

Nickerson, Susan D.]

BREAD-WINNERS.

BY

A LADY OF BOSTON.

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"ONE gathers the fruit, — one gathers the flowers,
One soweth the seed again!
There is not a creature from England's king
To the peasant that delves the soil,
That knows half the pleasure the seasons bring,
If he have not his share of toil."

BARRY CORNWALL.

"A WOMAN is like to — but stay,
What a woman is like who can say?
There is no living with, or without one,
She's like nothing on earth but a woman."

HOARE, "*Lock and Key*."

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BREAD-WINNERS.

CHAPTER I.

"WHEN SHALL WE THREE MEET AGAIN?"

IT was a November evening; the hills of New Hampshire were draped, from base to summit, with snow. The two noble rock-maples before Mr. Dascomb's door stood motionless in the clear moonlight, every branch and twig wrapped in the spotless covering. Cold, bitter cold without, but the blazing logs upon the open hearth sent a glow out upon the frozen landscape, and lighted the front room, where three farmers' daughters sat.

The sun had set an hour before; but when Sophia Dascomb proposed bringing candles, Ruth Bentley and Miriam Weston begged for a talk by the firelight. The three girls had always been neighbors in the rural sense; that is, the acres from which, "by the sweat of the brow," their daily bread was earned, lay in

close proximity. A walk of a quarter of a mile would just bring you from Mr. Dascomb's door-stone to the granite step, worn by the feet of three generations who had borne the name of Bentley. Still farther on, was the home of Miriam Weston. Was the distance as great as that which the thickness of two or three bricks makes in localities where the question is often asked, "Who is my neighbor?"

Those three New Hampshire girls had been neighbors from infancy. Neither could remember the time when she had not known the others intimately; for the three mothers had each caressed and admired the next-door baby, as they had met under one or the other roof; and as the long-robed diamond edition of humanity had been carried home, each had secretly congratulated herself. "Each mother had thought her own" baby "the best." Babyhood passed, the three children had played, been berrying, and walked together, year after year, till a friendship, which they doubtless honestly thought would be life-long, had "grown with their growth." In short, they were "particular friends."

Two weeks before the evening when we first looked in upon them, Sophia Dascomb had received an invitation from her cousin Darius, to spend the winter in Boston. The invitation had been accepted, and she

had asked her two friends to pass with her the last evening before her departure.

"What a grand time you will have, Sophia," said Miriam; "I wish I was going, too."

"I'm sure I wish you were," replied Sophia; "how strange it will seem not to see you and Ruth. I don't believe there ever has been a fortnight in which I haven't seen you both."

"Oh! you will do well enough without us; you'll have plenty else to think of, so we poor girls, up here among the snow-banks, will be 'out of sight, out of mind.'"

"I'm sure it's no such thing. I shall write to you and tell you all about what I'm doing. You don't think I'll forget you, do you, Ruth?"

"No, I'm sure I shouldn't forget if I was in your place," was the prompt answer.

So, sitting in the firelight, the three girls exchanged vows of eternal friendship till the clock struck nine; then, protected from the sharp wind by thick cloaks, scarfs, and hoods, Ruth and Miriam walked home over the snow which sparkled in the moonlight, and creaked under their tread, each saddened by the parting from their childhood's playmate, their girlhood's associate and confidant. In the gray morning, each listened for the jingle of Mr. Dascomb's sleigh-bells;

and, when the sound died away in the distance, each felt that the sunshine of her existence was partially dimmed.

Darius Dascomb lived in Nutall Square. The houses in Nutall Square were new, and contained *all* the modern improvements. The furniture in the houses was all new, and much of it in the latest antique style; the people who lived in the houses were new to such surroundings, and strove manfully and womanfully to appear at home amid velvet and upholstery, and to call by their right names, and put to their intended uses, all the modern appliances.

When Mrs. Darius Dascomb began housekeeping, her loftiest aërial architecture never included such a palatial residence as that over which she afterwards actually presided. But five years before the time of which we are now speaking, her husband, then carrying on a moderate retail grocery business, was fortunate enough to buy, of an out-at-the-elbows chemical genius, a receipt for the manufacture of real old French brandy; and, as a consequence of this purchase, the contents of puncheons marked "New England rum" were pumped into casks bearing makers' brands, custom-house marks, etc. The retail grocery became a wholesale store. The said genuine casks were hoisted to the first floor, and from them was

drawn the Cognac and Hennessy, which sold for three, five, eight, to twelve dollars per gallon, according to subtle distinctions of age, proof, and flavor, understood by sellers and (?) purchasers.

What though, in this marvellous transformation, certain things which rough tongues would call poisons assisted? The business brought in money; and if Darius Dascomb had refused to purchase the receipt, his rival on the opposite side of the street would have bought it, and the only difference would have been in the bank accounts of the two, and the earlier flight of the rival to the regions where wholesale dealers most do congregate; the amount of genuine brandy sold would not have been affected.

Many an evening Mr. Dascomb walked up to Nutall Square, after the business of the day was over, arm-in-arm with his cousin, Augustus Foote — whole-souled, generous men they were called — clothed in the finest of broadcloth, and as the poor, reeling driveller, who had just swallowed, at a corner grocery, a glass of Mr. Dascomb's potent mixture, jostled them on the curbstone, the thrifty merchant wondered that "a man would make such a beast of himself."

Mr. and Mrs. Darius Dascomb and their guest, Miss Grimshaw, sat at Mrs. Dascomb's faultlessly-laid breakfast-table; the plate was solid, and reflected

the delicate china; the napery was exquisitely fine, and white as the driven snow; all betokened ample means, and a disposition to exhibit them. Mr. Dascomb, a rosy-faced man of forty years, finished his repast, and, laying his napkin on the table, turned to the visitor, and asked, "Do you really think you must leave us to-day?"

"Oh, yes! I really must. I have made too long a stay now; you know 'a guest and a fish after three days are poison.'"

"That does not hold good in this house."

"No, not literally; no one knows that better than I; but I have feasted long enough in another man's hall, it is time for me to return to my own."

"If you must go, I will see you to the dépôt. I suppose Foote has not got home from New York."

"Thank you! It would be adding another favor to the many I have to thank you for."

When it was decided beyond danger of reconsideration that Miss Grimshaw should leave for home that morning, Mrs. Dascomb thought it time to interpose; she bent her head towards the glistening urn, and, with a most persuasive smile, said:

"Now really, Miss Grimshaw, you are merciless; think of poor me, how lonely I shall be; you seem

quite like one of the family; can't you be persuaded to favor us a few days longer?"

"I can only give you 'the poor man's payment, gratefulness,' for all your attentions; but friends must part," said Miss Grimshaw, glancing at the French mantel-clock, and guessing the time. "I believe I must beg to be excused; 'time, tide, and railroad cars wait for no man,' or woman."

She left the room, and soon reappeared arrayed for her journey. The hostess pressed the hand of the departing guest, and hoped it would not be long before they should see her again.

"Oh, never fear; 'a bad penny always comes back.'"

The hack turned the corner of Nutall Square just as Mrs. Dascomb entered her boudoir. She threw herself into a *bijou* of a sewing-chair, covered with orange-colored satin, and dropped her company manners. She was alone now. "That horrid old maid!" she soliloquized; "she gets more and more intolerable every time she comes, with her old saws; she's got a new stock, I do believe, and brought along all her old ones too. It seems as if she grew younger every year; why can't she die, and let Augustus have the money without any more fuss? She's fifty if she's a day. What an unlucky thing it is she was ever asked

here; now she comes every year, just as if it was her right. She isn't my aunt, or Darius's; why should we have to take care of all Foote's relations? 'Twon't do to hint anything to him, he'll be up at once. I'll find some way to get rid of her; I can generally carry my point when I set out."

Mrs. Dascomb sat for ten minutes absorbed in her reflections; then the cloud cleared from her brow, and she exclaimed, "Yes, that will do! I will talk to Darius after dinner;" and the lady rose, went into her dressing-room, and rang for her maid; her toilet completed, she stepped into her carriage, already waiting at the door, and ordered the coachman to drive to Winter Street.

Darius Dascomb was master of his own house, but while he undoubtedly occupied the throne, there was a power behind it, a power which took good care to keep *behind* it. Years of practice had perfected Mrs. Dascomb in the art of providing that all important measures should be proposed by the head of the family.

The dinner was well cooked and well served, the dessert was placed upon the table, and the servant had left the room; the opportune moment had arrived. Mr. Dascomb was leisurely cracking his filberts.

"Has Augustus come home?" Mrs. Dascomb asked.

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"No, — why?"

"I thought you expected him, that is all."

"He will come by the night train, I suppose."

"It was strange Miss Grimshaw did not wait to see him again."

"She seldom changes her mind; when she says she is going to do a thing, she does it. You will miss her company, won't you?"

"Yes, she is rather tedious sometimes, but when there is no visitor here I have no one but the servants to speak to from morning till night, except when some one calls."

Mr. Dascomb made no reply, and for a few moments the silence was broken only by the cracking of the filbert shells; at length the lady spoke again. "You have not heard from that New Hampshire uncle of yours lately?"

"No, he is not a very good correspondent; I suppose he thinks the same of me."

"That oldest daughter of his must be quite pretty now; at least I thought she was growing so last summer, when we stopped there on our way from the White Mountains."

"Yes, Sophia had improved immensely; when we were there before she was a perfect tom-boy, driving about with those two girls — I have forgotten their

names — but last summer she was quite the young lady."

"She would take a polish very quick, if she had a chance."

"I don't doubt it; why not ask her here to stay awhile?"

"Oh, it would be like having a child to bring up."

"I don't think so, and you would not feel as if you must pay her the attention you do Miss Grimshaw, and I am sure she is not such a proverbial philosopher as that lady is."

"No, she would not bore me so much, and she might be some company."

"Of course she would. Her father has done me some good turns, and I should not object to reciprocate. I think I will write this evening; and, if you should enclose a note to Sophia, she would be more likely to come," said Mr. Dascomb, as he rose from the table.

He carried his prompt business habits into all his acts. Husband and wife went at once to the library; the letter was written and addressed to Joseph Dascomb, requesting him to allow his eldest daughter to spend the coming winter at her cousin's house; the enclosure also was penned, and, in a somewhat con-

descending tone, expressed the hope that Miss Dascomb would accept the invitation.

The sheet of commercial note, and the minute scrap of French water-lined, scented paper, were exchanged across the table. The expression on Mr. Dascomb's face, as he deciphered the somewhat straggling characters of the latter, was not exactly that of satisfaction, but his wife forestalled criticism by exclaiming, "All winter! I did not think you were going to ask her for all winter."

"Why, yes. I do not see that it would be much use to ask her for a shorter time; however, if you don't like it I will alter it; it won't be much trouble to write it again, and she will be your guest rather than mine."

"Oh, no! Let it be as you have written it."

Thus gracefully she yielded to the carrying out of her own plans. Is not the husband the head? Should not the casting vote be his? Hortense Dascomb thought it should — at least she often said she thought so.

The letter was duly directed and placed in Mr. Dascomb's memorandum-book, to be mailed when the merchant should stop at the post-office on his way to the store the next morning. On the afternoon of the following day but one, it was delivered to Mr. Bentley

when he called at the village office. The members of the three families performed reciprocal letter-carriers' duty.

The epistle, with its dainty enclosure, caused quite a sensation in Mr. Joseph Dascomb's household. To Sophia it brought visions of city sights and pleasures, but the Flora McFlimsey obstacle seemed insurmountable. Mrs. Dascomb thought that Sophia's alpaca could be made over. "And," said the mother, "she may have my black silk. I don't wear it much; it could be turned, and look just about as well as new." The brothers and sisters were each and all ready to give what aid they could, and to lend anything desired from their scanty wardrobes.

"Your plans are all very good," said the father, "but unluckily there is one pretty important thing wanting, and that is time; by the time all the old dresses are made into new ones, the winter will be half gone; and besides, what you will fix up here won't suit Darius's wife. I shouldn't wonder if that is what she means to hint. What is it she says? Read it, Sophia."

Sophia read: "If you should need one or two dresses, you can procure them best here, and my seamstress will assist you in making them up."

"Yes, that's about what I thought it was. Well,

I don't know how to afford it, but Sophia may never have another such chance; if she says no now, Darius will not ask her again, so I'll draw a hundred dollars out of the bank, and let her have that. Better write to Darius and his wife, Sophia, and say when you'll come."

In blissful ignorance of city ladies' dry goods accounts, Farmer Dascomb thought he had provided liberally for his daughter's needs.

CHAPTER II.

THE JOINT IN THE ARMOR.

SOPHIA DASCOMB, "passing rich" with a hundred dollars in her possession, was received by her cousin at the Boston station, on the afternoon which she had appointed. The ride across the city dissipated the slight fatigue caused by the journey; the bustle and constantly changing sights and sounds were, to one accustomed to quiet country life, sufficiently exhilarating to bring color to her cheeks and brightness to her eyes. When she alighted at the door of the "palatial residence," its mistress, standing at the window, surveyed the young visitor with triumph. "A regular unsophisticated country beauty!" was the mental comment. Mrs. Dascomb hastened to the hall, touched her lips to the soft cheek, saying, "Are you very tired, dear?" then turned to the maid, "Lisette, show Miss Dascomb her room, and stop and help her dress; dinner will be served in an hour." But Sophia had thus far been quite sufficient for her own toilet, and declined the attention of the Hibernian maid with

the French name. Lizabet she was called when she lived among the bogs, but she had learned much since that time;—apt learners in some kinds of lore, the natives of bog-land.

The chamber into which Lisette ushered Sophia, was elegant beyond all that had ever before met the eyes of the new occupant. Her trunk of moderate dimensions stood with straps unbuckled in one corner. The pert maid was anxious to arrange its contents in closet and bureau, but the key was safe in the owner's pocket, who did not intend to give the smartly dressed servant opportunity to examine the modest wardrobe which it contained. Sophia was thankful when Lisette had done her fussy flitting about the room, and had gone out and closed the door.

The dusty travelling dress was removed, water rushed from the plated faucet into a china bowl set in an ample marble slab, and bearing the initials, D. B. D., in gilt and maroon; not much like the plain white hand-basin and ewer which had been adjuncts of Sophia's toilet. The rural maiden's innate love of elegance, hitherto dormant for want of material to feed upon, was fairly aroused, and her wits suggested the use of appliances never before seen.

She had just let down her long black hair, which fell below her belt, and was about to arrange it in the

style that had at home been pronounced very becoming, when Mrs. Dascomb knocked at the door, asking, "May I come in?" Sophia quickly answered the summons, and the hostess entered and seated herself beside the long mirror before which her guest stood. "All your own hair, my dear!" the lady exclaimed; "why, you will be the envy of our city belles, with their locks bought and paid for. You must have Lisette in to dress it. No, no, don't say you can do it yourself; she is a perfect genius at hair-dressing, and will be delighted to have the chance. She is the best maid I ever had to dress hair, having been three years at the best hair-dresser's in the city."

Mrs. Dascomb rang the bell, and Lisette soon appeared. "I wish you to dress Miss Dascomb's hair," said the mistress; "very simply, remember, Lisette. I will come in in about fifteen minutes."

The nimble fingers of the maid flew about among the heavy tresses, while her tongue kept up an accompanying rattle. "Beau-ti-ful hair. I can do something with this. I don't have to put every hair just so. No bald spots here, etc., etc.—Don't look, Miss, please." Sophia had raised her eyes to the mirror, but, in obedience to the request of the enthusiastic Lisette, turned them away and waited till the girl exclaimed, "There now, Miss, look, please!"

Sophia gazed upon an image which she could hardly believe was a reflection of her very self. The abundant locks were arranged not in the extreme of the prevailing fashion, but so as to hide defects, and bring beauty of contour and feature into full relief.

Mrs. Dascomb, having exchanged the cashmere morning-robe for a dark silk, dressing without her maid, came in just as Sophia turned to thank the gratified girl. "Very well indeed, Lisette!" said her mistress; "Miss Dascomb will let you dress her hair every day."

"I'm sure it's a pleasure to dress such hair as that," said Lisette.

"Well, you may go now."

Lisette descended two flights, and confidentially informed the coachman that there was "some comfort in putting a comb into such a head of hair as that, nothin' like Mrs. Dascomb's, yer had ter put a puff here, an' a braid there, an' some lace er top ev that, an' then it didn't look like nothin'."

"I will wait till you are ready to go down, dear," said Mrs. Dascomb. It was important that she should have, as soon as possible, in her mind, an inventory of the contents of that russet trunk in the corner. Sophia was no more desirous of seeing them spread out before the mistress than before the maid, but the

aid of one could not be so peremptorily refused as could that of the other. The key was placed in the lock, the lid raised, and the best, the only silk dress came to view. It was of that class of goods that, in the words of the country salesman, "was sure never to be out of fashion, always handsome at any time and in any place, good enough for the mistress of the White House herself; in fact, shouldn't hesitate to recommend that very piece to her when she comes for her next new dress, and of course a lady of her judgment, and knowledge of what's *au fait*, will purchase." Delicate and humorous that last, thought the young dispenser of molasses and meal, soap and silk.

The dress had done duty several seasons, and, a month before its owner came to the city, had been made over in the latest New York style, under the supervision of a mantua-maker who had her patterns direct from the metropolis, and it had appeared in the choir the previous Sunday, much to the satisfaction of the wearer, and admiration of the other lady singers. Now, beside Mrs. Darius Dascomb's watered silk, trimmed with real lace, it looked flimsy and antiquated.

The blood mounted to Sophia's cheeks when Mrs. Dascomb said, "I will hang your dresses in the wardrobe for you;" but with a faint "I don't like to

trouble you," the young girl submitted to the inspection of her effects. Mrs. Dascomb rapidly shook out the folds that Sophia's mother had carefully laid in the few dresses. "Positively not one fit to be seen," thought the inspector. "What a pity it is Augustus's day to come to dinner! It can't be helped, though; he is always talking feminine simplicity; perhaps it won't do any harm, after all." Having rapidly made these comments, the lady turned to her guest and said, "Ready, dear? shall we go down?" and they descended the broad stairway.

Mr. Foote always dined with his cousin once a week. Mrs. Dascomb's watchful ear had caught the sound of the door-bell when he drew the knob, and of his step as he crossed the hall, and she well knew that he was now in the drawing-room in conversation with her husband. She led the way by the drawing-room door into the library, opened the glass door between the two apartments, and stood back, that Sophia might enter, and that she herself might, in half concealment, witness and judge of the first meeting between the "well-to-do" merchant and her husband's country cousin; between the future husband and wife, as she intended they should be. Mr. Dascomb rose, took Sophia by the hand, and introduced her as "My cousin, Miss Dascomb,—my Uncle Joseph's daughter." Mr.

Foote remembered that Mr. Dascomb had spoken to him of having invited a young relative to spend some time at his house as a companion for his wife, who always sadly missed Miss Grimshaw after her visits. He had not given the announcement a second thought; for the coming of the rustic maiden, redolent of the cheese-press and the churn, concerned him little. But when his friend presented the fresh young beauty who clearly did not owe her charms to dress, he was startled and dazzled. Through more than one watering-place season, and beneath flaming chandeliers in half a score of cities, his armor had been proof against the weapons of assiduous, patient mammas, and skilfully drilled daughters; but was there not a joint in that armor? We shall see.

Well content with her survey of the field, her reconnaissance, shall we call it? Mrs. Dascomb came in and greeted Mr. Foote, as her husband drew forward a chair for Sophia. The servant announced dinner. The hostess allowed the tips of her jewelled fingers to rest on Mr. Foote's arm, and the host escorted the young visitor to her place at the table. The white-gloved attendant passed the soup.

"You have never been in our city before, I believe?" said Mr. Foote, speaking to Sophia.

"Only for a few days," she replied, vexed that her cheeks would flush when she was addressed.

"Then there is much here that will be new to you."

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Mr. Dascomb and I anticipate much pleasure in showing Sophia the city sights," said Mrs. Dascomb.

"Show her the lions," said her husband.

The wife smiled; when in full dress, "on dress parade," said some graceless youngsters, who had known her in other days, she never allowed herself to use an expression that savored of slang. The two gentlemen spoke of particular objects of note, the ladies now and then joining in the conversation, Mrs. Dascomb to confirm the opinions expressed by her husband and his friend, Sophia to ask questions.

When they left the dining-room, Mr. Foote proposed an adjournment to the library, that Miss Dascomb might look at some stereoscopic pictures and photographs. Seated beside the young country girl, he spent the entire evening displaying and explaining a fine collection of American views. His extensive travels in his own country, and his habits of observation, had made him familiar with most of their originals. Sophia had none of the false pride which refuses to be taught; her interest was so real, and her questions so apt, that the hours flew rapidly. No school-boy ever

more reluctantly left his game at the sound of teacher's bell, than did Mr. Foote, roused by "yon dull steeple's drowsy chime," turn from the pile of unexamined views, and from — his fair listener. Mr. Dascomb had been dozing over his newspaper, Mrs. Dascomb had been studying the pages of the "Lady's Book," but not so intently as to prevent her hearing every word uttered by the two who bent over the table, and seeing every look that passed between them.

Mr. Foote, standing with his hand on the door, proposed that the round of sight-seeing should begin the next day; but Mrs. Dascomb had no idea of allowing her protégée to appear in public until she was "armed and equipped" as "Mrs. Grundy" directs.

"I must say nay," the lady interposed; "Sophia and I have some shopping for to-morrow; that is as much as she ought to undertake, I think, until she has had time to recover from her journey."

"You are right, no doubt," was the reply. "You ladies don't bear being jolted about in the cars as we men do."

Mr. Foote left the house with a vague impression that Mrs. Dascomb thought that he had been officious, and uncertain whether he had been put in place or not.

The next morning Mrs. Dascomb held a consulta-

tion in her boudoir, with Sophia, on the subject of dress, concealed with some effort her amusement at her visitor's ideas of expense, and of the extent of surface a hundred dollars could be made to cover. The consultation closed with the proposal from the elder lady that she should go to some of the principal dry goods stores, and make a selection of goods to be sent home for examination.

Mrs. Dascomb well knew where to find the most desirable of fabrics and styles, and being a liberal patroness of her favorite establishments, had no difficulty in inducing principals and assistants to do her bidding. At the end of three days Sophia was provided with home and street attire perfectly satisfactory to her hostess. In choosing the material, and deciding upon trimmings, that lady had quietly overruled any disposition for display. She knew that Mr. Foote was fastidious in the matter of ladies' dress, and particularly disliked any approach to tawdriness. Often ostentatious in her own apparel, she considered that her position and manners made display more becoming in her than in a plain farmer's daughter. She saw, with pride, the transformation which her taste and skill had made, as it appeared when Sophia came down on Sunday morning.

The two ladies stepped into the carriage, and soon

alighted at St. ——'s Church. "Mr. Dascomb always goes to the reading-room Sunday mornings, and I never wait for him," the wife explained; when the carriage drew up at the church door, the gentleman stood at the entrance talking with his friend. "I met Foote down town," said Mr. Dascomb, as he gave his hand to his wife, "and told him he had better come and confess his sins." Mrs. Dascomb saw the expression of approval with which the younger man glanced from Sophia's becoming bonnet to her neat boot.

The service over, Mr. Foote accepted Mrs. Dascomb's gracious invitation to dinner. From that time hardly a day passed when he did not meet Sophia. Theatres, operas, concerts, lectures, and occasional parties, occupied the evenings. Rides in the beautiful environs of the city employed many daylight hours.

Sophia frequently wrote to her two friends at home. Her letters were of course read with avidity, and the frequent mention of Mr. Foote was made the text of some bantering comments in the replies. Neither was surprised when, about the first of April, the engagement was actually announced. The joint in the armor had been found, but it was not "a bow drawn at a venture" that had sped the shaft which pierced the hitherto invulnerable breast.

The same mail which brought the young lady's let-

ter to her mother, brought one also from her cousin, enclosing the accepted suitor's request for a favorable reception into the family of his future father-in-law. Mr. Darius Dascomb proposed that the wedding should take place at his house, in May. How this proposal was received, we may learn from Mr. Joseph Dascomb's reply to his nephew:

"DEAR DARIUS,—Your letter, and Mr. Foote's, we got day before yesterday, and one from Sophia the same day.

"It seemed to us that it would have been just as well if she had asked her father's and mother's advice, but young folks nowadays think they know best about getting married, and a good many other things, so I won't say anything more about that.

"You know I'm a plain farmer, and you can give my daughter a smarter wedding than we can up here; but, to my way of thinking, the only right place for a girl to be married in is her father's house, if she is lucky enough to have a father's house, and my daughter will never be married anywhere else, and I say yea.

"If you and your wife are a mind to come up here next June, when everything is bright and pleasant, and Mr. Foote's a mind to take Sophia from the old

house, I've nothing to say against it, but that is all I can say. My wife and I thank you for your offer, and don't want you to think we don't call it very kind of you. I'd be much obliged to you if you'd show this to Mr. Foote, and tell him I hope he will take this for an answer to his letter. I ain't much of a hand with a pen.

"My wife says, if Sophia is a-going to be married in June, she thinks she'd better come home the last of next week, at the farthest.

"Your uncle,

"JOSEPH."

Did you ever think, meditative reader, what a fortunate thing it is that *châteaux en Espagne* are constructed of airy nothings, that nought of actual substance enters into them? Were it otherwise, how sad would be the consequences to their architects, when some slight turn of fortune's wheel, some zephyr from an adverse quarter, brings the lofty edifice suddenly to the ground! Were air-castles subject to any of the laws of matter except those of gravitation, poor Mrs. Darius Dascomb would have been in a pitiable plight indeed, when uncle Joseph's letter reached the palatial residence. The plain epistle, indited beneath the shade of the Franconia mountains, had for her edifice

all the force of the gunpowder-plot, supposing the said plot to have been successful. It tumbled at her feet in inextricable confusion, bouquets and garlands, gaslights and sable waiters, pealing organ and white-robed D.D., the champing horses, the glistening carriage, the admiring crowd at the church door, the stately walk up the carpeted aisle, herself scarcely less conspicuous than the bride who was to follow, the wine and bride's-cake, the congratulatory farewells, first family names shouted from her door-way (this last doubtful, but worth trying for), Mrs. Darius Dascomb the presiding genius, the Lady Bountiful of the whole. All this and much more did that letter dash to earth, and Mrs. Dascomb did not stretch out her hand to stay the destruction, but sat smiling in the midst of the ruins, true to her oft-expressed opinion that the husband should be the head of the house.

"I should have been most happy to have your wedding here, Sophia," said Mr. Dascomb, "but your father is right. I believe I should have said just what he has, if I had been in his place."

Mr. Foote had caught occasional glimpses of the showy material that was being wrought into Mrs. Dascomb's château, and though quite averse to being made to serve, in so public a way, the lady's purpose in the matter of social advancement, was too much in

love to veto any plans to which his bride elect did not object. He was therefore heartily grateful to the father who had interposed; and the respect which his straightforward common-sense inspired, increased the lover's admiration for the daughter. As he was intending to visit his aunt the next day, he begged that he might be allowed to show her the missive that had been so welcome to him, so distasteful to Mrs. Dascomb.

CHAPTER III.

DISCONTENT.

MRS. DASCOMB was not the one to quarrel with the half loaf. To be sure, the hope of a brilliant wedding had been blighted, but there was still much planning to be done, and many useful hints to be given about the management of a house, servants, and—husband. It was well for Mr. Foote's peace of mind that he never heard, never suspected, what were the subjects of some of the morning conversations in that dainty boudoir. It was well for Sophia's future happiness that many of the directions given were so cool and hard, that they chilled and repelled her.

The lover had reluctantly bade adieu for two days; the two ladies were seated in the boudoir.

"We will have a nice quiet day," said Mrs. Dascomb; "Darius won't be home till dinner-time, and there is no danger of Augustus coming in to see if we don't want to go somewhere."

"Augustus thinks a great deal of his aunt," said Sophia.

"Oh, yes, he ought to. She has been more than a mother to him; she is a genuine old maid, but of an old family, and she goes into the best society at home, and could here, if she chose." The lady did not add, as she might have done, that Miss Grimshaw was on terms of intimacy with families who resisted the vigorous pushing of Mrs. Darius Dascomb.

"Miss Grimshaw brought Augustus up, he told me," said Sophia.

"Yes, Augusta Grimshaw made a very unfortunate match; her husband turned out a miserable fellow, but she clung to him in spite of his abuse; it was even whispered that he went so far as to strike her. Her family offered her a comfortable home for herself and her children, but she always said no, so they moved about from place to place; often her friends did not know where she was. She was so poor, and so proud, she did not want them to see her misery. She had four children; they died one after another, till only Augustus was left, named for his mother, you see. She found her own health was failing, and was afraid her last child would follow his brother and sisters. She sent for Miss Grimshaw, and, with the tears rolling down her cheeks—I heard Augustus tell about it once—asked her to take the boy, and save him from the grave. From that day she has been a

mother to him: he was eight years old; she kept him at the best schools till he wanted to go into a store, and when he was twenty-one she set him up in business."

"I don't wonder Mr. Foote thinks a great deal of her."

"Yes, he owes everything he has to her, but I can't say I altogether like her; the fact is, she is peculiar, but I hope you will like her; she must like you, at any rate. I suppose Augustus will be her heir."

When Mr. Foote returned he was the bearer of a note from his aunt to Sophia, which, as it exhibited some of Miss Grimshaw's "peculiarities," we lay before our readers:

"I am very glad, my dear, that Augustus has at last found some one to convince him of what I have often told him, 'A man's own hearth is gold's worth.' I am glad, too, that you are to be so soon married, for, 'Happy is the wooing that's not long doing.'

"I hope you will excuse an old woman for taking the liberty of adding a little bit of canvas, for 'a woman without money is a ship without sails.'

"Your sincere friend and hearty well-wisher,

"JANE B. GRIMSHAW."

The "bit of canvas" was a check for five hundred dollars.

The following week Mr. Foote accompanied Sophia to her own home, where he was received with frank cordiality; and, before he took his leave, the day was appointed when he might return and claim his bride.

The home of her childhood, the house, and all around, were the same that she had left a few months before. Even the well-worn furniture was not in the least different; each article stood in the very spot it had occupied that November morning, but everything was changed. All nature was then fast bound in the embrace of winter; now the earth had cast off her snowy mantle; on the mountain-tops, only, a few folds still clung, and the swelling leaf-buds, and starting blades, gave promise of harvest. But it was not the change of season that Sophia noticed. What made those grand old hills look so majestic now? They had hardly caused her a thought in days gone by, except when resting or vanishing clouds portended storm or sunshine. Now they seemed almost like a living presence—like great powers to be propitiated and revered.

What made the old farm-house seem so low and small, the partitions to cramp her motions, the ceiling to press her down as she stood? The daily old hum-

drum life there, too; it annoyed and irritated her. It was with considerable effort that she suppressed exclamations of vexation, as she saw her mother and sisters plodding round day after day, in the discharge of the same monotonous duties. Washing, ironing, baking, skinning milk, churning, moulding butter,—no cessation, except on the weekly day of rest; then the ride in the open wagon behind the old farm-horse.

The large-windowed meeting-house, where flies buzzed, farmers snored, good wives nodded, bass viol droned, violin squeaked, and fugue tunes crept, walked, trotted, galloped through mazes of woe and jollity.

That life that had been one of comfort and content, was now a very treadmill existence; but the life itself was not altered, the transformation was in her who looked on as if she had never been part of this very existence. Surely, "the mind is its own place."

To her two young friends Sophia was like one returned from a distant land. They listened with never-failing interest to her "story without an end." It was taken up and continued whenever the friends met. On one occasion the narrative was broken off by the sudden departure of the narrator, and Ruth Bentley and Miriam Weston were left in Mrs. Bentley's kitchen.

"I wonder," said Miriam, "what's the reason that

other people have all the fun in the world, and you and I have to stay here as stupid as owls?"

"Maybe I'm as stupid as an owl," said Ruth, with an owlish grimace, "but I am sure you are not; and as for the fun, I rather think father is right: he says, in the long run, we farmers, and farmers' boys and girls, are the happiest people in the world."

"Perhaps he is right; but I don't see how such deadly-alive folks are to know whether other people are happy or not."

"We didn't think we were very deadly-alive last winter. I'm sure 'twas singing-school, apple-bees, sewing-society, quiltings, something all the time, to say nothing about that jolly candy-scrape we had at Mr. Barnard's; nothing very owlish about that, but the time we got home, was there?"

In spite of her attempt to look grave and discontented, Miriam could not help laughing at the recollection of the frolic, but she answered: "Yes, a parcel of great grown-up children we were. I'm getting tired of babyish performances; I'd like to hear some of the great singers and speakers."

"Of course, so should I; but if I can't, I won't make myself miserable about that."

"Can't? I'm not so sure of that. How shabby we look beside Sophia!"

"Yes, she does outline us, but we haven't got a cousin Darius to give us silks and satins; and I'm not sure I should want to take them from him if I had."

"Pah! that's where your pride comes in. I don't think it would trouble my pride much, if he'd give me a dress off that pretty de laine I saw at Mr. Barnard's store this morning. I mean to ask father if I mayn't have it; but I don't suppose it's any use."

The request was made. "Father, I wish you'd let me have a new dress. Mr. Barnard has got some de laines, come this week, and one of them is a beauty."

"A new dress! I don't see as you want a new dress. Why don't you wear out your old ones?"

"Why, father, they are just about worn out. I haven't got a dress that's fit to be seen."

"Well, mend them up then. I don't see but they look well enough. You girls are all taken up with dress."

"I'm sure I ain't. I don't have anything that is pretty enough to be taken up with. Everything I've got is as old-fashioned as the hills."

"Old-fashioned! that's it. Don't you know, child, that fashion is all folly? If you have what's comfortable and tidy, you ought to be satisfied. There's better things to spend your time and thought on than chasing after silly nonsense — fashion."

"I want to look a little like other folks."

"You mean you want to be bedizened like Sophia Dascomb? You must earn the money for yourself, then; I can't afford it."

"I will see if I can't earn for myself!" was the unexpressed determination of the daughter.

Mr. Weston went back to his plough.

