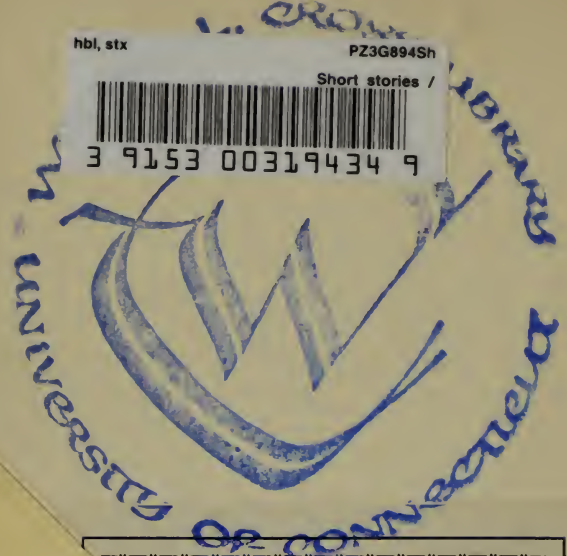
SHORT STORIES

BY

LORENZO GRISWOLD



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LORENZO GRISWOLD

AUTHOR OF "PRIEST AND PURITAN"

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RESTITUTION *

I

IT was raining hard, and a flood was imminent.

Tom Sheldon, clothed in a rubber suit, and seated upon his trusty brown mare, was solemnly gazing at the dam, over which the broad and rapid current was plunging with deafening roar. At length, having satisfied himself that everything was safe, he was on the point of turning his horse homeward, when his eyes fell upon an object half a mile to the north. It was the four o'clock stage.

Surprised that the driver did not turn about when he saw that the road in front of him was already submerged, and fearful of the consequences of his attempt to get through, Sheldon at once started up the road to meet him.

* Written by LORENZO GRISWOLD, author of "Priest and Puritan," for *The Sunday Republican.*

It was a perilous journey, but at length it was completed. And none too soon; for when Sheldon arrived, the stage was already floating, and the current had swung it around against the bank, where it had come to a standstill.

There were two passengers, and they had placed themselves on the farther side of the coach from where Sheldon stood, that they might keep it from tipping over; and he was close to the window before he could see them. Looking through the open window, he saw a man about fifty years of age, and a young woman whose age he would have guessed to be twenty had he not known it must have been much less. The two men gave a look of great surprise when their eyes met. They had been old acquaintances. She, looking out, saw a man somewhat under forty, with dark eyes and brown beard and mustache. The face was strong, and inspired confidence without encouraging familiarity.

Sheldon broke the silence by saying: "I

see but one way out of this difficulty, and that is for me to land this young lady in safety, and then return for you."

"Go, Belle," said the other.

The young woman moved over to the window where Sheldon waited, and he reached forth and lifted her from the coach and seated her in front of him. Then, with his arm around her to keep her from falling, he carefully picked his way up the current, and landed his burden in the highway beyond the water, where she could wait in safety her companion's arrival.

When the young woman found herself once more upon solid ground, she expressed warm gratitude, both by speech and by her looks. Having thanked her rescuer, she begged him to make haste and save "poor papa."

"I will," said her companion, turning his horse and riding downstream.

It was not long before the father rejoined his daughter. He was disposed to be profuse with his thanks, but Sheldon cut short

his words by telling him to take his daughter to a dwelling that was near, where shelter and warmth could be found. Then saying, "I must leave you, as I have much to look after," he turned and disappeared.

When he reached the bulkhead on his return the flood had covered the spot in the road where a levee was always built in time of freshet. Sheldon made what haste he could with his now jaded horse to the village, rallied his men, returned to the dam, and built the levee. When it was done he went home, leaving some trusty men in charge, and telling them that he would come up again during the night.

The house where Tom Sheldon lived with his mother and sister—his father had died ten years before—stood on a rise of ground opposite the mill. It was a large, substantial, old-fashioned one that his father had built, and was surrounded with trees that his father had planted. Tom Sheldon was not wealthy, in the sense of having much money,

although he was the principal owner of the mill he was managing.

A little more than fifteen years before he had come home from college and settled down to business, mainly, as he said at the time, because he saw that his father was breaking down from hard work. He gave up a hope that he had been cherishing of a life in one of the professions. His duty to his father and the family was alone reason enough for his not leaving home again to pursue either his studies or a profession. There was, however, something else that made obedience to that duty seem less like a sacrifice than it would have seemed a year earlier. Then he would have turned his back on the gay world at the call of duty with great regret, and even sorrow. Not so now. A year had changed the world, or it had changed him, so that when he came home to remain he turned to that home as to a place of refuge, desiring to be shut in from the gay world without, that his heart, which had received a deep wound, might have time

to heal—and then he settled down to hard work. He became almost a recluse.

For a long time a scar above his temple reminded him that the wound at his heart was not healed. She for whom he had received the one had given him the other. And when the scar of the first wound had faded into a mere pink line, the pain of the other had ceased. How long ago that was he could not tell. Work and care had been a blessing to him, for they had left his hands and mind busy. He would allow his mother and sister to bear no burden that he could bear himself. Worried at times by matters of business, he would then assume a cheerfulness he did not feel, that they might be light-hearted. And now, as he entered the house, there was nothing in his manner to indicate that he was not in good spirits. He was late for supper, and they had waited for him.

"My son, are we going to have a flood?" was the question that met him as he crossed the threshold.

"I think not, mother. We'll hope not, anyway. But if we do, you know we are used to them, and can generally take care of ourselves."

"*We*, Tom?" said his sister. "When you are at the dam, mamma and I don't think we are taking very good care of *you*."

"But you are, after all, Minnie, for when I am there, something warns me all the time to keep out of danger for your sakes. So, sister, you see that *we* do take care of ourselves."

"You may keep out of danger, but you don't keep out of the water, Tom. Why, you are wet through!"

"So you are, Tom!" cried his mother. "How did you get so wet?"

"How could I help it, mother?" replied her son, laughing. "Is it not raining? And haven't I been on horseback? One can't ride on horseback in the rain without getting his legs wet. I'm pretty dry from my legs up, and pretty hungry, too," he added,

as he went to his room to put on dry clothing.

In a short time he reappeared, and tea was served. While they were at tea the rain stopped. From that moment all felt relieved. Minnie, especially, was possessed with such a vivacious humor that her brother at last asked her to disclose the reason of it.

"I shall have to, Tom," said she. "Since the storm ceased I do feel much more cheerful. Then I have heard some news. Have you seen him—the new minister?"

"The new minister? Where did you suppose I met him—at the dam? Did you imagine I met him there to be immersed?"

"Oh, no! He isn't a Baptist. But I must tell you the news. After months of failure the committee have at last found a minister who has agreed to come and preach a Sunday or two, with the understanding that if he likes the place, and is liked, he will settle here."

"Well?" said Tom.

"Well," continued Minnie, "the minister who is to come on trial is none other than Rev. Allen Warren. Hence my elation. Not so much because a minister has been secured as that *he* is the one. Now, perhaps you would like to know why, for I don't think you can guess."

When Minnie mentioned the minister's name it was only by a great effort that Tom Sheldon kept himself from showing unusual interest in what she was saying, and only by a great effort, also, was he able to reply in nearly his usual tone of voice: "Naturally, I would like to know—and, of course, I am too dull to guess."

"And, naturally, I take pleasure in telling you that it is for the very good reason that Belle—that's his daughter—and I were schoolmates once, and are the best of friends."

As soon as the meal was over Tom arose from his chair, kissed his mother and sister, and begged them not to sit up for him, telling them that he would return as soon as

the water subsided, and he had seen the obstructions removed from the road.

"Allen Warren a minister!" he muttered, as he descended the hill. "God pity the flock with such a shepherd! It would be interesting to know when and why he assumed the title of reverend."

Many a time during the previous ten years had Sheldon made this trip to the dam, by day and by night, but never before had he rode forth in such a state of mind as now. The love that he had felt for the woman that he had lost was such as only strong natures feel. She had been the one woman in the universe for him. He had lost her, and he never expected to find another who could be the same to him. He never wanted to see her again. He had prayed that he might be kept from the pain that was sure to come at the sight of her. That which seemed a fatal possibility when he first came home had, as the years went by, appeared more and more improbable, until he had at length ceased to dread it. But that

was because he had ceased to expect it. And now it was to come. Of all evils that could befall him, he felt that this was the worst. Bringing them so near together—placing them in the same neighborhood—the same village. And more than that, the members of their families were to become intimate. Here was to be a constant reminder of those days he had hoped were forgotten; of a disappointment he hoped he had outlived.

Like a man in a dream he rode to the dam, mechanically gave the men directions to remove the obstructions, and returned home and went to bed—but not to sleep for hours. It was a long, restless night to Tom Sheldon. The morning found him haggard. almost ill. He arose and dressed himself. Then he went and stood before his mirror and, brushing back his hair, looked closely at the faint line across his temple. It was the closing act but one of a review of the past he had been holding through the night. It was like the examination of an impor-

tant witness to supply a certain link in the chain of evidence. Having found courage enough, for the first time in years, to stand before his mirror and look steadily for a moment at the scar upon his temple that he had received for her sake, he proceeded to do something that required still greater courage—something that he had not dared to do since he came from college.

Taking from his pocket a key, and unlocking a drawer of his dressing-case, he took from it a miniature and, going to the window, looked upon it for the first time since he put it away, fifteen years ago. As his eyes fell upon the face that he held up to receive the morning light he uttered a cry of pain. He had half believed that memory exaggerated her beauty, and he was mistaken.

"God help me!" he groaned. Then, closing his hand around the picture and throwing himself, face downward, upon the bed, he once more allowed the flood of feeling to break through and overrun the bar-

rier that had restrained it, until it overwhelmed him with a weight of suffering that could not have been greater had his disappointment been fresh that morning.

II

The people of Bolton were not unlike the people in any other country town, and so there was a renewed interest in the church when it became known that a minister had been engaged for a Sabbath or two on trial. As usual in such a community there was a great curiosity to hear the new man, and much speculation as to his ability and power to please.

His first Sabbath in Bolton arrived, and the hour of service. The church was full. There was a general turnout from all parts of the town. Many from Sheldon's mill were there, and in the family pew were the Sheldons themselves. Tom was not a steady churchgoer. In fact, he was more often absent than present when service was held regularly at the church. But to be absent on this Sabbath would be to disappoint his

sister and perhaps to cause comment, for he usually did go to hear a new minister on the first Sunday. Could he have chosen he would not have been there. Being there, he, like the rest of the congregation, was not without a certain curiosity. Though different, it possibly was greater than that of anybody else. No one having any reason to suppose that he could feel any interest that was not common to all present, in the service and occasion, he was not observed very closely.

He sat at the end of the pew, with his elbow resting upon the arm of it and with his hand to his head, and no one could see his face. He was greatly agitated, and not being an adept at concealing his true feelings, he kept his face in the shadow of his hand. Curiosity was giving place to a feeling of dread as he waited for the minister's arrival. He longed for some knowledge of that art of deception which would enable him to present an imperturbable exterior to the world. But he had seen nothing for

years of that society where the art is acquired and where such an accomplishment is perhaps indispensable.

At the very moment of his greatest agitation and when he was beginning to doubt his power to undergo the trial that he apprehended, Rev. Allen Warren and his daughter entered the door which was at the side of the pulpit. They could be seen by all the congregation as they came in, and they were alone. The face that Tom Sheldon had expected to see, that he had been summoning all his strength to look upon, was not there. The ordeal that he had anticipated was spared him now and for all time. For the Rev. Allen Warren was a widower. His wife had died when her daughter was a young child.

Sheldon, ignorant of that fact, was not long in finding a reason satisfactory to his own mind, for the absence of the minister's wife. Doubtless she had heard through her daughter of the rescue from the flood and it was not strange that she should shrink a

little at the thought of a first encounter with him. And now that the feeling of dread which had possessed him had passed away, he found another feeling in its place—it was disappointment. The sermon was well under way before Sheldon's thoughts reverted to the preacher. Certain words that he uttered arrested Sheldon's attention. They were "repentance" and "hope." Beginning with those words, Tom Sheldon listened to the discourse until the end. The speaker said that all men could hope, but they must first repent. Had anyone committed some great sin, let him repent and hope, and peace of mind would follow.

At the close of the sermon there was little dissent from the general opinion that it was an able one. The majority of the congregation felt that they would be greatly favored if they could keep Rev. Allen Warren.

After the service Minnie made haste to greet her old schoolmate; the minister came down from the pulpit, and she was introduced to him. The three then came toward

Tom and Mrs. Sheldon. Tom knew there was no escape from meeting Warren and shaking hands with him. The minister was the first to come up. He extended his hand to Tom, which the latter received in his own, but made the greeting as brief as possible.

"Why!" said Minnie, "you seem to have met before."

"We have, indeed!" exclaimed Belle Warren, making haste to offer her hand to Tom, which he received much more warmly than the hand of her father. "Hasn't your brother told you of his great service to papa and me the day of the flood?"

"Why, Tom!" cried Minnie. "And you never told us a word!"

"Mr. Warren, Miss Warren, allow me to make you acquainted with my mother," was the only reply that Tom Sheldon made.

There were so many people waiting to be introduced to the new minister that the interview could not well be prolonged. It was a relief to Tom when it was over.

Minnie was to remain for the Sabbath-school which followed the service, while Tom and Mrs. Sheldon started for home. Mrs. Sheldon lingered a moment on the way out to speak with an acquaintance or two, and her son waited outside for her. She learned from one of these people that Mrs. Warren had been dead many years. But when she rejoined Tom, she did not at once impart the intelligence to him, for she was at the time thinking more of the sermon than anything else.

They walked some distance in silence. At last she asked her son how he liked the sermon.

"I can speak plainly to you, mother, and as I could not to anyone else. I did not like it," was the reply.

Mrs. Sheldon was surprised. She had been greatly impressed by the discourse, and she knew that most of the congregation had been. She said as much to Tom, and asked him what he found objectionable.

"It dealt in generalities," he answered.

"It did not satisfy me as to every case I could imagine. While the preacher was speaking, I imagined a case like this: Suppose some one—let us say Mr. Warren himself—had committed a very great sin against a friend—had deceived and misled that friend—had robbed him of something that was dearer than life, and had ruined his life and had blasted his hopes beyond repair. Say that when all this was done, Warren repented—that as he looked upon the wreck his friend had become, he felt the deepest degree of repentance. What would it all avail? I cannot see how it would give him any peace of mind, unless he had a superficial nature. And certainly his sorrow could never restore what he had taken from his friend."

"It is true that in such a case full reparation could not possibly be made. Yet sincere repentance would be a step in the right direction, and it would bring the offender nearer to that peace of mind he coveted. Certainly, Mr. Warren was right in saying

there must first be repentance, don't you think so, Tom?"

"Oh, yes, he was right there, mother. *Sincere* repentance would make the wrong-doer's case a little more hopeful, and when the injury could be repaired, would lead him to see it done. Repentance is a step in the right direction—so far I assent. But when Rev. Warren asserts that a man, having done a great wrong to a friend, shall by mere repentance secure tranquillity of mind, though the other remains in despair, I decidedly dissent. And against that statement I make this: Whoever claims that he has bought happiness in this way has not only not repented at all, but is a hypocrite and villain."

This vehemence caused Mrs. Sheldon to look at him in astonishment. She had not seen him manifest so much feeling about anything for a long time, and she could not account for the sudden display of it now. She thought it best to change the topic.

"It seems that Mrs. Warren died many years ago."

Her words caused Tom to stop suddenly, turn deathly pale, and almost fall to the ground.

Mrs. Sheldon, startled at his appearance put her hand upon his shoulder. "What is it, Tom, dear? Are you ill?" she asked.

The anxious look upon his mother's face, and the fear of betraying his secret, gave Tom a measure of composure.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, with a faint smile. "It's nothing serious. I have a little trouble now and then. I believe the doctor calls it neuralgia—shooting pains through the—chest. The church was rather warm, and the change to this chilly air may have brought it on again."

He had hid from his mother the cause of his suffering, but he had not relieved her anxiety. She meant to see the doctor herself. They resumed their walk homeward, but said little more. Tom was adjusting

himself to his new surprise. "Dead." He was repeating the word over to himself. After trying to realize the fact as he walked along, he asked what difference it made to him? If in the flesh and on earth, would she not be dead to him? Undoubtedly. What possible benefit could he have received, could he have met her once more? His misery might have been increased. Had he hoped that, by meeting her again, there could ever have come an opportunity for clearing up the misunderstanding that had separated them? Impossible. No allusion to those early days would have been permitted. "It is best as it is" was his conclusion.

Rev. Allen Warren interested and surprised the people of Bolton in his second discourse even more than in the first, and he was invited to settle, as pastor, over Bolton's only church. There was great unanimity in the call, and he accepted it. He was installed as speedily as possible. With his daughter and one servant he immediately

took possession of the pleasant little cottage called the parsonage.

The people of the parish were not long in discovering that their new minister was more a preacher than a pastor. He seldom called upon his parishioners; but his sermons were masterpieces, and they bore evidence of thorough research and deep thinking. Another fact became apparent after a short time—he was not in robust health. In fact, at times he looked quite delicate. Especially after preaching he had occasionally a very weary look. His sermons and his talks at the evening meetings of the church were characterized by earnestness and fervency. But he was more retiring than social in his disposition, and spent much of his time in his study. He preached so well that his hearers could overlook his neglect of his pastoral duties. The church was filled every Sunday, and there was good attendance at the weekly meeting. He grew in favor. The people of Bolton pointed him out to strangers and took great pride in telling

them that the pale man, who shrunk back timidly when accosted on the street, was their minister—rapidly growing famous as a preacher.

While Rev. Allen Warren was thus drawing the respect and admiration of his flock, he was at the same time winning the hearts of the people through his daughter. No man, no cause, could fail when supported by a creature so bright and beautiful. The father imparted to every subject that he handled in his public utterances—all things in life and experience—a hue somewhat somber; but from the daughter there was a radiation like gentle sunshine, darkened by no morbid influence.

Belle Warren was a blonde. She was of medium height, and well proportioned. Good health and good habits had saved her from any resemblance to those shadowy and ethereal beings whom their admirers look upon as "so interesting."

Her beauty was of a kind that was heightened by nearness of view. It would almost

seem as if nature, in planning the uncommon beauty of the minister's daughter, had in view the home rather than the public place. A stranger, seeing her at some distance, would be likely to conclude that her face, though refined and lovely, was much too pale. The delicate and exquisite color that nature had given it would be invisible at a distance. He might think her eyes were blue—which, indeed, they were, and such blue eyes!—but, so far away, he could have no conception of what it was to encounter the appeal of those orbs, nor experience the thrill produced by their commendation, nor suffer the pain caused by their mild censure. The forehead, that from his standpoint seemed too high for a woman, he would find on closer view so fair, so noble, and withal so womanly that he would not change it if he could—no, not for the world! And her hair? What witchery was in that marvelous crown! In color a shade lighter than golden "children's hair," as many called it. The world would envy that favored man—the

lover or husband—who would one day be permitted to gratify the perpetual desire to touch, to caress it.

The life of the minister's daughter was in accord with her father's belief, and yet she entered with zest into every harmless pleasure. She infused new life into the sleepy old town of Bolton. When the people awoke to the fact that they had secured a double prize in Mr. Warren and his daughter they began to wonder how it had ever happened, and what in the place had attracted them. And they were all the more surprised when they learned that the minister was not a poor man, nor dependent upon his salary for a living.

But none of the minister's flock were likely to have their curiosity satisfied on this point. If there was any special reason for his settling in Bolton, he kept it to himself. Belle knew no reason. Her father had only told her that if he were called he should come. He certainly would have been acceptable to a larger church, and would have commanded

a much larger salary. But he chose to settle in Bolton.

She knew her father so well that she was sure he had a reason for this singular step. She would not question him about it. What she needed to know he would tell her, and she had no doubt that when he came to give his reasons for coming to Bolton they would fully justify the act. In the meantime she often found herself trying to guess his motive.

Belle Warren had her hours of serious meditation, and even of sadness, but she passed them alone. They were not on account of herself. At home, at least in her father's presence, she saw the need of always displaying the cheerful side of her nature. For, since she had finished her schooling—some two years before—and had come to be with him constantly, she had noticed that he was at times depressed. This melancholy rather increased than diminished until they came to Bolton. After that, for some time, Belle had seen nothing of it.

One clear November afternoon she had been to walk with Minnie Sheldon. She had returned, and was divesting herself of her wraps in the hall when she saw that the door of the study was ajar. It was some time before tea, and she resolved to go in and sit with her father for an hour. When she reached his door she saw him seated in front of his desk, with his face buried in his hands. She paused a moment to look at the silent figure, and then walked up to him and laid her hand upon one of his. The minister lifted his head suddenly and turned his face toward the intruder. When he saw who it was he made an effort to brighten up, and partially succeeded. But Belle had noticed his dejection. She had never before, when she had seen him thus, attempted to find out the cause, but had set herself to work to cheer him. To-day she determined to find out the cause of his despondency. She seated herself by his side and began.

"Papa, this trouble—what is it?"

The question forced the minister to see

that if he had anything to conceal he must be on his guard. In an instant he was changed. He arose quickly, kissed his daughter on the forehead, and then, holding her face so that he could look straight into it, replied:

"Trouble? I don't see anything that looks like it here—too much color in the cheeks—eyes too bright—lips too red."

"But, papa, there was trou——"

"There was, Belle? Perhaps so, but—" resuming his close scrutiny of her face, "no one would dream of it if he stood where I do."

Belle, seeing the remarkable change in her father, had no desire to pursue the investigation further. The shadow had lifted—let it be forgotten.

"Now, then," continued her father, resuming his seat and looking at Belle, "is this rosy young woman as happy as she looks?"

"She is when a certain other person is."

"She ought always to be, my dear child.

God has given her perfect health and a light heart. She should bless Him, as I do, for what He has done for her, and she should let her happy nature have free course. She must not attempt to dwarf that joy with which she is endowed in order to bring it to the level of the poverty of spirit—we will say—of a certain other person, who would be miserable if he had reason to think that Belle was not happy."

"Would he be happy if he knew she was?"

"The knowledge of that would certainly work miracles in his case. Remember that, Belle; always remember that."

