”

“If Mrs. Googe will not heed your request, I do hope you will make it your mission work to induce Ellen to stay.”

“Indeed, I will; I thought she might stay the more willingly if I were with her.”

“I’m sure of it,” Father Honoré said heartily.

“Are you going in now?”

“Yes.”

“Well, please tell Ellen that if Mrs. Googe wants me, she is to come up at once to tell me. Good morning.”

She walked rapidly down the road beside the house. Father Honoré turned to look after her. How many, many lives there were like that! — unselfish, sacrificing, loving, helpful, yet unknown, unthought of. He watched the slight figure, the shoulders bowed already a little, but the step still firm and light, till it passed from

sight. Then he entered the kitchen and encountered Mrs. Caukins.

"I never was so glad to see any living soul as I am you, Father Honoré," was her greeting; she looked up from the lemon she was squeezing; "I don't dare to leave her till she gets a regular nurse. It's enough to break your heart to see her lying there staring straight before her and not saying a word — not even to the doctor. I told the Colonel when he was here a little while ago that I could n't stand it much longer; it's getting on my nerves — if she'd only say *something*, I don't care what!"

She paused in concocting the lemonade to wipe her eyes on a corner of her apron.

"Mrs. Caukins, I wish you would say to Mrs. Gooze that I am here and would like to speak with her before I leave town this afternoon. You might say I expect to be away for a few days and it is necessary that I should see her now."

"You don't mean to say you're going to leave us right in the lurch, 'fore we know anything about Champney! — Why, what will the Colonel do without you? You've been his right hand man. He's all broken up; that one night's work nearly killed him, and he has n't seemed himself since —"

Father Honoré interrupted this flow of ejaculatory torrent.

"I've spoken to the Colonel about my going, Mrs. Caukins. He agrees with me that no harm can come of my leaving here for a few days just at this time."

"I'll tell her, Father Honoré; I'm going up this minute with the lemonade; but it's ten to one she won't see you; she would n't see the rector last week — oh, dear me!" She groaned and left the room.

She was back again in a few minutes, her eyes wide with excitement.

“She says you can come up, Father Honoré, and you’d better go up quick before she gets a chance to change her mind.”

He went without a word. When Mrs. Caukins heard him on the stair and caught the sound of his rap on the door, she turned to Ellen and spoke emphatically, but with trembling lips:

“I don’t believe the archangel Gabriel himself could look at you more comforting than Father Honoré does; if *he* can’t help her, the Lord himself can’t, and I don’t mean that for blasphemy either. Poor soul — poor soul” — she wiped the tears that were rolling down her cheeks, — “here I am the mother of eight children and never had to lose a night’s sleep on account of their not doing right, and here’s Aurora with her one and can’t sleep nor eat for the shame and trouble he’s brought on her and all of us — for I’m a Googe. Life seems sometimes to get topsy-turvy, and I for one can’t make head nor tail of it. The Colonel’s always talking about Nature’s ‘levelling up,’ but I don’t see any ‘levelling’; seems to me as if she was turning everything up on edge pretty generally. — Give me that rice I saw in the pantry, Ellen; I’m going to make her a little broth; I’ve got a nice foreshoulder piece at home, and it will be just the thing.”

Ellen, rejoicing in such talkative companionship, after the three weeks of dreadful silence in the house, did her bidding, at the same time taking occasion to ask some questions on her own part, among them one which set Mrs. Caukins speculating for a week: “Who do you suppose killed Rag?”

Aurora was in bed, but propped to a sitting position

by pillows. When Father Honoré entered she started forward.

“Have you heard anything?” Her voice was weak from physical exhaustion.

“No, Mrs. Googe — ”

She sank back on the pillows; he drew a chair to the bedside.

“— But I have decided to go down to New York and search for myself. I have a feeling he is there, not in Maine or Canada; and I know that city from Washington Heights to the Battery.”

“You think he’ll be found?” She could scarcely articulate the words; some terror had her by the throat; her eyes showed deadly fear.

“Yes, I think he will.”

“But she won’t do anything — I — I went to her — ”

“Don’t exert yourself too much, Mrs. Googe, but if you can tell me whom you mean, to whom you have applied, it might help me to act understandingly.”

“To his aunt — I went last night.”

“Mrs. Champney?”

She closed her eyes and made a motion of assent.

“And she will do nothing?”

“No.”

“I fail to understand this. Surely she might give of her abundance to save one who is of her own blood. Would it do any good, do you think, for me to see her? I’ll gladly go.”

She shook her head. “You don’t understand.”

He waited in silence for some further word; for her to open her eyes at least. But none was forthcoming; the eyes remained closed. After a while he said gently:

“Perhaps I might understand, if you felt willing to tell me, if the effort is not too great.”

She opened her eyes and fixed them apathetically on the strong helpful face.

“I wonder if you could understand — I don’t know — you’re not a woman —”

“No, but I am human, Mrs. Googe; and human sympathy is a great enlightener.”

“The weight here — and here!” She raised one hand to her head, the other she laid over her heart. “If I could get rid of that for one hour — I should be strong again — to live — to endure.”

Father Honoré was silent. He knew the long pent stream of grief and misery must flow in its own channel when once it should burst its bounds.

“My son must never know — you will give me your word?”

“I give you my word, Mrs. Googe.”

She leaned forward from her pillows, looked anxiously at the door, which was open into the hall, then whispered:

“She said — my son was Louis Champney’s — bastard; — *you* don’t believe it, do you?”

For the space of a second Father Honoré shrank within himself. He could not tell at that moment whether he had here to do with an overwrought brain, with a mind obsessed, or with an awful fact. But he answered without hesitation and out of his inmost conviction:

“No, I do not believe it, Mrs. Googe.”

“I thought you would n’t — Octavius did n’t.” She sighed profoundly as if relieved from pain. “That’s why she hates me — why she will not help.”

“In that case I will go to Mr. Van Ostend. I asked to see you that I might tell you this.”

“Will you — oh, will you?” She sighed again — a

sigh of great physical relief, for she placed her hand again over her heart, pressing it hard.

“That helps here,” she said, passing her other hand over her forehead; “perhaps I can tell you now, before you go — perhaps it will help more.”

Her voice grew stronger with every full breath she was now able to draw. Gradually a look of comprehension replaced the apathetic stare. She looked squarely at the priest for the first time since his entrance. Father Honoré could but wonder if the thought behind that look would find adequate expression.

“You have n’t said ‘God’ to me once since that — that night. Don’t speak to me about Him now, will you? He’s too far away — it does n’t mean anything to me.”

“Mrs. Gooze, there comes a time in most lives when God seems so far away that we can find Him only through the Human; — perhaps such a time has come in your life.”

“I don’t know; I never thought much about that. But — my god was human, oh, for so many years! — I loved Louis Champney.”

Again there was a long inhalation and exhalation. It seemed as if each admission, which she forced herself to make, loosened more and more the tension of the long-racked nerves; as a result the muscles of the throat relaxed, the articulation grew distinct, the voice stronger.

“— And he loved me — better than life itself. I was so young when it began — only sixteen. My husband’s father took me into his home then to bring up; I was an orphan. And Louis Champney loved me then and always — but Almeda Gooze, my husband’s sister, loved him too — in her way. Her own father could do nothing with her awful will — it crushed everybody

that came in contact with it — that opposed it; it crushed me — and in the end, Louis.”

She took a little of the lemonade to moisten her lips and went on:

“She was twelve years older than he. She took him when he was in college; worked on him, lied to him about me; told him I loved her brother; worked backwards, forwards, underhanded — any way to influence him against me and get her hold upon him. He went to Europe; she followed; wrote lying letters to her brother — said she was engaged to be married to Louis before her return; told Louis I was going to marry her brother, Warren Googe — in the end she had her way, and always has had it, and will have it. I married Warren Googe; she was forty when she married Louis at twenty-eight.”

She paused, straightened herself. Something like animation came into her face.

“It does me good to speak — at last. I’ve never spoken in all these years — and I can tell *you*. My child was born seven months after my husband’s death. Louis Champney came to see me then — up here, in this room; it was the first time we had dared to see each other alone — but the baby lay beside me; *that kept us*. He said but little; but he took up the child and looked at him; then he turned to me. ‘This should have been our son, Aurora,’ he said, and I — oh; what will you think of me!” She dropped her head into her hands.

“I knew in my heart that during all those months I was carrying Warren Googe’s child, I had only one thought: ‘Oh, if it were only Louis’ and mine!’ And because I was a widow, I felt free to dwell upon that one thought night and day. Louis’ face was always before me. I came in thought to look upon him as the

true father of my boy — not that other for whom I had had no love. And I took great comfort in that thought — and — and — my boy is the living image of Louis Champney.”

She withdrew her hands, clasping them nervously and rubbing them in each other.

“Oh, I sinned, I sinned in thought, and I’ve been punished, but there was never anything more — and last night I had to hear that from her!”

For a moment the look of deadly fear returned to the eyes, but only for a moment; her hands continued to work nervously.

“Never anything more; only that day when he took my boy in his arms and said what he did, we both knew we could not see much of each other for the rest of our lives — that’s why I’ve kept so much to myself. He kissed the baby then, laid him in my arms and, stooping, kissed me once — only once — I’ve lived on that — and said: ‘I will do all I can for this boy.’ And — and ” — her lips trembled for the first time — “that little baby, as it lay on my breast, saved us both. It was renunciation — but it made me hard; it killed Louis.

“I saw Louis seldom and always in the presence of my boy. But Almeda Champney was not satisfied with what she had done; she transferred her jealousy to my son. She was jealous of every word Louis spoke to him; jealous of every hour he was with him. When Louis died, still young — my son was left unprovided for. That was Almeda Champney’s work — she would n’t have it.

“Then I sold the first quarry for means to send Champney to college; and I sold the rest in order to start him well in business, in the world. But I know that at the bottom of my ambition for him, was the desire

that he might succeed in spite of the fact that his aunt had kept from him the property which Louis Champney intended to be his. My ambition has been overweening for Champney's material success — I have urged him on, when I should have restrained. I have aided him to the extent of my ability to attain his end. I longed to see him in a position that, financially, would far outshine hers. I felt it would compensate in part. I loved my son — and I loved in him Louis Champney. I alone am to blame for what has come of it — I — his mother.”

Her lips trembled excessively. She waited to control them before she could continue.

“Last night, when I begged her to help me, she answered me with what I told you. I could bear no more —”

She leaned back on the pillows, exhausted for a while with her great effort, but the light of renewed life shone from every feature.

“I am better now,” she said, turning to Father Honoré the dark hollow eyes so full of gratitude that the priest looked away from her.

While this page in human history was being laid open before him, Father Honoré said nothing. The confession it contained was so awful in its still depths of pure passion, so far-reaching in its effects on a human soul, that he felt suddenly the utter insignificance of his own existence, the futility of all words, the meagreness of all sympathetic expression. And he was honest enough to withhold all attempt at such.

“I fear you are very tired,” he said, and rose to go.

“No, no; I am better already. The telling has done me such good. I shall soon be up and about. When do you go?”

"This afternoon; and you may expect telegrams from me at almost any time; so don't be alarmed simply because I send them. I thought you would prefer to know from day to day."

"You are good — but I can say nothing." The tears welled at last and overflowed on her cheeks.

"Don't say that — I beg of you." He spoke almost sharply, as if hurt physically. "Nothing is needed — and I hope you will let Sister Ste. Croix come in for a few days and care for you. She wants to come."

"Tell her to come. I think I am willing to see any one now — something has given way here;" she pressed her hand to her head; "it's a great relief."

"Good-bye." He held out his hand and she placed hers in it; the tears kept rolling down her cheeks.

"Tell my darling boy, when you see him, that it was my fault — and I love him so — oh, how I love him —" Her voice broke in a sob.

Father Honoré left the room to cover his emotion. He spoke to Ellen from the hall, and went out at the front door in order to avoid Mrs. Caukins. He had need to be alone.

That afternoon at the station, Octavius Buzzby met him on the platform.

"Mr. Buzzby, is there any truth in the rumor I heard, as I came to the train, that Mrs. Champney has had a stroke?"

The face of Champ-au-Haut's factotum worked strangely before he made answer.

"Yes, she's had a slight shock. The doctor told me this morning that he knew she'd had the first one over three years ago; this is the second. I've come down for a nurse he telegraphed for; I expect her on the

next train up — and, Father Honoré —” he hesitated; his hands were working nervously in each other.

“Yes, Mr. Buzzby?”

“I come down to see you, too, on purpose —”

“To see me?” Father Honoré looked his surprise; his thoughts leaped to a possible demand on Mrs. Champney’s part for his presence at Champ-au-Haut — she might have repented her words, changed her mind; might be ready to help her nephew. In that case, he would wait for the midnight train.

The man of Maine’s face was working painfully again; he was struggling for control; his feelings were deep, tender, loyal; he was capable of any sacrifice for a friend.

“Father Honoré — I don’t want to butt in anywhere — into what ain’t my business, but I do want to know if you’re going to New York?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Are you going to try to see *him*?”

“I ’m going to try to find him — for his mother’s sake and his own.”

Octavius Buzzby grasped his hand and wrung it. “God bless you!” He fumbled with his left hand in his breast pocket and drew forth a package. “Here, you take this — it’s honest money, all mine — you use it for Champney — to help out, you know, in any way you see fit.”

Father Honoré was so moved he could not speak at once.

“If Mr. Googe could know what a friend he has in you, Mr. Buzzby,” he said at last, “I don’t think he could wholly despair, whatever might come,” — he pressed the package back into Octavius’ hand, — “keep it with you, it’s safer; and I promise you if I need it I

will call on you." Suddenly his indignation got the better of him — "But this is outrageous!" — he spoke in a low voice but vehemently, — "Mrs. Champney is abundantly able to do this for her nephew, whereas you —"

"You're right, sir, it's a damned outrage — I beg your pardon, Father Honoré, I had n't ought to said that, but I've seen so much, and I'm all broke up, I guess, with what I've been through since yesterday. I went to her myself then and made bold to ask her to help with her riches that's bringing her in eight per cent, and told her some plain truths —"

"You went —!" Father Honoré exclaimed; he had almost said "too," but caught himself in time.

"Yes, I went, and all I got was an insult for my pains. She's a she-dev — I beg your pardon, sir; it would serve me right if the Almighty struck me dumb with a stroke like hers, only hers don't affect her speech any, Aileen says — I guess her tongue's insured against shock for life, but it had n't ought to be, sir, not after the blasphemy it's uttered. But I ain't the one to throw stones, not after what I've just said in your presence, sir, and I do beg your pardon, I know what's due to the clo —"

The train, rounding the curve, whistled deafeningly.

Father Honoré grasped both Octavius' hands; held them close in a firm cordial grip; looked straight into the small brown eyes that were filled with tears, the result of pure nervousness.

"We men understand each other, Mr. Buzzby; no apology is necessary — let me have your prayers while I am away, I shall need them — good-bye —" He entered the car.

Octavius Buzzby lifted his hat and stood bareheaded on the platform till the train drew out.

PART FOURTH

Oblivion



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Oblivion

I

“**I** HAVE called to see Mr. Van Ostend, by appointment,” said Father Honoré to the footman in attendance at the door of the mansion on the Avenue.

He was shown into the library. Mr. Van Ostend rose from the armchair to greet him.

“I am glad to see you, Father Honoré.” He shook hands cordially and drew up a chair opposite to his own before the blazing hearth. “Be seated; I have given orders that we are not to be interrupted. I cannot pretend ignorance as to the cause of your coming — a sad, bad matter for us all. Have you any news?”

“Only that he is here in New York.”

Mr. Van Ostend looked startled. “Here? Since when? My latest advice was this afternoon from the Maine detectives.”

“I heard yesterday from headquarters that he had been traced here, but he must be in hiding somewhere; thus far they’ve found no trace of him. I felt sure, from the very first, he would return; that is why I came down. He could n’t avoid detection any longer in the country, nor could he hold out another week in the Maine wilderness — no man could stand it in this weather.”

“How long have you been here, Father Honoré?”

“Three days. I promised Mrs. Googe to do what I could to find him; the mother suffers most.”

“I know — I know; it’s awful for her; but, for God’s sake, what did he do it for!”

“Why do we all sin at times?”

“Yes, yes — I know; that’s your point of view, but that does not answer me in this case. He had every opportunity to work along legitimate lines towards the end he professed to wish to attain — and he had the ability to attain it; I know this from my experience with him. What could have possessed him to put himself in the place of a sneak thief — he, born a gentleman, with Champney blood in his veins?”

Father Honoré did not answer his question which was more an indignant ejaculation.

“You spoke of my ‘point of view,’ Mr. Van Ostend. I think I know what that implies; you mean from the point of view of the priesthood?”

The man on the opposite side of the fire-lighted hearth looked at him in surprise. “Yes, just that; but I intended no reflection on your opinion; perhaps I ought to say frankly, that it implied a doubt of your powers of judgment in a business matter like the one in question. Naturally, it does not lie in your line.”

Father Honoré smiled a little sadly. “Perhaps you may recall that old saying of the Jew, Nathan the Wise: ‘A man is a man before he is either Christian or Jew.’ And we are men, Mr. Van Ostend; men primarily before we are either financier or priest. Let us speak as man to man; put aside all points of view entailed by difference of training, and meet on the common

ground of our manhood. I am sure the perspective and retrospective ought to be in the same line of vision from that standpoint."

Mr. Van Ostend was silent. He was thinking deeply. The priest saw this, and waited for the answer which he felt sure would be well thought out before it found expression. He spoke at last, slowly, weighing his words:

"I am questioning whether, with the best intentions as men to meet in the common plane of our manhood, to see from thence alike in a certain direction, you and I, at our age, can escape from the moulded lines of our training into that common plane."

"I think we can if we keep to the fundamentals of life."

"We can but try; but there must be then an absolutely unclouded expression of individual opinion on the part of each." His assertion implied both a challenge and a doubt. "What is your idea of the reason for his succumbing to such a temptation?"

"I believe it was the love of money and the power its acquisition carries with it. I know, too, that Mrs. Googe blames herself for having fostered this ambition in him. She would only too gladly place anything that is hers to make good, but there is nothing left; it all went." He straightened himself. "What I have come to you for, Mr. Van Ostend, is to ask you one direct question: Are you willing to make good the amount of the embezzlement to the syndicate and save prosecution in this special case — save the man, Champney Googe, and so give him another chance in life? You know, but not so well, perhaps, as I, what years in a penitentiary mean for a man when he leaves it."

"Are you aware that you are asking me to put a

premium on crime?" Mr. Van Ostend asked coldly. He looked at the priest as if he thought he had taken leave of his senses.

"That is one way of putting it, I admit; but there is another. Let me put it to you: if you had had a son; if he were fatherless; if he had fallen through emulation of other men, would n't you like to know that some man might lend a hand for the sake of the mother?"

"I don't know. Stealing is stealing, whether my son were the thief or another man's. Why should n't a man take his punishment? You know the everyday argument: the man who steals a loaf of bread gets nine months, and the man who steals a hundred thousand gets clear. If the law is for the one and not for the other, the result is, logically, anarchy. Besides, the man, not he of the street who steals because he is hungry, but the one who has every advantage of education and environment to make his way right in life, goes wrong knowingly. Are we in this case to coddle, to sympathize, to let ourselves be led into philanthropic drivel over 'judge not that ye be not judged'? I cannot see it so."

"You are right in your reasoning, but you are reasoning according to the common law, man-made; and I said we could agree only if we keep to the fundamentals of life."

"Well, if the law is n't a fundamental, what is?"

"I heard Bishop Brooks once say: 'The Bible *was* before ever it was written.' And perhaps I can best answer your question by saying the law of the human existed before the law of which you are thinking was ever written. Love, mercy, long-suffering *were* before the law formulated 'an eye for an eye,' or this world

could not have existed to the present time for you and me. It is in recognition of that, in dealing with the human, that I make my appeal to you — for the mother, first and foremost, who suffers through the son, her first-born and only child, as your daughter is your only —” Mr. Van Ostend interrupted him.

“I must beg you, Father Honoré, not to bring my daughter’s name into this affair. I have suffered enough — enough.”

“Mr. Van Ostend, pardon me the seeming discourtesy in your own house, but I am compelled to mention it. After you have given your final decision to my importuning, there can be no further appeal. The man, if living, must go to prison. Mrs. Champney positively refuses to help her nephew in any way. She has been approached twice on the subject of advancing four-fifths of the hundred thousand; she can do it, but she won’t. She is not a mother; neither has she any real love for her nephew, for she refuses to aid him in his extremity. I mentioned your daughter, because you must know that her name has been in the past connected with the man for whom I am asking the boon of another chance in life. I have felt convinced that for her sake, if for no other, you would make this sacrifice.”

“My daughter, I am glad to inform you, never cared for the man. She is too young, too undeveloped. It is the one thing that makes it possible for me to contemplate what he has done with any degree of sanity. Had he won her affections, had she loved him —” He paused. It was impossible for him to proceed.

“Thank God that she was spared that!” Father Honoré ejaculated under his breath. Mr. Van Ostend,

looking at him keenly, perceived that he was under the influence of some powerful emotion. He turned to him, a mute question on his lips. Father Honoré answered that mute query with intense earnestness, by repeating what, apparently, he had said to himself:

“I thank my God that she never cared for him in that way, for otherwise her life would have been wrecked; nor could you, who would lay down your life for her happiness, have spared or saved her, — her young affections, her young faith and joy in life, all shattered, and Life the iconoclast! That is the saddest part of it. It is women who suffer most and always. In making this appeal to you, I have had continually in mind his mother, and you, the father of a woman. I know how your pride must have suffered in the knowledge that his name, even, has been connected with hers — but your suffering is as naught compared with that mother’s who, at this very moment, is waiting for some telegram from me that shall tell her her son is found, is saved. But I will not over urge, Mr. Van Ostend. If you feel you cannot do this, that it is a matter of principle with you to refuse, there is no need to prolong this interview which is painful to us both. I thank you for the time you have given me.” He rose to go. Mr. Van Ostend did likewise.

At that moment a girl’s joyous voice sounded in the hall just outside the door.

“Oh, never mind that, Beales; papa never considers me an interruption. I’m going in, anyway, to say good night; I don’t care if all Wall Street is there. Has the carriage come?”

There was audible the sound of a subdued protest; then came a series of quick taps on the door and the sound of the gay voice again:

"Papa — just a minute to say good night; if I can't come in, do you come out and give me a kiss — do you hear?"

The two men looked at each other. Mr. Van Ostend stepped quickly to the door and, opening it, stood on the threshold. Something very like a diaphanous white cloud enwrapped him; two thin arms, visible through it, went suddenly round his neck; then his arms enfolded her.

"Oh, Papsy dear, don't hug me so hard! You'll crush all my flowers. Ben sent them; was n't he a dear? I've promised him the cotillon to-night for them. Good night." She pecked at his cheek again as he released her; the cloud of white liberty silk tulle drifted away from the doorway and left it a blank.

Mr. Van Ostend closed the door; came back to the hearth; stood there, his arms folded tightly over his chest, his head bowed. For a few minutes neither man spoke. When the clock on the mantel chimed a quarter to nine, Father Honoré made a movement to go. Mr. Van Ostend turned quickly to him and put out a detaining hand.

"May I ask if you are going to continue the search this evening; it's a bad night."

"Yes; I've had the feeling that, after he has been so long in hiding, he'll have to come out — he must be at the end of his strength. I am going out with two detectives now; they have been on the case with me. This is quite apart from the general detective agency's work."

"Father Honoré," Mr. Van Ostend spoke with apparent effort, "I know I am right in my reasoning — and you are right in your fundamentals. We both

may be wrong in the end, you in appealing to me for this aid to restrain prosecution, and I in giving it. Time alone will show us. But if we are, we must take the consequences of our act. If, by yielding, I make it easier for another man to do as Champney Googe has done, may God forgive me; I could never forgive myself. If you, in asking this, have erred in freeing from his punishment a man who deserves every bit he can get, you will have to reckon with your own conscience. — Don't misunderstand me. No spirit of philanthropy influences me in my act. Don't credit me with any 'love-to-man' attitude. I am going to advance the sum necessary to avoid prosecution if you find him; but I do it solely on that mother's account, and" — he hesitated — "because I don't want her, whom you have just seen, connected, even remotely, by the thought of what a penitentiary term implies. I don't want to entertain the thought that even the hem of *my* child's garment has been so much as touched by a hand that will work at hard labor for seven, perhaps fifteen, years. And I want you to understand that, in yielding, my principle remains unchanged. I owe it to you to say this much, for you have dealt with me as man to man."

"Mr. Van Ostend, we may both be in the wrong, as you say; if it prove so, I shall be the first to acknowledge my error to you. My one thought has been to save that mother further agony and to give a man, still young, another chance."

"I've understood it so."

He went to his writing table, sat down at it, and, for a moment, busied himself with making out his personal check for one hundred thousand dollars payable to the Flamsted Granite Quarries Company. He

handed it to Father Honoré to look at. The priest read it.

“Whatever bail is needed, if an arrest should follow now,” said Mr. Van Ostend further and significantly, “I will be responsible for.”

The two men clasped hands and looked understandingly into each other’s eyes. What each read therein, what each felt in the other’s palm beats, they realized there was no need to express in words.

“Let me hear, Father Honoré, so soon as you learn anything definite; I’ll keep you posted so far as I hear.”

“I will. Good night, Mr. Van Ostend.”

On reaching the iron gates to the courtyard, the priest stepped aside to give unimpeded passage to a carriage just leaving the house. As it passed him, the electric light flashed athwart the bowed glass front, already dripping with sleet, and behind it he caught a glimpse of a girl’s delicate face that rose from out the folds of a chinchilla wrap, like a flower from its sheath. She was chatting gaily with her maid.

II

THE night was wild. New York can show such in late November. A gale from the north-east was driving before it a heavy sleet that froze as it fell, coating the overhead wires and glazing the asphalt and sidewalks.

It lacked an hour of midnight. From Fleischmann's bakery, the goal of each man among the shivering hundreds lined up on Tenth Street, the light streamed out upon a remnant of Life's jetsam — that which is submerged, which never comes to the surface unless drawn there by some searching and rescuing hand; that which the home-sheltered never see by daylight, never know, save from hearsay. In the neighboring rectory of Grace Church one dim light was burning in an upper room. The marble church itself looked a part of the winter scene; its walls and pinnacles, already encrusted with ice crystals, glittered fantastically in the rays of the arc-light; beneath them, the dark, shuffling, huddling line of humanity moved uneasily in the discomfort of the keen wind.

At twelve o'clock, each unknown, unidentified human unit in that line, as he reaches the window, puts forth his hand for the loaf, and thrusting it beneath his coat, if he be so fortunate as to have one, or under his arm, vanishes. . . .

Whither? As well ask: Whence came he?

Well up towards the bakery, because the hour was early, stood Champney Gooze, unknown, unidentified as yet by three men, Father Honoré and two de-

tectives, who from the dark archway of a sunken area farther down the street were scanning this bread-line. The man for whom they were searching held his head low. An old broad-brimmed felt hat was jammed over his forehead, almost covering his eyes. The face beneath its shadow was sunken, drawn; the upper lip, chin, and cheeks covered with a three weeks' growth of hair that had been blackened with soot. The long period of wandering in the Maine wilderness had reduced his clothes to a minimum. His shoes were worn, the leather split, showing bare flesh. Like hundreds of others in like case, he found himself forced into this line, even at the risk of detection, through the despairing desperation of hunger. There was nothing left for him but this — that is, if he were not to starve. And after this, there remained for him but one thing, one choice out of three final ones — he knew this well: flight and expatriation, the act of grace by which a man frees himself from this life, or the penitentiary. Which should it be?

“Never that last, never!” he said over and over again to himself during this last month. “Never, never *that!*”

It was the horror of that which spurred him to unimaginable exertion in the wilderness in order to escape the detectives on his track; to put them off the scent; to lead them to the Canada border and so induce them to cross it in their search. He had succeeded; and thereafter his one thought was to get to New York, to that metropolis where the human unit is reduced to the zero power, and can dive under, even vanish, to reappear only momentarily on the surface to breathe. But having reached the city, by stolen rides on the top of freight cars, and plunging again into its maelstrom,

he found himself still in the clutch of this unnamable horror. Docks, piers, bridges, stations were become mere detective terminals to him — things to be shunned at all cost. The long perspective of the avenues, the raking view from river to river in the cross streets, afforded him no shelter from watching eyes — in every passing glance he read his doom; these, too, were things to be avoided at all hazard.