The wedding-day came, and with it Mr. Darius Dascomb, rosy and good-natured; Mrs. Darius Dascomb, magnificent and patronizing; Miss Grimshaw, more proverbial than ever. She told Sophia's mother that she could say, "My son is my son till he has got him a wife, but my daughter is my daughter all the days of my life." She told the bridegroom that "a little house well filled, a little land well tilled, and a little wife well willed, are great riches." She told the bride that "a man canna thrive except his wife let him." She told them both that "wisdom in the man, patience in the wife, bring ease to the house and a happy life."

Miriam Weston and Ruth Bentley were the bridesmaids. The solemn words were spoken — "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

The bridal party started on the wedding-tour, the guests all departed; then succeeded the oppressive quiet that so often follows excitement. Miriam Weston went from one room to another, tried one employ-

ment after another, and at last threw down the book she had been holding for five minutes, and said: "There, I can't stand it any longer! I'm going over to see Ruth." She found her sitting in her own little room, busily sewing upon a dress for her younger sister. She looked up smilingly when her friend came hastily in at the open door, but went on with her work. Miriam seated herself, and watched Ruth's fingers as they rapidly passed the needle through the light gingham. Ruth looked up again and smiled; then Miriam exclaimed, "I declare, you do provoke me sometimes! Here you are, sitting just as if nothing had happened, and I can't read, I can't sew, I can't do anything, except think."

"Winnie wants her dress to wear next Sunday, and mother won't have time to finish it for her," answered Ruth.

"Ruth!"

"Well, what is it?"

"I'm determined I won't stay mewed up here all my life; you might as well be in a dungeon, and done with it."

"Supposing it was a dungeon with green grass, and trees, and mountains, and so on?"

"Oh, nonsense! I'm going to Boston, and I want you to go too. I saw Jerry Barnard yesterday."

"Yes, I heard he was here; come for his vacation, I suppose?"

"Yes, and he says he likes Boston very much; he wouldn't come back here to live for anything. He says, too, that he thinks he could get you and me places in a shop; he says there are more and more girls going into shops every year. Come! what do you say? Will you go?"

"No, I don't think I will. I'll see what mother says about it. I don't think she will want me to go. I'm needed at home."

"Winnie can help your mother."

"She does a great deal about the house, but she goes to school when school keeps. On second thoughts, I don't believe I'll say anything to mother about it. I know she won't want me to go. What does your mother say?"

"Oh! she tries to talk me out of it; but when she sees I'm really going, she'll say yes."

CHAPTER IV.

DOUBTS—DECISION.

FROM time to time the plan for going to Boston was talked over, and came to the ears of Mr. and Mrs. Bentley. Their disapproval was expressed in so decided terms, that Ruth was glad she had never seriously listened to the proposal.

One afternoon in August, Miriam called for Ruth; they were intending to walk down to the village, stop at the house of an acquaintance, and return after the mail was distributed.

"I am in hopes I shall get a letter from Jerry to-day," said Miriam, "I want to know whether I am going or not."

The call was made. The postmaster handed Miriam the expected letter, the purport of which was, that the writer had secured for Miriam a place in a shop on Washington Street at six dollars a week, and that there was another vacant position in the same establishment, which he could engage for Ruth if advised within a month.

"I shall go, of course," said Miriam. "What shall I write about you?"

"Say that I am very much obliged to him, but I will sing 'Home, sweet Home,' a little longer."

"I don't suppose it's any use to try to persuade you."

"No! do let's talk of something else. I can't bear to think of it. Sophia is gone, and you are going, and I shall be left all alone."

When it was decided that she was to leave home to go and seek her fortune, Miriam's heart nearly failed her. The lot of a young girl, almost friendless, in a large city, did not appear so attractive as it had done, but she would see Sophia Foote often, and she would have money that she could call her own. Completely absorbed in her thoughts, she walked on. A sudden exclamation of her friend roused her from her reverie. Miriam looked up. They were within a few rods of Mr. Bentley's house. Before the gate was a gray horse and a weather-beaten, open buggy, containing a small, leathern-covered case. Near by was a group of the neighbors, talking excitedly. As the two girls came near, the voices were hushed, and the people stealthily crept away, like guilty ones.

"Oh, dear! that is Dr. Jarvis's horse," said Ruth. "What is the matter?"

As fast as her trembling limbs would carry her, she hastened on. Dr. Jarvis came out just as she opened the gate, and answering her mute question, which her lips refused to utter, said: "Your father—I've often told him he ought to be careful of that yoke of oxen, but he has got a strong constitution, he'll pull through. I've got to go for some things I want. You are a brave girl, I know." And Dr. Jarvis stepped into his buggy and drove off.

The good physician had not had the courage to tell Ruth that her father was injured beyond hope of recovery; that though his life was in little immediate danger, he would be for the remainder of his days a cripple. He had owned, for a year, a yoke of oxen, known to be refractory, but with full confidence in his ability to control them, had not taken the proper precautions in their management. That afternoon he had yoked them into a heavy cart, and a chain becoming entangled in the yoke, he stepped directly before the surly brutes; they started, and threw their owner down; the cart passed over him, and he was taken up insensible.

It would lead us too far from our story, as we designed to tell it, were we to describe the distress of Mr. Bentley's family, as gradually the truth appeared to them, that their kind father, the stay of the house-

hold, was a hopeless cripple. One week after the accident, Ruth watched for the arrival of the doctor, and heard from his lips the confirmation of her fears. She went directly to her own room, that she might think what was the best course for her to pursue in the altered circumstances of the family. She debated with herself till she heard the sound of Dr. Jarvis's wheels as he drove away—he staid longer than usual that day—then went down to help her mother in the arrangement of her father's room.

That evening, when all was still about the house, and her brother had taken his place beside his father's pillow, sitting with her mother in the sitting-room, Ruth told what Dr. Jarvis had said, and added: "I have been thinking that Ben will have to carry on the farm now, and you know that father only saved a little every year when he was well. It will be all Ben can do to keep along; if I should go away and take care of myself, perhaps it would be the best thing I could do to help Ben, and to help you all."

Mrs. Bentley burst into tears.

"You would miss me, I know, mother, and I wouldn't think of it if I knew any way to stay at home, and not be a drawback on you and Ben. I can have the place with Miriam; and doesn't it seem as if that might be the way we are to be helped out of some

of our troubles? But if you feel so about it, I won't say anything more."

If Ruth refrained from speaking of the matter, she did not cease to think of it. She could not divest her mind of the conviction that the opening was providentially made for her in this emergency. Never before had it seemed advisable that she should earn her own bread; never before had the means of providing for herself been offered: was this mere accident, mere coincidence? On the other hand, the question came up, could she take so important a step in opposition to her mother's wishes? Again and again did these thoughts force themselves on her attention, and the conclusion reached was, that she could not add to her mother's griefs by pursuing a course in direct contradiction to her desire. This obstacle, however, was removed by Mrs. Bentley herself.

The third day after Ruth had spoken of her plan, the mother passed through the room, where her daughter was busy in the discharge of some domestic duty, hesitated a moment, and said: "Ruth, if you think it best to go, I will not oppose you."

"Won't you tell me what you think is best, mother?" Ruth pleaded.

But the door had already closed. Mrs. Bentley could not trust herself to say another word. If the

sacrifice was to be made, the pain must be thrust out of sight as much as possible; there must be no holding up of wrung hearts to each others' gaze, no review of peace and comfort past, no recounting the sorrows of later days. Ruth understood her mother well enough to realize all this. The decision was left with herself, but the trembling voice, the manifest emotion with which the permission was given, made it harder than ever for her to decide. She thought she would ask Ben's opinion; perhaps she might get some encouragement from her elder brother.

In the afternoon, when the shadows had begun to lengthen, she went out to the field where her brother was at work. Poor Ben! The disinterested fellow listened to all she had to say, but his answer only increased her perplexity: "I hate to have you go, Ruth. I will do the best I can. I am young and strong, and this old farm can be made to bring in more than it has done."

"Yes, Ben, but you will have to hire more hands now, and we may need to spend more for father than we think."

"Yes, I know, but we can get along together, I guess; still, if you think it best to go, I won't oppose you."

Her mother's very words. Ruth wished he had

chosen others. Oh, for five minutes' conversation with her father, as she remembered him! His clear judgment had never failed his family before, but now it would be impossible to make him understand the case; and besides, the doctor had often dwelt upon the importance to him of perfect quiet. Ruth inherited her father's decision of character, but there had been little in her experience to call it into exercise, and their recent troubles had so benumbed her faculties, that she felt like one dreaming, and feared she might come to a conclusion that would be afterwards regretted. Was there no one to whom she could appeal? no one who was sufficiently her friend to give her advice, yet whose affection would not blind his judgment? Yes, there was the good doctor! He knew, even better than she did, what were the probable needs of the family. Ruth determined to go to him.

Dr. Jarvis's patients were not, to him, certain specimens of humanity who were to be treated as parts of a great whole; he did not experiment on them, thinking that if one descended into the jaws of death from under the keen edge of his deftly-handled knife, and two lived five years, thanks to that same glittering blade, he had prolonged life on the whole, and therefore been a benefactor to his race. No, his patients were each one of a great family of sentient, breath-

ing beings, of loving and loved beings, who existed, not for themselves alone, but for friends around them, for a world to be worked for, and, mayhap, made better. He did not arrogate to himself the right to lop away certain limbs of the human tree, that others might grow more vigorously. He left the meting out of death to a higher power; to Him with whom is "the fountain of life." Dr. Jarvis contented himself with doing conscientiously, tenderly, all that he could for each individual under his care.

He looked upon his young caller as a patient, and heard her statement as if he were listening to an enumeration of physical ills, keeping up a running comment of nods, 'mms, and yeses. The description of symptoms over, the diagnosis was rapid, and the prescription was ready. "Your father will never do another day's work, his improvement will be slow, very slow; in a year he may be able to sit up; that is the best we can hope. As for Ben, he will do well, no doubt; but it is hard for a young man to try to carry too heavy a load. This offer of employment is not of your seeking. I think you will be more likely to regret it if you refuse, than if you accept it."

This might have sounded cold and hard to a third person, but it gave Ruth rest; the way of duty was clear now.

"One thing more," said Dr. Jarvis; "I will drop in once in a while on your father, when I do not call professionally, and, if you are needed at home, I will not fail to let you know — if your father should alter for the worse, or if your mother should appear to be overburdened."

"Oh, thank you, doctor!" said Ruth, offering the physician her hand.

"That will be very easy for me," said Dr. Jarvis. "I shall be driving by every day."

"It will be peace and courage for me," said Ruth.

"Rely upon me," was the answer, as the young girl turned to the door.

Dr. Jarvis took up the *Medical and Surgical Journal*, to finish the article he had been reading, adjusted his spectacles, moved the lamp, took off his glasses, wiped them, but it was of no use; off came the glasses again, and the kind-hearted physician passed his handkerchief across his eyes, muttering: "Pshaw! it's only a girl going away from home to earn her living; that has happened thousands of times before."

A young girl going from home to earn her living! Yes, thousands have done it, and found that it meant leaving the warm fireside for the cold, driving storm without; that it meant the attrition of a wicked, selfish world; some, that it meant sinking in the over-

whelming waves of temptation, without the heart to cry, "Save, Lord, or I perish!" some, that it meant the independence of honest toil.

It was with lagging gait that Ruth had gone to the good doctor's house; the unusual exertion, the intense anxiety of the last ten days, had told upon her physical powers, and she was conscious of a fatigue such as she had never felt before; but her mind more at ease, her body recovered some of its elasticity, and, with a springing step, she walked rapidly towards home, revolving in her thoughts different plans for relieving her mother, which she hoped her earnings would make possible. Six dollars a week, cash in hand; she would not need the whole for herself.

She stopped at Mr. Weston's, and asked Miriam if she had written to Jerry Barnard.

"Yes, but I can write again," was the answer.

"I wish you would, and say I will go with you. Have you engaged a boarding-place?"

"Jerry wrote that he would engage one for me."

Though the subject was seldom mentioned in the Bentley family, it was understood that Ruth's decision was made. Jerry Barnard wrote again to Miriam, enclosing the name of the street and number of the house where board had been engaged, and a request from Mr. Ratliburn that the young ladies would be at

their posts as soon as possible, in order to become acquainted with their duties before the fall trade commenced.

With a kiss, and "God bless you, my daughter!" Mrs. Bentley took leave of her child.

Miriam was in boisterous spirits—forced spirits, Ruth thought—when she saw the tears glistening in her companion's eyes, as in answer to the question, "Did your mother feel very badly about your coming?" she replied, "Oh, I don't know as I should have had spunk enough to come at all, if it hadn't been for father. Mother wouldn't say I might, but father said, 'Let her go if she wants to, 'twon't hurt her to know what it is to earn money; she'll find it don't grow on every bush, she'll get enough, and be back again before long';—but I won't," added Miriam bitterly.

CHAPTER V.

FINDING A HOME.

AS they left their country home farther and farther behind them, the thoughts of the two friends turned more exclusively to the life they were about to enter upon, and, full of hope, they reached the city, where neither had ever been before. With the aid of a hackman they soon found the house to which Jerry Barnard had directed them. Miriam's repeated summons at the bell-pull was unanswered; the hackman came up the steps with a trunk in each hand, and resting one against his knee, gave the knob a vigorous jerk.

"There, I guess that'll bring 'em," said he; "there's somebody been peeking out the side of the curtain all the time."

The somebody, or deputy, thought it best to save the bell-wire the risk of another such strain. The door opened four inches; in that space was visible a vertical section of one of those specimens of feminine beauty, grace, and neatness, of which Ireland must have an inexhaustible supply.

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FINDING A HOME.

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"Is Mrs. Jackson in?" Ruth asked.

"Noa."

"We engaged board here, or it was engaged for us," said Ruth, referring to a letter which Miriam held open in her hand. "Mrs. Jackson, No. 59 Goodwill Street. This is the place."

"She's gun out."

"Perhaps you can show us the room."

"Indade, an' I can't."

"Well, open the door, can't you? and let the ladies come in. They can wait till the woman comes home," said the hackman. But the specimen maintained her post.

"I can't stand here holding these trunks forever. I've got two passengers to take to the dépôt," said the man, using one trunk for a battering-ram, and, shoving by the three women, he deposited the baggage in the entry, despite the servant's protestations that "the misthress wouldn't like it, at ahl, at ahl."

"I don't care whether she likes it or not!" was the driver's answer. Then turning to Ruth, he added, "she's got to keep 'em for you, till you can find some other place to put 'em."

"She tould me I wa'n't to let the gurls in if they be after comin'," said the specimen, ducking her head as if to avoid the storm which she dreaded on the return

of the absent mistress. "It's boxes in the enthry she don't be afther likin'."

"Oh-h! that's it," said the man. "I thought very likely. I've heard of her serving people such tricks before. So she did agree to take them, and now she's got a better chance, she's backed out."

"It's a b'y that's got the rheum."

"Yes, of course. She never takes girls only when she can't get 'by's' to fill the rooms."

"Why not?" asked Ruth.

"Oh, they are better pay, of course."

"Indade! An' they don't be after makin' the throuble; they don't be after comin' down in ther kitchen axin can they have a drap er warrum whather, an' er small little bit er starch, an' er hot iron, jist ter wash the handkercher and the bit collar."

"Well it's a mean trick she's served you," said the driver, "but I always did say there wasn't no greater hogs in existence, than one woman to another."

Having delivered himself of this scientific opinion, he slammed the door behind him, and left Ruth and Miriam standing in the hall.

"What is to be done now?" said Ruth.

"Suppose we see if we can find the store," said Miriam.

"Maybe we haven't been engaged there, either."

"How far is it to Washington Street?" Ruth asked.

"Sure, an' it's not fur it is."

"If you'll let those trunks stand there, we'll take them out of your way just as soon as we can," said Miriam. And the two girls went out, regardless of the reiterated declaration that "the misthress didn't be plazed wid boxes in the enthry."

With feelings akin to those of a mariner cast upon an inhospitable shore, they stepped upon the sidewalk. After inquiring the way several times, they found themselves in front of a large store, which was to them, accustomed to Mr. Barnard's motley establishment, arranged merely with a view to classification of its contents, a marvel of taste and magnificence. In the great plate-glass windows were daintily disposed embroideries, laces, dress' trimmings, gloves, and many small wares. The door stood open, and goods of like styles were scattered upon the counter, suspended from hooks, displayed in various ways, and in what seemed inexhaustible quantity.

Mindful of the rebuff they had received at the dingy boarding-house, it was with some diffidence that the two girls entered this glittering store, and asked for Mr. Rathburn. They were pointed to a tall, fashionably dressed, gentlemanly-looking man, whom Ruth judged to be about thirty-five years of age, and who

advanced to meet them. They introduced themselves; and the cordial manner in which their employer expressed the hope that their business connection would be mutually pleasant and beneficial, made them feel that they were not altogether strangers in a strange land. In answer to the question whether they would be ready to assume their duties on the morrow, they stated their perplexity.

"That is rather rough," said Mr. Rathburn. "Any friends in the city?"

"Not one," Ruth answered.

The gentleman thought a moment, then called "Cash." A small boy came running up.

"Ask Miss Lambert to step this way." One of the saleswomen came.

"This is Miss Bentley, Miss Lambert," said Mr. Rathburn, "she will help you in your department; and this is Miss Weston; she will help Miss Lincoln. Do you think your mother could accommodate them until they can find a permanent boarding-place? I should be quite obliged to her if she would."

"Oh yes, sir, I think so."

"We are not very busy to-day. We will release you for the rest of the afternoon." Then speaking to Ruth and Miriam, Mr. Rathburn said, "Mrs. Lambert may be able to advise you about finding a home.

As soon as you have fixed upon one, I shall be glad to see you here."

Finding a home — a home. The words rang again and again in Ruth's ears. Mr. Rathburn had not intended to be sarcastic, but when Ruth learned what kind of comforts cheap boarding-houses — and most shop-girls can live in no other — grudgingly yield friendless women, the words seemed to convey the keenest sarcasm. "Finding a home!" Finding a spot where no man will rest his head; submitting for weeks, months, to impositions that no man would endure for a day; sitting uncomplainingly in the most uncomfortable place at the table, half suffocated by close proximity to a scorching stove, or heat-ejecting register; chilled by drafts from constantly opening and closing doors, while Mr. — and Mr. — occupy positions where neither hot nor cold blast annoys; yes, and dispose of slices of tenderloin and juicy upper side, while the shop-girl vainly tries to masticate her portion of flank end; if at last she rebels against this order of things, — "why, women are always quarrelling."

Mrs. Lambert lived in half of a small house with her three daughters, all of them shop-girls, and eked out their moderate incomes by binding shoes at odd moments. In her heart, and in her house, there was

always "room for one more," especially when the one was a shop-girl in need. "For," she said, "I want to do by her just as I should want somebody to do by one of my girls if she was in her place." Many a girl had her motherly encouragement strengthened; many a one owed her recovery from dangerous illness to Mrs. Lambert's timely nursing.

She received Ruth and Miriam as if they had been old acquaintances, saying that when a young girl from the country came to her house, she felt as if a mother had commended a daughter to her care. So, pouring in the oil and wine of kindness and friendly counsel, she made them welcome to the best she had that night. In the morning she gave them a note of introduction, and the address of several landladies, one of whom she thought must have vacant rooms.

"You mustn't mind," said she, "if they ain't all of them very soft spoken. It's a matter of business with them, you know. If one of them thinks she can make a little money by taking you, she'll do it; if she don't, she won't; so don't be disappointed if they think more of counting coppers than being civil; they have a hard tussle with life, every one of 'em."

The warning was not superfluous. The door of the first house where they called was opened by the mistress herself, who looked as if she was indeed engaged

in "a tussle," and was fully determined to continue the contest.

Before Ruth could fairly ask the question, "Do you take boarders?" she answered, "No women,—don't want any women."

"Glad you don't," said Miriam. The door shut with a noisy bang.

The morning was spent in going from one house to another; repeatedly they met with the same refusal, though couched in milder language; others' rooms were all full; others still demanded a price far beyond the ability of those to whom six dollars a week must afford shelter, food and raiment.

"Only one more—Mrs. Graham," said Ruth, as she looked at the memorandum Mrs. Lambert had given them.

"We'll try that one," said Miriam, "but I don't suppose it is much use. If we don't have better luck there, we must go back to Mrs. Lambert's. 'Twould be queer if we had to go home because we can't find a place to put our heads under; I won't do that in a hurry, though. This is the house, I suppose."

The door was opened by a slip-shod, torn-aproned, rough-headed girl, who, in answer to the question, "Can we see Mrs. Graham?" threw open the door at right angles with the street entrance. The air of the

hall was loaded with the accumulated odor of scores of dinners that had been cooked in the cellar-kitchen below, and eaten in the long dining-room in the rear. The floor was covered by an oil-cloth, the pattern of which collected dust, and the grinding of many feet, had made undistinguishable.

On the stairway directly facing the front door was a woollen carpet that had undergone a process much like that which carpenters call battening, and was in that loose state which suggests caution to the uninitiated.

"Take a sate, an' I'll call the misthress," said the maid of Erin, who, it was evident, had but recently enjoyed the comforts of a voyage and the luxuries of an emigrant ship.

"I wonder if we mayn't take two 'sates,'" said Miriam, who thought their condition forlorn enough to call for an effort to be facetious; but the effort was cut short by the appearance of a thin, pale woman, whose face and figure were expressive of worry and over-exertion. Married, at eighteen, to a man more indulgent than provident, at thirty she was a widow. Cast down from ease to penury by the sudden death of her husband, never having learned to help herself, with five children looking to her for bread, she knew not which way to turn.

Some of the friends of more prosperous days assisted her to establish herself in a third-rate boarding-house, and there she struggled on, her every faculty absorbed in the effort to provide for the physical wants of the five immortal beings who called her mother. Poor woman! how could she guide their moral or mental education? They went to the public schools, roamed the streets, or tumbled about the house, taking cuffs and sugar-plums from the inmates; the cuffs to the sugar-plums as ten to one.

"Mrs. Lambert recommended us here," Ruth explained. "She thought you might have a vacant room; we are looking for board."

"Yes, I have one unoccupied room. Would you like to see it now?" said Mrs. Graham, speaking in a voice intended to be polite, but which gave her hearers the idea of an existence out of which all hope and enjoyment had faded.

"Yes, we would like to see it," Ruth replied.

Mrs. Graham called "Nora." The girl appeared from an adjacent region, and, in obedience to the direction, "Show these young ladies the upper bedroom," led the way. Up, up they mounted the steep, half-lighted staircases, three in all, and Nora threw open the door of a small attic. The narrow bedstead was crowded under the oblique ceiling; another chance

for the uninitiated to exercise caution. The floor was carpetless, save three small strips of divers colors. A single chair that had seen better days, a worse-for-wear wash-stand, and a gas-pipe that thrust itself out of the wall with the air of being well able to maintain its ground, nearly filled the minute apartment.

Miriam looked in consternation, and turned to Nora. "Are you sure this is the room? there is some mistake."

"No mishake at ahl, at ahl, miss; that's what the misthress tould me. 'Twas the two young ladies was in Mr. McKenzie's store that was slapin' here the last week. There is no mishake at ahl, at ahl, bekase I'll tell ye why; the house is as full as an egg is of mate, intirely."

"Well, it is 'Hobson's choice,' I suppose," said Miriam.

"It looks like it," said Ruth. "Let us go down and see if we can make a bargain with Mrs. Graham."

The bargain was soon struck. Three dollars and a half a week they each agreed to pay for an undivided half of an irregularly-shaped box, by courtesy called a room, and for a seat at Mrs. Graham's table.

The next thing to be done was to relieve Mrs. Jackson, of Goodwill Street, of boxes "in the enthry,"

that "didn't plaze her." A job-wagon that stood at a corner close by was despatched for the baggage.

"Mary and me will bring up the thrunks," said Nora, as she closed the door after the driver. Ruth and Miriam climbed again to their aërial dormitory.

"I wonder where under the sun 'Mary and me' will put the thrunks?" said Miriam.

Ruth was looking at the prospect to be seen from the one dormer-window. Chimney-pots, brick, plastered and iron; slated pitched roofs, flat roofs on which clothes were flapping in the wind; the single pleasant object, a cat, making stealthy and perilous exploration of the jumble.

A puffing and thumping, and Nora's voice was heard on the stairs. "Sure, an ye needn't be crass the day. I'd bring' em up mysel', but I ain't able." One trunk was placed in the room, and so reduced the space that both the girls looked about in perplexity, but Nora was equal to the emergency. "It's in the enthry we'll have ter pit ther feller till it; it's mebbe lonesome it'll be." Ruth's trunk was deposited on the landing; the door was closed, and Ruth and Miriam were left in their elevation.

"Not so bad as it might be," said Ruth. "See, the linen is clean, and the towels are whole."

"We shan't need many towels, if that is our well,"

said Miriam, looking at the pitcher on the wash-stand. Three pints of water filled it to overflowing. "However, we wont grumble; we knew we couldn't bring all New Hampshire with us, and we ain't obliged to stay here if we don't like."

"No," said Ruth, "and we will see if the Irish girl won't let us have some more water; she looks good-natured."

The two friends remained in their room until the loud clanging of a bell sounded through the house. "That is for tea, I suppose," said Ruth; "we shall have to find our own way down."

Nora was at the dining-room door, grasping the bell by the tongue. She pointed to two chairs, telling Ruth and Miriam "them was the top bidroom sates."

The number of people who rushed in and sat down to the table, convinced Miriam of the truth of the statement, that the house was "as full as an egg is of mate"; the wonder was how so small an edifice could be made to afford a home to so many. The landlady stood at the upper end of the room, pouring out tea and coffee.

The two girls lingered till all the other boarders had left the table; then Ruth presented her petition for a more abundant supply of water.

"Shure now, ain't it rigilar ducks yer counthry

folks is; warn't it a lot er wather I give yer? It ain't me as knows where I'll find another pitcher. Mebbe, now, ye tuk notish till a door foreninst your own; look inside, an' ye'll see a fassation, an' ye's can get wather to drown yersel'."

At five minutes before eight the next morning, Ruth and Miriam crossed the threshold of Mr. Rathburn's store; the former with the determination to devote her energies to her employer's interest, to comply with any and all of his requests, unless they involved a sacrifice of self-respect or principle; the latter with a vague feeling that she was exchanging a life of dulness for one of bustle. Mr. Rathburn showed them the closet where they hung their hats and shawls, assigned them places behind the counter, explained his private business-mark, and referred Ruth to Miss Lambert, and Miriam to Miss Lincoln, for further information.

CHAPTER VI.

"IS THY BURDEN HARD AND HEAVY?—HELP TO BEAR
ANOTHER'S BURDEN."

THE first day as a shop-girl! Ruth remembered it, in later years, with feelings akin to horror. The heavily-laden air of the city, that seemed scarcely to reach her lungs, the ceaseless rattle of wheels on the pavements, the passing to and fro of people in the store, the bewildering demands for articles she knew not where to find, the questions as to prices she could not remember, went to make up a collection of discomforts that amounted, in the aggregate, to misery. Weary and foot-sore from standing, for she had sat down only when she had eaten, or rather when she had tried to eat, her dinner, she dragged her tired limbs towards the comfortless boarding-house. Would she be able to support the fatigue of this new life? She could not tell, but she must give it a fair trial. Had she not a motive,—a strong incentive to exertion?

Miriam, not less fatigued, walked silently by her side, her thoughts running in similar veins; she, too,

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had an incentive; to show her father that she could and would be independent of his grudging support. Oh, fathers! why will you provoke your daughters to such trials of strength!

Nora was practising on her beloved bell when they opened the door, and, glancing at their pale faces, she said: "It's thired ye be. I'll tak the shawls, an' ye betther get a nice sthrong cup o' tay, an' it's betther ye'll fale."

The "nice sthrong cup o' tay" was refreshing, and the jaded saleswomen started on their ascent to their aërial dormitory. When they reached the upper landing, a sound like a child's sob fell upon their ears. "What is that?" asked the startled Ruth.

"It is so dark here, you can't see," said Miriam; "I will light the gas."

She opened the door of their room, and speedily the self-sufficient gas-burner threw a glare of light on the entry. There was little Josie Graham, the landlady's youngest "encumbrance," curled up asleep on Ruth's trunk, her head resting on her arm. She had cried herself to sleep, but was still sobbing, and lay on the hard, knobby trunk, a miniature incarnation of wretchedness.

"Shall we wake her?" asked Ruth, her eyes filling with sympathetic tears.

"No, no," said Miriam, "let her sleep, and she'll forget the whipping, or whatever it was that sent her up here."

But the child opened her eyes, and cried out in terror, "Don't let him have me, don't let him carry me off!"

"No, we won't,—he sha'n't!" said Ruth, lifting the frightened little girl, and sitting down, herself, on the trunk. Josie threw her arms round Ruth's neck, and cried bitterly; her whole frame was convulsed.

"I should think you'd be too tired to hold a young one," said Miriam; "I am sure I am. Let her go to her mother."

"Mamma's busy," said Josie. That was this child's idea of her mother; she was a woman too much occupied with the cares of life to have time or thought to give to caresses or consolation.

Ruth made no answer, but clasped the little creature tighter in her arms. Gradually the sobs became less frequent, and fainter, and Ruth asked, "Who is it you are afraid of? Who is coming?"

"It's th—the big bl—black man that stays down cellar," said Josie, sobbing as bitterly as before.

"There is no black man down cellar."

"Yes there is, I heard him."

"Who told you so?"

"Mary; and he's bigger than this house," said Josie, her eyes round with fright.

Mary had taken advantage of the sliding coal in the cellar to drive Josie from the cook's dominions, where she was anything rather than an efficient helper. "There! there he is down there!" cried Mary. "I hear him, he's comin,' an' he'll ate ye up in a mouthful."

Slide, slide went the coal, away flew the child, and stopped only when she could go no higher. Ruth tried vainly to persuade Josie that the monster had no existence except in Mary's brain, and in that of her victim; the child could not see the hibernicism in giving a gentleman of larger bulk than the house a residence in its subterranean story.

The consoler resorted to a counter-move, and began telling stories, to distract Josie's attention. The sobs ceased as the child listened; and when Nora's voice was heard calling, "Josie, Josie! where is the childer?" the small head was drooping, and the small eyes opening and shutting, in sleepy content.

"Here is Josie," said Ruth, in answer to the repeated call of the rising Nora.

"Shure, an' ye mustn't be afther throublin' the leddy," said Nora, taking Josie by the arm. "It's a big trouble ye are, seeing yer a little one."

Josie was not disposed to give up her new friend without vigorous remonstrance ; but at Ruth's decided "yes, you must go — you may come up again some other time," she quietly allowed herself to be carried to her crib, in which she was quickly deposited. She went to sleep almost as soon as her head touched the sheet, and dreamed of alternate horrors and pleasures. Twice in the night she waked, crying, because of her inability to escape a terrible pursuer.

In the morning, the first sound that Ruth heard was a child's voice repeating fragments of the story she had told Josie ; and when Miriam opened the door, the little girl was sitting on the trunk, petting a pillow she had taken from her crib, and twisted into the semblance of a baby. With this rude image in her arms, she was enacting the scenes of the last evening. Her face was clean now, and Ruth did not shrink from the lips which said, "I want to kiss you." There was no time to cultivate acquaintance, so Nora's bell warned her. Josie went down stairs holding Ruth's hand, and, while she sat at the table, peeped in at the door, as much, and as often, as Nora's vigilance would allow. Nora's vigilance was in inverse ratio to her duties as waitress ; in the early stages, when all the boarders were expectant of tea, coffee, etc., Nora could only pounce upon the little

peeper as she passed the door ; but, when the wants of each had been once supplied, the maid found time to make divers starts and plunges from behind different chairs, but the child was dexterous in evading, and prompt in returning.

When most of the boarders were gone, Nora gave up skirmishing, and stood at ease, looking out of the window at Ruth's right hand. A good opportunity to venture an appeal for the neglected Josie.

"Is Josie very troublesome, Nora?" asked Ruth.

"Troublesome? No, miss, it ain't troublesome she is ; she's worse nor that ; it's a torment she is," she replied, leaning on a just deserted chair, and speaking in a half whisper.

"She was dreadfully frightened last night."

"Shure, an' what'll Mary do wid her? A pettin' her tin fingers an' two thumbs intil ivery blessed thing."

Ruth glanced at the well-formed little hand that was cautiously pushing the door, and was relieved to see the usual number of digits, and no more.

"An' didn't she handy to pull a spidle o' hot fat ontill her the day?" continued Nora ; "shure, an' it's a wondher it is she don't be kilt inthirely."

Ruth was convinced that Mary had not sinned against the child wantonly.

When the two saleswomen came home at noon,

Josie was watching for them, her nose flattened against the glass beside the door. "You'll get enough of the child if you take notice of her," said Miriam.

"I don't know but I shall; but it's pleasant to have even such a forlorn little thing as she is glad to see you;" and she handed Josie some small blocks she had brought from the shop. From that day she formed the habit of saving, for the child, stray pieces of bright tastes, tape, and paper. They were trifles, that were trampled under foot at the shop as worthless; to Josie they were priceless treasures. It was not a sob that Ruth heard when she was going up to her room that evening; it was a bird-like voice chirping, "Is you coming?"

Miriam proved a false prophet; for, though Josie seldom let Ruth come in or go out of the house without claiming a smile, a word, or a kiss, she had been so unaccustomed to petting, that even these small attentions satisfied her. She made the upper entry her play-room, repelled thither by dread of the imaginary monster in the cellar, attracted by the vicinity of her protector's room.

Josie piled her valuables, as they accumulated, in one corner, played with them, and talked to them, by the hour together. Sometimes one of her brothers

or sisters came and played with her, but more boisterous amusements pleased them better, and she was generally left to the companionship of her motley collection.

There was one thing that was almost as terrible to her as the subterranean ogre. Nora's broom was a formidable weapon. Josie watched for it, gathered her treasures in her arms, and dodged from side to side, avoiding the besom as best she could; when the tempest was past, with a long-drawn sigh of relief she returned to her play. She managed to protect her property in this way for a few weeks, but, as it increased, it became like all growing estates, more difficult to handle. Josie's estate had more sources of increase than Ruth's good-will, for other inmates of the house, seeing her give the child trifles, and noticing the joy with which they were received, occasionally followed Ruth's example; and from being, as Nora expressed it, "a torment," always under foot, always crying, she became a bright, smiling, agreeable little creature. Such is the power of kindness, such is the power of employment; granted that the smile often shone through grime and dirt, but it did shine through.