He arose and kissed her again, and said: "There is just time enough before tea for you to play me one or two of your stirring pieces on the piano; come."

Belle followed him into the parlor, and played for him until tea-time.

"You haven't told me where you went this afternoon," he said, after they were seated at the table.

"I went to Sheldon's mill, as they call the upper part of the village—to call upon Minnie Sheldon."

"Ah! and had a pleasant time, I suppose?"

"Very, indeed. The day was so pleasant, we went to the dam for a walk, and when we arrived there I had a curiosity to see the place where we were shipwrecked—or stage-wrecked—and so we did not return until we had been there."

"That reminds me again, Belle, of the perplexity of that affair. Of course, Sheldon did us a great service, a very kind one, and I should be glad to have him know how grateful we really are. But I cannot mention it to him—he will not allow me to."

"Well, if he will not permit it, we shall have to submit, I suppose. He cannot doubt that we are grateful to him."

"I hope he does not think so ill of us as to doubt that," said the minister.

"Think ill of us? How can he? We have done him no wrong, unless our put-

ting him to the trouble of rescuing us was doing him an injury. Most men would have been thankful for the opportunity to do their fellow creatures such a favor—and I do not doubt he was."

"Do you ever meet him, Belle?"

"Rarely, but I did this afternoon."

"Did you? Well, I am interested to know how he appeared to you. He's quite a mystery to me. I can't make him out."

"I think he is singularly reticent, papa."

"He seemed so to me," said the minister.

"I can recall," continued Belle, "nothing that he said while going through the mill—Minnie was bound to have me go in with her—but 'don't go there,' and 'look out for your dress,' as warnings to us when we got too close to the machinery or belts."

Her father laughed outright, and said: "Indeed!"

"He let Minnie do the explaining, and whether she knew what she was talking about or not I have no idea. At any rate, I learned nothing about the mill, for all at

once I became aware that her brother's serious face was directed toward me, and it embarrassed me a little, and I was rather glad to get out of the mill. It's a noisy place, papa. I don't think I shall go there again."

The minister laughed again, and very heartily, as Belle finished speaking. It was such an unusual thing for him to do, and so genuine, that Belle was delighted.

III

It was a perfect December morning. The snow which had fallen two days before was now well trodden, and the sleighing was excellent. Tom Sheldon had made his regular morning circuit of the mill, had visited every room, consulted with the superintendent, had returned to his private room in the office and was writing at his desk when a man whom he wished to see drew up his team in front of the office. Sheldon lowered the window and engaged in conversation with him. While standing there the jingle of some very sweet-toned sleigh-bells fell upon his ear. Turning, he saw a young woman driving a spirited black pony. The young woman smiled and bowed as her eyes met Sheldon's. Bolton could boast of no other turn-out so modern and so neat.

When he had closed the window, instead

of resuming his writing, Sheldon sank back in his chair. The music of the sleigh-bells was in his ears, and for the time being he was struck with a helpless deafness to all other sounds. His vision was also affected. His faculty of seeing seemed limited to one object—that object a face upturned to meet his. In the blue eyes was a look expressive of gratitude and good will, on the red lips a benign and captivating smile. The man who could remain unmoved, with no accelerated beating of his heart by a look like that from such eyes would need no lessons in self-control. And it would have required more than human power for Tom Sheldon, with the spell thrown around him, to resist the influence of his unique position. A vision of beauty alone could not have overcome him, but something had, and the secret was here; this fair stranger had in a moment gained the power of an enchantress over him by her likeness to what he had so long loved —her mother's face. It was no new ruler seeking to gain his allegiance who held her

scepter over him, but the old, the first and only sovereign of his heart, before whom his heart willingly still bowed down. The resemblance that Miss Warren bore to her mother had not entirely escaped Tom Sheldon's notice before—but not until now had he realized that it was so remarkable.

At first, as he sat there, he made an effort to compare the new face with the old, feature with feature, but he failed. He could not separate one from the other. As he essayed to do so, the two would blend into one, until at last there was but one to him, and he lost himself in contemplation of it. There it was before him, just as it appeared when he, an athletic young man, had sprung forward at the risk of his life, seized the flying horses by their bits and brought them to a standstill—there, at the carriage window, the blue eyes gazing at his bleeding temple, the red lips uttering thanks—and there it was to-day, the eyes, the lips, and hair—all the same. The intervening years had made no change.

Worn out by work and loss of sleep the night before, Sheldon fell into a heavy doze. But his mind did not lose its interest in the matter he had been considering when the line was crossed and dreamland was entered. His thoughts were still intently busy with the same subject when he was interrupted by a voice at his side:

"My name is Fate."

"Who let you in here?" asked Sheldon, surprised.

"Oh, I came in when you did!"

"I thought I was alone," said the manufacturer.

"No doubt—but I'm always with you—always have been."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to talk. You have been reaching conclusions too fast, Tom, in the last hour. You are likely to make mistakes unless you consult me. Now, that theory of yours that one and one are one doesn't agree with a certain fact."

"What fact?"

"Why, your age, of course. When that accident threatened face number one you were how old, Tom?"

"Twenty," muttered the other.

"Right. Well, when face number two smiled upon you to-day what was your age?"

"I'm—considerably—under—forty, you know." It sounded almost like an apology.

"Well, thirty-eight, say," said Fate.

"No, you are mistaken—thirty-five—and a trifle over."

"Very well. Now, your reasoning was ingenious, but erroneous. One and one are two—especially when one is separated so far from the other, unless—" here Fate paused and winked at Tom "you can find some miraculous way of making 'thirty-five and a trifle over' just twenty. Good day."

The manufacturer was awakened by a knock on his door, once or twice repeated. "Come in," he said at last, and his bookkeeper brought in his mail and laid it upon his desk.

Left alone again, he soon reached the conclusion that night work was telling upon his strength. He would give it up to Matthews, the superintendent, who must attend to it in future. As for himself, he was not so young as he used to be and could not stand this night work. It was well to bear that fact in mind and act accordingly.

Among his letters he found one from the commission house that sold his goods, inclosing a sample of cloth. The writer asked if he could make goods like it. There was a great deal of money to be made by getting machinery to make that class of goods. On the old styles, he wrote, margins were small and likely to be smaller. Wouldn't it pay to get machinery, even if it had to be imported, to make these goods?

This letter set the manufacturer to thinking. Go abroad, and at once, for machinery? Why not? Business was bad. It was closer work every year to make money. He could arrange matters so as to be absent for a few months, and he must do something in order

to make more money. So much from a business point of view. In another way the trip seemed quite as important, and even necessary. He had never taken a vacation. All at once he had found that he needed one. He welcomed any excuse for a temporary absence, and he was thankful to find one so good.

It seems almost like a paradox that a man's nervous system could be undermined in the environment of such a quiet, old-fashioned town as Bolton. None the less Sheldon felt that his nerves were giving out. The cause must be there, for he had been in no other place where he could thus be affected. If so, the only relief from his disorder would be found in a change of scenes and faces—especially the latter.

In a week he had sailed.

A few days after Tom Sheldon had gone, Belle Warren went up, one afternoon, to call on Minnie for assistance in drawing up a list of committees for a church festival. The young women worked at their task very

faithfully, and, when it was done, Belle found that she must hurry home in order to be with her father at tea, as she made it a point always to be with him at meal times. On returning, she found him in his study, writing. She was glad to notice that he was in good spirits. They repaired at once to the tea table. When the meal was finished, Belle, wishing to consult him about the festival, followed him back to the study.

After they had exhausted that subject, Belle was about to retire, when the father requested her to remain for a few moments. She resumed her seat in silence, and he began, slowly and gravely.

" There is something—it's a delicate matter to talk about, and much more difficult for a father than a mother—that I feel impelled to mention to you. It has been on my mind for some time, and my conscience will feel easier when I have discharged this—duty. Young people—and it is according to nature —are sure, sooner or later, to form attachments—to fall in love. Some day you will

do as they all do. Perhaps you have already——"

There was a faint but positive "No" from his daughter, spoken before he had finished.

"At present, then, you are entirely heart-whole, Belle?"

With downcast eyes: "I believe I am."

"You left no one in Covington whom——"

"None—but friends."

"And here?" continued her father.

"I hope I have many friends here," she replied smiling.

"I venture to think you have, Belle," said the minister, returning her smile. Then the smile upon his face gave place to a serious expression, as he remarked:

"Bear with me a little longer, my dear child. The time will come when some one will ask you to give him your hand. I charge you—call to mind that day, how earnestly I urged it—to let your hand go only where your heart goes. Let no persuasion lead you to accept a man you do not

love. Your mother enjoined me to say this to you, and my love has prompted me to do it. And now, tell me, Belle, do you regret that we came to Bolton?"

"No."

"If you could do so, would you wish to return to Covington?"

"I think not, unless you wished to go back. I have many friends here whom I regard highly—and then, there is Minnie. We are like sisters, and should be sorry to separate."

"I am glad you are contented, Belle, for it is my wish to remain in Bolton. But your wishes, and not mine, must determine the length of our stay here."

For nearly a week after this interview, Belle's mind was closely occupied in planning for the festival. With Minnie, she spent much of her time at the town hall, where the fair was to take place.

The day to which so many of the young people had looked forward at last arrived. The festival was to be in the evening and

about four o'clock in the afternoon Belle ventured to leave the hall long enough to make a flying visit to the parsonage, to arrange for an early supper. Before returning to the hall she informed her father that she would not be at the parsonage again until tea time. When she had gone, the minister, after a moment's deliberation, concluded to make a call. He took his hat and crossed the street. Dr. Morten, a new and very promising physician, lived directly opposite. To his office Rev. Allen Warren betook himself. If, in the long interview that followed, the minister learned something from the doctor which would have plunged most men into the deepest gloom, there was no indication of it in his looks when he left the doctor's office.

He reached home some time before Belle, and went at once to his study and sat down to think. For a long time he never moved from his chair. At length he arose and went to his room to make some slight changes in his dress before going to the festival, which

he must attend. Belle barely arrived at the hour appointed for supper.

"There!" she exclaimed, as they sat down to the table, "I believe the hall is all ready. The decorations are a success. Now, as to the fair, I am quite anxious that it should be successful, as it is our first experience with a country festival."

"Have no fears about it, daughter. The sleighing is good, the evening perfect. There will be a large attendance. You see I am ready."

Belle looked at her father. He had on his best coat, and his thick gray hair was brushed with unusual care from his fine forehead. His gold-rimmed glasses hid the dark circles around his eyes that had of late begun to show themselves. His appearance was striking, and his daughter spoke her true feelings when she said:

"You look splendid, papa—quite handsome."

"Got it, didn't I?"

"What, papa?"

"Oh, I got the compliment my vanity was craving!"

Belle, in great glee, answered by half smothering him with kisses.

The minister's good spirits did not leave him during the evening. No one had ever seen him so social, so lighthearted. He remained at the social until quite a late hour, and then went home, leaving Belle to go at her pleasure.

Dr. Morten did not attend the festival. Had he been there, he would undoubtedly have thought that the minister's apparent cheerfulness was forced and not natural. He would have been mistaken. The truth was that his actions exactly indicated the state of Rev. Allen Warren's mind.

For two years he had been under a suspense that at times was terrible to endure. When, at Covington, he became conscious of something wrong with him, his mind was at once enveloped in the deepest gloom, and since that day he had lived with hope and fear alternating in his soul.

The uncertainty of his hold upon life led him to come to Bolton when he did. He had a scheme in view, the first suggestion of which came to him while he sat in a sort of reverie, or day-dream. He realized that if he had any expectation of seeing this scheme executed, the condition of his health warned him not to put off the preliminary steps. And so he came to Bolton.

After making the change, he felt less depression—not because his health was better, but because his conscience sanctioned the move. As to his health, the fact was that it did not improve. He had, in the last month, suffered several attacks of such a grave nature that he felt he must know more certainly the character of his disorder. He could no longer endure this ebb and flow within his mind.

The result of the examination, which had proved his affection to be heart disease, had lightened the load he had been carrying. It ended the suspense. He knew where he stood. He had for two years been encour-

aging himself to hope, only to have that hope suddenly darkened by some return of a familiar attack of the disease or some new manifestation of its power. Now he knew what was to come. Very well, he was ready. No—not quite—there was his plan—his scheme. He would like to live long enough to see it tried. But as it was doubtful about his doing so, he would do what he could while he lived.

He had done what he could. He had made the first move. He would still be doing when the end came. Would not that be all that could be demanded of him by the great Judge of right and justice? He thought it must be so. When he had done all that he could, and died while doing, God would exonerate him and accept his work as complete. By such thoughts and reasoning he reconciled himself to the probability that he should leave his work uncompleted.

After becoming reconciled to his destiny, he went still further—he welcomed it. To be sure, it gave him a pang when he thought

of Belle left alone. But she was already a young woman. It would be much worse were she still a child. And he had taken care to make a comfortable provision for her future. Still, the thought of her brought a pang. But so far as it affected him alone it was a relief that awaited him. And now that it appeared to be so near at hand, it had the effect of dispelling the clouds that, with a varying density, had overcast his mind for so long a time. The atmosphere of his mental vision was clearer than it had been in many years. And as for his work—his last should be his best.

In this condition of mind was Rev. Allen Warren when he met his daughter at the table that night before the festival. The harmless pleasantry that he saw fit to indulge in a little later, and his unusual display of sociability at the festival, delighted Belle as much as they surprised her.

When Belle went home, she found her father writing. She stopped a moment to chat with him about the fair, and then, bid-

ding him good-night, retired. He often wrote until late at night, and she assumed that he had some thoughts that he wished to put into his sermon for the next Sabbath. Being very tired, she fell into a sound slumber, and did not hear him when he went to his room, as she usually did.

Although the minister often sat up until a late hour, he seldom if ever remained at his desk far into the morning, as on this occasion. He did not appear to be at work upon his sermon—for after writing at considerable length, he folded what he had written, put it into an envelope, sealed and directed it. Then he took a fresh supply of paper and wrote again for a long time. And when he was through, he placed the last epistle or whatever it was, also in an envelope and directed that. Then, taking a key from his pocket, he opened a small drawer in his desk, placed the two envelopes in it, locked the drawer, and returned the key to his pocket. He then went quietly to his chamber.

IV

It was late in the morning when he came downstairs and informed Belle that it was necessary for him to be absent, perhaps two days. He was going to Covington. Did she feel equal to the task of taking him to the depot with her pony? Belle told him that it would be a pleasure to do so, and soon after breakfast they were on their way.

The morning was clear, the air invigorating. The ride was like a tonic to the minister's system, and it was well that it was so, for the previous long day's work, followed by little sleep, had left him much in need of some stimulant. He showed this in his looks. But Belle did not notice it. Perhaps it was because she was not feeling quite well herself, nor, for some reason, in the best of spirits. When they parted at the depot, Belle thought that her father kissed her with unwonted tenderness.

Rev. Allen Warren reached Covington at three o'clock in the afternoon. He went directly to a stable and ordered a horse and driver. When they were ready he got into the carriage and directed the driver where to go. After two or three turns, they drove into a street that led out of the city. The driver kept his horse going at a good pace until the city limit was reached. After that, there was some snow on the ground, and the progress was slower. It was about an hour after they left the stable when the carriage came to a halt in front of a gateway over which was an arch with the inscription:

OAK GROVE CEMETERY

The minister alighted from the carriage and seeing that the gate was locked, stepped to the keeper's house, which was close by. The man, who knew him very well, came out and opened it for him, and he entered the inclosure. He followed the main drive as far as it ran in the direction he wished to go, and was soon lost to view.

At a certain point he left the main drive and took a path that would lead him to that section of the cemetery which, a little more than a dozen years before, was the only part occupied. It surprised him to see how rapidly the new territory was being taken up. He followed this narrow path until he was at the border of the original burying ground. Then he turned, took a few steps down a still narrower walk, and he was at his destination. He stood in front of his own lot. He opened the gate and went in. A handsome granite monument stood in the center of the lot and a short distance from that was a granite slab that marked the resting place of the only sleeper there. In front of the slab the visitor paused and read again the familiar inscription:

Sacred to the memory of
ELINOR,
Wife of ALLEN WARREN,
Died —— 18—
Aged 25.

A moment later he stood with his hand resting upon the crown of the stone, and his eyes upon the snow that covered the grave in front of him.

He had come to satisfy the strong desire that he had felt on rising that morning to visit the place once more. He believed that this would be his last journey to the spot, or last but one; it would probably be his last in life. The snow beneath his feet and around him, the increasing chilliness of the winter air, did not make the place seem dreary to him. He had come there many times when the flowers were in bloom, and the grass green, but it had never seemed more inviting to him than now.

If that which was to come, would but come now, how fitting, how welcome it would be! He was there, was ready and waiting. He raised his eyes, and ventured to offer up a silent petition that if it were right to ask it, he did now ask for the release. He remained in this attitude for a long time. The light of day was giving place to the shadows of even-

ing, but he was unconscious of the change. He was conscious of nothing but the one desire that had come into his soul since he came there, and toward which his whole being was bent; and this desire increased as the shadows deepened. He was not conscious of the nervous strain to which he was subjecting himself. His heart beat loudly and rapidly, but he neither heard nor felt it.

At length the silence was broken by a voice saying, " In a day and in an hour when ye look not for it." He had uttered the words involuntarily. This was the answer then. It was to come " when he looked not for it "—not now and here. With reluctance he prepared to leave the place. He took a step or two in the direction of the gate, then stopped. Moved, partly by a wish to cast one look more upon the grave, and partly by his unwillingness to accept the answer given him he turned around. At that instant the power of evil thrust into his consciousness a most horrible suggestion; it was that he take his own life.

It took him by surprise, for never once in all his years of misery had he for a moment thought of such a deed. It terrified, and yet it fascinated and tempted him. Here was the only way in which his petition could be granted. But he had not come to that: no, not yet! He thanked God that he had the power to resist the temptation. As he would have done had the tempter stood before him in material form, he put out his hand to push him away. He had escaped for the present; but how about the future? Was this awful possibility to shadow all his future earthly life?

If so, would there come a time when the power of resistance would be gone? He felt that he was already in the penumbra of this fearful possibility that seemed to overshadow his pathway. While yet there was any light at all, and before he drifted farther toward the total eclipse of his reason and his will, he would call on his Maker to witness that his heart was right; it would not consent to the crime—it would not yield to the tempter.

And that sorely troubled heart remained right to the end, and gained a spiritual triumph in this its last temptation. But the heart of flesh—that enfeebled organ which at its best had of late been intermittent and irregular in its action, succumbed at last under the prolonged strain it had been enduring, and its beating ceased entirely and for ever. For an instant the body of the minister swayed back and forth, and then it fell forward upon the grave of his wife.

V

The sudden death of her father was such a shock to Belle that when the will was read she noticed but one thing in it—and that attracted her attention simply because it seemed strange. It was the appointment of Tom Sheldon as executor. After it had been read, the lawyer who had drawn it up suggested to Belle that it would be well to make a search in order to ascertain whether her father had left any letter addressed to her.

"From what he once said to me," remarked the lawyer, "I have reason to think he did leave such a letter." And he added, "If other letters are found, I would advise that they be left where they are, for delivery by the executor."

When Belle became sufficiently composed, she acted upon his suggestion. She found

the keys to the desk in the study, and asking her Uncle Philip, her father's brother, to accompany her, she went to look for any paper that might have been left for her. She was not long in finding the two envelopes that her father had placed in the desk the night before his death.

One was directed to her, the other to Thomas Sheldon. She took her own, and after replacing the other and relocking the drawer, seated herself to read her father's last message. It was a long one and was replete with a father's tender love—a benediction that deeply moved the sad heart of the reader.

Again and again the blinding tears welled up from Belle's overflowing heart, and compelled her to pause in her reading. Her uncle turned his face away to hide his own emotion, as he heard the sobs she could not suppress. Her father wrote that he had long suspected that he had a grave disease, and that his life hung by a slender thread. He had not told her because he would not make

her unhappy—and if he and the doctor should prove mistaken in their suspicions, to tell her would be to give a false alarm. Hence, he had concluded that the letter was the only medium through which he could give her his last blessing. Concerning the appointment of Sheldon as executor, he said he had made it because he had the utmost confidence in Sheldon. He had not chosen him hastily, but after mature deliberation. He assured her that she need have no fears as to the ability and integrity of the man whom he had appointed.

Among his closing words were these: "You may desire to know my wishes as to your place of residence. I leave that entirely for you to decide. Do what will please yourself. If you decide to go and live with your Uncle Philip, or if you prefer to remain in Bolton, or wheresoever you take up your abode, the blessing of your father shall be upon you."

Philip Warren remained several days at the parsonage, and before he returned home

he urged his niece very strongly to go with him. But no one had seemed quite so near to Belle in this great sorrow which had befallen her as Mrs. Sheldon and Minnie, and she had already accepted their kind invitation to remain with them until Tom came home, when she could settle what she would finally do. And so Belle allowed her Uncle Philip to go, thanking him for his generous offer of a home, and telling him that while she could not set the time when she would come, it would probably be before long.

Her reason for remaining a while in Bolton she kept to herself. She found herself in unexpected circumstances, and she wanted a little time in which to adjust herself to them. For some cause, known only to himself, her father had but a short time before come to Bolton. She would not, therefore, make haste to leave the place. She wished to consider the situation carefully, and she would take this first view of her changed circumstances from the standpoint of Bolton.

The day after her uncle had gone, Belle went home with Minnie. Mrs. Sheldon received her as kindly and tenderly as a mother would have done. Belle was overcome for a moment, and laid her head on the kind woman's shoulder and wept. But after this brief outburst, she never again gave way to her grief in the presence of either Mrs. Sheldon or Minnie. And, indeed, during the next few weeks the questions which forced themselves upon her for consideration and settlement, seemed so important and demanded such immediate attention, that they engrossed her thoughts, and lifted her out of a disposition to brood over her great loss.

A shallower nature would perhaps have wept more and thought less, if at all, of the problems that seemed of so much moment to Belle. But to her it appeared that if she would truly honor her father's memory, she must meet and solve the problems that so deeply concerned her future life in a way that he would approve if living.

"Had her father come to Bolton for a

special purpose?" and "If so, was she under obligation to discover that purpose and fulfill it, if it had not already been fulfilled?"