For four nights, since he sought refuge in New York, he had crawled into an empty packing-box in a black alley behind a Water Street wholesale house. Twice, during this time, he had made the attempt to board as stowaway an outward-bound steamship and sailing vessel for a South American port; but he had failed, for the Eyes were upon him — always the Eyes wherever he went, whenever he looked, Eyes that were spotting him. In the weakness consequent upon prolonged fasting and the protracted exposure during his journey from Maine, this horror was becoming an obsession bordering on delirium. It was even now beginning to dull the two senses of sight and hearing — at least, he imagined it — as he stood in line waiting for the loaf that should keep him another day, keep him for one of two alternatives: flight, if possible to South America, or . . .

As he stood there, the fear that his sight might grow suddenly dim, that he might in consequence fail in recognition of those Eyes so constantly on the lookout for him, suddenly increased. He grew afraid, at last, to look up — What if the Eyes should be there! He bore the ever-increasing horror as long as he could, then — better starve and have done with it than die like a dog from sheer fright! — he stepped cautiously, softly, starting at the crackle of the ice under his

tread, off the curbstone into the street. So far he was safe. He kept his head low, and walked carelessly towards Third Avenue. When nearing the corner he determined he would look up. He took the middle of the street. It cost him a supreme effort to raise his eyes, to look stealthily about him, behind, before, to right, to left —

What was that in the dark area archway! His sight blurred for the moment, so increasing the blackness of impending horror; then, under the influence of this last applied stimulus, his sight grew preternaturally keen. He discerned one moving form — two — three; to his over-strained nerves there seemed a whole posse behind them. Oh, the Eyes, the Eyes that were so constantly on him! Could he never rid himself of them! He bent his head to the sleeting blast and darted down the middle of the street to Second Avenue.

He knew now the alternative.

After a possible five seconds of hesitation the three men gave chase. It was the make of the man, his motion as he started to run, the running itself as Champney took the middle of the street, by which Father Honoré marked him. It was just such a start, just such running, as the priest had seen many a time on the football field when the goal, which should decide for victory, was to be made. He recognized it at once.

“That’s he!” He spoke under his breath to the two men; the three started in pursuit.

But Champney Gooze was running to goal, and the old training stood him in good stead. He was across Second Avenue before the men were half way down Tenth Street; down Eighth Street towards East River he fled, but at First he doubled on his tracks and eluded them. They lost him as he turned into Second

Avenue again; not a footstep showed on the ice-coated pavement. They stopped at a telephone station to notify the police at the Brooklyn Bridge terminals, then paused to draw a long breath.

“You’re sure ’t was him?” One of the detectives appealed to Father Honoré.

“Yes, I’m sure.”

“He give us the slip this time; he knew we was after him,” the other panted rather than spoke, for the long run had winded him. “I never see such running — and look at the glare of ice! He’d have done me up in another block.”

“Well, the hunt ’s up for to-night, anyway. There’s no use tobogganning round after such a hare at this time of night,” said the other, wiping the wet snow from the inside of his coat collar.

“We’ve spotted him sure enough,” said the first, “and I think, sir, with due notifications at headquarters for all the precincts to-night, we can run him down and in to-morrow. If you’ve no more use for me, I’ll just step round to headquarters and get the lines on him before daylight — that is, if they’ll work.” He looked dubiously at the sagging ice-laden wires.

“You won’t need me any longer?” The second man spoke inquiringly, as if he would like to know Father Honoré’s next move.

“I don’t need you both, but I’d like one of you to volunteer to keep me company, for a while, at least. I can’t give up this way, although I know no more of his whereabouts than you do. I’ve a curious unreasoning feeling that he’ll try the ferries next.”

“He can’t get at the bridge — we’ve headed him off there, and it’s a bad night. It’s been my experience that this sort don’t take to water, not naturally, on such

nights as this. We might try one of the Bowery lodging houses that I know this sort finds out sometimes. I'll go with you, if you like."

"Thank you, I want to try the ferries first; we'll begin at the Battery and work up. How long does the Staten Island boat run?"

"Not after one; but they'll be behind time to-night; it's getting to be a smothering snow. I don't believe the elevated can run on time either, and we've got three blocks to walk to the next station."

"We'd better be going, then." Father Honoré bade the other man good night, and the two walked rapidly to the nearest elevated station on Second Avenue. It was an up-town train that rolled in covered with sleet and snow, and they were obliged to wait fully a quarter of an hour before a south bound one took them to the Battery.

The wind was lessening, but a heavy snowfall had set in. They made their way across the park to the "tongue that laps the commerce of the world."

Where was that commerce now? Wholly vanished with the multiple daytime activities that centre near this spot. The great fleet of in-coming and out-going ocean liners, of vessels, barges, tows, ferries, tugs — where were they in the drifting snow that was blotting out the night in opaque white? The clank and rush of the elevated, the strident grinding of the trolleys, the polyglot whistling and tooting of the numerous small river craft, the cries of 'longshoremen, the roaring basal note of metropolitan mechanism — all were silenced. Nothing was to be heard, at the moment of their arrival, but the heavy wash of the harbor waters against the sea wall and its yeasting churn in the ferry slip.

Near the dock-house they saw some half-obliterated tracks in the snow. Father Honoré bent to examine them; it availed him nothing. He looked at his watch; at the same moment he heard the distant hoarse half-smothered whistle repeated again and again and the deadened beat of the paddle wheels. Gradually the boat felt her way into the slip. The snow was falling heavily.

"We will wait here until the boat leaves," said Father Honoré, stepping inside to a dark wind-sheltered angle of the house.

"It's a wild goose chase we're on," muttered his companion after a while. The next moment he laid a heavy hand on the priest's arm, gripping it hard, every muscle tense.

A heavy brewery team, drawn by noble Percherons, rumbled past them down the slip. On it, behind the driver's seat, was the figure of a man, crouched low. Had it not been for the bandaged arm and the unnatural contour it gave to the body's profile, they might have failed to recognize him. The two stood motionless in the blackness of the inner angle, pressing close to the iron pillars as their man passed them at a distance of something less than twelve feet. The warning bell rang; they hurried on board.

After the boat was well out into the harbor, the detective entered the cabin to investigate. He returned to report to Father Honoré that the man was not inside.

"Outside then," said the priest, drawing a sharp short breath.

The two made their way forward, keeping well behind the team. Father Honoré saw Champney standing by the outside guard chain. He was whitened by

the clinging snow. The driver of the team sang out to him: "I say, pardner, you'd better come inside!"

He neither turned nor spoke, but, bracing himself, suddenly crouched to the position for a standing leap, fist clenched. . . .

A great cry rang out into the storm-filled night: "Champney!"

The two men flung themselves upon him as he leaped, and in the ensuing struggle the three rolled together on the deck. He fought them like a madman, using his bandaged arm, his feet, his head. He was powerful with the fictitious strength of desperation and thwarted intent. But the two men got the upper hand, and, astride the prostrate form, the detective forced on the handcuffs. At the sound of the clinking irons, the prisoner suffered collapse then and there.

"Thank God!" said Father Honoré as he lifted the limp head and shoulders. With the other's aid he carried him into the cabin and laid him on the floor. The priest took off his own wet cloak, then his coat; with the latter he covered the poor clay that lay apparently lifeless — no one should look upon that face either in curiosity, contempt, or pity.

The detective went out to interview the driver of the team.

"Where 'd you pick him up?"

"'Long on West Street, just below Park Place. I see by the way he spoke he'd broke his wind — asked if I was goin' to a ferry an' if I'd give him a lift. I said 'Come along,' and asked no questions. He ain't the first I've helped out o' trouble, but I guess I've got him in sure enough this time."

"You're going to put up on the Island?"

“Yes; but what business is it o’ a decent-looking cove like youse, I’d like to know.”

“Well, it’s this way: we’ve got to get this man back to New York to-night; it’s the boat’s last trip and there ain’t a chance of getting a cab or hack in this blizzard, and at this time of night, to get him up from the ferry. If you’ll take the job, I’ll give you fifteen dollars for it.”

“That ain’t so easy earned in a reg’lar snow-in; besides, I don’t want to be a party to gettin’ him funder into your grip by takin’ him over.”

“Oh, that’s all right. He’s got a friend with him who’ll see to him for the rest of the night.”

“Well, I don’t mind then. It’s goin’ on one now, an’ I might as well make a night o’ it on t’ other side. It’s damned hard on the hosses, though, an’ it’s ten to one I don’t get lifted myself by one o’ them cussed cruelty to animil fellers that sometimes poke their noses into the wrong end o’ their business. — Make it twenty an’ it is done.”

The detective smiled. “Twenty it is.” He patted the noble Percherons and felt their warmth under the blankets. “You’re not the kind they’re after. What have you got in your team?”

“Nothing but the hosses’ feed-bags.”

“That’ll do. We’ll put him in now in case any one comes on at Staten Island for the return trip. You don’t know nothing about *this*, you know.” He looked at him knowingly.

“All right, Cap’n; I’d be willin’ to say I was a bloomin’ idjot for two saw-horses. Come, rake out.”

The detective laughed. “Here’s ten to bind the bargain — the rest when you’ve landed him.”

III

THE brewery team made its way slowly up from the ferry owing to the drifting snow and icy pavements. From time to time a plough ran on the elevated, or on the trolley tracks, and sent the snow in fan-like spurts from the fender. The driver drew rein in a west-side street off lower Seventh Avenue. It was a brotherhood house where the priest had taken a room for an emergency like the present one. He knew that within these walls no questions would be asked, yet every aid given, if required, in just these circumstances. The man beneath the horse-blankets was still unconscious when they lifted him out, and carried him up to a large room in the top-most story. The detective, after removing the handcuffs, asked if he could be of any further use that night. He stepped to the side of the cot and looked searchingly into the passive face on the pillow.

“No; he’s safe here,” Father Honoré replied. “You will notify the police and the other detectives. I will go bail for him if any should be needed; but I may as well tell you now that the case will probably never come to trial; the amount has been guaranteed.” He wrote a telegram and handed it to the man. “Would you do me the favor to get this off as early as you can?”

“Humph! Poor devil, he’s got off easy; but from his looks and the tussle we had with him, I don’t think he’ll be over grateful to you for bringing him through this. I’ve seen so much of this kind, that I’ve come to

think it's better when they drop out quietly, no fuss, like as he wanted to."

"I can't agree with you. Thank you for your help."

"Not worth mentioning; it's all in the night's work, you know. Good night. I'll send the telegram just as soon as the wires are working. You know my number if you want me." He handed him a card.

"Thank you; good night."

When the door closed upon him, Father Honoré drew a long breath that was half a suppressed groan; then he turned to the passive form on the cot. There was much to be done.

He administered a little stimulant; heated some water over a small gas stove; laid out clean sheets, a shirt, some bandages and a few surgical instruments from a "handy closet," that was kept filled with simple hospital emergency requirements, and set to work. He cut the shoes from the stockingless feet; cut away the stiffened clothing, what there was of it; laid bare the bandaged arm; it was badly swollen, stiff and inflamed. He soaked from a clotted knife-wound above the elbow the piece of cloth with which it had first been bound. He looked at the discolored rag as it lay in his hand, startled at what he saw: a handkerchief — a small one, a woman's! With sickening dread he searched in the corners; he found them: A. A., wreathed around with forget-me-nots, all in delicate French embroidery.

"My God, my God!" he groaned. He recalled having seen Aileen embroidering these very handkerchiefs last summer up under the pines. One of the sisterhood, Sister Ste. Croix, was with her giving instruction, while she herself wrought on a convent-made garment.

What did it mean? With multiplied thoughts that grasped helplessly hither and thither for some point of attachment, he went on with his work. Two hours later, he had the satisfaction of knowing the man before him was physically cared for as well as it was possible for him to be until he should regain consciousness. His practised eye recognized this to be a case of collapse from exhaustion, physical and mental. Now Nature must work to replenish the depleted vitality. He could trust her up to a certain point.

He sat by the cot, his elbows on his knees, his head dropped into his hands, pondering the mystery of this life before him — of all life, of death, of the Beyond; marvelling at the strange warp and woof of circumstance, his heart wrung for the anguish of that mother far away in the quarries of The Gore, his soul filled with thankfulness that she was spared the sight of *this*.

The gray November dawn began to dim the electric light in the room. He went to a window, opened the inner blinds and looked out. The storm was not over, but the wind had lessened and the flakes fell sparsely. He looked across over the neighboring roofs weighted with snow; the wires were down. A muffled sound of street traffic heralded the beginning day. As he turned back to the cot he saw that Champney's eyes were open; but the look in them was dazed. They closed directly. When they opened again, the full light of day was in the room; semi-consciousness had returned. He spoke feebly:

“Where am I?”

“Here, safe with me, Champney.” He leaned over him, but saw that he was not recognized.

“Who are you?”

“Your friend, Father Honoré.”

“Father Honoré —” he murmured, “I don’t know you.” He gave a convulsive start — “Where are the Eyes gone?” he whispered, a look of horror creeping into his own.

“There are none here, none but mine, Champney. Listen; you are safe with me, safe, do you understand?”

He gave no answer, but the dazed look returned. He moistened his parched lips with his tongue and swallowed hard. Father Honoré held a glass of water to his mouth, slipping an arm and hand beneath his head to raise him. He drank with avidity; tried to sit up, but fell back exhausted. The priest busied himself with preparing some hot beef extract on the little stove. When it was ready he sat down by the cot and fed it to him spoonful by spoonful.

“Thank you,” Champney said quietly when the priest had finished his ministrations. He turned a little on his side and fell asleep.

The sleep was that which follows exhaustion; it was profound and beneficial. Evidently no distress of mind or body marred it, and for every sixty minutes of the blessed oblivion, there was renewed activity in nature’s ever busy laboratory to replenish the strength that had been sacrificed in this man’s protracted struggle to escape his doom, and, by means of it, to restore the mental balance, fortunately not too long lost. . . .

When he awoke, it was to full consciousness. The sun was setting. Behind the Highlands of the Navesink it sank in royal state: purple, scarlet, and gold. Upon the crisping blue waters of Harbor, Sound, and River, the reflection of its transient glory lay in quivering windrows of gorgeous color. It crimsoned faintly the snow that lay thick on the multitude of city roofs; it blazoned scarlet the myriad windows in the towers

and skyscrapers; it filled the keen air with wonderful fleeting lights that bewildered and charmed the unaccustomed eyes of the metropolitan millions.

Champney waited for it to fade; then he turned to the man beside him.

“Father Honoré —” he half rose from the cot. The priest bent over him. Champney laid one arm around his neck, drew him down to him and, for a moment only, the two men remained cheek to cheek.

“Champney — my son,” was all he could say.

“Yes; now tell me all — the worst; I can bear it.”

“I can’t see my way, yet.” These were the first words he spoke after Father Honoré had finished telling him of his prospective relief from sentence and the means taken to obtain it. He had listened intently, without interruption, sitting up on the cot, his look fixed unwaveringly on the narrator. He put his hand to his face as he spoke, covering his eyes for a moment; then he passed it over the three weeks’ stubble on his cheeks and chin.

“Is it possible for me to shave here? I must get up — out of this. I can’t think straight unless I get on my feet.”

“Do you feel strong enough, Champney?”

“I shall get strength quicker when I’m up. Thank you,” he said, as Father Honoré helped him to his feet. He swayed as if dizzy on crossing the room to a small mirror above a stand. Father Honoré placed the hot water and shaving utensils before him. He declined his further assistance.

“Are there — are there any clothes I could put on?” He asked hesitatingly, as he proceeded to shave himself awkwardly with his one free hand.

"Such as they are, a plenty." Father Honoré produced a common tweed suit and fresh underwear from the "handy closet." These together with some other necessaries from a drawer in the stand supplied a full equipment.

"Can I tub anywhere?" was his next question after he had finished shaving.

"Yes; this bath closet here is at your disposal. He opened a door into a small adjoining hall-room. Champney took the clothes and went in. While he was bathing, Father Honoré used the room telephone to order in a substantial evening meal. After the noise of the splashing ceased, he heard a half-suppressed groan. He listened intently, but there was no further sound, not even of the details of dressing.

A half-hour passed. He had taken in the tray, and was becoming anxious, when the door opened and Champney came in, clean, clothed, but with a look in his eyes that gave the priest all the greater cause for anxiety because, up to that time, the man had volunteered no information concerning himself; he had received what the priest said passively, without demonstration of any kind. There had been as yet no spiritual vent for the over-strained mind, the over-charged soul. The priest knew this danger and what it portended.

He ate the food that was placed before him listlessly. Suddenly he pushed the plate away from him across the table at which he was sitting. "I can't eat; it nauseates me," he said; then, leaning his folded arms on the edge, he dropped his head upon them, groaning heavily in an agony of despair, shame, remorse: "God! What's the use — what's the use! There's nothing left — nothing left."

Father Honoré knew that the crucial hour was striking, and his prayer for help was the wordless outreaching of every atom of his consciousness for that One more powerful than weak humanity, to guide, to aid him.

“Your manhood is left.” He spoke sternly, with authority. This was no time for pleading, for sympathy, for persuasion.

“My manhood!” The bitterest self-contempt was voiced in those two words. He raised his head, and the look he gave to the man opposite bordered on the inimical.

“Yes, your manhood. Do you, in your supreme egotism, suppose that you, Champney Gooze, are the only man in this world who has sinned, suffered, gone under for a time? Are you going to lie down in the ditch like a craven, simply because you have failed to withstand the first assaults of the devil that is in you? Do you think, because you have sinned, there is no longer a place for you and your work in this world where all men are sinners at some time in their lives? I tell you, Champney Gooze, — and mark well what I say, — your sin, as sin, is not so despicable as your attitude towards your own life. Why, man, you’re alive — ”

“Yes, alive — thanks to you; but knocked out after the first round,” he muttered. The priest noted, however, that he still held his head erect. He took fresh courage.

“And what would you say of a man who, because he has been knocked out in the first round, does not dare to enter the ring again? So far as I’ve seen anything of life, it is a man’s duty to get on his feet as quickly as he can — square away and at it again.”

“There’s nothing left to fight — it’s all gone — my honor —”

“True, your honor’s gone; you can’t get that back; but you can put yourself in the running to obtain a standard for your future honor. Champney, listen;” he drew his chair nearer to him that the table might not separate them; “hear me, a man like yourself, erring, because human, who has sinned, suffered — let me speak out of my own experience. Put aside regret; it clogs. Regret nothing; what’s done is done past recall. Live out your life, no matter what the struggle. Count this life as yours to make the best of. Live, I say; live, work, make good; it is in any man’s power who has received a reprieve like yours. I know whereof I am speaking. I’ll go further: it would be in your power even if you had been judged and committed.”

The man, to whom he was appealing, shuddered as he heard the word “committed.”

“*That* would be death,” he said under his breath; “last night was nothing, nothing to that — but you can’t understand —”

“Better, perhaps, than you think. But what I want you to see is that there is something left to live for; Champney — your mother.” He had hesitated to speak of her, not knowing what the effect might be.

Champney started to his feet, his hand clenched on the table edge. He breathed short, hard. “O God, O God! Why did n’t you let me go? How can I face her and live!” He began to pace the room with rapid jerky steps. Father Honoré rose.

“Champney Googe,” — he spoke calmly, but with a concentrated energy of tone that made its impression on the man addressed, — “when you lay there last

night," he motioned towards the cot, "I thanked my God that she was not here to see you. I have telegraphed her that you are alive. In the hope that you yourself might send some word, either directly or through me, I have withheld all detail of your condition, all further news; but, for her sake, I dare not keep her longer in suspense. Give me some word for her — some assurance from yourself that you will live for her sake, if not for your own. Reparation must begin here and *now*, and no time be lost; it's already late." He looked at his watch.

Champney turned upon him fiercely. "Don't force me to anything. I can't see my way, I tell you. You have said I was a man. Let me take my stand on that assurance, and act as one who must first settle a long-standing account with himself before he can yield to any impulse of emotion. Go to bed — do; you're worn out with watching with me. I'll sit here by the window; *I promise you*. There's no sleep in me or for me — I want to be alone — alone."

It was an appeal, and the priest recognized in it the cry of the individual soul when the full meaning of its isolation from humankind is first revealed to it. He let him alone. Without another word he drew off his boots, turned out the electric light, opened the inner blinds, and laid himself down on the cot, worn, weary, but undaunted in spirit. At times he lost himself for a few minutes; for the rest he feigned the sleep he so sorely needed. The excitation of his nerves, however, kept him for the greater part of the night conscious of all that went on in the room.

Champney sat by the window. During that night he never left his seat. Father Honoré could see his form silhouetted against the blank of the panes; his

head was bowed into his hands. From time to time he drew deep, deep, shuddering breaths. The struggle going on in that human breast beside the window, the priest knew to be a terrible one — a spiritual and a mental hand-to-hand combat, against almost overpowering odds, in the arena of the soul.

The sun was reddening the east when Champney turned from the window, rose quietly, and stepped to the side of the cot. He stood there a few minutes looking down on the strong, marked face that, in the morning light, showed yellow from watching and fatigue. Father Honoré knew he was there; but he waited those few minutes before opening his eyes. He looked up then, not knowing what he was to expect, and met Champney's blue ones looking down into his. That one look was sufficient to assure him that the man who stood there so quietly beside him was the Champney Googe of a new birth. The "old man" had been put away; he was ready for the race, "*forgetting those things that are behind.*"

"I've won out," he said with a smile.

The two men clasped hands and were silent for a few minutes. Then Champney drew a chair to the cot.

"I'd like to talk with you, if you don't mind," he said.

IV

IN the priest's soul there was rejoicing. He was anticipating the victorious outcome of the struggle to which, in part, he had been witness. But he acknowledged afterwards that he had had not the faintest conception, not the remotest intimation of the actual truth. It remained for Champney Gooze to enlighten him.

"I've been digging for the root of the whole matter," he began simply. His hand was clenched and pressed hard on his knee, otherwise he showed no sign of the effort that speech cost him. "I've been clearing away all obstructions, trying to look at myself outside of myself; and I find that, ever since I can remember, I've had the ambition to be rich — and rich for the power it apparently gives over other men, for the amplitude of one kind of living it affords, for the extension of the lines of personal indulgence and pleasure seemingly indefinitely, for the position it guarantees. There has been but one goal always: the making of money.

"I rebelled at first at the prospect of the five years' apprenticeship in Europe. I can see now that those six years, as they proved to be, fostered my ambition by placing me in direct and almost daily contact with those to whom great wealth is a natural, not an acquired thing." (Father Honoré noted that throughout his confession he avoided the mention of any name, and he respected him for it.) "On my return, as you

know, I was placed in a position of great responsibility, as well as one affording every opportunity to further my object in life. I began to make use of these opportunities at once; the twenty thousand received from the quarry lands I invested, and in a short time doubled the sum. I was in a position to gain the inside knowledge needed to manipulate money with almost a certainty of increment; this knowledge, I was given to understand, I might use for any personal investment of funds; I took advantage of the privilege.

“I soon found that to operate successfully and largely, as I needed to in order to gain my end and gain it quickly, I must have a larger amount of cash. For this reason, I re-invested the forty thousand on the strength of my knowledge of a rise that was to be brought about in certain stocks within two months. This rise was guaranteed, you understand; guaranteed by three influential financiers. It would double my investment. They let it be known in a quiet way and in certain quarters, that this rise would occur at about such a date, and then forced the market up till they themselves had a good surplus. All this I know for a fact, because I was on the inside. Just at this time the syndicate intrusted to me three hundred thousand as a workable margin for certain future investments. My orders were to invest in this prepared stock only *after* October fifteenth. Meanwhile the manipulation of this amount was in my hands for eight weeks.

“I knew the forty thousand I had purposely invested in these stocks would double itself by the fifteenth of October; this was the date set. I knew this because I had the guaranty of the three men behind me; and, knowing this, I took a hundred thousand of the sum

intrusted to me, in order to make a deal with a Wall Street firm which would net me twenty thousand within two weeks.

“I knew perfectly well what I was doing — but there was never any intention on my part of robbery or embezzlement. I knew the sum eighty thousand, from my personal investment of forty thousand, was due on October fifteenth; this, plus the twenty thousand due from the Wall Street deal, would insure the syndicate from any loss. In fact, they would never know that the money had been used by me to ante-date the investment of the three hundred thousand — a part of the net yearly working profits from the quarries — intrusted to me.”

He paused for a moment to pass his hand over his forehead; his eyebrows contracted suddenly as if he were in pain.

“The temptation to take this money, although knowing well enough it was not mine to take, was too great for me. It was the resultant of every force of, I might say, my special business propulsion. This temptation lay along the lines on which I had built up my life: the pursuance of a line of action by which I might get rich quick. — Then came the crash. That special guaranteed stock broke — never to rally in time to save me — sixty-five points. The syndicate sent out warning signals to me that I was just in time to save any part of the three hundred thousand from investment in those stocks. Of course, I got no return from the forty thousand of my personal investment, and the hundred thousand I had used for the deal went down too. So much for the guaranty of the multi-millionaires. — Just then, when everything was chaotic and a big panic threatened, came a call from the

manager of the quarries for immediate funds; the men were getting uneasy because pay was two weeks overdue. The syndicate told me to apply the working margin of three hundred thousand at once for this purpose. Of course there was a shortage; it was bound to be discovered. I tried to procrastinate — tried to put off the payment of the men; then came the threatened strike on account of non-payment of wages. I knew it was all up with me. When I saw I must be found out, I fled —

“I never meant to rob them — to rob any one, never — never —” His voice broke slightly on those words.

“I believe you.” Father Honoré spoke for the first time. “Not one man in ten thousand begins by meaning to steal.”

“I know it; that’s what makes the bitterer cud-chewing.”

“I know — I know.” The priest spoke under his breath. He was sitting on the side of the cot, and leaned forward suddenly, his elbows on his knees, his chin resting in his palms, his eyes gazing beyond Champney to something intangible, some inner vision that was at that moment projecting itself from the sensitive plate of consciousness upon the blank of reality.

Champney looked at him keenly. He was aware that, for the moment, Father Honoré was present with him only in the body. He waited, before speaking, until the priest’s eyes turned slowly to his; his position remained the same. Champney went on:

“All that you have done to obtain this reprieve, has been done for me — for mine —”; his voice trembled. “A man comes to know the measure of such sacrifice after an experience like mine — I have no words —”

“Don’t, Champney — don’t —”

“No, I won’t, because I can’t — because nothing is adequate. I thought it all out last night. There is but one way to show you, to prove anything to you; I am going to do as you said: make good my manhood —”

Father Honoré’s hand closed upon Champney’s.

“— And there is but one way in which I can make it good. I can take only a step at a time now, but it’s this first step that will start me right.”

He paused a moment as if to gather strength to voice his decision.

“I should disown my manhood if I shirked now. The horror of prospective years of imprisonment has been more to me than death — I welcomed *that* as the alternative. But now, the manhood that is left in me demands that if I am willing to live as a man, I must take my punishment like a man. I am going to let things take their usual course; accept no relief from the money guaranteed to reimburse the syndicate; plead guilty, and let the sentence be what it may: seven, fifteen, or twenty years — it’s all one.”

He drew a long breath as of deliverance. The mere formulating of his decision in the presence of another man gave him strength, almost assurance to act for himself in furthering his own commitment. But the priest bowed his head into his hands and a groan burst from his lips, so laden with wretchedness, with mental and spiritual suffering, that even Champney Googe was startled from his hard-won calm.

“Father Honoré, what is it? Don’t take it so hard.” He laid his hand on his shoulder. “I can’t ask you if I’ve done right, because no man can decide that for me; but would n’t you do the same if you were in my place?”

“Oh, would to God I had! — would to God I had!” he groaned rather than spoke.