One morning Josie found it impossible to gather all her possessions in her arms, and was at her wits' end; Nora was on the way, singing, the broom

thumping, thumping, as she dragged it after her up the stairs. Josie pushed everything up close to the wall, and stood on the defensive.

"Sthand back, Josie, now, wait till I shweep up."

"Don't, Nora, don't sweep there, I sweeped all the dirt up yesterday."

"Shure, an' didn't it git back the day?" said Nora, drawing the child aside.

"Don't, Nora, please — please don't!"

"Oh, it's plase Nora, it is. It's yer sha'n't, Nora, 'twas. Shure, plase is betther than sha'n't, any day. I'll tell ye what I'll do for ye; if I don't swape them up the day, an' I'll get yees a box, will ye pit ivery bit intil it an' not pesther me when I'm afther swap-ing?"

"Oh, yes, I will, Nora, I will!"

The compromise was effected, and the agreement faithfully kept, by both the high contracting parties. A large wooden box was brought, and Josie was more smiling than ever. Was she not a young woman of means, and were not her means safely invested?

CHAPTER VII.

THAT PECULIAR OLD MAID.

FROM day to day Ruth and Miriam found their powers more commensurate with their duties. They became accustomed to the noise and stir in the street and in the store, learned to translate the characters of the private mark into figures, became familiar with the prices and places of most of the different articles — each in her own department — and could answer the demands of three or four ladies at once.

Weeks passed, yet they had not seen Mrs. Augustus Foote. She had written frequently, giving glowing accounts of her wedding-journey, and of the fashionable watering-places at which she was sojourning with her husband; her summer was spent in a round of enjoyment. In one letter she wrote, "Mr. Foote goes to Boston every week to attend to business. About the first of September we expect to spend a few days with Miss Grimshaw, Augustus's aunt, and then return to the city. We shall stay at cousin Darius's for a few weeks, until our house is ready.

Mr. Foote has just bought one we both like very much; he did not want to take a house before we were married, because he thought it would be so much easier and pleasanter for us to fit it up afterwards."

The reply to this letter contained the news of Mr. Bentley's accident, and of the intention of Ruth and Miriam to accept the offer of places behind Mr. Rathburn's counter. Mrs. Dascomb and Mrs. Foote were in the parlor of a Newport hotel, when Mr. Foote came down the piazza, handed Sophia Miriam's note, and passed on. Mrs. Foote had read only a few lines, when she exclaimed, "How sad! I'm so sorry for Ruth!"

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Dascomb.

"Mr. Bentley has had a dreadful accident. I will read what Miriam writes."

Mrs. Foote read the brief story, as Miriam had given it, and inadvertently added the intelligence that filled Mrs. Dascomb with far more horror than did the description of the strong man suddenly reduced to helplessness and suffering. "Ruth and I are going to Boston, next week, to go into Mr. Rathburn's store."

When the shocking words fell from Sophia's lips, Mrs. Dascomb glanced round the room, and out upon the piazza, in alarm lest the nerves of some of the

guests should have suffered a shock. Her anxiety relieved — for the piazza was entirely deserted, and the parlor nearly so — she turned to her pupil in the science of social life. That it was her business to instruct Sophia Foote as to the best mode of mounting the social ladder, she was fully persuaded. It was her own intention to struggle, wriggle, creep up into circles which she thought above her present position, and Mrs. Augustus Foote might, perhaps, serve as a support when her own footing was uncertain. The Grimshaw connection was too valuable to be entirely ignored; in the person of Miss Grimshaw, it was unmanageable; but in that of Mrs. Augustus Foote, it must be more pliant.

Moved by these considerations, Mrs. Dascomb gave her lesson in a voice cautiously modulated, so that it should not reach the ears of the few ladies, in dainty morning-dresses, lingering about the large parlor.

"Going into Rathburn's store? That is very singular! they can't expect you to invite them to your house."

"They will; we have been just like three sisters all our lives."

"Yes, I dare say. That is all very well for children and school-girls, but things are very different now; they are only shop-girls, and you are the wife

of a Boston merchant; you must remember what you owe to your husband's standing."

"Augustus told me he wanted me to ask my friends to see us."

"Certainly; but he did not foresee anything of this kind: your paths in life will be quite different."

Quite different, Mrs. Dascomb! but, in their windings, will they never intersect?

Mrs. Foote did not care to continue the argument; there was no need of answering the letter immediately, and she had not told Ruth or Miriam where the new house was. She wondered, however, what her father would say, if he should learn that his daughter had so suddenly found herself too good to associate with her life-long friends. By tacit consent, nothing was said to the two husbands of the subject that had been under discussion.

Early in September, Mr. and Mrs. Dascomb returned to Nuttall Square, and Mr. and Mrs. Foote went to pay their first visit to Miss Grimshaw. Mr. Foote, having spent most of his boyhood in the house where his mother was born, was as one going home; but, to Mrs. Foote, the old mansion seemed like the realization of the pages of a story-book. There was, in and around it, an element of quaintness that was utterly indescribable; yet to the most casual observer,

the evidence of ample means, well managed, was everywhere visible.

The fence was formed of round rails, supported by tall plumb posts, crowned with balls. Two towering elms, inside the fence, were trimmed so that the ends of their branches just touched the roof, and scratched the panes of the second story windows only when the wind was high; a weird sound, that, on a dark night. The clapboarded barn was, like the house, painted straw color, with white window and door-frames, and sheltered an old, but still vigorous, pair of gray horses. In the rear of the barn was the garden where Margery found the green corn wherewith to compound those wonderful puddings, the receipt for which was one item in her will; for neither carefully-worded petition of epicurean visitor, nor coaxing request of indulgent mistress, would induce her to give it up during her natural life. The garden furnished an inexhaustible supply of fruits and vegetables; a supply that honored the draft of many a friend, many a beneficiary. In the garden, too, bloomed morning-glories and four-o'clocks, (not Marvel of Peru, there,) marigolds and asters.

The square, wooden house was adorned with blinds glistening with the best of Paris green, and free from sully of resting dust or dropping rain. The massive

mahogany furniture, dark with age, but mirroring all surrounding objects, except where satin-wood inlaying shattered the image, or the well-polished brasses returned the stare of the gazer in mocking mimicry, hilarious or despondent, according to the position of the *vis-à-vis*.

The old serving-man and woman were as much a part of the establishment as its brisk, self-dependent, elderly mistress, whose memory held no record of the time when they did not minister to the wants and criticise the acts of the Grimshaws.

The few new flowers that bloomed in the garden, the boy who weeded the beds, now Obadiah's back "was a leetle, jist a leetle rheumatizy, jist as smart as ever I been, only but for this plaguey rheumatiz, ugh-h;" the few modern articles of furniture, the recent publications that abounded in the library and sitting-room, the rosy-cheeked maiden whose youthful energy supplemented Margery's failing powers; these comprised all that was recent about Miss Grimshaw's residence, and only served, by contrast, to make the rest appear more as if it belonged to another country and another age than that of steam and electricity, of houses whose walls may bury, whose florid stuccoing may brain, whose convenient water-pipes may drown their luckless inhabitants.

Obadiah harnessed the gray horses into the high-wheeled, solid-built carryall, and drove to the dépôt for "Mr. Augustus and his wife." "Mr. Augustus was all very well, he was half Grimshaw, if his name was nothing but Foote; but Mr. Augustus's wife!" — Obadiah indulged in some private head-shaking — "What was the need of Mr. Augustus's wife? He," Obadiah, "had got along very well without any Mrs. Obadiah, and lived to be — he wasn't an old man now; but Mr. Augustus wouldn't live half his days, and wouldn't want to, either, now he'd got a wife to spend his money and plague him.

"To hae a wife and rule a wife,
Taks a wise man, taks a wise man,
But to get a wife to rule a man,
O that ye can, O that ye can."

The incoming train put a period to Obadiah's quotation. The sight of the youthful face and sound of the pleasant voice that greeted the old servant when Mr. Foote said, "Here is Obadiah, my dear; he has saved me many a good whipping I deserved," mollified the grumbler, and even surprised him into a smile, as he replied, "Yer wife 'll see you get your deserts now."

"So you wash your hands of my defence for the future, Obadiah?" said Mr. Foote.

"In course;" and Obadiah drove slowly home. The husband and wife, as they sat behind him, saw his old shoulders shake with suppressed merriment; he had actually perpetrated a joke, and it lasted him for a subject of conversation the rest of his days.

Miss Grimshaw sat at the window watching for her guests; and as soon as she caught a glimpse of the sleek, gray horses, ran to the door, down the yard, and stood at the gate. Very undignified, do you say, fastidious reader? Oh, yes, to be sure, very undignified! but Miss Grimshaw would sometimes allow her sensibilities to overthrow her dignity. She swung the gate back, and I really don't know but that she would have opened the carryall door, had not Mr. Foote's hand been on the fastening.

"You can find your own way, Augustus," said his aunt; "I will go up stairs with Sophia."

During the few days of Mr. and Mrs. Foote's stay, the mistress of the mansion was never idle; she constantly found something to do for the happiness of her guests, or in the care of her house.

"Why don't you give yourself some rest?" asked the nephew.

"If I rest, I rust, said the key," was the answer.

When he proposed that she should close her house for the winter, and reside with them, she replied, "The

fire burns brightest on one's own hearth"; but she promised that when the spring opened, she would return their visit with interest.

Coming as she did from a first-class hotel to this antiquated homestead, where there was such an utter absence of all show and pretence, Sophia felt that she was breathing another atmosphere,—that she could look down upon diminished objects that had appeared large and important to her. She was not yet enough versed in the winding ways of a manœuvring world to sacrifice her better nature without a pang; yet the morbid questioning, "What will they say?" would not be entirely thrust aside. For what an aggregate of meanness that query is responsible!

Sophia well knew that she was ignorant of many of the laws of etiquette; she knew, too, that this ignorance would cause those better versed in the code to call her countrified; she must be watchful to avoid, as far as possible, the dreaded epithet. She remembered, with mingled shame and apprehension, that Miriam's last note was unanswered; shame, that she had not given Ruth the least intimation of the sympathy she really felt for her,—what Ruth's course would have been had their positions been reversed, she well knew: apprehension, lest she might encounter her shop-girl

friends when it would be excessively awkward for her to acknowledge their acquaintance.

She asked herself whether she should not tell her husband of her perplexity ; but remembered Mrs. Dascomb's remark that she, Sophia, should not forget what she owed to his position, and she did not wish him to think that, by his marriage, he had lowered himself in the social scale.

Two or three times she almost decided to ask Miss Grimshaw's advice, but Miss Grimshaw was peculiar ; Mrs. Dascomb said so : could she tell this positive, eccentric woman, whom it was so important to conciliate, that her nephew had married beneath him ?

The note was still unanswered when the guests bade their hostess good-by. Miss Grimshaw renewed her promise of a return visit in the spring, prophesied for them "one year of joy, another of comfort, and all the rest of content" ; and the last is the best, she added, for "a mind content both crown and kingdom is."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOCIETY EXPECTS EVERY WOMAN TO MAINTAIN
HER POSITION.

UNDER Mrs. Dascomb's guidance Mrs. Foote called upon carpet-dealers, upholsterers, house-furnishers, etc. The question of covering for the drawing-room suite she found the most difficult to settle. The upholsterer, who was to finish the furniture, recommended a material that was perfectly satisfactory, but could not supply suitable trimmings. Mrs. Dascomb suggested that they might get the required material at the dry goods' stores. So they stepped into the carriage, and Mrs. Dascomb gave the order, "To Rathburn's, on Washington Street." Sophia did not notice the order, and it was not till she stood face to face with Miriam and Ruth that she knew whither her chaperone was leading her.

The two shop-girls had repeatedly expressed to each other their surprise that they heard nothing from their old friend ; and on that very morning Ruth had said, "Sophia must be in town by this time ; perhaps she

did not get your letter. I should have written to her, but I did not know how to direct."

"You might direct to her husband."

"So I might. I will write the first time I can get."

Poor, simple country girl! The thought did not enter her mind that in obeying the stern call of duty, in refusing to put an additional burden upon already overburdened relatives, in using the faculties that God had given her to provide for the wants He had also laid upon her, she had made herself an unfit associate for Mrs. Augustus Foote, even though she had been, in infancy, childhood, and youth, the most intimate friend of Sophia Dascomb.

It did not occur to either of the saleswomen, when they saw the two ladies come into the store, that Mrs. Foote had come for any purpose but to see her old friends. Both greeted her so cordially, and with such utter unconsciousness of social distinctions, that Sophia could do no less than take the hands that were joyfully extended to her. She inquired for Mr. Bentley, and about home affairs, and then asked for the gimp. Miriam showed the goods; Mrs. Dascomb, who had been standing a little behind Mrs. Foote, inwardly chafing because her pupil had profited so little by her instructions, approached the counter, and, without the least sign of recognition of the shop-girl, gave her

advice. The trimmings were selected, Miriam was asked to send them to the upholsterer's, and, with a smile and a nod, Mrs. Foote followed Mrs. Dascomb to the carriage.

As soon as the carriage door was closed, lesson second began. It was given in more emphatic terms than was lesson first.

"My dear, you will never be received into good society if you persist in clinging to your plebeian acquaintances. I thought I should have sunk through the floor to see you shake hands with those two shop-girls, just as if they were equals."

"We thought we were equals no longer ago than last spring," replied Mrs. Foote, laughing.

The dictatorial manner of the professor of "social duty" was quite distasteful to the learner, but she did not choose to resent it, and the lesson was continued.

"But, let me tell you, my dear, everything is different now. Having lived in the country all your life, you don't realize the importance of these things. If those two girls are reasonable, sensible girls, they will see this themselves. When they have been here a little while, they will see that shop-girls are not the equals of a merchant's lady who rides in her own carriage. If they are really your friends, they will not want to drag you down; for it is certain, if you consort

with people beneath you, they will do so. There was Mrs. Alta Familia watching you all the time you was talking with those two shop-girls, and she looked perfectly astonished."

Now Mrs. Alta Familia, though careful to keep her own circle select, and well understanding how to interpose the impassable barrier, the "thus far shalt thou come, and no farther," between herself and all encroachers, would have scorned the thought of deserting an old friend because she had been obliged to fall into the ranks of the bread-winners. The surprise which her countenance did express was, not that Mrs. Foote should be glad to see her shop-girl friends, but that the unguarded rustic could have passed nearly a year under the tuition of Mrs. Dascomb, and still retain so warm a heart. "She has a good face," thought Mrs. Alta Familia, "and Mr. Foote's mother came of an unexceptionable family. Shall I call upon her? I would, if it were not for that insufferable Mrs. Dascomb; she will be sure to try to thrust herself in. No, I will not call, but it is a pity that this young wife should follow the lead of such a heartless woman." All this, pro and con, Mrs. Alta Familia debated, as she sat apparently comparing the beauties of the embroideries which Ruth held in her hand.

Although vexed that Mrs. Dascomb assumed the

right to school her in so offensive a way, Mrs. Foote had already seen enough of city and watering-place life to know that her teacher was simply repeating the sentiments of most of the fashionable world. Sophia had heard the status of one and another new comer discussed at the hotels, and though she could not always refrain from smiling at the lofty style in which the retail dealer's wife and daughters spoke of the master carpenter's wife and daughters, she had learned that, in the estimation of thousands of people who help to make up what is called society, she who sits all day with lily hands toying with many-colored worsted, careless whether the bread she eats is the fruit of a father's wearing toil and anxiety, or drawn from the slender hoard which should secure his old age against privation, is infinitely above her who labors, be that labor light or onerous.

"It's no use for me to try to convince all these people that they are wrong, and I want to go into as good a set as I can. I will be careful not to go to Rathburn's again; and if I meet Ruth and Miriam in the street, I'll be just as civil as ever." While these thoughts were passing in Mrs. Foote's mind, the bells were ringing for one o'clock, and the two shop-girls were on their way to their boarding-house.

"It seemed like old times, seeing Sophia again," said Ruth.

"Yes, but she is altered, I shouldn't think she could have altered so much in a few months."

"She dresses better, of course. Dress does a good deal for any one, and she seems as if she had seen something of the world."

"Did you mind, she didn't ask us to come and see her — didn't even tell us where she lives?"

"No, she didn't. She must have forgotten it."

"Queer thing to forget."

Mrs. Foote had not forgotten, neither did she forget her resolution to avoid Mr. Rathburn's store; but as that establishment happened to be one of those that Mrs. Dascomb specially affected as being a place where "you could find some things better and cheaper than anywhere else," she found herself unable to keep it. The two ladies were often out together, and Mrs. Foote frequently encountered the alternative of sitting in the carriage before the door, or going into the store. She chose sometimes one horn of the dilemma, sometimes the other; but the winter had not passed before even Ruth was obliged to acknowledge that her occasional customer wished it to be understood that when she became Mrs. Augustus Foote she threw aside childish things, and now considered herself far

above Sophia Dascomb's playmates. The doubt once settled, the pride of the young saleswomen came to Mrs. Foote's assistance, and no lady who entered the store was treated by them with more purely formal civility than their former confidential friend.

They had not been many weeks behind Mr. Rathburn's counter, when they learned to recognize most of the regular frequenters of the establishment. Ruth became accustomed to their tastes, and ways of buying. Ladies often relied as much on her judgment as on their own. She became more and more conversant with the business every day, and found it easier and easier to satisfy the demands of purchasers. Though there were some who did not intend to be pleased, and were supercilious in their manners, there were more who appreciated the efforts made for their accommodation, and proved very pleasant business acquaintances.

Mrs. Alta Familia would buy of no one but Ruth, and soon learned her name, and frequently sent her written orders. The goods were always selected with care, and seldom failed to please the customer, who once said to the saleswoman, "I don't know that I shall have to come here at all; you always send me what I want."

Mr. Alta Familia's name was often seen in the

newspapers appended to requests to certain distinguished, or to be distinguished, savants, that, if their pressing engagements would permit, they would favor Boston with their course of lectures on Preadamite Literature; on the Iceberg that might, could, would, or should have grazed Noah's Ark; on Physiology, or Travel,—in short, on subjects of no practical value or advantage, except as they served to display the gift, or lack, of tongue possessed by the aforesaid distinguished; and also on subjects that were really intelligible, useful, and interesting. As these signatures obligated the signers to take and pay for handfuls of printed bits of pasteboard, Mrs. Familia often gave two or three to Ruth, saying, "I have more than I need; perhaps you and some of your friends would like to go."

Ruth was indebted to the same lady for the means of making sundry flying visits, on her way to or from dinner, to exhibitions of celebrated works of art, without detriment to her purse, which was far from plethoric. Her salary she found barely sufficient for her necessary expenses; the hope of being able to meet any home demands vanished soon after she came to the city.

Miriam's temperament was impulsive, and her early training had not tended to remedy any defects in her

disposition. Her resentment was aroused by Sophia's conduct, and she allowed it to be an ever-present thorn in the flesh. This, with other annoyances, each petty in itself, wrought a gradual change in her bearing, which impaired her efficiency as a saleswoman, and customers often turned away offended at the curt answers for which Mrs. Foote was indirectly responsible.

It is frequently said that in no place is there a better opportunity for the student of human nature to pursue his investigation than in a public conveyance; but for the study of certain phases of moral and mental development, there is no standpoint more advantageous than inside the counter of a retail dry-goods store. With a quick sense of the ludicrous, and little of the "charity" that "thinketh no evil," Miriam soon saw this, and did not hesitate to ridicule the foibles, and to criticise the manners, of the ladies and gentlemen who entered the store. Individuals were nicknamed. The customer who had just come in had the pleasure of hearing the appearance and acts of the customer who had just gone out canvassed in plain or in blind terms, just as it happened, and the listener who was over-sensitive left the store feeling that she was to furnish the next subject for Mr. Rathburn's employés to try their wits upon.

Though Miriam did not originate this practice, she

joined in it with so much zest, and brought her keen satirical powers so freely into action, that an incipient fault, from which probably few similar establishments are free, became a serious evil. Had the irritable shop-girl no excuse for all this? Had she no cause for provocation? Some cause for provocation, but no adequate excuse for allowing her lack of patience to interfere with her own and her employer's interests. The evidences of prosperity were constantly around her; they jostled her on the sidewalk, they stopped her at the crossings, they were flaunted in her face in the store, and she was at work on the oft-proposed, never-to-be-solved problem — "Why should *they* wear the stiffest of silks and softest of velvets, while I can barely get the plain merino and the rough cloth? Why should *they* loll in their carriages while I plod on foot? Why should *they* have so much more than I?" She permitted herself to brood over this puzzle, until she regarded all whom fortune favored as, in a certain sense, her natural enemies.

CHAPTER IX.

FRIENDS MEET.

THE time for Miss Grimshaw's visit was fast approaching, and Mrs. Foote looked forward to it with as much anxiety as the doubtful aspirant for matriculation at Yale or Harvard anticipates examination. Would the peculiar maiden aunt approve of the new house and furniture? Would not she interfere with family management? Would she remember the bright young friends who stood beside the bride in the New Hampshire farm-house? Would she commend that bride for closing her doors against them? Her own conscience was far from being at rest on the latter point; she could only hope that if Miss Grimshaw's estimate of the debt due to society did not agree with Mrs. Dascomb's, she would have forgotten the bridesmaids, whom she had seen for one short hour only.

The young housekeeper could not have been more promptly relieved of all apprehension on the score of interference in the Foote domestic economy, had Miss

Grimshaw been able to read her niece's thoughts. Her coming into the house was like a sea-breeze on a summer day, when the vane suddenly veers, and the welcome current spreads comfort and vitality wherever it penetrates.

"How do you do, Sophia? I'm glad to see you in your own house. 'Peace, and a well-built house, cannot be bought too dearly.' I want to go all over it, just as soon as I can get my cloak off."

The heavy travelling-cloak was hung in the hall closet, and the attic, the cellar, the kitchen, the parlor, the store-room, and the hall, passed under inspection. When the grand rounds were fairly made, Mr. Foote asked: "Do you like our 'little cot'?"

"Decidedly. 'A house well furnished makes a good housewife.'"

"You don't think we have launched out too much, then?"

"That is for you to judge. I'm not afraid that you will 'stretch your arm farther than your sleeve will reach.' You know, as well as I do, that 'a pig bought on credit grunts all the year.'"

"I believe you mean to follow Obadiah's lead, and leave my wife to see that I get my deserts," said Mr. Foote, laughing.

"Indeed I do! When 'every man' — and woman,

I suppose — 'minds his own business, the work is done.'"

Active and energetic as she was, Miss Grimshaw did not propose to assume the duty of regulating her nephew's butcher's bill, or overseeing his pantry. Once having made the acquaintance of the dwelling, she was as much at home there as when surrounded by her own last-century brass and mahogany. Her trunk was half-filled with garments, in various stages of manufacture, intended for her friends, her needy beneficiaries, and herself, the latter decidedly in the minority. On one or another of these garments she sewed or embroidered, as if she were averting the starvation that idleness might bring upon her. She selected one window in the light, sunny sitting-room, drew to it a low chair, very straight in the back, and, during all her stay, that was her station.

She had many reminiscences of her own younger days, and many anecdotes of Mr. Foote's boyhood to relate, that were highly entertaining to the young wife. The first morning of her visit, after she had been telling of one exploit of the boy Augustus, which had roused the indignation of Obadiah, who then declared, for the two hundredth time, that he "never would 'resker' that boy ag'in! he might drown hisself and blow hisself up, if he was a mind ter; he washed his hands of

him; 't'wa'n't in reason t'spose a man could follow a whirligig," — Miss Grimshaw paused a moment to laugh at her story, then suddenly exclaimed: "I've often thought, Sophia, of your two bridesmaids. I almost envied you those two friends. 'Old friends and short reckonings,' I say. When I was of your age, and younger, I had old playmates I could call friends; but as we grow older the old friends drop away one by one, and the acquaintances we make never quite fill their places. 'Better a friend, than money to spend.' Yes, I've thought of those two girls often; the smallest one I liked the best — Ruth, you called her, I think. They say you must 'judge a maiden at the kneading-trough, and not at the dance'; but I don't believe I am mistaken in that maiden. Do you hear from them often?"

Sophia had sat with her eyes fixed on her work; and if Miss Grimshaw's eyes had not been as busily employed as her tongue, she would have seen the color come and go in her niece's cheek; but, happily for the latter, the speech was long, and at its close she could look up, and with a steady voice answer, "I didn't tell you, did I, that Ruth's father met with a bad accident last summer?" And she repeated all the particulars that were within her knowledge.

"How sorry I am!" said Miss Grimshaw. "Do you know how he is now?"

"I had a letter from mother yesterday. She said that he had just got so that he could be wheeled in a chair from one room to another."

"What a sad thing for his family! The next time you write to your friend, do tell her she has my hearty sympathy. Perhaps she will remember me; and if she does not, I fancy an old woman's sympathy is like 'an old woman's gold, not ugly.' — What do you think about this breakfast-jacket? Wouldn't a little rose-color in that vine improve it, — make it look cheerful?"

"Yes, I think it would."

"I wish I had brought some with me. There is some now in the left-hand division of my upper work-table drawer. I must try that," said Miss Grimshaw, holding up the garment, and contemplating it at different angles; "I will go right down into Washington Street, and get some."

"Let me send Hannah; she has a good eye for color."

"Oh, no; I'd rather go myself. 'Thine hand is never the worse for doing thy own work.'"

"Have the carriage, then; let me ring for John."

"No, no," answered Miss Grimshaw; "I'd twenty

times rather walk than ride, in this east wind. 'When the wind is east, 'tis neither good for man or beast.'"

Mrs. Foote saw that it was useless to place any further hindrances in Miss Grimshaw's way, though she would gladly have induced her to defer going shopping. Miss Grimshaw went and returned.

"Did you find the right shade?" asked Mrs. Foote.

"Yes, exactly. I got it at Rathburn's: and whom do you think I saw there? Your two bridesmaids; they say they have been there six months. You didn't tell me so."

"Didn't I? It was odd I didn't speak of it."

"Yes, so it was," answered the unsuspecting Miss Grimshaw. "Well, I told them to be sure and call while I was here. 'When friends meet, hearts warm.'"

"No danger of their coming," thought Mrs. Foote; but Miss Miriam Weston was not of the same opinion. She was revolving in her mind a plot for the discomfiture of Mrs. Foote. Jerry Barnard's aid was indispensable, but she had little fear that it would be refused. He was always ready to escort the two friends to any lecture or entertainment for which Mrs. Alta Familia had good-naturedly provided tickets, and sometimes came to spend an evening hour with them. As a special favor, they were allowed to see

him in Mrs. Graham's parlor. He called on the evening after Miss Grimshaw had been to Mr. Rathburn's store. As soon as he was seated, Miriam began:

"Jerry, you remember Sophia Foote?"

Jerry, Miriam, and Ruth had shouted "*a b ab, ib ib,*" over the same book, following the school-mistress's pointing scissors; had chosen each other when the spelling-class chose sides; had skated and coasted in company on moonlight evenings; and would as soon have thought of calling each other "Your High Mightiness," as Mr. Barnard, Miss Weston, or Miss Bentley.

The young man pursed up his lips, shut his eyes, and pretended to be searching among by-gones for a few moments; then he slowly shook his head, and said:

"No, I am not acquainted with Sophia Foote."

"Nonsense, Jerry! You are acquainted with Sophia Dascomb."

"Oh-h, Sophia Dascomb! That's a little girl I used to see ages ago, when I was a boy. We used to go to school together; and when we went out coasting, I used to lend her my sled, and draw it up hill for her, too; but I ain't acquainted with her now. I don't know any New Hampshire folks now, since I've come to Boston and set up my kirrige."

"She don't know the people she used to know, either," said Miriam, laughing. "She sails into the store dressed in the height of the fashion, and sails out."

"Sails in and sails out, and doesn't hail," Jerry interrupted. "I was in there one day when she was engaged in that style of navigation. I'd a good mind to chuck a pound of batting at her ear, as she has a snowball at mine many a time."

"I wish you had," said Miriam.

"Well, you see, the festive Rathburn was round, and I didn't know but he might be of the opinion that that sort of thing was not exactly in order."

"Very likely," said Ruth, dryly.

"Sophia Foote, or Sophia Dascomb, whichever you've a mind to call her," said Miriam, "never has asked Ruth and me to come and see her. She hasn't even told us where she lives; we shouldn't know, if it wasn't for sending bundles. We're only shop-girls; we'll do to send my lady's bundles home for her, but won't do to sit in my lady's parlor."

"My lady is a small-potatoes customer, anyhow; what's the use of minding her?"

"I don't care for her, but I'd like to trip her up on her stilts. She's got a nice old lady visiting her, Mr. Foote's aunt; she was at the wedding. She came

into the store, and remembered us; was delighted to see us, and asked us to call while she was in town. She said Mrs. Foote would be very happy to see us; 'old friends and old ways ought not to be disdained,' 'a good friend is better than silver and gold,' and half a dozen other old saws, that I've forgotten. . What do you say to going there some evening and making a set call?"

"My eye! What a lark! Yes, I'll go," said Jerry, executing a facial contortion that would have done honor to one of Christy's or Buckley's troupe.

"You mustn't be rowdy, or you'll spoil it all."

"Rowdy! I'll be a regular Turveydrop!" returned Jerry, laying his hand, with the fingers stretched to their utmost extent, on the left side of his waistcoat. "You'll go too, won't you, Ruth?"

"Don't ask me, I wouldn't go on any account. I wish you wouldn't."

"I wouldn't lose the chance for a thousand dollars," said Miriam.

"How do you know what trouble you may make for her? Miss Grimshaw does not know but what we call there, or she wouldn't have asked us, and I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Foote didn't even know that we are here."

"What do I care how much trouble I make her!

—the more the merrier, I say. I'd like to bring a shower-bath down on her shoulders."

"'Twon't hurt her, Ruth," said Jerry. "Don't waste your sympathies on her. I say, Miriam, you must get yourself up in gorgeous array. Have you got any cards? We must send up our cards: we want to do it up in style, you know."

"Oh, yes! to be sure. I've got a new dress at the dressmaker's. I will bloom out in that."

"When will you go?"

"I don't know. Some evening next week; you come into the store in the course of a day or two."

"Don't be so long getting ready that the old lady will go home first."

"Never fear."

Miriam went to an engraver's and ordered cards, and thus spent the money that should have been paid for a pair of boots. The price of a spring bonnet, more expensive than she could afford, and some minor adornments, emptied her purse; but what did she care, if she was obliged to pinch all summer, provided she secured her revenge! She succeeded in making an appearance satisfactory to herself, and more than satisfactory to Jerry. "Why, Miriam," said he, when she came down dressed for the call, "I didn't know you was so pretty!" It was no empty compliment he

uttered; her dress, though not of rich material, was becoming, and in style.

Jerry rang Mr. Foote's bell gently, at the same time informing Miriam, "You must be careful how you pull the door-bell; when you go to make a fashionable call, you should draw the knob easily, and not let it fly back quick; you shouldn't jerk it like an expressman, or — dry-goods bundle-carrier."

John opened the door, ushered them into the dimly-lighted drawing-room, turned on the gas, took the cards, carried them up to the sitting-room, and laid them on the table before Miss Grimshaw, saying, "Lady and gentleman in the drawing-room."

Miss Grimshaw adjusted her gold-bowed eye-glasses. "'Mr. J. W. Barnard.' 'Miss Weston.' Did you say they asked for me, John?" But John was gone, and Miss Grimshaw was obliged to start on a voyage of discovery.

Mrs. Foote was as much surprised as if a bomb-shell had fallen into her pleasant sitting-room, but well understood the motive that had brought the fun-loving Jerry Barnard to her house. She wished, now, that she had been more frank with her husband, more sincere with her friends. The better she learned to read Augustus Foote's heart, the more persuaded she was that he would not approve the sacrifice she had laid

on the social altar : she was half inclined to tell him the whole story now ; but then she must confess not only that her acquaintances would not elevate him in the social scale, but that she herself had acted an unworthy part ; and, after all, shop-girls were not desirable associates. Her reflections were cut short by the reappearance of John, who stood in the doorway and delivered a message from Miss Grimshaw : " I was to tell Mr. and Mrs. Foote that Mrs. Foote's friend, Miss Weston, is in the drawing-room."

" Your friend Miss Weston ?" said Mr. Foote ; " one of your New Hampshire friends ?"

" Yes, she was one of my bridesmaids. Don't you remember her ?"

" I had forgotten their names. I suppose I mustn't go down in my dressing-gown ; it's very comfortable." And the gentleman glanced at his wife ; but she was too much annoyed to give him the encouragement he wished, and he drew on a smooth-fitting coat, and with a loving look at the dressing-gown, went down stairs. Mrs. Foote followed, vexed that she was to be made the subject of Jerry Barnard's quizzing, and uncertain whether he might not see fit to bring about a full explanation.

But the young man gravely discussed the style of a recently-arrived popular preacher with the lady of the

house, the probable fluctuations of the produce market with the master, and a lately-published treatise on the origin of evil with the guest, taking care always to sit so that he could watch every look and motion of Mrs. Foote, as she talked volubly to each by turns.

Miriam several times returned random answers to Mr. Foote and Miss Grimshaw ; for it was difficult to keep up a conversation, and at the same time enjoy the success of her scheme. The burning cheek, the constantly clasping and unclasping hands, the rapid utterance, told of the victim's agitation. A few months previous Miriam could not have found such pleasure in another's pain ; could not have repeatedly approached a dreaded topic, and as often receded, carefully framing her sentences, so that she might gloat over the apprehension excited. Only the day before she left home she had snatched a little quivering mouse from the tormenting cat.

Would this call never end ? Mrs. Foote glanced at the clock : but ten minutes since she entered the room ; she looked towards the door, and wished she could make her escape. Jerry, however, had impressed it upon Miriam that they must not make a visitation. She rose, saying, " I think, Mr. Barnard, if we keep all our engagements this evening, we must go."

"You make a short call," said Mr. Foote. "Are you stopping in the city for any length of time?"