These two questions had not, all at once, taken shape in her mind since her father's death. They had been before her for some time, and she had given them more or less desultory thought. But the time had now come when she must give them her undivided attention until she reached a positive and final decision.

To the first question, she was already prepared to give an affirmative answer. He had left Covington, where a much larger salary and pleasanter social surroundings had seemed to offer every inducement for him to remain. His congregation there had offered to increase his salary, but against every apparent motive of self-interest he had accepted the call to the little town of Bolton. The relief from his despondency—the lifting of the cloud from his mind—all these things were conclusive evidence of some uncommon motive for the change. She would

be blind indeed if she did not see clearly thus far.

Having answered quickly and decisively the first, she proceeded to consider the second question—her obligation. Ought she to seek for the motive that had influenced him, and, if it were still possible, to complete any work that he had left uncompleted? Should she endeavor to bring to light what perhaps he had labored to keep secret? She might take the property he had left her, and, giving the question no more thought, become at once a member of her Uncle Philip's household, and, after she had spent a proper time —according to the rules of fashionable society—in mourning, enter with all her heart into the pleasures to which she was invited.

She was not insensible to the allurements of society, but she would not permit herself yet to come under their influence, lest her views of what now seemed to her a solemn duty be changed. She might not be bound to look into anything her father had done, or intended to do. That she was not decided

upon. But before she should place herself within the vortex of fashionable life, she was bound to satisfy her conscience by some decision for or against such an examination.

And now several things combined to give her judgment a bent toward an affirmative answer to the second question. First, the fact that her father had come to Bolton for a special purpose. Then, the money he had left her. It was hers legally, for the will made it so. But had she a moral right to it all? Would it be right to touch it until she knew, and how could she know without finding out whether her father had attained his object in coming to Bolton before he was so suddenly stricken down?

And, lastly, a feeling was fast growing into a conviction in her mind that her father had come to Bolton to pay a debt—the payment of which would be a restitution, and that he wished to do it indirectly, secretly. A debt of what nature? She believed that it was a money debt. Her reason for thinking so was that one day as she sat alone in her

room, thinking of her early life and calling to mind every little incident associated with those days, a scene of which she had been a witness when about five years old was all at once recalled from some secret recess of her memory. As she remembered it, her father had returned home after what seemed a long absence, when her mother showed him a letter she had received while he was away. It must have been an important one to have caused the commotion which followed. Her mother wept long and bitterly—her father paced the floor. There was much earnest talk and frequent reference to the letter. And was she mistaken, or had her mother uttered these words, quoting from the letter:

"It was a wicked robbery."

She might have heard the words at some other time, but she could not divest herself of the feeling that they were stamped upon her young memory at that time.

The outcome of her deliberations was a decision that she would not take possession of her inheritance until she was sure that

what her father had left her was hers morally as well as legally. And if her father had been stricken down before he had been able to make the restitution that she was sure he intended to make, she should certainly carry out his intention, even though it exhausted the estate to do it. The first step in that direction was plain to her. It was to ascertain from the executor whether her father in writing to him had expressed a wish to have anything done that was not decreed in the will. This first step could not be taken until Thomas Sheldon returned home, and Minnie had told her that he was not expected until the middle of March, which was now nearly two months away. As the days went by she grew very anxious to see him, that she might begin the worthy task that she had assigned herself.

Meantime, Tom Sheldon in London was receiving great benefit in the relaxation from his long application to business. Since he had left home he had seen much of the great world and had discovered that he

could still become interested in it. His trip, and his sojourn abroad, had been of immense profit to him. He looked and felt much better than when he left home. He had become interested enough in his personal appearance to change his attire, and one might easily mistake this neatly dressed and handsome man for a younger brother of Tom Sheldon of Bolton. The purchasing of machinery, which he prosecuted leisurely, afforded him interest and pleasure. It was after his return to London, when he had visited a large manufacturing city to contract for a certain part of his machinery, that he found a letter from home informing him of the death of Mr. Warren and of his appointment as executor.

Tom read this with astonishment. What next? he wondered. Why had Warren chosen him as executor? The minister had certainly been a very strange man, with singular ideas of the fitness of things. A very peculiar man, indeed, to come near him and take up his abode almost at his very door,

when, if he had possessed a correct sense of propriety, he would have kept out of his sight forever.

And here was a still stranger proceeding —this appointing as his executor a man who had every reason in the world for being his enemy. Tom concluded that the minister was not quite right in his mind during the last year of his life. Otherwise, how could his remarkable actions be explained?

" Well, Warren has now closed the drama, and his last act was characteristic of the man," thought Tom. But he was very sorry that the embarrassing duty had been forced upon him. That night, in his room, as he thought the matter over, he saw plainly that he must come to a thorough understanding with himself before he returned to Bolton. He did not hesitate to put the most pointed questions to himself.

" What are you going to do, Tom Sheldon? Are you going back to become hopelessly in love with Belle Warren? Think of her age and yours. Are you a fool? Do

you think a young girl will marry a man of thirty-five? Do you intend to ruin yourself and let your business go to destruction, and your mother and sister come to want? Come —you see where you are drifting—what are you going to do?"

This matter-of-fact questioning brought Tom to his senses. As he expressed it: "That, I hope, knocks the nonsense out of me."

His duties as executor might make it a little harder to carry out his resolution, but he felt so strong after that understanding with himself that he had no doubt of his ability to follow the course decided upon—which was to let the secret of that early love remain buried in the graves of Allen Warren and his wife. And, while he would perform his work as executor to the best of his ability, he would never for a moment allow himself to show any other feeling for Belle Warren than such as a kind, elderly friend might manifest if placed in such a relation.

And he was to prosecute his business with

great vigor. He had great confidence in the venture he was making. He did not mean to be oversanguine, but he felt that wealth was within his reach. He pictured to himself his mother and Minnie living in luxurious ease, and smiled to think how readily Minnie would spend money when she had a plenty.

It was a little past the middle of March when he stepped out upon the platform at Wallingford one afternoon and met his man and team waiting for him.

As he approached Bolton the calmness of mind into which he had reasoned himself during the last month did not desert him. He congratulated himself that the nervousness which troubled him when he went away had entirely left him. He had so thoroughly settled what to do and so carefully arranged how to do it that he had no further doubts or misgivings. As he ascended the hill which led up to the house he wondered if his mother and Minnie would be on the lookout for him. Yes, there they

were, on the porch. The carriage drew up at the foot of the stone steps and he alighted. What a welcome awaited him! He ran up the stone steps and caught his mother and Minnie in his arms. It was the happiest moment Tom had experienced for many years as, with his arms around them, he entered his home once more.

Belle had gone up to her room when she saw Tom coming, and remained there until the greetings were over. When she came into the room, as she did not long after, there was an attempt to smile on her sad face as she approached Tom and extended her hand. His face turned a shade paler in spite of himself as he received it in his. His heart was stirred with sympathy as he looked straight into the interesting face.

" I am glad," he said, almost falteringly, " that you consented to come here for a little while, and I trust you will feel that I shall do all in my power to be of service to you in the unexpected position in which I have been placed."

" I do not doubt it," she replied. " I am already under very great obligation to you all, and the debt is increasing every day."

" Do not think of yourself as indebted to us, Miss Warren. We esteem it a pleasure to do all that we can for you."

" Oh, I know how naturally and easily you all perform acts of kindness, but that does not lessen their value to me, and you must permit me at least to say that I am grateful—very grateful—for all you do," said Belle.

The next morning Tom found Belle alone in the sitting room when he came down. After exchanging the usual " Good morning " with her, he said:

" I shall need to pass a day at the mill, then I shall at once qualify for the duties I am to perform for you. Is there anything you wish to suggest to me—anything you think of that requires my first attention? "

" Thank you. There is a letter that papa left in his desk for you which I think it

would be advisable for you to read as soon as convenient."

"I will go to the parsonage to-morrow morning for that purpose. Perhaps you and Minnie will go with me," said Tom.

"I will be ready, and will ask Minnie to go with us," replied Belle.

Sheldon spent a busy day at the mill. In the morning, as agreed, he went with Belle and Minnie to the parsonage. On arriving there, they went directly to the study. Belle unlocked the desk, and taking from it the sealed envelope, which was directed to Sheldon, handed it to him, and then she and Minnie withdrew from the room. After Sheldon had read the letter, he sat for a moment almost bewildered. Then he arose, put the letter in his pocket, walked over to the window and looked out. He had thought that the remarkable series of surprises with which Rev. Allen Warren had kept him in a state of agitation for half a year had come to an end when the minister died. But he was mistaken. The contents of the letter so

amazed and startled Tom Sheldon that it seemed to him everything the minister had done since he came to Bolton was reasonable in comparison.

Belle and Minnie would soon return. The former would question him as to the contents of the letter. What answer could he make? He heard them coming. By a great effort he succeeded in regaining some degree of composure. When the young women entered he immediately remarked to Belle, in as quiet a manner as he could command:

"Your father merely sought to make plain a certain matter concerning which he correctly presumed I might be a little in the dark."

"Is it about anything I need to know?" asked Belle.

Tom Sheldon hesitated—raised his eyes until they met Belle's, and slowly replied:

"I think not. No, I am quite sure he did not intend that I should trouble you with the matter."

"But I am prepared to know the worst, and I had surmised that papa had written something to you—that—he was not quite willing to tell me. If he has mentioned anything, Mr. Sheldon, which he wishes done, it must be done—I wish it done—whatever the cost may be."

"Trust me for that. I shall take no step that is not in accordance with your wishes."

"But you will need to know what my wishes are in—in any certain case," said Belle, smiling.

"True."

"And before I can tell you what they are, I need to know what the letter is about."

"It has become evident to me, within the last few moments, that you expected that this letter would direct about something that I feel warranted in saying—it does not allude to. But, if there is anything I need to know in order to carry out your wishes, I hope you will feel free to tell me," said Sheldon.

"There is something," replied Belle,

" that I wished to consult with you about. But I will not trouble you farther to-day."

Belle was determined to bring up the matter again, as soon as a more favorable time presented itself. That would be when she could see the executor at leisure and alone.

VI

Tom came in one morning, saying: "I am going to Wallingford. Who is brave enough to ride with me?" not thinking anyone would wish to go.

"Thank you," answered Minnie, "no one of this company cares to ride a dozen miles and back when the traveling is so bad."

"I think I could," quietly remarked Belle.

"You think you could!" exclaimed Minnie. "Why, think of the mud!"

"Oh, I shan't mind that, if your brother is really willing to let me go!"

"Willing!" quickly put in Tom, looking surprised and pleased; "I shall be delighted."

"Then I shall certainly go." Saying which Belle made haste to get ready.

"I did not dream you would care to go, or I would have made the invitation more

direct," remarked Tom, after they had started.

"Thank you, but it is just as well, so long as I am here. I wanted to go—partly because I wished to see you alone."

"Oh! about——"

"About the letter."

"That is why you braved the mud?"

"Yes; I really wish to know its contents."

"You would never forgive me if I told you and I should never forgive myself," was the answer.

It was a hasty and, as he afterwards felt, an unwise one. It troubled him exceedingly to think that in an unguarded moment he had let her see that it was an important letter. He meant rather to have made it seem unimportant—to have evaded her questions —to have done anything else than have come to close quarters about it.

"Then you will not tell me?"

"No, I could not."

A serious expression was on the maiden's

face as she asked: "Is that quite right, Mr. Sheldon?"

The look and tone threw Tom Sheldon off his balance again, and he committed a blunder worse than the first.

"Yes," he answered; "if I disclosed the contents of the letter I should never after dare look you in the face."

Belle turned pale at this statement. Nothing more was said for some moments. Sheldon felt that he had made a mess of it. "What a stupid idiot I am!" was his inward comment. He was the first to break the silence, which he did by saying:

"You imagined the letter related to—what, Miss Warren?"

There was some delay, and then Belle replied slowly: "I had expected papa would speak of—a mistake made, or—wrong done, long ago."

Tom Sheldon stared at the fair face beside him. He could hear his heart beat.

"I am quite satisfied," added Belle, "that he felt he had done some one an injury and

that he was seeking to undo the wrong when —he died."

"What are your grounds for a supposition so unlikely?"

"Oh, I think this conviction rests on a pretty substantial basis!"

"But that is not telling what, and I cannot believe that you have any good reason for such a surmise."

"My reasons are quite convincing to me, though I do not give them, and I hold myself as bound to complete the work of restitution that I am sure papa intended to have done had he lived. Do you think I shall be successful?"

"I am sure you would succeed in any undertaking where you had some tangible basis."

"Oh, I shall do my utmost to succeed, and you will help me do my duty, won't you, Mr. Sheldon?"

"I—oh, certainly! I am at your service —but what can I do?"

"Perhaps not anything—unless it is to

give me some light, if you have received any, as to what it was that papa was anxious to have done. I believe you hold the only key to that knowledge."

"Have you ever tried to guess or imagine what it was?" asked Sheldon.

"Yes."

"And what did you guess it was?"

"I have thought it must be a matter of property—perhaps money."

"Whom did you imagine he had—wronged?"

"I could never guess. But I mean to know."

"I see you are quite determined."

"I am glad you see that."

"Well, I will be frank with you. Your father left no indebtedness that he was holden, either morally or legally, to pay."

"No obligation?"

"No."

"But I cannot make that statement agree with things that I remember, Mr. Sheldon."

"Nevertheless, that statement is absolutely true. You may rely upon it."

During the silence that followed Tom Sheldon was congratulating himself on what he deemed his escape from a very critical situation. He now felt safe. But his congratulations were premature. While he had been felicitating himself upon the favorable turn the conversation had taken, the young woman at his side had been very thoughtful, and had thought to some purpose. At last she spoke.

"Did you know papa before he came to Bolton?"

"Yes." It was a husky voice that replied. Sheldon's feeling of safety was leaving him very rapidly.

"Long before?"

"A number of years."

"Was that why he chose you for executor?"

"Very likely—I certainly had no other qualification for the position."

"Did he owe you anything?"

"No, not a dollar," the answer came in a hoarse whisper.

"If not money, anything else?"

"For God's sake, why do you ask that, Miss Warren?" he cried in the desperation into which her questions had driven him. Then, seeing his mistake, he tried to recover his footing by saying: "No—nothing."

Belle turned and looked into the face of her companion and earnestly exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Sheldon, do not withhold longer the knowledge from me! Papa was indebted to you in some way. Tell me in what way, I pray you, that I may repay the debt!"

Tom Sheldon looked into the beautiful eyes that were turned toward him. He did not reply at once. He was considering, not so much how he could still longer evade his questioner as what the consequences would be if he told her all and showed her her father's letter. At last he said:

"I have been trying to keep from you a secret that you ought never to know. Think

seriously, Miss Warren. Would you press me to disclose what I feel sure will destroy your peace of mind, and—mine also?"

"No, I would not. But do you think I shall be happy, forever believing there was something I should have had a voice in settling, and that I was not permitted to know what it was?"

"You still wish to see the letter?"

"I do—unless you are willing to tell me this secret."

"I could not—would not. If it is ever told, it must be your father's pen and not my voice that tells it. If you still demand the letter I shall give it up to you. But I ask you to remember that I never intended you should see it——"

"I will remember what you ask. You have done your duty, I must do mine. I cannot turn back."

Then, slightly paler, but with a steady voice, she concluded with: "There is no escape for me, Mr. Sheldon; I must see the letter."

Tom Sheldon took the letter from his pocket and handed it to her. She took it and read as follows:

Thomas Sheldon:

SIR: I spend much time in meditation. The habit grows upon me. I do not seem to lack food for reflection, and when this mood is upon me I rarely let it pass without comparing—I find a lurid interest in doing so—myself with other of God's creatures, to see which one I most resemble. The result is always the same—that in one particular Judas and I stand alone together, in showing to the world how victory can be at once so complete and—so fatal.

And yet I am not without a faint hope, as I write what is to be a confession and a revelation, that I shall yet see the light break through the thick darkness that has enveloped my soul so long, and that on that great day which is to come, Thomas Sheldon—whom I have so wickedly betrayed—shall meet me with forgiveness, and not with accusation.

I drugged the wine that night at the club with a substance whose effect was to bewilder and craze the brain, and then I poured into your ear the base slander that drove you, mad with the drink, to rave before her. After you had left her, and while she was yet trembling from the fright you had given her, I went to her; and to her inquiry whether you were in such a condition before, I falsely replied that I feared it was a common thing for you to be as she saw you then —that, in fact, I had tried in vain to reclaim you from your cups. God forgive me! As I rehearse it, how wicked the treachery seems! I was madly in love with her. I knew how deeply you loved her, but I did not know how strong her affection for you was until after we were married and your reproaching letter came. Then I found that she had returned your love with her whole heart.

Here I have a secret to impart. She was a widow. This fact I learned while I was pressing my suit after your last visit to her.

I also learned that she had a little daughter named Belle, who lived in an adjoining town with Elinor's mother. Little Belle I saw once or twice before her mother and I were married. Her blue eyes and fair complexion were an exact copy of her mother's.

After our marriage Belle lived with us. My treachery bore its legitimate fruit—misery. For two years it was my lot to stand—a helpless and hopeless watcher by the side of the woman I worshiped, and whose heart I had broken, and at the end of that time to lay her in her grave. My great, though fatal, love won her pity and forgiveness. Before she died she urged me, that I might make amends in a measure for the suffering I had caused, to choose some calling in which I could do the most good to mankind, and suggested the ministry. I followed her advice. As time went on, the more devoted I became in my profession and the more I urged men to forsake their sins the more my own monstrous crime loomed

up before me, until at last I could think of nothing else. And after I learned that the malady from which I suffered would probably terminate my earthly existence at an early day, at times I suffered torments. It was during my last two years at Covington that I learned I had a severe affection of the heart.

While brooding over the matter one day, and asking myself for the thousandth time if there was anything I could do to lessen my guilt in the sight of God before I was summoned into His presence, a strange thought suggested itself to my mind. Belle was at this time approaching womanhood, and was strikingly like her mother. The thought came to me that I should bring you and her together. If the result should be the same as when you and Elinor met, would I be doing any wrong to Belle? I could not see that I would. And in the event of your acquaintance ripening into love, would I not have undone the wrong I had done you, and lifted a great load from my con-

science? I satisfied myself as to your uprightness, and then I came to Bolton to execute the plan I had made. The choosing of you as an executor was the second step in the same plan. Thus far, Thomas Sheldon, have I gone to make amends for the great wrong I did you.

Do you ask me if I would be so base as to sell this beautiful creature for the sake of gaining peace for my troubled conscience? I answer, no, I would not. Another sin would not lighten the load I carry. Hear me. She is the very idol of my heart. I could not love her more were she my own child, as she supposes she is. I have charged her to give her hand to no man who has not won her heart. I charge you to win her fairly and fully, if you win her at all, or my curse and the curse of God be upon you. But I know you better than to think evil of you. You will be manly and honorable with her, Sheldon. I do not doubt it. I trust you fully. And if you fairly and truly win her heart, rest assured you will

receive not only mine, but her mother's blessing.

ALLEN WARREN.

While Belle was reading the letter, Sheldon, walking his horse slowly, had the air of a man in a funeral procession, and his spirits were not much lighter than those of one following a dear friend or relative to burial. Indeed, he felt as if that would be much like what he was doing. For, notwithstanding his pretended belief to the contrary, he had been cherishing a hope of one day winning this woman's heart. But now that hope was dead, and he was riding to its burial. The end of the letter would be its grave. He waited for her to finish, expecting to hear her then pronounce the final "Dust to dust—ashes to ashes" over his dead hope.

After reading the letter, Belle returned it to Sheldon, saying as she did so:

"All these revelations are very surprising and startling, but perhaps it is as well that I should know the truth."

"And the whole of it?" asked Tom.

"Yes, the whole of it."

"In that case there remains something for me to tell."

"I said the whole, supposing the letter contained all," said Belle, coloring slightly.

"Do not be disturbed, Miss Warren; I am not about to offer you anything that requires any answer on your part. I take it for granted that you have already in your own mind refused to be a partner in the execution of his unnatural and revolting scheme —doubly unnatural and revolting because I —I, of all men, was the medium through which it was submitted to you. I think your father felt that I could not look into your face and hear your voice many times without having the old love awakened within my heart, and the old spell thrown around me —and he was right. After what had been to me long, hopeless years, you came—as a stranger, I thought at first. But soon, without intending or knowing it, you forced me to see in you—in every feature, in voice, and

in action—not simply a resemblance to her, but the very being who had been inexpressibly dear to me. What then? Did hope return? For one brief moment the voice of the old love silenced all others within my soul. Then there was discord. Reason asserted itself and called Love a fool, and, with convincing logic, left it no ground to stand upon. But, Miss Warren, Love is very persistent and—deceitful; and though pretending to be persuaded by Reason's philosophizings, I found it was keeping alive and hid within the choicest chamber of my heart a faint hope. Half distracted by the opposing forces within me, I went abroad. There I formed a resolution to bury the old love and to settle the estate of which I had been appointed executor, and thus make it possible for you to leave Bolton at an early day, that I might become of some use to my family and myself—and—I—am doing all I can to carry out that resolution."

"Wallingford is in sight. Shall I go at

once? Shall I take the train there for Uncle Philip's? Is that what you desire?" asked Belle.

"If you have no desire to stay—I beg you to go—soon. It will be more merciful to me."

"But the promise that I made myself—we are both forgetting that," said she.

"For Heaven's sake!" he exclaimed, looking with astonishment at her. "Do you think I——"

"Oh, no," interrupted Belle, "I do not think you would hold me to it against my will—that isn't the point. What if you do magnanimously refuse to consider my promise binding? And of what consequence is it that I did not know what it might lead to? True, I was mistaken in supposing that part or all of my patrimony would be required to make that promise good, but I made it after mature deliberation. I took the chances, and how can I honorably disregard my pledge?"

That she could discuss the matter in such

an apparently calm matter, or even at all, misled and exasperated the already unnerved man. He turned toward her and said, almost fiercely:

"I did not expect this. Would you trifle with a man as serious as I am? Would you belittle this love of mine by thinking it would allow of any sacrifice on your part? Do you think I would bind you to myself with any bonds but those of love?"