Champney was startled. He realized, for the first time, perhaps, in his self-centred life, that he was but a unit among suffering millions. He was realizing, moreover, that, with the utterance of his decision, he had, as it were, retired from the stage for many years to come; the curtain had fallen on his particular act in the life-drama; that others now occupied his place, and among them was this man before him who, active for good, foremost in noble works, strong in the faith, helpful wherever help might be needed, a refuge for the oppressed of soul, a friend to all humanity because human, *his* friend — his mother's, was suffering at this moment as he himself had suffered, but without the relief that is afforded by renunciation. Out of a great love and pity he spoke:

“What is it? Can't you tell me? Won't it help, just as man to man — as it has helped me?”

Father Honoré regained his control before Champney ceased questioning.

“I don't know that it will help; but I owe it to you to tell you, after what you have said — told me. I can preach — oh yes! But the practice — the practice — ” He wiped the sweat from his forehead.

“What you have just told me justifies me in telling you what I thought never to speak of again in this world. You have done the only thing to do in the circumstances — it has taken the whole courage of a man; but I never for a moment credited you with sufficient manhood to dare it. It only goes to show how short-sighted we humans are, how incomprehensive of the workings of the human heart and soul; we think we know — and find ourselves utterly confounded, as I

am now." He was silent for a few minutes, apparently deep in meditation.

"Had I done, when I was twenty years old, as you are going to do, I should have had no cause to regret; all my life fails to make good in that respect. — When I was a boy, an orphan, my heartstrings wound themselves about a little girl in France who was kind to me. I may as well tell you now that the thought of that child was one of the motives that induced me to investigate Aileen's case, when we saw her that night at the vaudeville."

He looked at Champney, who, at the mention of Aileen's name, had started involuntarily. "You remember that night?" Champney nodded. How well he remembered it! But he gave no further sign.

"I was destined for the priesthood later on, but that did not stifle the love in my heart for the young girl. It was in my novitiate years. I never dared ask myself what the outcome of it all would be; I wanted to finish my novitiate first. I knew she loved me with a charming, open, young girl's love that in the freedom of our household life — her grandfather was my great-uncle on my mother's side — found expression in a sisterly way; and in the circumstances I could not tell her of my love. It was the last year of my novitiate when I discovered the fact that a young man, in the employ of her grandfather, was paying her attention with the intention of asking her of him in marriage. The mere thought of the loss of her drove me half mad. I took the first opportunity, when at home for the holidays, to tell her my love, and I threatened, that, if she gave herself to another, I would end all — either for myself or for him. The girl was frightened, indignant, horrified almost, at the force of the passion

that was consuming me; she repelled me — that ended it; I took it for granted that she loved that other. I lay in wait for him one night as he was going to the house; taunted him; heaped upon him such abuse as makes a man another's murderer; I goaded him into doing what I had intended. He struck me in the face; closed with me, and I fought him; but he was wrestling with a madman. We were on the cliff at Dieppe; the night was dark; intentionally I forced him towards the edge. He struggled manfully, trying to land a blow on my head that would save him; he wrestled with me and he was a man of great strength; but I — I knew I could tire him out. It was dark — I knew when he went over the edge, but I could see nothing, I heard nothing. . . .

“I fled; hid myself; but I was caught; held for a time awaiting the outcome of the man's hurt. Had he died it would have been manslaughter. As it was I knew it was murder, for there had been murder in my heart. He lived, but maimed for life. The lawyer, paid for by my great-uncle, set up the plea of self-defence. I was cleared in the law, and fled to America to expiate. I know now that there was but one expiation for me — to do what you are to do; plead guilty and take my punishment like a man. I failed to do it — and I preach of manhood to you!”

There was silence in the room. Champney broke it and his voice was almost unrecognizable; it was hoarse, constrained:

“But your love was noble — you loved her with all the manhood that was in you.”

“God knows I did; but that does not alter the fact of my consequent crime.”

He looked again at Champney as he spoke out his

conviction, and his own emotion suffered a check in his amazement at the change in the countenance before him. He had seen nothing like this in the thirty-two hours he had been in his presence; his jaw was set; his nostrils white and sharpened; the pupils of his eyes contracted to pin points; and into the sallow cheeks, up to the forehead knotted as with intense pain, into the sunken temples, the blood rushed with a force that threatened physical disaster, only to recede as quickly, leaving the face ghastly white, the eyelids twitching, the muscles about the mouth quivering.

Noting all this Father Honoré read deeper still; he knew that Champney Googe had not told him the whole, possibly not the half — *and never would tell*. His next question convinced him of that.

“May I ask what became of the young girl you loved? — Don’t answer, if I am asking too much.”

“I don’t know. I have never heard from her. I can only surmise. But I did receive a letter from her when I was in prison, before my trial — she was summoned as witness; and oh, the infinite mercy of a loving woman’s heart!” He was silent a moment.

“She took so much blame upon herself, telling me that she had not known her own heart; that she tried to think she loved me as a brother; that she had been willing to let it go on so, and because she had not been brave enough to be honest with herself, all this trouble had come upon me whom she acknowledged she loved — upon her and her household. She begged me, if acquitted, never to see her, never to communicate with her again. There was but one duty for us both she said, guilty as we both were of what had occurred to wreck a human being for life; to go each

the way apart forever — I mine, she hers — to expiate in good works, in loving kindness to those who might need our help. . . .

“I have never known anything further — heard no word — made no inquiry. At that time, after my acquittal, my great-uncle, a well-to-do baker, settled a sum of money on the man who had been in his employ; the interest of it would support him in his incapacity to do a man’s work and earn a decent livelihood. My uncle said then I was never again to darken his doors. He desired me to leave no address; to keep secret to myself my destination, and forever after my whereabouts. I obeyed to the letter — now enough of myself. I have told you this because, as a man, I had not the face to sit here in your presence and hear your decision, without showing you my respect for your courage — and I have taken this way to show it.”

He held out his hand and Champney wrung it. “You don’t know all, or you would have no respect,” he said brokenly.

The two men looked understandingly into each other’s eyes, but they both felt intuitively that any prolongation of this unwonted emotional strain would be injurious to both, and the work in hand. They, at once, in tacit understanding of each other’s condition, put aside “the things that were behind” and “reached forth to those that were before”: they laid plans for the speedy execution of all that Champney’s decision involved.

“There is one thing I cannot do,” he spoke with decision; “that is to see my mother before my commitment — or after. It is the only thing that will break me down. I need all the strength of control I possess to go through this thing.”

The priest knew better than to protest.

“Telegraph her to-day what you think best to ease her suspense. I will write her, and ask you to deliver my letter to her after you have seen me through. I want *you* to go up with me — to the very doors; and I want yours to be the last known face I see on entering. Another request: I don’t want you, my mother, or any one else known to me, to communicate with me by letter, message, or even gift of any kind during my term, whether seven years or twenty. This is oblivion. I cease to exist, as an identity, outside the walls. I will make one exception: if my mother should fall ill, write me at once. — How she will live, I don’t know! I dare not think — it would unsettle my reason; but she has friends; she has you, the Colonel, Tave, Elvira Caukins; they will not see her want, and there’s the house; it’s in her name.”

He rose, shook himself together, drew a long breath. “Now let us go to work; the sooner it’s over the better for all concerned. — I suppose the clothes I had on are worth nothing, but I’d like to look them over.”

He spoke indifferently and went into the adjoining bath closet where Father Honoré, not liking to dispose of them until Champney should have spoken of them at least, had left the clothes in a bundle. He had put the little handkerchief, discolored almost beyond recognition, in with them. Champney came out in a few minutes.

“They’re no good,” he said. “I’ll have to wear these, if I may. I believe it’s one of the regulations that what a man takes in of his own, is saved for him to take out, is n’t it?”

“Yes.” An hour later when Father Honoré disposed of the bundle to the janitor, he knew that Aileen’s

handkerchief had been abstracted — and he read still deeper into the ways of the human heart. . . .

Within ten days sentence was passed: seven years with hard labor.

There was no appeal for mercy, and speedy commitment followed. A paragraph in the daily papers conveyed a knowledge of the fact to the world in general; and within ten days, the world in general, as usual, forgot the circumstance; it was only one of many.

PART FIFTH

Shed Number Two

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Shed Number Two

I

“IT ’S a wonder ye ’re not married yet, Aileen, an’ you twenty-six.”

It was Margaret McCann, the “Freckles” of orphan asylum days, who spoke. Her utterance was thick, owing to the quantity of pins she was endeavoring to hold between tightly pressed lips. She was standing on a chair putting up muslin curtains in her new home at The Gore, or Quarry End Park, as it was now named, and Aileen had come to help her.

“It ’s like ye ’re too purticular,” she added, her first remark not having met with any response. She turned on the chair and looked down upon her old chum.

She was sitting on the floor surrounded by a pile of fresh-cut muslin; the latest McCann baby was tugging with might and main at her apron in vain endeavor to hoist himself upon his pudgy uncertain legs. Aileen was laughing at his efforts. Catching him suddenly in her arms, she covered the little soft head, already sprouting a suspicion of curly red hair, with hearty kisses; and Billy, entering into the fun, crowed and gurgled, clutching wildly at the dark head bent above him and managing now and then, when he did

not grasp too wide of the mark, to bury his chubby creased hands deep in its heavy waves.

"Oh, Maggie, you're like all the rest! Because you've a good husband of your own, you think every other girl must go and do likewise."

"Now ye're foolin', Aileen, like as you used to at the asylum. But I mind the time when Luigi was the wan b'y for you — I wonder, now, you could n't like him, Aileen? He's so handsome and stiddy-like, an' doin' so well. Jim says he'll be one of the rich men of the town if he kapes on as he's begun. They do say as how Dulcie Caukins'll be cuttin' you out."

"I did n't love him, Maggie; that's reason enough." She spoke shortly. Maggie turned again from her work to look down on her in amazement.

"You was always that way, Aileen!" she exclaimed impatiently, "thinkin' nobody but a lord was good enough for you, an' droppin' Luigi as soon as ever you got in with the Van Ostend folks; and as for 'love' — let me give you as good a piece of advice as you'll get between the risin' of a May sun and its settin': — if you see a good man as loves you an' is willin' to marry you, take him, an' don't you leave him the chanct to get cool over it. Ye'll love him fast enough if he's good to you — like my Jim," she added proudly.

"Oh, your Jim! You're always quoting him; he is n't quite perfection even if he is 'your Jim.'"

"An' is it perfection ye're after?" Maggie was apt in any state of excitement to revert in her speech to the vernacular. "'Deed an' ye'll look till the end of yer days an' risk dyin' a downright old maid, if it's perfection ye're after marryin' in a man! An' I don't need a gell as has niver been married to tell me my Jim ain't perfection nayther!"

Maggie resumed her work in a huff; Aileen smiled to herself.

“I did n’t mean to say anything against your husband, Maggie; I was only speaking in a general way.”

“An’ how could ye mane anything against me husband in a gineral or a particular way? Sure I know he’s got a temper; an’ what man of anny sinse has n’t, I’d like to know? An’ he’s not settled-like to work in anny wan place, as I’d like to have him be. But Jim’s young; an’ a man, he says, can’t settle to anny regular work before he’s thirty. He says all the purfessional men can’t get onto their feet in a business way till they be thirty; an’ stone-cuttin’, Jim says, is his purfession like as if ’t was a lawyer’s or a doctor’s or a priest’s; an’ Jim says he loves it. An’ there ain’t a better worker nor Jim in the sheds, so the boss says; an’ if he will querrel between whiles — an’ I’m not denyin’ he don’t — it’s sure the other man’s fault for doin’ something mane; Jim can’t stand no maneness. He’s a good worker, is Jim, an’ a good husband, an’ a lovin’ father, an’ a good provider, an’ he don’t drink, an’ he ain’t the slithery kind — if he’d ’a’ been that I would n’t married him.”

There was a note of extreme authority in what Maggie in her excitement was giving expression to. Now that Jim McCann was back and at work in the sheds after a seven years absence, it was noted by many, who knew his wife of old, that, in the household, it was now Mrs. McCann who had the right of way. She was evidently full of her subject at the present moment and, carried away by the earnestness of her expressed convictions, she paid no heed to Aileen’s non-responsiveness.

“An’ I ’m that proud that I ’m Mrs. James Patrick McCann, wid a good house over me head, an’ a good husband to pay rint that ’ll buy it on the insthalment plan, an’ two little gells an’ a darlin’ baby to fill it, that I be thankin’ God whiniver Jim falls to swearin’ — an’ that ’s ivery hour in the day; but it ’s only a habit he can’t be broke of, for Father Honoré was after talkin’ wid him, an’ poor Jim was that put out wid himself, that he forgot an’ swore his hardest to the priest that he ’d lave off swearin’ if only he knew whin he was doin’ it! But he had to give up tryin’, for he found himself swearin’ at the baby he loved him so. An’ whin he told Father Honoré the trouble he had wid himself an’ the b’y, that darlin’ man just smiled an’ says: — ‘McCann, there ’s other ways of thankin’ God for a good home, an’ a lovin’ wife, and a foine b’y like yours, than tellin’ yer beads an’ sayin’ your prayers.’ — He said that, he did; an’ I say, I ’m thankin’ God ivery hour in the day that I ’ve got a good husband to swear, an’ a cellar to fill wid fuel an’ potatoes, an’ a baby to put to me breast, an’ — an’ — it ’s the same I ’m wishin’ for you, me dear.”

There was a suspicious tremble in Maggie’s voice as she turned again to her work.

Aileen spoke slowly: “Indeed, I wish I had them all, Maggie; but those things are not for me.”

“Not for you!” Maggie dashed a tear from her eyes. “An’ why not for you, I ’d like to know? Is n’t ivery wan sayin’ ye’ve got the voice fit for the op-payra? An’ is n’t all the children an’ the quarrymen just mad over yer teachin’ an’ singin’? An’ look at what yer know an’ can do! Did n’t wan of the Sisters tell me the other day: ‘Mrs. McCann,’ says she, ‘Aileen Armagh is an expurrt in embroidery, an’ could earn

her livin' by it.' An' was n't Mrs. Caukins after praisin' yer cookin' an' sayin' you beat the whole Gore on yer doughnuts? An' did n't the Sisters come askin' me the other day if I had your receipt for the milk-rice? Jim says there 's a man for ivery woman if she did but know it. — There now, I'm glad to see yer smilin' an' lookin' like yer old self! Just tell me if the curtains be up straight? Jim can't abide annything that ain't on the square. Straight, be they?"

"Yes, straight as a string," said Aileen, laughing outright at Freckles' eloquence — the eloquence of one who was wont to be slow of speech before matrimony loosened her tongue and home love taught her the right word in the right place.

"Straight, is it? Then I'll mount down an' we'll sit out in the kitchen an' hem the rest. It's Doosie Caukins has begged the loan of the two little gells for the afternoon. The twins seem to me most like my own — rale downright swate gells, an' it's hopin' I am they'll do well when it' comes to their marryin'."

Aileen laughed merrily at the matrimonial persistence of her old chum's thoughts.

"Oh, Maggie, you are an incorrigible matchmaker!"

She picked up the baby and the yards of muslin she had been measuring for window lengths; leaving Maggie to follow, she went out into the kitchen and deposited Billy in the basket-crib beside her chair. Maggie joined her in a few minutes.

"It seems like old times for you an' me to be chattin' together again so friendly-like — put a finger's length into the hem of the long ones; do you remember when Sister Angelica an' you an' me was cuddled together to watch thim dance the minute over at the Van Ostends'? — Och, you darlin'!"

She rose from her chair and caught up the baby who was holding out both arms to her and trying in his semi-articulate way to indicate his preference of her lap to the basket.

“What fun we had!” Aileen spoke half-heartedly; the mention of that name intensified the pain of an ever present thought.

“An’ did ye read her marriage in the papers, I guess ’t was a year gone?”

Aileen nodded.

“Jim read it out to me wan night after supper, an’ I got so homesick of a suddin’ for the Caukinses, an’ you, an’ the quarries, an’ Mrs. Googe — it was before me b’y come — that I fell to cryin’ an’ nearly cried me eyes out; an’ Jim promised me then and there he’d come back to Flamsted for good and all. But he could n’t help sayin’: ‘What the divil are ye cryin’ about, Maggie gell? I was readin’ of the weddin’ to ye, and thinkin’ to hearten ye up a bit, an’ here ye be cryin’ fit to break yer heart, an’ takin’ on as if ye’d niver had a weddin’ all by yerself!’ An’ that made me laugh; but, afterwards, I fell to cryin’ the harder, an’ told him I could n’t help it, for I’d got such a good lovin’ husband, an’ me an orphan as had nobody —

“An’ then I stopped, for Jim took me in his arms — he was in the rockin’-chair — and rocked back an’ forth wid me like a mother does wid a six-months’ child, an’ kept croonin’ an’ croonin’ till I fell asleep wid my head on his shoulder —” Mrs. McCann drew a long breath — “Och, Aileen, it’s beautiful to be married!”

For a while the two worked in silence, broken only by little Billy McCann, who was blissfully gurgling

emphatic endorsement of everything his mother said. The bright sunshine of February filled the barren Gore full to the brim with sparkling light. From time to time the sharp crescendo *sz-szz-szzz* of the trolleys, that now ran from The Corners to Quarry End Park at the head of The Gore, teased the still cold air. Maggie was in a reminiscent mood, being wrought upon unwittingly by the sunny quiet and homey kitchen warmth. She looked over the head of her baby to Aileen.

“Do you remember the B’y who danced with the Marchioness, and when they was through stood head downwards with his slippers kicking in the air?”

“Yes, and the butler, and how he hung on to his coat-tails!”

Maggie laughed. “I wonder now could it be *the* B’y — I mane the man she married?”

Aileen looked up from her work. “Yes, he’s the one.”

“An’ how did you know that?” Maggie asked in some surprise.

“Mrs. Champney told me — and then I knew she liked him.”

“Who, the Marchioness?”

“Yes; I knew by the way she wrote about him that she liked him.”

“Well, now, who’d ’a’ thought that! The very same B’y!” she exclaimed, at the same time looking puzzled as if not quite grasping the situation. “Why, I thought — I guess ’t was Romanzo wrote me just about that time — that she was in love with Mr. Champney Googe.” Her voice sank to a whisper on the last words. “Would n’t it have been just awful if she had!”

"She might have done a worse thing than to love him." Aileen's voice was hard in spite of her effort to speak naturally.

Maggie broke forth in protest.

"Now, how can you say that, Aileen! What would the poor gell's life have been worth married to a man that 's in for seven years! Jim says when he comes out he can't niver vote again for prisident, an' it 's ten chanct to wan that he 'll get a job."

In her earnestness she failed to notice that Aileen's face had borrowed its whiteness from the muslin over which she was bending.

"Aileen — "

"Yes, Maggie."

"I 'm goin' to tell you something. Jim told me the other day; he would n't mind my tellin' you, but he says he don't want anny wan of the fam'ly to get wind of it."

"What is it?" Aileen looked up half fearfully.

"Gracious, you look as if you'd seen a ghost! 'T is n't annything so rale dreadful, but it gives you a kind of onaisy feelin' round your heart."

"What is it? Tell me quick." She spoke again peremptorily in order to cover her fear. Maggie looked at her wonderingly, and thought to herself that Aileen had changed beyond her knowledge.

"There was a man Jim knew in the other quarries we was at, who got put into that same prison for two years — for breakin' an' enterin' — an' Jim see him not long ago; an' when Jim told him where he was workin' the man said just before he was comin' out, Mr. Gooze come in, an' he see him *breakin' stones wid a prison gang* — rale toughs; think of that, an' he a gentleman born! Jim said that was tough; he says

it's back-breakin' work; that quarryin' an' cuttin' ain't nothin' to that — ten hours a day, too. My heart's like to break for Mrs. Googe. I think of it ivery time I see her now; an' just look how she's workin' her fingers to the bone to support herself widout help! Mrs. Caukins says she's got seventeen mealers among the quarrymen now, an' there'll be more next spring. What do you s'pose her son would say to that?"

She pressed her own boy a little more closely to her breast; the young mother's heart was stirred within her. "Mrs. Caukins says Mrs. Champney could help her an' save her lots, but she won't; she's no mind to."

"I don't believe Mrs. Googe would accept any help from Mrs. Champney — and I don't blame her, either. I'd rather starve than be beholden to her!" The blood rushed into the face bent over the muslin.

"Why don't you lave her, Aileen? I would — the stingy old screw!"

Aileen folded her work and laid it aside before she answered.

"I *am* going soon, Maggie; I've stood it about as many years as I can —"

"Oh, but I'm glad! It'll be like gettin' out of the jail yerself, for all you've made believe you've lived in a palace — but ye're niver goin' so early?" she protested earnestly.

"Yes, I must, Maggie. You are not to tell anyone what I've said about leaving Mrs. Champney — not even Jim."

Maggie's face fell. "Dear knows, I can promise you not to tell Jim; but it's like I'll be tellin' him in me slape. It's a trick I have, he says, whin I'm tryin' to kape something from him."

She laughed happily, and bade Billy "shake a day-day" to the pretty lady; which behest Billy, half turning his rosy little face from the maternal fount, obeyed perfunctorily and then, smiling, closed his sleepy eyes upon his mother's breast.

II

AILEEN took that picture of intimate love and warmth with her out into the keen frosty air of late February. But its effect was not to soften, to warm; it hardened rather. The thought of Maggie with her baby boy at her breast, of her cosy home, her loyalty to her husband and her love for him, of her thankfulness for the daily mercy of the where-withal to feed the home mouths, reacted sharply, harshly, upon the mood she was in; for with the thought of that family life and family ties — the symbol of all that is sane and fruitful of the highest good in our humanity — was associated by extreme contrast another thought: —

“And *he* is breaking stones with a ‘gang of toughs’ — breaking stones! Not for the sake of the pittance that will procure for him his daily bread, but because he is forced to the toil like any galley slave. The prison walls are frowning behind him; the prison cell is his only home; the tin pan of coarse food, which is handed to him as he lines up with hundreds of others after the day’s work, is the only substitute for the warm home-hearth, the lighted supper table, the merry give-and-take of family life that eases a man after his day’s toil.”

Her very soul was in rebellion.

She stopped short and looked about her. She was on the road to Father Honoré’s house. It was just four o’clock, for the long whistle was sounding from

the stone sheds down in the valley. She saw the quarrymen start homewards. Dark irregular files of them began crawling up over the granite ledges, many of which were lightly covered with snow. Although it was February, the winter was mild for this latitude, and the twelve hundred men in The Gore had lost but a few days during the last three months on account of the weather. Work had been plenty, and the spring promised, so the manager said, a rush of business. She watched them for a while.

“And they are going to their homes — and he is still breaking stones!” Her thoughts revolved about that one fact.

A sudden rush of tears blinded her; she drew her breath hard. What if she were to go to Father Honoré and tell him something of her trouble? Would it help? Would it ease the intolerable pain at her heart, lessen the load on her mind?

She dared not answer, dared not think about it. Involuntarily she started forward at a quick pace towards the stone house over by the pines — a distance of a quarter of a mile.

The sun was nearing the rim of the Flamsted Hills. Far beyond them, the mighty shoulder of Katahdin, mantled with white, caught the red gleam and lent to the deep blue of the northern heavens a faint rose reflection of the setting sun. The children, just from school, were shouting at their rough play — snowballing, sledding, skating and tobogganning on that portion of the pond which had been cleared of snow. The great derricks on the ledges creaked and groaned as the remaining men made all fast for the night; like a gigantic cobweb their supporting wires stretched thick, enmeshed, and finely dark over the white expanse of the

quarries. From the powerhouse a column of steam rose straight and steady into the windless air.

Hurrying on, Aileen looked upon it with set lips and a hardening heart. She had come to hate, almost, the sight of this life of free toil for the sake of love and home.

It was a woman who was thinking these thoughts in her rapid walk to the priest's house — a woman of twenty-six who for more than seven years had suffered in silence; suffered over and over again the humiliation that had been put upon her womanhood; who, despite that humiliation, could not divest herself of the idea that she still clung to her girlhood's love for the man who had humiliated her. She told herself again and again that she was idealizing that first feeling for him, instead of accepting the fact that, as a woman, she would be incapable, if the circumstances were to repeat themselves now, of experiencing it.

Since that fateful night in The Gore, Champney Googe's name had never voluntarily passed her lips. So far as she knew, no one so much as suspected that she was a factor in his escape — for Luigi had kept her secret. Sometimes when she felt, rather than saw, Father Honoré's eyes fixed upon her in troubled questioning, the blood would rush to her cheeks and she could but wonder in dumb misery if Champney had told him anything concerning her during those ten days in New York.

For six years there had been a veil, as it were, drawn between the lovely relations that had previously existed between Father Honoré and this firstling of his flock in Flamsted. For a year after his experience with Champney Googe in New York, he waited for some sign from Aileen that she was ready to open her heart

to him; to clear up the mystery of the handkerchief; to free herself from what was evidently troubling her, wearing upon her, changing her in disposition — but not for the better. Aileen gave no sign. Another year passed, but Aileen gave no sign, and Father Honoré was still waiting.

The priest did not believe in forcing open the portals to the secret chambers of the human heart. He respected the individual soul and its workings as a part of the divinely organized human. He believed that, in time, Aileen would come to him of her own accord and seek the help she so sorely needed. Meanwhile, he determined to await patiently the fulness of that time. He had waited already six years.

He was looking over and arranging some large photographs of cathedrals — Cologne, Amiens, Westminster, Mayence, St. Mark's, Chester, and York — and the detail of nave, chancel, and choir. One showed the exquisite sculpture on a flying buttress; another the carving of a choir-stall canopy; a third the figure-crowded façade of a western porch. Here was the famous rose window in the Antwerp transept; the statue of one of the apostles in Naumburg; the nave of Cologne; the conglomerate of chapels about the apse of Mayence; the Angel's Pillar at Strasburg — they were a joy in line and proportion to the eye, in effect and spirit of purpose to the understanding mind, the receptive soul.

Father Honoré was revelling in the thought of the men's appreciative delight when he should show them these lovely stones — across-the-sea kin to their own quarry granite. His semi-monthly talks with the quarrymen and stone-cutters were assuming, after

many years, the proportions of lectures on art and scientific themes. Already many a professor from some far-away university had accepted his invitation to give of his best to the granite men of Maine. Rarely had they found a more fitting or appreciative audience.

"How divine!" he murmured to himself, his eyes dwelling lovingly — at the same time his pencil was making notes — on the 'Prentice Pillar in Roslyn Chapel. Then he smiled at the thought of the contrast it offered to his own chapel in the meadows by the lake shore. In that, every stone, as in the making of the Tabernacle of old, had been a free-will offering from the men — each laid in its place by a willing worker; and, because willing, the rough walls were as eloquent of earnest endeavor as the famed 'Prentice Pillar itself.

"I'd like to see such a one as this in our chapel!" He was talking to himself as was his way when alone. "I believe Luigi Poggi, if he had kept on in the sheds, would in time have given this a close second."

He took up the magnifying glass to examine the curled edges of the stone kale leaves.

There was a knock at the door.

He hastily placed the photographs in a long box beside the table, and, instead of saying "Come in," stepped to the door and opened it.

Aileen stood there. The look in her eyes as she raised them to his, and said in a subdued voice, "Father Honoré, can you spare me a little time, all to myself?" gave him hope that the fulness of time was come.

"I always have time for you, Aileen; come in. I'll start up the fire a bit; it's growing much colder."

He laid the wood on the hearth, and with the bellows blew it to a leaping flame. While he was thus occu-

pied, Aileen looked around her. She knew this room and loved it.

The stone fireplace was deep and ample, built by Father Honoré, — indeed, the entire one storey house was his handiwork. Above it hung a large wooden crucifix. On the shelf beneath were ranged some superb specimens of quartz and granite. The plain deal table, also of ample proportions, was piled at one end high with books and pamphlets. Two large windows overlooked the pond, the sloping depression of The Gore, the course of the Rothel, and the headwaters of Lake Mesantic. Some plain wooden arm-chairs were set against the walls that had been rough plastered and washed with burnt sienna brown. On them was hung an exquisite engraving — the Sistine Madonna and Child. There were also a few etchings, among them a copy of Whistler's *The Thames by London Bridge*, and a view of Niagara by moonlight. A mineral cabinet, filled to overflowing with fine specimens, extended the entire length of one wall. The pine floor was oiled and stained; large hooked rugs, genuine products of Maine, lay here and there upon it.