Miriam fixed her eyes full upon Sophia as she answered, deliberately, "I shall be here for a few weeks, certainly."

"You must make us a visit before you go home. Mrs. Foote would be glad to have you, and I am always most happy to see my wife's friends."

Miss Grimshaw did not hear this, for she was speaking to Jerry. "I don't often give advice," said she; "they say 'a woman's counsel is not worth much, but he that despises it is no wiser than he should be.' Perhaps you won't be offended if I remind you that troubles are just the reverse of faults. 'We carry our neighbor's failings in sight; we throw our own over our shoulders;' but we see our own troubles, and not other people's. We can't get rid of trouble in this world. 'Wherever a man dwells, he is sure to have a thorn-bush near his door!' Whenever I see a young man, or woman, wondering about the origin of evil, I always want to say, 'God reaches us good things with our own hands.' Better let the gray-headed write and read on those subjects. I'm not sure but they might find more useful employment."

"Much obliged to you, ma'am, I'm sure," said

Jerry, "but I don't think such books will hurt me. Good-evening, ma'am!"

"That is a pleasant, sober-minded young man," said Miss Grimshaw, as the door closed; "almost too serious, I am afraid, for one so young. 'Old young, old long.'"

"Ha! ha! ha!" The sound of a loud laugh startled the denizens of that quiet street.

"One of those rowdy fellows from the new bowling-alley," said Mr. Foote. "I hope they won't get a habit of coming by here." But his wife said nothing; she had heard a laugh very like that before. "Ha! ha! ha!" it came again. The "too serious" young man indulged in unrestrained merriment.

"Come, Jerry, don't! Those people on the other side are staring at us."

"Oh, dear! — oh, dear! I don't know as I shall be able to walk home, that nice old lady of yours pelted me so with proverbs; she's a regular magazine of them. She blows them out like I used to beans out of a bean-blower. Well, I've recovered my equilibrium somewhat," said Jerry, offering his arm.

"I didn't know you read those solemn old books about why Eve ate an apple."

"Read 'em! I don't read 'em."

"You was talking as if you knew all about 'em."

"Well, ain't that apple, and all that was ever written or thought about it, tossed back and forth across the table at our house till I'm sick enough of it? We've got two old fellows there that have scratched all the hair off their heads—I'm expecting every day to see their scalps beginning to peel—trying to find out 'why God don't kill *debil*.' I'll fire some of Miss Grimshaw's ammunition at 'em, see if I don't. I say, Miriam, Sophia was tremendously teased!"

"Wasn't she? I shouldn't wonder if she was saying some catechism now."

CHAPTER X.

THE WIND IS EAST.

MIRIAM was mistaken, however; Mr. Foote, having discharged his duty as master of the house, felt no further care of his wife's callers, and Miss Grimshaw had but just expressed her concern for the prematurely old Jerry Barnard, when she began to sneeze.

(Sneeze.) "Oh, dear!" (sneeze) "I don't like" (sneeze) "your Boston east winds; I do hope" (sneeze) "I am not going to have a cold in my head!" (sneeze) "Well, I think I'll go to the land of Nod; maybe I shall sleep it off. 'Quiet sleep feels no foul weather.'"

The saying was the forerunner of that most wearisome and uninteresting of maladies, "a very bad cold." When she came down into the dining-room the next morning, she looked out on the pavements, wet with a drizzling rain, and up at the vane on a neighboring spire, and exclaimed, "I do believe the wind was east Candlemas-day. 'When the wind is

east on Candlemas-day, there it will stick till the second of May.'"

"How is your cold?" asked Mr. Foote.

"Not much better," answered Miss Grimshaw, in nasal tones.

"No, I should think not. I'm sorry for you, and sorry for myself. I should have been glad to have you and Sophia go down to Williams & Everett's and look at some pictures; but you can't go, decidedly."

"I wish I could; but 'a right easterly wind is very unkind' when a puir body has a cold in her head."

"I'd like to have you look at the pictures, Sophia," said the husband. "Here is a catalogue: I have marked those I liked best; if there are any you particularly fancy, will you mark those too? I wouldn't ask you to go on such an uncomfortable day, but the sale is advertised for to-morrow."

"Oh, yes, I will go! The rain won't hurt me in the carriage."

When, later in the morning, Mrs. Foote came into the sitting-room ready to go out, Miss Grimshaw was again at work on the breakfast-jacket. "I am sorry I can't go with you," said she, "but would you mind, Sophia, stopping at Rathburn's and getting me three more skeins of that rose-colored silk? 'Enough is

enough, and too much spoils;' but I didn't know whether I should like it, so I didn't get much."

"Oh, certainly I will get it for you. I shall go right by."

"I wonder what was the reason your other friend, Ruth, didn't come last evening? Miss Weston said she asked her to, but she was so busy dressing a one-armed doll for the landlady's daughter, she couldn't; but perhaps she had promised the poor little thing, and I'll warrant she does not think that 'promises are like pie-crust, made to be broken.'"

"Is this the pattern of your silk? I shall not be gone more than two hours. Good-morning."

Mrs. Foote would rather have gone to every other dry-goods store on Washington Street, could she have procured the silk without seeing Miriam that day; but knowing that Miss Grimshaw was very exact as to color and quality, she feared that a slight deviation might lead to questions; she therefore determined to execute with nonchalance the commission she had accepted with smiles; no investigating aunt, or misinformed husband, would be by.

Her carriage drew up at Mr. Rathburn's store at the time when a part of his employes had gone to dinner, leaving Ruth, Miriam, and two salesmen to attend to the business. One of the salesmen stood near

the stove, the other was showing some cravats to a gentleman. Ruth was busily employed displaying embroideries to Mrs. Alta Familia, who was in an unusually critical mood. Ruth glanced at Mrs. Foote when she came in, but supposed, as Miriam was idle, that she would wait upon her. Miriam's nerves were irritated by the rough wind that blew directly on her face whenever the door was opened, and her envious feelings had not been soothed by the recent sight of her former friend's house and furniture, which Jerry Barnard had pronounced "straight out nobby."

As Mrs. Foote swept into the store, her rich brocade silk rustled, her Russia sable cloak reached to within ten inches of the floor, her lace-edged, needle-wrought handkerchief peered from her dark, soft muff. Miriam gazed at her as if she had never seen her before, and speedily made an estimate of the cost of her attire. The lady walked up to the counter with the air of one who was well satisfied with herself, and expected others to be as thoroughly pleased.

"Can you match that silk for me?" she asked; "it was bought here yesterday."

Miriam fixed her eyes full upon her interlocutor's face for sixty seconds, then turned, walked deliberately towards the stove, and began a conversation with the salesman who stood there. For a moment Mrs. Foote

was in a complete quandary; mortified that Mrs. Familia should be the witness of the affront offered her, her first impulse was to leave the store; but knowing that she could not frame a sufficient apology for Miss Grimshaw, she hesitated. Ruth came to her relief. "I beg your pardon: what did you call for?" The silk was soon selected. Mrs. Foote paid for it with a crisp bank-note, took her change, and left. Ruth's customer passed out, and Miriam came back, trembling with anger, to her place.

"I never did see anything like you. I do believe if anybody boxed your ears, you'd ask them to please do it again."

"Don't. There are people coming in; they will hear you;" said Ruth, who had never learned to discuss personal questions behind the counter.

"I don't care if they do. She ain't a going to trample on me. I'm as good as she is, any day, if I am only a shop-girl; and if she don't know it, I'll teach her."

"You and I are here to wait upon Mr. Rathburn's customers."

"Oh, yes, but we are not here to be insulted by Mr. Rathburn's customers. You haven't got the spirit of a fly!"

"Perhaps I have got so much spirit that I don't

want her to see that she can vex me ; at any rate, as long as I am here, I shall treat her civilly when she comes into the store. Out of the store I have no occasion to treat her at all."

Ruth had not spoken loud, but every word she had said reached the ears of the gentleman at the next counter. His purchase concluded, as he passed out he bowed to Ruth ; then, and not till then, she recognized Mr. Lester, a former partner of Mr. Rathburn.

The subscribers to the stock of a new manufacturing company met at an office in Court Square. Business was despatched, and the meeting adjourned, but some of the gentlemen remained conversing in groups. Mr. Rathburn stood talking with Mr. Lester.

"Business good, Rathburn?"

"Pretty fair."

"Your two new saleswomen fit into their places pretty well."

"Yes, one of them improves every day, but I don't know that I can say as much for the other."

"Who recommended them to you?"

"Barnard, your clerk. They come from his native place. Foote's wife came from the same place. You know Foote?"

"Yes, to be sure. That explains what I saw at your store yesterday." And Mr. Lester described the encounter between Mrs. Foote and Miriam.

"Depend upon it," said he, "that Miss Bentley is on the right track: business in business hours; private quarrels, etc., at other times. I think, Rathburn, that is one reason why so many women fail when they undertake to do business; they can't forget all the little petty annoyances they encounter."

"Very likely. I never was more mistaken in my life, though, in two people, than I was in those two saleswomen. When they first came, I thought Miss Weston was by far the most efficient: she is much quicker of apprehension, but lately she has been growing careless; still, I did not think she would be quite so forgetful of her duty."

"You must excuse my mentioning it, but I shall always feel an interest in that store."

"I am very glad you did speak of it. I will look into it. Insolence behind the counter is, I fancy, contagious. The master's eye cannot always be on his employés, and outsiders sometimes see farther behind the scenes than he does. Generally, when a saleswoman first comes into the store she takes hold with a will, and her checks come up to the desk pretty fast; but when she thinks she has established a reputation

for being wide-awake, she becomes indifferent. But it has been just the reverse with Miss Bentley; she improves every day, shows more and more capacity for business, and has already drawn quite a run of customers around her."

"Some of your neighbors will be offering her a higher salary, if you don't look out."

"I'm not afraid of that. I go upon the principle of good pay for good work."

"That's it; good work can command good pay; if one won't give it another will. It is strange that so few subordinates have sense enough to see that when they are looking out for their employer's interests they are looking out for their own."

"Most of them look out sharp not to do more than they think they are paid for. I overheard Miss Weston saying to Miss Bentley the other day, 'What's the use of my working myself to death for six dollars a week?'"

"As if she ought not to show her capacity for more valuable service before she can expect higher pay."

"Well, it's about time I went to look after those salesmen and saleswomen of mine. Good-morning."

The conversation with Mr. Lester made a decided impression on Mr. Rathburn. During the remainder of the day he carefully noted the manners of his

employés, but failed to discover anything with which he could decidedly find fault; he must adopt another plan: must, as he had said, go "behind the scenes."

CHAPTER XI.

HEAVEN HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES.

MR. RATHBURN left his house the next morning with the determination of making it the business of the day to ascertain whether his customers were well served. It was early when he reached the store, but the salesmen and women were all there; he walked up to the desk, stopped a few moments, then came down, saying to one of the clerks, "I sha'n't be gone more than two hours," went into the street, and from there into the cellar appropriated to storage, came up by a back way little used, asked his book-keeper to exchange his high seat at the large desk for a lower one, usually appropriated by the head of the house. The desk was surrounded by a wire netting, which effectually masked the features behind it, but concealed nothing that was going on outside.

He had sat there hardly five minutes, before nervous little Miss Parker came in: one of the most conscientious, obliging women that ever trod the pave-

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ments of Washington Street; but one who magnified the most trivial affairs into matters of great moment.

Miriam had given her the soubriquet of Parched Pea, so exactly did her movements resemble a pea while undergoing dry cookery. She bobbed into the door, half stopped at Ruth, turned to the other counter, and finally lighted before Miriam.

"Got any braid, dear? Blue braid? Any blue silk braid, dear? Embroidery braid, I mean, dear." She went on jerking out the sentences, and catching her breath at favorable opportunities.

"No, no, not that, dear! That isn't what I want." Miriam, with a glance at her nearest neighbor, had placed a box of wide braid before Miss Parker.

"Oh, it's serpentine braid you want!" and Miriam took a box of serpentine braid from the counter.

"No, no, dear! *That* isn't what I want. I know you've got it. You had it yesterday. I don't want it for myself." Miriam handed some braid of another color.

"No, no, no! I don't want it for myself. I want it for a friend, or I shouldn't mind. Blue—silk—embroidery—braid!"

"Oh, yes! Blue silk embroidery braid;" and Miriam took down the box that she had purposely

passed by, that the idlers behind the counter might enjoy Miss Parched Pea's impatience.

The little lady paid for the braid, and requested that it might be sent home. "I wouldn't ask you to send it if it was for myself, but my friend wants to be sure and have it this morning. You'll send it right away, won't you, dear? You're sure you've got the direction right? It ain't for myself, it's for a friend."

"I'll send it before dinner."

"Before dinner! But she wants it this morning. She'll be very much disappointed if she don't get it this morning."

"I will send it."

"No, give it to me, dear. It isn't for myself, it's for a friend. I'll take it up to her myself. I wouldn't have her miss getting it for anything."

Painstaking Miss Parker trudged a mile out of her way, and delivered the small twist of brown paper.

"I've saved you one tramp," said Miriam to the lounging shop-boy.

"Bleeged to you! Save me another, do."

Mrs. Cameron soon took Miss Parker's place. She believed in being up betimes, and was often the first customer in the morning. She had kept a small shop herself; but having waked one day to the consciousness that a second cousin had shown the good sense

to leave ten thousand dollars to a person so admirably fitted to take care of his hard earnings, she added to the legacy her own savings, and forthwith gave up the dry goods trade, and went into the business of setting the world to rights, and guarding all her acquaintances from cheats. The latter branch of her vocation involved the execution of many commissions for her wards, so that in the sum-total her annual purchases were considerable, and her custom was valuable.

As for her manners, they were decided, rather than agreeable. Mr. Rathburn watched her as long as she remained in the store, and heard every word she uttered. She had but just crossed the threshold, when Miriam whispered to the saleswoman at her elbow, "There comes the Catamount." Up and down the store the word and the smile spread like a ripple. The word reached Mr. Rathburn; the nickname was so apt, that he could not help joining in the smile. Mrs. Cameron strode up to the counter at double-quick time. "Where's the girl that sold me this spool of silk yesterday?"

"Which of the young ladies would you like to see?" asked Miriam, in a soft voice.

"I want to see the girl that sold me this for a two-hundred yard spool," said Mrs. Cameron, holding out a round piece of wood, that might have brought to

mind open fires and their substantial backlogs. Miriam took the spool, and said, "This is a mistake; we will exchange it."

"You ought to be more careful; here I've had to come way down here, all for your carelessness."

"It is a pity you took the silk out of the wrong box."

"Is this a two-hundred yard spool?"

"You might measure it, and see," replied Miriam, demurely.

Mrs. Cameron looked unutterable things at the shop-girl, whose features bore no trace but that of utter ignorance. "Is Mr. Rathburn in?"

"No, ma'am. He has just gone out, and said he shouldn't be back for some time."

Mrs. Cameron looked all round the store, but failing to discover the master, rammed her port-monnaie down into the inside breast-pocket of her sacque, and strode out, Miriam saying to Ruth loud enough for the irate woman to hear, "Don't you wish you had a breast-pocket?"

"Better not carry that much farther," said Ruth, in an under-tone, "she'll complain to Mr. Rathburn."

"Let her do it, if she wants to."

Customers came in faster as the morning advanced, and the attendants were all fully occupied. Just at the time that trade was at its height, a young dress-

maker, who had done some work for Miriam, came in to ask directions about a dress she had agreed to alter. Miriam turned from the customer at the young woman's right, and was soon in the midst of a brisk consultation on the feasibility of certain trimmings and piecings.

"I might get new sleeves out of the pieces, and put the trimming on where it is joined."

"Yes—"

"Have you none of a darker shade?" interrupted the lady on the right.

"No," to the customer. To the dressmaker, "Yes, you might do that if it wouldn't bring the trimming too high up."

"Is not that a piece on the shelf?" persisted the neglected customer.

"It's wider," answered Miriam shortly, taking the card out and throwing it on the counter.

"Have you any fringe like that?" asked a new-comer on the left.

"You might take a half-breadth out of the skirt, if you couldn't do any better," said Miriam.

"Have you any fringe like that?" repeated the new-comer.

"No, we haven't," answered Miriam, hardly looking at the pattern.

For full fifteen minutes the dressmaker stayed, and during that time customers' wants were of small moment to Miriam. Ladies received tart answers, or no answers at all; they were refused goods which might or might not have been on the shelves. It was much easier to say "No," than to look for the articles in question. Some turned away without even asking for the goods they were in quest of, so difficult was it to attract the notice of the preoccupied saleswoman.

The dressmaker went at last, and in came Miss Farrar with a sample of poplin. "Have you any trimming suitable for that?" she asked, as she sat down. Miriam, aware that she had been remiss, took out piece after piece, and really tried to please the lady, but nothing was right; and when a goodly quantity of gimps, fringes, etc., lay in a confused heap on the counter, the unsuccessful saleswoman had the pleasure of hearing Miss Farrar say, in reply to the question of a friend who had just entered, "Yes, I did get the trimmings for that dress in New York, but I thought I'd look and see if they had any like it here."

It was Miss Farrar's favorite amusement to go to the dry goods stores and "look." She was well-known as "one of the humbugs," in all the principal establishments where dress-goods were sold; but as

Mr. Rathburn's stock consisted of smaller wares, it seldom afforded the material for her pet recreation. The lady who comes to buy generally knows what she wishes, and can distinguish a satisfactory article when she sees it; and, though often over-critical, is positively agreeable compared with the lady who comes to "look." Your inveterate shopper is not satisfied till every piece of goods within reach is displayed and priced; she gives her opinion freely as to cost, color, quality, etc., and finishes by asking for a sample, or by pronouncing the fabrics not so coarse or fine, light or heavy, gay or sombre, as she desires. She consumes a hundredfold more time and patience than the actual buyer does.

Mr. Rathburn had convinced himself that there was much in his store that needed reformation; that while nearly all his employes were careless as to their duties, and faulty in their deportment, no one was more so than Miriam, and he wondered that these evils could have attained such magnitude without attracting his attention. From Miriam he had repeatedly turned to Ruth, and seen that her customers were quickly served, that she appeared to have an almost intuitive knowledge of their wants; that she never joined in the conversation that was going on behind the counter, or took up the blind jokes or

catch-words that were flying about the store. "She must be a woman of a good deal of decision," thought he, as he left the desk and passed out of the back door. In another moment he entered the store by the front entrance; went back and took his station in a slightly elevated position, and stood in full view. The carelessness and incivility, the fun and sociability, all vanished, and buying and selling were the only purposes apparent there.

His attention was soon attracted to a showily-dressed individual who expected to be called a lady. She was holding out a crumpled roll to Ruth, and saying, "I'd like to have you take that back and give me the money."

Ruth opened the roll, examined the collar it enclosed, and answered, "I do not think we can take this; it was not bought here."

"Yes, certainly it was. I bought it here myself, yesterday."

"I beg your pardon. You must be mistaken."

"No, I am not mistaken. I bought it here yesterday for five dollars, and my daughter bought one here last week, just like it, for four; that's what you call one price. If you know what's best for you, you'll give me back my money."

"We never take goods we have not sold. We did

not sell this yesterday, I am confident, for we had none of that pattern then."

"And you didn't sell my daughter one like it?"

"Very likely we did, last week. We have had collars like that, and asked five dollars for them, but we marked them down, and closed them out several days since, at four dollars."

"Well, I paid five for that yesterday. Somebody got the difference. I shouldn't wonder if it wasn't Mr. Rathburn."

"I have nothing more to say about it," said Ruth, rolling up the collar and handing it to the lady. "We cannot refund the money for goods that were not purchased here."

"I'll speak to Mr. Rathburn about it. He ought to know how impudent his shop-girls are."

Mr. Rathburn met the angry woman as she hastily made her way up the store. "Do you keep a one-price store, Mr. Rathburn?"

"We do, madam."

"Do you allow your shop-girls to ask one price of one lady, and another of another?"

"We do not."

"Well, here is a collar I gave five dollars for yesterday, and you sold the same thing last week for four, and this girl tells me I'm fibbing."

By this time Mr. Rathburn and his questioner stood before Ruth.

"How is it about this collar, Miss Bentley?" he asked.

"Will you please to look at the mark, sir?"

Mr. Rathburn glanced at the shop-mark in red lead on the muslin that was to be cut out of the neck.

"Ah, yes! I see that is one of the marks McKenzie, next door, uses. Your collar must have come from there."

"No, I bought it myself; just as if I didn't know where I buy! But you'll stand up for your people before folks. It wouldn't sound very pretty to acknowledge that people are served so in your store."

"Wait one moment, if you please, madam. Cash, here." Mr. Rathburn took out his pocket-book, gave the boy several small bills, and the collar that was the subject of dispute, and said, "Go and see if they have any collars like that at McKenzie's. If they have, buy one; pay just what is asked; quick as possible."

The boy ran out, returned in a few moments, and gave back the remaining bills.

"What did you pay?"

"Five dollars, sir."

"Now, madam, you will be good enough to com-

pare these two marks; you will see that they correspond exactly."

"Oh, you'll stand up for your people!"

"Yes, madam. I *will* stand up for my assistants when they do their duty. I appreciate a good saleswoman, and when one is faithful I generally know it, and she may always depend upon my approval and aid."

"I'll never spend another dollar in this store as long as I live. Shameful, to encourage the insolence of these shop-girls!"

The wrathful speaker flounced out into the street, and Mr. Rathburn returned to his stand.

The business of the day was nearly over, and one of the cash-boys came to Miriam with a message from Mr. Rathburn; he "would like to see her for a few moments at the desk." She went with some trepidation, thinking that Mrs. Cameron, "the Catamount," had entered her complaint.

"Some hints have lately reached me, Miss Weston," said Mr. Rathburn, "that have caused me to fear that customers do not always receive such courtesy as they have a right to expect. I am quite sure you have the qualifications of a good saleswoman; but from some things I have seen to-day, I fear you do not give that attention to your duties that

is indispensable. I believe you have the good sense to make it needless for me to speak a second time; but I wish you to understand that my customers must be waited upon promptly and politely, that they must never be nicknamed or ridiculed while in the store. The manners of those who show goods are of almost as much importance as the quality of the goods. I hope I shall not have to speak so again. Will you be good enough to ask Miss Bentley to step this way?"

Miriam went to Ruth and said, "You've got to go now and take your turn."

"I wonder what I've done amiss?" thought Ruth. But her employer soon put her at ease.

"You have been with us long enough, Miss Bentley, to judge how you will like the business?"

"Yes, sir. I think I shall like it; it comes easier to me every day."

"Do you feel like assuming greater duties,— more responsibility?"

Ruth hesitated. "I would do my best, sir, but I am just getting acquainted with my work now."

"And would prefer to remain in the department where you are?"

"I think I should."

"We won't disagree about that. The fact is, Miss

Lambert is about to leave; she is going into another line of business, and I thought I should propose to you to take her place as forewoman of your department. In that case you will, of course, receive a forewoman's salary, eleven dollars a week; but I shall expect you to take the responsibility. You will have two assistants, as Miss Lambert has had, and will be expected to have some oversight of them: to see that the goods are kept in order, all in their proper boxes, etc., especially before closing at night; to know and inform me when any particular article is out, and sometimes, perhaps, to make purchases. Do you think you can do all this?"

"I would like to try, sir."

"Very well. Miss Lambert will leave as soon as I can fill the place of Miss Bentley, promoted. Then your increased pay will commence, and I have no fear that you will not be able to discharge the duties to your own satisfaction and to mine."

"I can have no better help than to know that I am giving satisfaction," said Ruth.

"That is a help my employes shall have as long as they merit it."

CHAPTER XII.

WE ARE ALL ADAM'S CHILDREN, — BUT MR. McKENZIE'S CUSTOMERS MUST BE WAITED UPON.

WELL, what's the matter with you? If he isn't satisfied with such a pink of propriety as you, it's no use trying to suit him!" said Miriam, as soon as she was outside of the store.

Ruth spoke of Mr. Rathburn's offer, but Miriam was too much out of temper to congratulate her friend. "Well, you'll do it, of course. Everybody gets ahead of me. I suppose it won't be long before you'll get up in the world, so you can't see a poor shop-girl."

"I am a poor shop-girl myself. I don't want to find fault with you, Miriam, but you and I had the same chance. I'm not sure that your chance wasn't better than mine; you was always smarter than I at any kind of work you really set yourself about, and you know you are a great deal quicker at figures. Come, my dear Miriam, do turn over a new leaf! Mr. Rathburn is willing to give you a fair chance, and pay you a fair salary."

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"Turn over a new leaf! Yes, and eat humble-pie to Rathburn, and Sophia Foote, and all the rest of the upstarts that look down on me because I'm only a shop-girl. I won't stay in that store."

"What will you do?"

"I can go to McKenzie's."

"You won't like there. We have seen enough of Mr. McKenzie to know that he is not a gentleman."

Miriam was not to be dissuaded. It was humiliating enough to be taken to task, but to remain in the store in disgrace when Ruth was promoted! She would do nothing of the kind. The next day she made an agreement with Mr. McKenzie. When told of it, Ruth said, "If you have promised to go, it's no use to say anything more; but I am sorry. When do you begin there?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow! Does Mr. Rathburn want you to leave on such short notice?"

"I don't know, and I don't care much; he won't get a chance to lecture me many times more. McKenzie offered me a fortnight's extra pay if I would come right away."

Ruth understood, as well as Miriam, that Mr. McKenzie thought the money well expended, as he re-

duced a rival's available force at the opening of the busy season.

Mr. McKenzie had begun life as a farm drudge. In his boyhood his sullen will had yielded only to kicks and blows; and in his later years he had no idea of any other way of securing obedience, than by a show of authority. By thrifty management, he had, in middle life, become the sole proprietor of a large retail dry goods store, to which he attracted many buyers by the cheapness of some of his goods. Buying at auctions, and being careful always to have cash on hand, wherewith to take advantage of hard-pushed, wholesale dealers, he could often offer real bargains.

He was a short, obese man, and when not out making purchases, strutted up and down the store with his hands under the skirts of his swallow-tailed coat, and with all the pomposity and self-gratulation of the architect of Great Babylon. If aught was amiss he applied the remedy at once, not hesitating to reprove bookkeeper, salesman, or boy, at any time, and in language that could not be called elegant.

Miriam could not help contrasting the quiet bearing of Mr. Rathburn, who always sought to cultivate the self-respect of all under his influence, with the bluster of her new employer. She had learned a lesson from experience, and though conscious that she was now

serving a hard master, did her best; but it was with a sense of degradation that she discovered that, as an equivalent for the two weeks extra pay, she was expected to give information about Mr. Rathburn's prices, ways of buying, and general business arrangements, and that it was a part of her duty on dull days, when customers were not numerous, to become a shopper, and go to the stores in the same line of trade, and ascertain wherein their goods and prices corresponded to, or differed from, those of Mr. McKenzie.

Early in the second week Mrs. Foote and Miss Grimshaw came into the store. Mrs. Foote started with surprise when she saw her former friend, but passed on to another counter. Not so Miss Grimshaw; the instant she saw Miriam her face lighted up with a smile, and she offered her hand, saying, "You here? I thought you were at Rathburn's." Then she turned to look for Mrs. Foote. "Sophia came in with me. Oh, there she is! She didn't see you."

"Oh, yes, she did!" returned Miriam; "as well as she can see any shop-girl. You know I'm only a shop-girl!"

"Only a shop-girl!" echoed Miss Grimshaw. "'We

are all Adam's children, but silk makes the difference.' "

"And makes a good deal of difference."

"Not so much as you think, after all. 'Adam got him a hoe, and Eve a spinning-wheel, and thence came all our nobles.' To be sure, 'money and purse will be always in fashion,' but 'every one is weary—the poor in seeking, the rich in keeping, the good in learning.' I'll be back in a few moments." And Miss Grimshaw left Miriam with all her bitterness aroused.

"It's all very easy for her to talk about the poor being weary; she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth," she thought; and was so occupied with her reflections, that she did not notice the little lady who was mildly asking for "green lutestring ribbon"; but Mr. McKenzie's harsh voice recalled her, and, at the same time, drew the attention of every other person in the store. "Green lutestring ribbon, Miss Weston! Is that the way you wait upon a lady? I should think your wits had gone wool-gathering."

Miriam's face was crimson as she took the block of ribbon from the show-case. The little lady looked at her with commiseration, and bought some yards of the ribbon, which was not really what she wished, for fear the saleswoman might be subjected to further reproof;

but her consideration did not prevent Mr. McKenzie from giving Miriam a long lecture on her duties. The lecture was in progress when Miss Grimshaw and Mrs. Foote passed out. As the elder lady glanced at Miriam's burning cheek, she felt that then, at least, it was a kindness not to recognize a shop-girl; but the triumphant expression of Mrs. Foote's face did not escape Miss Grimshaw, and then many trivial circumstances arranged themselves in suggestive connection in her mind.

During the remainder of her visit, she did not mention the name of either of the two friends; and the aspirant for the favor of society knew that she had fallen in the estimation of one whose good opinion she would gladly have secured.

CHAPTER XIII.

HANDS FOR WORK, AND WORK FOR HANDS.

WHEN Ruth and Miriam were about to leave home, their minister gave them a letter of introduction to one of the city clergymen, advising them to take seats in his church, and to present the letter. The letter lay in Ruth's trunk, waiting for leisure, which rarely came; but the two girls were regular attendants at the Sunday services. Connected with the parish was a ladies' sewing-circle, which assembled in rooms adjoining the vestry; the notice of its meeting was read from the pulpit every month, with this addendum: "All the ladies of the congregation are cordially invited to attend."

After having heard the notice several times, Ruth and Miriam concluded to accept the invitation, Jerry Barnard promising to come and see them safely home. At six o'clock, Miriam called for Ruth — Mr. McKenzie allowed no drones round his hive, no gossiping acquaintances hindering his "tenders." The two friends found a side door of the church open, went

through a long passage-way to a dressing-room, where were deposited some cords of millinery and wraps, better for use than show, into a brilliantly-lighted, carpeted apartment. The room was half filled with ladies, standing or sitting on vestry chairs and settees, with here and there a pillar of the church, who, in consideration of his important place in ecclesiastical architecture, was graciously smiled upon when he came for his monthly ration of "tea, bread and butter, and two kinds of plain cake." All less prominent supporters of the edifice, of gender masculine, well understood that their presence was not expected "till after tea," and, doubtless, had no disposition to put themselves in the way of the infliction; for of all forlorn, bewildered beings, there is no more pitiable one than a lord of creation trying to secure a meal when "tea is carried round," and, at the same time, to make himself agreeable to the feminine bevy about. What would he do if one of the bevy did not benevolently push the work aside, and give the "dear man" a corner of the table, "just to set his tea-cup"? But corners of tables are never very numerous in "the society's rooms"; hence one reason that none but pillars are expected to tea.

Ruth and Miriam took seats at one side of the room, and looked on, highly entertained by the novel

scene. Mrs. O'Flaherty, a regular attendant of the meetings, passed round a large tray of china mugs half filled with tea. Several young ladies followed with sugar and cream, buttered rolls, and the two kinds of plain cake, accompanied by merry jests and apt retorts. "The cup that cheers but not inebriates" dissipated the slight reserve of the earlier hours, and the prerogative that is popularly supposed to be woman's was freely exercised; a prerogative which the sterner sex do not hesitate to encroach upon. Is it women who are preëminently the talkers of the world? What says a recent writer? "In damp weather, persons a mile away from a column of soldiers can locate them by the low rumble of their conversation."

The officers of the society moved about among the members with a pleasant word for each. Several ladies came at different times, and spoke patronizingly to the two shop-girls; as one turned away, she was greeted by a new-comer; and, though Miriam could not hear the words, she was sure that the question was asked, "Who are the strangers?" The reply was received with elevated eyebrows; and the first lady added, as Miriam *did* hear, "Oh, we all meet on a level *here!*"

The young ladies emerged from the ante-room and

closed the door, so as to shut out, as much as possible, the clatter Mrs. O'Flaherty made in marshalling into order the teaspoons, china mugs, and plates. Four or five vivacious maidens, not much older or younger than Ruth and Miriam, took their station so near the two shop-girls as to give them the benefit of their comments on one of their own associates, who had just gone to the other side of the room.

"I don't see but Mabel seems just as she used to."

"Well, why shouldn't she?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what? I knew they said her father had lost lots of money, but we've all seen her since that."

"Oh, no, that's not it! she has gone into a store to keep books. Should you think she would?"

"I shouldn't think she would like it, I'm sure. I should go into fits, doing horrid sums all day. I had enough of that at school."

"And then everybody that comes in seeing her!"

"Oh, no! people don't see her much; they say she has a nice room, all to herself, in the back part of the store."

"I suppose, when we go to call upon her, she'll have on a brown holland pinafore, and a pen behind her ear."

"We shall have to call upon her at her place of business, sha'n't we?"

"'Twon't do to interrupt business, you know. I don't think I shall call upon her at all. Let me see, — I believe she owes me a call. Now she won't have much time to return it; she'll have to stick to the shop; — just as well!"

"Mabel earning money! Going into a store! I shouldn't think she would. Perhaps her father made her. Poor thing!"

"No, her father did not make her, Stella." It was a manly voice that answered.

The young lady turned, smiling. "That you, Uncle George? I didn't know you was here."

"I have just come in," replied Mr. Lester, shaking hands with the young ladies.

Two matrons, talking earnestly of some society measure, now stood between our two friends and the group that surrounded Mr. Lester, and the conversation was carried on in a lower key.

"It was Mabel's own choice to be a bookkeeper," said Mr. Lester. "That was what, fortunately, she was fitted to be; and I honor her for her decision."

Ruby lips pouted; youthful brains were searched for a change of subjects. Jerry Barnard was spied

out. "Isn't that Mr. Barnard, Stella?" Maud Derby asked; "I wish you'd introduce him to me!"