He stopped, and, half repenting his fiery words, slowly turned and looked at Belle. He expected to see her pale, trembling—perhaps weeping. But instead of that she was flushed, smiling, and looking at him with her mother's eyes. Seeing her thus, he believed she was about to offer some other remark—meant to be consoling, like the last, and he hardened his heart and prepared to meet it, still more severely.

"You have told me that you love me. Do you really think so?"

"Think so!" he cried. "Why do you ask that? Man never loved more than I love you!"

"But are you sure of it? You know you were thinking of another when you first saw me. Are you certain you are not loving me for mamma's sake, and because I am like her?"

He took her hand and, looking earnestly into her face, replied: "If I should say yes, I am sure—and the love of the youth, as great as it was, was nothing compared with the love of the man—that you have no rival on earth or in heaven, and that I adore you, Belle—if I should say all this, and it were true, what then? For I do say it, and it is true."

"Then——"

She lifted her eyes to Tom's, cast a furtive glance at his expectant face, and then withdrew them. She did not finish what she started to say. Her voice had suddenly failed her. She trembled a little, and then sat dumb at Tom's side—and the crimson on her cheeks deepened rapidly.

"Then—what?" he repeated; and the look on his face was not that of a quite hopeless man.

"The dream meant nothing, after all," she answered.

"The dream?"

"Yes—when you were away, one night, I had a dream. There was a great flood, and I seemed to be clinging to an isolated rock in the current. You came down the stream on horseback, looking just as you did once before. You looked at me, and passed on to save another who, as you raised her from the water, I saw, with surprise, looked very much like—me. And—I—let go of the rock, for I—loved you, and was ready and willing, then, to—die."

The actions of Tom Sheldon during the next few moments must be described as—inconsistent with the ironclad resolution he had made in London.

At length he picked up the reins—he had been so reckless as to drop them—and started the horse toward Wallingford.

"When did you begin, darling?" he asked.

"When did I—begin—to——"

"To love me, yes?"

"I think now—though I did not know it then—it was when we—first met. There—don't humiliate me any more, please."

"I won't," replied the ecstatic lover.

A moment later he laid his hand on Belle's and said solemnly:

"I am thinking of him, dear—and I can now say, from my heart, let his rest be—like his restitution—complete."

GEORGE DALE'S AMBITION *

"WELL, Lucy, here's a surprise; whatever do you think of this?"

"'My dear old friend: Feeling a decided lack of interest in my duties at the present time, I have concluded to take a brief vacation, and am coming to Claremont. Will you do me the great favor of engaging me a boarding place for two weeks from the fifteenth instant?

"'By the way, that is Mabel's birthday, isn't it? I believe I am right, and that she will be thirteen that day—you see how well I remember some things—and I have ventured to buy a pony, with cart, harness, saddle, etc., for her. Hope she will not refuse my gift.

"'Sincerely yours,

"'George Dale.'"

"The same as ever," remarked my wife; "he was always surprising us and—not al-

* From Outing, May, 1892.

ways agreeably. We can't take the pony. How can we?"

"I think we had better let Mabel keep it, Lucy."

"You do? Well! And I suppose you would next invite him to come here and spend his vacation!"

It was not a laughing matter; at the same time, I could not help smiling as I replied, "You guess right, Lucy; I would."

"When you passed through New York last winter and met him on the street for a moment, did you invite——"

"Oh, no, not a bit of it! This letter is a surprise to me as well as to you. I saw him, as I told you, for but a moment; and I liked him as of old. Dale is a very wealthy man, Lucy, and it is nothing for him to give these things to Mabel; and you know they would make her the happiest girl in America. Let him do it. Why should he not?

"And now as to the place where he shall stop. I would be very glad if you would

consent to my inviting him to come here. I do not forget the past, yet I believe in his integrity. If he came here I am sure you would like him."

"It would be embarrassing," replied my wife.

"I think not," said I. "Many years have passed since you knew him. He has grown, and is now no ordinary man. He comes in contact with giants in the legal profession in New York, and he holds his own among them.

"Let him come, Lucy!"

"Very well, the responsibility is yours."

"Mine? I should say it was mostly *his*. He evidently desires to be on friendly terms with us once more; and I propose to let him have his own will."

"And I may as well let you have yours," said my wife, smiling.

"It is decided then that we furnish entertainment for the man—and his beast, is it?" I asked.

"I am forced to confess that it looks so,"

remarked my wife, and so the matter was settled.

I did not tell Lucy all that was in my mind concerning the coming visit of George Dale to Claremont, and I have since learned that she kept from me much that was in her own. Perhaps that accounts for the fact that our sleep was not continuous and sound that night.

Some time before four o'clock we did get to sleep, and at seven were horribly startled out of a sound slumber by a shrill whistle through the speaking tube that ran from the kitchen to our chamber. Since that night and other wakeful ones that followed, Lucy and I have confessed to each other what it was that kept us awake It was this: "What was to be the outcome of George Dale's visit to Claremont?"

I wrote him a very cordial invitation to come and spend his vacation with us.

He came on Mabel's birthday, having sent the pony and the trappings so that they arrived just before he did.

I think Lucy's heart warmed toward him when she witnessed Mabel's delight over her present—and I know mine did.

The morning after his arrival, at the breakfast table, I asked him what he desired to do by way of recreation, and offered to join him in anything he wished to do.

"You know this region pretty well," said I, "and the opportunities it affords for pleasure."

"Thank you," he replied. "For a few days I think I shall do nothing but rest under the shade of your trees here on the lawn. By and by, if my learned brother (my profession was the same as his) will consent to accompany me, I very much desire to try my luck for one day trout-fishing in the brook that begins up at Number Nine and comes down Tolland Hills."

His eyes were on the table as he spoke, which gave me an opportunity to cast a quick glance at my wife to see if the sound of "Tolland Hills" from his lips affected her as it did me. She caught my eye, and I knew that it did.

In the meantime I had replied, "All right. Your 'learned brother' will be glad to go with you."

With the exception of riding out with Mabel a few times with her pony, Dale did not leave the place for nearly a week. And during that time he certainly gained in our esteem. Even to my wife, who was somewhat prejudiced against him, he seemed, as she expressed it, "as noble as he was talented and cultivated."

And to Mabel he was something more than a common mortal. And I do not think it was chiefly the gift of the pony that raised him so high in her estimation, but rather his patience, his subdued manner, his wonderful stories and his *looks*.

His hair was very gray for a man but forty years of age.

I knew his age exactly, for we were class and room mates at college.

Young gray heads were peculiar to the Dale family.

His hair was a puzzle to Mabel. One day she said to her mother, "Mamma, don't

you think Mr. Dale is a beautiful old gentleman?"

"But he is not old. He's younger than papa, and you don't call him old, do you?"

That night, after we had gone to our room, my wife rehearsed the brief conversation between herself and Mabel regarding Dale's looks, and then remarked:

"He certainly has aged, Dexter; and he seems a little sad; don't you think so? But it was not illness that made his vacation necessary. Do you think it was?"

"I suppose your last question is all you expect me to answer. My answer is that he is not what you would call an invalid."

"An invalid? Well, hardly. Aside from being a little pale, he looks well enough. I believe, Dexter, that his bodily health is good."

"You do, Lucy? Why didn't you ask him what under the sun he meant by it?"

"Ask him what he meant by what?"

"Why, by coming here in perfect bodily health."

"And run the risk of being told that he came here because my husband invited him? I would rather be excused. I wonder if he has the family trait as well as the characteristic gray hair?"

"What trait, Lucy?"

"Fickleness," was her quick reply.

"Give it up," I answered.

"By the way, Dexter, I never knew—or I had forgotten—that his eyes were gray. You know that I don't like gray eyes."

"The deuce you don't! Mine are gray!" I exclaimed.

"Dexter!"

"Yes'm."

"Yours are *blue*!"

"Gobelin-blue then, I guess."

"*Real* blue, my dear, if not quite as heavenly as they used to be."

"I see but one defect in his make-up, Lucy."

"What is that?"

"His hair and mustache don't match.

He ought to get a brown wig, or whitewash his mustache."

"Oh, that combination is quite natural to the men of his family! It is unique, and quite pleasing to the eye."

"To the eye, yes. The fact is, Lucy, to the eye he's quite a handsome man. Don't you think so?"

"Frankly, I do," said she.

"I didn't see how you could deny that, but I am not specially interested in his good looks. I admire him very much because of his power as an advocate. He is called a very able pleader. I should like to hear him in an important case."

"And so should I!" exclaimed my wife. "But whether I hear him or not, I hope the time will come when he will have to plead in a case where he himself as defendant will have at stake all that is as dear as life and happiness to him, and that he may suffer the pangs of defeat before he wins, and—I am not sure that I hope he will win then."

"Ah, Lucy! put him there on the defense, and unless I mistake the man, there would be something worth hearing."

I went to sleep with my wife's last words uppermost in my mind, and perhaps it was not strange that during the night I dreamed that I was present with her at just such a trial as she spoke of, and that I heard George Dale speak in defense of himself. When I awoke in the morning I told Lucy of the dream.

"And how did he come out?" she asked.

"The dream ended before I could discover," I replied.

"Well, no matter; his being here is all a dream to me. I cannot make it seem real and *natural*. And I cannot see what good is to come of it. When do you take that fishing trip?"

"Oh, whenever Dale is ready," I said.

"I wish you would get him ready and have it over with. *That* part of his purpose in coming here puzzles me most."

It did me, too, but I did not mention the

fact to my wife. I simply told her that I would hurry him up a little.

But it was not necessary for me to do so. Before I started for the office Dale brought up the matter and asked me when it would be convenient to go.

"Any day. Can go to-morrow, if you wish," I replied.

"Say we do," he answered.

"All right. To-morrow it is," said I.

And at six the next morning we started. It was about ten miles to Number Nine, in the vicinity of which several of the brooks that came down Tolland Hills took their rise. We were going to our old fishing grounds, a spot once very dear to George and me, and where he had not been for fifteen years. In what high spirits a man, famous with the fishing rod as George had been, would start out on such an excursion! And with what interest and pleasure he would look again upon objects and scenes once familiar to him! And when the man had George Dale's fluency of speech, and so

much on every side as he rode along to inspire him, how much he would have to say, and how interestingly he would discourse!

But how was it?

My eloquent friend—eloquent and voluble enough elsewhere—said but little, and that little in an absent-minded sort of a way, or else he rode in utter silence, with his eyes looking straight ahead or on the ground. Soon after we started he made an effort to talk, but he evidently could not do it. And so, in silence, for most of the way, we rode to the fishing grounds.

Once during the journey, as I caught a look at his solemn face and thought of the object we had in view, the grim humor of the situation struck me very forcibly, and I was tempted to slap him on the back and shout:

"That's right! Be as gay as you please, George! It *is* a great day! Nothing like fishing, old boy!"

But, of course, I did nothing of the kind, and by refraining, perhaps, prevented the

turning of a farce into a tragedy; for I am inclined to think—judging from his looks at that moment—that had I spoken in that vein, he would either have shot me or run me through with his fish pole, the butt end of which had an iron that tapered to a point like a spike.

I was not sorry when we reached our destination. I drove up to the small tavern that stood within half of a mile of where our fishing was to begin, and left our team with orders to have it by twelve o'clock at a certain place where I had planned that we would take our lunch.

At eight o'clock we began our fishing. The prospect—so far as the day was concerned—was favorable. George also had brightened up a little, and, as of old, insisted upon my going ahead, as I was the poorest fisherman.

To a genuine fisherman time passes rapidly, and before I was aware of it, it was noon. My basket was nearly full. I turned to look for my companion, and was some-

what startled to discover him sitting within a few yards of me with his rod in his hand done up in its case.

"Enough so soon?" I asked.

He looked up with a weary expression on his face, and replied:

"I find I can't stand this work as I used to, Bevans."

"Well, our team must be near here. Let us go to lunch. You'll feel better after that," said I.

Convinced from Dale's appearance that our fishing was over, at least for that day, I took my rod apart and, stepping to the edge of the brook, prepared myself for lunch, as he had already done. We then went to the place where our team was to meet us.

I settled with the man who had brought it and let him return. Then, hitching our horses to a tree beside the road, we took from the wagon the baskets containing our lunch and sat down under another tree near by. We scarcely spoke while we were eat-

ing. After we had finished we lighted our cigars; and, feeling refreshed and strengthened by the meal, and with my courage renewed, I determined to make Dale talk.

And so I said:

"I suppose you recognize this locality?"

He was looking down the long vista formed by the maples on the sides of the road as I spoke, and without turning his eyes he replied:

"Yes."

"Of course," I continued, "you remember this shady road, and the old stone watering trough a little below here that used to be such a great curiosity to us. And the echo rock opposite it. And then that sudden turn in the road, and the wonderful view in the direction of the ledges——"

"Stop! I beg of you!" he cried, turning suddenly toward me. "I forget nothing, Bevans. And it is because my memory is so acute at this moment that I am so miserable."

He bowed his head upon his hands, and,

clutching his handsome gray locks with his fingers, went on:

"I believe that she loved me when it happened. I have lived, and I shall die, with that conviction. She was certainly mistaken —I thought her unreasonable; and I was too proud and hasty on that fatal day."

He raised his head and shot out the sentence:

"She *accused* me of possessing the *family trait!*"

He stopped short and waited, evidently for me to get the full meaning of the words. I thought I could see that the rankling wound made by the charge had not entirely healed.

"Family trait?" he resumed. "I had not the remotest idea of her meaning. But I had some family pride, and I resented what I considered was a reflection upon my family, and—we parted. A word would have brought me back—just a word from her acknowledging that she had been mistaken. I would have come gladly, joyfully!

But she was never undeceived. Continuing to believe the evil misrepresentation, she cast me out of her heart. Bevans, I ought to have sacrificed my pride to my love and gone back to her before it was too late. It was the mistake of my life that I did not; and how I have suffered in consequence of that mistake! The consolations and joys of love having been taken from me, I turned to my profession with the determination of devoting to it my whole power in order to overcome my disappointment. In a measure I succeeded. I made for myself a name, and was respected—even envied. If at times, when the strife and bustle of the day were over, as I sat in my room, love mournfully whispered of the past, the voice of pride would break in and silence it, saying: 'Remember your resolution! — and your watchword—fame! You were not to stop short of the topmost round of the ladder. Do not falter!'

"Thus pride spurred me on. But pride and ambition together could never have car-

ried me as far as I was bent on going. The real basis of my aspirations was a desire to show *her* what was in the man who, for some reason, she had considered unworthy of her. I was determined, if I lived, to stand as the peer of those who were foremost in my profession. And I had made myself believe that, when I reached that high position, I should find much satisfaction in the thought that she would be compelled to see that this rejected lover of hers was bound to rise in the world in spite of that *family trait* which, whatever it was, was supposed to be a weight that tended to keep him down.

"You see, Bevans, that I am keeping nothing back. But I am talking a great deal, and perhaps you don't care to hear?"

"I *do* care to hear. Do not keep back a word that you feel free to tell me," I replied. The fact was I hung upon his words with intense interest.

"Very well," he said, "do you think that there was a single grain of comfort to me

in the thought that I was a renowned, and not an obscure, lawyer when I read the news of her death?"

Absorbed as I had been in the revelation which my old friend had been making to me of that which was most secret and sacred to him, my interest reached the climax as I heard his last words. But I did not speak, and he continued.

"What was a great name and fame to me then? The only one in the world that I cared to have witness my success had gone to a place where earthly honors are never for a moment thought of.

"On the eve of my triumph—triumph! I do not hesitate to utter the word, for that exactly indicates what my aim was. You see now how great and disinterested my love was when I was seeking to rise so far above the object of it that she would view me from afar, and sigh to think of what might have been.

"On the eve of my triumph she died. Died? She ascended to a height so far

above me that by no known sign could I convey to her the knowledge of my misery.

"The satisfaction of the fool who thinks himself great, which I had begun to feel, departed from me. I was like a man dazed by a heavy blow. My grasp upon all matters pertaining to my profession weakened, and in ability to accomplish results, and in power to present my cases, I was but a faint shadow of what I had been. For months I have been fighting losing battles. I have been aware of this—that my power has not only been waning, but that it had nearly vanished; and yet a strange conceit has continued to rule me until this day—a conceit which, as I view it now, seems contemptible. Under its influence I came to Claremont to show that I could look complacently back upon the fact that a country girl, years ago, rejected me. And swayed by it I proposed the trip we are taking to-day.

"But *now*! and *here*! Oh, my old friend, it no longer controls—supports me! These hills were the birthplace of my—*our* love;

and I am overpowered by the memories that rush upon me! I can no longer pretend to be what I am not—indifferent. Sinking beneath my load of disappointment and sorrow, I confess anew my love. I here proclaim it, and own that the years which have intervened since I first told it here have been wasted—worse than wasted—and lost!"

When he had finished speaking, I arose and asked:

"May I tell this to my wife?"

He replied: "Yes, tell her. I desire to have her know all that I have told you. Do not spare me. But, in simple justice to me, say this, that never during all these years have I ceased to love her sister. And to-morrow I will return to the city. I cannot be congenial company to you and her."

In silence we proceeded to descend the long and beautiful avènue.

Here and there the rays of the afternoon sun entered between the leaves and branches of the trees and fell upon the ground—"disks of light and interspaces of gloom."

When we reached the stone water trough, Dale asked me to stop for a moment, and I did so. He alighted from the carriage and went and stood by the side of the road and looked across to the echo rock. I wondered if he meant to shout and call out the echo. But he only folded his arms and stood there in deep thought for a few moments.

As I watched him how vividly I recalled the days when he and I were there before, and with us the "Gladden girls" — Lucy and her sister! Of course, as he stood there, he must have remembered those days.

How terrible the strain which my friend was undergoing as he stood there, with his arms folded upon his breast, thinking of her as he saw her that day—bright, beautiful, and happy—and, then, as sleeping that long, last sleep beneath the drooping willow tree down in the Gladden family plot!

Fearing that the tension, if prolonged, might be tragic in its consequences to him, I prevailed on him to leave the spot.

There was one place on our way toward

which I looked with no little anxiety. I had spoken of the wonderful view toward the ledges from that place, but he understood what was there of more interest than that, to him. It was the Gladden residence, a stately, old-fashioned house with pillars in front, that could be seen through the trees the moment the corner in the road was turned. I knew that from the moment we came in sight of the place until we had passed it, it would be a trying time to him.

As we left the maple and turned into the elm avenue, and the "Old Gladden Homestead," as it was called, came into view, I imagined that Dale gave a quick, deep sigh.

The house was some thirty rods or so ahead of us. I had jogged my horses over a third of the distance when, glancing down the arched road, I saw a lady approaching slowly—a lady dressed in white, bareheaded, and carrying a parasol.

Slowly the distance between us lessened—lessened until only a few yards were left,

when I felt Dale's hand convulsively grasp mine.

I turned to look at him. His face was that of a man who sees one that has risen from the dead. Doubt, surprise, and overjoy within—the signs of these were plainly stamped upon his face. But all the signs there no man could read, though, having seen that look, he would be likely to carry it with him forever.

"*Who, then, is your wife in mourning for?*" he gasped out.

"Her *Aunt* Mabel; it was a misprint," I quickly replied. And then reining in my horses and bringing them to a standstill, I at the same time brought George Dale and Mabel Gladden once more face to face.

I am sure that from his lips came faintly but fervently the words, "Thank God!"

I am also quite sure that from that moment he was unconscious of my presence.

He stepped out of the carriage, uncovered his head, and stood in front of Mabel Gladden. I looked at her. Her eyes were

fixed upon him. I am confident that there was no one in their world but themselves then.

Why did not the impropriety, the indelicacy of my remaining a witness to their meeting strike me, and induce me to take myself out of the way? I know not. The thought never entered my mind. I remained riveted to the spot.

"Mabel!"

He spoke in a tone scarcely above a whisper, but with intense earnestness.

"To me you are as one risen from the dead. For, a moment ago, I thought you *were* dead; and I would have given the world had I possessed it — I would have given my life and have considered it a paltry price to pay—for the precious privilege of seeing you alive, and of saying to you what I now say, 'I am a miserable man! My life has been a failure because it has been separated from yours. If pride and resentment were in my heart when I went away, love was also there, and that alone has

survived—my love for you. It was never as great as now. Before God! I believe that it has been refined by suffering, as by fire, and that it is now pure and unselfish.'

"As one sees a miracle, I see my wish granted; and O Mabel! those words reveal my heart. Truer ones will never be spoken!"

He held out his hands and looked longingly toward her.

"Ah, Mabel, my sister, forgive me for being a witness of your agitation! Those long years — long and sad, and marked often by hours and days of *secret* tears and repentance that brought no relief—have left their trace upon you.

"But in spite of that you were beautiful —never more so to me—and to him, I doubt not.

"I saw you start; and the look of wonder and the light of joy that came into your face.

"I saw your lips tremble — and then

breathe his name when he stretched his hands toward you.

"And when his arms closed about you, in my deepest heart I said, 'Amen! and amen!'"

AN UNEXPECTED WITNESS *

GEORGE RANKIN and family were at their summer residence in Berkton. It was a warm June evening, and Mr. Rankin was sitting on the piazza when his mail was handed to him. It was so seldom that he received any communication of importance not contained in his daily letter from his business manager in the city, that, after reading that epistle, he turned to the opening of the other envelopes with no expectation of finding anything more interesting than a circular, or a statement of some local market. His surprise and interest were therefore considerable when he opened the following letter:

MY DEAR RANKIN: To-day for the first time in fifteen years I have heard of you. I

* Written for the *Sunday Republican*, March 21, 1880. By G.

learn that you have passed your summers for the last few years in a secluded little village—a paradise of quietness, called Berkton. I also hear that in your little hamlet there is a church but no minister. My friend, when we were "chums," you could not believe that I would ever be solemn enough to be a preacher. But a preacher I am, although at present without a charge. I have been offered a position in your city, with large salary. For a certain reason, which I shall not mention, I cannot accept the offer. I desire to labor in the Master's service as long as I live, but I am compelled to work in some quiet section of His field. May I ask you to present my name as that of a candidate for the vacant pulpit in your neighborhood?

Sincerely yours,
JOHN RAYMOND.

It is doubtful if there had been for years in the feelings of George Rankin anything so near to sentimentalism as there was during, and for some time after, the reading of that letter. "So he really became a minister," said he, to himself, as he folded up the letter and put it in his pocket. For an

hour he forgot to turn to his paper, the memories of those college days were all at once so absorbing.