Many a man coming in from the quarries or the sheds with a grievance, a burden, or a joy, felt the influence of this simple room. Many a woman brought here her heavy over-charged heart and was eased in its fire-lighted atmosphere of welcome. Many a child brought hither its spring offering of the first mitchella, or its autumn gift of checkerberries. Many a girl, many a boy had met here to rehearse a Christmas glee or an Easter anthem. Many a night these walls echoed to the strains of the priest's violin, when he sat alone by the fireside with only the Past for a guest. And these combined influences lingered in the room, mellowed

it, hallowed it, and made themselves felt to one and all as beneficent — even as now to Aileen.

Father Honoré placed two of the wooden chairs before the blazing fire. Aileen took one.

“Draw up a little nearer, Aileen; you look chilled.” He noticed her extreme pallor and the slight trembling of her shoulders.

She glanced out of the window at some quarrymen who were passing.

“You don’t think we shall be interrupted, do you?” she asked rather nervously.

“Oh, no. I’ll just step to the kitchen and give a word to Thérèse. She is a good watchdog when I am not to be disturbed.” He opened a door at the back of the room.

“Thérèse.”

“On y va.”

An old French Canadian appeared in answer to his call. He addressed her in French.

“If any one should knock, Thérèse, just step to the kitchen porch door and say that I am engaged for an hour, at least.”

“Oui, oui, Père Honoré.”

He closed the door.

“There, now you can have your chat ‘all to yourself’ as you requested,” he said smiling. He sat down in the other chair he had drawn to the fire.

“I’ve been over to Maggie’s this afternoon — ”

She hesitated; it was not easy to find an opening for her long pent trouble.

Father Honoré spread his hands to the blaze.

“She has a fine boy. I’m glad McCann is back again, and I hope anchored here for life. He’s trying to buy his home he tells me.”

“So Maggie said — Father Honoré;” she clasped and unclasped her hands nervously; “I think it ’s that that has made me come to you to-day.”

“That? — I think I don’t quite understand, Aileen.”

“The home — I think I never felt so alone — so homeless as when I was there with her — and the baby — ”

She looked down, struggling to keep back the tears. Despite her efforts the bright drops plashed one after the other on her clasped hands. She raised her eyes, looking almost defiantly through the falling tears at the priest; the blood surged into her white cheeks; the rush of words followed: —

“I have no home — I ’ve never had one — never shall have one — it ’s not for me, that paradise; it ’s for men and women like Jim McCann and Maggie. — Oh, why did I come here!” she cried out wildly; “why did you put me there in that house? — Why did n’t Mr. Van Ostend let me alone where I was — happy with the rest! Why,” she demanded almost fiercely, “why can’t a child’s life be her own to do with what she chooses? Why has any human being a right to say to another, whether young or old, ‘You shall live here and not there’? Oh, it is tyrannical — it is tyranny of the worst kind, and what have n’t I had to suffer from it all! It is like Hell on earth!”

Her breath caught in great sobs that shook her; her eyes flashed through blinding tears; her cheeks were crimson; she continued to clasp and unclasp her hands.

The peculiar ivory tint of the strong pock-marked face opposite her took on, during this outburst, a slightly livid hue. Every word she uttered was a blow; for in

it was voiced misery of mind, suffering and hardness of heart, despair, ingratitude, undeserved reproach, anger, defiance and the ignoring of all facts save those in the recollection of which she had lost all poise, all control — And she was still so young! What was behind these facts that occasioned such a tirade?

This was the priest's problem.

He waited a moment to regain his own control. The ingratitude, the bitter injustice had shocked him out of it. Her mood seemed one of defiance only. The woman before him was one he had never known in the Aileen Armagh of the last fourteen years. He knew, moreover, that he must not speak — dare not, as a sacred obligation to his office, until he no longer felt the touch of anger he experienced upon hearing her unrestrained outburst. It was but a moment before that touch was removed; his heart softened towards her; filled suddenly with a pitying love, for with his mind's eye he saw the small blood-stained handkerchief in his hand, the initials A. A., the man on the cot from whose arm he had taken it more than six years before. Six years! How she must have suffered — and in silence!

"Aileen," he said at last and very gently, "whatever was done for you at that time was done with the best intentions for your good. Believe me, could Mr. Van Ostend and I have foreseen such resulting wretchedness as this for our efforts, we should never have insisted on carrying out our plan for you. But, like yourself, we are human — we could not foresee this any more than you could. There is, however, one course always open to you —"

"What?" she demanded; her voice was harsh from continued struggle with her complex emotions.

She was past all realization of what she owed to the dignity of his office.

"You have long been of age; you are at liberty to leave Mrs. Champney whenever you will."

"I am going to." The response came prompt and hard.

"And what then?"

"I don't know — yet —;" her speech faltered; "but I want to try the stage. Every one says I have the voice for it, and I suppose I could make a hit in light operetta or vaudeville as well now as when I was a child. A few years more and I shall be too old."

"And you think you can enter into such publicity without protection?"

"Oh, I'm able to protect myself — I've done that already." She spoke with bitterness.

"True, you are a woman now — but still a young woman —"

Father Honoré stopped there. He was making no headway with her. He knew only too well that, as yet, he had not begun to get beneath the surface. When he spoke it was as if he were merely thinking aloud.

"Somehow, I had n't thought that you would be so ready to leave us all — so many friends. Are we nothing to you, Aileen? Will you make better, truer ones among strangers? I can hardly think so."

She covered her face with her hands and began to sob again, but brokenly.

"Aileen, my daughter, what is it? Is there any new trouble preparing for you at The Bow?"

She shook her head. The tears trickled through her fingers.

"Does Mrs. Champney know that you are going to leave her?"

“No.”

“Has it become unbearable?”

Another shake of the head. She searched blindly for her handkerchief, drew it forth and wiped her eyes and face.

“No; she’s kinder than she’s been for a long time — ever since that last stroke. She wants me with her most of the time.”

“Has she ever spoken to you about remaining with her?”

“Yes, a good many times. She tried to make me promise I would stay till — till she does n’t need me. But, I could n’t, you know.”

“Then why — but of course I know you are worn out by her long invalidism and tired of the fourteen years in that one house. Still, she has been lenient since you were twenty-one. She has permitted you — although of course you had the undisputed right — to earn for yourself in teaching the singing classes in the afternoon and evening school, and she pays you something beside — fairly well, does n’t she? I think you told me you were satisfied.”

“Oh yes, in a way — so far as it goes. She does n’t begin to pay me as she would have to pay another girl in my position — if I have any there. I have n’t said anything about it to her, because I wanted to work off my indebtedness to her on account of what she spent on me in bringing me up — she never let me forget that in those first seven years! I want to give more than I’ve had,” she said proudly, “and sometime I shall tell her of it.”

“But you have never given her any love?”

“No, I could n’t give her that. — Do you blame me?”

“No; you have done your whole duty by her. May I suggest that when you leave her you still make your home with us here in Flamsted? You have no other home, my child.”

“No, I have no other home,” she repeated mechanically.

“I know, at least, two that are open to you at any time you choose to avail yourself of their hospitality. Mrs. Caukins would be so glad to have you both for her daughters’ sake and her own. The Colonel desires this as much as she does and —” he hesitated a moment, “now that Romanzo has his position in the New York office, and has married and settled there, there could be no objection so far as I can see.”

There was no response.

“But if you do not care to consider that, there is another. About seven months ago, Mrs. Googe —”

“Mrs. Googe?”

She turned to him a face from which every particle of color had faded.

“Yes, Mrs. Googe. She would have spoken to you herself long before this, but, you know, Aileen, how she would feel in the circumstances — she would not think of suggesting your coming to her from Mrs. Champney. I feel sure she is waiting for you to take the initiative.”

“Mrs. Googe?” she repeated, continuing to stare at him — blankly, as if she had heard but those two words of all that he was saying.

“Why, yes, Mrs. Googe. Is there anything so strange in that? She has always loved you, and she said to me, only the other day, ‘I would love to have her young companionship in my house’ — she will never call it

home, you know, until her son returns — ‘to be as a daughter to me’ —”

“Daughter! — I — want air —”

She swayed forward in speaking. Father Honoré sprang and caught her or she would have fallen. He placed her firmly against the chair back and opened the window. The keen night air charged with frost quickly revived her.

“You were sitting too near the fire; I should have remembered that you had come in from the cold,” he said, delicately regarding her feelings; “let me get you a glass of water, Aileen.”

She put out her hand with a gesture of dissent. She began to breathe freely. The room chilled rapidly. Father Honoré closed the window and took his stand on the hearth. Aileen raised her eyes to him. It seemed as if she lifted the swollen reddened lids with difficulty.

“Father Honoré,” she said in a low voice, tense with suppressed feeling, “dear Father Honoré, the only father I have ever known, don’t you know *why* I cannot go to Mrs. Gooze’s? — why I must not stay too long in Flamsted?”

And looking into those eyes, that were incapable of insincerity, that, in the present instance, attempted to veil nothing, the priest read all that of which, six years ago on that never to be forgotten November night in New York, he had had premonition.

“My daughter — is it because of Champney’s prospective return within a year that you feel you cannot remain longer with us?”

Her quivering lips gave an almost inaudible assent.

“Why?” He dared not spare her; he felt, moreover, that she did not wish to be spared. His eyes held hers.

Bravely she answered, bracing soul and mind and body to steadfastness. There was not a wavering of an eyelid, not a suggestion of faltering speech as she spoke the words that alone could lift from her overburdened heart the weight of a seven years' silence:

"Because I love him."

The answer seemed to Father Honoré supreme in its sacrificial simplicity. He laid his hand on her head. She bowed beneath his touch.

"I have tried so hard," she murmured, "so hard — and I cannot help it. I have despised myself for it — if only he had n't been put *there*, I think it would have helped — but he is there, and my thoughts are with him there — I see him nights — in that cell — I see him daytimes *breaking stones* — I can't sleep, or eat, without comparing — you know. Oh, if he had n't been put *there*, I could have conquered this weakness —"

"Aileen, *no!* It is no weakness, it is strength."

Father Honoré withdrew his hand, that had been to the broken woman a silent benediction, and walked up and down the long room. "You would never have conquered; there was — there is no need to conquer. Such love is of God — trust it, my child; don't try any longer to thrust it forth from your heart, your life; for if you do, your life will be but a poor maimed thing, beneficial neither to yourself nor to others. I say, cherish this supreme love for the man who is expiating in a prison; hold it close to your soul as a shield and buckler to the spirit against the world; truly, you will need no other if you go forth from us into a world of strangers — but why, why need you go?"

He spoke gently, but insistently. He saw that the girl was hanging upon his every word as if he bespoke her eternal salvation. And, in truth, the priest was

illuminating the dark and hidden places of her life and giving her courage to love on which, to her, meant courage to live on. — Such were the demands of a nature, loyal, impulsive, warmly affectionate, sincere, capable of an all-sacrificing love that could give without return if need be, but a nature which, without love developing in her of itself just for the sake of love, would shrivel, become embittered, and like withered fruit on a tree drop useless to the ground to be trodden under the careless foot of man.

In the darkening room the firelight leaped and showed to Father Honoré the woman's face transfigured under the powerful influence of his words. She smiled up at him — a smile so brave in its pathos, so winning in its true womanliness, that Father Honoré felt the tears bite his eyeballs.

“Perhaps I don't need to go then.”

“This rejoices me, Aileen — it will rejoice us all,” he answered heartily to cover his emotion.

“But it won't be easy to stay where I am.”

“I know — I know; you speak as one who has suffered; but has not Champney suffered too? Think of his home-coming!”

“Yes, he has suffered — in a way — but not my way.”

Father Honoré had a vision at that moment of Champney Gooze's face when he said, “But you loved her with your whole manhood.” He made no reply, but waited for Aileen to say more if she should so choose.

“I believed he loved me — and so I told him my love — I shall never, never get over that!” she exclaimed passionately. “But I know now — I knew before he went away the last time, that I was mistaken;

no man could say what he did and know even the first letter of love."

Her indignation was rising, and Father Honoré welcomed it; it was a natural trait with her, and its suppression gave him more cause for anxiety than its expression.

"He did n't love me — not really —"

"Are you sure of this, Aileen?"

"Yes, I am sure."

"You have good reason to know that you are telling a fact in asserting this?"

"Yes, altogether too good a reason." There was a return of bitterness in her answer.

Father Honoré was baffled. Aileen spoke without further questioning. Evidently she was desirous of making her position as well as Champney's plain to him and to herself. Her voice grew more gentle as she continued: —

"Father Honoré, I've loved him so long — and so truly, without hope, you know — never any hope, and hating myself for loving where I was not loved — that I think I do know what love is —"

Father Honoré smiled to himself in the half-dark; this voice was still young, and its love-wisdom was young-wise, also. There was hope, he told himself, that all would come right in the end — work together for good.

"But Mr. Googe never loved me as I loved him — and I could n't accept less."

The priest caught but the lesser part of her meaning. Even his wisdom and years failed to throw light on the devious path of Aileen's thoughts at this moment. Of the truth contained in her expression, he had no inkling.

"Aileen, I don't know that I can make it plain to

you, but — a man's love is so different from a woman's that, sometimes, I think such a statement as you have just made is so full of flaws that it amounts to sophistry; but there is no need to discuss that. — Let me ask you if you can endure to stay on with Mrs. Champney for a few months longer? I have a very special reason for asking this. Sometime I will tell you."

"Oh, yes;" she spoke wearily, indifferently; "I may as well stay there as anywhere now." Then with more interest and animation, "May I tell you something I have kept to myself all these years? I want to get rid of it."

"Surely — the more the better when the heart is burdened."

He took his seat again, and with pitying love and ever increasing interest and amazement listened to her recital of the part she played on that October night in the quarry woods — of her hate that turned to love again when she found the man she had both loved and hated in the extreme of need, of the 'murder' — so she termed it in her contrition — of Rag, of her swearing Luigi to silence. She told of herself — but of Champney Gooze's unmanly temptation of her honor, of his mad passion for her, she said never a word; her two pronounced traits of chastity and loyalty forbade it, as well as the desire of a loving woman to shield him she loved in spite of herself.

Of the little handkerchief that played its part in that night's threatened tragedy she said nothing — neither did Father Honoré; evidently, she had forgotten it.

Suddenly she clasped her hands hard over her heart.

"That dear loving little dog's death has lain here like a stone all these years," she said, and rose to go.

“You are absolved, Aileen,” he said smiling. “It was, like many others, a little devoted life sacrificed to a great love.”

He reached to press the button that turned on the electric lights. Their soft brilliance caught in sparkling gleams on the points of a small piece of almost pure white granite among the specimens on the shelf above them. Father Honoré rose and took it from its place.

“This is for you, Aileen,” he said handing it to her.

“For me?” She looked at him in wonder, not understanding what he meant by this insignificant gift at such a time.

He smiled at her look of amazement.

“No wonder you look puzzled. You must be thinking you have ‘asked me for bread and I am giving you a stone.’ But this is for remembrance.”

He hesitated a moment.

“You said once this afternoon, that for years it had been a hell on earth for you — a strong expression to fall from a young woman’s lips; and I said nothing. Sometime, perhaps, you will see things differently. But if I said nothing, it was only because I thought the more; for just as you spoke those words, my eye caught the glitter of this piece of granite in the firelight, and I said to myself — ‘that is like what Aileen’s life will be, and through her life what her character will prove to be.’ This stone has been crushed, subjected to unimaginable heat, upheaved, submerged, ground again to powder, remelted, overwhelmed, made adamant, rent, upheaved again, — and now, after æons, it lies here so near the blue above our Flamsted Hills, worthy to be used and put to all noble uses; fittest in all the world for foundation stone — for it is the foundation rock of our earth crust — for all lasting

memorials of great deed and noble thought; for all temples and holies of holies. Take it, Aileen, and — remember !”

“I will, oh, I will; and I’ll try to fit myself, too; I’ll try, dear, dear Father Honoré,” she said humbly, gratefully.

He held out his hand and she placed hers in it. He opened the door.

“Good night, Aileen, and God bless you.”

“Good night, Father Honoré.”

She went out into the clear winter starlight. The piece of granite, she held tightly clasped in her hand.

The priest, after closing the door, went to the pine table and opening a drawer took out a letter. It bore a recent date. It was from the chaplain of the prison and informed him there was a strong prospect of release for Champney Gooze at least three months before the end of his term. Father Honoré smiled to himself. He refolded it and laid it in the drawer.

III

EARLY in the following March, on the arrival of the 3 P. M. train from Hallsport, there was the usual crowd at The Corners' station to meet it. They watched the passengers as they left the train and commented freely on one and another known to them.

"I'll bet that 's the new boss at the upper quarries," said one, pointing to a short thickset man making his way up the platform.

"Yes, that 's him; and they 're taking on a gang of new men with him; they 're in the last car — there they come! There 's going to be a regular spring freshet of 'em coming along now — the business is booming."

They scanned the men closely as they passed, between twenty and thirty of them of various nationalities. They were gesticulating wildly, vociferating loudly, shouldering bundle, knapsack or tool-kit. Behind them came a few stone-cutters, mostly Scotch and Irish. The last to leave the train was evidently an American.

The crowd on the platform surged away to the electric car to watch further proceedings of the newly arrived "gang." The arrival of the immigrant workmen always afforded fun for the natives. The men shivered and hunched their shoulders; the raw March wind was searching. The gesticulating and vociferating increased. To any one unacquainted with foreign ways, a complete rupture of international peace

and relations seemed imminent. They tumbled over one another into the cars and filled them to overflowing, even to the platform where they clung to the guards.

The man who had been the last to leave the train stood on the emptied platform and looked about him. He carried a small bundle. He noted the sign on the electric cars, "To Quarry End Park". A puzzled look came into his face. He turned to the baggage-master who was wrestling with the immigrants' baggage:— iron-bound chests, tin boxes and trunks, sacks of heavy coarse linen filled with bedding.

"Does this car go to the sheds?"

The station master looked up. "It goes past there, but this is the regular half-hour express for the quarries and the Park. You a stranger in these parts?"

"This is all strange to me," the man answered.

"Any baggage?"

"No."

At that moment there was a rapid clanging of the gong; the motorman let fly the whirling rod; the over full cars started with a jerk — there was a howl, a shout, followed by a struggle to keep the equilibrium; an undersized Canuck was seen to be running madly alongside with one hand on the guard and endeavoring to get a foothold; he was hauled up unceremoniously by a dozen hands. The crowd watching them, cheered and jeered:

"Goin' it some, Antoine! Don't get left!"

"Keep on your pins, you Dagos!"

"Steady, Polacks — there 's the strap!"

"Gee up, Johnny!" This to the motorman.

"Gosh, it 's like a soda bottle fizin' to hear them Rooshians talkin'."

"Hooray for you!"

The cars were off swiftly now; the men on the platforms waved their hats, their white teeth flashing, their gold earrings twinkling, and echoed the American cheer:—

“Horray!”

The station master turned away laughing.

“They look like a tough crowd, but they ’re O. K. in the end,” he said to the man beside him who was looking after the vanishing car and its trailer. “There ’s yours coming down the switch. That ’ll take you up to Flamsted and the sheds.” He pushed the loaded truck up the platform.

The stranger entered the car and took a seat at the rear; there were no other passengers. He told the conductor to leave him as near as possible to the sheds.

“Guess you don’t know these parts?” The conductor put the question.

“This here is new to me,” the man answered; he seemed nothing loath to enter into conversation. “When was this road built?”

“’Bout five years ago. You ’ll see what a roadway they ’ve made clear along the north shore of the lake; it ’s bein’ built up with houses just as fast as it ’s taken up.”

He rang the starting bell. The car gathered headway and sped noisily along the frozen roadbed. In a few minutes it stopped at the Flamsted station; then it followed the shore of the lake for two miles until it reached the sheds. It stopped here and the man got out.

“Can you tell me where the manager’s office is?” he asked a workman who was passing.

“Over there.” He pointed with his thumb backwards across some railroad tracks and through a stone-

yard to a small two-storey office building at the end of three huge sheds.

The man made his way across to them. Once he stopped to look at the leaden waters of the lake, rimmed with ice; and up at the leaden sky that seemed to be shutting down close upon them like a lid; and around at the gray waste of frozen ground, the meadows covered lightly with snow and pools of surface ice that here and there showed the long bleached grass pricking through in grayish-yellow tufts. Beyond the meadows he saw a rude stone chapel, and near by the foundations, capped with wood, of a large church. He shivered once; he had no overcoat. Then he went on to the manager's office. He rang and opened the door.

"Can I see the manager?"

"He 's out now; gone over to the engine-house to see about the new smoke stack; he 'll be back in a few minutes. Guess you 'll find a stool in the other room."

The man entered the room, but remained standing, listening with increasing interest to the technical talk of the other two men who were half lying on the table as they bent over some large plans — an architect's blue prints. Finally the man drew near.

"May I look too?" he asked.

"Sure. These are the working plans for the new Episcopal cathedral at A.;" he named a well known city; "you 've heard of it, I s'pose?"

The man shook his head.

"Here for a job?"

"Yes. Is all this work to be done by the company?"

"Every stone. We got the contract eleven months ago. We're at work on these courses now." He turned the plates that the man might see.

He bent over to examine them, noting the wonderful detail of arch and architrave, of keystone, cornice and foundation course. Each stone, varying in size and shape, was drawn with utmost accuracy, dimensions given, numbered with its own number for the place of its setting into the perfect whole. The stability of the whole giant structure was dependent upon the perfection and right placing of each individual stone from lowest foundation to the keystones of the vaulting arches of the nave; the harmony of design dependent on rightly maintained proportions of each granite block, large or small — and all this marvellous structure was the product of the rude granite veins in The Gore! That adamantine mixture of gneiss and quartz, prepared in nature's laboratory throughout millions of years, was now furnishing the rock which, beneath human manipulation, was flowering into the great cathedral! And that perfect whole was *ideaed* first in the brain of man, and a sketch of it transferred by the sun itself to the blue paper which lay on the table!

What a combination and transmutation of those forceful powers that originate in the Unnamable!

The manager entered, passed into the next room and, sitting down at his desk, began to make notes on a pad. At a sign from the two men, the stranger followed him, cap in hand.

The manager spoke without looking at him:—
“Well?”

“I'd like a job in the sheds.”

At the sound of that voice, the manager glanced up quickly, keenly. He saw before him a man evidently prematurely gray. The broad shoulders bowed slightly as if from long-continued work involving much stoop-

ing. He looked at the hands; they were rough, caloused with toil, the knuckles spread, the nails broken and worn. Then he looked again into the face; that puzzled him. It was smooth-shaven, square in outline and rather thin, but the color was good; the eyes — what eyes!

The manager found himself wondering if there were a pair to match them in the wide world. They were slightly sunken, large, blue, of a depth and beauty and clarity rarely seen in that color. Within them, as if at home, dwelt an expression of inner quiet, and sadness combined with strength and firmness. It was not easy to look long into them without wanting to grasp the possessor's hand in fellowship. They smiled, too, as the manager continued to stare. That broke the spell; they were undeniably human. The manager smiled in response.

“Learned your trade?”

“Yes.”

“How long have you been working at it?”

“Between six and seven years.”

“Any tools with you?”

“No.”

“Union man?”

“No.”

“Hm-m.”

The manager chewed the handle of his pen, and thought something out with himself; his eyes were on the pad before him.

“We 've got to take on a lot of new men for the next two years — as many as we can of skilled workmen. The break will have to be made sometime. Anyhow, if you 'll risk it they 've got a job for you in Shed Number Two — cutting and squaring for a while — forty

cents an hour — eight hour day. I'll telephone to the boss if you want it."

"I do."

He took up the desk-telephone and gave his message.

"It's all right." He drew out a ledger from beneath the desk. "What's your letter?"

"Letter?" The man looked startled for a moment.

"Yes, initial of your last name."

"G."

The manager found the letter, thrust in his finger, opened the page indicated and shoved the book over the desk towards the applicant. He handed him his pen.

"Write your name, your age, and what you're native of." He indicated the columns.

The man took the pen. He seemed at first slightly awkward in handling it. The entry he made was as follows:

"Louis C. Googe — thirty-four — United States."

The manager glanced at it. "That's a common enough name in Maine and these parts," he said. Then he pointed through the window. "That's the shed over there — the middle one. The boss'll give you some tools till you get yours."

"Thank you." The man put on his cap and went out.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" was all the manager said as he looked after the applicant. Then he rose, went to the office door and watched the man making his way through the stone-yards towards the sheds. "Well, boys," he said further, turning to the two men bending over the plans, "that suit ain't exactly a misfit, but it has n't seen the light of day for a good many years — and it's the same with the man. What in thunder is

he doing in the sheds! Did he say anything specially to you before I came in?"

"No; only he seemed mighty interested in the plans, examined the detail of some of them — as if he knew."

"We 'll keep our eyes on him." The manager went back to his desk.

IV

PERHAPS the dreariest environment imaginable is a stone-cutters' shed on a bleak day in the first week in March. The large ones stretching along the north shore of Lake Mesantic are no exception to this statement. A high wind from the northeast was driving before it particles of ice, and now and then a snow flurry. It penetrated every crack and crevice of the huge buildings, the second and largest of which covered a ground space of more than an acre. Every gust made itself both felt and heard among the rafters. Near the great doors the granite dust whirled in eddies.

At this hour in the afternoon Shed Number Two was a study in black and gray and white. Gray dust several inches thick spread underfoot; all about were gray walls, gray and white granite piles, gray columns, arches, uncut blocks, heaps of granite waste, gray workmen in gray blouses and canvas aprons covered with gray dust. In one corner towered the huge gray-black McDonald machine in mighty strength, its multiple revolving arms furnished with gigantic iron fists which manipulate the unyielding granite with Herculean automatonism — an invention of the film-like brain of man to conquer in a few minutes the work of nature's æons! Gray-black overhead stretched the running rails for the monster electric travelling crane; some men crawling out on them looked like monkeys. Here and there might be seen the small insignificant "Lewis

Key" — a thing that may be held on a woman's palm — sustaining a granite weight of many tons.

There were three hundred men at work in this shed, and the ringing *chip-chip-chipping* monotone from the hundreds of hammers and chisels, filled the great space with industry's wordless song that has its perfect harmony for him who listens with open ears and expansive mind.

Jim McCann was at work near the shed doors which had been opened several times since one o'clock to admit the flat cars with the granite. He was alternately blowing on his benumbed fingers and cursing the doors and the draught that was chilling him to the marrow. The granite dust was swirling about his legs and rising into his nostrils. It lacked a half-hour to four.

Two cars rolled in silently.

"Shut thim damned doors, man!" he shouted across to the door-tender; "God kape us but we' it's our last death we'll be ketchin' before we can clane out our lungs o' the dust we've swallowed the day. It's after bein' wan damned slitherin' whorl of grit in the nose of me since eight the morn."

He struck hard on his chisel and a spark flew. A workman, an Italian, laughed.

"That's arll-rright, Jim — fire up!"

"You kape shet," growled McCann. He was unfriendly as a rule to the Dagos. "It's in me blood," was his only excuse.

"An' if it's a firin' ye be after," he continued, "ye'll get it shurre if ye lave off workin' to warm up yer tongue wid such sass. — Shut thim doors!" he shouted again; but a gust of wind failed to carry his voice in the desired direction.

In the swirling roar and the small dust-spout that

followed in its wake, Jim and the workmen in his cold section were aware of a man who had been half-blown in with the whirling dust. He took shelter for a moment by the inner wall. The foreman saw him and recognized him for the man who, the manager had just telephoned, was coming over from the office. He came forward to meet him.

“You ’re the man who has just taken on a job in Shed Number Two?”

“Yes.”

The foreman signed to one of the men and told him to bring an extra set of tools.

“Here ’s your section,” he said indicating McCann’s; “you can begin on this block — just squaring it for to-night.”

The man took his tools with a “Thank you,” and went to work. The others watched him furtively, as Jim told Maggie afterwards “from the tail of me eye.”