Mr. Lester was not to be turned aside by the pert miss. "It is true," said he, "that Mabel's father has made heavy losses, and that his health has suffered in consequence; the fear that he might leave his family in want has preyed upon his spirits sadly. Mabel saw that the time might come when she would be obliged to provide for herself, and decided to seek for a place where her fine abilities would be of use. Her father told me, an hour ago, that the first happy day he had known since his failure, was the one when Mabel told him that she was in receipt of a fair remuneration for services she was perfectly well able to render. 'Then,' said he, 'I felt that the whole responsibility was not on my shoulders, and from that time my affairs have begun to look more hopeful; perhaps because I can look more hopefully at them.' Now, I put it to you, young ladies: which is better, for a daughter, who has been supplied with every luxury by a kind father, to sit idly lamenting because sudden reverses have deprived her of superfluities and comforts, or to put her own shoulder to the wheel, and help what she can? I have an old book at home, perhaps some of you have the same, which says, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' I honor the lady, the young

lady, especially, who has the courage to obey the precept. God has given hands for work, and work for hands; why should you scorn it? If you will scorn it for yourselves, I beg you do not despise her who heeds a call she cannot shut her ears to, without being false to all her best impulses. Come, now, let us see if you will practise my preach; let me introduce you to those two young ladies talking with Mr. Barnard."

"Why, Mr. Lester!" tittered Maud, "what a funny man you are!"

"What is there funny about that?"

"You know, well enough, they are only shop-girls. One of them sold me some lace this very afternoon!"

"Well, what of that? Mr. Barnard is only a store young man. He is in my store, you know, and one of those young ladies, to my certain knowledge, came here impelled by a sense of duty similar to that which has placed Mabel at a desk. Her father is a farmer, as your grandfather and uncles are. As for Barnard, his father keeps a country store, to be sure, but he tells me that one of his brothers has engaged to work for Miss Bentley's brother this summer."

"Oh, well, it's very different for a man to be in a store."

"Yes, it is different. The world helps him on, has

a contempt for a young man if he is idle, but let a young woman in *good society*, no matter how great the necessity, exert herself for her own support, she loses caste at once, must encounter the frowns of her five hundred particular friends, must go through an ordeal which requires a courage that seems to me a little short of heroism. Then you won't be introduced, Miss Maud?"

"I'd rather be excused."

Mr. Lester was called away, and Miss Maud appealed to her portly mother, who sat near by, talking languishingly with two members of the work-committee. "Only think, mamma, Mr. Lester wanted me to be introduced to those two shop-girls!"

"How singular, my dear! Mr. Lester is a good man, but very odd."

"Oh, very, very!"

Mother and daughter went in pursuit of acquaintances sufficiently aristocratic.

"Used to be a milliner herself," said one of the committee, throwing her head on one side, and pursing up her lips, "but she don't know anything about bonnets now."

"Except to come out in a new one every other Sunday."

"And thinks they grow'd, I s'pose; but—" the

speaker stopped, looked disconcerted, and said, "I wouldn't have made that speech if I had known you were hearing, Dea. Abbot."

"Jean Ingelow has written a very pretty children's story, that she calls 'My Grandmother's Slippers,' " said Dea. Abbot, and moved on.

"I'd rather any one but the deacon had heard us talking about Mrs. Derby. He hates anything that sounds like gossip."

"He has a wonderful faculty of making one ashamed of one's peccadilloes."

"And one can't be angry with him, either."

"What did he mean about the story?"

"Oh, didn't you understand that? Some children played in an attic where there was a curtain drawn across one end. After they had been playing some time, they were terribly frightened at seeing the toes of their grandmother's slippers peeping out under the curtain; they thought that she knew everything that they had been doing; but come to find out, it was only the slippers there, and not the grandmother."

"Perhaps he didn't hear us, then, after all."

Ruth and Miriam each paid a dollar into the treasury, thus becoming members of the society until the next annual meeting, and left, thinking that, on the whole, they had spent a very pleasant evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

"WHAT A IMAGE!"

THE national anniversary was welcomed on the part of the fathers of the city by the booming of cannon and ringing of bells; on the part of the sons of the city, by the snapping of fire-crackers and braying of horns, and other demonstrations, by which Young America annually makes patriotism hideous. Ruth and Miriam were not old enough in city life to be indifferent to the amusements provided by the afore-said fathers. Jerry Barnard had agreed to call for his young townswomen, and to act as their guide to holiday Boston.

Josie Graham's treasures in the upper landing did not satisfy her that day, for one boarder had tossed her a cent "to buy a stick of candy," another a three-cent piece, another five cents, and so on, until the child was in possession of a sum-total such as she had never owned before. There was not a shade of the miser in Josie's temperament, and money was to her only so many round bits of metal, unless she

could exchange it for more attractive commodities; but how to effect that exchange was the question. A disposition to roam, to make excursions into unknown regions, which had developed itself as soon as her little limbs would consent to transport her, had been nipped in the bud by fancy sketches of "p'lice that shut up childer in dark holes whin they thried to rin off."

In vain the eager child had besought brother and sister to "just let me go with you a little tinty ways." They "couldn't have her tagging after them." All her blandishments had been exhausted on Nora. "Shure an' I would if I could, Jousie; but didn't I promish me coozen I'd go wid her?"

When Ruth came out of the dining-room after breakfast, Josie was standing in the hall with a sorrowful face, bravely trying to keep back her tears. "Why, Josie, what is the trouble?" Ruth asked.

"I can't spend my money."

"That's a funny thing to be troubled about," said Miriam. "I'm troubled because I can spend my money."

"Give me your money. I'll buy something for you," said Ruth.

But Josie, not inclined to purchase through an agent, clenched her fingers, and said, "I want to buy

it mine own self. I'll get some candy, an' a jumpin'-jack, an' a b'loon, an' — an' — "

"How much have you got, Josie? Let me see."

The small hand opened, and Ruth counted the funds. "Twenty cents," said Miriam. "Well, I guess you'll have to go yourself, if you buy all those things for twenty cents."

"We couldn't take her with us?" said Ruth.

"No, indeed! She'd get all tired out, and cry, and then we'd have to come trotting home with her."

"I won't get tired! I won't cry! I can run real fast," said Josie, running the length of the hall, to prove her pedestrian powers.

"You go with Jerry when he comes, Miriam, and I'll take Josie out a little while," said Ruth.

"Too bad for you to spoil all your sport for that young one! So seldom we get a day out of the store, too!"

"It won't spoil my sport. I can meet you at the Music Hall at eleven. Jerry told me where he was going to sit."

"Poh, you won't get there by that time! Better go with us."

"No, I will go with Josie first. If I don't come, you won't wait for me, of course;" and Ruth unclasped

the arms the child had thrown round her neck as she stooped. "Let's go and find Nora."

The Hibernian answered Josie's call, but to Ruth's request that she would dress the child to take a walk, or bring her hat, etc., that she might array her herself, Nora returned a bewildered stare, and an interrogatory "Which?"

"I want to take Josie out a little way," Ruth explained. "Will you bring a clean dress, and her hat and sacque, or whatever she wears?"

"It's a clane dress I'll give yer, but niver a bit of a cote an' hat. Shure, she don't be goin' outside, an' the misthress can't be gittin' cotes an' hats fur the likes iv her stoppin' widin. Stop now, there's a small little cote the other childer used ter be afther wearin'. Mebbe, now, that might do yer."

"Let me have it, and we will see."

The dress of cheap print, and an old cambric sacque, adorned with the style of open-work with which Father Time embellishes garments, were taken up to Ruth's room. Josie's soiled frock was exchanged for the fresher one; and Ruth, hastily, with needle and thread, drew together some gaping rents in the sacque, cautiously manœuvred the child into the treacherous garment, and balanced upon her head a plain hat of her own. What if it was roomy over

the brows and behind the ears, and displayed a disposition to hang alternately over the eyes and on the neck of the wearer?—it would not fall off if the elastic held. Thus equipped, Josie seated herself on the stairs facing the front door, and patiently waited Ruth's time.

Miriam admitted Jerry when he came, and at once accounted for Ruth's non-appearance. He glanced at Josie, exclaimed "What a image!" and added, as he went down the steps, "Ruth must be more good-natured than I am, to convoy such a craft as that through the streets to-day."

Josie jumped up at the sound of Ruth's descending footsteps; but obedient to the warning, "Go quietly, like a little lady, or you will tear your sacque," took Ruth's hand, and walked demurely on. Confectioners, dealers in toys, and sidewalk venders of delicacies, had been patronized, and the funds were vanishing. Josie caught sight of a man holding aloft a stick to which were attached a score of red globes trying to soar heavenwards.

"I want a b'loon! I want a b'loon!" cried the child.

"When we get the balloon we will carry it home, won't we?" asked Ruth.

"Yes, we'll carry it home."

The pedler was disentangling one of the cords,

when Ruth glanced across the street, and saw a familiar face. The color mounted to her cheeks; she had thought that strangers only were looking on while she stood in a public thoroughfare making a purchase, and with such a grotesque little figure at her side. For Josie's hands were full — she had succeeded in changing her cash for very bulky merchandise.

Ruth was searching in her port-monnaie for the money Josie needed to make up the price of the toy, when some one behind said, "A little protégée of yours, Miss Bentley?"

"My landlady's daughter," Ruth explained, moving in the direction of her boarding-house. "Josie thought she would be ready to go home if she had a balloon."

"I had some money, just now," said the child, "and she taked me to buy somepin."

"Have you bought all you want, little one?" Mr. Lester asked.

"I spendd all the cents."

"Would you buy more if you had more cents?"

"I couldn't carry no more."

"Sensible child!" said Mr. Lester, laughing; "more sensible than we older people."

"I ain't a image, is I?" asked Josie, who had been puzzling her brain to discover what connection Jerry saw between her own living, active self, and the stout,

long-nosed, long-chinned effigy that was put outside of the tobacconist's door opposite her home every morning, and stood all day with a knowing grin on his wooden face, and pointed over his shoulder to the emporium of smoke and snuff, as if he would give all passers-by a sly warning: "If you go in you will be taken in."

"You an image? I don't see much imagery about you. Quite a matter-of-fact, sensible little girl, I should say. You're going home now, — good-morning, then!" As Mr. Lester raised his hat to Ruth, a young lady standing at a window of a first-class residence suddenly exclaimed, "Well, I declare!"

"What is it, Maud, dear?"

"Why, mother, if there isn't Mr. Lester, and he was talking to one of those shop-girls he wanted to introduce me to the other evening, and she's got the awfulest looking child with her!"

"Oh, well, he is very odd, my dear."

"Oh, very, very!"

"Very odd!" growled Mr. Derby. "He's got some common sense, and that is enough to make anybody odd nowadays."

The next day Mr. Lester came in to see Mr. Rathburn, but stopped at Ruth's counter as he passed up

the store. "How is our philosophical little maiden this morning?"

"Quite well, sir."

"And as content as ever?"

"Looking rather sober over her collapsed balloon, when I left."

"Ah, that's it! She isn't the only one who has collapsed pleasures to look sober over. Solomon, in all his glory, did not know the pure, unalloyed enjoyment that little damsel had yesterday. Would it be too much trouble for you, Miss Bentley, to see that she is provided with one or two plain suits, whatever she needs? I suppose her mother does not have much surplus revenue."

"Not in the least," said Ruth, taking the money Mr. Lester offered her.

"If you will, I shall be much obliged to you. I know you have not much time to spare, but it is something quite out of my line."

"I will do it gladly, sir!"

Had some sudden good fortune happened to Ruth herself, she would not have been more gratified. She had often wished, as she had noticed the dilapidated condition of Josie's apparel, that it was in her power to supply the child with more comfortable clothing.

Ruth went that evening to consult Mrs. Lambert,

confident that she would be able to recommend a person whose needle would be useful in Josie's service. The benevolent woman was much interested in Ruth's plans, and had then staying at her house an over-worked seamstress, who was glad of employment that could be taken up and laid aside according to her hourly ability; and Ruth's duty was reduced to purchasing material, taking part in deliberations, and seeing that Josie made frequent visits to "Auntie Lambert's." One Saturday afternoon the child ran, or rather danced, home, in a costume which Jerry Barnard said did not remind him half so much of the "Conflict of Ages."

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD GRUDGE AGAIN.

DAYS when laborers dropped with their tools in their hands, when horses fell in their tracks, prostrated by the rays of the vertical sun, alternated with days of such delightful temperature that it seemed neglecting God's good gifts to stay between walls. Miriam panted for green fields and mountain breezes. Mr. McKenzie's yoke weighed heavily on her shoulders, but she dared not let him see how it galled. She was often tempted to throw off the hateful servitude, but the anticipated "Didn't I tell you so?" of her father, kept her at her post. Her pride generally prevented her making direct complaints to Ruth, but she made no effort to conceal her dislike of her employer.

One afternoon late in July, the two girls started for a walk in the Public Garden. "Anything is better than that stived-up store," said Miriam.

"Mr. McKenzie doesn't close early this summer?"

"No, the old curmudgeon wouldn't. A gentleman came in with a paper for him to sign, but he said he

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THE OLD GRUDGE AGAIN.

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wouldn't do anything of the kind. He knew how it would be if he agreed to close at four: we'd cover up the goods at two, and nobody that came in could get anything for love or money; we'd give 'em to understand their room was better than their company; all we'd be thinking of, would be getting away."

"Do you suppose it would be so?"

"Shouldn't wonder. Some of the young men were laughing the other day about the lively times they used to have last summer; how they used to hustle the customers round when they came late: 'they might come before, what's the use of their coming just at shutting-up time'; but he's glad of the excuse, — he picks up the custom after four o'clock. We manage to be even with him sometimes. He's gone away now, and we take turns going home early; that's how I got away this afternoon; there's no need of all of us being there. When he is at home he makes the boys come at seven and sweep out, and so on; he comes down himself every little while, early, to see if they are there. If everything ain't all right, the boys have to take it. Now he has gone, the boys clear up in the afternoon."

"What! sweep before the goods are covered up?"

"To be sure. They ain't our goods, you know. The greatest fun is to see the ladies fidget, and turn up their noses. My Lady Foote and my Lady Dascomb

came in yesterday ; it was pretty early, but I gave the boys the wink, and they went to sweeping, and raised a furious dust ; they stood it, or sat it, pretty well, till one of the boys asked my Lady Dascomb to move ; she looked daggers at him, dropped whatever she was looking at, and marched out of the store, my Lady Foote after her."

"They won't come again very soon."

"Who cares, if they don't? we have snobs enough without them."

"Mr. Rathburn signed the paper, but he told us he should have the shutters put up at four, and till then he should rely upon us to wait upon customers just the same as if we were not going to close till six. Miriam, I shouldn't like to be in the employ of any one I couldn't respect more than you do Mr. McKenzie."

"Of course you wouldn't!"

"Why not look for another place, then? You might come back to our store. Mr. Rathburn would give you another chance."

"Yes, go back there and say 'I am sorry ; I'll be a good girl ; won't do so no more.' No, I'm obliged to you. Besides, I can't leave Mr. McKenzie if I wanted to ; he looks out to keep some of our wages back, and he wouldn't pay me if I didn't give him

notice ; but he'll settle up when I go home, and I sha'n't go back. I'm going to learn a trade."

"What trade?"

"A dressmaker's. At least I'm going to work for a dressmaker."

"Do you think you will like that better than being in a store?"

"I think I should like to try it."

The time which Miriam had so impatiently waited for, came at last. It was the middle of August, and she was homeward-bound with Ruth ; there was no need of feigning enjoyment then. Having reached the old farm, she ran about with all the delight of a city child making his first country excursion. Even there, the fact as she thought it, that God's ways are unequal, could not be quite forgotten. She had not been at home many hours when her father asked, "See Sophia Dascomb pretty often, Miriam?"

"Not very."

"Jerry Barnard says she can't see New Hampshire folks in the city. I told her father of it. I guess he'd heard something of the sort before. 'I'd rather,' says he, 'a daughter of mine lived in a cottage of two rooms, than get so high up in the world that she can't see old friends ; and I shall tell her so.' I guess he did tell her so. She didn't stay

here long when she came this summer. She's gone to—what is it they call it?—Branch—Long Branch, that's it! You ought to hear the other Dascomb girls talk about my sister, Mrs. Foote, her carriages and her horses, and —”

“I don't care whether she sees me or not. There's Ben Bentley going down to the village;” and Miriam snatched a hat off the table, and the next moment was riding towards the village with Ben.

“She don't look so fleshy as she did, but I don't see as her spirits are broke,” said Mr. Weston.

Her spirits were not broken, but she was careful not to speak of the real trials she had borne, for, in her own heart, she knew that many of them she had brought upon herself.

Ruth's pleasure in being once more with her much-loved relatives, was chastened by grief for her father's infirmities. She was not prepared to see him so completely the wreck of his former self; those who were with him every day had become accustomed to his feeble state, and, actuated by a desire to make the best of things, had written more cheerfully than the facts would really warrant; hence, to Ruth, the shock was great. She had but little recollection of her father except as a strong, active, self-reliant man, whose judgment was valued, and whose advice was

often asked, not only by his own family, but by neighbors and townsmen. But now, every morning her brother helped him to dress, and lifted him into his chair, which was wheeled into the kitchen; there the broken-down man sat watching the passing, or looking at pictures, absorbed in occupations that would have contented an infant in arms—a mindless existence. Ruth saw plainly that his physical faculties could not long endure. Though she refrained from hinting aught of this to her mother, she bade him good-by at the end of a fortnight, sadly apprehensive that it might be for the last time.

Two weeks' vacation was all that she had been able to take; but Miriam prolonged her stay: she had engaged to commence work at Mesdames Rimmelle's the second week in September.

CHAPTER XVI.

INDEPENDENT DRESSMAKERS, AND SUBMISSIVE LADIES.

THE Mesdames Rimmelle appreciated the advantages of division of labor. In their work-room — a small, side apartment — were crowded ten girls and a sewing-machine. The machine was accorded, because it would have it, nearly twice the room that one of the young women occupied. One girl operated the machine, another worked on sleeves, a third on skirts, and so on.

In the reception-room the elder Madame Rimmelle took orders, gave information about styles and trimmings, and was exceedingly affable to all callers. The younger saw that the requisite goods were on hand, and administered discipline. The duties of a disciplinarian in a fashionable dressmaker's establishment, are by no means insignificant. When madame had exhausted her powers of persuasion on an unmanageable lady, the latter could generally be reduced to submission by a mere allusion to "ma sœur"; but if she displayed further signs of obstinacy, she was handed

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over to "ma sœur," who did not hesitate to execute the last penalty, and dismiss the culprit from the ranks of those "we work for." This dissimilarity between the sisters had many of the advantages so prominent in the partnership of which the renowned Jorkins was a member, and some that were peculiar to itself. Was a lady disappointed in not receiving her work finished in the way or at the time promised, madame blandly informed her that she must be mistaken, "ma sœur" attended to it herself. And while madame was pronounced a delightful creature, "so Frenchy in her manners," the more rudely "ma sœur" treated her patrons, the more they were convinced that she was very stylish. "She wouldn't dare to be so saucy if she hadn't oceans of work." This agreement to disagree was made the text of many sly witticisms among the girls, to whom the partners were madame and massa.

When Miriam made her first appearance in the work-room, "ma sœur" put the breadths of a dress into her hands, asking her to overcast them; and all day long, except at the noon hour, she overcast breadths, interrupted only when a spool or some implement was missed. "Oh, dear, I've lost my silk! Miss Weston, will you please get up?" Miss Weston, another and another miss rose; when every one

in the room had moved, the spool was found in the pocket of the searcher.

"Ma sœur" came and stood at the door. "Have you got that trimming on, Deborah?"

"I've nearly finished it, and there is so much left," Deborah answered, holding up two yards of lace.

"Left? There mustn't be any left. I don't want that remnant. How many times must I tell you not to make remnants?"

"I put it on just as it was ordered."

"Ma sœur" listened patiently to remonstrances from some of the girls, the like of which no customer would dare to offer. Good workwomen were not so numerous as gullible ladies.

"Well, put the rest on somewhere; find a place to put it. If it's put on she'll have to pay for it, and the remnant is no use to me."

"I'll put it on."

"Ma sœur" vanished. Deborah puckered the lace on, and displayed her handiwork to her fellow-laborers, saying, "There, massa's lace is all on, and her ladyship, that is going to wear the dress, has got it trimmed in the latest — no-remnant — Paris style."

There was no provision made for ventilating the work-room, and when the window could not be lowered, all the air which ten pairs of lungs consumed

must come in through the door standing open into a small hall. It was not strange that Miriam went home, day after day, with a violent headache, and that the clatter of the sewing-machine still sounded in her ears when she rested her head on the pillow.

"Ma sœur" was a good judge of character, and soon took the exact measure of the capabilities of a new hand; a girl could not be under her supervision many weeks, without being initiated into the very branch of the work for which nature and education had prepared her. She found that Miriam could be a valuable assistant in the reception-room, and called upon her when customers came in so rapidly that the partners could not attend to them all.

The change was very grateful to Miriam, and she was often amused and surprised by what she heard and saw, but by nothing was she more astonished than by the cool effrontery with which the younger Madame Rimmelle treated her patrons, and the meekness with which ladies submitted to her brusque independence. It mattered not whether they came in their carriages or on their own feet, "ma sœur" did not hesitate to give them to understand that she was mistress of as large a business as she cared to manage, and could choose her customers.

"But then, she was so fashionable!"

Mrs. A. came in with a small roll in her hand.

"When can you make a dress for me?"

"We have more begun than we can finish this week; we might fit you the middle of next week."

"What day shall I come in?"

"Wednesday we might attend to you."

Mrs. A. described the material she intended to buy, and timidly added, "I have some lace here; it is real lace, and has never been worn. I thought it might trim handsomely."

"We furnish the trimmings for all our dresses," replied "ma sœur," without deigning to look at the lace.

"What do you think would be stylish?" asked Mrs. A., putting the condemned lace out of sight.

"We have some laces that are suitable for that material. Madame will show them to you in a few moments."

A lace, far inferior to the one Mrs. A. carried home and laid in her bureau drawer, was put upon the dress.

Mrs. B. took an envelope from her pocket. "I would like to settle this bill, Madame Rimmelle. I should have paid it before I went out of town in the summer, but I wished to attend to it myself. Is not that charge higher than we expected it would be?"

"The account is perfectly correct."

Mrs. B. laid a goodly roll of greenbacks in "ma sœur's" hand. The bill was receipted, and Miriam was requested to gather up Mrs. B.'s goods.

"Will you take them with you, or shall I send them?" "ma sœur" asked.

"Are the dresses finished?"

"No, madam, but we never work for ladies who dispute our accounts."

"Very well, send them down to the carriage."

Mrs. B. had been grossly overcharged on her bill for spring dresses, but, though she had paid it, discipline must be maintained, and she might get her work done as best she could. "Ah! good-morning, Mrs. Dascomb. Good-morning, Mrs. Foote," said the elder Madame Rimmelle. "How is Madam Foote to-day? Beautiful weather, is it not? There was a package came for Madam Foote from Yendell's, but we didn't examine it; we preferred to wait till we had the pleasure of seeing Madam Foote herself. There is a parcel on that shelf, Miss Weston, with Mrs. Foote's name on it. Hand it, please."

Miriam gave the bundle to madame senior. She gathered the silk into folds and held it up, exclaiming, "Oh, *très jolie*, beau-tiful, *perfectionné*! but then

Madam Foote has such exquisite taste. How were you proposing to have this made?"

"What new styles have you?"

"Oh, we have a great variety: let me reflect. One must give much mind to such a dress as this —"

Madame stood with her finger on her lip for a moment, then started, as if a new thought had entered her brain. "Ah oui, that is it. *Très distingué*. Miss Weston, run and see if Mrs. Alta Familia's costume *est complet*. *Vite, s'il vous plait*, Mademoiselle Weston."

Miriam walked leisurely towards the work-room, while madame, with a sweet smile, informed her customers that, "Really, we do not like to bring ordered work into the reception-room, but I must make an exception in the case of ladies of such taste as Madam Dascomb and Madam Foote. I can't refuse them anything;" and madame glanced askance at "ma sœur." "It's *très grand plaisir* to show beautiful things to ladies who can appreciate." Miriam, indignant that she was made "to fetch and carry" for Sophia Foote, brought the dress, and stood listening to fashion editor's jargon as it flowed smoothly from the lips of Madame Rimmelle, rippling and uncertain from the lips of the ladies; a jargon, hog French we

are tempted to call it, unintelligible to any but the initiated.

Mrs. Foote's trimmings were selected, the dress promised, and the two ladies lolled back in their carriage, saying, "What a dear creature madame is!"

"Ma sœur" directed Miriam to look in a drawer filled with waist-patterns, for one labelled with Mrs. Foote's name. As she turned over the rolls she said to "ma sœur," who was making out a memorandum of the order, "She used to come into the store pretty often and talk about having her dresses made at Madame Rimmelle's. She used to say she liked madame, 'she was so respectful,' but her sister was 'a perfect termagant.'"

"Ma sœur" gazed at Miriam's cool, stolid countenance, uncertain whether a portion of her wrath should not fall upon the subordinate who had repeated the rude epithet, but concluded that discretion was the better part, especially as she was unusually hurried just then.

Miriam had the double satisfaction of being very insolent to one above her, and of knowing that Mrs. Foote would pay the penalty of her unguarded remark. The lady was astonished, the next day, when she received the "*très jolie, beau-tiful, perfectionné*" dress, with a note, "The Mesdames Rimmelle decline to

work for Mrs. Augustus Foote. The Mesdames Rimmelle retain no names on their books but those of ladies."

Sophia recognized Miriam's handiwork, and though she could not remember where she had given offence, saw the wisdom of submitting to the edict with good grace. Thus she lost one card of admission to good society; when asked, "Who is your dressmaker, Mrs. Foote?" she could not reply with a matter-of-course air, "Oh, the Mesdames Rimmelle!" But she consoled herself by saying, "I used to patronize the Mesdames Rimmelle, but I gave them up, their manners are so insufferable. 'Ma sœur' is so coarse, and madame fawns, and makes such ridiculous work trying to talk French."

"Ma sœur" was well satisfied with herself; she had administered salutary correction to the purse-proud woman, whose filthy lucre she condescended to take in exchange for her talent and energy.

"Simpletons, every one of them! Turning up their noses at me! If the bread and butter wasn't fairly held to their mouths, they'd starve."

The fashionable dressmaker's mental denunciations of that class "of pleasaunt womankind" from which she drew her own support, were interrupted by the entrance of one of the sterner sex. The calls of gen-

tlemen at the Mesdames Rimmelle's rooms were like angels' visits, and were appreciated in proportion to their rarity. For them madame's smiles were sweet beyond expression; to them "ma sœur's" insolence became frank, friendly courtesy.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Grantley! How is Mrs. Grantley? I was telling my sister, only yesterday, that of all the ladies we see here—and we see the first ladies in the city—there was not one who, for real style and fine appearance, could compare with Mrs. Grantley."

"Mrs. Grantley is—Mrs. Grantley. I can't give her higher praise. The anniversary of our wedding is coming round again, and I wish to prepare a little surprise for my wife," said the affectionate husband. "I am in the city on business, and for a short time only. You have Mrs. Grantley's measure, I believe. Can you get up a dress for her, and send it to my hotel this day week?"

"We would do our best, sir. If it can possibly be done without disappointing other customers, we will do it."

"Then you can't promise it?"

"Ma sœur" thought a moment, then run over in a stage *aside* several names that in commercial minds were associated with gilt-edged paper, and said, "Yes,

sir, I don't know but we might venture to promise it. We have two dresses commenced for Mrs. Alta Familia, jr. We were to finish them next week, if we possibly could; but if Mrs. Grantley *must* have her dress, we can't *possibly*. What is the dress to be?"

"Silk, I thought; and I would like it rich."

"Oh! you have not purchased it, then?"

"No, certainly not! I shall leave that to you. I am a better judge of marble and granite, than silk." Mr. Grantley was largely interested in quarries. "You know what Mrs. Grantley's taste is. Something neat, rich, dark rather than light, and not much trimming. I think you would be quite as likely to buy what would be satisfactory to her as I should."

"Oh, I don't know! We often take orders to purchase and make up goods. I think we never failed of giving satisfaction yet. Still, we prefer, if a gentleman can spare the time, that he should see the material before it is finally purchased."

"I don't see how I can possibly spare the time. I am making Boston my head-quarters, but I am in the city but little."

"Very well, sir! What is the last moment you can give us?"

"This day week, at noon."

"And we shall send to the Tremont House?"

"Yes."

Mr. Grantley was opening his pocket-book, but "ma sœur" said, "Oh, never mind that now! We will make one account of it, if you please."

"I may not have time to settle your bill."

"Send us your check at your leisure."

Mr. Grantley disappeared, and "ma sœur" went to rummaging in her drawers, and brought out two remnants of silk. Other attentive husbands had wished to make loving wives presents. Madame always recommended ample patterns, and if a gentleman chose to accompany "ma sœur" when she selected the goods, she could easily pronounce fashionable, serviceable, or "suited to your lady's style and figure," those which matched the remnants in one of her drawers. Thus she not only made two commissions, the one for buying and the one from the dealer, but in two or three dresses cleared the price of one.

Mrs. Grantley's dress was completed, and sent to the hotel just as Mr. Grantley was leaving. He took the box in his hand, and, when he reached home, gave it to his wife, saying, "Something for you, my dear. This is the anniversary of the happiest day of my life, you remember!"

The gallant husband was rewarded by a shower of kisses. The box was opened, and Mrs. Grantley held

up a rich, but light, showy dress, loaded with last year's trimmings. The wife praised the quality of the silk and the cut, and said all she could in favor of her present. The husband turned it over, and tried to think it was lady-like, and looked expensive. Expensive it certainly was, whether it looked so or not. Mr. Grantley received the bill by mail the next day, and sent his check. What the figures on that check were, was one of the few secrets he kept from his wife.

No wonder the Mesdames Rimmelle liked to take orders from gentlemen, when their orders were such capital safety-valves for old stock, and their fives, tens, twenties, hundreds, slid so easily into "ma sœur's" cash-box.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRIKE.

THERE was no dull time for the Mesdames Rimmelle. During the winter, party dresses were wanted; the marriage-bells sounded, and the dreaded messenger called upon families to assume the garb of woe, regardless of spring's revival or autumn's decay; but it was only with the changing seasons that there was much stir in the reception-room. Day after day Miriam was employed with her needle. This close application affected her health, and she often wished she could discover some way of escape short of giving up her place.

One morning there was an unusual noise in the adjoining room, separated from the workroom only by a board partition, and occupied by an embroidery-pattern designer and stamper.

"What is going on in Gunnison's room?"

"He is moving. Didn't you know he was going out?"

"No. Let's pull down the partition and make one room of it," said Miriam.

"That isn't a bad idea. It used to be all one room, you know, and when madame and massa didn't have as many girls as they have now."

"What did they divide it for?"

"To get the rent, of course; the landlord rose on massa, and she thought she'd take some of it out of us girls; so she crowded us up into a corner, and let two-thirds of the room."

"I guess we'd better pull the partition down before massa has a chance to get anybody else in the other side of it."

"Look out! she'll hear. She's got ears all round her head."

When Miriam sat down to her work in the afternoon, she put into the hands of her next neighbor a slip of paper, on which these words were written: "Go to Deborah's room after work. Mum's the word! Don't go in a body. Pass this on."

The paper passed from hand to hand at safe intervals, and returned to Miriam. The girls assembled in Deborah's room, a dormitory which afforded them standing-room only, all but one wondering what was the occasion of this conclave. Miriam constituted

herself presiding officer, and did not call the meeting to order, but stated the object of the gathering.

"What do you say, girls, to taking Gunnison's room?"

"This one says, 'how you going to get it?'" said Deborah.

"This one says, 'out of massa's bank,'" said Miriam, joining in the laugh.

"This one says, 'how you going to get over?'" chimed in another voice.

"This one says, 'I'll tell,'" said Miriam. The laugh which followed was interrupted by Rachel Dow's cough.

"Half killed, ain't you, Rachel? Stived up in that miserable little room, with nothing but a stove-pipe to warm it."

"I believe I've taken a little cold," said Rachel, pressing her hand on her aching side.

Miriam enlarged upon the advantages of the change. "More light, better ventilation, room to draw your needle out without being in danger of putting it into somebody's eyes;" and added, "I say we can get it, if you'll all help."

"What! pay for it ourselves? Count me out," said Deborah.

"Pay for it ourselves? Nonsense! You don't think I'm going to pay madame's rent?"

"Why can't you tell us what you are driving at? We won't hinder."

"Come here to-morrow, all, at this time, and I'll tell you more about it. Only mum's the word, be sure!"

"Yes, we'll remember." And the girls separated, thinking Miriam's scheme utterly chimerical. But the next evening she brought a paper drawn up in the round-robin form, and in Jerry Barnard's most legible hand. It set forth that —

"The signers of this document, employés of the Mesdames Rimmelle, beg leave to call the attention of the Mesdames Rimmelle to the small, close, and generally insalubrious state of their workroom. The aforesaid employés regret to be obliged to state, that on account of grave detriment to health, they must decline to pursue their avocation in the aforesaid workroom after the close of the present week. They have, however, the honor of affirming, that they shall esteem it a pleasure to resume work at the Mesdames Rimmelle's at the earliest day on which the Mesdames Rimmelle can provide more healthful quarters.

"Confident that the Mesdames Rimmelle are anxious to do all in their power to promote the health and comfort of their employés, they sign themselves," —

Miriam read the paper, but it was not received with the favor that she expected. She explained that it was to be signed "round and round." Madame and massa would have no pretext for blaming one more than another.

"I don't know that it will be any consolation to me, if I am out of work, to know that all the rest of you are," said Deborah.

"We sha'n't be out of work. Madame and massa know which side their bread is buttered better than that. Do you know how many dresses they've got ordered now?"

"No, I am sure I don't."

"Well, I do. To say nothing of all the others, they've got six promised for the grand wedding that is coming off Tuesday; the bride's and the bridesmaid's, and 'Madame mère's,' as massa calls her. They won't dare to disappoint them, if the skies should fall. Massa is saucy enough, but the cards are all out, and she'd rather do the whole job for nothing than not to have her work on hand in time. These big weddings are splendid advertisements for her. Then there are the Germans at Mrs. Alta Familia's; she's got dresses to make for them. Don't you see it's just the work she can't put new hands on?"

"Well, 'nothing venture, nothing have,' said

Deborah. "I've no objection to putting the screws on to them; they've screwed us all they dared." And she signed the paper.