There was very little that Rankin knew about Raymond, though for a year at college, it so happened the two had shared a room; they were very good friends, though by no means very intimate. They were unlike in many respects. The former cared little for society; the latter was looked upon, even then, as quite a society man. Raymond's father was dead. His last request was that his son become, like him, a minister. Soon after his father died, leaving barely property enough to support his mother and educate him, young Raymond came into possession of considerable wealth by the decease of an uncle. From that time he was able to gratify his taste for elegant attire, pictures and books, and to keep a team. Though possessing many good qualities, Rankin could remember but one thing in the life of his roommate that seemed positively religious, and that was his invariable

custom of offering a morning and an evening prayer. A silent prayer, and not unfrequently when offering it was he a long while upon his knees. This apparently sincere act of devotion made some impression upon Rankin, but less than it might have done perhaps if other alleged acts in Raymond's life had not seemed so strangely inconsistent with it. If certain impressions that prevailed among collegians at that time was correct, his course of life in one respect, in particular, was altogether inconsistent with such a life as that solemn practice implied he led. But, as has been said, there was very little that Rankin really knew about his roommate. He himself had discovered no vice in him; and their friendship was not of the kind that led them to make confessions to each other. Yet he had come to think that the opinion which existed to some extent, that in the fashionable circles which Raymond frequented he was given to an excessive use of wine, was probably correct. It was said that, solicited by one of the fair

sex—whose beauty and accomplishments the time of many was spent in praising—a daughter of one of the wealthiest residents of the town, he could not decline. And it was rumored that he had become infatuated with this young woman. Rankin once saw her portrait on the table in their room, where Raymond had inadvertently dropped it.

After leaving college and entering upon an active business career, Rankin ceased to think much about his friend, and at length quite forgot him. Called to mind again by the application he had made, which vaguely hinted at some mystery in his life, Raymond seemed more of an enigma than ever to Rankin; and more interesting. Still, as much as Rankin desired to see the now "Rev." John Raymond, and learn more about him, at first he had doubted as to whether it would be right and safe to recommend him as a pastor to the people of Berkton. These doubts, however, departed after the matter had rested upon his mind for a

few days, owing, in a great measure, to the fact that for some time after that letter came, a vision of Raymond in the soberer aspects of his college life was constantly before him. And then the letter was an appeal that he could not disregard; reading between the lines, he came to the conclusion that Raymond was very anxious to get the position he had asked for. Rankin said nothing to anyone until he had deliberated the matter thoroughly, and the outcome of his thoughts was a confidence of considerable strength in the Rev. John Raymond. Then he submitted that gentleman's application to some of the officers of the little church of the place. The officers decided to permit the applicant to preach two Sabbaths on trial.

How long it would have been before the bell of that church would again have been heard calling the people of Berkton to worship, if a minister had not offered himself, is uncertain. The humble building had been so long closed and neglected already that

cobwebs and mold were seen inside of it, and outside briers and small trees half hid the lower windows, while grass was growing in the pathway to the door. And yet within sight of the old-fashioned structure there were a score of new cottages and more stately dwellings, owned by the people from the city who spent the warmer months in Berkton. There were signs of thrift in everything except the church. The tavern even had spruced up while the church was closed, and was able to make quite a respectable appearance among the stylish dwellings of the village. But before the first Sunday of the two that were to settle whether or not the Rev. John Raymond was to be called to preach in Berkton came, the church received quite a thorough dusting and brushing inside, and the brush and weeds around it were cleared away.

The audience that awaited the new minister, and that filled the house that first Sabbath morning was a motley one, made up of city and country people. There were

those in the height of fashion as to dress; and there were many who had worn the same dress, or bonnet, or coat, for a quarter of a century, and were not aware that their garments were out of fashion until they were worn out.

As the Rev. John Raymond came in and took his seat upon the ancient-looking sofa back of the pulpit, two things in his personal appearance were noticed; these were an indescribable sadness in his handsome face, and his hair, which was very gray for a man less than forty. His sermon was a powerful one; the impression left upon the minds of nearly all his hearers was favorable. After he had preached two Sabbaths, he was asked to settle over the church. It was not necessary for George Rankin to say anything in his favor to secure the place for him, and he did not; but his failure to do so was not owing to its not being necessary, but to the fact that when he saw Raymond enter the church he thought he discovered in that person's melancholy face

and his somewhat sunken eyes unmistakable evidences that he was a victim to that appetite which, if rumors had been true, he was doing all he could to fix within himself during the last year of his college life. But Rankin, like all the rest, became a great admirer of the eloquent preacher, and was compelled after a while to dismiss from his mind what he came to consider his groundless fears. Where before the Sabbath had been looked upon as a tiresome, dull day by the fashionable people of Berkton, it was now thought to be almost equal to any of the other six days. To the old inhabitants of the town the sermon on Sunday was a great treat.

If the Rev. Mr. Raymond was not very much in earnest he succeeded in giving the impression that he was, and the result was an increased religious interest among all classes. Persons that had never or seldom been to church became regular attendants. The church became uncomfortably full, and there was some talk of a new building.

Church matters had now come to the front in Berkton.

And yet, though as a preacher Mr. Raymond was all that could be desired, there was some dissatisfaction at the stand he had taken in regard to a certain matter. When he accepted the call to settle in Berkton, he stated that his circumstances were such as to make it impossible for him to call upon his parishioners or receive callers at his house. Dissatisfaction at this existed among both the old inhabitants of the place and the sojourners from the city. It seemed a strange thing to the former that the minister should not visit them, and to the latter that he forbade their visiting him. Curiosity sprang up as to the cause of such a remarkable state of things. And that curiosity was not lessened by the fact that, instead of occupying the parsonage—a small house near the church—the new minister had rented a large mansion that was built by a once wealthy gentleman who, by the reverses of fortune, was at present unable to keep it up himself. It would

seem as though a person who was able to live in such a place might bear the burden of entertaining at least those of his parish who felt disposed to call upon him. No one, however, attributed the course of the pastor to an unwillingness to bear the expense of entertaining, for though he did ask for salary all he could get, it was known that he gave for the benefit of the church, and in ways of charity, as much as he received for his services. It was out of the question also to accuse him of pride, for although always dignified, he was always humble. Diffidence had nothing to do with the stand he had taken. He was self-possessed and agreeable, and yet grave. He isolated himself to the extent mentioned, and neither gave nor showed any reason for doing so. He did do as much as consent to see all who desired to ask advice of him immediately after the service on Sunday and a moment after the Thursday evening meeting. A man so interesting, and about whom so little was known, and so little could be found out, is

sure to be talked about and watched. It was soon discovered that the lights in his house on the hillside, seen through the trees from the village, were often burning all night; another mysterious circumstance connected with this gentleman. Did he find it necessary to study and write all night to prepare for the Sabbath? or did he have strange visitors who came and went in the darkness of the night?

A year passed away and nothing new came to light concerning him. But what for a season had been simple curiosity was now suspicion—a fear that something must be wrong, based upon the profound secrecy in which the pastor's domestic affairs were kept and the change that was apparent in his looks and actions. His hair had grown whiter, his eyes more sunken, the lines upon his face deeper; and there was a look in his countenance that a person might have who was almost at the point where hope is lost. This change impressed no one so much as it did George Rankin on his return to Berk-

ton in June to spend the summer. It became the burden of his thought. He was sure that the pastor was waging a fearful warfare with some great evil. He could not doubt what that evil was; and he felt that it was a contest in which the minister was losing ground; and that the time of his utter defeat and fall was near. His conscience condemned him for keeping back at the first what he had known of Raymond. He thought it his duty to go to the officers of the church at once and tell them what he knew and what he feared of the man that stood over them in holy things, and he did it. This was about the middle of the week. By Sunday the secret was generally known. Nevertheless, the congregation that gathered, while the tolling of the bell sounded out through the beautiful valley and over the hills of Berkton, to hear the popular preacher was as large as ever. Doubtless many who were there had more curiosity than ever to hear him. And many, too, felt genuine pity for the man. The seats were

filled, the bell ceased tolling. There was a silent, waiting audience, but there was no speaker. The pastor failed to come that morning. After remaining a little while the people left the church; and outside, for some time after the congregation had broken up, there were many little groups of persons discussing in quiet and solemn tones the melancholy fate of their talented preacher.

The day passed and a dark night set in. That night was not soon forgotten by the residents of Berkton. The news that flew through the village the next morning was of the most startling nature. It was that a woman had been found at about midnight near the pastor's house in an unconscious state, with a knife driven into her body near her heart. The two physicians of the place were summoned to attend her, and though she still lived, they pronounced her wound probably fatal. At the time she was found the minister's whereabouts was not known. About an hour later he walked into the room where the still unconscious woman lay. He

had a haggard look, and acted like a person not fully conscious of what was going on. He asked no questions and made no remarks; but preserved a perfect silence through the remainder of the night. What his thoughts were as he stood for a long while at a time by the side of the bed and gazed at the figure lying upon it, or when he paced back and forth in the corridor outside of the chamber door, no one could tell. The knife that had been used for the dreadful deed was identified by the servants as one which had sometimes laid on Mr. Raymond's desk in his library, and was at other times carried by him. The country for miles around was searched, but no one was found who was suspected of the crime. In the light of the events of the previous year, and of present circumstances, the people of Berkton soon discerned who must have been the perpetrator of the awful act. They came to the conclusion that the Rev. John Raymond, while laboring under some dark delusion, caused by a long indulgence in

that habit which it was now considered proved had mastered him, had committed this crime. The once popular preacher became in their eyes a fiend. There was a determination that justice should certainly and speedily take its course. At the suggestion of some of the citizens, the suspected man was taken into custody by the officers of the law, and hurried to jail, to await the result of the woman's injuries. The arrest seemed a great surprise to Raymond. When the officers called at his house, and in the library informed him of their intention, he pretended to think it was all like a horrid dream.

"Is it possible," he asked, "that I am suspected of murdering *my wife*?" Then, after a moment's pause, he said: "If I must go and leave her, permit me to remain until an old family physician, whom I have sent for and whom I expect every moment, arrives."

The officers waited, and in a short time the physician came, a stranger to all in

Berkton outside of Mr. Raymond's household. He came in a carriage of the pastor's, and the horse showed he had been driven very hard and a long distance. Raymond was not permitted to see the newcomer alone. At his request one of the other doctors was called in and introduced to the stranger. Raymond called the latter Dr. Walden, and stated he had been his medical adviser for years, and that he wished him to take charge of the present case, while he hoped the other doctors would give their aid and counsel. And then, as he was turning to follow the officers away, he remarked in a low tone:

"Dr. Walden, reveal no secret that you know."

There was general satisfaction in Berkton that Raymond was lodged in jail. And there was also a general expectation for days of hearing that his wife was dead. The sympathy for the latter, of whose existence up to that night no one in the place had dreamed, was universal and great. As

great and universal as the abhorrence in which her husband was at this time held.

The announcement of Mrs. Raymond's death, so constantly looked for, did not come. For several weeks she hovered between life and death, and then grew better. The village doctors ceased to attend upon her. And as though the injunction of Rev. John Raymond to Dr. Walden was meant for them also, to all who questioned them concerning the minister's domestic affairs they were dumb. While people were wondering at this silence on the part of these medical men, it was found out that Raymond was at liberty and at home. The only explanation that could be found for his being free was that somehow the matter had been privately settled, and the court had ordered his release. There was great indignation and intense excitement. If Raymond had ventured out among men he might have been severely handled. But he followed his old custom and remained at home. How, men asked, could such a grave

matter be settled without a trial? A trial, it was determined, there should be. The court would not do its duty; the church must not fail to do its own.

Raymond was at once summoned to appear before a "council" of the church to answer certain charges. The trial came off in the church, and was—as long as it lasted —public. In his "best days" the Rev. John Raymond never met a larger assembly there than he now encountered on this, one of his "worst days." He was accused of intemperance and of making a murderous assault. To be guilty of either of these unfitted him for the ministry. In support of the first charge George Rankin was a reluctant witness. He testified as to Raymond's habits at college; and, in answer to a question, stated that he had felt, since Raymond had become the pastor there, that he was an intemperate man. Though loath to say as much, when asked at such a time he must tell the truth. There were enough to testify as to the pastor's singular customs

and manners while he had been in Berkton. One member of the council contended that the bleached hair and sunken eyes of the accused were strong evidences of his dissipation.

To sustain the last and gravest accusation, one of the brethren simply stated what was universally believed to be the facts as to the cruel and almost fatal assault upon Mrs. Raymond. The church closed the presentation of its case. Perhaps the majority of the assembly were no more certain of the minister's guilt after hearing the evidence against him than before. They had no doubts about it when they came into the church. It was thought that Raymond would make a great speech in defense of himself. All eyes were riveted upon him as, with a pale face, he arose to answer the charges brought against him. Instead of a long defense, he made a very brief one.

"Brethren," said he, "before God, I solemnly affirm that, since I have been the pastor of this church, I have never been in-

temperate; and that I have never made an assault upon any person. I speak the truth, but I have no witness to testify in my behalf. Men may have inferred from my manner heretofore that some dark cloud overshadowed my life—and one has; but now, thank God, that cloud has disappeared. Brethren, I believe I am called to preach the gospel. Permit me, I beseech you, to continue my work here, and make only this demand of me: that, if henceforth my conduct shall seem unbecoming a pastor, and these members of the church so inform me, I shall resign my pastorate at once; and I am confident you will never regret that you gave me a chance to regain your respect and affection."

The dead silence that reigned when the pastor had closed and resumed his seat was in a moment disturbed by the rustling of a dress on the stairs that led from the vestry up to the audience room. A person ascending these stairs would, on reaching the top, come into view of those seated in the church,

as the seats faced the stairs. The chairman of the council arose, but before he could offer what he had to say, there came into the presence of the assembly a lady veiled and elegantly dressed. Stepping to a place in front of the men who constituted the council, she threw back her veil, disclosing a face which, though it bore the marks of disease or indulgence, was very beautiful. It was a face whose portrait George Rankin remembered to have seen.

Raymond sprang from his chair, and, taking a step or two toward her, ejaculated: "Alice, why are you here?"

"I am here," was the quiet reply, "as a witness for the defense. My husband would not summon me, and I come to give voluntary testimony in his favor. John, you must allow me to speak."

The stranger—for she was such to nearly everyone in the place—then addressed the council as follows:

"Gentlemen, you misjudge as noble a man as ever lived. The charge of intemper-

ance you have made against him should have been made against his wife. The blow that nearly ended the earthly existence of that miserable wife, that you accuse him of giving, was administered by her own hand. I stand as a witness of his innocence. And not only that, but as, I trust, a redeemed soul, saved by the entreaties, ministrations, and prayers of my husband, whose patience and kindness have known no limit."

A new church has been built in Berkton, and the much loved pastor, the Rev. John Raymond, preaches to a larger congregation than the old building would hold. The pastor's wife has as warm a place in the hearts of the people as her husband, and is considered a very earnest Christian woman. It must, however, be owned that there are many who believe she is the possessor of still another important secret. But no one complains, seeing it is the secret of knowing how to be the most charming woman that Berkton has ever known.

A REGULAR POPINJAY*

'LISHA FORD, the landlord of the Farnham House, sat on the piazza of that small inn, smoking his after-dinner pipe. It was his favorite place; and, as often before, he was at the moment nearly asleep, with his pipe in his mouth, when a rather overdressed young man, who had stopped for dinner, approached him, and drawled out:

"Ra-ather of a dull place here."

"What?" exclaimed Ford, springing to his feet, and dropping his pipe in doing so.

"Oh, I—I merely ventured the—ah—opinion that this place was not—*too* lively. That is to say, one is not likely to be *distracted* by——"

"It's all right. Take a chair," said Ford

* Written for *The New York Ledger* by LORENZO GRISWOLD.

to the young man, who was backing away from him, as if afraid he was angry.

When the young man had seated himself and lighted a cigarette, Ford, having recovered his pipe, said to him:

"Fact of it is, you startled me."

"I see. Asleep, weren't you?"

"Not quite. No; I wa'n't so far gone as that."

"Sorry if I disturbed you. But I didn't see anyone else to talk to, and——"

"I *said* it was all right." Then, after a short pause: "You think it's rather dull here, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Woodburne," said the other.

"Mr. Woodburne?"

"If there's no offense, I'll say yes."

"They's no offense. Oh, I suppose to city people it does seem dull here! Very possibly; very possibly. But things *have* happened in this dull place."

"I dare say, and happening all the time, very likely," replied the young man.

"*Well*, we hain't never come to a *full*

stop, of course. We allers managed to live, move, and have our bein'. But we've *had* times when we was stirred as with earthquakes. And one time in pertickler we was *mightily* shook up."

"Excuse me, Mr.——"

"Ford—'Lisha Ford, I'm called."

"Oh, yes, Ford—ah—do you think I can make the 2:10 train for Boston?"

"No, s'r; you can't. It's five miles to Fairfield Station, and Jones's mare is the only horse round here that ever went there in fifteen minutes. She did it once to git the doctor. But she's lame; and that animal you drove in here can't do it in half an hour."

"Well, then, I'll take the 4:30 train," remarked Woodburne.

After the two men had smoked some moments in silence, the landlord said:

"You're somethin' like him; and your voice and *them words*—I swan! I was rattled for a minit."

"Beg pardon!" said Woodburne.

"My wife, who was once a school-

teacher," continued Ford, "said he was a regular popinjay. I didn't know what that meant, though I knew somethin' about *blue*-jays. Yes, you remind me a *little* of him."

Here Ford stopped a moment and ran his eyes slowly over Woodburne's white flannel shirt, and then asked:

"Do you know what 'popinjay' means?"

"I—er—I'll look it up some time," answered Woodburne, coloring a little.

"Yis; you look it up when you git time. *He* thought it was kinder dull here."

"He? Who?" asked the young man.

"You turn back my register to June, 1869, and you'll find his name. And there's another thing that carries me back: he hitched up his name jest as you do. You'll find it there, 'E. Ralph Woolwine.'"

"Sho-o!" exclaimed Woodburne.

"Yis, s'r. Sounds kinder—dainty, don't it? He was drest in white linen—duck, I guess they call it."

"*Passé,* long ago," remarked the young man.

"Heigh? Long ago? Why, it happened more'n twenty year ago."

"I say!" ejaculated Woodburne. "Is this a riddle, and do you want me to guess on it?"

"Well, now; if you want to guess, what do you think I see take place right over there once, jest north of Parker's store, at the top of that hill that pitches down to that fust house?"

"Dog fight?" asked Woodburne.

"You try my patience, young man. No; them allers occur in my back lot, betwixt Benson's cur and mine."

"Come now, you don't mean a *murder*, do you?"

"*That's* a good deal better guess. You've got an hour and three-quarters before train time, and you can prob'ly get that weak cre'ter of your'n to Fairfield in three-quarters of an hour."

"I understand. I'm—a—listening," remarked Woodburne, lighting another cigarette.

" He come here," began Ford, " and put up for dinner. I looked at him, and his name on the register, and I says to myself: ' Here's small pertaters.' Well, he went in and et his dinner, and then come up to where I set a-smoking. He came out a sort of whistlin' low—out here, and says:

" ' Ruther of a dull place here.'

" I said:

" ' Yis; it's kinder quiet here most of the time. Good place to rest,' says I; ' better take a chair.'

" ' Thank you,' says he. ' I guess I won't set down. I want to go up and look at the moniment. I understand that I have an ancester buried there.'

" The moniment was in honor of some Revolutionary soldiers.

" And so he started down the walk. He was rather tall, but kinder slender. I sorter spleened against him, with his white suit and tie, but I said to myself that most likely wimmen would think he was good-lookin'.

" Well, sir, *I* little dreamed, and littler, I

guess, did he, that he was walking right out to meet his fate."

"Good-er-gracious, landlord! Your first chapter looks ominous for your hero," exclaimed Woodburne.

"Can't help it. You jest let me tell it in my own way. I've got to tell it as it *was*, you know," remarked Ford, not very pleasantly.

"The street was pretty dusty—we don't have sprinkler-carts, of course—and as he crossed it he walked carefully, so's not to git his shoes dusty.

"'Well, by George!' says I to myself. 'What *will* that feller do to amount to anything if he's so almighty afraid of gittin' a little dirt on him?'"

"Alph Burton lived in that fust house there.

"Alph was a strange bein'. Sometimes he was very pious, and would go to meetin' and take part, and sometimes he wouldn't take any interest in meetin's or anything good. He had spells of doin' nothing but

drinkin' cider. Why, he'd lay to and drink cider at times in a terrible way. I've known him to drink over twenty gallons in a week!

" In short, when he felt like prayin', he'd pray, and when he wanted to swear and drink cider, he'd do them things. He was a terror when he'd been loadin' in cider for a week. He was powerful strong. There wa'n't but one man here that could hold a candle to him, and that was Ben Sumner. But Sumner wa'n't nowhere when Burton was crazy with cider.

" One time the nabors sent for Sumner to come in and quiet Alph, who was full and goin' around the house with both hands over his head, repeatin' over and over ag'in: ' I'm er terror! I'm er tiger! I'm er terror! I'm er tiger! '

" ' Come, come; quiet down,' said Ben, in a sort of orderin' way.

" No sooner had he spoke than Alph went for him. Well, now, Ben, for once got a full meal. Alph caught him and thrashed

him over the stove as if he'd been an empty suit of clothes. Why, he broke the stove right down a-thrashin' Ben Sumner over it, and then chucked Ben out of the door. After that no one ever interfered with Alph when he was on a tear. His folks would then jest go out of the house and stay with the nabors till he got over his drunk.

"He never got much of his drink here, though I used to sell some. But one day after Alph had been having a time my wife called me into the parlor, 'n shuttin' the door, says to me, in a sort of implorin' way:

"'Lisha, promise me, if you love me, that you won't sell no more licker.'

"'If I loved her!' Them words took a strong holt er me, for I remembered the time when I was afeared she didn't care much for me, and I had an idee that it had been pretty hard gittin' her. 'Jennie,' says I, 'I promise.' Maybe her looks and *actions* didn't pay me—but I guess so, ruther.

"I hain't sold no licker since."