He knew his work. They soon saw that. Every stroke told. The doors were shut at last and the electric lights turned on. Up to the stroke of four the men worked like automatons — *chip-chip-chipping*. Now and then there was some chaffing, good-natured if rough.

The little Canuck, who by dint of running had caught the car, was working nearby. McCann called out to him:

“I say, Antwine, where you ’d be after gettin’ that cap with the monkey ears?”

“Bah gosh, Ah have get dis à Mo’real — at good marché — sheep.” He stroked the small skin earlaps caressingly with one hand, then spat upon his palm and fell to work again.

“Montreal is it? When did you go?”

“Ah was went tree day — le Père Honoré tol’ mah Ah better was go to mon maître; he was dead las’ week.”

“Wot yer givin’ us, Antwine? Three days to see yer dead mater an’ lavin’ yer stiddy job for the likes of him, an’ good luck yer come back this afternoon or the new man ’ud ’a’ had it.”

“Ah, non — ah, non! De boss haf tol’ mah, Ah was keep mah shob. Ah, non — ah, non. Ah was went pour l’amour de Père Honoré.”

“Damn yer lingo — shpake English, I tell you.”

Antoine grinned and shook his head.

“Wot yer givin’ us about his Riverince, eh?”

“Le Père Honoré, hein? Ah-h-h-rr, le bon Père Honoré! Attendez — he tol’ mah Ah was best non raconter — mais, Ah raconte you, Shim — ”

“Go ahead, Johnny Frog; let ’s hear.”

“Ah was been lee’l garçon — lee’l bébé, no père; ma mère was been — how you say? — gypsee à cheval, hein?” he appealed to McCann.

“You mane a gypsy that rides round the counthry?”

Antoine nodded emphatically. “Yah — oui, gypsee à cheval, an’ bars — ”

“Bears?”

“Mais oui, bruins — bars; pour les faire dancer — ”

“You mane your mother was a gypsy that went round the counthry showin’ off dancin’ bears?”

“Yah-oui. Ah mane so. She haf been seek — ma-lade — how you say, petite vérole — so like de Père Honoré?” He made with his forefinger dents in his face and forehead.

“An’ is it the shmall pox yer mane?”

“Yah-oui, shmall pookes. She was haf it, an’ tout le monde — how you say? — efferybodyee was haf

fear. She was haf nottin' to eat — nottin' to drrink; le Père Honoré was fin' her in de bois — forêt, an' was been tak' ma pauvre mère in hees ahrms, an' he place her in de sugair-house, an' il l'a soignée — how you say?" He appealed to the Italian whose interest was on the increase.

"Nurrsed?"

"Yah — oui, nurrsed her, an' moi aussi — lee'l bébé —"

"D' yer mane his Riverince nursed you and yer mother through the shmall pox?" demanded McCann. Several of the workmen stopped short with hammers uplifted to hear Antoine's answer.

"Mais oui, il l'a soignée jusqu'à ce qu'elle was been dead; he l'a enterrée — place in de terre — airth, an' moi he haf place chez un farmyer à Mo'real. An' le Père Honoré was tak' la petite vérole — shmall pookes in de sugair-house, an' de farmyer was gif him to eat an' to drrink par la porte — de door; de farmyer haf non passé par de door. Le Père Honoré m'a sauvé — haf safe, hein? An' Ah was been work ten, twenty, dirty year, Ah tink. Ah gagne — gain, hein? — two hundert pièces. Ah been come to de quairries, pour l'amour de bon Père Honoré qui m'a safe, hein? Ah be très content; Ah gagne, gain two, tree pièces — dollaires — par jour."

He nodded at one and all, his gold half-moon earrings twinkling in his evident satisfaction with himself and "le bon Père Honoré."

The men were silent. Jim McCann's eyes were blurred with tears. The thought of his own six-months boy presented itself in contrast to the small waif in the Canada woods and the dying gypsy mother, nursed by the priest who had christened his own little Billy.

"It's a bad night for the lecture," said a Scotchman, and broke therewith the emotional spell that was holding the men who had made out the principal points of Antoine's story.

"Yes, but Father Honoré says it's all about the cathedrals, an' not many will want to miss it," said another. "They say there's a crowd coming down from the quarries to-night to hear it."

"Faith, an' it's Mr. Van Ostend will be after havin' to put on an a trailer to his new hall," said McCann; "the b'ys know a good thing whin they see it, an' we was like to smother, the whole kit of us, whin they had the last pitchers of them mountins in Alasky on the sheet. It's the stairioptican that takes best wid the b'ys."

The four o'clock whistle began to sound. Three hundred chisels and hammers were dropped on the instant. The men hurried to the doors that were opened their full width to give egress to the hastening throngs. They streamed out; there was laughing and chaffing; now and then, among the younger ones, some good-natured fisticuffs were exchanged. Many sought the electric to The Gore; others took the car to The Corners. From the three sheds, the power-house, the engine-house, the office, the dark files streamed forth from their toil. Within fifteen minutes the lights were turned out, the watchman was making his first round. Instead of the sounds of a vast industry, nothing was heard but the *sz-szz-szzz* of the vanishing trams, the sputter of an arc-light, the barking of a dog. The gray twilight of a bleak March day shut down rapidly over frozen field and ice-rimmed lake.

CHAMPNEY GOOGE left the shed with the rest; no one spoke to him, although many a curious look was turned his way when he had passed, and he spoke to no one. He waited for a car to Flamsted. There he got out. He found a restaurant near The Greenbush and ordered something to eat. Afterwards he went about the town, changed almost beyond recognition. He saw no face he knew. There were foreigners everywhere — men who were to be the fathers of the future American race. A fairly large opera house attracted his attention; it was evidently new. He looked for the year — 1901. A little farther on he found the hall, built, so he had gathered from the few words among the men in the sheds, by Mr. Van Ostend. The name was on the lintel: “Flamsted Quarries Hall.” Every few minutes an electric tram went whizzing through Main Street towards The Bow. Crowds of young people were on the street.

He looked upon all he saw almost indifferently, feeling little, caring little. It was as if a mental and spiritual numbness had possession of every faculty except the manual; he felt at home only while he was working for that short half-hour in the shed. He was not at ease here among this merry careless crowd. He stopped to look in at the windows of a large fine shop for fruits and groceries; he glanced up at the sign:— “Poggi and Company.”

“Poggi — Poggi” he said to himself; he was thinking it out. “Luigi Poggi — Luigi — Ah!” It was a long-drawn breath. He had found his clew.

He heard again that cry: “Champney, — O Champney! what has he done to you!” The night came back to him in all its detail. It sickened him.

He was about to turn from the window and seek the quiet of The Bow until the hall should be open — at “sharp seven” he heard the men say — when a woman passed him and entered the shop. She took a seat at the counter just inside the show-window. He stood gazing at her, unable to move his eyes from the form, the face. It was she — Aileen!

The sickening feeling increased for a moment, then it gave place to strange electric currents that passed and repassed through every nerve. It was a sensation as if his whole body — flesh, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins, every lobe of his brain, every cell within each lobe, had been, as the saying is of an arm or leg, “asleep” and was now “coming to.” The tingling sensation increased almost to torture; but he could not move. That face held him.

He must get away before she came out! That was his one thought. The first torment of awakening sensation to a new life was passing. He advanced a foot, then the other; he moved slowly, but he moved at last. He walked on down the street, not up towards The Bow as he had intended; walked on past The Greenbush towards The Corners; walked on and on till the nightmare of this awakening from a nearly seven-years abnormal sleep of feeling was over. Then he turned back to the town. The town clock was striking seven. The men were entering the hall by tens and twenties.

He took his seat in a corner beneath the shadow of a large gallery at the back, over the entrance.

There were only men admitted. He looked upon the hundreds assembled, and realized for the first time in more than six years that he was again a free man among free men. He drew a long breath of relief, of realization.

At a quarter past seven Father Honoré made his appearance on the platform. The men settled at once into silence, and the priest began without preface:

“My friends, we will take up to-night what we may call the Brotherhood of Stone.”

The men looked at one another and smiled. Here was something new.

“That is the right thought for all of you to take with you into the quarries and the sheds. Don’t forget it!”

He made certain distinct pauses after a few sentences. This was done with intention; for the men before him were of various nationalities, although he called this his “English night.” But many were learning and understood imperfectly; it was for them he paused frequently. He wanted to give them time to take in what he was saying. Sometimes he repeated his words in Italian, in French, that the foreigners might better comprehend his meaning.

“Perhaps some of you have worked in the limestone quarries on the Bay? All who have hold up hands.”

A hundred hands, perhaps more, were raised.

“Any worked in the marble quarries of Vermont?”

A dozen or more Canucks waved their hands vigorously.

“Here are three pieces — limestone, marble, and granite.” He held up specimens of the three. “All

of them are well known to most of you. Now mark what I say of these three: — first, the limestone gets burned principally; second, the marble gets sculptured principally; third, the granite gets hammered and chiselled principally. Fire, chisel, and hammer at work on these three rocks; but, they are all *quarried* first. This fact of their being quarried puts them in the Brotherhood — of Labor.”

The men nudged one another, and nodded emphatically.

“They are all three taken from the crust of the earth; this Earth is to them the earth-mother. Now mark again what I say: — this fact of their common earth-mother puts them in the Brotherhood — of Kin.”

He took up three specimens of quartz crystals.

“This quartz crystal” — he turned it in the light, and the hexagonal prisms caught and reflected dazzling rays — “I found in the limestone quarry on the Bay. This,” he took up another smaller one, “I found after a long search in the marble quarries of Vermont. This here,” he held up a third, a smaller, less brilliant, less perfect one — “I took out of our upper quarry after a three weeks’ search for it.

“This fact, that these rocks, although of different market value and put to different uses, may yield the same perfect crystal, puts the limestone, the marble, the granite in the Brotherhood — of Equality.

“In our other talks, we have named the elements of each rock, and given some study to each. We have found that some of their elements are the basic elements of our own mortal frames — our bodies have a common earth-mother with these stones.

“This last fact puts them in the Brotherhood — of Man.”

The seven hundred men showed their appreciation of the point made by prolonged applause.

“Now I want to make clear to you that, although these rocks have different market values, are put to different uses, the real value for us this evening consists in the fact that each, in its own place, can yield a crystal equal in purity to the others. — Remember this the next time you go to work in the quarries and the sheds.”

He laid aside the specimens.

“We had a talk last month about the guilds of four hundred years ago. I asked you then to look upon yourselves as members of a great twentieth century working guild. Have you done it? Has every man, who was present then, said since, when hewing a foundation stone, a block for a bridge abutment, a cornerstone for a cathedral or a railroad station, a cap-stone for a monument, a milestone, a lintel for a door, a hearthstone or a step for an altar, ‘I belong to the great guild of the makers of this country; I quarry and hew the rock that lays the enduring bed for the iron or electric horses which rush from sea to sea and carry the burden of humanity’?—Think of it, men! Yours are the hands that make this great track of commerce possible. Yours are the hands that curve the stones, afterwards reared into noble arches beneath which the people assemble to do God reverence. Yours are the hands that square the deep foundations of the great bridges which, like the Brooklyn, cross high in mid-air from shore to shore! Have you said this? Have you done it?”

“Ay, ay. — Sure. — We done it.” The murmuring assent was polyglot.

“Very well — see that you keep on doing it, and show that you do it by the good work you furnish.”

He motioned to the manipulators in the gallery to make ready for the stereopticon views. The blank blinding round played erratically on the curtain. The entire audience sat expectant.

There was flashed upon the screen the interior of a Canadian "cabin." The family were at supper; the whole interior, simple and homely, was indicative of warmth and cheerful family life.

The Canucks in the audience lost their heads. The clapping was frantic. Father Honoré smiled. He tapped the portrayed wall with the end of his pointer.

"This is comfort — no cold can penetrate these walls ; they are double plastered. Credit limestone with that!"

The audience showed its appreciation in no uncertain way.

"The crystal — can any one see that — find that in this interior?"

The men were silent. Father Honoré was pointing to the mother and her child; the father was holding out his arms to the little one who, with loving impatience, was reaching away from his mother over the table to his father. They comprehended the priest's thought in the lesson of the limestone: — the love and trust of the human. No words were needed. An emotional silence made itself felt.

The picture shifted. There was thrown upon the screen the marble Cathedral of Milan. A murmur of delight ran through the house.

"Here we have the limestone in the form of marble. Its beauty is the price of unremitting toil. This, too, belongs in the brotherhoods of labor, kin, and equality. — Do you find the crystal?"

His pointer swept the hierarchy of statues on the

roof, upwards to the cross on the pinnacle, where it rested.

“This crystal is the symbol of what inspires and glorifies humanity. The crystal is yours, men, if with believing hearts you are willing to say ‘Our Father’ in the face of His works.”

He paused a moment. It was an understood thing in the semi-monthly talks, that the men were free to ask questions and to express an opinion, even, at times, to argue a point. The men’s eyes were fixed with keen appreciation on the marble beauty before them, when a voice broke the silence.

“That sounds all right enough, your Reverence, what you’ve said about ‘Our Father’ and the brotherhoods, but there’s many a man says it that won’t own me for a brother. There’s a weak joint somewhere — and no offence meant.”

Some of the men applauded.

Father Honoré turned from the screen and faced the men; his eyes flashed. The audience loved to see him in this mood, for they knew by experience that he was generally able to meet his adversary, and no odds given or taken.

“That’s you, is it, Szchenetzy?”

“Yes, it’s me.”

“Do you remember in last month’s talk that I showed you the Dolomites — the curious mountains of the Tyrol? — and in connection with those the Brenner Pass?”

“Yes.”

“Well, something like seven hundred years ago a poor man, a poet and travelling musician, was riding over that pass and down into that very region of the Dolomites. He made his living by stopping at the

stronghold-castles of those times and entertaining the powerful of the earth by singing his poems set to music of his own making. Sometimes he got a suit of cast-off clothes in payment; sometimes only bed and board for a time. But he kept on singing his little poems and making more of them as he grew rich in experience of men and things; for he never grew rich in gold — money was the last thing they ever gave him. So he continued long his wandering life, singing his songs in courtyard and castle hall until they sang their way into the hearts of the men of his generation. And while he wandered, he gained a wonderful knowledge of life and its ways among rich and poor, high and low; and, pondering the things he had seen and the many ways of this world, he said to himself, that day when he was riding over the Brenner Pass, the same thing that you have just said — in almost the same words: — ‘Many a man calls God “Father” who won’t acknowledge me for a brother.’

“I don’t know how he reconciled facts — for your fact seems plain enough — nor do I know how you can reconcile them; but what I do know is this: — that man, poor in this world’s goods, but rich in experience and in a natural endowment of poetic thought and musical ability, *kept on making poems, kept on singing them*, despite that fact to which he had given expression as he fared over the Brenner; despite the fact that a suit of cast-off clothes was all he got for his entertainment of those who would not call him ‘brother.’ Discouraged at times — for he was very human — he kept on giving the best that was in him, doing the work appointed for him in this world — and doing it with a whole heart Godwards and Christwards, despite his poverty, despite the broken promises of the great to reward him

pecuniarily, despite the world, despite *facts*, Szchenetzy! He sang when he was young of earthly love and in middle age of heavenly love, and his songs are cherished, for their beauty of wisdom and love, in the hearts of men to this day."

He smiled genially across the sea of faces to Szchenetzy.

"Come up some night with your violin, Szchenetzy, and we will try over some of those very songs that the Germans have set to music of their own, those words of Walter of the Bird-Meadow — so they called him then, and men keep on calling him that even to this day."

He turned again to the screen.

"What is to be thrown on the screen now — in rapid succession for our hour is brief — I call our Marble Quarry. Just think of it! quarried by the same hard work which you all know, by which you earn your daily bread; sculptured into forms of exceeding beauty by the same hard toil of other hands. And behind all the toil there is the *soul of art*, ever seeking expression through the human instrument of the practised hand that quarries, then sculptures, then places, and builds! I shall give a word or two of explanation in regard to time and locality; next month we will take the subjects one by one."

There flashed upon the screen and in quick succession, although the men protested and begged for an extension of exposures, the noble Pisan group and Niccola Pisano's pulpit in the baptistery — the horses from the Parthenon frieze — the Zeus group from the great altar at Pergamos — Theseus and the Centaur — the Wrestlers — the Discus Thrower and, last, the exquisite little church of Saint Mary of the Thorn, —

• the Arno's jewel, the seafarers' own, — that looks out over the Pisan waters to the Mediterranean.

It was a magnificent showing. No words from Father Honoré were needed to bring home to his audience the lesson of the Marble Quarry.

“I call the next series, which will be shown without explanation and merely named, other members of the Brotherhood of Stone. We study them separately later on in the summer.”

The cathedrals of York, Amiens, Westminster, Cologne, Mayence, St. Mark's — a noble array of man's handiwork, were thrown upon the screen. The men showed their appreciation by thunderous applause.

The screen was again a blank; then it filled suddenly with the great Upper Quarry in The Gore. The granite ledges sloped upward to meet the blue of the sky. The great steel derricks and their crisscrossing cables cast curiously foreshortened shadows on the gleaming white expanse. Here and there a group of men showed dark against a ledge. In the centre, one of the monster derricks held suspended in its chains a forty-ton block of granite just lifted from its eternal bed. Beside it a workman showed like a pigmy.

Some one proposed a three times three for the home quarries. The men rose to their feet and the cheers were given with a will. The ringing echo of the last had not died away when the quarry vanished, and in its place stood the finished cathedral of A. — the work which the hands of those present were to create. It was a reproduction of the architect's water-color sketch.

The men still remained standing; they gave no outward expression to their admiration; that, indeed, although evident in their faces, was overshadowed by

something like awe. *Their* hands were to be the instruments by which this great creation of the mind of man should become a fact. Without those hands the architect's idea could not be materialized; without the "idea" their daily work would fail.

The truth went home to each man present — even to that unknown one beneath the gallery who, when the men had risen to cheer, shrank farther into his dark corner and drew short sharp breaths. The Past would not down at his bidding; he was beginning to feel his weakness when he had most need of strength.

He did not hear Father Honoré's parting words: —

"Here you find the third crystal — strength, solidity, the bedrock of endeavor. Take these three home with you: — the pure crystal of human love and trust, the heart believing in its Maker, the strength of good character. There you have the three that make for equality in this world — and nothing else does. Good night, my friends."

VI

FATHER HONORÉ got home from the lecture a little before nine. He renewed the fire, drew up a chair to the hearth, took his violin from its case and, seating himself before the springing blaze, made ready to play for a while in the firelight. This was always his refreshment after a successful evening with the men. He drew his thumb along the bow —

There was a knock at the door. He rose and flung it wide with a human enough gesture of impatience; his well-earned rest was disturbed too soon. He failed to recognize the man who was standing bareheaded on the step.

“Father Honoré, I’ve come home — don’t you know me, Champney?”

There was no word in response, but his hands were grasped hard — he was drawn into the room — the door was shut on the chill wind of that March night. Then the two men stood silent, gazing into each other’s eyes, while the firelight leaped and showed to each the other’s face — the priest’s working with a powerful emotion he was struggling to control; Champney Gooze’s apparently calm, but in reality tense with anxiety. He spoke first:

“I want to know about my mother — is she well?”

Father Honoré found his voice, an uncertain one but emphatic; it left no room for further anxiety in the questioner’s mind.

“Yes, well, thank God, and looking forward to this —

but it's so soon! I don't understand — when did you come?"

He kept one hand on Champney's as if fearing to lose him, with the other he pulled forward a chair from the wall and placed it near his own; he sat down and drew Champney into the other beside him.

"I came up on the afternoon train; I got out yesterday."

"It's so unexpected. The chaplain wrote me last month that there was a prospect of this within the next six months, but I had no idea it would be so soon — neither, I am sure, had he."

"Nor I — I don't know that I feel sure of it yet. Has my mother any idea of this?"

"I was n't at liberty to tell her — the communication was confidential. Still she knows that it is customary to shorten the —" he caught up his words.

"— Term for exemplary conduct?" Champney finished for him.

"Yes. I can't realize this, Champney; it's six years and four months —"

"Years — months! You might say six eternities. Do you know, I can't get used to it — the freedom, I mean. At times during these last twenty-four hours, I have actually felt lost without the work, the routine — the solitude." He sighed heavily and spoke further, but as if to himself:

"Last Thanksgiving Day we were all together — eight hundred of us in the assembly room for the exercises. Two men get pardoned out on that day, and the two who were set free were in for manslaughter — one for twenty years, the other for life. They had been in eighteen years. I watched their faces when their numbers were called; they stepped forward to the

platform and were told of their pardon. There was n't a sign of comprehension, not a movement of a muscle, the twitch of an eyelid — simply a dead stolid stare. The truth is, they were benumbed as to feeling, incapable of comprehending anything, of initiating anything, as I was till — till this afternoon; then I began to live, to feel again."

"That 's only natural. I 've heard other men say the same thing. You 'll recover tone here among your own — your friends and other men."

"Have I any? — I mean outside of you and my mother?" he asked in a low voice, but subdued eagerness was audible in it.

"Have you any? Why, man, a friend is a friend for life — and beyond. Who was it put it thus: ' Said one: I would go up to the gates of hell with a friend. — Said the other: I would go in.' That last is the kind you have here in Flamsted, Champney."

The other turned away his face that the firelight might not betray him.

"It 's too much — it 's too much; I don't deserve it."

"Champney, when you decided of your own accord to expiate in the manner you have through these six years, do you think your friends — and others — did n't recognize your manhood? And did n't you resolve at that time to 'put aside' those things that were behind you once and forever? — clear your life of the clogging part?"

"Yes, — but others won't —"

"Never mind others — you are working out your own salvation."

"But it 's going to be harder than I thought — I find I am beginning to dread to meet people — everything

is so changed. It 's going to be harder than I realized to carry out that resolution. The Past won't down — everything is so changed — everything —”

Father Honoré rose to turn on the electric lights. He did not take his seat again, but stood on the hearth, back to the fire, his hands clasped behind him. The clear light from the shaded bulbs shone full upon the face of the man before him, and the priest, searching that face to read its record, saw set upon it, and his heart contracted at the sight, the indelible seal of six years of penal servitude. The close-cut hair was gray; the brow was marked by two horizontal furrows; the cheeks were deeply lined; and the broad shoulders — they were bent. Formerly he stood before the priest with level eyes, now he was shorter by an inch of the six feet that were once his. He noticed the hands — the hands of the day-laborer.

He managed to reply to Champney's last remark without betraying the emotion that threatened to master him.

“Outwardly, yes; things have changed and will continue to change. The town is making vast strides towards citizenship. But you will find those you know the same — only grown in grace, I hope, with the years; even Mr. Wiggins is convinced by this time that the foreigners are not barbarians.”

Champney smiled. “It was rough on Elmer Wiggins at first.”

“Yes, but things are smoothing out gradually, and as a son of Maine he has too much common sense at bottom to swim against the current. And there 's old Joel Quimber — I never see him that he does n't tell me he is marking off the days in his 'almanack,' he calls it, in anticipation of your return.”

“Dear old Jo! — No! — Is that true? Old Jo doing that?”

“To be sure, why not? And there’s Octavius Buzzby — I don’t think he would mind my telling you now — indeed, I don’t believe he’d have the courage to tell you himself —” Father Honoré smiled happily, for he saw in Champney’s face the light of awakening interest in the common life of humanity, and he felt a prolongation of this chat would clear the atmosphere of overpowering emotion — “there have never three months passed by these last six years that he has n’t deposited half of his quarterly salary with Emlie in the bank in your name —”

“Oh, don’t — don’t! I can’t bear it — dear old Tave —” he groaned rather than spoke; the blood mounted to his temples, but his friend proved merciless.

“And there’s Luigi Poggi! I don’t know but he will make you a proposition, when he knows you are at home, to enter into partnership with him and young Caukins — the Colonel’s fourth eldest. Champney, he wants to atone — he has told me so —”

“Is — is he married?”

Father Honoré noticed that his lips suddenly went dry and he swallowed hard after his question.

“No,” the priest hastened to say, then he hesitated; he was wondering how far it was safe to probe; “but it is my strong impression that he is thinking seriously of it — a lovely girl, too, she is —” he saw the man’s face before him go white, the jaw set like a vise — “little Dulcie Caukins, you remember her?”

Champney nodded and wet his lips.

“He has been thrown a good deal with the Caukinses since he took their son into partnership; the Colonel’s boys are all doing well. Romanzo is in New York.”

“Still with the Company?”

“Yes, in the main office. He married in that city two years ago — rather well, I hear, but Mrs. Caukins is not reconciled yet. Now, there’s a friend! You don’t know the depth of her feeling for you — but she has shown it by worshipping your mother.”

Champney Googe’s eyes filled to overflowing, but he squeezed the springing drops between his eyelids, and asked with lively interest:

“Why is n’t Mrs. Caukins reconciled?”

“Well, because — I suppose it’s no secret now, at least Mrs. Caukins has never made one of it, in fact, has aired the subject pretty thoroughly, you know her way — ”

Champney looked up and smiled. “I’m glad she has n’t changed.”

“But of course you don’t know it. The fact is she had set heart on having for a daughter-in-law Aileen Armagh — you remember little Aileen?”

Champney Googe’s hands closed spasmodically on the arms of his chair. To cover this involuntary movement, he leaned forward suddenly and kicked a burning brand, that had fallen on the hearth, back into the fireplace. A shower of sparks flew up chimney.

Father Honoré went on without waiting for the answer he knew would not be forthcoming: “Aileen gave me a fright the other day. I met her on the street, and she took that occasion, in the midst of a good deal of noise and confusion, to inform me with her usual vivacity of manner that she was to be housekeeper to a man — ‘a job for life,’ she added with the old mischief dancing in her eyes and the merry laugh that is a tonic for the blues. Upon my asking her gravely who was the fortunate man — for I had no one in mind and

feared some impulsive decision — she pursed her lips, hesitated a moment, and, manufacturing a charming blush, said: — ‘I don’t mind telling *you*; it’s Mr. Octavius Buzzby. I’m to be his housekeeper for life and take care of him in his old age after his work and mine is finished at Champo.’ I confess, I was relieved.”

“My aunt is still living, then?” Champney asked with more eagerness and energy than the occasion demanded. His eyes shone with suppressed excitement, and ever-awakening life animated every feature. Father Honoré, noting the sudden change, read again, as once six years before, deep into this man’s heart.

“Yes, but it is death in life. Aileen is still with her — faithful as the sun, but rebelling at times as is only natural. The girl gave promise of rich womanhood, but even you would wonder at such fine development in such an environment of continual invalidism. Mrs. Champney has had two strokes of paralysis; it is only a question of time.”

“There is *one* who never was my friend — I’ve often wondered why.”

Into the priest’s inner vision flashed that evening before his departure for New York — the bedroom — the mother — that confession —

“It looks that way, I admit, but I’ve thought sometimes she has cared for you far more than any one will ever know.”

Champney started suddenly to his feet.

“What time is it? I must be going.”

“Going? — You mean home — to-night?”

“Yes, I must go home. I came to ask you to go to my mother to prepare her for this — I dared not shock

her by going unannounced. You'll go with me — you'll tell her?"

"At once."

He reached for his coat and turned off the lights. The two went out arm and arm into the March night. The wind was still rising.

"It's only half-past nine, and Mrs. Gooze will be up; she is a busy woman."

"Tell me —" he drew his breath short — "what has my mother done all these years — how has she lived?"

"As every true woman lives — doing her full duty day by day, living in hope of this joy."

"But I mean *what* has she done to live — to provide for herself; she has kept the house?"

"To be sure, and by her own exertions. She has never been willing to accept pecuniary aid from any friend, not even from Mr. Buzzby, or the Colonel. I am in a position to know that Mr. Van Ostend did his best to persuade her to accept something just as a loan."

"But *what* has she been doing?"

"She has been taking the quarrymen for meals the last six years, Champney — at times she has had their families to board with her, as many as the house could accommodate."

The arm which his own held was withdrawn with a jerk. Champney Gooze faced him; they were on the new iron bridge over the Rothel.

"You mean to say my mother — *my* mother, Aurora Gooze, has been keeping a quarrymen's boarding-house all these years?"

"Yes; it is legitimate work."