"You'll sign? — and you? — and you?" Miriam asked all around; and, after some further argument, received an affirmative answer from every one but little Rachel Dow, who said, "No, I guess not."

"Now, that's too bad!" said Miriam.

"I can't afford to lose a single day's work," said Rachel.

Ah! there was a consumptive sister, in a small room in a poor tenement-house; the slender tenure by which she held her earthly existence must not be strained. These two sisters were all that remained of a large family; and the affection that had been given to father, mother, brothers and sisters, was concentrated on each other. Rachel cheerfully devoted her wages to their mutual support, only regretting that they afforded her sister so few of the comforts that her feeble state demanded. Though Rachel Dow accomplished as much, and did as good work, as any one at the Mesdames Rimmelle's, her pay was the lowest.

"It's precious little work you'll lose, Rachel," said Miriam. "Madame can't afford to lose our work a bit better than we can afford to lose her pay. I tell

you what it is, Rachel: you're a fool to work for the wages you do."

"I can't help it."

"Yes, you can help it. Just tell massa you can't do it — you must have more."

"I did tell her, the other day, that I had to pay more for everything; but she said she paid me as much as my work was worth to her."

"Well, it's no such thing; and she knows it ain't. Your work is worth as much as Deborah's, and she gets half as much again. If you'd only spunk up, they'd have to pay you more. Won't you sign? You'd better! Massa'll think all the more of you, if she finds you've got some mind of your own."

"I'd rather not sign."

"You must do as you please; but you mustn't tell anything you have heard here."

"I wouldn't do that, of course."

"Then we will have to spread our signatures a little more, that is all."

The postman dropped some letters into the Mesdames Rimmelle's letter-box the next morning, and with them a long envelope, directed in a bold, business-like, but unfamiliar hand. Madame opened it, while "ma sœur" stood at the side of the desk looking on. The elder sister glanced over the paper, and, with a look

full of meaning, said to the younger, "By and by," thrust the round-robin back into its wrapper, put the whole out of sight, and quietly proceeded to open the rest of the morning's mail.

Throughout the day neither partner, by look or motion, betrayed any annoyance; and it was not till evening, when the rooms were closed to customers, and the workwomen had all left, that the long envelope was brought to light, and the sisters, together, conned the seditious document. They read it twice.

"This looks very much like a strike," said madame.

"I should think so. The spiteful things, to get up a strike now, when they know we've got weddings and parties on hand, just as many as we can manage! we never were so crowded with work since we began business, and there's Cephas Derby's death in to-night's paper; the order for their mourning will come in first thing to-morrow. I've been thinking we'd have to get in new hands, only we couldn't crowd another one into the workroom, and it won't do to bring work into the reception-room, that gives things such a common look."

"Oh, yes! that's too plebeian altogether. What had we better do?"

"I'd turn every one of them out to-morrow, if I could."

"Of course; but we can't, and they know it. If worst comes to worst, I don't see but we must take down the partition to Gunnison's room again, but that'll be a loss of three hundred dollars a year to us."

"Oh, no! It needn't be a loss; the customers must pay expenses."

"Yes; but there is one thing I'd like to know, that is, who started this. We must find that out."

"Let's see! There is every name here but Rachel Dow. I shouldn't wonder if that was only a blind, and she did it after all."

"She! she hasn't got the courage. We make more money out of her work than out of any other girl's here."

"I know that, but she's deep, with that white face of hers, and pretending to have a cough."

The dressmaker knew that she wronged the submissive Rachel, and disliked her accordingly.

"Several of the family died in consumption. I think it's more likely to be that Miss Weston. I always thought it was very impudent of her to say what she did about Mrs. Foote."

"No, it isn't she, I'm sure; she's too blunt. She comes straight out, and says what she has to say."

"At any rate, we'll keep a stiff upper lip, and see if we can't find out who the ringleader is, and make an

example of her. We'll question the girls, one at a time, when they are off their guard. I don't see that it is any use to make a fuss about it. We will engage some new hands, and take care to let the old ones know that we are doing it; maybe that will frighten them into good behavior. I don't like to have the rod held over me in this style."

"Neither do I; but what will you do with your new hands, if the others don't leave? If they do leave, there are all those dresses that new girls can't possibly finish as well, or as quick, as those that have been at work on them, and understand all about them."

"We can have the partition taken down Saturday night. It won't do to slack work now; we might just as well give up entirely. I can see that minx 'direct from Paris,' direct from the woods, that's just set up opposite, rolling up her eyes, and saying, '*I never disappoint my customers!*' We never should hear the last of it."

"Then I don't see but those saucy girls will have their own way."

"Well, you do not want to bite off your nose to spite your face, do you?"

The machinery of the Mesdames Rimmelle's establishment moved smoothly on, without jar or perceptible friction. Their workwomen stitched on satin, silk,

and crape, with outward calmness, but some inward trepidation. That their missive had reached its destination they had no doubt, for Deborah had seen the long envelope in madame's hand, but it had failed to produce the expected commotion: not a word about its contents had either partner uttered to one of the employés.

Friday came, and Miriam was called into the reception-room several times, on different pretexts. Each time "ma sœur" was talking with applicants for work, and more than once Miriam heard her say, "We shall expect you Monday morning." The leader of the strike asked herself if she had not been playing with edged tools; if the manœuvre, which she thought had displayed ability and courage, would result in throwing her fellow-laborers and herself out of work, at a season when it would be next to impossible to find employment elsewhere?

Dissatisfied with herself, and fully convinced that, however illuminated others' pathways might be, there was little sunlight on hers, she left her work Friday afternoon; when only a few steps from the Mesdames Rimmelle's, Deborah overtook her.

"Well, Miriam, I don't see that the partition has come down, or that we have climbed over, and I don't see that there are any signs of it, either."

"No, and that isn't the worst of it, either. Massa is engaging new girls."

"You don't suppose she's going to have all new girls, do you?"

"How can I tell? She'll have a nice time of it if she does; lots of work to take out, and that always makes massa raving."

"I guess we'd better have kept quiet; it's better to have a small workroom, than no workroom at all. I'm not sure but we shall be served just right. Madame and massa have always paid me well; it was rather mean to come down on them when we thought they couldn't help themselves."

Miriam remembered that Jerry had spoken of "striking a fellow when he is down," before he consented to draw up the round-robin.

"If you like being shut up in that stived-up room all day, I don't," said Miriam. "I'm sure I haven't any more strength than a fly, when I come out at night."

"It isn't right to expect us to; but we might have talked it over with madame and massa."

"Yes, and what good would it have done? They'd just as lief make money out of our very lives as anything else. When they have killed us off, they can get more in our places."

"I don't know about that. I can generally make massa hear to reason, and if she wouldn't, it was time enough then to say what we would and what we wouldn't do."

Miriam made no reply; she was too much out of spirits to carry the argument farther.

Saturday passed. Still no compromise offered by the principals; no intimation of yielding on their part. Late in the afternoon Deborah whispered in Miriam's ear, "Come round to my room." Her first impulse was to refuse, but second thought told her she must not be a coward, and fly from the storm she had herself raised. One after another the Mesdames Rimelle's girls came. Only Rachel Dow was missing, and each wished she had no more reason to be present than Rachel. It was not a hilarious party, and the young women who composed it were not as forbearing as Deborah.

"Pretty kettle of fish you've cooked up for us, Miriam Weston!" said the machine girl.

"I suppose you didn't have any hand in it yourself?" Miriam retorted.

"We shouldn't have thought of such a thing if it hadn't been for you."

"We've just been and quarrelled with our bread and butter, and have lost it, I suppose."

"If we haven't lost it, we've got to eat our own words with it."

Thus Miriam alone had to bear the upbraidings of the angry group. At last Deborah came to her rescue. "Come, girls, haven't you scolded Miriam enough? She meant to help herself, and us too. What are you going to do Monday?"

"I'm going to do the best I can for myself," said one.

"I've had enough of 'union is strength' for one while," said another.

It was decided that "*Sauve qui peut*" should be the motto of each.

Monday morning came. In a state of glorious uncertainty Deborah sauntered down the street on which were the rooms of the Mesdames Rimmelle. She was early, but others were before her, with the hope that "first come" would be best "served." Her companions in uncertainty were early on the spot. Deborah opened the workroom door. To her astonishment she entered an apartment three times as large as that she had left on Saturday; the partition was gone, and no sign remained save marred plastering.

At the usual hour of beginning work, the newly engaged seamstresses were at their posts. Of the signers of the round-robin, no one was absent but Miriam.

Madame portioned out the tasks, and in the most matter-of-fact manner imaginable said, "Our business has increased so much of late, that 'ma sœur' and I told Mr. Gunnison he must give us up his room." Miriam came in in a few moments, cast a triumphant glance round the room, but met no responsive look. In the course of the morning she picked up from the floor a small card, and wrote on it, "What do you think of the kettle of fish now?" and passed it to the machine girl. The answer came back, "No thanks to you!"

Which party was victorious? The workwomen certainly had more comfortable quarters. Madame had a pretext for throwing out delicate hints of the greatly increased expenses of the business. "Ma sœur" had an excuse for adding a very respectable percentage to her charges. Miriam had an experience in leading a strike which she thought would suffice for her lifetime.*

*Justice demands the statement that the occurrences which have been described as happening in the Mesdames Rimmelle's apartments, and those in which the sisters, their patrons and their employés, have been actors, did not all take place in any one establishment, or in any one city. For the sake of continuity, and to save my

The Mesdames Rimmelle did their utmost to discover the organizer of the plot. They asked leading questions, professed full information, contrived skillful conversational ambushes, from which to pounce upon the well-kept secret, but all to no purpose. To this day they are ignorant of the name of the originator of the round-robin; to this day they do not know whether the signers would have adhered to their boldly-asserted determination or not.

While Miriam had been paying off old grudges, and organizing the strike at the Mesdames Rimmelle's, Ruth had remained at Mr. Rathburn's, steadily gaining in his good opinion. Other departments than the one for which she was responsible gradually came under her general oversight, and she often gave notice to Mr. Rathburn when the stock in them was running low.

"I don't like to have a lady come in and ask for standard articles that we keep, and not be able to find them," she said one day, by way of apology, lest her employer might think her officious.

"Decidedly not. I am much obliged to you; you

readers the trouble of much travelling, I have brought them into one locality; the one with the every-day life and customs of which I am most familiar.

have saved me many a journey down town. If all assistants would devote themselves to their calling as you do, business would be almost a pastime to principals. I beg your pardon, but didn't I see Mr. McKenzie talking with you this morning?"

"Yes, sir. His head saleswoman has gone to New York."

"And he made you an offer to take her place. May I ask what that offer was?"

"He did not make a definite offer; he said he would give more than I was receiving."

"That is rather a mean way of managing; we will put a stop to that. Draw at the rate of twenty dollars a week from to-day, and if Mr. McKenzie repeats his offer, or if any one else makes a similar one, I would like to know it."

"I thank you, Mr. Rathburn, but I refused to go to Mr. McKenzie, and certainly should not make any change without consulting you."

"I did not suppose you would."

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR LOSS, HIS GAIN.

A MERRY Christmas!" "The same to you, and a hundred more and merrier!" Greetings flew from lip to lip. Stalwart men, bright-faced ladies, and happy children, were hurrying on, bent on the same errand, the delivery of Christmas tokens. "The fir-tree, the pine, and the box together," beautified the sanctuary, and symbolized there, and in numberless homes, the birth of the ever living Child, who came to bring "peace on earth and good will to men." But so long as the world stands, it must be that the day of joy to the many, is the day of sorrow to the few.

It was on Christmas morning that Mr. Rathburn sent Ruth a letter from Dr. Jarvis. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR MISS RUTH, — You will doubtless remember that I promised to inform you of any decided change in your father. I write now partly in fulfillment of that promise, and partly because I believe your mother would prefer that the intelligence should

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come from me. His state is such now, that it will be contrary to all precedent should he continue many weeks. I do not see that your coming home can be of any advantage at present, but would advise you to hold yourself in readiness to come at a moment's warning. Probably it is needless for me to call your attention to the fact, that your father, now hopelessly shattered in body and mind, only waits a state of existence where pain and infirmity have no place.

"Rely upon me to summon you in season.

"Your old friend,

"W. J. JARVIS."

The short home-letters that Ruth received during the next three weeks, only spoke of her father's failing strength, but at the end of that time Dr. Jarvis's telegram came.

"Come quick as possible! He asks for you."

The candle that had burnt low and flickering, was brightening before the final extinguishment. The sun of intelligence was, just before its setting, dispelling the clouds.

Ruth carried the message to Mr. Rathburn; she had before shown him the letter.

"You have my hearty sympathy, Miss Bentley," said he; "but is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing, sir, but to give me leave to go."

"That, of course: and do not be in haste about coming back; there is no one in the store who will not gladly take part of your duty now."

The afternoon was bitterly cold. Ruth heard the fact asserted over and over again, but was unconscious of it herself. She only knew that the cars crept slowly, oh, so slowly! Would she reach home in time to see her father once more? She almost wished she could get out and walk, then it would seem as if she were making some progress. The long journey was ended at last. It was dark when she, the only passenger who stopped there, alighted at the station two miles from her home.

She had had no time to give notice of her coming; she might not be expected until the next day; would she be delayed in getting a conveyance for those two miles? There was the gray horse. By the light of the switchman's lantern she recognized the faithful animal, who shared, with another as faithful, the honor of bearing Dr. Jarvis on his missions of mercy. Beside him stood his master, so completely cased in fur, that form and features were undistinguishable.

"I did not know that you would get my despatch in season to come by this train, but I was coming by this way, and I told Ben I'd stop and see."

"Am I in time, doctor?"

"Yes, your father will probably rally again to-night; after that, I cannot say."

Nothing more was said until the sleigh stopped at Mr. Bentley's door. "Hold yourself in readiness to come when I call you."

Dr. Jarvis threw off his outside coat, and went into the sick-room. Ruth heard her father's voice, weak, but firm, and the tones were those of his best days. "Has she come, doctor? Why doesn't she come in?"

Dr. Jarvis opened the door, beckoned to Ruth, and, as she passed, whispered, "Be careful!" With a self-control surprising to herself, Ruth walked quietly up to the bed, stooped to kiss her father's forehead, and, at once understanding his wish, took the hands he was too feeble to raise, and clasped them about her neck. "Ruth, my daughter, my blessing!" he said; then unclasped his hands. Ruth replaced them on the couch.

"Sit down there close by me. I must say what I can, now. It's a year and a half, they tell me, Ruth, since I was hurt, and nearly all that time you have been from home. They tell me, my daughter, that you are doing well in the city; but they needn't tell me that, I should know it myself. Mother says you did not know whether you ought to go or not. Now

I shall leave you and Ben to take care of mother and Winnie; and you won't grieve for me much, will you, Ruth? There — was — more — I — ”

Mr. Bentley was again unconscious. Ruth released her hand from his grasp, and turned to look for a reviving draught; but Dr. Jarvis, who had come from the next room, said, “Better so. He knows no pain while he is in that state. I will be with you again early in the morning.”

Ruth remained with her father that night; the other members of the family were within call. At half-past seven Dr. Jarvis came.

“Has he lain just so?” he asked.

“Precisely; breathing as quietly as an infant.”

The dying man stirred and spoke. “Open the blinds; raise the curtains! I want to see them all. Call them all — wife, Ben, Ruth, Winnie,” he said. “Let in the light!”

Ben looked at Dr. Jarvis; he nodded assent. The full morning sunlight streamed into the room. The united family stood around the bed; the husband and father gazed at each with an affection words could not express; his eyes closed: he murmured, “Let in the light!”

Dr. Jarvis led the widowed mother out; the fatherless children crept away one by one. Mr. Joseph

Dascomb had just come in to make his usual morning offer of service, and it was Sophia Foote's father who made ready the earthly tabernacle, that the dead might be buried out of sight.

It was a dreary winter day when Mr. Bentley's wife and children gave up to the frozen earth the care that had been their sorrow for many months, but never their burden. The cutting wind drove hither and thither the snow-flakes that fell fitfully from the gray clouds. The weather was in accord with Ruth's feelings. What business had the sun with her father's open grave? When the last trumpet should sound, then would come the light of perfect day.

When she returned to the house, deserted of him whose affection had pervaded every nook and corner, she mechanically took the hand extended to assist her in getting out of the sleigh; her thick veil and blinding tears prevented her seeing that it was not a neighbor's arm she leaned upon, and it was not till she returned to the sitting-room, after laying aside her veil and winter wraps, that she knew that Mr. Lester had accepted Ben's invitation, and was waiting to see her.

“Business brought me to this region, Miss Bentley,” said he, “and I could not refrain from paying the last respect we can render to a good man, and, at

the risk of intruding, expressing my sincere sorrow for his family's loss; my joy — yes, my joy, for his gain."

Ruth could say but little. Mr. Lester spoke of Josie, whom he had never lost sight of since the day he made the acquaintance of the "little bit of contentment," as he called her. It was from her that he first heard of Ruth's bereavement; in her childish way she had shown warm sympathy. "She's got Josie to love her now," the little girl said, "if her father has gone to heaven." "Ah, Miss Bentley!" Mr. Lester added, "good deeds are more enduring than life; death has no power over them, except it be to make them more potent."

Mr. Bentley's will was read. One copy was found, as he had indicated, among his papers; another was deposited at his lawyer's. The farm, house, and all appertaining to them, were equally divided between his wife and son. The other property, personal, and about five thousand dollars, was to go to Mrs. Bentley and her children in equal portions. The testator stated that he had made this distinction between his son and daughters, not from any lack of affection for Ruth and Winnie, but because, as head of the family, Ben would be charged with the care of his mother

and sisters. He advised that there should be no change in the family arrangements until six months after his decease; then, if Mrs. Bentley preferred to give the farm up to Ben, and could make a satisfactory bargain with him, she might do so with the assurance that she was carrying out the testator's wishes.

When Ruth went back to Boston, Miriam had given up her place at the Mesdames Rimmelle's, and applied to Messrs. Yendell & Co. for work. "There is not a better firm in the city to work for," said Miriam, and she was right. Their workroom was large, sunny, and airy. The Mesdames Rimmelle did not pay according to the quality or quantity of service rendered. If an efficient workwoman demanded full pay, she received it; but if she was timid, and allowed herself, as Miriam expressed it, to be "crowded over," her labor was secured at a rate below its market value.

Yendell & Co., on the contrary, had a fixed scale of prices for work, and each one of their employes received a percentage on the profits of the whole business, after they reached a certain amount. Their workwomen were allowed unusual liberty as to the hours for commencing and leaving work, and the firm

rarely found their confidence abused. When the time for preparing for the spring trade arrived, Miriam was engaged to work at Yendell & Co.'s, on ladies' outside garments. *

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW HOME.

AUGUST found Ruth once more at home. Her father's vacant chair was there, and though his bodily presence was wanting, his memory was intertwined with almost every object in the house, and about the farm.

There was a careworn expression on Mrs. Bentley's face, such as Ruth remembered to have seen there only during the first few weeks after her father's accident. The daughter waited for her mother's confidence, but waited in vain. One afternoon, as Mrs. Bentley was sewing, her work dropped into her lap, and she sat, her head turned from Ruth, gazing out of the window, but evidently taking no note of what was passing. Ruth watched her for some minutes, then crossed the room, laid her hand on her parent's shoulder, and asked, "What is it, mother; can I help you?"

"I don't know; perhaps you can. I was thinking of Winnie. She and Nannie never agreed very well;

you know Ben and Nannie are to be married in the fall?"

"Yes, mother. Well, I can't say I ever had a very high opinion of Nannie Dascomb, but I think she really loves Ben, and I can't help hoping she will make him a good wife."

"I don't see why she may not, but Winnie doesn't like to hear a word in her favor, and insists she will not stay at home after Nannie comes. I suppose if I exerted my authority she would obey me — no one of my children ever refused to obey me yet — but I doubt if the effect would be good in the end. There, I hear her now; she is talking to Nannie. I do wish Nannie wouldn't speak to her in that cool, superior way."

Winnie came in, threw her hat down on the floor, flung herself into a chair, and began, "Say, Ruth, can't you get me a place in a store in Boston?"

"Perhaps I could, Winnie; but you are younger than I was when I went to Boston, and I had some things to go through with I wouldn't want you to have to bear; at least till you are older. We'll talk it over some day, though."

"I don't care. I'm going somewhere. I won't stay here with Nannie Dascomb, forever flourishing 'my sister, Mrs. Foote,' in my face; she used to be

always trying to 'ma'am' me at school; she was one of the big girls."

"I don't believe you will want to go away from home if mother thinks it isn't best," said Ruth.

Winnie glanced at the careworn face under the widow's cap, and saw that tears filled her mother's eyes. She sprang from her seat, took both her mother's hands in hers, and kissed the eyelids from under which hot tears were streaming. "Poor mother! darling mother! has trouble enough, don't she?" snatched her hat, and ran out of the room.

"She is a dear, warm-hearted child!" said Mrs. Bentley, as she wiped away her tears, "but I wish she had more of your balance, Ruth."

"And I more of her cheeriness! Perhaps, mother, I've been building an air-castle. Do you suppose Ben would feel very badly if you shouldn't live here always?"

"I think Ben chooses I should stay; but Nannie — I suppose I shall be mother-in-law to her."

"When we close early, sometimes I take a ride a little way out of town in a horse-car, and so get a breath of fresh air. When I pass a pretty little cottage, with a green door, yard in front, and prairie roses and honeysuckles climbing round the windows, I think how pleasant it would be if you and Winnie

and I could have one like it. Don't you suppose you and I could buy a small house a few miles out of the city, with what father left us, and not touch Winnie's portion?"

"I see no reason why you should spend your share of father's property, and save Winnie's, when she would be benefited as much as you."

"Let me have my own way about that; do, mother. I'd so much rather Winnie's share would be put where it will be gaining something for her. I can support myself, and more too, if I have my health. I have saved something of my earnings now; I wouldn't touch that. My salary is over a thousand dollars a year, and Mr. Rathburn would take Winnie into the store. We couldn't live in any great splendor, but we could take real comfort."

"You can't be comfortable at your boarding-place?"

"I am not. I shouldn't have stayed there so long, if it hadn't been for Miriam and Josie. Miriam couldn't afford to pay higher board; but we changed our room. Since I've had the care of Josie's clothes — Mr. Lester keeps me supplied with money for her — she has clung to me in her quiet, unobtrusive way. Such a needy little creature nestles down in your heart, and you don't want to drive her out."

"Her mother is sick, you say?"

"Yes, a clear case of death from hard work. She keeps her room half the time, and there is no one to oversee anything. A good many of the boarders have left. Nora has gone; she got tired of living in a boarding-house. And Mary, too; she wanted to go where the work wouldn't be so hard. The new girls do pretty much as they like. It will be impossible for Miriam or me to stay much longer."

"Mrs. Graham is to be pitied, certainly."

"Yes, mother. I don't know what she would have done if Mr. Lester hadn't agreed to be responsible for her rent. I think he must have paid it several times. Two of the children have gone to their father's friends in the country somewhere; the oldest two can take care of themselves, I suppose; but I don't know what will become of Josie. I wish we could take her with us. I sha'n't know how to leave her; but I don't know that we ought to take the responsibility of providing for her until we see how we get along ourselves. But I am talking just as if it was all settled. Perhaps it's only an air-castle, after all; but it won't be amiss to think it over."

Mrs. Bentley did think it over. Ruth's air-castle assumed substantial proportions, and became, at last, a reasonable, feasible plan. Nannie did not intend to

be exasperating, but, naturally self-confident, she expressed her opinions in decided terms; and the prospect of assuming matronly dignity had made her more dictatorial than ever. The mother foresaw friction, constant and wearing, between the sisters-in-law, and she looked directly in the face the fact that so many women have accepted querulously and reluctantly—the inevitable fact that there would be divided interests in her family; that her first-born, who had drawn his nourishment from her breast, who had confided to her all his childish secrets, and had, in vigorous youth, been guided by her counsels, would be bound to another by closer ties than those that had ever made him a loyal and affectionate son! Her husband, when making his will, probably looked forward to a state of things somewhat like that which now existed. She would offer Ben her interest in the farm for his portion of the personal property, which was as yet undivided. That he would strenuously oppose her decision, she well knew; but she would gently and firmly carry it through. Her purpose formed, she communicated it to her son.

“Now, mother, I do wish you wouldn’t talk or think of anything of the sort. Why must the family be broken up, and so soon after father has gone? He would choose that you and Winnie should live

here just as you have done. My being married needn’t make any difference. I’d a great deal rather you’d live here than anywhere else, and I am sure Nannie would.”

Mrs. Bentley was not so sure of Nannie’s cordiality, but she let the subject drop, intending to bring it up again when time should have familiarized Ben with the idea of separation. After an evening spent with Nannie, his opposition was weaker, and he finally accepted his mother’s offer, but with the express condition that she and his sisters would always count his house as one of their homes, to be resorted to at any time.

While the plan was under discussion, Winnie often declared her entire willingness to accede to her mother’s wishes in all particulars.

“You won’t break up and go away,” said she, “if you don’t want to, just because I’ve been a horrid, cross, ugly, ungrateful girl, will you, mother?”

“I will only do what I think is best for you, and Ruth, and all of us,” the mother answered.

Ruth spent the usual two weeks at home, and returned to the city, but petitioned for an extension of her vacation, that she might have time for house-hunting. As the weather was still warm, and many

city residents still lingered at the beaches and among the mountains, Mr. Rathburn could easily spare her.

She conned the advertising columns of the newspapers, made memoranda of brokers' offices, and started, one morning, happy in the anticipation of home, peace, and comfort. She mounted steep stairways, covered with the dust that had blown in from the street, searched out doors on crooked landings, and saw many phases of masculine character. The wide-awake youth, new to the business, who began by stating that he should not accept a tenant who could not give good guaranties. The young man, heels on desk and cigar in mouth, who, with the skill and celerity of a gymnast, brought the heels to the floor at the sight of a bonnet, and chewed the cigar-end while he tried to find out who his caller was, and gauge her purse. The older man, who talked leisurely of houses and places quite different from the one for which she was seeking. The heavy dealer, who had not time to give to so small a trade. The smart man, who had full confidence in his ability to make black appear white; white, black; who protested that locations where pigs, goats, and human beings live in delightful equality were extremely genteel. The courteous man, who was deeply interested for her, and thought he had on his list something that could not fail to please her.

So she went up and down, in and out of large and small offices, all the time haunted by the thought of the spider and the fly. She rode many miles in short trips, examined many impracticable places, and became convinced that it was far easier to form an ideal than to find its realization in brick or wood. Her time was fast passing, and she had seen but one house that had impressed her favorably. A second time she called upon the courteous man, intending to ascertain his precise terms. The price was named, the place extolled, all its advantages held up in the most favorable light; always salable, sure to rise, etc., etc.

"That is your very lowest?" Ruth asked.

"The very lowest. If I were dealing with a man, I should ask him five hundred more; but when I deal with a lady, I always name the very lowest cent first."

The door opened, the broker wheeled about in his rotary office-chair, and spoke to the gentleman who entered: "Good-morning, Mr. Lester!"

"Good-morning, sir! Good-morning, Miss Bentley! We don't see you down among the offices very often."

"No, I don't find my way here very often. I shouldn't be here now, but mother is thinking of moving."

"And you are looking for a house! Has Mr. Stubbs got about what you want on his list?"

"Not exactly; but I have seen nothing I like better than one of his houses."

"Where is that?" Ruth gave the location.

"That place is worth about how much, Mr. Stubbs?"

"I told the lady I could sell it for twenty-five hundred."

"Twenty-five hundred! It strikes me I saw a notice of the recent sale of that place for something under that figure."

"Perhaps you did, but those are the present owner's terms. I might see him again, and try to induce him to make them lower."

"I think it would be well to do so before Miss Bentley closes the bargain."

"If I conclude to look at the house again, I will call," said Ruth.

"I will come in again in the course of the day, Mr. Stubbs," said Mr. Lester, as he opened the door for Ruth. When they were in the street, he said, "That place, Miss Bentley, could be bought for two-thirds the price named to you. I happen to know about it; it has some drawbacks that do not appear at first sight. There is a good deal of talk in these days of the protection that men are always ready to give to

women, the strong shielding the weaker, and so on; a good deal of cant, I think. When it comes to a matter of dollars and cents, women receive little mercy at men's hands. I know there are some men who deal with women in the chivalrous spirit of true knights, but the great majority don't hesitate to drive as hard a bargain as they can. Women cannot know all the windings of trade. I fervently hope they never will."

"I should not have bought that house without asking advice," said Ruth.

"No, *you* would not. Perhaps you think it is strange I talk in this way; but when I see a great, burly man get an unsuspecting woman into his toils, and take the very crust out of her mouth, it wakes up all the temper I have been trying, for forty years, to reduce to tolerable order. Here we are at the store. I will go in a moment."

Mr. Lester wrote the address of a real estate dealer, and gave it to Ruth, saying, "If you will allow me to advise you, I would say go to that office, tell the broker just what you are in search of, and ask him to look around for you. Tell him, if you please, that I recommended you to call upon him. If you need further advice before you decide, I shall be happy to aid you."

With hearty thanks Ruth took the address, followed Mr. Lester's directions to the letter, and, before many

days had passed, bought, in her mother's name, a small place that bore much resemblance to her ideal.

Ruth shrank from telling Mrs. Graham that she was about to leave. As for Josie, the thought of parting with her, of giving her up to the tender mercies of a selfish world, was unendurable. Every day the child's hold upon her affections was firmer, and to tell the trusting little girl that she was to be cast aside by the friend she looked up to, almost revered, required a strength of nerve that Ruth felt she did not possess.

She wrote to her mother, announcing the purchase, and added, "Mr. Lester has promised to attend to the papers, so that neither you nor I need feel any care about that; but there is one thing that troubles me. What is to become of Josie? No one has offered to take her yet. When I came back I found Mrs. Graham much altered; she keeps her room nearly all the time. The servants go there and take their directions, then obey them or not, just as they please.

"The few boarders that are left, say they cannot submit to this state of things much longer. The oldest daughter does what she can, in the little time she has from her work; and Josie has undertaken to nurse her mother. She creeps about her room, smooths her pillows when she is lying down, helps her to dress when she is able to sit up, and goes down

into the kitchen, and coaxes the cross cook to give her 'a nice little breakfast for my poor, tired mother, so she'll get well and strong.'

"I think she has some suspicion that her mother never will be well and strong again in this world, and that vague fear makes the child a woman in gentleness and self-denial. It is beautiful to see, but, oh, so sad! What is she to do when her mother is gone? She might be admitted into one of the orphan asylums, but I don't know how that would be.

"Mother, you see what I am coming to. I may as well say it at once. Do you think we could take her? She would be very pleasant company for you, Winnie and I being away so much. I don't know that we ought to undertake it, but she has been thrown in my way so much, that I cannot avoid all responsibility about her. But you know, almost as well as I do, how the case stands.

"There is one thing you cannot know, though, and that is, what a lovable child she is; but for that very reason, perhaps, you can judge better than I can. Besides, if we should conclude to take her, I suppose most of the additional care will come upon you; so it is for you to decide.

"If you think it is best not to do anything about it, I will try to provide for her in some other way,

and I have no doubt Mr. Lester will do something towards it.

"I shall not say anything to Mrs. Graham till I have your answer."

Ruth mailed her letter, and the next day went, according to Mr. Lester's appointment, to a lawyer's office to make the payment for the new house, and take the deed. When the business was concluded, Mr. Lester said, "I wish you and your mother much happiness in your new home, Miss Bentley, but I have been thinking that the little maiden will soon be left without a shelter, and I am afraid her poor little heart will get such a chill that it will never warm again. I asked my friend, Dr. James, to call and see if he could do anything for Mrs. Graham. He tells me that it is one of those cases of gradual decay, of long endurance, that may come to an end at any moment. He thinks that it is her anxiety for Josie, more than anything else, that holds her to life. She told him that she could not die till she knew that the child was provided for. She reproaches herself that she has not done more for her children."

"I don't know how she could do more than give her life for them," said Ruth.

"That is what the doctor told her; but what I was going to say is this: would your mother feel dis-

posed to undertake the care of Josie if I were to take measures to have her legally put under my guardianship, thus assuming all pecuniary responsibility? Then the child will be provided for, and the mother relieved of anxiety in her last days."

"I wrote to mother, yesterday, about Josie," said Ruth, "and proposed that we should take her. I hope to get her answer to-morrow; but perhaps I had better let her know of your plan, it might influence her decision."

"Just as you think best about that, but I fear there is not a day to lose."

Ruth wrote a short letter; but her mother's answer to the former one was already on the way. "I am no seer, Ruth, but nearly all that your letter says about Josie was already in my mind. I knew that when it actually came to leaving your little friend, you would find some formidable obstacles in the way; and that she should make one of my family, should her mother not live, I have always expected.

"She may be some care to me, but if I find her as affectionate as you have found her, it will be a care that will bring its daily recompense."

Ruth at once informed Mr. Lester of the purport of her mother's reply, and the message returned was, "Will you be good enough to ascertain at what time

to-morrow Mrs. Graham will be best able to see me, and be at home yourself at the same hour, if you can?"

At ten o'clock the next morning Ruth showed Mr. Lester into Mrs. Graham's room. He found her wrapped in blankets, sitting in a large easy-chair. She apologized for being obliged to see the gentleman up stairs, saying, "Josie and I could not quite manage the dressing this morning."

Mr. Lester saw that it was no time for lengthened statements, and put his plans for Josie into as few words as possible.

The dying woman listened eagerly, raised her eyes, and exclaimed, "My God, I thank thee!" turned to Josie's benefactor, and said, "The blessing of the God of the widow and the fatherless be upon you! I have waited for this."

Not many days later, the jewel was removed from the worn-out casket, and little Josie Graham was an orphan.

CHAPTER XX.

PAST TAILORESSES.

WHILE the removal of Mrs. Bentley and her daughters was under consideration, Ruth spoke to Miriam, and said, "If we should have a home near Boston, we would be glad to have you share it with us."

"I am much obliged to you, but I couldn't. Every one has better luck than I."