The narrator here seemed to lose himself in thought. A pleasant expression was on

his face, and he was silent so long, that his companion, after looking at his watch, remarked:

"Do you mind—ah—taking up the—ah—popinjay again?"

"Oh, to be sure! Woolwine he lived to cross the street and to start up the sidewalk, such as it was, but he hadn't gone more'n ten feet when a disturbance at Alph's led him to stop and look to'rd the house.

"I heard the noise. It was like a scuffle, and chairs and tables bein' knocked over, 'n I looked to see what was ter pay.

"Jest then, there was the *aw*fulest cry in that house that I ever heard in my day, though I was in the war. It was a cry of 'Murder!' You can't imagine how terrible it sounded here in this quiet place, where no such sound was ever heard afore.

"It brought me to my feet. I—ah! I tell you, I *never* felt such feelin's as I did at that minit. My heart thumped like a trip-hammer. I think I was crazy for the time bein'. I know I thought the devil had got loose and was out to murder innercent

and helpless wimmen and child'en. Somehow, I got it into my head that *my* wife and child'en was in danger.

"A light iron bar stood ag'in' the fence, right in front of me. I jumped, grabbed it, and run. But I never got there.

"I barely got to the street, when out of Alph's door a-flyin' come his oldest girl—the one that took the prize at Somerville Academy.

"'Tain't allers that smartness and good looks goes together in a girl, but they did in her case. And she *was* proud. Lord! so was Alph—and smart, too.

"Well, it seemed that this very *pride* had brought on the crisis.

"You see, Marg'ret was talkin' to him about the way things was a-goin' on; and you know about how it ends when you talk to a drunken man, and especially a mighty ugly one. And she finally says:

"'You make us all *ashamed* of you.'

"'*Ashamed* of me! You said that!' he says, 'I'll teach you *better'n* that!'

"And he jumped and run to the cup-

board, knockin' over a small table and some chairs on his way, and grabbed a knife and started for Marg'ret. Alph's wife then give that dreadful yell that made us all so wild.

"But Marg'ret never uttered a sound. She jest waited long enough to see that he *meant* to kill her, and then she run.

"When she come out of the door her father was clost upon her, and I caught sight of that long and savage-lookin' knife which he held in his hand.

"'It's come!' thought I. 'He could kill her with one blow of his fist—and to take a knife! He's a maniac possest with fifty devils!'

"The girl run well, and gained jest a hair on her father until she reached the top of the hill by the corner of Parker's store; there she stept on her dress and fell flat to the ground.

"There was fifty people in sight then that see what follerd, but not one of them nigh enough to do anything if he'd dared to.

"At that minit, like a flash of lightnin'

for quickness, there sprung in betwixt the girl and her devil-father that man Woolwine.

" He hadn't the fust thing in his hand, not even a cane; and God only knows where he got his strength to do what he done, or how he done it. All said he faced Alph and didn't come behind him. No matter; quicker than I can tell it he flung Alph down the bank, landed on top of him and held him down. He took the knife away from Alph and threw it to where somebody picked it up and took care of it.

" Then we rushed in, and when we come up to where the two men were locked together with a grip like death, we thought Woolwine had got a wound that would kill him, jedging from the blood on his clothes and on the ground.

" Alph had slashed him awfully with his knife. Some of the men lifted Woolwine up, and others froze onto Burton with no gentle holt, I can tell you.

" Ah! I tell *you*," exclaimed the landlord,

shuddering and drawing a long breath, " it made me sick and faint as I looked at Woolwine. He couldn't stand when we lifted him up, but sunk down and leaned back ag'in' one of the men. His face was white as snow, and looked, I thought, as a dyin' martyr's might. I could 'a' knelt down and worshiped him at that minit. He'd got a dreadful cut somewhere on the right side of him, we couldn't tell where just then; but his coat was cut open downward, from the top of his shoulder, a foot, and his clothes on that side were simply soaked in blood.

" The crowd soon became larger, and was very excited and feelin' ugly to'rd Alph.

" ' Hang him up on a tree! ' shouted some one. And in half a minit they had a rope round his neck and was dragging him to'rd that elm there.

" Alph was then the sca'test man that I ever see. In five minits it would 'a' been all over with him but for one thing.

" ' Stop them! ' said Woolwine, feebly; and he tried to get up.

" We lifted him up.

" ' Take me up there,' says he.

" We took him up to where the men held Alph.

" ' Don't do that,' said he. ' Don't *you* commit murder, but leave him to the law, to God and to his own conscience. It'll be harder for him than what you propose.'

" And then he fainted dead away in our arms."

" He *was* a brick, by Jove!" exclaimed Woodburne.

" The wimmen gathered around," continued Ford, " give one look at Woolwine, then covered their faces and cried and groaned. All except Margaret Burton—the girl for whose sake the young feller had met his fate."

" What do you say? Was he dead?" cried Woodburne.

" I *wish* you'd let me tell it," growled Ford. " Margaret Burton, with her hair all tumbled down and a bruise, stained with dirt, on her forehead, where she struck in fallin'

—*she* come and give a long look at Woolwine. Then she clasped her hands together and says:

"'Oh!' says she; 'oh, I *wish'd* it had 'a' been me! I'd ruther it had 'a' been me! I'd ruther it had 'a' been me—*his own* child —than him!'

"'Come, Margie,' said my wife; and she led her away.

"We brought the poor young feller into the house and put him on the bed in the big front chamber upstairs, and got the doctor. It turned out that the knife had plowed down through the right shoulder and then struck a rib, and didn't go no furder. The doctor said if it had 'a' gone *between* the ribs it would 'a' killed him. But, as it was, he—er—didn't die."

"Good! Good enough!" cried Woodburne, springing up and extending his hand. "Mr. Ford, let's shake."

The landlord smiled, and heartily grasped the hand offered him.

"But," continued the narrator, "he was

a long while gettin' well. Margaret Burton wanted to take care of him, but when my wife spoke to the doctor about it the old gentleman blurted out:

"'Nonsense! We don't want any wimmen round here. Got ter have men.'

"'Well, I guess *I* shall be round here a *good deal*!' said Jennie.

"'Oh, well *you*, of course, that's all right,' says he.

"My wife and I agreed that we wouldn't have no *trained* nurses around, but that *we'd* see him through, and if good nursing would save him, he'd be saved. And one of us was there every minit night and day, and *awake*, too, I want you to understand.

"Jennie and me have had many a good laugh over the way things went on during these days.

"One day, when he was gettin' better, and was awful sore and *cross*, Jennie bein' with him, he snapped out:

"'Why the deuce don't somebody as much as *ask* how I be?'

"'Well, my boy,' said Jennie, 'if that hain't pretty reas'nable, when not a day passes without fifty askin'.'

"'Plague on *fifty*!' growled he. '*One's* 'nough!'

"'Ah!' answered Jennie. 'Forty-nine too many. Well! *Well!*'

"'But you don't care for flowers, do you?' says she.

"'*Yis*, I do,' quickly says he.

"'I kinder thought if you did, you'd some day—when you got *well* enough—let me tell the young woman that brings these here every mornin' that you thanked her. But you hain't never spoke of 'em—and——'

"'Who brings 'em?' he asked.

"'Margaret Burton,' said Jennie.

"'Margaret? Is that the one?' He stopped.

"'Yis; that's the one,' says my wife.

"'Did she ever ask—how—?' 'n then he stopped again.

"'I don't need to answer any such ridic-'lous question as that,' says she.

"'Well, thank her for the flowers, and tell her they are a great comfort to me.'

"He didn't say anything more for quite a long while; then he begun again in a queer way:

"'You've been dreadful good to me, Mrs. Ford, and I shall see that you are well paid jest the minit I can git around and *earn* the money. What a nuisance I've been to you and your husband!'

"That was too much for Jennie, and she broke right down, and cried:

"'Do you think we're so unfeelin'—so small and mean—as to do this for *money*?' she asked him.

"'There I be!' he groaned. 'The same old idiot when I try to clear up a point. I know you are the kindest and best woman that ever lived, and you must contrive *some way* to forgive me for hurtin' your feelin's.'

"And Jennie, seein' how woe-begone he looked, dried her eyes and set to cheering him up.

"Well, we jest tried ter do *more* for him

when we found out that he was poor. I say we *tried*, in order ter show him that money wa'n't no account with us. But I don't suppose we *could* do more than we had been doin'.

"Some one overheard my wife and I talkin' about his bein' poor, and so it got out.

"Margaret Burton she heard of it, and comes to Jennie with the money she'd earned teachin' school, and says to her:

"'Take this and use it. Don't let him want for anything, and I'll soon have some more to bring.'

"And the nabors, they come to me and offered to help. But my wife and I jest told 'em all that they come, we knew, out'n the goodness of their hearts, but it wa'n't no use to talk to us about *payin'* for what we was doin' for Woolwine—that we felt it to be an honor and a pleasure to do for him.

"Why, you see, he didn't have only a small gripsack with him, and that was locked, and not one of us would open it, though he said we better. But no; Jennie

she went and made him some nightshirts—that is, she and Marg'ret. I guess Marg'ret did most of the sewing. Lord! They got the best cloth they could get for 'em, too.

" After he was gittin' over the worst on't one day, he asked Jennie if that was *his* nightshirt that he had on.

" ' Yours? Of course it's yours,' says she.

" ' I didn't know that any of mine had such deep ruffles round the neck,' says he.

" Jennie was a little beat at that, and she and Marg'ret held a council, and the next nightshirt was all right.

" A day or two after, my wife mentioned them flowers to him, he got it into his head that he ought to begin to set up. But Jennie knew that the doctor wasn't in favor of it. So she urged him to wait.

" ' Wait till to-morrow, 'n we'll see,' she said to him.

" ' To-morrow's a good while ter wait,' says he, ' but I'll try ter do it.'

" That night when Jennie come downstairs to send me up for the night—she

tended him days and I nights—she says pretty emphatic'ly:

"'Lisha, they's *one* thing I might as well git settled.'

"'What's that?' I asked.

"'I'm goin'— There! I don't dare tell you, after all. I'll tell you some other time.'

"'All right, jest as you're a mind,' I answered, and went upstairs.

"About ten o'clock the next day, Jennie asked Woolwine if he was willin' to have *Miss* Marg'ret Burton come in and set with him for an hour, while she went and done a little work—of some sort—I don't remember what, downstairs. Jennie told me that she never should forgit the look he gin her, before he answered.

"It was a sort of questionin', and at the same time, determined look. They wa'n't anything like a smile on his face until he'd looked *through* her, as she expressed it. Then he sort of smiled, and said:

"'I should think we might git along together for an hour.'

"After a good long hour, my wife concluded it was time to look after her patient, and so she went upstairs. When she entered the room, Marg'ret set by the bedside with her hand in Woolwine's, and she never stirred, nor so much as started.

"'You see, Mrs. Ford,' said Woolwine, 'we managed to git along toler'bly well in your absence.'

"'And toler'bly *fast*, too, I should say,' answered Jennie.

"'Mrs. Ford,' says he, 'it's *events* more than length of time that makes folks acquainted. Somethin' sometimes happens that in a moment does more to'rd makin' two persons know each other than *years* of common acquaintance, without that somethin's happenin'. And that is our case. When Marg'ret stood before me that day and spoke as she did, I was conscious, I saw her, I *knew* her, I *loved* her. And Marg'ret—' he stopped, and looked at her.

"'And Margaret loved *you*,' said the girl.

"What did Jennie do but cry! That's

one of the things I can't understand about wimmen—cryin' when they're happy.

"She cried a little, 'n told the young folks that she was a-most as happy as they was. That it was just as she *hoped* it would turn out, and was as it *oughter* be—the bravest and noblest man in the world findin' and winnin' the best and beautifulest girl in the world.

"'But what'll folks say of *your* match-makin', Mrs. Ford?' asked Woolwine.

"'*My* match-makin'?' answered Jennie. '*I* hain't made no matches.'

"'Yes,' says he; 'I told you as plainly as *looks* could do it what I should do if you brought Margaret here.'

"'I *wondered* what you meant by that look,' said Jennie. 'But if you accuse me of match-makin' I'll send Margaret home and refuse to let her come again.'

"'And then I'll die on your hands, and you'll be my murderer,' said he, laughin'.

"'Oh, dear!' Jennie answered. 'You *will* have your way. What *can* I do?'

"'Do?' cried Woolwine. 'Keep right

on bein' an angel, just as you have been, Mrs. Ford. Margaret and I won't mind an angel or two bein' added to our heaven here."

"In tellin' me about it, Jennie says:

"'Lisha, *that* was the *great* day of my life! In our *own* courtin' I wa'n't keyed-up morn'n I was then. I felt that God, in a sudden and strange way, brought them two uncommon bein's together. For the fust time I *felt* them words—"What God hath j'ined together let not man put asunder." It was all the doin's of Providence,' says she; 'for how otherwise could such a man as Woolwine have found the suitablest woman in the world for him, and the smartest girl ever raised in these parts? And they *was* in heaven, 'Lisha,' says she. 'There's no mistake about that.'

"Well, sir, they was married within a month from that day, and Alph was at the weddin' in the parlor there."

"He was! I wouldn't have had the brute around!" exclaimed Woodburne.

"Oh, yes, you would, if you'd 'a' seen what a changed man he was. He found, when he come so near to bein' a murderer, that there wa'n't any fun in it, and for fear that he should some time do some awful thing ag'in he stopped drinkin' entirely, went to meetin', and has been a fust-class citizen ever since. By the way, Woolwine wa'n't no *poor* man."

"He wa'n't?"

"No. He was rich as mud. But he jest put that notion a-goin' so's to see if Marg'ret cared for him for what he *was*, and not for what he *had*—the rascal!"

"Ever seen him since?" asked Woodburne.

"Oh, yes! He drives through here every three or four years with his family, on his way to the White Mountains."

"Ever seen his daughter Marg'ret?"

"Yis; but what in time do *you* know about *his* darter?" exclaimed Ford.

"Well," replied Woodburne, speaking calmly as if the topic were the weather,

" she's *my* Marg'ret—that is, she's consented to be, some day."

" *She* has? And *you* know the Woolwine family? Come into the house quick! Jennie must see you."

And when Jennie—a handsome woman of fifty-five—had come, slightly flushed, from the kitchen, and had heard and seen who and what Woodburne was, she wished him all the happiness in the world, and hoped that he would be good enough for Marg'ret's Marg'ret, but was very much afraid that he *couldn't* be.

At which Woodburne smilingly said that it was certainly time for him to go.

As he was getting into his buggy, Ford said:

" Why didn't you tell me, when I began to talk about Woolwine, that you knew him? "

" What! And spoil the story? Not much! Why, Mr. Ford, Margie told me that if I didn't contrive to bring up here some time and get that story from you she

wouldn't *have* me. I understand that she now intends to put me to reading the lives of all the great heroes and martyrs. Suppose she'll make anything out of me?" he asked, as he started away.

"Don't know," laughingly replied Ford. "Looks is awful *deceivin'* sometimes."

The landlord watched Woodburne's buggy until it was nearly out of sight, and then he turned, and with the remark, "I don't hardly think *he'll* ever be a second Woolwine," went into the house.

At nearly the same moment Woodburne was saying to himself:

"Pretty well done, I think, and all owing to the coaching Margie gave me. Well, by Jove! the gov'n'r *did* have a lot of sand, and I don't wonder Margie's proud of him! But now, does Margie imagine that *I could*—Lord! I should get run right through the gizzard—I *know* I should!"

HONTANITA

OF his own free will Clarence Kingman would never have entered the ministry.

But to his mother and sister the idea of his going into business, or following any profession other than that followed by his sainted father, was too painful to contemplate.

And, being unwilling to grieve those who were dearest to him, he was obliged to shock the bright young fellows and charming young ladies of his set by becoming a preacher of the gospel.

Well born, talented, handsome, and a lover of pleasure, he had been the accepted leader of those who in fashionable phraseology are called the "best" young people of not only his native town, but of his college and college town as well.

His lively young friends felt that he was as good as lost to the world from the moment he made that " fatal " decision.

He did, however, shine for a while longer as a ball and tennis player. But when he entered the divinity school he gave up dancing, and—his star had then indeed set. Being neither a dull nor an idle scholar, he took high rank and graduated with honor.

Knowing that it had taken a considerable sum from his mother's by no means large estate to educate him, he formed the very laudable purpose of becoming self-supporting as soon as possible.

And within a few months after he graduated from the divinity school he was ordained and installed over the church at Windam village, his sister very cheerfully accepting of his invitation to become his housekeeper.

His mother and sister were proud of him, and happy. He was proud, but not happy. He would not pain that mother and sister

by permitting them to witness his discontent. He would not brood over that unfortunate lot that love had forced him to choose. But he felt that he was not in his proper place. And more than that, he felt that he was perhaps a hypocrite. "To save souls" was a phrase distasteful to him. He had, in short, no heart in his work. In those prayers of his which were not formal nor in public he prayed that the interest, the light, and the inspiration might come. But he started without either.

And yet, strange to say, he quickly made his mark. He was a man of force and determination. He set his large brain to work with all its power in the preparation of his sermons. He grew as a pulpit orator. In three months he had become a preacher of note.

But he felt that he was doing what he might have done in a field that would have better satisfied his ambition. And sometimes in the seclusion of his study, with the door shut, in a subdued groan he would say:

"O mother! O sister! why would you have it so?"

But he worked on, and always on his sermons; and they were making him famous. His learned and eloquent discourses, if they lacked somewhat in spirituality, were acceptable to his rather critical audience, and the people seemed contented, even though their pastor saw little else to do besides preaching.

But one day something happened. There came down from the mountainside a picturesque individual, with long hair and heavy beard, by name Don Welding, the famous fox and coon hunter—he of the fleet foot, who had once, without the aid of a gun, run down and caught a fox.

A strange errand brought this man to the door of the Rev. Clarence Kingman. Very strange, indeed, it seemed to the minister that the man should come to him on such business. Was there not some local and common kind of a minister to do this sort of thing? he wondered. He looked at the

messenger in astonishment—and almost in reproof—as he made known his errand. It was this: A man had died up in "The Wilderness," and would "Mr. Kingman" attend the funeral "Thursday, at two?"

It seemed to Don that the minister was a great while in giving him an answer. And he was—was in fact some time in finding an answer for himself. Did at one time decide that he could not go, then changed his mind and told Don he would come. He made some inquiries about the dead man and his family and then let Don go, and returned to his study.

"And so men die and must be buried," he said as he sat down—said the words aloud, and like one stating something that is new or unusual.

And "Thursday at two" engrossed all his thoughts until it came.

"The Wilderness" was east of Windam village on the side of the mountain, by air line two miles, by road five. It was once a productive farm, but had long since been

abandoned and given over to common ownership.

On the day appointed for the funeral the minister partook of an early dinner, and, with a driver who was familiar with the strange country to which they were going, set out on the journey.

In a lonely spot, near the center of "The Wilderness," a quarter of a mile from any other human habitation, was an ancient and dilapidated dwelling.

In front of this dwelling the driver halted, saying:

"Here we are."

As the minister alighted from the buggy he felt somewhat anxious and uneasy, having never officiated as a clergyman at a funeral. Don Welding met him at the door, and, ushering him in and taking him to where a young woman in black was sitting, said: "Hontanita, this is the minister, Mr. Kingman."

The dress of this young woman was such a strange collection of ancient articles of

woman's attire, and held the attention of the minister so closely, that he took little note of the wearer, and went to the chair to which Don was hurrying him without the remotest idea of her looks.

He was not aware that there was any occasion for haste, as there were but about a dozen people within the house, and some were still waiting outside. And resting his elbow on the little rickety stand at his side, he bowed his head upon his hand and made an effort to collect his thoughts.

He shut his eyes, but could not shut out nor deaden a painful consciousness of the contrast between his own elegant person and his surroundings. What he had seen when he entered that had given to his refined sensibilities such a severe shock—the small room destitute of ornaments and almost of furnishings, the countrified people, the lonely young woman clothed in a garb that lacked everything that could adorn or make comfortable a woman's form, and the rude coffin—made a picture such as he had

never before seen, and which was now as vivid in his mind as it had been to his eyes. His mind was in such a condition just at that moment, that it intensified and magnified the picture. His habitual self-possession began to leave him, and he chafed under the fetters that bound him to such distasteful tasks and associations. The obstacles that interposed themselves across the pathway that he felt he had been forced to pursue loomed large in his imagination.

The situation grew more intolerable every moment. He could not reconcile himself to it. He had sacrificed his own ambition for the sake of the profession he had entered, and why were men and circumstances so perverse? Why would they not conform to his sense of propriety and his views of taste, that the life which he had chosen and which at the best was not agreeable to him might at least continue to be tolerable?

A flood of bitterness and resentment was rising in his heart, and the fountains of sympathy and compassion therein seemed dry-

ing up. With difficulty he restrained an insane impulse to rail at the people gathered there, accusing them of being lowborn and telling them that they were an offense unto him.

He felt a strong temptation to rebuke the poor frightened creature sitting there as chief—and sole—mourner for appearing in public in such attire.

The vulgarity of everything about him shocked him beyond measure. How many times could he endure the experience of this afternoon? He doubted if he could once again. To be sure he had " put his hand to the plow," but there was a limit to what a man could endure.

Such were the thoughts that the Rev. Clarence Kingman had " collected " to prepare himself for the service he had in hand.

Strange thoughts, these, to come to him in the very presence of the dead and of that solitary mourner in need of that word of comfort and of that help which possibly he

of all beings in the world could best give to her!

He did not look up until Don Welding touched him and whispered that they had been waiting some minutes for him to proceed. Then he opened his eyes, lifted up his head, arose, and, without so intending, looked directly across the room into the eyes of Hontanita, for she was looking at him.

As he met her eyes and looked at her upturned face it was a moment of great surprise to the minister. He faltered, became very much disconcerted, and for a moment stood, agitated and trembling, before this unknown girl. He felt that his changing color and his whole manner must surely be betraying himself to her. He forgot the dress that had done such violence to his taste so shortly before, and stared in amazement at her face and eyes.

That face a product of "The Wilderness"? He could not believe it. A very dark and uncommon face.