"My mother — *my* mother —" he kept repeating as

he stood motionless on the bridge. He seemed unable to grasp the fact for a moment; then he laid his hand heavily on Father Honoré's shoulder as if for support; he spoke low to himself, but the priest caught a few words:

“I thank Thee — thank — for life — work —”

He seemed to come gradually to himself, to recognize his whereabouts. He began to walk on, but very slowly.

“Father Honoré,” he said, and his tone was deeply earnest but at the same time almost joyful, “I'm not going home to my mother empty-handed, I never intended to — I have work. I can work for her, free her from care, lift from her shoulders the burden of toil for my sake.”

“What do you mean, Champney?”

“I made application to the manager of the Company this afternoon; I saw they were all strangers to me, and they took me on in the sheds — Shed Number Two. I went to work this afternoon. You see I know my trade; I learned it during the last six years. I can support her now — Oh —”

He stopped short just as they were leaving the bridge; raised his head to the black skies above him, reached upwards with both hands palm outwards —

“— I thank my Maker for these hands; I thank Him that I can labor with these hands; I thank Him for the strength of manhood that will enable me to toil with these hands; I thank Him for my knowledge of good and evil; I thank Him that I have ‘won sight out of blindness —’” his eyes strained to the skies above The Gore.

The moon, struggling with the heavy drifting cloud-masses, broke through a confined ragged circle and,

for a moment, its splendor shone upon the heights of The Gore; its effulgence paled the arc-lights in the quarries; a silver shaft glanced on the Rothel in its downward course, and afar touched the ruffled waters of Lake Mesantic. . . .

“I’ll stay here on the lawn,” he said five minutes afterwards upon reaching the house. A light was burning in his mother’s bedroom; another shone from her sitting-room on the first floor.

The priest entered without knocking; this house was open the year round to the frequent comers and goers among the workmen. He rapped at the sitting-room door. Mrs. Champney opened it.

“Why, Father Honoré, I did n’t expect you to-night — did n’t you have the — What is it? — oh, what is it!” she cried, for the priest’s face betrayed him.

“Joyful news, Mrs. Champney,” — he let her read his face — “your son is a free man to-night.”

There was no outcry on the mother’s part; but her hands clasped each other till the nails showed white.

“Where is he now?”

“Here, in Flamsted — ”

“Let me go — let me go to him — ”

“He has come to you — he is just outside — ”

She was past him with a rush — at the door — on the porch —

“Champney! — My son! — where are you?” she cried out into the night.

Her answer came on swift feet. He sprang up the steps two at a time, they were in each other’s arms — then he had to be strong for both.

He led her in, half carrying her; placed her in a chair; knelt before her, chafing her hands. . . .

Father Honoré made his escape; they were unconscious of his presence or his departure. He closed the front door softly behind him, and on feet shod with light-heartedness covered the road to his own house in a few minutes. He flung aside his coat, took his violin, and played and played till late into the night.

Two of the sisters of The Mystic Rose, who had been over to Quarry End Park nursing a sick quarryman's wife throughout the day, paused to listen as they passed the house. One of them was Sister Ste. Croix.

The violin exulted, rejoiced, sang of love heavenly, of love earthly, of all loves of life and nature; it sang of repentance, of expiation, of salvation —

“I can bear no more,” whispered Sister Ste. Croix to her companion, and the hand she laid on the one that was raised to hush her, was not only cold, it was damp with the sweat of the agony of remembrance.

The strains of the violin's song accompanied them to their own door.

VII

THE Saturday-night frequenters of The Greenbush have changed with the passing years like all else in Flamsted. The Greenbush itself is no longer a hostelry, but a cosy club-house purveyed for, to the satisfaction of every member, by its old landlord, Augustus Buzzby. The Club's membership, of both young and old men, is large and increasing with the growth of the town; but the old frequenters of The Greenbush bar-room head the list — Colonel Caukins and Octavius Buzzby paying the annual dues of their first charter member, old Joel Quimber, now in his eighty-seventh year.

The former office is a grill room, and made one with the back parlor, now the club restaurant. On this Saturday night in March, the white-capped chef — Augustus prided himself in keeping abreast the times — was busy in the grill room, and Augustus himself was superintending the laying of a round table for ten. The Colonel was to celebrate his sixty-fifth birthday by giving a little supper.

“Nothing elaborate, Buzzby,” he said a week before the event, “a fine saddle of mutton — Southdown — some salmon trout, a stiff bouillon for Quimber, you know his masticatory apparatus is no longer equal to this whole occasion, and a chive salad. *The* cake Mrs. Caukins elects to provide herself, and I need not assure you, who know her culinary powers, that it will be a *ne plus ultra* of a cake, both in material and execution;

fruits, coffee and cheese — Roquefort. Your accomplished chef can fill in the interstices. Here are the cards — Quimber at my right, if you please.”

Augustus looked at the cards and smiled.

“All the old ones included, I see, Colonel,” he ran over the names, “Quimber, Tave, Elmer Wiggins, Emlie, Poggi and Caukins” — he laughed outright; “that ’s a good firm, Colonel,” he said slyly, and the Colonel smiled his appreciation of the gentle insinuation — “the manager at the sheds, and the new boss of the Upper Quarry?” He looked inquiringly at the Colonel on reading the last name.

“That ’s all right, Buzzby; he’s due here next Saturday, the festal day; and I want to give some substantial expression to him, as a stranger and neighbor, of Flamsted’s hospitality.”

Augustus nodded approval, and continued: “And me! Thank you kindly, Colonel, but you’ll have to excuse me this time. I want everything to go right on this special occasion. I’ll join you with a pipe afterwards.”

“As you please, Buzzby, only make it a cigar; and consider yourself included in the spirit if not in the flesh. Nine sharp.”

At a quarter of nine, just as Augustus finished putting the last touch to an already perfect table, the Colonel made his appearance at The Greenbush, a pasteboard box containing a dozen boutonnières under his arm. He laid one on the table cloth by each plate, and stood back to enjoy the effect. He rubbed his hands softly in appreciation of the “color scheme” as he termed it — a phrase that puzzled Augustus. He saw no “scheme” and very little “color” in the dark-wainscoted room, except the cheerful fire on the hearth and some heavy

red half-curtains at the windows to shut out the cold and dark of this March night. The walls were white; the grill of dark wood, and the floor painted dark brown. But the red carnations on the snow-white damask did somehow "touch the whole thing up," as he confided later to his brother.

The Colonel's welcome to his companions was none the less cordial because he repressed his usual flow of eloquence till "the cloth should be removed." He purposed then to spring a surprise, oratorical and otherwise, on those assembled.

After the various toasts, — all given and drunk in sweet cider made for the occasion from Northern Spies, the Colonel being prohibitive for example's sake, — the good wishes for many prospective birthdays and prosperous years, the Colonel filled his glass to the brim and, holding it in his left hand, literally rose to the occasion.

"Gentlemen," he began in full chest tones, "some fourteen years ago, five of us now present were wont to discuss in the old office of this hospitable hostelry, now the famous grill room of the Club, the Invasion of the New — the opening of the great Flamsted Quarries — the migrations of the nations hitherwards and the consequent prospective industrial development of our native village."

He paused and looked about him impressively; finally his eye settled sternly on Elmer Wiggins who, satisfied inwardly with the choice and bounteous supper provided by the Colonel, had made up his mind to "stand fire", as he said afterwards to Augustus.

The Colonel resumed his speech, his voice acquiring as he proceeded a volume and depth that carried it far

beyond the grill room's walls to the ears of edified passers on the street:

"There were those among us who maintained — in the face of extreme opposition, I am sorry to say — that this town of Flamsted would soon make itself a factor in the vast industrial life of our marvellous country. In retrospect, I reflect that those who had this faith, this trust in the resources of their native town, were looked upon with scorn; were subjected to personal derision; were termed, to put it mildly, 'mere dreamers' — if I am not mistaken, the original expression was 'darned boomers.' Mr. Wiggins, here, our esteemed wholesale and retail pharmacist, will correct me if I am wrong on this point —"

He paused again as if expecting an answer; nothing was forthcoming but a decidedly embarrassed "Hem," from the afore-named pharmacist. The Colonel was satisfied.

"Now, gentlemen, in refutation of that term — I will not repeat myself — and what it implied, after fourteen years, comparable to those seven fat kine of Pharaoh's dream, our town can point throughout the length and breadth of our land to its monumental works of art and utility that may well put to blush the renowned record of the Greeks and Romans."

Prolonged applause and a ringing cheer.

"All over our fair land the granite monoliths of *Flamsted*, beacon or battle, point heavenwards. The transcontinental roads, that track and nerve our country, cross and re-cross the raging torrents of western rivers on granite abutments from the *Flamsted* quarries! The laws, alike for the just and unjust," — the Colonel did not perceive his slip, but Elmer Wiggins smiled to himself, — "are promulgated within the stately

granite halls of the capitals of our statehood — *Flamsted* again! The gospel of praise and prayer will shortly resound beneath the arches of the choir and nave of the great granite cathedral — the product of the quarries in The Gore!”

Deafening applause, clinking of glasses, and cries of “Good! True — Hear — Hear!”

The Colonel beamed and gathered himself together with a visible effort for his peroration. He laid his hand on his heart.

“A man of feeling, gentlemen, has a heart. He is not oblivious either of the needs of his neighbor, his community, or the world in general. Although he is vulnerable to wounds in the house of his friends,” — a severe look falls upon Wiggins, — “he is not impervious to appeal for sympathy from without. I trust I have defined a man of feeling, gentlemen, a man of heart, as regards the world in general. And now, to make an abrupt descent from the abstract to the concrete, from the general to the particular, I will permit myself to say that those aspersions cast upon me fourteen years ago as a mere promoter, irrespective of my manhood, hurt me as a man of feeling — a man of heart.

“Sir — ” he turned again to Elmer Wiggins who was apparently the lightning conductor for the Colonel’s fourteen years of pent-up injury — “a father has his feelings. You are *not* a father — I draw no conclusions; but *if* you had been a father fourteen years ago in this very room, I would have trusted to your magnanimity not to give expression to your decided views on the subject of the native Americans’ intermarriage with those of a race foreign to us. I assure you, sir, such a view not only narrows the mind, but constricts

humanity, and ossifies the heart — that special organ by which the world, despite present-day detractors, lives and moves and has its being.” (Murmuring assent.)

“But, sir, I believe you have come to see otherwise, else as my guest on this happy occasion, I should not permit myself to apply to you so personal a remark. And, gentlemen,” the Colonel swelled visibly, but those nearest him caught the shimmer of a suspicious moisture in his eyes, “I am in a position to-night — this night whereon you have added to my happiness by your presence at this board — to repeat now what I said fourteen years ago in this very room: I consider myself honored in that a member of my immediate family, one very, very dear to me,” his voice shook in spite of his effort to strengthen it, “is contemplating entering into the solemn estate of matrimony at no distant date with — a foreigner, gentlemen, but a naturalized citizen of our great and glorious United States. Gentlemen,” he filled his glass again and held it high above his head, — “I give you with all my heart Mr. Luigi Poggi, an honored and prosperous citizen of Flamsted — my future son-in-law — the prospective husband of my youngest daughter, *Dulcibella Caukins*.”

The company rose to a man, young Caukins assisting Quimber to his feet.

With loud and hearty acclaim they welcomed the new member of the Caukins family; they crowded about the Colonel, and no hand that grasped his and Luigi's in congratulation was firmer and more cordial than Elmer Wiggins'. The Colonel's smile expanded; he was satisfied — the old score was wiped out.

Afterwards with cigars and pipes they discussed for an hour the affairs of Flamsted. The influx of for-

eigners with their families was causing a shortage of houses and housing. Emlie proposed the establishment of a Loan and Mortgage Company to help out the new-comers. Poggi laid before them his plan for an Italian House to receive the unmarried men on their arrival.

“By the way,” he said, turning to the new head of the Upper Quarry, “you brought up a crowd with you this afternoon, did n’t you? — mostly my countrymen?”

“No, a mixed lot — about thirty. A few Scotch and English came up on the same train. Have they applied to you?” He addressed the manager of the Company’s sheds.

“No. I think they’ll be along Monday. I’ve noticed that those two nationalities generally have relations who house and look out for them when they come. But I had an application from an American just after the train came in; I don’t often have that now.”

“Did you take him on?” the Colonel asked between two puffs of his Havana.

“Yes; and he went to work in Shed Number Two. I confess he puzzles me.”

“What was he like?” asked the head of the Upper Quarry.

“Tall, blue eyes, gray hair, but only thirty-four as the register showed — misfit clothes — ”

“That ’s the one — he came up in the train with me. I noticed him in the car. I don’t believe he moved a muscle all the way up. I could n’t make him out, could you?”

“Well, no, I could n’t. By the way, Colonel, I noticed the name he entered was a familiar one in this part of Maine — Googe — ”

“Googe!” The Colonel looked at the speaker in amazement; “did he give his first name?”

“Yes, Louis — Louis C. Googe — ”

“My God!”

Whether the ejaculation proceeded from one mouth or five, the manager and foreman could not distinguish; but the effect on the Flamsted men was varied and remarkable. The Colonel’s cigar dropped from his shaking hand; his face was ashen. Emlie and Wiggins stared at each other as if they had taken leave of their senses. Joel Quimber leaned forward, his hands folded on the head of his cane, and spoke to Octavius who sat rigid on his chair:

“What ’d he say, Tave? — Champ to home?”

But Octavius Buzzby was beyond the power of speech. Augustus spoke for him:

“He said a man applied for work in the sheds this afternoon, Uncle Jo, who wrote his name Louis C. Googe.”

“Thet ’s him — thet ’s Champ — Champ ’s to home. You help me inter my coat, Tave, I ’m goin’ to see ef ’s true — ” He rose with difficulty. Then Octavius spoke; his voice shook:

“No, Uncle Jo, you sit still a while; if it ’s Champney, we can’t none of us see him to-night.” He pushed him gently into his chair.

The Colonel was rousing himself. He stepped to the telephone and called up Father Honoré.

“Father Honoré — ”

“This is Colonel Caukins. Can you tell me if there is any truth in the report that Champney Googe has returned to-day?”

“Thank God.”

He put up the receiver, but still remained standing.

“Gentlemen,” he said to the manager and the Upper Quarry guest, his voice was thick with emotion and the tears of thankfulness were coursing down his cheeks, “perhaps no greater gift could be bestowed on my sixty-fifth birthday than Champney Googe’s return to his home — his mother — his friends — we are all his friends. Perhaps the years are beginning to tell on me, but I feel that I must excuse myself to you and go home — I want to tell my wife. I will explain all to you, as strangers among us, some other time; for the present I must beg your indulgence — joy never kills, but I am experiencing the fact that it can weaken.”

“That ’s all right, Colonel,” said the manager; “we understand it perfectly and it ’s late now.”

“I ’ll go, too, Colonel,” said Octavius; “I ’m going to take Uncle Jo home in the trap.”

Luigi Poggi helped the Colonel into his great coat. When he left the room with his prospective father-in-law, his handsome face had not regained the color it lost upon the first mention of Champney’s name.

Emlie and Wiggins remained a few minutes to explain as best they could the situation to the stranger guests, and the cause of the excitement.

“I remember now hearing about this affair; I read it in the newspapers — it must have been seven or eight years ago.”

“Six years and four months.” Mr. Wiggins corrected him.

“I guess it ’ll be just as well not to spread the matter much among the men — they might kick; besides he is n’t, of course, a union man.”

“There ’s one thing in his favor,” it was Emlie who

spoke, "the management and the men have changed since it occurred, and there are very few except our home folks that would be apt to mention it — and they can be trusted where Champney Googe is concerned."

The four went out together.

The grill room of The Greenbush was empty save for Augustus Buzzby who sat smoking before the dying fire. Old visions were before his eyes — one of the office on a June night many years ago; the five friends discussing Champney Googe's prospects; the arrival of Father Honoré and little Aileen Armagh — so Luigi had at last given up hope in that direction for good and all.

The town clock struck twelve. He sighed heavily; it was for the old times, the old days, the old life.

VIII

IT was several months before Aileen saw him. Her close attendance on Mrs. Champney and her avoidance of the precincts of The Gore — Maggie complained loudly to Mrs. Googe that Aileen no longer ran in as she used to do, and Mrs. Caukins confided to her that she thought Aileen might feel sensitive about Luigi's engagement, for she had been there but twice in five months — precluded the possibility of her meeting him. She excused herself to Mrs. Googe and the Sisters on the ground of her numerous duties at Champ-au-Haut; Ann and Hannah were both well on in years and Mrs. Champney was failing daily.

It was perhaps five months after his return that she was sitting one afternoon in Mrs. Champney's room, in attendance on her while the regular nurse was out for two hours. There had been no conversation between them for nearly the full time, when Mrs. Champney spoke abruptly from the bed:

"I heard last month that Champney Googe is back again — has been back for five months; why did n't you tell me before?"

The voice was very weak, but querulous and sharp. Aileen was sewing at the window. She did not look up.

"Because I did n't suppose you liked him well enough to care about his coming home; besides, it was Octavius' place to tell you."

"Well, I don't care about his coming, or his going either, for that matter, but I do care about knowing

things that happen under my very nose within a reasonable time of their happening. I'm not in my dotage yet, I'll have you to understand."

Aileen was silent.

"Come, say something, can't you?" she snapped.

"What do you want me to say, Mrs. Champney?" She spoke wearily, but not impatiently. The daily, almost hourly demands of this sick old woman had, in a way, exhausted her.

"Tell me what he's doing."

"He's at work."

"Where?"

"In the sheds — Shed Number Two."

"What!" Paralysis prevented any movement of her hands, but her head jerked on the pillow to one side, towards Aileen.

"I said he was at work in the sheds."

"What's Champney Gooze doing in the sheds?"

"Earning his living, I suppose, like other men."

Almeda Champney was silent for a while. Aileen could but wonder what the thoughts might be that were filling the shrivelled box of the brain — what were the feelings in the ossifying heart of the woman who had denied help to one of her own blood in time of need. Had she any feeling indeed, except that for self?

"Have you seen him?"

"No."

"I should think he would want to hide his head for shame."

"I don't see why." She spoke defiantly.

"Why? Because I don't see how after such a career a man can hold up his head among his own."

Aileen bit her under lip to keep back the sharp retort. She chose another and safer way.

“Oh,” she said brightly, looking over to Mrs. Champney with a frank smile, “but he has really just begun his career, you know —”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mean he has just begun honest work among honest men, and that’s the best career for him or any other man to my thinking.”

“Umph! — little you know about it.”

Aileen laughed outright. “Oh, I know more than you think I do, Mrs. Champney. I have n’t lived twenty-six years for nothing, and what I’ve seen, I’ve seen — and I’ve no near-sighted eyes to trouble me either; and what I’ve heard, I’ve heard, for my ears are good — regular long-distance telephones sometimes.”

She was not prepared for the next move on Mrs. Champney’s part.

“I believe you would marry him now — after all, if he asked you.” She spoke with a sneer.

“Do you really believe it?” She folded her work and prepared to leave the room, for she heard the nurse’s step in the hall below. “Well, if you do, I’ll tell you something, Mrs. Champney, but I’d like it to be between us.” She crossed the room and paused beside the bed.

“What?”

She bent slightly towards her. “I would rather marry a man who earns his three dollars a day at honest work of quarrying or cutting stones, — or breaking them, for that matter,” — she added under her breath, “but I’m not saying he would be any relation of yours — than a man who does n’t know what a day’s toil is except to cudgel his brains tired, with contriving the quickest means of making his millions double themselves at other people’s expense in twenty-four hours.”

The nurse opened the door. Mrs. Champney spoke bitterly:

“You little fool — you think you know, but —” aware of the nurse, she ended fretfully, “you wear me out, talking so much. Tell Hannah to make me some fresh tamarind water — and bring it up quick.”

By the time Aileen had brought up the refreshment, she had half repented of her words. Mrs. Champney had been failing perceptibly the last few weeks, and all excitement was forbidden her. For this reason she had been kept so long in ignorance of Champney’s return. As Aileen held the drinking tube to her lips, she noticed that the faded sunken eyes, fixed upon her intently, were not inimical — and she was thankful. She desired to live in peace, if possible, with this pitiable old age so long as it should last — a few weeks at the longest. The lesson of the piece of granite was not lost upon her. She kept the specimen on a little shelf over her bed.

She went down stairs into the library to answer a telephone call; it was from Maggie McCann who begged her to come up that afternoon to see her; the matter was important and could not wait. Aileen knew by the pleading tone of the voice, which sounded unnatural, that she was needed for something. She replied she would go up at once. She put on her hat, and while waiting for the tram at The Bow, bought a small bag of gumdrops for Billy.

Maggie received her with open arms and a gush of tears; thereupon Billy, now tottering on his unsteady feet, flopped suddenly on the floor and howled with true Irish good will.

“Why, Maggie, what *is* the matter!” she exclaimed.

“Och, Aileen, darlin’, me heart’s in smithereens,

and I'm that deep in trouble that me head's like to rend — an' Jim's all broke up — ”

“What is it; do tell me, Maggie — can I help?” she urged, catching up Billy and endeavoring to smother his howls with kisses.

Mrs. McCann wiped her reddened eyes, took off her apron and sat down in a low chair by Aileen who was filling Billy's small mouth, conveniently open for another howl upon perceiving his mother wipe her eyes, with a sizable gumdrop.

“The little gells be over to the kindergarten with the Sisters, an' I thought I'd clane go out of me mind if I could n't have a word wid you before Jim gets home — Och, Aileen, dearie, me home I'm so proud of — ” She choked, and Billy immediately repudiated his gumdrop upon Aileen's clean linen skirt; his eyes were reading the signs of the times in his mother's face.

“Now, Maggie, dear, tell me all about it. Begin at the beginning, and then I'll know where you're at.”

Maggie smiled faintly. “Sure, I would n't blame you for not knowin' where I'm at.” Mrs. McCann sniffed several times prefatorily.

“You know I told you Jim had a temper, Aileen — ”

Aileen nodded in assent; she was busy coaxing the rejected ball into Billy's puckered mouth.

“— And that there's times whin he querrels wid the men — ”

“Yes.”

“Well, you know Mr. Googe bein' in the same shed an' section wid Jim, I says innercent-like to Jim: — ‘I'm glad he's in your section, Jim, belike you can make it a bit aisier for him.’

“‘Aisy is it?’ says Jim.

“‘Yes, aisy,’ says I.

“‘An’ wot wud I be after makin’ a job aisier for the likes of him?’ he says, grouchy-like.

“‘An’ why not?’ says I.

“‘For a jail-bird?’ says he.

“‘Deed,’ says I, ‘if yer own b’y had been breakin’ stones wid a gang of toughs for sivin long years gone, would n’t ye be after likin’ a man to spake wan daycint word wid him?’ says I.

“Wid that Jim turned on quick-like an’ says:—

“‘I’ll thank ye, Mrs. McCann, to kape yer advice to yerself. It’s not Jim McCann’s b’y that’ll be doin’ the dirty job that yer Mr. Champney Googe was after doin’ six years gone, nor be after takin’ the bread an’ butter out of an honest man’s mout’ that has a wife an’ three childer to feed. He’s a convic’,’ says Jim.

“‘What if he is?’ says I.

“‘I don’t hold wid no convic’s,’ says Jim; ‘I hold wid honest men; an’ if it’s convic’s be comin’ to take the best piece-work out of our hands, it’s time we struck—to a man,’ says Jim.

“Niver, niver but wanct has Jim called me ‘Mrs. McCann,’” Maggie said brokenly, but stifled a sob for Billy’s sake; “an’ niver wanct has he gone to work widout kissin’ me an’ the childer, sometimes twice round—but he went out yisterday an’ niver turned for wan look at wife an’ childer; an’ me heart was that heavy in my bosom that me b’y refused the breast an’ cried like to kill himself for wan mortal hour, an’ the little gells cried too, an’ me bread burnin’ to a crisp, an’ I could n’t do wan thing but just sit down wid me hands full of cryin’ childer—an’ me heart cryin’ like a child wid ’em.”

Aileen tried to comfort.

“But, Maggie, such things will happen in the happiest married lives, and with the best of husbands. Jim will get over it — I suppose he has by this time; you say it is n’t like to him to hold anger long — ”

“But he has n’t!” Maggie broke forth afresh, and between mother and son, who immediately followed suit, a deluge threatened. “Wan of the stone-cutters’ wives, Mrs. MacLoughanchan, he works in the same section as Jim, told me about it — ”

“About what?” Aileen asked, hoping to get some continuity into Maggie’s relation of her marital woes.

“The fight at the sheds.”

“What fight?” Aileen put the question with a sickening fear at her heart.

“The fight betwixt Jim an’ Mr. Googe — ”

“What do you mean, Maggie?”

“I mane wot I say,” Maggie replied with some show of spirit, for Aileen’s tone of voice was peremptory; “Jim McCann, me husband, an’ Mr. Googe had words in the shed — ”

“What words?”

“Just lave me time an’ I ’ll tell you, Aileen. You be after catchin’ me short up betwixt ivery word, an’ more be token as if ’t was your own man, instid of mine, ye was worrittin’ about. I said they had words, but by rights I should say it was Jim as had them. Jim was mad because the boss in Shed Number Two give Mr. Googe a piece of work he had been savin’ an’ promisin’ him; an’ Jim made a fuss about it, an’ the boss said he ’d give Jim another, but Jim wanted *that wan piece*; an’ Jim threatened to get up a strike, an’ if there ’s a strike Jim ’ll lave the place an’ I ’ll lose me home — ochone — ”

“Go on, Maggie.” Aileen was trying to anticipate

Maggie's tale, and in anticipation of the worst happening to Champney Googe, she lost her patience. She could not bear the suspense.

"But Jim did n't sass the boss — he sassed Mr. Googe. 'T was this way, so Mrs. MacLoughanchan says — Jim said niver a word about the fight to me, but he said he would lave the place if they did n't strike — Mr. Googe says, 'McCann, the foreman says you 're to begin on the two keystones at wanct — at wanct,' says he, repating it because Jim said niver a word. An' Jim fires up an' says under his breath:

"'I don't take no orders from convic's,' says he.

"'What did you say, McCann?' says Mr. Googe, steppin' up to him wid a glint in his eye that Jim did n't mind he was so mad; an' instid of repatin' it quiet-like, Jim says, steppin' outside the shed when he see the boss an' Mr. Googe followin' him, loud enough for the whole shed to hear:

"'I don't take orders from no convic's —' an' then —" Maggie laid her hand suddenly over her heart as if in pain, "'Take that back, McCann,' says Mr. Googe — 'I'll give you the wan chanct.' — An' then Jim swore an' said he'd see him an' himself in hell first, an' then, before Jim knew wot happened, Mr. Googe lit out wid his fist — an' Jim layin' out on the grass, for Mrs. MacLoughanchan says her man said Mr. Googe picked a soft place to drop him in; an' Mr. Googe helps Jim to his feet, an' holds out his hand an' says:

"'Shake hands, McCann, an' we 'll start afresh —'

"But, oh, Aileen! Jim would n't, an' Mr. Googe turned away sad-like, an' then Jim comes home, an' wid-out a word to his wife, says if they don't strike, because there 's a convic' an' a no union man a-workin' 'longside

of him in his section, he 'll lave an' give up his job here — an' it's two hundred he's paid down out of his wages, an' me a-savin' from morn till night on me home — an' 't was to be me very own because Jim says no man alive can tell when he 'll be dead in the quarries an' the sheds."

She wept afresh and Billy was left unconsolated, for Maggie, wiping her eyes to look at Aileen and wonder at her silence, saw that she, too, was weeping; but the tears rolled silently one after another down her flushed cheeks.

"Och, Aileen, darlin'! Don't ye cry wid me — me burden's heavy enough widout the weight of wan of your tears — say something to comfort me heart about Jim."

"I can't, Maggie, I think it's wicked for Jim to say such things to Mr. Googe — everybody knows what he has been through. And it would serve Jim McCann but right," she added hotly, "if the time should come when his Billy should have the same cruel words said to him —"

"Don't — don't — for the love of the Mother of God, don't say such things, Aileen!" She caught up the sorely perplexed and troubled Billy, and buried her face in his red curls. "Don't for the sake of the mother I am, an' only a mother can know how the Mother of God himself felt wid her crucified Son an' the bitter words he had to hear — ye're not a mother, Aileen, an' so I won't lay it up too much against ye —"

Aileen interrupted her with exceeding bitterness;

"No, I'm not a mother, Maggie, and I never shall be."