"I am not sure of that," Ruth answered, thinking that the difference in their positions was not all owing to luck. "Why not go with us?"

"I'm going to try my luck in another line of business. I'm going to do dressmaking by the day."

"I did not know that you had learned the trade."

"I haven't, regularly, but I picked up a good deal at madame and massa's. I can get two or three dollars a day, and sha'n't have to pay so much for board. I can make money faster."

"When you get a set of customers, perhaps you can."

"It won't take long to do that. There is Miss Manton: she used to work at the Rimmelle's; she left there last spring, and now she says, if there were eighteen working days in the week, she wouldn't be idle one. She promised to recommend me. Oh, I can get work enough, and for good pay, too!"

"I don't doubt it, if you fit well, and I don't see why you shouldn't. I thought you liked at Yendell's."

"So I do; but they only keep their best hands all the year round."

"Miss Grimshaw would tell you, that 'a rolling stone gathers no moss.'"

"Do you see her nowadays?"

"Yes, she comes into the store once in a while, and hardly ever goes out without repeating some old saw; the last time she took up a pin from the floor, and gave it to me, and said, 'See a pin and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck; see a pin and let it lay, bad luck you'll have all the day.'"

"Perhaps that's the reason I ain't more lucky, because I don't keep a sharper lookout for pins," said Miriam, laughing. She refused to see, or refused to acknowledge even to herself, that her lack of success and of satisfaction in the employments she had undertaken was owing less to their inherent difficulties and

annoyances, than to her own want of interest, and to vexations common to humanity.

She resigned her place in Yendell & Co.'s work-room, and inserted an advertisement in one of the evening papers: "A young lady, thoroughly competent, would like to make engagements to do dress-making by the day, in a few select families. Please address, M. W., No. — Street."

Her advertisement soon brought her work. As her fingers were nimble, and her taste good, her first customers recommended her to others. But she found that in taking up another calling she had not succeeded in escaping vexations. The majority of ladies for whom she worked had sufficient respect for themselves, sufficient kindly feeling for others, to make the rendering of service as little irksome as it could be to one of Miriam's temperament; but in the houses of others, she came in contact with a vulgar display of wealth, and of the importance that money seldom fails to give its possessor.

There were a few ladies (?) who took pleasure in trying to make "the dressmaker" feel her infinite inferiority to themselves. As a single twinging joint can make us oblivious to the health of all the rest of the body, so the few cases of overbearing treatment caused Miriam to forget the many of kind and consid-

erate conduct. Some words which she had heard Mrs. Darius Dascomb utter, were an unfailing source of bitter reflection.

The dressmaker went for the first time to a house in Nutall Square. Notwithstanding that the door of the small side-room where she was at work was closed, all the conversation in the sitting-room adjoining would have been audible to her, had she chosen to listen; but intent upon scissors and needle, the sounds made no impression on her brain, until the question of a neighbor, who had come in to make an informal call, fell upon her ear — “Has your dressmaker come?”

“Oh, yes!”

“Do you think you shall like her?”

“Yes, she seems to take hold of her work as if she understood it, but I shouldn’t wonder if she was pretty topping.”

“That’s the trouble with all American dressmakers that go out by the day now. I’d rather have an Irish dressmaker; they don’t make any objection to eating in the kitchen. Why, if you’ll believe me, the last dressmaker I had, when she found that Lisette was taking her down into the kitchen, just turned round and went up stairs again.”

“And went without her dinner?”

“Yes, to be sure, the contrary creature!” said Mrs.

Dascomb, for by this time Miriam was sure the voice was that of Mrs. Foote’s teacher. “I wasn’t going to have her dinner sent up to her after that. The cook had everything nice, she said; a great deal better than that dressmaker has been used to, I’ll warrant. I have some dresses I want altered; they were made last year, and they are as antiquated as the hills, and I thought, if you liked your dressmaker, I might have her; it is so bad, you know, sending such work away from home; but if she’s topping, it is no use.”

“No, madam, it isn’t any use! I’d just like to have you ask me to work for you,” Miriam muttered.

The voices of the mistress of the house and her caller were heard on the stairway. Five minutes after, a voice that gave promise of being base at some future time, broke upon the silence: “Mother — *mother!*”

“Well, my son?”

“Where do you suppose Mrs. Dascomb used to eat her dinner when she went out doing tailoring by the day?”

“Hush, hush, my son!”

“Well, she did! you know she did. Jack Barton says she used to make his trousers when he was a shaver. He says it’s because she’s made so many breeches that she knows so well how to wear ’em;

he says she used to ride home from his house on her own goose."

"There, that's enough of John Barton's talk! He is a coarse, low boy, and I wonder you will have anything to say to him."

"Maybe Jack Barton has something to say about the time when mamma herself worked in a tailor's shop," thought Miriam.

Late in the afternoon the lady came into the sewing-room, sank on the lounge, and said, "I should think you would get very tired, Miss Weston, working all day. I really don't see how you bear it."

"Oh, I bear it very well!" replied Miriam. "I don't think the work can be as hard as that you used to do; and I am sure you couldn't have had so pleasant a room as this to work in."

"Saucebox! You'll never set foot in this house again," was the mental comment of the ex-tailoress, as she left the room with a step much quicker than that with which she entered.

It was Miriam's fortune to make an engagement to work in a family which rejoiced in the possession of a genuine "enfant terrible." A boy of eight years, who observed everything he ought not to see, was blind to all he should have noticed; vociferous, when he ought to have been silent; dumb, when he should have

spoken; swift as the wind for mischief, slow as a snail for any useful errand.

Miriam's task was to cut a dress for the *enfant's* older sister. The measures were taken while the boy stood close to his sister's side, staring into the dress-maker's face.

"Go away, Markie! Don't you see Miss Weston can't work?" the young lady remonstrated. "Mother, do make Markie go away!"

"Don't trouble sister, Markie, dear!" said the mother.

The boy did not heed the request, and the sister gave him a violent push, exclaiming, "There now, if you don't keep out of the way I'll call father!"

"He's gone!"

"No he hasn't gone!" The father's step was heard, and the *enfant* thought best to stand a few feet off.

The measures were taken, some directions given about the cutting, and the lady and daughter went out of the room, leaving Master Markie only with Miriam. She spread her material on the table, the boy, standing at her elbow, making faces; she glanced at him, laughed, and said, "You look very pretty now! I'd keep my face so all the time, if I were you; if you'd go over to the other side of the room, though, I

could see you better." As Miriam moved, she pushed against the young gentleman.

"You needn't shove me, you're nothing but a dressmaker! You ain't pretty. Mother says you've got a cow-lick, and you ain't going to eat dinner with us," said he, twitching the cloth; the scissors slipped, and made a fearful gash. Miriam dropped them, took the boy by the shoulder, and before he could collect his senses to resist, seated him in a chair at the farther end of the room. He at once set up a scream that brought his mother, aunt, and sister to the rescue.

"What is the matter, Markie? Have you hurt you?"

"That old dressmaker, she pinched me. I'll kick her!" he snarled, darting across the room. Miriam drew back, for the boots were thick, and the wearer in a rage. The two ladies seized him before he had time to execute his threat.

His intended victim looked at the owner of the dress, and said, quietly, "I had to put him into the chair. I am afraid I cannot fit this dress so as to please you, if your brother stays here; there is one front entirely spoiled now."

The girl ran into the entry, and called, "Father,

father! Will you come and see to Markie? He is making the dressmaker spoil my dress."

The father appeared, took the screaming boy by the collar, and carried him out, at the same time admonishing him that if he came into that room again to-day, "it would be worse for him." Markie exercised his talents in another part of the house, until he was sure that his father had gone to his business; then he came and took his stand on the threshold he dared not pass, and sent his compliments to Miriam, in the shape of paper-pellets, beans, squash-seeds, etc.

A jewelry case stood open on the bureau. As Miriam had occasion to pass, she stopped to admire the beautiful tints of the opals in the brooch and earrings. "Put there to make me envious!" she thought, and she was confirmed in her opinion when Mrs. Keeler came, took up the case, examined its contents carefully, and tried the effect of each article, one by one. She had returned all but one ear-ring to their places, and stood holding that up to her ear, when a tumble, and the *enfant's* shriek, were heard at the same instant.

"That poor child! I hope he isn't killed," and she hastened down stairs, leaving the case open again, and close to Miriam's chair.

The cutting and basting were well advanced when

Mrs. Keeler returned, her morning-robe replaced by street costume. "I am going out, Miss Weston," the lady said, "but my daughter will be home from school by the time you are ready to try on the dress. Oh! I'd better put these away before I go; how careless to leave them here!"

Mrs. Keeler looked at the jewelry before she closed the case. "What! there is one ear-ring gone; now I do hope I haven't lost that."

"I saw the dressmaker looking at 'em," shouted the *enfant*, putting his head in at the door.

His mother searched under chairs, tables, bureau, and turned over the goods scattered about, from time to time casting suspicious glances at Miriam, who went on with her work.

"I saw the dressmaker looking at 'em," shouted the *enfant* again.

"This is very strange, Miss Weston!" said Mrs. Keeler. "There has been no one in the room but you since I left?"

"No one. If there had been I should have known it, of course; perhaps you dropped it on the stairs."

"I've no idea I did, but I will look."

The gas in the hall was lighted, and the parlor-girl called to join in the search; still no ear-ring.

"I must say, Miss Weston, this is very strange,"

the lady said. "Will you look in your pocket, and see if it is not there?"

The indignant girl turned her pocket inside out.

"Well, one thing is certain: the ear-ring is gone, and you are the only person that has been in the room. It is a valuable set. I have never worn it. Mr. Keeler brought it to me yesterday for a birthday present. I really feel as if I must take decided measures to find it. If you will give it to me now, I won't say anything more about it."

"Do you mean to say, madam, that you think I have stolen your jewelry?" asked Miriam, standing up, and with flashing eyes facing the suspicious woman.

"I did not say so," she answered, "but if you haven't, you will have no objection to letting me see that it is not concealed about you."

"I have no objection."

Miriam actually underwent a thorough search. Her dress was removed, and her clothing handled inch by inch, lest some concealed pocket might be overlooked. She submitted to the ordeal, her face ghastly white with anger. "She wouldn't look so pale if she was innocent," the inquisitor thought.

The search concluded, Miriam resumed her dress, and, choking with rage, asked, "Are you satisfied?"

"If she isn't guilty she looks like it," was Mrs.

Keeler's decision, as she replied, "I haven't found it, certainly."

Miriam sat down, her hands resting idle on her lap.

"Have you done all you can to Sallie's dress?" the mother asked.

"I don't know whether I have or not."

"Well, we will let the ear-ring go for the present," said the lady, locking the case in a drawer. "Sallie wants her dress to wear to a little school-festival next week."

Still Miriam sat motionless. The street-door opened. Miss Sallie ran up stairs, and came into the room breathless. "Got my dress ready to try on, Miss Weston? The girls said they'd wait for me if I wouldn't be long. I'm going—What's the matter, mother? You sick, Miss Weston?"

"No, I am not sick."

"The dressmaker doesn't like it because I have been trying to find my ear-ring. I left the set here when I went down stairs, and when I came back one ear-ring was gone. I know they were all here, for I had them in my hand, and Markie fell, and I laid them down right there, and ran to see to him, and Miss Weston acknowledged, herself, there hadn't been anybody else in the room. Markie said he saw her looking at 'em, too."

"It's some of Markie's mischief, I know. Just as if she'd want one ear-ring! what good would that do her? You fix my dress all right," said Sallie, patting Miriam on the shoulder, "there's a good creature, and there sha'n't be any more fuss about the ear-ring."

"I'll never put scissors or needle into cloth again in this house," said Miriam.

Sallie saw that the case was desperate, and she must bestir herself, or "all the other girls would have their dresses, and I sha'n't have mine. I don't believe but what I can find it. What dress did you have on this morning—oh yes, I know!" and she went to her mother's dressing-room, the lady calling after her, "I've looked there."

Sallie took down the morning-robe, thrust her hand into the outside pocket, and two fingers passed through a respectable-sized rip. She followed the breadth down with her hand—yes, there was something hard between the lining and the cashmere! The impetuous young lady seized a pair of scissors, ripped the hem, and took out the missing jewel, rushed back to the sewing-room, and held up the ear-ring before her mother and Miriam. "I told you, mother, you'd lose something through that hole in your pocket some day!"

"I'm sure I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Keeler, "but

you must acknowledge, Miss Weston, that it was very strange."

Miriam uttered not a word, but rose and put on her shawl.

"Aren't you going to finish my dress?" Sallie asked, lugubriously.

"I tell you I will not put scissors or needle into cloth again in this house."

"I'm sure I don't think you need to be so angry. I've told you I'm sorry," said the mother.

"You know you wouldn't have dared to treat me so if I had not been a poor dressmaker," Miriam replied, as she descended the stairs.

"What a temper she has got!" said Mrs. Keeler.

"I don't wonder she was mad, to be accused of stealing. Seems to me, mother, I'd be pretty sure what I was about before I did that again. It's too bad! Now I sha'n't have my dress, at any rate."

Ruth had often asked Miriam to go and visit her at the new house, but had always been met by some excuse: no time, too cold, and so on. One warm day in spring, however, Miriam concluded to accept the repeated invitation, and made an appointment to ride out with Ruth.

Mrs. Bentley received her with the cordiality of an old friend, and displayed the beauties of her humble

home to the best of her ability. Josie was there, full of life and spirits. Young as she was, her grief for her mother's loss had been sincere; but Providence has wisely ordered that the griefs of childhood should be evanescent, and she hopped about "Grandma Bentley" with such a happy forgetfulness of trouble, that she earned the endearing title, "My Sunbeam."

"Come, my Sunbeam, help grandma get tea," said Mrs. Bentley, after she had made the tour of her small house and garden with Miriam.

The shop-girl and the dressmaker were left tête-à-tête. Miriam looked around and contrasted her position with Ruth's.

"It is very pleasant here," she said, "and I'm sure I am glad you've got such a comfortable home; but just look at me. I've worked hard, and have just been able to keep body and soul together. What does Rathburn pay you now?"

"Twenty-five dollars a week."

"That's pretty good pay, but you managed to get into Rathburn's good graces from the first. I don't believe there are many shop-girls in Boston get twenty-five dollars a week."

"I suppose most of the shopkeepers could not pay that. Mr. Rathburn has a thriving business, a

good run of the best class of custom, and makes fair profits."

"The storekeepers that say they cannot afford to pay women good prices, pay them to men. What is the reason, if a woman does just as good work as a man, she should not have just as good pay?"

"That question is asked pretty often; there is no reason, that I can see. If I go to buy a cloak, what difference does it make to me whether it is sold me by a young man or a young woman? The cloak is the cloak, and is worth a certain sum to me, but if I know that at one store I could buy just as good a cloak of a man five dollars cheaper than I could buy it of a woman next door, and *vice versa*, I think I should buy my cloak where I should pay the least for it. It is just the same with work. I don't know that you can blame the man who is in need of a certain kind of work, for getting it as reasonably as he can. Women have always been willing to work cheaper than men."

"Well, it ought not to be so."

"Perhaps not; but it is a great deal easier to say this and that ought not to be, than it is to arrange all things just as they ought to be, or just as we think they ought to be."

"Women have always been the slaves of men. I

think it is about time for them to throw off the chains!"

"Don't get upon that track, Miriam. What is the need of this arraying one sex against the other, as some people are so fond of doing? I thought you were doing very well in your dressmaking, now."

"So I am, as far as money goes, but I don't like it. I'm getting tired of having people set their feet on my neck, because they have a few more coppers than I have."

"You are thinking of Mrs. Keeler. There is not one woman in a thousand, in ten thousand, who would treat you in that way."

"I was unlucky enough to come across the one. It is easier to talk about such things than to bear them."

"Do you think I have no proud insolence to bear? I do, more or less of it, every day, but I let it go for what it is worth, and that is very little, in my estimation."

"All very pretty! It is come and go with you, but I get into people's houses, and they crowd their insolence down my throat. Did I ever tell you of the last performance?"

"What was that?"

"I was working for a lady upon the new land; a very pleasant woman she was, too. She was called

down into the parlor; pretty soon she came up, and said there was a lady of her acquaintance, Mrs. Parneau, down stairs, who wanted to know if I could work for her three days, at a certain time. I looked at my book and found the days were not engaged, so I told her I could. Mrs. Parneau sent me her card, with the directions what train I was to take, and so on: she lived out of town. I went, as I had promised. It was a large, handsome house, plenty of servants, and all that sort of thing. There were any number of rooms on the second floor; but Mrs. Parneau told the girl that came to the door, to show Miss Weston her room. She went up stairs, opened a door in the second hall, and there was another stairway, the attic stairway, shut off, just as it is in a good many country-houses, you know. I climbed up those stairs, and there was the room I was to work in, and, close by, the room I was to sleep in. I looked out of the window, and what do you think the prospect was?—Gravestones!

“There I staid those three days; my meals were sent up to me on a tray, and all day I worked with nobody to speak to but the seamstress, except when my Lady Parneau vouchsafed to come up and give me directions. I worked the regular hours, and the seamstress went away, and I had the pleasure of sit-

ting contemplating the grave-stones in the moonlight. No books, no papers, but plenty of grave-yard!”

“You could have gone out to walk if you had had a mind to, couldn’t you?”

“Oh, yes, of course! When it came night I was shut up in my suite of apartments, all sole alone; the servants slept in another part of the house, the family on the floor below; but night or day their quarters must not be contaminated by the most distant approach of the dressmaker.”

“You are not obliged to work for that lady again.”

“Indeed I am not, and I told her so.”

“Now, it seems to me that you have an employment that you can arrange so as to be pleasant to you. A dressmaker who gives satisfaction, has no lack of applicants for her services. The longer you work, I should say, the less you will be liable to rudeness. You will become acquainted with your customers, and find out who knows the difference between self-respect and foolish pride. I always thought you were perfectly right to leave Mrs. Keeler as you did. If there are any people in the world who need to retain their self-respect, workingwomen do; but the trouble is, so many of them think the way to do that is to look down on their business. I don’t

think so. I think it is just the way to lower yourself, to be all the time doing what you think is beneath you."

"I don't know that I am above my business."

"Oh, no! I was not speaking of you."

"People are always telling about elevating the working classes; getting up homes for them, and libraries, and so on. If they would just treat them as if they were human beings, and not dogs, I should have more faith in their talk."

"You are rather sweeping, Miriam. Just look back, and think of all the time you have been earning your own living, and of the different ladies, and so-called ladies, you have come in contact with; are not those who have treated you kindly, the many; those who have been purse-proud and supercilious, the few?"

"Supper's ready!" cried Josie. "Come, you're going to sit side of me." She took Miriam's hand, and led her to her seat in the dining-room.

Miriam's slumbers were broken in the early morning by the matins of the blithe little songsters who were sending up to heaven their thanksgiving for early spring.

"It is the singing of birds that wakes Ruth, and

the rumblings of ice-wagons, and the bawling of fishermen, that wake me. That's my luck all the way through!" she thought, and closed her eyes for a little more sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVE, BUT NOT AT FIRST SIGHT.

IT was one of the "lang, lang" lightsome days in June; the sun was sinking in the west. Ruth sat alone in the parlor of her mother's cottage, while memory carried her back to her girlhood, sheltered by a father's care, and a mother's love; to the calamity that had placed her face to face with the responsibilities of life; to the duties she assumed; to the independence and peace of mind that had been the reward of their faithful performance; and she felt that if she had any cause for special gratitude it was, that in the time of perplexity and doubt, she was led to take up the work offered to her hand.

A shadow, passing the window, recalled her from by-gones; she looked up in time to return Mr. Lester's bow, but, before she could rise to receive him, he was already within the open door.

"The suburban cot is a pleasant retreat this evening, Miss Bentley," he said.

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"Yes, we all enjoy it, but Josie most of all, I think. I will call her. She is in the garden with Winnie."

"No, don't call her in, let her make the most of these bright days. I am not much given to dreaming, Miss Bentley, but there is something so calm and restful in the weather, that I have been indulging in a day-dream. Shall I tell it to you?"

"Surely," thought Ruth, "there has some change come over Mr. Lester, I never saw him in this mood before;" and she answered, "Your dream must be well worth the hearing."

"I saw a poor boy on a country-road, weary and footsore, trudging towards the city; all his possessions he carried in his hand; I saw him looking for work that would give him, day by day, his daily bread; I saw him laboring for a pittance, sometimes well-nigh discouraged, then again more hopeful. I saw him a young man, just rising on the wave of prosperity. I saw him later, with hundreds of thousands that he could call his own; he had all that money could buy; he was rich, he was flattered, he had friends, true, sincere friends, and the friends that money will attract, that the loss of money will scatter.

"I saw him sitting by his own fireside with the wife of his mature choice; she was the younger, and her beauty was transcendent in his eyes, — the beauty

of soul, that shines in form and feature. He had seen her in places of trust, in times of trial, and he knew she was a woman with whom a man could rest his life, his love, his sacred honor." Mr. Lester had spoken slowly, his eyes fixed upon the opposite wall of the room, as if the scene he described were passing in panorama there, but now he looked directly into Ruth's face, as he added, "The last, the greatest blessing is in your hand, Miss Bentley! Ruth, shall it be mine? It is for you to make my dream, which is not all a dream, a bright reality."

Ruth's eyes fell under his earnest, supplicating gaze. She had listened as the dream was unfolded, thinking that Mr. Lester had come to announce his approaching marriage, and she vaguely wondered why the June evening had become suddenly so cold, icy cold. That he was thinking of her, she had not suspected. The wealthy merchant had shown an interest in Josie's welfare, and in her own, but many a kind-hearted man would have succored a needy orphan, would have defended an inexperienced woman.

Ruth knew not how long she sat thus buried in her own reflections, but Mr. Lester, interpreting her silence as a refusal she shrank from uttering, rose to go.

"Mr. Lester!" She spoke almost in a whisper, but he was at her side in an instant.

"This is so new—so strange to me—give me time."

"Take time, Miss Bentley. I would not have you decide hastily; when your decision is reached, you know how to summon me." He took her hand. "I will not say that if you cannot be my wife I shall go mourning all the days of my life,—we men leave such talk as that to boys; but I will say, that God can bestow no greater boon upon me than this hand!" The firm clasp was loosened, and he was gone.

Five minutes after, Josie came running in. "Where is Mr. Lester? Grandma said she saw him coming."

A week elapsed. Ruth did not see Mr. Lester, but as his many virtues passed under review, his failings that "leaned to virtue's side," his riches, his standing, the fact that he might have had the *entrée* of almost any drawing-room in the land, "still the wonder grew" that he could have been attracted by the plain shop-girl, who was nearly destitute of what the world calls beauty, and who never had had time or opportunity to cultivate artificial graces of person or manner. The more she thought of herself as Mr. Lester's wife, the better she understood the wintry chill of that summer evening, when she imagined he had come to tell her that he was about to wed another.

She had repeatedly had occasion to consult Josie's

guardian, and had been in the habit of sending a note to his store, when she needed his counsel in behalf of their mutual charge. One morning Mr. Lester found a note, directed in a well-known hand, on the desk in his counting-room. He opened it. "Josie wonders that Mr. Lester does not come and see her."

"Mr. Lester will go and see Josie this evening," was his smiling comment, as he deposited the missive in his pocket-book.

He found Josie's friend, as before, alone in the small parlor. She advanced to meet him. He took her right hand in both of his.

"Mine?" he asked.

"Yours. But I am puzzled to know what you find so attractive about it."

"Ah, well! I am not." He took a ring from his pocket, slipped it on Ruth's finger, and pressed it to his lips.

"May our Heavenly Father help me to be worthy of your love!" she said.

When Ruth gave Mr. Rathburn notice of her intention to leave his employ, he answered, "I am not surprised; Mr. Lester gave me a hint of this. Allow me to congratulate you; but I can congratulate him even more heartily than I can you, for, well as I know Mr.

Lester, and appreciate his sterling qualities, I believe his will be the greater gain."

The happy lover was a daily visitor at the suburban cottage, and seldom came without bringing architects' plans or designs for furniture, etc. He seemed very desirous that Ruth should be pleased with the house that he was finishing for his own use—one of a block, the erection of which he had commenced some time previously; but he never asked her to go and examine the dwelling for herself. He had been describing two different styles of decorations for a certain room, and asked, "Which do you prefer? I wish you to have it exactly as your fancy dictates." After some comparing of beauties, Ruth chose the design that was at once the most expensive, and the least gaudy. Mr. Lester expressed his gratification, and added, "Our tastes agree in that! That is what I should have decided upon if I had consulted my own preference only."

"It is odd," said Ruth, "that you have never asked me to go and see your house."

"Your house!" he echoed. "I thought it was to be our house. I have been called odd before."

Still Ruth had seen only the outside of the residence of which she was to be mistress. Still the same solic-

itude on the part of her future husband, that all its arrangements should please her.

The time set for the wedding was fast approaching. Another question was brought up, when Mr. Lester handed Ruth a package of specimen wedding-cards, and asked her to look them over, and return to him, the next day, the one which she preferred. She could not conceal her annoyance.

"What is it?" he asked. "You have a choice about the cards, have you not? There is quite a variety."

"I hoped you would be willing to dispense with cards altogether."

"Why! I have a good many friends who might feel slighted."

"Yes; and—don't misunderstand me. I am afraid you will think that after you have consulted me so kindly, with so much forethought, taken so much pains to gratify me, I ought not to object to this, but I had better say just what I mean. Will not your friends think that it would be just as well for me—for the shop-girl—to wait to have her acquaintance sought?"

"Very likely some will think so, and say so, too; they have the option of *honoring* Mrs. George Lester with their countenance or not. George Lester cannot

name a lady beside whom he will not be proud to place his wife that is to be, the shop-girl that has been; and I hope and believe that both Mr. and Mrs. George Lester will never be ashamed to own that they have worked for their living. Why, Ruth, if you are going to talk about such matters, your birth is better than mine. You, the daughter of a thrifty, self-reliant farmer, who never knew the time when the ancestral roof did not offer her a shelter. I, a poor boy, homeless and friendless, save one sister, who owed her bread to the kindness of those in whose veins kindred blood did not flow.

"Do you think I know nothing of the butterflies of fashion? There have been too many of them fluttering about me, for me not to understand them well; it is no vanity for me to say so. It was not the heart or soul of the man that attracted them; it was his gold. How often I have longed to tell them, 'I will not buy a wife.' If all of this world's goods that I possess were melted into one mass, it could not buy a wife for me. No, her price is above rubies! And now I have found her, if I have any friends who will look down upon her, the quicker I know it the better. I sha'n't grieve over them much. I believe I must have my way in this."

It was in the church where the two shop-girls had

attended the sewing-circle, that George Lester and Ruth Bentley pronounced their marriage vow; only a few of their more intimate friends witnessed the ceremony. The cards were distributed the same afternoon. While the bride and bridegroom, on their way to Niagara, were admiring the rich autumnal foliage; a square envelope was left at the door of many a house in modern Athens.

MR. & MRS. GEORGE LESTER,

At Home,

October 25th, 26th, and 27th.

The announcement met the eye of many a stately dame, many a pert maiden; what their comments were does not concern us. Neither is it our duty to accompany our heroine and her husband on their travels. A telegram had informed Mrs. Bentley of the day and hour of their return, in accordance with a previous understanding with Mr. Lester.

Ruth found her mother, Winnie, and Josie, waiting to welcome her. As soon as the greetings had been exchanged, Mr. Lester said, "Ruth, will you look at the library?—Not now, Josie, I won't keep her but a moment."

Mr. Lester opened the door of a room nearly lined with shelves, which were all, except one, filled with

books, bound in gilt, calf, and morocco. The one shelf held volumes that were, to their fresher neighbors, as the veteran corps returning, scarred and war-worn, from hard-fought battles, to the holiday home soldiery, who, in gay uniforms, receive the braves. They were, Ruth afterwards learned, the slow accumulations of her husband's earlier years, when a book was a rare acquisition that came only after patient hoarding, the cheerers of less happy days, that the prosperous man could not make up his mind to throw aside.

Mr. Lester unlocked a desk, and took from it a thick package of paper, which he gave to Ruth, saying, "My wife, I made you no present on our wedding-day. I chose to reserve it till to-day—the day when we should come home."

Ruth unbound the tape about the package. It contained a deed of the house, and its conveyance, with all its contents, to her. She raised her eyes, overflowing with tears, to her husband's face, and kissed his cheek. "What shall I say? What can I say?" she exclaimed. "Again I pray our Heavenly Father to make me worthy of your love."

"And may He make *me* grateful for the gift he has bestowed upon me; enable me to cherish it as His crowning blessing."

Mr. Lester opened the door; Josie rushed in, and seized Ruth's hand, saying, "I want to show you."

From room to room she was hurried by Winnie and Josie. Mr. Lester remained in the library, talking with Mrs. Bentley.

"Have you changed your mind about the cottage, mother?" he asked.

"Not in the least; my choice is to stay there."

"And Winnie?"

"She says that if Mr. Lester is the kindest of men and the best of brothers, that is no reason why she should not depend upon herself."

"Very well. It would be no kindness to either of you to urge you against your own wishes, but you can reconsider at any time."

There was no change made at the cottage, except that the strict economy that had held sway there no longer reigned.

Winnie still stood behind Mr. Rathburn's counter, and often sold to Mrs. George Lester such adornments as she had dispensed to others. Mrs. Lester always had a pleasant word and cordial smile for her old associates, who spoke with pride of their acquaintance with one who, though raised from the ranks, knew the heart of a comrade still.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE REVOLVES.

THE stockholders of the manufacturing company mentioned in a former chapter, were waiting the coming of their President. Jerry Barnard came into the office with a roll of papers under his arm; he handed them to Mr. Rathburn, and said, "Mr. Lester was obliged to go out of town this morning, and wished me to bring these papers. He thought I had better stay and give any information I could."

"Mr. Lester has returned from his wedding-journey, then?" said Mr. Baker.

"Oh, yes," Mr. Rathburn answered; "it is their first 'at home' to-day. I intend calling this evening, with Mrs. Rathburn."

"Mrs. Lester used to be in your store, didn't she?"

"Yes, and always filled her place well: she was the balance-wheel of my establishment; a young woman of a great deal of character, always courteous, always attentive to business, her influence was felt by every one in the store. I don't believe there is a

store on Washington Street with a better set of attendants than mine. I couldn't always say that. I attribute the change, in a great measure, to Miss Bentley's example."

"I heard Mrs. Alta Familia say, the other day, that she was a born lady," said Mr. Baker. "I shall call with my wife. You will too, I suppose, Foote?"

"Yes, I suppose so; that is, I don't know that we had cards."

"Oh yes, of course you did! You know Lester very well, and your wife is an old acquaintance of Mrs. Lester's."

"Very likely. I don't keep the run of Mrs. Foote's visiting list."

"Visiting list!" exclaimed blunt Mr. Baker. "Why, Mrs. Foote and Mrs. Lester used to know each other when they were girls. Didn't you tell me, Barnard, that Mrs. Lester stood bridesmaid for Mrs. Foote?"

"The fat is in the fire now!" thought Jerry, as he answered, "Miss Ruth Bentley was one of Mrs. Foote's bridesmaids."

"This is not exactly business, gentlemen," said Mr. Rathburn. "In the absence of the President, it is the duty of the Vice-President to call the meeting to order."

As soon as the meeting was adjourned, Mr. Foote took his hat, bade his fellow-stockholders good-morning, walked rapidly to his office, and shut himself up in his private room.

"Is that Foote?" asked a business acquaintance, whom he passed without recognition.

"Yes, that's Foote," was the reply; "been losing money tremendously."

"Has he! how's that?"

"Oh, I don't know: one thing after another turned out bad; then Dascomb's dying just as he did—he owed him considerable, they say. But the worst of all is that Rollrig—he's tremendously loaded with that, they say; put some of his aunt's money into it, then kept buying, to keep the stock from settling; he couldn't keep the whole thing up."

"That stock will be good again."

"Maybe, but when a man's creditors are down on him he can't pacify them, telling them what stock is going to be."

"That's true."

Mr. Foote pored over his books and accounts, hoping against hope that he might have overlooked something encouraging, but to no purpose; property that was intrinsically valuable, if forced upon the market, would not bring half its cost. Worst of all was

the Rollrig stock, in which he had put ten thousand dollars that Miss Grimshaw had sent him, with the request that he would place it in one of two investments, and hold the certificates until she should come to the city. Was he to tell her that he had been false to his trust? he had asked himself again and again.

As he had thought the matter over that morning, he had seen but one way of escape. Mr. Lester might help him, if he was disposed; it was said that he had helped more than one hard-pressed business man. Mr. Foote knew of no one else to whom he would be willing to appeal,—no one else from whom there was the least prospect of receiving sympathy and aid; he would go to him, and tell him the exact state of the case. That was the determination he had formed that morning, but now he looked at the matter from a different standpoint; if there had been any differences between Mrs. Foote and Mrs. Lester, it was folly to expect aid from that quarter.

It was earlier than usual that afternoon, when the jaded man sought his luxurious home. A bright fire was burning in the sitting-room grate, before it stood his large easy-chair; he sank into it with a deep sigh. His wife noticed his pale face, saw his hands pressed to his head, and detected, as she supposed, the signs of coming illness. She brought his dressing-gown

and slippers from the closet, and stood beside him.

"Shall I take your coat, Augustus? Can I do anything for you?"

"Leave it. I'll take it in a moment."

She laid her hand on his head; he shook it off.

"Don't stand there! Do go and sit down."

He must be ill. Could he be wandering? He had never spoken to her so before. She went back to her seat. He maintained his moody silence for some minutes, then asked, abruptly, "Have Mr. Lester's cards been left here?"

"Mr. Lester's? No! Is he a friend of yours?" She had heard of Ruth's engagement to a wealthy merchant, she had seen the names in the list of marriages in a daily paper some weeks since, but chose to profess ignorance now.

"I thought he was a friend of mine," the husband answered. "Who was it that called here some time ago, with Jerry Barnard, and asked for Miss Grimshaw? One of your New Hampshire friends, you said."

"That was Miriam Weston."

"Why did she come here then, and never before or since? And why did she ask for Miss Grimshaw, and not for you?"

"Miss Grimshaw asked her to call."