Yet his agitation was owing to something

besides the beauty of this young woman's face. There was something in her eyes that troubled him. He imagined that they reproached him, accused, judged, and—condemned him because of his unchristian thoughts of her and her friends. Because of those thoughts he had the moment before been harboring, which he now saw plainly enough were cruel and unspeakably selfish and mean.

And he blushed for very shame of himself.

He now stood a penitent man before her, desiring and determined to make amends for the wrong which he had in his heart done her.

Convicted and humbled, he took from the stand his book of selections and began the service. And throughout it all made no effort to conceal the deep pity and compassion that he felt for her.

And Hontanita sat and listened, and looked at him with wonder in her eyes.

The service over, the procession formed,

descended the mountain, passed through the village, by the parsonage, and out to the cemetery, which was half a mile from the village.

On returning, the minister got out of his buggy at the entrance to the parsonage grounds, dismissed his driver, and waited for Don's team to come up. When it had arrived he took the hand of Hontanita and held it while he said:

"I hope I have said something to comfort you to-day. Before long I shall come and see you," and then he turned and walked toward the parsonage.

And Hontanita saw where he lived.

From that day the Rev. Clarence Kingman was a changed man.

The ministry could never again be to him solely a field for the display of fine talents as an orator or essayist. And for the time being he was without his former ambition—was not so anxious about his oratory nor so particular about his fine sentences.

And where before he shrank from taking

up the full round of ministerial obligations, he now desired and determined to do so. Indeed, he dared not do otherwise. He dared not refuse to go forward in the line of duty and service to which he felt God had now plainly called him.

And " to save souls " had ceased to be an obnoxious phrase, and had become an inspiring watchword. His heart was now in his work.

As the days went by he gave earnest thought to the change that had taken place in him, and he had no hesitation in applying to the change that word so long and so often used in Christian phraseology, namely, " Conversion."

And the fact that Hontanita had been, even if unconsciously, instrumental in that conversion was something he could never forget.

She certainly had arisen in his pathway, startled and arrested him, and had changed him from his selfish and vain life.

Why had this unlettered and unrefined

girl been sent to turn him—or to prompt him to turn—to a better life, unless it was that he might one day bring her to a saving knowledge of Christ? Was it not, then, providential?

And so deeply did he become impressed with the thought that they stood in this possible relation to each other that the persistency with which "Providence" projected Hontanita into his thoughts awakened no surprise in his mind.

Before he realized it she had become the center of all his meditations. He began to lay out his work—to plan with reference to her.

At times he fell under strange illusions in regard to her, and ascribed to her gifts and discernments that would have been astonishing in a prophetess of Israel.

That a man like Don, who had so long known her, should attribute to her an intelligence that was superior to his own was less to be wondered at than that this learned minister, who was neither a dreamer nor a

believer in superstition, could soberly look upon this new acquaintance as a censor of his life and conduct, as he was doing.

And yet there were strange confusion and contradiction in his thoughts of her.

For while he was one moment according to her nothing less than a supernatural gift of insight in thinking she had read his thoughts at the funeral, the next moment he pictured her as living a circumscribed and benumbed life, and was wrestling with the momentous problem of how to awaken within her soul aspirations after that higher and truer—that spiritual—life which presumably she had never known, and of which possibly she had never dreamed.

Was she who had been the means of his reclamation to become a castaway because of failure on his part to go, armed with spiritual weapons, to her rescue?

No, such a thing should never be.

And when two Sundays had passed after the funeral, and to his surprise she had not come on either to church, he decided to

defer no longer his visit to "The Wilderness." He would go before another Sunday came round, and the first day Marion, his sister, would accompany him. He had not long to wait. Perhaps no more beautiful day had ever dawned or would ever dawn in Paradise or fairyland than that October day on which the minister and his sister took their trip to the mountain.

The minister's sister, enlivened by the crisp and bracing air, and charmed with the richness and brilliancy of the autumnal foliage, was surprised to find early in their journey that her brother seemed to lack appreciation of the splendor that was all about them.

And she left him to his apparently very sober reflections, and quietly drank in the glories of the day and of the country.

After an hour's ride up the steep mountain road and through a dense forest, during which little was said, they came out into an opening. This spot the minister remembered, amended at once his manners, grew

more social, drove a few yards farther, stopped the horse, hitched him to a sapling by the side of the road, assisted his sister to alight, and then led the way out to a point near the road where a better view of the valley could be had.

After spending some time in the enjoyment of the charming outlook, much to the regret of the minister's sister they turned toward their carriage to proceed on their journey.

They had gotten into the carriage, and the minister was bending over to pick up the reins, when Marion quickly grasped his arm and whispered:

"Clarence, look! What a handsome boy!"

The minister raised his eyes, started, spoke the name Hontanita, and handing the reins to his sister, stepped to the ground.

Hontanita had been crossing the road but a few yards in front of the team when suddenly she caught sight of the minister and his sister, and backed to the side of the road

to wait for Don Welding, who was near by in the lot, to come up.

By one who, like the minister's sister, had never seen Hontanita in any other than her present dress, she might be taken for a youth not yet quite out of his teens.

She was dressed in a costume the art of making which the "old hermit," her father, had brought with him from no one knew whither. It was made of the skins of small wild animals, tanned in such a way that they were as soft and pliable as chamois. The color was russet. There was a coat or sack reaching nearly to the knees and belted at the waist, also closely fitting leggins and moccasins, all of this material. A small cap, also of skin and slightly ornamented with beads, rested lightly on her head. She held in her hand a light rifle that Don had given her. To add to her boyishness, her hair, though longer than Don's, was "trimmed" after his backwoods fashion, being cut straight around.

But it was long enough to require tying

behind to prevent her being caught in a thicket while hunting—after the manner of Absalom—of whom, however, she had never heard.

Before the minister reached her, Don, gun in hand, came through the brush. Seeing the minister, he hastened forward and extended his hand to him. And while the minister was greeting Hontanita, Marion got out of the carriage and joined the group. At the mention of her name and relation to himself by the minister, Hontanita's face lighted up with an engaging smile, and reaching out her hand to Marion, inquiringly repeated the word:

"Sister?"

"Yes," replied Marion, "I'm the minister's sister."

The two young women were immediately on the best of terms.

Soon Marion cried: "Oh, come, let us go and look down on the lovely valley! My brother would hurry me away from it against my will. But"—and she pointed

at Hontanita's rifle—" I'm afraid of that. It won't go off, will it? "

Hontanita gave a subdued and very pretty laugh, handed the rifle to Don, and then, taking the proffered hand of Marion, went with her to the look-off point, where they sat down together on the grass.

The gentlemen were not disposed to be left behind, and after the horse had been again tied, and Don had put his game and gun back from Marion's sight, they, too, were soon seated near.

" I hope, Mr. Welding, that we did not break up your hunting party," said Marion.

" Oh, no, miss! We were through, and were coming out to the road to get an easier walk home. And I always stop about here to rest and enjoy the view whenever I go to the ' Red Mill ' down there," and he pointed across the North River to an ancient but well-kept building that had ground the grist for all that region for three fourths of a century.

"There, listen!" commanded Don; "hear the millstones?"

They all imagined they heard something.

"That's the millstones, and no mistake," said Don.

"That's great!" cried Marion. "I don't doubt, Mr. Welding, that you know everything in sight—old and new landmarks; and now you must point things out and tell me all about them, will you?" And she arose and went and sat down near Don.

"Oh, I'll tell ye all I know! 'Twon't take long nor be very interesting," replied the hunter.

"I know you'll be interesting, and I shall keep asking questions," returned Marion.

"Mr. Welding, you have my deepest sympathy," said the minister, rising and going toward Hontanita.

It was not by accident that he seated himself with his back toward Don and Marion. He did it purposely and with deliberation.

He saw that his opportunity to have Hontanita to himself had come. He must improve those precious moments. For her sake he felt that he must not waste one of them.

He was never more sincere in his life, and never more anxious. He must make no mistake—must not antagonize this young woman who was the object of his deepest anxiety and solicitude. If in these few moments he should awaken in her mind resentment, fear, and distrust toward himself, where, if he was to succeed in his efforts to aid her, he must have her confidence and even esteem, so fatal would his blunder be that in all probability she would drift beyond his power to save her.

As he slowly and cautiously sought to induce her to talk, to draw her out, that he might get some inkling of what was in her mind, what her thoughts, her conceptions of life, of duty, what her hopes and dreams were, employing all the tact he possessed that he might not embarrass her, he soon

learned, and without much surprise, how little she knew of the great world, of its customs, and of those common interests with which the average man and woman, and those even with which the average child, of the world is concerned.

And why should he be surprised at that lack on her part? he asked himself. What else was to be expected with her lack of advantages? And what of it? Had not he himself been a man well versed in worldly knowledge—a man of no little learning? And what had he done that was worthy of his gifts and equipment? Nothing.

Who had changed him and led him to have some serious and worthy aim and purpose in life?

Why, this girl whom he had esteemed at first as a barbarian. Hontanita had turned a sinner from the error of his ways—and that was more than he had ever done, with all his learning.

Thus he reasoned with himself the while

that he talked with Hontanita. And Hontanita talked—answered his questions; had a clear, definite, intelligent answer to most of them. When she did not understand, she admitted it with childlike frankness. What mattered it that her language was faulty? She spoke the language of Don—speech that was direct, unequivocal, easily understood.

And the minister was deeply interested, and in truth charmed, by her talk and her whole manner. And he was learning something of her. A little wild flower in bloom standing near by caught his eye. In surprise he spoke of it as lingering behind its fellows. She corrected him, saying that she picked them often in November.

This led to talk of other things in the forest and wildwood, of mosses, birds, and animals, and she told him many things that were new to him, at which he blushed, and thought:

"And I am here to teach!"

And when he saw that she was about to

talk, to tell him some of those things she had learned from nature, he would encourage her, saying:

"Tell me, Hontanita."

And Hontanita never before had so good a listener to discourse of hers.

But to long discourse she was not given. A short sentence, then a pause and perhaps a gesture gracefully made, or during the hesitancy a glance at the minister's face, her lips slightly apart, as if thinking for a word or in doubt whether to go on, now and then a little shrug of the shoulder or some peculiar mannerism that added to her charm—and then came silence, her eyes upon the ground and a rising color upon her dusky cheek.

The minister, who at the first had broken the ground and for a while had had much to say, dropped almost into silence, only speaking as became necessary to lead her into further discourse. And every look, every turn of the head, every gesture, and every movement of the lips in speaking or

in silence, did but disclose and magnify her startling beauty.

As the minister, with his eyes fastened upon her, watched these changes, which were like the unfolding of a flower, he found it easy as Don had done to fancy her an Indian princess.

When Marion called her brother to get ready to return he was sitting as if spell-bound before Hontanita. But Hontanita was looking at the ground.

Called to himself by his sister's voice, the minister sprang to his feet and assisted Hontanita to arise.

He was not sure that he had auspiciously begun the important work that had called him to the mountain—was not quite sure of anything. He was at a loss for some fitting word to say to Hontanita in parting, indicative of his continued interest in her welfare, and that he might leave with her as an encouragement and inspiration.

And possibly that accounted for the manner in which he did take his leave of her,

which was to take her hands, look intently into her eyes, speak her name slowly and in almost a whisper several times, and then turn and walk toward his carriage.

When he reached the carriage he found Marion seated within and the horse headed homeward. A word of parting to Don, and in a moment he was driving down the mountain.

The next morning the minister set to work on his sermon, of which he had not yet prepared a sentence—had not even settled upon a text.

Two days were less than he was wont to reserve for its preparation, and he would therefore be closely occupied in his study for the remainder of the week.

Toward evening of the next day, with a sigh of relief, he laid down his pen, saying: "Such as it is, it is done."

After tea he sat down to his desk, listlessly picked up his manuscript and attempted to read it. If it had been in an unknown language he could hardly have

found it less unintelligible or more uninteresting. He dropped it on his desk, started up and walked back and forth like a caged animal. A strange unrest possessed him. He went about the room changing articles from one place to another. Wearied of that, he dropped into his chair again. A little later he had fallen into that peculiar condition of mind that sometimes comes to men after too much study or brooding, and suddenly it struck him that the room was close. He imagined a sense of suffocation. To get relief he sprang from his chair, dashed to the window, threw up the shade, put his hands on the sash to raise it, when—something caused him to turn, seize his hat, and rush forth from the house.

He passed around the corner of the house, approached to within a few steps of a large arbor-vitæ tree, and stopped. There, partly hidden by the branches of the tree, and now in great confusion and distress, with her face covered by her hands, stood Hontanita in her hunting suit.

Moved by some strong impulse, she had come down the long path from the mountain that passed by the parsonage grounds, and had stolen softly into the inclosure. Hidden by the tree from the street, she had thought herself secure, and—had been discovered.

The minister's concern for Hontanita's spiritual welfare was genuine and deep. Yet it might have been possible for him to have had as deep a religious interest in another who, like her, needed to be led out of darkness into light. But the time had now come when he could no longer deny to himself that no woman had ever been or could ever be to him what Hontanita had become.

His love for her, which had been growing in his consciousness more definite every day and even every hour, in an instant, at the sight of her through his study window, asserted itself, became dominant throughout his whole being, and, exultant and impatient, bore him swiftly toward her.

And it was his love, too, not lessened but

made deeper and truer, less selfish and more reverent, that held him considerately back a moment as he looked upon her, bowed in humiliation, while his heart, not quite convinced, but still hoping, was asking itself: "Has she done this for me?"

Though knowing he must be approaching, Hontanita neither looked up nor moved.

The minister drew nearer to her—still nearer, and then very near.

"Hontanita!"

No answer.

He put his hand most tenderly upon her hair, and bending forward, kissed one of her hands.

A tremor, but nothing more.

He knelt upon the ground in front of her, reached up and put his hands on hers.

"Hontanita, love me!" he said.

She trembled and swayed, but did not speak nor lower her hands.

"Bend down and listen, Hontanita. I love you! I loved you first!"

A long deep sigh, and she permitted him to take one hand. He soon found it safe to take the other.

He arose with both her hands in his. He longed to clasp her to his heart, but dared not do it. He could not interpret her actions—her reserve.

Was it not her love that had brought her to him? Why, then, when he had declared his was she silent and unmoved?

He led her into the bright light that streamed through the window from his study lamp.

"You are very beautiful," he said, "and I love you much. Cannot you come? Hontanita, come!" and he opened his arms. Was it the proud blood of an Indian princess coursing through Hontanita's veins that made it so hard for her to forget the chances that love had taken, and the discovery and the mortification that followed? Possibly. But as she looked into the minister's face and listened to his entreaties she slowly moved toward him.

She did but move a step. At that concession pride was vanquished and love had triumphed, and Hontanita was locked in the minister's arms, submitting to his caresses.

And when at length she told him that Don would miss her and be coming after her—that he might even then be waiting somewhere near—he held her close, saying: "But there is something I must hear you say before you go, Hontanita. Tell me that something, and then I will boldly lead you unto the mighty Don, be he at my garden gate or in 'The Wilderness.'"

At that she lifted her face, radiant and happy, and looking directly into the minister's eyes—whispered something.

Whispered it, presumably, for fear that Don perhaps near by might overhear.

And the minister, standing very near to her, seemed to hear every word she said, with the result that Hontanita did not immediately start in search of Don—indeed, seemed to feel no pressing need of doing so.

But if most of the five senses of this

young couple had taken wings, a fragment of the sense of hearing remained to them both, and at the sound of Don's heavy tread on the front walk they came to themselves and went around and received him in a becoming manner.

Don was made to enter the parsonage; Hontanita, timid and shrinking, was led in. Marion was called, and there was a surprising *dénouement*, a series of exclamations from Marion followed by her "sisterly" greeting to Hontanita and genial acquiescence from Don.

And then the minister was compelled to bid good night to Hontanita and commit her to the faithful Don for the journey to the mountain.

He had walked out to the gate with her to do it, Don gallantly going a little in advance in order to give them a moment to themselves.

The minister would have gone himself with Hontanita, but she forbade him, saying that she should be uneasy thinking of

him on his lonely return. At which he smiled, caught her to his heart, told her that he adored her, and then permitted her to join Don.

The moon was shining bright. The minister stood and watched the graceful form of Hontanita as she moved away by the side of the stalwart Don.

A great joy filled his heart. "God has given her to me, and with His help I will bring her to Him," he said solemnly, turning and going in.

A DREAM

JOHN ELLSWORTH was passing the summer as usual with his sister in Wellburne. He was seated on the piazza this superb June morning holding his straw hat in his hand and looking down at the old bridge when the town clock struck the hour of nine.

At the sound he arose quickly to his feet muttering, "There's something strange about this!—something very strange!" and then went down the walk and turned and walked up street. He walked rapidly, and was soon in front of the large and handsome cottage of the Grahams', within which he had not set foot for three years. He had not been quite sure what he should do when he got there, but as he came near he observed something that determined his course, and

he went boldly up to the door and rang the bell.

To the servant who answered, he handed his card and said:

"Miss Graham."

The servant left him in the drawing-room. How well Ellsworth remembered the day he was last there! The whole scene came vividly before him—cold, cruel words then spoken seemed still echoing through the spacious room.

Her words had during all these years seemed to him the most bitter and cutting. He had never been able to forget them—had never ceased to suffer from their sting.

Soon there was the rustle of a dress, and in a few seconds more Miss Graham entered, and these two people, who had not met since that day some three years before when they had broken their engagement and parted in bitterness, stood face to face exchanging a civil "Good morning!" from opposite sides of the room.

If at this first meeting after the long sep-

aration they were curious to discover what effect their estrangement had had upon each other, they would look in vain to find any evidence of past suffering or unhappiness. They were both looking exceedingly well.

The advantage, if any, was with Miss Graham for the reason that her previous night's rest had been perfect as usual, while Ellsworth had slept fitfully and poorly, and as a result was somewhat pale.

A brief greeting, a few seconds of silence in which their eyes met in a searching look, and Ellsworth had accepted an invitation to be seated and taken a chair across the room from Miss Graham.

Then without delay he proceeded to explain the meaning of his call.

" I can easily imagine, Miss Graham, your surprise at a call from me. My intrusion would have been utterly unwarranted had I not been led to believe that if I did not come the result might be serious to you. Last night I had a most distressing dream. I

have never been a man to put faith in dreams, but this one seemed so real that I could not throw off its effects, not even in the morning when daylight came, as we so often do things of that nature.

"The dream was this: I stood by the old bridge listening to the town clock which was striking the hour of nine. The last stroke had but died away when a feeling took possession of me that you were in danger—that something tragic was overhanging you, and that I alone in the world had it in my power to avert your fate, but that I could do so only by seeing you before I should hear the clock strike off another hour—that I must see you within that time and prevail upon you to remain at home that day. My first impulse was to come to you, and I was about to start when a doubt arose in my mind as to—as to my reception should I come. Possibly you can imagine, Miss Graham, why the task which was put upon me did not seem easy. I hesitated — lingered, as it seemed to me, but a few moments, but while

I lingered the clock began to strike the hour of ten. I then became conscious of a great commotion in the village, could hear frantic cries, at which sounds I sought to move, to rush up the street, but I could not move, and was compelled to stand there paralyzed while Victor, bearing you upon his back dashed by and—over the bridge.

" That was the dream.

" This morning I sat on the piazza looking at the bridge and musing upon my singular dream—trying to make light of it and to convince myself that it would be absurd to think it could have any meaning—when the clock once more tolled off the hour of nine. That of itself would not have impressed me greatly. But the moment it had ceased to strike I found myself mastered by the same feeling that possessed me in the dream.

" Moved then by my fears and forebodings, I sprang to my feet and came quickly toward your house. I was nearly opposite your door when again a doubt arose in my

mind whether I really had sufficient cause for troubling you, but by chance looking up the driveway I saw Victor saddled and, as I presumed, waiting for you, and my course was determined.

"That, Miss Graham, is the story of a restless night and a trying morning. I seem to have been forced to be an instrument for conveying to you a caution that possibly you would do well to heed.

"Perhaps you will postpone—but you will need no advice from me, and will hardly expect me to offer it. If you decide to ride Victor, and succeed in proving that my fears and forebodings were groundless, I and all the world shall admire your courage."

Then, arising and smiling:

"Having now delivered my message, I can find no excuse for prolonging an interview that I fear has already become tiresome to you."

He was about to bow and go, but Miss Graham had also arisen, and was standing in his pathway. She, as well as he, was suc-

ceeding very well in an effort to smile, but a pallor which had overspread her face while she had been listening to Ellsworth deepened somewhat as she arose and stood before him. Her change of place and position brought her nearer to Ellsworth, and disclosed to him what he had been dull not to see before, that she was in her riding habit. The change had brought her so near to him and into such a light that, as his eyes fell upon her face, his heart beat quick and loud, and the old love that he had tried for three years to overcome, that he had pretended to himself was dead—was rising like a flood in his heart, threatening—what humiliation! when suddenly her words, those that had been the most cruel, had hurt him the most, that like coals of fire had burned into his heart, and like them had been alive ever since to burn and to pain, seemed—perhaps because he was where they were first uttered—repeating themselves with new vigor and greater bitterness, and his heart hardened and love was scornfully rebuked and silenced, and

Ellsworth was meeting the eyes of Miss Graham with outward calmness.

In that brief moment, while he was on the eve of his departure, every other thought fled before an inrushing sense of the wrong that had once been done him, of a love that he knew had been true and deep, most wantonly and wickedly wounded and humiliated. He almost forgot his errand, and stood like a statue, but inwardly impatient, with his hat in his hand, gazing over Miss Graham's head at the open door.

Miss Graham noticed the change that had suddenly come over him, and for a moment dared not speak lest she utter some commonplace that might bring—she knew not what direful consequences. But to remain silent when there was such stress of feeling, what might not happen! This man had saved her life—she believed that. Victor was getting old and ugly—had run with her the day before and nearly thrown her. She had stopped him only after a hard struggle, and was nearly exhausted when she reached

home; was to give him one more trial, and if he acted badly she would ride him no more, but she had spent the hour with Ellsworth that she had intended to spend riding. She owed her life to Ellsworth—there was no doubt about it.

Thus hurriedly she summed up in her mind the thoughts that had passed through it while Ellsworth was telling his strange experience. Her eyes now became fastened upon Ellsworth's face, but he did not see her—he was looking into space. What affected her so? What spell was upon her? Whence came this sense of need, of urgency? Was that the nine-o'clock bell? — nine — would it soon be ten, and—all be over?