Maggie looked at her in absolute incomprehension.

“I thought you was cryin’ for me, an’ Jim, an’ all our prisent troubles, but I belave yer cryin’ for —”

Mrs. McCann stopped short; she was still staring at Aileen who suddenly lifted her brimming eyes to hers. — What Mrs. McCann read therein she never accurately defined, even to Jim; but, whatever it was, it caused a revulsion of feeling in Maggie’s sorely bruised heart. She set Billy down on the floor without any ceremony, much to that little man’s surprise, and throwing her arms around Aileen drew her close with a truly maternal caress.

“Och, darlin’ — darlin’ —” she said in the voice with which she soothed Billy to sleep, “darlin’ Aileen, an’ has your puir heart been bearin’ this all alone, an’ me talkin’ an’ pratin’ about me Jim to ye, an’ how beautiful it is to be married! — ’Deed an’ it is, darlin’, an’ if Jim was n’t a man he’d be an angel sure; but it’s not Maggie McCann that’s wantin’ her husband to be an angel yet, an’ you must just forgive him, Aileen, an’ you’ll find yerself that no man’s perfection, an’ a woman has to be after takin’ thim as they be — lovin’ an’ gentle be times, an’ cross as Cain whin yer expectin’ thim to be swateheartin’ wid ye; an’ wake when ye think they’re after bein’ rale giants; an’ strong whin ye’re least lookin’ for it; an’ ginerous by spells an’ spendthrifts wid their ’baccy, an’ skinflints wid their own, an’ — an’ — just common, downright aggravatin’, lovable men, darlin’ — There now! Yer smilin’ again like me old Aileen, an’ bad cess to the wan that draws another tear from your swate Irish eyes.” She kissed her heartily.

In trying to make amends Mrs. McCann forgot her own woes; taking Billy in her arms, she went to the stove and set on the kettle.

“It ’s four past, an’ Jim ’ll be comin’ in tired and worried, so I ’ll put on an extra potater or two an’ a good bit of bacon an’ some pase. Stay wid us, Aileen.”

“No, Maggie, I can’t; besides you and Jim will want the house to yourself till you get straightened out — and, Maggie, it *will* straighten out, don’t you worry.”

“’Deed, an’ I ’ll not waste me breath another time tellin’ me troubles to a heart that ’s sorer than me own — good-bye, darlin,’ an’ me best thanks for comin’ up so prompt to me in me trouble. It ’s good to have a friend, Aileen, an’ we ’ve been friendly that long that it seems as if me own burden must be yours.”

Aileen smiled, leaning to kiss Billy as he clung to his mother’s neck.

“I ’ll come up whenever you want me and I can get away, Maggie, an’ next time I ’ll bring you more comfort, I hope. Good-bye.”

“Och, darlin’! — T’row a kiss, Billy. Look, Aileen, at the kisses me b’y’s t’rowin’ yer!” she exclaimed delightedly; and Billy, in the exuberance of his joy that tears were things of the past, continued to throw kisses after the lady till she disappeared down the street.

IX

OH, but her heart was hot with indignation as she walked along the road, her eyes were stung with scalding tears, her thoughts turbulent and rebellious! Why must he suffer such indignities from a man like Jim McCann! How dared a man, that was a man, taunt another like that! The hand holding her sun umbrella gripped the handle tightly, and through set teeth she said to herself: "I hate them all — hate them!"

The declining July sun was hot upon her; the road-bed, gleaming white with granite dust, blinded her. She looked about for some shelter where she could wait for the down car; there was none in sight, except the pines over by Father Honoré's and the sisterhood house an eighth of a mile beyond. She continued to stand there in the glare and the heat — miserable, dejected, rebellious, until the tram halted for her. The car was an open one; there was no other occupant. As it sped down the curving road to the lake shore, the breeze, created by its movement, was more than grateful to her. She took off her shade-hat to enjoy the full benefit of it.

At the switch, half way down, the tram waited for the up car. She could hear it coming from afar; the overhead wires vibrated to the extra power needed on the steep grade. It came in sight, crowded with workmen on their way home to Quarry End; the rear platform was black with them. It passed over the switch slowly, passed within two feet of her seat. She turned

to look at it, wondering at its capacity for so many — and looked, instead, directly into the face of Champney Googe who stood on the lower step, his dinner-pail on his arm, the arm thrust through the guard.

At sight of her, so near him that the breath of each might have been felt on the cheek of the other, he raised his workman's cap —

She saw the gray head, the sudden pallor on brow and cheek, the deep, slightly sunken eyes fixed upon her as if on her next move hung the owner's hope of eternal life — the eyes moved with the slowly moving car to focus *her*. . . .

To Aileen Armagh that face, changed as it was, was a glimpse of heaven on earth, and that heaven was reflected in the smile with which she greeted it. She did more: — unheeding the many faces that were turned towards her, she leaned from the car, her eyes following him, the love-light still radiating from her every feature, till he was carried beyond sight around the curving base of the Flamsted Hills.

She heard nothing more externally, saw nothing more, until she found herself at The Corners instead of The Bow. The tumult within her rendered her deaf to the clanging of the electric gong, blind to the people who had entered along Main Street. Love, and love alone, was ringing its joy-bells in her soul till external sounds grew muffled, indistinct; until she became unaware of her surroundings. Love was knocking so loudly at her heart that the bounding blood pulsed rhythmic in her ears. Love was claiming her wholly, possessing her soul and body — but no longer that idealizing love of her young girlhood and womanhood. Rather it was that love which is akin to the divine rapture of maternity — the love

that gives all, that sacrifices all, which demands nothing of the loved one save to love, to shield, to comfort — the love that makes of a true woman's breast not only a rest whereon a man, as well as his babe, may pillow a weary head, but a round tower of strength within which there beats a heart of high courage for him who goes forth to the daily battlefield of Life.

She rode back to The Bow. Hannah called to her from the kitchen door when she saw her coming up the driveway:

“Come round here a minute, Aileen.”

“What is it, Hannah?” Her voice trembled in spite of her effort to speak naturally. She prayed Hannah might not notice.

“Here's a little broth I've made for Uncle Jo Quimber. I heard he was n't very well, and I wish you'd take this down to him before supper. Tell him it won't hurt him and it's real strengthenin'.”

“I will go now, and — Hannah, don't mind if I don't come home to supper to-night; I'm not hungry; it's too hot to eat. If I want anything, I'll get a glass of milk in the pantry afterwards. If Mrs. Champney should want me, tell Octavius he'll find me down by the boat house.”

“Mis' Champney ain't so well, to-night; the nurse says. “I guess it's this heat is telling on her.”

“I should think it would — even I feel it.” She was off again down the driveway, glad to be moving, for a strange restlessness was upon her.

She found Joel Quimber sitting in his arm chair on the back porch of the little house belonging to his grand-niece. The old man looked feeble, exhausted and white; but his eyes brightened on seeing Aileen come round the corner of the porch.

"What you got there, Aileen?"

"Something good for you, Uncle Jo. Hannah made it for you on purpose." She showed him the broth.

"Hannah's a good soul, I thank her kindly. Set down, Aileen, set down."

"I'm afraid you're too tired to have company to-night, Uncle Jo."

"Lord, no — you ain't comp'ny, Aileen, an' I ain't never too tired to have your comp'ny either."

She smiled and took her seat on the lower step, at his feet.

"Jest thinkin' of you, Aileen — "

"Me, Uncle Jo? What put me into your head?"

"You're in a good part of the time ef you did but know it."

"Oh, Uncle Jo, did they teach you how to flatter like that in the little old schoolhouse you showed me years ago at The Corners?"

Old Joel Quimber chuckled weakly.

"No — not thar. A man, ef he's any kind of a man, don't have to learn his a-b-c before he can tell a good-lookin' gal she's in his head, or his heart — jest which you're a min' ter — most of the time. Yes, I was thinkin' of you, Aileen — you an' Champney."

The color died out entirely from Aileen's cheeks, and then surged into them again till she put her hands to her face to cool their throbbing. She was wondering if Love had entered into some conspiracy with Fate to-day to keep this beloved name ever in her ears.

"What about me and Mr. Googe?" She spoke in a low tone, her face was turned away from the old man to the meadows and the sheds in the distance.

"I was a-thinkin' of this time fourteen year ago this very month. Champ an' me was walkin' up an' down

the street, an' he was tellin' me 'bout that serenade, an' how you 'd give him a rosebud with pepper in 't — Lord, Aileen, you was a case, an' no mistake! An' I was thinkin', too, what Champ said to me thet very night. He was tellin' 'bout thet great hell-gate of New York, an' he said, 'You 've got to swim with the rest or you 'd go under, Uncle Jo,' — 'go under,' them 's his very words. An' I said, 'Like enough *you* would, Champ — I ain't ben thar —'

He paused a moment, shuffled out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes. Then he spoke again, but in so low a tone that Aileen could barely catch the words:

"An' he went under, Champ did — went under —"

Aileen felt, without seeing, for her face was still turned to the meadows and the sheds, that the old man was leaning to her. Then she heard his voice in her ear:

"Hev you seen him?"

"Once, Uncle Jo."

"You 're his friend, ain't you, Aileen?"

"Yes." Her voice trembled.

"Guess we 're all his friends in Flamsted — I heered they fit in the shed, Champ an' Jim McCann — it had n't ought 'a'-ben, Aileen — had n't ought 'a'-ben; but 't warn't Champ's fault, you may bet your life on thet. Champ went under, but he did n't stay under — you remember thet, Aileen. An' I can't nowise blame him, now he 's got his head above water agin, for not stan'in' it to have a man like McCann heave a stone at him jest ez he 's makin' for shore. 'T ain't right, an' the old Judge use ter say, 'What ain't right had n't ought ter be.'"

He waited a while to regain his scant breath; the long speech had exhausted it. At last he chuckled weakly

to himself, "Champ 's a devil of a feller —" he caught up his words as if he were saying too much; laid his hand on Aileen's head; turned her face half round to his and, leaning, whispered again in her ear:

"Don't you go back on Champ, promise me thet, Aileen."

She sprang to her feet and laid her hand in his.

"I promise, Uncle Jo."

"Thet 's a good girl." He laid his other hand over hers. "You stick by Champ an' stick up for him too; he 's good blood, an' ef he did go under for a spell, he ain't no worse 'n the rest, nor half ez bad; for Champ went in *of his own accord* — *of his own accord*," he repeated significantly, "an' don't you forget thet, Aileen! Thet takes grit; mebbe you would n't think so, but it does. Champ makes me think of them divers, I've read an' heerd about, thet dives for pearls. Some on 'em comes up all right, but some of 'em go under for good an' all. Champ dove mighty deep — he was diving for money, which he figured was his pearl, Aileen — an' he most went under for good an' all without gettin' what he wanted, an' now he 's come to the surface agin, it 's all ben wuth it — he 's got the pearl, Aileen, but t' ain't the one he expected to get — he told me so t' other night. We set here him an' me, an' understan' one 'nother even when we don't talk — jest set an' smoke an' puff —"

"What pearl is it, Uncle Jo?" She whispered her question, half fearing, but wholly longing to hear the old man's answer.

"Guess he 'll tell you himself sometime, Aileen."

He leaned back in his chair; he was tired. Aileen stooped and kissed him on the forehead.

"Good night, Uncle Jo," she said softly, "an' don't

forget Hannah's broth or there'll be trouble at Champo."

He roused himself again.

"I heered from Tave to-day thet Mis' Champney is pretty low."

"Yes, she feels this heat in her condition."

"Like enough — like enough; guess we all do a little." Then he seemed to speak to himself: — "She was rough on Champ," he murmured.

Aileen left him with that name on his lips.

On her return to Champ-au-Haut, she went down to the boat house to sit a while in its shade. The surface of the lake was motionless, but the reflection of the surrounding heights and shores was slightly veiled, owing to the heat-haze that quivered above it.

Aileen was reliving the experience of the last seven years, the consummation of which was the knowledge that Champney Gooze loved her. She was sure of this now. She had felt it intuitively during the twilight horror of that October day in The Gore. But how, when, where would he speak the releasing word — the supreme word of love that alone could atone, that alone could set her free? Would he ever speak it? — could he, after that avowal of the unreasoning passion for her which had taken possession of him seven years ago? And, moreover, what had not that avowal and its expression done to her?

Her cheek paled at the thought: — he had kissed love into her for all time; and during all his years of imprisonment she had been held in thrall, as it were, to him and to his memory. All her rebellion at such thralldom, all her disgust at her weakness, as she termed it, all her hatred, engendered by the unpalatable method he had used to enthrall her, all her

struggle to forget, to live again her life free of any entanglement with Champney Googe, all her endeavors to care for other men, had availed her naught. Love she must — and Champney Googe remained the object of that love. Father Honoré's words gave her courage to live on — loving.

“Champney — Champney,” she said low to herself. She covered her face with her hands. The mere taking of his name on her lips eased the exaltation of her mood. She rejoiced that she had been able that afternoon to show him how it stood with her after these many years; for the look in his eyes, when he recognized her, told her that she alone could hold to his lips the cup that should quench his thirst. Oh, she would be to him what no other woman could ever have been, ever could be — no other! She knew this. He knew it. When, oh, when would the word be spoken?

She withdrew her hands from her face, and looked up the lake to the sheds. The sun was nearing the horizon, and against its clear red light the gray buildings loomed large and dark. — And there was his place!

She sprang to her feet, ready to act upon a sudden thought. If she were not needed at the house, she would go up to the sheds; perhaps she could walk off the restlessness that kept urging her to action. At any rate, she could find comfort in thinking of his presence there during the day; she would be for a time, at least, in his environment. She knew Jim McCann's section; she and Maggie had been there more than once to watch the progress of some great work.

On the way up to the house she met Octavius.

“Where you going, Aileen?”

“Up to the house to see if I'm needed. If they don't

want me, I'm going up to the sheds for a walk. They say they look like cathedrals this week, so many of the arches and pillars are ready to be shipped."

"There's no need of your going up to the house. Mis' Champney ain't so well, and the nurse says she give orders for no one to come nigh her — for she's sent for Father Honoré."

"Father Honoré! What can she want of him?" she asked in genuine surprise. "He has n't been here for over a year."

"Well, anyway, I've got my orders to fetch Father Honoré, and I was just asking Hannah where you were. I thought you might like to ride up with me; I've harnessed up in the surrey."

"I won't drive way up, Tave; but I'd like you to put me down at the sheds. Maggie says it's really beautiful now in Shed Number Two. While I'm waiting for you, I can nose round all I want to and you can pick me up there on your way back. Just wait till I run up to the house to see the nurse myself, will you?" Octavius nodded.

She ran up the steps of the terrace, and on her return found Octavius with the surrey at the front door.

Aileen was silent during the first part of the drive. This was unusual when the two were together, and, after waiting a while, Octavius spoke:

"I'm wondering what she wants to see Father Honoré for."

"I'd like to know myself."

"It's got into my head, and somehow I can't get it out, that it's something to do with Champney —"

"Champney! —" the name slipped unawares through the red barrier of her lips; she bit them in vexation at

their betrayal of her thought — “you mean Champney Googe?” She tried to speak indifferently.

“Who else should I mean?” Octavius answered shortly. Aileen’s ways at times, especially during these last few years when Champney Googe’s name happened to be mentioned in her presence, were irritating in the extreme to the faithful factotum at Champ-au-Haut.

“I wish, Aileen, you ’d get over your grudge against him — ”

“What grudge?”

“You can tell that best yourself — there ’s no use your playing off — I don’t pretend to know anything about it, but I can put my finger on the very year and the very month you turned against Champney Googe who never had anything but a pleasant word for you ever since you was so high — ” he indicated a few feet on his whipstock — “and first come to Champo. ’T ain’t generous, Aileen; ’t ain’t like a true woman; ’t ain’t like you to go back on a man just because he has sinned. He stands in need of us all now, although they say at the sheds he can hold his own with the best of ’em — I heard the manager telling Emlie he ’d be foreman of Shed Number Two if he kept on, for he ’s the only one can get on with all of the foreigners; guess Jim McCann knows — ”

“What do you mean by the year and the month?”

“I mean what I say. ’T was in August seven years ago — but p’r’aps you don’t remember,” he said. His sarcasm was intentional.

She made no reply, but smiled to herself — a smile so exasperating to Octavius that he sulked a few minutes in silence. After another eighth of a mile, she spoke with apparent interest:

“What makes you think Mrs. Champney wants to see Father Honoré about her nephew?”

“Because it looks that way. This afternoon, when you was out, she got me to move Mr. Louis’ picture from the library to her room, and I had to hang it on the wall opposite her bed —” Octavius paused — “I believe she don’t think she ’ll last long, and she don’t look as if she could either. Last week she had Emlie up putting a codicil to her will. The nurse told me she was one of the witnesses, she and Emlie and the doctor — catch her letting me see any of her papers!” He reined into the road that led to the sheds.

“I hope to God she ’ll do him justice this time,” he spoke aloud, but evidently to himself.

“How do you mean, Tave?”

“I mean by giving him what ’s his by rights; that ’s what I mean.” He spoke emphatically.

“He would n’t be the man I think he is if he ever took a cent from her — not after what she did!” she exclaimed hotly.

Octavius turned and looked at her in amazement.

“That ’s the first time I ever heard you speak up for Champney Googe, an’ I’ve known you since before you knew him. Well, it ’s better late than never.” He spoke with a degree of satisfaction in his tone that did not escape Aileen. “Which door shall I leave you at?”

“Round at the west — there are some people coming out now — here we are. You ’ll find me here when you come back.”

“I shall be back within a half an hour; I telephoned Father Honoré I was coming up — you’re sure you don’t mind waiting here alone? I’ll get back before dusk.”

“What should I be afraid of? I won’t let the stones fall on me!”

She sprang to the ground. Octavius turned the horse and drove off.

On entering the shed she caught her breath in admiration. The level rays of the July sun shone into the gray interior illumining the farthest corners. Their glowing crimson flushed the granite to a scarcely perceptible rose. Portions of the noble arches, parts of the architrave, sculptured cornice and keystone, drums, pediments and capitals, stone mullions, here and there a huge monolith, caught the ethereal flush and transformed Shed Number Two into a temple of beauty.

She sought the section near the doors, where Jim McCann worked, and sat down on one of the granite blocks — perhaps the very one on which *he* was at work. The fancy was a pleasing one. Now and then she laid her hand caressingly on the cool stone and smiled to herself. Some men and women were looking at the huge Macdonald machine over in the farthest corner; one by one they passed out at the east door — at last she was alone with her loving thoughts in this cool sanctuary of industry.

She noticed a chisel lying behind the stone on which she sat; she turned and picked it up. She looked about for a hammer; she wanted to try her puny strength on what Champney Gooze manipulated with muscles hardened by years of breaking stones — that thought was no longer a nightmare to her — but she saw none. The sun sank below the horizon; the after-glow promised to be both long and beautiful. After a time she looked out across the meadows — a man was crossing them; evidently he had just left the tram, for

she heard the buzzing of the wires in the still air. He was coming towards the sheds. His form showed black against the western sky. Another moment — and Aileen knew him to be Champney Googe.

She sat there motionless, the chisel in her hand, her face turned to the west and the man rapidly approaching Shed Number Two — a moment more, he was within the doors, and, evidently in haste, sought his section; then he saw her for the first time. He stopped short. There was a cry:

“Aileen — Aileen — ”

She rose to her feet. With one stride he stood before her, leaning to look long into her eyes which never wavered while he read in them her woman's fealty to her love for him.

He held out his hands, and she placed hers within them. He spoke, and the voice was a prayer:

“My wife, Aileen — ”

“My husband — ” she answered, and the words were a *Te Deum*.

OCTAVIUS drew up near the shed and handed the reins to Father Honoré.

“If you ’ll just hold the mare a minute, I ’ll step inside and look for Aileen.”

He disappeared in the darkening entrance, but was back again almost immediately. Father Honoré saw at once from his face that something unusual had taken place. He feared an accident.

“Is Aileen all right?” he asked anxiously.

Octavius nodded. He got into the surrey; the hands that took the reins shook visibly. He drove on in silence for a few minutes. He was struggling for control of his emotion; for the truth is Octavius wanted to cry; and when a man wants to cry and must not, the result is inarticulateness and a painful contortion of every feature. Father Honoré, recognizing this fact, waited. Octavius swallowed hard and many times before he could speak; even then his speech was broken:

“She ’s in there — all right — but Champney Googe is with her — ”

“Thank God ! ”

Father Honoré’s voice rang out with no uncertain sound. It was a heartening thing to hear, and helped powerfully to restore to Octavius his usual poise. He turned to look at his companion and saw every feature alive with a great joy. Suddenly the scales fell from this man of Maine’s eyes.

"You don't mean it!" he exclaimed in amazement.

"Oh, but I *do*," replied Father Honoré joyfully and emphatically. . . .

"Father Honoré," he said after a time in which both men were busy with their thoughts, "I ain't much on expressing what I feel, but I want to tell you — for you'll understand — that when I come out of that shed I'd had a vision," — he paused, — "a revelation;" the tears were beginning to roll down his cheeks; his lips were trembling; "we don't have to go back two thousand years to get one, either — I saw what this world's got to be saved by if it's saved at all —"

"What was it, Mr. Buzzby?" Father Honoré spoke in a low voice.

"I saw a vision of human love that was forgiving, and loving, and saving by nothing but love, like the divine love of the Christ you preach about — Father Honoré, I saw Aileen Armagh sitting on a block of granite and Champney Googe kneeling before her, his head in the very dust at her feet — and she raising it with her two arms — and her face was like an angel's —"

The two men drove on in silence to Champ-au-Haut.

The priest was shown at once to Mrs. Champney's room. He had not seen her for over a year and was prepared for a great change; but the actual impression of her condition, as she lay motionless on the bed, was a shock. His practised eye told him that the Inevitable was already on the threshold, demanding entrance. He turned to the nurse with a look of inquiry.

"The doctor will be here in a few minutes; I have telephoned for him," she said low in answer. She bent over the bed.

“Mrs. Champney, Father Honoré is here; you wished to see him.”

The eyes opened; there was still mental clarity in their outlook. Father Honoré stepped to the bed.

“Is there anything I can do for you, Mrs. Champney?” he asked gently.

“Yes.”

Her articulation was indistinct but intelligible.

“In what way?”

She looked at him unwaveringly.

“Is — she going — to marry — him?”

Father Honoré read her thought and wondered how best to answer. He was of the opinion that she would remember Aileen in her will. The girl had been for years so faithful and, in a way, Mrs. Champney cared for her. Humanly speaking, he dreaded, by his answer, to endanger the prospect of the assurance to Aileen of a sum that would place her beyond want and the need to work for any one's support but her own in the future. But as he could not know what answer might or might not affect Aileen's future, he decided to speak the whole truth — let come what might.

“I sincerely hope so,” he replied.

“Do — you know?” with a slight emphasis on the “know.”

“I know they love each other — have loved each other for many years.”

“If she does — she — won't get anything from me — you tell her — so.”

“That will make no difference to Aileen, Mrs. Champney. Love outweighs all else with her.”

She continued to look at him unwaveringly.

“Love — fools — ” she murmured.

But Father Honoré caught the words, and the

priest's manhood asserted itself in the face of dissolution and this blasphemy.

"No — rather it is wisdom for them to love; it is ordained of God that human beings should love; I wish them joy. May I not tell them that you, too, wish them joy, Mrs. Champney? Aileen has been faithful to you, and your nephew never wronged you personally. Will you not be reconciled to him?" he pleaded.

"No."

"But why?" He spoke very gently, almost in appeal.

"Why?" she repeated tonelessly, her eyes still fixed on his face, "because he is — hers — Aurora Googe's —"

She paused for another effort. Her eyes turned at last to the portrait of Louis Champney on the wall at the foot of her bed.

"She took all his love — all — all his love — and he was my husband — I loved my husband — But you don't know —"

"What, Mrs. Champney? Let me help you, if I can."

"No help — I loved my husband — he used to lie here — by my side — on this bed — and cry out — in his sleep for her — lie here — by my side in — the night — and stretch out his arms — for her — not me — not for me —"

Her eyes were still fixed on Louis Champney's face. Suddenly the lids drooped; she grew drowsy, but continued to murmur, incoherently at first, then inarticulately.

The nurse stepped to his side. Father Honoré's eyes dwelt pityingly for a moment on this deathbed; then he turned and left the room, marvelling at the differentiated expression in this life of that which we name Love.

Octavius was waiting for him in the lower hall.

“Did you see her?” he asked eagerly.

“Yes; but to no purpose; her life has been lived, Mr. Buzzby; nothing can affect it now.”

“You don’t mean she’s gone?” Octavius started at the sound of his own voice; it seemed to echo through the house.

“No; but it is, I believe, only a question of an hour at most.”

“I’d better drive up then for Aileen; she ought to know — ought to be here.”

“Believe me, it would be useless, Mr. Buzzby. Those two belong to life, not to death — leave them alone together; and leave her there above, to her Maker and the infinite mercy of His Son.”

“Amen,” said Octavius Buzzby solemnly; but his thought was with those whom he had seen leave Champ-au-Haut through the same outward-opening portal that was now set wide for its mistress: the old Judge, and his son, Louis — the last Champney.

He accompanied Father Honoré to the door.

“No farther, Mr. Buzzby,” he said, when Octavius insisted on driving him home. “Your place is here. I shall take the tram as usual at The Bow.”

They shook hands without further speech. In the deepening twilight Octavius watched him down the driveway. Despite his sixty years he walked with the elastic step of young manhood.



“ ‘Unworthy — unworthy !’ was Champney Googe’s cry, as he knelt before Aileen ”

XI

“UNWORTHY — unworthy!” was Champney Googe’s cry, as he knelt before Aileen in an access of shame and contrition in the presence of such a revelation of woman’s love.

Aileen lifted his head, laid her arms around his neck, drew him by her young strength and her gentle compelling words to a seat beside her on the granite block. She kept her arms about him.

“No, Champney, not unworthy; but worthy, worthy of it all — all that life can give you in compensation for those seven years. We’ll put it all behind us; we’ll live in the present and in hope of a blessed future. Take heart, my husband — ”

The bowed shoulders heaved beneath her arms.

“So little to offer — so little — ”

“‘So little’!” she exclaimed; “and is it ‘little’ you call your love for me? Is it ‘little’ that I’m to have a home — at last — of my own? Is it ‘little’ that the husband I love is going out of it and coming home to it in his daily work, and my heart going out to him both ways at once? And is it ‘little’ you call the gift of a mother to her who is motherless — ” her voice faltered.

Champney caught her in his arms; his tears fell upon the dark head.

“I’m a coward, Aileen, and you are just like our Father Honoré; but I *will* put all behind me. I *will* not regret. I *will* work out my own salvation here in my native place, among my own and among strangers.

I vow here *I will*, God helping me, if only in thankfulness for the two hearts that are mine. . . . ”

The afterglow faded from the western heavens. The twilight came on apace. The two still sat there in the darkening shed, at times unburdening their over-charged hearts; at others each rested heart and body and soul in the presence of the other, and both were aware of the calming influence of the dim and silent shed.

“How did you happen to come down here just to-night, and after work hours too, Champney?” she asked, curious to know the how and the why of this meeting.

“I came down for my second chisel. I remembered when I got home that it needed sharpening and I could not do without it to-morrow morning. Of course the machine shop was closed, so I thought I’d try my hand at it on the grindstone up home this evening.”

“Then is this it?” she exclaimed, picking up the chisel from the block.

“Yes, that ’s mine.” He held out his hand for it.

“Indeed, you ’re not going to have it — not this one! I’ll buy you another, but this is mine. Was n’t I holding it in my hand and thinking of you when I saw you coming over the meadows?”

“Keep it — and I’ll keep something I have of yours.”

“Of mine? Where did you get anything of mine? Surely it is n’t the peppered rosebud?”

“Oh, no. I’ve had it nearly seven years.”