"Miss Grimshaw asked her, and you didn't; is that it?"

"Why, you see, Augustus, she came to Boston just about the time we were married, and went into a store; and you know I couldn't associate with a shop-girl, so I didn't ask her to call."

"You couldn't associate with a shop-girl! Who told you so? That silly woman, Mrs. Darius Dascomb, I suppose. This Miss Weston wasn't the only shop-girl you couldn't associate with, the only old friend you turned your back upon, because you had more silks and gewgaws than she had, and now you have the pleasure of knowing that you have cut your husband off from the only help he could or would ask, and the gewgaws have changed hands."

"What *do* you mean, Augustus?"

"I mean just this: that your husband, Augustus Foote, is a ruined man; that the shop-girl's husband is rolling in money and credit. I mean, that as the drowning man catches at a straw, your husband, penniless Augustus Foote, meant to have asked the shop-girl's husband, George Lester, to throw him a rope. Do you think I'll ask him to do it, now I've found out my wife couldn't associate with the shop-girl? What answer do you think I should get, if I did? I wish

you joy of your teacher and her work; it means poverty and disgrace, now."

"Dinner is served." The servant stood at the door.

"Go down! Don't wait for me."

Mrs. Foote looked at the stern face of her husband, and dared not remonstrate. Alone she sat down to the board spread in all the bravery of silver, glass, and porcelain; she helped herself mechanically from dish after dish, as they were offered her by the servant; course followed course, and, when the mistress of all this splendor rose from the table, she knew not what viands had been set before her.

"Jeames" reported that "Master and Missis must have had a fallin' out. Master wouldn't come down to dinner, and when he went out he banged the door awful, and Missis didn't eat enough to keep a fly alive."

Never before had Mrs. Foote known what it was to be so utterly alone. Her husband had gone she knew not whither; the retinue of servants, who had bent in apparent submission to her nod, would, with foul-mouthed abuse, fly from her at the first hint of calamity; and the society, the dear society for which she had sacrificed time, money, peace of mind, and sacred affections, would join, with new aspirants for favor, in thrusting her from the elevation to which she had

so painfully climbed. She took from the table a richly-bound book, her husband's gift, and turned to the passage he had read her only the evening before :

"Some thought to raise themselves to high degree
By riches and unrighteous reward;
Some by close shouldering; some by flatteree;
Others through friendes; others for base regard;
And all, by wrong waies, for themselves prepar'd:
Those that were up themselves, kept others low;
Those that were low themselves, held others hard,
Ne suffred them to ryse or greater grow;
But every one did strive his fellow downe to throw."

Hour after hour she listened for the familiar foot-step, and it was not till past midnight, that, worn out by watching and anxiety, she laid her aching head upon her pillow, and fell into a fitful slumber. Husband and wife met at the breakfast-table. No anger or reproaches then; his words were courteous, and his demeanor quiet, but distant. Oh, so distant!

Mrs. Lester was in her morning-room; on a table before her were spread some of Flora's brightest gems. It was Mr. Lester's custom to stop at a florist's on his way to business, and send home bouquets or cut flowers. Ruth was thinking of what he had said just before he bade her good-morning. "God is

love; He has strewed this world with flowers, yet how many of His rational creatures go stumbling on over sharp stones, clutching at brambles, and will not stoop to take up the flowers scattered between."

A card was brought in. Here was one of the brambles, but she had no wish to touch it; she would not recall old lacerations, the pain of which had long since ceased.

"Say that I am engaged."

But brambles cling, and this one would not so readily be thrust aside. The servant returned; it was a sealed envelope he offered on the silver salver, as he said, "The lady is waiting for an answer."

With well-concealed impatience Ruth tore open the envelope, and read the appeal written in pencil, on the enclosed card: "Mrs. Lester, I implore you to see me. I am in trouble. I will detain you only a few moments."

Was it strange that Ruth thought, "She can implore Mrs. Lester: how was it when Ruth Bentley needed sympathy?" or that the man was surprised at the hauteur of his mistress's tone and manner, when she said, "Ask the lady to walk in here."

The few moments that Mrs. Foote had waited seemed an hour, and afforded ample opportunity to pass judgment on the drawing-room, where the genius

of the artist had vied with the skill of the mechanic in proving the rule of taste over purse. The same rule was apparent in the hall through which she passed, and in the smaller room into which she was ushered, and where stood the woman at whose feet all this wealth had been laid; the ample folds of her rich morning-dress sweeping the carpet, her hands filled with choice exotics.

Ruth bowed formally, as she would have done to a stranger, and asked her caller to be seated. Mrs. Foote hesitated, closed the door that the servant had left half-open, came hastily up to the table, and said, with fluttering, nervous accents, "You won't influence Mr. Lester against my husband?"

"I don't remember that I ever mentioned Mr. Foote's name to Mr. Lester."

"Oh, no, I didn't suppose you had; but, Ruth — Mrs. Lester — do excuse me, don't tell Mr. Lester not to help Augustus."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs Foote. I am at a loss to understand you. Will you be good enough to explain yourself? Please to take a seat," said Ruth, sitting down herself, and looking at the petitioner with mingled contempt and pity.

"I don't know. I don't understand about it, only Augustus says he'll lose everything, and be poor, if

somebody don't help him; and he says Mr. Lester would help him, if it wasn't for you and me. — Oh, dear, what am I saying? I mean if I hadn't treated you so shabbily."

Mrs. Lester could not but feel commiseration for the fashionably-dressed woman, who was twisting her hands to the destruction of her neatly-fitting gloves, and who could hold her head erect in proud confidence while she thought the ground under her feet was sure, but who now displayed all the irresolution and helplessness of a terrified child.

"I am sorry for you," said Ruth. "I will tell Mr. Lester what you say, and he will know, much better than I do, whether he can help Mr. Foote."

"Oh, no, don't tell Mr. Lester I have been here; he will tell Augustus, and he always hates to have women meddle."

"What shall I do? If I don't speak to Mr. Lester of your call, how can I help you?"

"If you — could — just let him think you wouldn't mind if he was good friends with Augustus — and —"

"I think you must leave the matter in my hands," said Ruth, rising, "and let me do what I think best."

Mrs. Foote left the house of her playmate, of her despised shop-girl acquaintance, of her discarded friend, who was now, as the perplexed woman be-

lieved, the arbiter of her fortunes. "I don't suppose I've done a particle of good," she thought; "she will tell Mr. Lester, and he will tell somebody else, and then Augustus will hear of it, and he won't like it, and oh, dear, we shall be poor after all! I am sure I should think Ruth might help me."

Mrs. Lester placed the flowers in the vases, and had barely time to make her toilet, when she was called down to the drawing-room. A succession of visitors kept her there the remainder of the morning, and turned her thoughts from Mrs. Foote and her difficulties, but they were recalled when she went again to the room where the suppliant had been received. Mr. Lester had come in, and stood turning a vase round and round, examining its contents.

"I think, Ruth, I shall always send home cut flowers for the future, I like your arrangement so much better than the florist's. When you put them in the vases they look at their ease, and as if they liked to be there; but the bouquets look as if the flowers were tied together, and must stay so," he said.

"I am glad if you like them, but they did not satisfy me. Some of the brambles got between them, I thought."

"Roses and thorns! It might have been all thorns and no roses. What was the bramble this time?"

"An offer to initiate me into the art of managing my husband!"

"Here is the subject: would you like to test your power?"

"I have heard it said that the way to make the most of knowledge was to impart it; so I will repeat the lesson."

"Teach your husband to manage your husband or his wife, just as you please. I sit at your feet," said Mr. Lester, laughing, and ensconcing himself in a large arm-chair.

"I ought not to laugh at other people's troubles, but it was a choice between laughing and scolding."

"Laugh, by all means, then! I don't believe in people's attempting what they are not likely to succeed in, and I have a suspicion you would be a failure as a scoldist. Come, your tale unfold!"

Ruth did unfold the tale, and added, "Perhaps I was too hard upon Sophia, but there was something so craven in her manner, that I don't know that I had the sympathy for her I ought to have had."

"You are the last person I should think she would appeal to; but I always thought Foote was to blame for leaving a young, inexperienced woman, as his wife was, so much under the guidance of Mrs. Dascomb. I am sorry for him, though. I knew he was in diffi-

culty. He has been very unfortunate, — rather too sanguine in some of his investments ; saw things too much with Dascomb's eyes, I fancy. I have wondered that he and Dascomb should be so intimate. Foote is twice the man that ever Dascomb was."

"They were cousins, you know."

"I had forgotten it. Mr. Dascomb died quite suddenly, and was in debt to Mr. Foote. More than that, he had appointed Foote his executor ; that placed Foote in a hard position enough, for every one supposed Dascomb was worth a handsome sum, and he made bequests by the ten and twenty thousands, but the estate was insolvent. It was said that the widow was unreasonable : no wonder she was disappointed. She accused Mr. Foote of being unfair ; they had high words, and so she lost a friend who would have been interested for her."

"Where is Mrs. Dascomb now?"

"I don't know ; poor enough, I am afraid. But what shall I do about Foote? I may not be right, but my impression is, that if some one was to hold out a hand to him just now, he would soon be able to take care of himself. I could do that ; it would involve some risk, but the loss to me, supposing I did lose, would be far less than the benefit to Foote, should his affairs turn out as I hope they would. The case is in

your hands, Ruth. Artful woman ! see how you are punished for trying to manage your husband. He throws the decision right back on you."

"My decision is, that the unmanageable husband shall not be influenced by the artful wife ; that he shall act just as he would do if he had never seen her."

"What a dreadful thing it is to be ruled by a woman !" said Mr. Lester, with a groan.

A week after, Mr. Foote met the same gentlemen who had criticised his appearance when he was coming from the stockholders' meeting. He passed them with a nod, and a cheery "How are you?"

"Foote doesn't look quite so blue as he did," said one.

"No, his affairs are looking up. Lester took hold for him, I surmise."

"Oh, well, he'll go through, then ! His creditors won't trouble him if he has a responsible party like Lester to back him, but if he hadn't, it would be 'Hit him again, he hasn't got any friends !' "

Mr. Foote's business standing was regained ; he was spared the mortification, disgrace, and pecuniary ruin that had threatened him, but he never knew to what indirect agency he owed his rescue.

Mr. and Mrs. Foote made a formal call on Mr. and Mrs. Lester; but though the gentlemen often met, the intercourse of the ladies was confined to evening calls, exchanged at long intervals.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHER'S IDEA OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

IT was six months after Ruth's marriage, that Mr. and Mrs. Foote called with Miss Grimshaw. While Ruth entertained the husband and wife, Mr. Lester talked with, or, rather, was entertained by Miss Grimshaw.

"What a pleasant house you have, Mr. Lester! Just the house I should have expected to find you in. 'The house shows the owner.'"

"Don't give me too much credit. I had some help, you remember."

"And you found that 'a woman's counsel is sometimes good.' 'A good wife, and health, are a man's best wealth.'"

"Then I am wealthy indeed."

"Yes. 'A good wife and good name hath no mate in goods or fame.' If Mrs. Lester 'were as little as she is good, a peascod would make her a gown and hood.'"

"She does not need to say much about the equality of men and women; she has proved that she can adorn her position, be it at home or in active life."

"Then you don't believe that 'a woman should be from her house but three times: when she is christened, married, and buried'?"

"Decidedly I think she should be from her house, or let her influence be felt outside of her house many times. There are few women whose duties are all within four walls."

"The old saying used to be, 'The wife that expects a good name, is always at home as if she were lame, and the maid that is honest, her chiefest delight is still to be doing, from morning till night.'"

"That theory would do very well when women were contented to be mere household drudges, if they ever were, but I would not advise you to bring up those exploded ideas in the hearing of some of the advocates of the modern views of the equality of woman with man. You would be as badly off as the children that cried, 'Go up, thou bald head!'"

"Equality of woman to man!" exclaimed Miss Grimshaw.

"Then you don't believe in it?"

"I believe in her superiority, and I can prove it, too."

"Suppose you give us the argument."

"Easily enough. Oysters from polyps, fishes from oysters, beasts from fishes, monkeys from beasts, man from monkeys, woman taken from the side of man, woman one remove farther from the monkey than man."

"Good!" said Mr. Lester, laughing. "Well argued. You believe in the transmutation theory, then?"

"I didn't say I did. You are convinced."

"A slight weakness in the foundation of the argument, isn't there? A mixing up of theories. I don't know that the oyster-beast-man-advocates would acknowledge that Mother Eve was taken from the side of Father Adam."

"A good many of the people who do seem to think that the only reason that she was, was because 'Adam must have an Eve to blame for his own faults.' But I must convince you that I am right. Adam was made from the dust of the earth."

Mr. Lester assented.

"Eve was taken from Adam's side, was she not?"

Mr. Lester nodded.

"Then was not Adam of the earth, more earthy? Is not man more prone to grovel in the dust of this world than woman?"

"Yes, I acknowledge that, looking at the question in that light, woman is man's superior."

"They say 'the world is too narrow for two fools quarrelling'; so it is for men and women quarrelling. 'No man should live in the world that has nothing to do in it.' Neither should any woman; but why can't each one go on and do his or her own work? What is the use of wrangling about what work belongs to each? I say, 'Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might.' 'For a web begun, God finds thread.' 'No wind can do him good who steers for no port.'"

"You are right in the main, but I think you must acknowledge that the agitators have some cause for being dissatisfied; that there are some of our laws and customs that bear hard upon women."

"I know that it is so. 'There is a fault in the house, but would they have it built without any?' I don't blame them for doing their utmost to right the faults, and I would be glad to do all I could in the same direction; but I am afraid many of the agitators are not going the right way to work. 'Most things have two handles, and a wise man takes hold of the best.'"

"There is to be a Woman's Rights Convention here

to-morrow; suppose we should go and see which handle they take hold of there?"

"I don't like to interrupt you, aunt," said Mr. Foote, "but are we not making a very long call?"

Though Mrs. Lester had done her best, she had not succeeded in so completely holding the attention of Mr. and Mrs. Foote as Miss Grimshaw had that of Mr. Lester.

"I don't know but we are," answered Miss Grimshaw, rising. "'Pleasant hours fly fast.'"

"I have been proposing that we should go to the Woman's Rights Convention to-morrow evening," said Mr. Lester.

"Mrs. Foote and I have an engagement for to-morrow evening. I fear we cannot go," Mr. Foote answered.

"How is it with you, Mrs. Lester?" her husband asked.

"I don't know of anything to prevent my going, except lack of inclination," Ruth replied.

"Oh, 'we mustn't seek to reform every one's dial by our own watch,'" said Miss Grimshaw. "How should we know our own watches were right, if we did not compare them with others once in a while?"

"How should we, to be sure!" said Mr. Lester.

"I like to hear, once in a while, the opinions of those who do not agree with me. You will go, Ruth?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"Then, Miss Grimshaw, shall we have the pleasure of seeing you to dinner to-morrow?"

"'When the mutton is going, it is good to take a slice,' and I am sure I should be most happy to take a slice of yours to-morrow."

It was in the edifice raised by the votaries of the peaceful trio, Ceres, Flora and Pomona, that one scene in the revolution was to be enacted; that down-trodden woman was to make one more effort to throw off her shackles. It was quarter past seven when Mr. and Mrs. Lester and Miss Grimshaw reached the temple of the three goddesses, and ascending a flight of broad marble steps, then two more flights of narrower and of less enduring material, took front seats in a small gallery. On the wall at the opposite end of the hall, were festoons of roses, firmly placed there by the brush of the painter; whether the artist had assisted the painter, it is not ours to inquire; we do not undertake to judge high art. Beneath these garlands was the platform, and on the right, looking from the gallery, was the ante-room, where were gathered the champions of both sexes. During the evening there was a flitting back and forth between the

platform and the ante-room, through the open door of which might be seen, on the table, reminders of confectioneries and cake bakeries.

The reformers began to come in. The male reformer has often been described. It is of those whose battles he has come to fight, and to whom he gives the support of his countenance and presence, that we wish to speak. The young blonde, who, with uncovered tresses, and in showy home-dress, adorned the rostrum; the older damsel, who, aware that the finger of Time had wrought with partiality among her once abundant locks, was content to hide his deprecations under a bonnet; the matronly dame, who was not ashamed of her gray curls; the woman who made the advocacy of the cause of her wronged sisters pay, and pay well; the woman who sought notoriety; and last, but not least, the woman who honestly wished to benefit her own sex, and the world at large.

The meeting was called to order. The audience was an assembly of those who were interested in "the cause," and of those who came to gratify curiosity, to ridicule, to sneer at "whistling girls and crowing hens."

One speaker after another stood forward. Those of the sterner sex, except in the case of the special favorite, were listened to with yawning and impatience; but when a woman took the stand, necks

were stretched and ears were open. If she had been in such a position before, and possessed a glib tongue, she was applauded by men and boys, as they would have applauded a good gymnast or rope-dancer. But if she was diffident and confused, she was assailed with cries, "Louder, Can't hear, Dry up," and calls for other advocates who were known to be present. Sympathizing sisters gave what encouragement they could, by clapping their hands; but the rowdies refused to be quiet, till the chairman had appealed to them as gentlemen who would not treat a lady with rudeness.

The meeting had been in session an hour when the presiding officer announced, "Miss Weston!—herself a working-woman, who will give you some of her experience of the wants and oppressions of working-women."

Ruth knew that her old friend had often spoken in public, but had refused repeated invitations to go and see her act a part that seemed to her so unwomanly; but there was no escape now, and she was astonished at the self-possession that Miriam exhibited.

The lappels of her close-fitting English walking-jacket were turned back, so as to show a white chemisette; her linen choker collar was surrounded by a narrow ribbon, tied in a small bow in front; her

hair, cut short and frizzled, was parted slightly on one side. She advanced with a firm step, laid on the secretary's table her sailor hat with its "half a fathom of black ribbon over the" rim, waited for the applause that greeted her appearance to subside, and began:

"MR. PRESIDENT—

"You have said truly that I am a working-woman. Yes, Mr. President, I know the hearts of the down-trodden working-women. I know that many of them are the slaves of their employers, who fare sumptuously every day, who roll in carriages bought by the tears and groans—yes, the lives—of working-women.

"There are, among our working-women, those fit to grace any man's home, and some of them have married the most successful men of the present day—our statesmen, our lawyers, our merchants; but when a working-woman takes off her apron, lays aside her scissors and her needle, and finds herself in her elegant parlor in Beacon Street, does she hold out her hand to those by whose side she has toiled? No, she forgets that she has ever labored for her bread. No! When the poor working-woman comes to the Beacon Street lady, and asks her for help, she puts her down in her cellar kitchen, to pant, to faint over her cooking-range. That's her place! And at night she may

drag her tired limbs to the attic, no matter how many spacious rooms there are in the palace. That's her place!

"Do you ask me why our poorly-paid sewing-woman does not seek domestic service? I have told you why. She won't do it!

"We are asked why woman does not do better work, and so earn better wages. I answer, she cannot if her task-master keeps her toil, toil from morning till night, takes all her time, all her energy, and then pays her a pittance. What chance has she to acquire skill, to learn the alphabet of higher, more remunerative employments? I tell you, no blacks on a southern plantation have ever been the very slaves that some of our working-women are, in this enlightened city, to-day!

"Go with me to the the rural home where one of these working-women first saw the light. It is the abode of peace, if not of plenty. See the infant dandled on a loving mother's knee, folded in a proud father's arms; see her tossing among the new-mown hay in all the glee of innocent childhood; see her in joyous girlhood, her mother's companion, her father's solace.

"See her going from her home, followed by a mother's prayers, a father's blessing. See her driven

by the goad of a merciless employer, giving time and strength to the uttermost, receiving the half loaf. See her looking through the bars of the convict's cell; go to the Morgue, and gaze on the lifeless body of her for whom scarce a score of summers and winters have come and gone. See the corpse thrust into the outcast's grave!

"Go back to the home among the green fields, and see the sorrow-stricken mother weeping hot tears, yet watching for the return of her erring child. She comes not! The grave will not give up its dead, till the last great day, when employer and employed shall come to judgment!

"Hear the father call down curses on the head of her who has disgraced a fair name. I ask you where the blame lies? Who is sinned against, and who is the sinning? She who lies in the potter's field, or he who took her labor, and refused her bread? Whose heart should those hot tears wither? On whose head should those curses fall?

"Men, fathers, sons, brothers, have you no responsibility here? To you I appeal! Dare you withhold the ballot from those who would right such wrongs? Refuse it to the oppressed, and give it to the oppressor?

"Women, mothers, daughters, sisters, I appeal to you! Demand the ballot! Claim it as your right! Take no denial! And when you have it, you can,

you will, right this foul wrong. Then will woman prove her entire equality with man."

Miriam sat down amid a storm of applause, and cries, "Go on!"

Notice was given that the finance committee would attend to their duties. A part of the audience disappeared, and one man and three women gave each individual who remained an opportunity to see the inside of a stove-pipe hat.

A few more speeches were made, and the convention adjourned.

"Shall we wait till the crowd scatters a little?" Mr. Lester asked.

"Haste makes waste, and waste makes want, and want makes strife between the good man and his wife," said Miss Grimshaw.

"If that is the penalty, we will 'make haste very slowly,'" replied Mr. Lester. "What did you think of the speakers?"

"I wanted to tell the women who spoke, that 'the camel going to seek horns lost his ears,'" Miss Grimshaw replied.

"Yes, I believe your sex will not find the result of this movement all gain. Yet they have some cause of complaint."

"No doubt of it. But 'he who wants content, can't find an easy-chair.'"

"What Mr—— said about the property that a man and his wife have earned together, he by out-of-door labor, and she by in-door labor, thrift, and economy, belonging of right as much to the wife as the husband, was well put; didn't you think so?"

"Indeed I did. There is many a man thinks, what's my wife's is mine; what's mine is my own."

"Yes, some of our laws and customs do bear hard on women, but, as you say, I am afraid they are not going the best way to work to reform them. Good-evening, Barnard! You are going home with us; that is right. If you will take care of Mrs. Lester, we old folks, Miss Grimshaw, will take care of each other."

"Men's years and their faults are always more than they are willing to own," replied Miss Grimshaw, taking Mr. Lester's arm. "Ah, well!—'Old be, or young die.'"

"I am sorry for Barnard," said Mr. Lester. "I fear Miss Weston is treating him rather unhand-somely."

"Is there an attachment there?"

"Yes, a life-long one, that has grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength."

"I am sorry for him, but if he should ask my advice, I should tell him to go and hear his charmer whenever she speaks in public; it would be a bitter draught, 'but bitter draughts may have sweet effect.' 'A whistling wife and a crowing hen will call the old gentleman out of his den.' 'Marriage with peace, is the world's paradise; with strife, this life's purgatory.' Mrs. Lester does not agree with Miss Weston. She acted on the principle, 'Help yourself, and God will help you.'"

"No, she does not," Mr. Lester answered, "but she takes a deep interest in the welfare of her sisters who depend on their own labor. She has invited, at my suggestion, some ladies to come and talk over with her some plans for the aid of working-women; she would be glad to have you come, too."

"I would join heart and hand in any enterprise that promised real benefit. Mrs. Lester finds, that 'when I have a ewe and a lamb every one says to me, Good-morrow, Peter.'"

"Oh, yes! we must expect that."

"I suppose it always will be, 'Stand up, farthing, and let the florin sit down.'"

Ruth and Jerry walked on some blocks in silence. Ruth well knew the subject of the young man's reflections, but did not know whether he would like to speak

of it; at last she ventured to say, "I don't understand how Miriam learned to talk so fluently in public."

"Miss Grimshaw would say, 'Who keeps company with wolves will learn to howl.' Those catamarans, they've made her cut off her hair! I do wish you would see if you can't get Miriam to listen to reason."

"I will do my best, Jerry, but if she will not listen to you, I am afraid I cannot make much impression on her."

"If she could only get out of that set for a little while, she would be herself again; but if she won't, I can't stay round here. I'll go off somewhere."

"And give up all your business prospects?"

"Yes, I will. I'll go to the Fejee Islands, or Kamtschatka, or the North Pole, I don't care where. I can't stay here, and see her gallivanting round with those women. Why do you suppose they borrowed their oppressors' hats to carry round? Why didn't they take their own?"

"Do you think a bonnet of the present style would make a very good contribution-box?"

"Well, no! I don't know as the bonnet of the present period would, but I like to see people go the whole figure. 'Consistency, thou art a jewel!' There is Mr. Lester stopping at Mr. Foote's door. Miss Grimshaw wants to bid you good-night."

Miriam was soliciting signatures to a petition to be presented to the legislature of Massachusetts, praying that suffrage might be granted to women, and called upon Mrs. Lester.

"You will sign this petition, Ruth," she said. "I was glad to see you at the convention the other evening. It is a matter that you and I must feel an interest in."

"Yes, I am expecting some ladies to meet here this morning, to see if we can do anything to aid such working-women as need help and encouragement; but before they come, Miriam, I see you so seldom, tell me about yourself. Jerry Barnard was at the meeting, too."

Ruth sat down on the sofa beside her old friend, and passed her arm about her waist. "Miriam, we have been friends together; let me have a friend's privilege now: are not you throwing away your own happiness?"

"I tell you, Ruth," exclaimed Miriam, trying to draw away, "I won't be the slave of any man!"

"Jerry's slave! He is a great deal more likely to be your slave, Miriam. If you would let your own heart speak, there would be no occasion for me to plead for Jerry; and I believe if ever woman was sincerely, honestly loved, you are."

"Don't you think, Ruth, I am fitted for anything better than to cook a man's dinner and warm his slippers for him?"

"Yes, and so does Jerry, my dear Miriam! Don't be angry, but if you have no mercy on yourself, think of Jerry. Is it right for you to have led him on as you have, and then fling him aside? Is it right for you to trifle with his happiness in this way?"

Miriam sprang to her feet saying, "There, Ruth, don't talk to me any more about Jerry! My mind is made up. What is the happiness of one or two to the enfranchisement, the liberation of millions? When there are no wronged, oppressed women to be battled for, then it will be time for me to talk of my own happiness! Will you sign the petition? Isn't that your door-bell? If your grand friends are coming, I had better be going."

"No more of that, Miriam, an' thou lov'st me. No, I will not sign the petition, because I do not wish to vote myself, and because I do not believe that, if the petition were granted, all the advantages would follow that you expect; but if you have time to stop and state the case as you see it to the ladies who will be here soon, I should be happy to have you. Here is Miss Grimshaw now. Miss Grimshaw, you are

acquainted with my old friend Miss Weston, I believe."

After shaking hands with Miss Grimshaw, Miriam said, "I came in in hopes to interest Mrs. Lester in the woman question."

"The woman question, the negro question, the Chinese question," said Miss Grimshaw. "Some one has said that woman is only one of nature's agreeable blunders; one would think that she was nature's most disagreeable blunder,—a hanger-on to the skirts of humanity, an interloper, a changeling in the human family. 'A good woman is worth (if she were sold) the fairest crown that is made of gold'; but every scribbler that can hold a pen, every chatterer that can wag a tongue, seems to think it his right and duty to put her in her place, and set her her work."

"I am glad you think women are men's equals."

"Now, Miss Weston, do excuse me, but I want to speak plainly: you are too frank yourself to mind if I do call a spade a spade. 'Fair words and foul play cheat both young and old.' This talk about the equality of men and women is all nonsense. Our Creator had a work for each to do, and fitted each for the work. Why don't you ask if a ship and a house are equal? The ship is sadly unequal to the house, if you wish to set it upon land; so is a house unequal

to a ship, if you want to send it to sea. That Mr. Peggotty made a comfortable house of an old hull, is no reason why all hulls are adapted for family residences. If you ask me whether a cambric needle and a darning-needle are equal, I will ask you whether you wish to hem a handkerchief, or fill a gap in a yarn-socking. Because in great emergencies, when men have skulked through by-ways, women have arisen who have triumphantly led them over the highways, it is not proved that all women, that many women, are capable of commanding armies. Because Queen Elizabeth ruled England successfully, should we place a woman in the White House to be torn limb from limb by office-seekers, male and female?"

"We want the ballot," said Miriam, "that women may mingle with men in education, in business, and in the government. Men need the refining influences of woman."

"Can the stream rise higher than the fountain? Can women elevate men, when they are not elevated themselves? Miss Weston, the crying vices of the age are laziness,—not a very pretty word, but what I mean, and its inseparable companion,—discontent. 'Every one would have potatoes grow by the pot-side.' Women will not do the work offered them. There is work in this country for every woman in it! I do not

say that it is always the work that she would choose ; I do not say that it is not sometimes hard work, harder than her training has prepared her for. I do not say that women who have others dependent upon them do not struggle under a fearful burden. May the God who listens to the cry of the widow and the fatherless pity them, when hard, grinding, money-making men do not ! But I do say, that you never spoke a true word, if you did not the other evening, when you said, 'She won't do it !' But, Miss Weston, don't say again that the young woman of twenty years fills an outcast's grave because she cannot earn her bread by honest labor, till there is no weary mechanic's wife in our city who would not gladly give her food and shelter, and pay her moderate wages, if she would assume part of the burden of the household ; till there is no farm-house where she will be received as one of the family, and have the comforts of a home, in return for a part of her time spent in work ; far more healthful than many a woman is bending over at this moment. 'If you leap into a well, Providence is not bound to fetch you out.'

"You don't suppose girls are going to work for low wages, are going to mew themselves up in the country and work for their bread, when they can get high

wages in the city, do you? You wouldn't tie women down to household drudgery, would you?"

"No, certainly I would not. I am speaking now of the outcast's grave that you painted so vividly, and I say that any honest toil is better than the way that leads to that. No, I don't know that I would, if I could, forbid any woman doing what she can do well. That any individual succeeds in the calling she has undertaken, to some extent, is presumptive — presumptive, not conclusive evidence, that she is fulfilling the end of her being ; and that, in domestic life, the great majority of women find the most congenial employment, thousands upon thousands of homes have testified — are testifying to-day. But we are not to argue from that, that women are fitted for nothing else, or that they should stoop to use unworthy means to secure homes to preside over.

"You spoke of elevating men. We can hardly take up a novel, or a newspaper, but we find sneers and jokes on the pertinacity, the skill, and the patience with which women angle for husbands, for themselves and their daughters. We are told that our watering-places and summer resorts are great wife-marts, where the commodities for sale are tricked out and displayed to attract purchasers. What woman has not read these stale jests with an indignant thrill ; indignant

because she could not declare, 'It is false, it is a base slander'? She knew that any man, however profligate, if he had the means to provide a wife with superfluities, with luxuries, could go into almost any family in the land and pluck its fairest flower. 'If you've money, take a seat, if you've none, take to your feet,' is the motto of numberless mothers and daughters. Is it strange that so many men, in their hearts, despise women? Shall we talk of the influence of women elevating men, while these things are true?

"It is not the real friend of woman who advises her to go on a pilgrimage in pursuit of a husband; or to stand with folded hands, and watchful eyes, ready to spring into the home that any man, good or bad, may offer her, then stay at home and 'mind the childer.' It is not the real friend of woman who would emancipate her from the kitchen and the needle. Surely the times are out of joint, when men are making and selling petticoats, and women are wrangling in our courts. It is not the real friend of woman who would make her a pauper, and, in her name, ask State or city governments for bread. No, the real friend of woman reminds her that she has hands to use, and a brain to guide her hands, and points out the way to train hands and brain, that the abilities with which she is endowed may minister to her own support, if need be; to the

comfort of those whom Providence, and the promptings of her heart, have made dependent upon her for happiness."

"It isn't strange," said Miriam, "that you, who never earned a penny in your life, should not feel much sympathy for the trials and privations of working-women."

"I know 'it is easy for a man in health to preach patience to the sick,' and I know, too, that some who talk loudly of their sympathy for hard-pressed working-women in general, can drive sharp bargains with needy individuals. 'Tis not prating, but working, that brings in the harvest.'"

A servant came in and spoke to Mrs. Lester. "Mrs. Alta Familia, and three other ladies, are in the drawing-room."

"If you won't sign my petition I might as well be going," said Miriam.

"Won't you come in and see the ladies?" Ruth asked.

"No, thank you. I don't care to hear a parcel of women cackling about what they don't understand."

"While the tall maid is stooping, the little one has swept the house," retorted Miss Grimshaw.

We will not repeat all that was said at the ladies' meeting; our readers will be more interested in re-

sults. Mrs. Lambert was placed at the head of a large boarding-house, where many shop-girls and working-women enjoyed the comforts of a home. Two of her daughters were put in charge of a shop for the sale of women's and children's clothing, while Deborah, who has left Mesdames Rimmelle's, superintends the work-room that supplies the shop, and where a large corps of girls find constant employment, and many are taught dressmaking and other trades. The teaching of trades was undertaken at Miss Grimshaw's suggestion; for she said, "He who hath a trade hath a share everywhere."

The capital was furnished by Mrs. Lester and her friends, and was divided into shares in which the workwomen have the liberty of investing their savings. Mrs. Lester, Miss Grimshaw, and other ladies interested, never omit an opportunity of recommending the establishment to those in need of such goods as the Misses Lambert and their assistants sell.

Miriam sneers at such "small potatoes" expedients, and asks what these few women are, to the great army writhing under the heels of the oppressors?

Miss Grimshaw replies, "'Though one grain fills not the sack, it helps. If every one will sweep before his own door, the street will be clean.'"

Rachel Dow has found a home with Mrs. Bentley,

who, now that Josie goes to school, is glad of the quiet little woman's presence at the cottage, where she daily helps in the work that "is never done," and sews for Mrs. Lester.

Jerry Barnard is on the high road to wealth. He is one of the firm of Lester & Co. now. He did not go to the Feejee Islands, or to the North Pole. Mr. Lester gave him Miss Grimshaw's prescription. He studied it with care, concluded that common sense was one of its ingredients, and, with many a wry grimace, swallowed dose after dose, till the Miriam of other days was dead to him; and now, when he meets in the street "Miss Weston, the celebrated advocate of the equality of the sexes," who becomes more masculine in dress and manners every day, he protests to himself that he never admired such a monstrosity.

Whether Miriam ever rakes among the ashes of a dead love, we cannot say; but we know that there is one small drawer in her office-desk that she keeps locked, and never allows curious eyes to inspect.