Suddenly a wild, agonizing cry broke the stillness of the room.

"John! O John! I repent! Can you forgive me?"

She had called him back.

"I can! I do, love!"

And she was in John Ellsworth's arms, and his lips were pressed against her wet cheek.

TSITHA

IF I succeeded in this and one other test, Tsitha, whom I madly loved, was to be mine. This was the pledged word of the old chief, Ennisera, her father. I was glad to know that he had fixed upon a limit to the trials he was requiring me to undergo, for, notwithstanding the very complimentary indorsement I had received from the governor of the island and put into his hands, it was dawning upon me that the old chief was not pleased with me as a suitor for his daughter's hand, and that he would balk me if he could do it in any honorable way.

I had met successfully thus far every requirement he had made of me; and now, not in fulfillment of any law or custom of the tribe, but simply to put one more difficulty in my way and satisfy a whim of his, I must run down and capture Tsitha within a mile

which was to be marked off on the path that ran around the lake.

I noticed that Tsitha approached her father and talked earnestly with him as if in remonstrance, but he shook his head and motioned her away. Then she came and, standing before me, said:

"If your love for me is great enough you will catch me, but if it is not great you will fail to do it."

"It's a question of living as well as of loving. If I *live*, I shall catch you," I replied.

As her eyes met mine, in the look she gave me I read entreaty, fear and discouragement, and I wondered what it could mean.

But when I came to give chase the meaning was clear enough; I was pursuing the fleetest runner of her race, who, I afterwards learned, had, in a friendly race, outrun the swift Kahiaha; and only by overtaking her within the mile could I hope to win her for my wife. She knew all this; and the first

half minute of our race had not expired before I saw plainly enough the cause of anxiety, and even fear, for both her and myself. She was given ten paces the start of me; and watchers were stationed along the way to see that she was acting in good faith. Whatever her desire in the matter, she knew too well the dishonor and disgrace that awaited her in the eyes of her race if she did not put forth her utmost endeavor to outfoot her lover, or fail of doing so.

For the first quarter of the mile I found, to my surprise, that I could scarcely hold my own. The speed and endurance of Tsitha astonished me, and I saw that I had an almost desperate task before me. It was fortunate for me that I had a short time before won a mile "event" in an intercollegiate athletic meet; and love spurred me on; and my training and greater powers of endurance favored me on the last half; and I caught her and held her exhausted in my arms, well within the mile limit.

I held her tightly and kissed her laughing

lips—for laughing she was, and happy, though nearly spent.

"It's a good omen, and I'm proud of my 'white-skin,'" she whispered, panting for breath.

"O Tsitha, God help me on that final test!" was all I could say.

We walked slowly back to the place of beginning to find that the old chief, as soon as he learned that I had caught Tsitha, had turned in astonishment and anger and gone to his house. I knew not what the final test was to be, and I went with Tsitha to her father's house with not a little misgiving. We went together and stood before him. The old chief was in very ill humor because of my unexpected victory and his daughter's steadfast devotion to me. He found her as strong of will as himself, and at length after much earnest talk between them in their native tongue, of which I understood but little, being a man of his word, he came, but with a rueful manner, and, taking Tsitha's hand, put it in mine and told us we

were at liberty to depart for a season. Desiring to be alone we left the little village, and hand in hand sauntered through the woods and fields, or sat by the side of the lake. While we were sitting by the lake we heard the sound of a paddle propelling a canoe, and in a few moments more saw a young brave approaching the shore near to where we were sitting. He did not discover us until his canoe touched the shore, and when he saw us he appeared not a little embarrassed. Tsitha also seemed ill at ease. The two gravely greeted each other, and the young man then walked away. I could but note his strong and comely face and his splendid physique.

When he had passed out of hearing, Tsitha, looking after him, said solemnly:

"O Kahiaha, there are Miami, Ungava, and Namounha, each more beautiful and better than I; and either one of them would die for you. Cannot you love one of them and drop poor me from your thoughts?"

And then turning to me, "I will tell you

a strange thing: I wish that no one but my 'white-skin'"—she at first gave me this almost worn-out name for a white man in mere banter, and then could not seem to drop it—"loved or even admired me, so much I fear our family tradition."

"Strange, indeed, that sentiment even from a child of the forest such as you once were, and stranger still from a young lady who has just completed her English education such as you now are," I replied.

"My English education and much reading have modified my views of certain traditions and customs of our race; but there is one family tradition or belief that has been handed down through a long line of ancestors that I cannot disbelieve and dare not disregard lest some awful thing befall me and the one I love; and I must confess that there is a sort of justice in it. O Eugene, I may pine and die without you, but, unless your love for me is greater than Kahiaha's, do not take me!"

I little dreamed that any fear or forebod-

ing was haunting her, but, filled with joy at what I thought her insatiable desire for my love, I caught her in my arms and exultingly cried:

"O Tsitha, put in the balance the loves of a thousand Kahiahas, and mine shall outweigh them all!"

Looking into my eyes, she replied:

"Ah, my 'white-skin,' how easily you make me believe what you say because this silly heart of mine *wants* to believe it! Love is past reasoning and almost past fearing in your presence. And so it comes about that Kahiaha must be content with my respect and regard seeing that I cannot give him my love; and help it I cannot, whatever he may do."

"Do, Tsitha? What can he do?" I asked anxiously.

"Oh, nothing perhaps but—love me too much!" she quickly replied.

"Which he cannot help—more's the pity. And how can I blame him for doing what I cannot help doing myself? But, Tsitha,

this final test which I came near forgetting, that your father spoke of, what is it to be, and when is it to come? I dread it, I fear it."

"The final test, according to our family tradition, is your love—the greatness of it. That was what my father meant, and that is wherein he still believes and hopes you will fail. If it prove to be greater than Kahiaha's, and as great as you have said, nothing can separate us. And that is the test that the months or years shall bring. Dare you undergo it? Dare you take me on the condition that you can keep me as long as your love for me exceeds that of any other man, and that when it does not you—you—must part with me?"

She was looking at the ground as she closed. I thought she did not dare trust herself to look into my face. I had time simply to note that she stood trembling for my answer, and to take in again for the thousandth time her great beauty, when my heart forced from me the words:

"Yes, I dare, and I do!"

She raised to mine a happy face and saying, "And may it be well," put her hands in mine.

And so we pledged our troth. I lingered in the northern country until into September, when, feeling that Tsitha had been hard to win from her father and might be hard to hold from him if I left her until the coming spring, I obtained her consent to an immediate marriage, to which the old chief reluctantly consented after making me solemnly promise that I would never seek to undermine his daughter's loyalty to the family beliefs and traditions.

And when I returned southward I took my beautiful bride Tsitha with me.

. . . . .

For five years paradise; and then one summer evening while my wife and I were sitting on the lawn under the trees watching little Tsitha, our three-year-old, at play, a horseman rode up and called for my wife. I went with her to meet him. He handed to

her a message which, being translated, read as follows:

"TSITHA: Thy letter:
Know that Kahiaha has ceased to live.
Fail not to keep the family vow.
I have written.
Your father,
ENNISERA."

My wife staggered against me and grasped my arm for support, and her face showed that fear had seized her as she whispered:

"O Eugene! Eugene! the final test is at hand."

That night we slept but little. The next morning, leaving our little Tsitha with her nurse, we started for the small village far north from which I had on a happy day some five years before taken my dusky bride.

Upon our arrival at her former home her father received us in a manner very quiet and solemn. The death of Kahiaha had evidently produced a deep impression upon the

natives of the village, not simply because he was of deservedly high standing, but also because many knew of the tradition that bound his family and that of Ennisera, and were waiting in awe to learn what might follow.

My wife passed another wakeful night lying in my arms and clinging to me.

In the morning at her request I accompanied her to a spot near the lake where she picked a few flowers to be used during the day. She allowed me to leave her but little, but I stole away from her for a brief time during the forenoon to have an interview with the priest, Father Lamourieux, to whom I had intrusted an important matter.

Tsitha talked but little; an awful suspense and dread overwhelmed her. We had come on a strange errand, which was to attend the funeral of Kahiaha, who had vainly loved my wife, the tradition of his and her family requiring such attendance on her part.

At the hour set, Tsitha and I, with the relatives and friends, repaired to the house

of the parents of Kahiaha, where his body was awaiting burial. Tsitha was fulfilling the vow that was upon her. At the house some were weeping and others singing doleful and weird songs. My wife walked through the throng addressing no one. All knew what had brought her there. She made her way to the body of Kahiaha and laid the little bunch of wild flowers she had gathered in the morning on his breast. This done, she turned and walked slowly out of the house. As I glanced, in passing with her, at the face of Kahiaha, I was struck with the change that had taken place in him after that day by the lake. The change was not simply from life to death, but from blooming youth to withered age. He looked old and emaciated. He had died from unrequited love.

The gloom and fear which had oppressed Tsitha, and which I had hoped to see decrease after we left the house of mourning, did not abate, but rather increased as night approached. The sight of Kahiaha's wasted

face had convinced her that he had died of love. How, then, could his love for her be equaled by other mortal man's? According to the tradition of her family, on the third night after his death the spirit of Kahiaha went to its maker, and if Kahiaha's love for Tsitha had been as great as she feared, the Great Spirit would permit him to call her away from the earth and to himself that same night.

To me, belonging to a race that had outgrown such superstition, the tradition that bound Tsitha and Ennisera meant nothing. But to them it meant much, verily, was life and death. Under the spell of it, it was evident to me, Tsitha would die from very fear before morning unless something supernatural or very strange should happen to relieve her mind of her expectation of death at any moment.

The pledge I had made her father had prevented me from seeking to lead her out of her superstition during the five years we had been married; and now I was perhaps to

see her die from terror because of my promise. I felt sure that the old chief would accept complacently the death of Tsitha under the circumstances, for he had meant to have her marry Kahiaha, and he had never forgiven me for coming in and interfering with his plans, although I had done so unintentionally and even unknowingly. The alliance between his daughter and a "white-skin" had embittered him, and estranged him from her. But, had the old chief much desired to save the life of his daughter, he would have been powerless to move in her behalf; for, like her, he was paralyzed by the inexorable family tradition.

After hearing of the wasting illness of Kahiaha, and noting the effect of it on Tsitha, I had seen the possibility of the crisis in her life which was now at hand; and from that time had done what I could to prepare for it. To that end I had secured the services of Father Lamourieux, a devout Catholic priest living in the village, and he was present on this night.

In the chamber besides him were Tsitha, Ennisera, and myself.

The priest sat near a window which was open and almost hidden by some vines growing up from the ground. From the window stool a shelf projected outward. This was unseen from within the room because of the vines. Ennisera sat opposite the priest and across the room. Tsitha and I sat a little to the right of Ennisera, and facing the priest also. I was supporting her with one arm and had my hand upon her pulse.

At about midnight, when Tsitha was momentarily expecting a summons to join Kahiaha, and her father was sitting with his eyes riveted upon her to note any change that might come to her, suddenly a voice from the window, speaking the language of Ennisera, broke the silence.

These were the words spoken:

"TSITHA: Peace be to thee, and be thou happy! I freely give thee to thy beloved—the white-skin. But know that for thee I die. Shall not this be a reason why forever

thou should'st think of me, thou should'st pray for me also? Now I have said my last word—I—— "KAHIAHA."

At the sound of her name Tsitha quickly opened her eyes and, greatly astonished, grasped my hand with the one I had been holding, and turned and looked intently at the window from whence the voice came, but where nothing but the luxuriant vine could be seen.

As the words following her name were slowly uttered, I saw the light of hope and joy come into her face; and at the conclusion of the message, when silence had ensued, she threw her arms around my neck and wept from excess of gladness and relief.

"He gives me life, he gives me you; and I must believe this strange voice that sounds like Kahiaha!" she exclaimed, her head upon my shoulder.

"So do, for, verily, the words are those I heard him speak," said the priest.

Ennisera, trembling with fear, crept to the side of Tsitha, took her hand, kissed it,

and held it as if feeling the need of her protection. It was evident to me that I should have no more opposition nor trouble from my father-in-law. The old chief requested permission to remain in the room with us through the night, which request we willingly granted.

When I saw that Tsitha was wholly reassured I let Father Lamourieux go. The moment I heard him close the outside door I began to engage Tsitha in conversation and to move about the room, sometimes going near to the window and standing with my back toward it for a few moments. My object was to enable the priest to perform unobserved a rather difficult piece of work before he left the premises, and that was to remove from the vine-covered shelf that ran out from the window a phonograph which he had placed there, and into which he, at my earnest solicitation, had induced Kahiaha, but a few days before his death, to speak the message which the instrument had that night reproduced.

TWO DOCTORS—A STORY

LINWOOD'S two physicians, between whom the patronage of the town was about equally divided, were not on friendly terms, and had for several years declined to counsel together. This was common knowledge to the people of the town, and when Dr. Thorndike, in a runaway accident, had been violently thrown to the ground, and lay bleeding and insensible in the street, the crowd of excited villagers who had gathered at the spot were in a quandary as to what to do.

There was no hospital in Linwood, and the nearest out-of-town physician lived a dozen miles away. Should they carry Dr. Thorndike to the office of his rival?

The exigency was such that prompt action was imperative, and, after a very brief conference, a half dozen men tenderly lifted

the injured man and carried him to a house less than a hundred yards distant, on the door of which was a small sign reading as follows:

"EDITH LONGLEY, M.D."

Dr. Longley had a reputation for possessing abundance of "nerve," but when she saw whom the men were bringing into her office she was unable to preserve her usual composure.

"What has happened?" she exclaimed.

"The doctor got throwed from his carriage," replied one of the men.

"Carry him upstairs into the chamber at the end of the hall," directed Dr. Longley.

The room to which she had sent them was her own, and upon the bed within the men laid their burden. The moment they had done so, Dr. Longley dispatched one of them for one of her nurses and dismissed the others.

When the men had gone out, she went to the bedside and proceeded to examine her patient. An abrasion on the side of his head plainly indicated where he had struck in falling and what had stunned him. Having satisfied herself as to the seriousness of the injury he had received from the concussion, she set about finding where the blood on his white waistcoat came from.

She found an ugly wound on his breast, and discovered something else that made her start and change color.

"Surely, seeing is—knowing!" thought she.

It was a woman's portrait that had startled her, or what she had reason to believe was such, although she would not deign to glance at it a second time to see if she could discover, through the stain of blood which was on it, whether it was as she believed. She carefully pushed it aside out of sight.

The picture was held in half of a locket that still remained attached to a small gold chain that encircled Dr. Thorndike's neck.

The hinged half of the locket had some time been broken off—perhaps in the doctor's fall, for the locket had evidently received a severe blow at that time which had turned it and driven it into the flesh, making a bad wound and causing the flow of blood.

Dr. Longley, having completed the examination, sat down in her chair to wait for the nurse, and summed up her diagnosis as follows:

"Concussion of the brain—not dangerous; a flesh wound—ugly, but not serious; a woman's picture suspended from his neck—evidence of the existence of a chronic and incurable malady."

And then she smiled rather scornfully as she thought of the "weakness" of her patient, which she had so unexpectedly and unintentionally discovered.

Presently there was a sigh or faint groan from Dr. Thorndike, and Dr. Longley sat watching for other signs of his returning consciousness when the nurse arrived. Doctor and nurse then proceeded to put the

injured man to bed, and there he found himself half an hour later when he had revived.

The nurse was then alone with him, Dr. Longley having deemed it expedient to absent herself for a few moments just at that time.

Dr. Thorndike let his eyes wander around the room for some minutes, and then, looking at the nurse, said:

"Well, nurse, as you seem to be without wings, I conclude that I am still an inhabitant of this terrestrial sphere."

"Are you disappointed that you did not awake among the angels?" she asked.

"Oh, no — and perhaps I did among wingless ones. I should like to know just where I am—it's a strange place to me."

"Fortunately," said the nurse, "the accident was near to the doctor's house, and——"

"You don't mean that I am at Dr. Longley's?"

"Yes," replied the nurse.

"And she let 'em bring me in here?" he asked.

"I guess they didn't ask her," quietly remarked the nurse.

"Perhaps she doesn't know that I'm here. Cannot I steal away so that she will not mistrust that I've been here and occupied her premises?"

"That would hardly work, doctor, as she dressed your wounds and helped to put you to bed," said the nurse, smiling.

"Oh, hum! what a mess we poor mortals sometimes make, and cannot help it," wearily sighed Dr. Thorndike, after which remark he closed his eyes and was silent.

His eyes were closed when Dr. Longley noiselessly reëntered the room and took the nurse's place.

During her brief absence Dr. Longley had prepared herself as well as she could to meet a somewhat trying situation—a situation likely to be as embarrassing to one doctor as the other. For something over three years the two physicians had studiously

avoided each other, and now had come this forced meeting.

Dr. Longley moved her chair so that she could look into Dr. Thorndike's face. His eyes were still closed, and she ventured to take a look at him. She could see that he was getting the least bit gray—gray hairs were visible in his mustache as well as on his head. She wondered if there was any special cause for his turning gray so young—whether there had been any real unhappiness in his life to cause it; and, specifically, whether a certain circumstance of nearly four years before had given him a single pang; and then the thought of the portrait intruded itself into her meditations, and she felt the color rising in her cheeks, and mentally exclaimed:

"What a ridiculous idea! Of course not!"

At this moment Dr. Thorndike opened his eyes, and Dr. Longley immediately bent forward and said, graciously and cheerfully:

"May I not congratulate you, doctor, that you are not seriously injured, although the escape was narrow?"

"Thank you for the good news; and I take this first opportunity to say that I trust you will pardon me for preferring to put you, rather than the coroner, to inconvenience," replied Dr. Thorndike.

"Willingly," answered Dr. Longley, and then dropped into silence, while at the same time she set about counting Dr. Thorndike's pulse. But that "steady hand," for which she was noted, seemed to have lost its power of self-control, and trembled so much that its owner gave up the notion of counting Dr. Thorndike's heart beats, drew her hand away, and sat in awkward silence.

And both physicians, as if by agreement, seemed to be carrying out the rule that they had so often enforced elsewhere that forbade conversation in the sick room.

At length Dr. Longley, concluding that her patient was in no further need of her services at that time, excused herself,

and, after sending in the nurse, went to make her round of calls on her other patients.

She returned at tea time, and remained just long enough to glance in and see that her patient was doing well, and then drove away again and did not get back until nearly midnight. Finding Dr. Thorndike sleeping at that time, she left the nurse with him for the night and retired.

The next morning, feeling the need of her coffee, she went directly to the breakfast table from her room. Finishing her breakfast before the nurse, she left the latter at the table and started upstairs for the sick room. She went quietly, lest she should disturb her patient if he were dozing. As she approached the chamber door, glancing through it she saw him, reflected by a mirror within, pressing the locket to his lips. Dr. Longley quickly turned back, retraced her steps to the other end of the hall, and straightening herself to her full stature, folded her arms and elevated her chin and

curled her lips contemptuously, as she reflected on the "humiliating" spectacle she had witnessed.

She waited some moments and until she heard the nurse stirring downstairs, and then, warning her patient by a cough of her proximity, walked into his room.

It seemed to Dr. Thorndike that she was not very cordial in her morning greeting, and that she was not as sympathetic as the day before. As soon as the nurse came in, Dr. Longley sent her for some articles needed in dressing the wound, and, while the nurse was gone on her errand, proceeded to examine it.

When she opened Dr. Thorndike's clothing she saw the gold chain that had held the locket, but the latter was not attached to it nor in sight—had evidently been taken off. She inferred that Dr. Thorndike did not wish to have her see it, and she did not think that at all strange.

After she had dressed the wound, she sent the nurse out for an airing, knowing

that she herself would have a busy day and that this would be the nurse's only opportunity to get a few breaths of outdoor air that day.

Dr. Longley stood by the window and watched the nurse until she disappeared on the street. She was thinking of the wound she had just dressed. It was not so slight a matter as she had first thought. The locket had plowed deeply into the flesh on Dr. Thorndike's breast. What a savage thing he had taken into his bosom—this inestimable treasure of his!—thought she, and again that fine lip moved scornfully.

Then suddenly her conscience smote her, as she remembered that she had uttered not a word of regret or sympathy to her patient as he winced and almost groaned while she was dressing the wound. Was he, then, to her a creature not deserving of either mercy or sympathy, or was she becoming an unfeeling monster?

Possibly these thoughts led her to put more feeling into her words than she meant,

when she asked, from her place at the window:

"Did I hurt you much, doctor?"

"When?"

"When I dressed the wound?"

"Comparatively—no," he replied.

"Comparatively?" and she turned enough to look at him.

"Compared with the pain you gave me at another time. But I am not permitted to speak of that—you put a seal upon my lips, you know," said he.

His words, so inconsistent with certain of his acts, surprised and irritated her. Had he thrown this declaration of his as a sop to her to appease her? It was altogether unnecessary, as she hoped to convince him.

She left her place at the window, went to the chair beside the bed, sat down, and, letting her eyes, which had in them a look of unconcern, rest on Dr. Thorndike's face, said, calmly and coldly:

"Yes, I remember, and I am quite sure

that neither of us would wish to have the seal removed."

The effects of her words she could not have failed to see. There spread over Dr. Thorndike's face a deathly pallor. He looked intently into her eyes for a moment, and, failing to find the encouragement he was looking for, took a hand from beneath the clothes and handed the locket to her, saying, as he did so:

"Then it will be useless for me to wear this again, seeing that it can no longer comfort me or give me hope."

Mechanically, Dr. Longley took the locket and looked at it. The stain had been removed from it, and, as she glanced at it, she saw a portrait of—herself. Of herself, and not, as she had supposed, of one now in Europe who was to return in the fall. The light flashed into Dr. Longley's mind. And so that "dear" girl friend and confidant who had told her the great "secret" had been deceived, or—was she deceiving?

As quickly as it could be done by one in

desperate haste, Dr. Longley dropped upon her knees, laid her head upon the pillow by the side of Dr. Thorndike's, and broke forth into sobs and penitent declarations.

Dr. Thorndike laid a hand upon the bowed head and said:

"O Edith, may I speak? Are my lips unsealed? Put then upon them the seal of our true love."

And the once haughty Dr. Longley meekly and willingly obeyed.