“Seven years!” She exclaimed in genuine surprise. “And whatever have you had of mine I’d like to know that has kept seven years? It’s neither silver nor gold — for I’ve little of either; not that silver or gold can

make a man happy," she added quickly, fearing he might be sensitive to her speech.

"No; I've learned that, Aileen, thank God!"

"What is it then? — tell me quick."

He thrust his hand into the workman's blouse and drew forth a small package, wrapped in oiled silk and sewed to a cord that was round his neck. He opened it.

Aileen bent to examine it, her eyes straining in the increasing dusk.

"Why, it's never — it's not my handkerchief! — Champney!"

"Yes, yours, Aileen — that night in all the horror and despair, I heard something in your voice that told me you — did n't hate me —"

"Oh, Champney!"

"Yes. I've kept it ever since — I asked permission to take it in with me — I mean into my cell. They granted it. It was with me night and day — my head lay on it at night; I got my first sleep so — and it went with me to work during the day. It's been kissed clean thin till it's mere gossamer; it helped, that and the work, to save my brain —"

She caught handkerchief and hand in both hers and pressed her lips to them again and again.

"And now I'm going to keep it, after you're mine in the sight of man, as you are now before God; put it away and keep it for —" He stopped short.

"For whom?" she whispered.

He drew her close to him — closer and more near.

"Aileen, my beloved," his voice was earnestly joyful, "I am hoping for the blessing of children — are you? —"

“Except for you, my arms will feel empty for them till they come — ”

“Oh, my wife — my true wife! — now I can tell you all!” he said, and the earnest note was lost in purest joy. He whispered:

“You know, dear, I ’m but half a man, and must remain such. I am no citizen, have no citizen’s rights, can never vote — have no voice in all that appeals to manhood — my country — ”

“I know — I know — ” she murmured pityingly.

“And so I used to think there in my cell at night when I kissed the little handkerchief — Please God, if Aileen still loves me when I get out, if she in her loving mercy will forgive to the extent that she will be my wife, then it may be that she will bestow on me the blessing of a child — a boy who will one day stand among men as his father never can again, who will possess the full rights of citizenship; in him I may live again as a man — but only so.”

“Please God it may be so.”

They walked slowly homewards to The Bow in the clear warm dark of the midsummer-night. They had much to say to each other, and often they lingered on the way. They lingered again when they came to the gate by the paddock in the lane.

Aileen looked towards the house. A light was burning in Mrs. Champney’s room.

“I ’m afraid Mrs. Champney must be much worse. Tave never would have forgotten me if he had n’t received some telephone message while he was at Father Honoré’s. But the nurse said there was nothing I could do when I left with Tave — but oh, I ’m so glad he did n’t stop! I *must* go in now, Champ-

ney," she said decidedly. But he still held her two hands.

"Tell me, Champney, have you ever thought your aunt might remember you — for the wrong she did you?"

"No; and if she should, I never would take a cent of it —"

"Oh, I'm so glad — so glad!" She squeezed both his hands right hard.

He read her thought and smiled to himself; he was glad that in this he had not disappointed her.

"But there's one thing I wish she would do — poor — *poor* Aunt Meda —" he glanced up at the light in the window.

"Yes, 'poor,' Champney — I know." She was nodding emphatically.

"I wish she would leave enough to Mr. Van Ostend to repay with interest what he repaid for me to the Company; it would be only just, for, work as I may, I can never hope to do that — and I long so to do it — no workman could do it —"

She interrupted gayly: "Oh, but you've a working-woman by your side!" She snatched away her small hands — for she belonged to the small people of the earth. "See, Champney, the two hands! I can work, and I'm not afraid of it. I can earn a lot to help with — and I shall. There's my cooking, and singing, and embroidery —"

He smiled again in the dark at her enthusiasm — it was so like her!

"And I'll lift the care from our mother too, — and you're not to fret your dear soul about the Van Ostend money — if one can't do it, surely two can with God's blessing. Now I *must* go in — and you may give me

another kiss for I've been on starvation diet these last seven years — only one — oh, Champney!" . . .

The dim light continued to burn in the upper chamber at Champ-au-Haut until the morning; for before Champney and Aileen left the shed, the Inevitable had already crossed the threshold of that chamber — and the dim light burned on to keep him company. . . .

A month later, when Almeda Champney's will was admitted to probate and its contents made public, it was found that there were but six bequests — one of which was contained in the codicil — namely:

To Octavius Buzzby the oil portrait of Louis Champney.

To Ann and Hannah one thousand dollars each in recognition of faithful service for thirty-seven years.

To Aileen Armagh (so read the codicil) a like sum *provided she did not marry Champney Googe.*

One half of the remainder of the estate, real and personal, was bequeathed to Henry Van Ostend; the other half, in trust, to his daughter, Alice Maud Mary Van Ostend.

The instrument bore the date of Champney Googe's commitment.

The Last Word

The Last Word

I

IT is the day after Flamsted's first municipal election; after twenty years of progress it has attained to proud citizenship. The community, now amounting to twelve thousand, has spent all its surplus energy in municipal electioneering delirium; there were four candidates in the field for mayor and party spirit ran high. On this bright May morning of 1910, the streets are practically deserted, whereas yesterday they were filled with shouting throngs. The banners are still flung across the main street; a light breeze lifts them into prominence and with them the name of the successful candidate they bear — Luigi Poggi.

The Colonel, as a result of continued oratory in favor of his son-in-law's candidacy, is laid up at home with an attack of laryngitis; but he has strength left to whisper to Elmer Wiggins who has come up to see him:

"Yesterday, after twenty years of solid work, Flamsted entered upon its industrial majority through the throes of civic travail," a mixture of metaphors that Mr. Wiggins ignores in his joy at the result of the election; for Mr. Wiggins has been hedging with his New England conscience and fearing, as a consequence,

punishment in disappointing election results. He wavered, in casting his vote, between the two principal candidates, young Emlie, Lawyer Emlie's son, and Luigi Poggi.

As a Flamstedite in good and regular standing, he knew he ought to vote for his own, Emlie, instead of a foreigner. But, he desired above all things to see Luigi Poggi, his friend, the most popular merchant and keenest man of affairs in the town, the first mayor of the city of Flamsted. Torn between his duty and the demands of his heart, he compromised by starting a Poggi propaganda, that was carried on over his counter and behind the mixing-screen, with every customer whether for pills or soda water. Then, on the decisive day, he entered the booth and voted a straight Emlie ticket!! So much for the secret ballot.

He shook the Colonel's hand right heartily.

"I thought I'd come up to congratulate personally both you and the city, and talk things over in a general way, Colonel; sorry to find you so used up, but in a good cause."

The Colonel beamed.

"A matter of a day or two of rest. You did good work, Mr. Wiggins, good work," he whispered; "you'd make a good parliamentary whip — 'Gad, my voice *is* gone! — but as you say, in a good cause — a good cause —"

"No better on earth," Mr. Wiggins responded enthusiastically.

The Colonel was magnanimous; he forbore to whisper one word in reminder of the old-time pessimism that twenty years ago held the small-headed man of Maine in such dubious thrall.

"It was each man's vote that told — yours, and

mine — ” he whispered again, nodding understandingly.

Mr. Wiggins at once changed the subject.

“Don’t you exert yourself, Colonel; let me do the talking — for a change,” he added with a twinkle in his eyes. The Colonel caught his meaning and threw back his head for a hearty laugh, but failed to make a sound.

“Mr. Van Ostend came up on the train last night, just in time to see the fireworks, they say,” said Mr. Wiggins. “Yes,” he went on in answer to a question he read in the Colonel’s eyes, “came up to see about the Champo property. Emlie told me this morning. Mr. Van Ostend and Tave and Father Honoré are up there now; I saw the automobile standing in the driveway as I came up on the car. Guess Tave has run the place about as long as he wants to alone. He’s getting on in years like the rest of us, and don’t want so much responsibility.”

“Does Emlie know anything?” whispered the Colonel eagerly.

“Nothing definite; they’re going to talk it over to-day; but he had some idea about the disposition of the estate, I think, from what he said.”

The Colonel motioned with his lips: “Tell me.”

Mr. Wiggins proceeded to give the Colonel the desired information.

While this one-sided conversation was taking place, Henry Van Ostend was standing on the terrace at Champ-au-Haut, discussing with Father Honoré and Octavius Buzzby the best method of investing the increasing revenues of the large estate, vacant, except for its faithful factotum and the care-takers, Ann and

Hannah, during the seven years that have passed since Mrs. Champney's death.

"Mr. Googe had undoubtedly a perfect right to dispute this will, Father Honoré," he was saying.

"But he would never have done it; I know such a thing could never have occurred to him."

"That does not alter the facts of this rather peculiar case. Mr. Buzzby knows that, up to this date, my daughter and I have never availed ourselves of any rights in this estate; and he has managed it so wisely alone, during these last seven years, that now he no longer wishes to be responsible for the investment of its constantly increasing revenues. I shall never consider this estate mine — will or no will." He spoke emphatically. "Law is one thing, but a right attitude, where property is concerned, towards one's neighbor is quite another."

He looked to right and left of the terrace, and included in his glance many acres of the noble estate. Father Honoré, watching him, suddenly recalled that evening in the financier's own house when the Law was quoted as "fundamental" — and he smiled to himself.

Mr. Van Ostend faced the two men.

"Do you think it would do any good for me to approach him on the subject of setting apart that portion of the personal estate, and its increase in the last seven years, which Mrs. Champney inherited from her father, Mr. Googe's grandfather, for his children — that is if he won't take it himself?"

"No."

The two men spoke as one; the negative was strongly emphatic.

"Mr. Van Ostend," Octavius Buzzby spoke with

suppressed excitement, "if I may make bold, who has lived here on this place and known its owners for forty years, to give you a piece of advice, I 'd like to give it."

"I want all I can get, Mr. Buzzby; it will help me to see my way in this matter."

"Then I 'm going to ask you to let bygones be bygones, and not say one word to Mr. Googe about this property. He begun seven years ago in the sheds and has worked his way up to foreman this last year, and if you was to propose to him what you have to us, it would rake up the past, sir — a past that 's now in its grave, thank God! Champney — I ask your pardon — Mr. Googe would n't touch a penny of it more 'n he 'd touch carrion. I *know* this; nor he would n't have his boy touch it either. I ain't saying he don't appreciate the good money does, for he 's told me so; but for himself — well, sir, I think you know what I mean: he 's through with what is just money. He 's a man, is Champney Googe, and he 's living his life in a way that makes the almighty dollar look pretty small in comparison with it — Father Honoré, you know this as well as I do."

The priest nodded gravely in the affirmative.

"Tell me something of his life, Father Honoré," said Mr. Van Ostend; "you know the degree of respect I have always had for him ever since he took his punishment like a man — and you and I were both on the wrong track," he added with a meaning smile.

"I don't quite know what to say," replied his friend. "It is n't anything I can point to and say he has done this or that, because he gets beneath the surface, as you might say, and works there. But I do know that where there is an element of strife among the men, there you will find him as peacemaker — he has a

wonderful way with them, but it is indefinable. We don't know all he does, for he never speaks of it, only every once in a while something leaks out. I know that where there is a sickbed and a quarryman on it, there you will find Champney Gooze as watcher after his day's work — and tender in his ministrations as a woman. I know that when sickness continues and the family are dependent on the fund, Champney Gooze works many a night overtime and gives his extra pay to help out. I know, too, that when a strike threatens, he, who is now in the union because he is convinced he can help best there, is the balance-wheel, and prevents radical unreason and its results. There's trouble brewing there now — about the automatic bush hammer — ”

“I have heard of it.”

“— And Jim McCann is proving intractable. Mr. Gooze is at work with him, and hopes to bring him round to a just point of view. And I know, moreover, that when there is a crime committed and a criminal to be dealt with, that criminal finds in the new foreman of Shed Number Two a friend who, without condoning the crime, stands by him as a human being. I know that out of his own deep experience he is able to reach out to other men in need, as few can. In all this his wife is his helpmate, his mother his inspiration. — What more can I say?”

“Nothing,” said Henry Van Ostend gravely. “He has two children I hear — a boy and a girl. I should like to see her who was the little Aileen of twenty years ago.”

“I hope you may,” said Father Honoré cordially; “yes, he has two lovely children, Honoré, now in his first knickerbockers, is my namesake — ”

Octavius interrupted him, smiling significantly:

“He ’s something more than Father Honoré’s name-sake, Mr. Van Ostend, he ’s his shadow when he is with him. The men have a little joke among themselves whenever they see the two together, and that ’s pretty often; they say Father Honoré’s shadow will never grow less till little Honoré reaches his full growth.”

The priest smiled. “He and I are very, very close friends,” was all he permitted himself to say, but the other men read far more than that into his words.

Henry Van Ostend looked thoughtful. He considered with himself for a few minutes; then he spoke, weighing his words:

“I thank you both; I have solved my difficulty with your help. You have spoken frankly to me, and shown me this matter in a different light; I may speak as frankly to you, as to Mr. Googe’s closest friends. The truth is, neither my daughter nor myself can appropriate this money to ourselves — we both feel that it does not belong to us, *in the circumstances*. I should like you both to tell Mr. Googe for me, that out of the funds accruing to the estate from his grandfather’s money, I will take for my share the hundred thousand dollars I repaid to the Quarries Company thirteen years ago — you know what I mean — and the interest on the same for those six years. Mr. Googe will understand that this is done in settlement of a mere business account — and he will understand it as between man and man. I think it will satisfy him.

“I have determined since talking with you, although the scheme has been long in my mind and I have spoken to Mr. Emlie about it, to apply the remainder of the estate for the benefit of the quarrymen, the stone-cutters, their families and, incidentally, the city

of Flamsted. My plans are, of course, indefinite; I cannot give them in detail, not having had time to think them out; but I may say that this house will be eventually a home for men disabled in the quarries or sheds. The plan will develop further in the executing of it. You, Father Honoré, you and Mr. Buzzby, Mr. Googe, and Mr. Emlie will be constituted a Board of Overseers — I know that in your hands the work will be advanced, and, I hope, prospered to the benefit of this generation and succeeding ones.”

Octavius Buzzby grasped his hand.

“Mr. Van Ostend, I wish old Judge Champney was living to hear this! He’d approve, Mr. Van Ostend, he’d approve of it all — and Mr. Louis too.”

“Thank you, Mr. Buzzby, for these words; they do me good. And now,” he said, turning to Father Honoré, “I want very much to see Mr. Googe — now that this business is settled. I have wanted to see him many times during these last six years, but I felt — I feared he might consider my visiting him an intrusion — ”

“Not at all — not at all; this simply shows me that you don’t as yet know the real Mr. Googe. He will be glad to see you at any time.”

“I think I’d like to see him in the shed.”

“No reason in the world why you should n’t; he is one of the most accessible men at all times and seasons.”

“Supposing, then, you ride up with me in the automobile?”

“Certainly I will; shall we go up this forenoon?”

“Yes, I should like to go now. Mr. Buzzby, I shall be back this afternoon for a talk with you. I want to make some definite arrangement for Ann and Hannah.”

"I'll be here."

The two walked together to the driveway, and shortly the mellow note of the great Panhard's horn sounded, as the automobile rounded the curve of The Bow and sped away to the north shore highway and the sheds.

Late that afternoon Aileen, with her baby daughter, Aurora, in her arms, was standing on the porch watching for her husband's return. The usual hour for his home-coming had long passed. She began to fear that the threatened trouble in the sheds, on account of the attempted introduction of the automatic bush hammer, might have come to a crisis. At last, however, she saw him leave the car and cross the bridge over the Rothel. His step was quick and firm. She waved her hand to him; a swing of his cap answered her. Then little Aurora's tiny fist was manipulated by her mother to produce a baby form of welcome.

Champney sprang up the steps two at a time, and for a moment the little wife and baby Aurora disappeared in his arms.

"Oh, Champney, I'm so thankful you've come! I knew just by the way you came over the bridge that things were going better at the sheds. You are so late I began to get worried. Come, supper's waiting."

"Wait a minute, Aileen — Mother —" he called through the hall, "come here a minute, please."

Aurora Gooch came quickly at that ever welcome call. Her face was even more beautiful than formerly, for great joy and peace irradiated every feature.

"Where's Honoré?" he said abruptly, looking about for his boy who was generally the first to run as far as the bridge to greet him. His wife answered.

"He and Billy went with Father Honoré as far as

the power-house; he 'll be back soon with Billy. Sister Ste. Croix went by a few minutes ago, and I told her to hurry them home. — What 's the good news, Champney? Tell me quick — I can't wait to hear it."

Champney smiled down at the eager face looking up to him; her chin was resting on her baby's head.

"Mr. Van Ostend has been in the sheds to-day — and I 've had a long talk with him."

"Oh, Champney!"

Both women exclaimed at the same time, and their faces reflected the joy that shone in the eyes of the man they loved with a love bordering on worship.

Champney nodded. "Yes, and so satisfactory —" he drew a long breath; "I have so much to tell it will take half the evening. He wishes to 'pay his respects,' so he says, to my wife and mother, if convenient for the ladies to-morrow — how is it?" He looked with a smile first into the gray eyes and then into the dark ones. In the latter he read silent pleased consent; but Aileen's danced for joy as she answered:

"Convenient! So convenient, that he 'll get the surprise of his life from me, anyhow; he really must be made to realize that I am his debtor for the rest of my days — don't I owe the 'one man on earth for me' to him? for would I have ever seen Flamsted but for him? And have I ever forgotten the roses he dropped into the skirt of my dress twenty-one years ago this very month when I sang the Sunday night song for him at the Vaudeville? Twenty-one years! Goodness, but it makes me feel old, mother!"

Aurora Googe smiled indulgently on her daughter, for, at times, Aileen, not only in ways, but looks, was still like the child of twelve.

Champney grew suddenly grave.

“Do you realize, Aileen, that this meeting to-day in the shed is the first in which we three, Father Honoré, Mr. Van Ostend, and I, have ever been together under one roof since that night twenty-one years ago when I first saw you?”

“Why, that does n’t seem possible — but it *is* so, is n’t it? Was n’t that strange!”

“Yes, and no,” said Champney, looking at his mother. “I thought of our first meeting one another at the Vaudeville, as we three stood there together in the shed looking upwards to The Gore; and Father Honoré told me afterward that he was thinking of that same thing. We both wondered if Mr. Van Ostend recalled that evening, and the fact of our first acquaintance, although unknown to one another.”

“I wonder — ” said Aileen, musingly.

Champney spoke abruptly again; there was a note of uneasiness in his voice:

“I wonder what keeps Honoré — I’ll just run up the road and see if he’s coming. If he is n’t, I will go on till I meet the boys. I wish,” he added wistfully, “that McCann felt as kindly to me as Billy does to my son; I am beginning to think that old grudge of his against me will never yield, not even to time; — I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Aileen watched him out of sight; then she turned to Aurora Googe.

“We are blest in this turn of affairs, are n’t we, mother? This meeting is the one thing Champney has been dreading — and yet longing for. I’m glad it’s over.”

“So am I; and I am inclined to think Father Honoré brought it about; if you remember, he said nothing

about Mr. Van Ostend's being here when he stopped just now."

"So he did n't!" Aileen spoke in some surprise; then she added with a joyous laugh: "Oh, that dear man is sly — bless him!" — But the tears dimmed her eyes.

II

“GO straight home with Honoré, Billy, as straight as ever you can,” said Father Honoré to eight-year-old Billy McCann who for the past year had constituted himself protector of five-year-old Honoré Googe; “I’ll watch you around the power-house.”

Little Honoré reached up with both arms for the usual parting from the man he adored. The priest caught him up, kissed him heartily, and set him down again with the added injunction to “trot home.”

The two little boys ran hand in hand down the road. Father Honoré watched them till the power-house shut them from sight; then he waited for their reappearance at the other corner where the road curves downward to the highroad. He never allowed Honoré to go alone over the piece of road between the point where he was standing and the power-house, for the reason that it bordered one of the steepest and roughest ledges in The Gore; a careless step would be sure to send so small a child rolling down the rough surface. But beyond the power-house, the ledges fell away very gradually to the lowest slopes where stood, one among many in the quarries, the new monster steel derrick which the men had erected last week. They had been testing it for several days; even now its powerful arm held suspended a block of many tons’ weight. This was a part of the test for “graduated strain” — the weight being increased from day to day.

The men, in leaving their work, often took a short cut homeward from the lower slope to the road just below the power-house, by crossing this gentle declivity of the ledge. Evidently Billy McCann with this in mind had twisted the injunction to "go straight home" into a chance to "cut across"; for surely this way would be the "straightest." Besides, there was the added inducement of close proximity to the wonderful new derrick that, since its instalment, had been occupying many of Billy's waking thoughts.

Father Honoré, watching for the children's reappearance at the corner of the road just beyond the long low power-house, was suddenly aware, with a curious shock, of the two little boys trotting in a lively manner down the easy grade of the "cross cut" slope, and nearing the derrick and its suspended weight. He frowned at the sight and, calling loudly to them to come back, started straight down over the steep ledge at the side of the road. He heard some one else calling the boys by name, and, a moment later, saw that it was Sister Ste. Croix who was coming up the hill.

The children did not hear, or would not, because of their absorption in getting close to the steel giant towering above them. Sister Ste. Croix called again; then she, too, started down the slope after them.

She noticed some men running from the farther side of the quarry. She saw Father Honoré suddenly spring by leaps and bounds down over the rough ledge. What was it? The children were apparently in no danger. She looked up at the derrick —

What was that! A tremor in its giant frame; a swaying of its cabled mast; a sickening downward motion of the weighted steel arm — then —

“Merciful Christ!” she groaned, and for the space of a few seconds covered her eyes. . . .

The priest, catching up the two children one under each arm, ran with superhuman strength to evade the falling derrick — with a last supreme effort he rolled the boys beyond its reach; they were saved, but —

Their savior was pinioned by the steel tip fast to the unyielding granite.

A woman’s shriek rent the air — a fearful cry:

“Jean — mon Jean!”

A moment more and Sister Ste. Croix reached the spot — she took his head on her lap.

“Jean — mon Jean,” she cried again.

The eyes, dimmed already, opened; he made a supreme effort to speak —

“Margot — p’tite Truite — ” . . .

Thus, after six and forty years of silence, Love spoke once; that Love, greater than State and Church because it is the foundation of both, and without it neither could exist; that Love — co-eval with all life, the Love which defies time, sustains absence, glorifies loss — remains, thank God! a deathless legacy to the toiling Race of the Human, and, because deathless, triumphant in death.

It triumphed now. . . .

The ponderous crash of the derrick followed by the screams of the two boys, brought the quarrymen, the women and children, rushing in terrified haste from their evening meal. But when they reached the spot, and before Champney Googe, running over the granite slopes, as once years before he ran from pursuing justice, could satisfy himself that his boy was uninjured, at what a sacrifice he knew only when he knelt by the prostrate form, before Jim McCann, seizing a

lever, could shout to the men to "lift all together," the life-blood ebbed, carrying with it on the hurrying out-going tide the priest's loving undaunted spirit.

All work at the quarries and the sheds was suspended during the following Saturday; the final service was to be held on Sunday.

All Saturday afternoon, while the bier rested before the altar in the stone chapel by the lake shore, a silent motley procession filed under the granite lintel:— stalwart Swede, blue-eyed German, sallow-cheeked Pole, dark-eyed Italian, burly Irish, low-browed Czechs, French Canadians, stolid English and Scotch, Henry Van Ostend and three of the directors of the Flamsted Quarries Company, rivermen from the Penobscot, lumbermen from farther north, the Colonel and three of his sons, the rector from The Bow, a dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church from New York, the little choir boys— children of the quarrymen— and Augustus Buzzby, members of the Paulist Order, Elmer Wiggins, Octavius Buzzby supporting old Joel Quimber, Nonna Lisa— in all, over three thousand souls one by one passed up the aisle to stand with bared bowed head by that bier; to look their last upon the mask of the soul; to render, in spirit, homage to the spirit that had wrought among its fellows, manfully, unceasingly, to realize among them on this earth a long-striven-for ideal.

Many a one knelt in prayer. Many a mother, not of English tongue, placing her hand upon the head of her little child forced him to kneel beside her; her tears wet the stone slabs of the chancel floor.

Just before sunset, the Daughters of the Mystic Rose passed into the church; they bore tapers to set upon

the altar, and at the head and foot of the bier. Two of them remained throughout the night to pray by the chancel rail; one of them was Sister Ste. Croix. Silent, immovable she knelt there throughout the short June night. Her secret remained with her and the one at whose feet she was kneeling.

The little group of special friends from The Gore came last, just a little while before the face they loved was to be covered forever from human gaze: Aileen with her four-months' babe in her arms, Aurora Googe leading little Honoré by the hand, Margaret McCann with her boy, Elvira Caukins and her two daughters. Silent, their tears raining upon the awed and upturned faces of the children, they, too, knelt; but no sound of sobbing profaned the great peaceful silence that was broken only by the faint *chip-chip-chipping* monotone from Shed Number Two. In that four men were at work. Champney Googe was one of them.

He was expecting them at this appointed time. When he saw them enter the chapel, he put aside hammer and chisel and went across the meadow to join them. He waited for them to come out; then, taking the babe from his wife's arms, he gave her into his mother's keeping. He looked significantly at his wife. The others passed on and out; but Aileen turned and with her husband retraced her steps to the altar. They knelt, hand clasped in hand. . . .

When they rose to look their last upon that loved face, they knew that their lives had received through his spirit the benediction of God.

Champney returned to his work, for time pressed. The quarrymen in The Gore had asked permission the day before to quarry a single stone in which their

priest should find his final resting place. Many of them were Italians, and Luigi Poggi was spokesman. Permission being given, he turned to the men:

“For the love of God and the man who stood to us for Him, let us quarry the stone nearest heaven. Look to the ridge yonder; that has not been opened up — who will work with me to open up the highest ridge in The Gore, and quarry the stone to-night.”

The volunteers were practically all the men in the Upper and Lower Quarries; the foreman was obliged to draw lots. The men worked in shifts — worked during that entire night; they bared a space of sod; cleared off the surface layer; quarried the rock, using the hand drill entirely. Towards morning the thick granite slab, that lay nearest to the crimsoning sky among the Flamsted Hills, was hoisted from its primeval bed and lowered to its place on the car.

It was then that four men, Champney Googe, Antoine, Jim McCann, and Luigi Poggi asserted their right, by reason of what the dead had been to them, to cut and chisel the rock into sarcophagus shape. Luigi and Antoine asked to cut the cover of the stone coffin.

All Saturday afternoon, the four men in Shed Number Two worked at their work of love, of unspeakable gratitude, of passionate devotion to a sacrificed manhood. They wrought in silence. All that afternoon, they could see, by glancing up from their work and looking out through the shed doors across the field, the silent procession entering and leaving the chapel. Sometimes Jim McCann would strike wild in his feverish haste to ease, by mere physical exertion, his great over-charged heart of its load of grief; a muttered curse on his clumsiness followed. Now and then

Champney caught his eye turned upon him half-appealingly; but they spoke no word; *chip-chip-chip-ping*, they worked on.

The sun set; electricity illumined the shed. Antoine worked with desperation; Luigi wrought steadily, carefully, beautifully — his heart seeking expression in every stroke. When the dawn paled the electric lights, he laid aside his tools, took off his canvas apron, and stepped back to view the cover as a whole. The others, also, brought their stone to completion. As with one accord they went over to look at the Italian's finished work, and saw — no carving of archbishop's mitre, no sculpture of cardinal's hat (O mother, where were the day-dreams for your boy!), but a rough slab, in the centre of which was a raised heart of polished granite, and, beneath it, cut deep into the rock — which, although lying yesterday nearest the skies above The Gore, was in past æons the foundation stone of our present world — the words:

THE HEART OF THE QUARRY.

The lights went out. The dawn was reddening the whole east; it touched the faces of the men. They looked at one another. Suddenly McCann grasped Champney's hand, and reaching over the slab caught in his the hands of the other two; he gripped them hard, drew a long shuddering breath, and spoke, but unwittingly on account of his habitual profanity, the last word:

“By Jesus Christ, men, we 're brothers!”

The full day broke. The men still stood there, hand clasping hand.

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