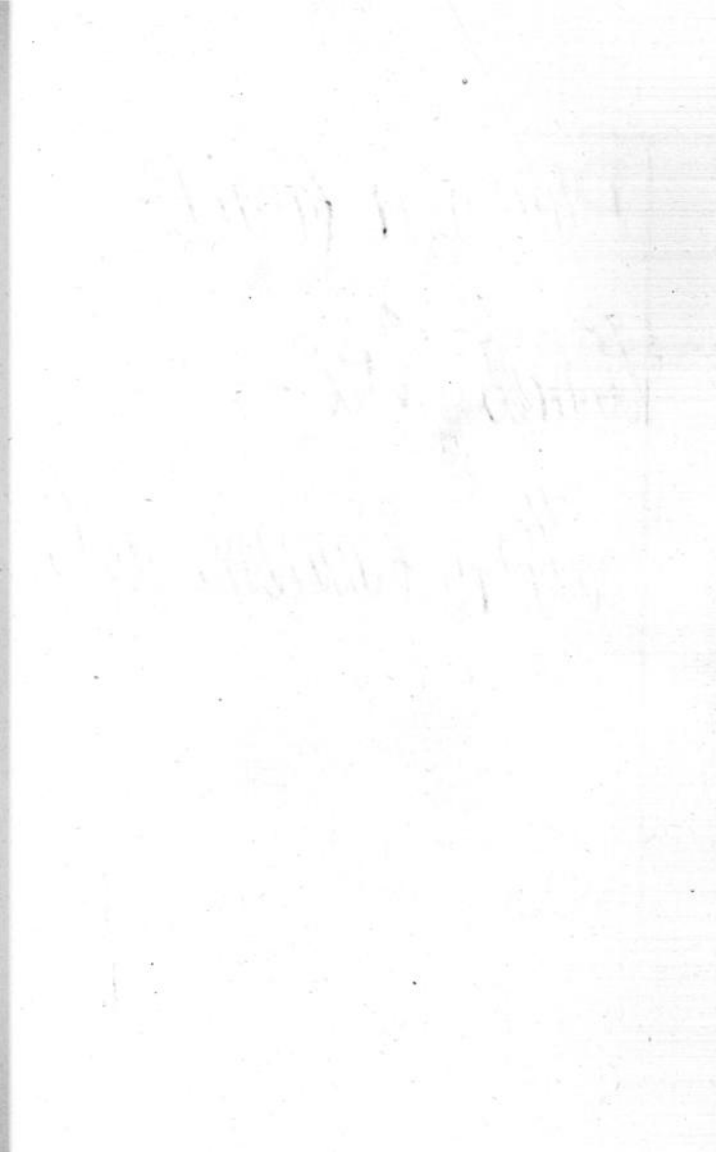


To my dear friend

DOWN OUR WAY

Mattie Ross -

Mary Cameron Judah.



DOWN OUR WAY

Stories of South-
ern and Western
character

by

Mary Jameson
Judah



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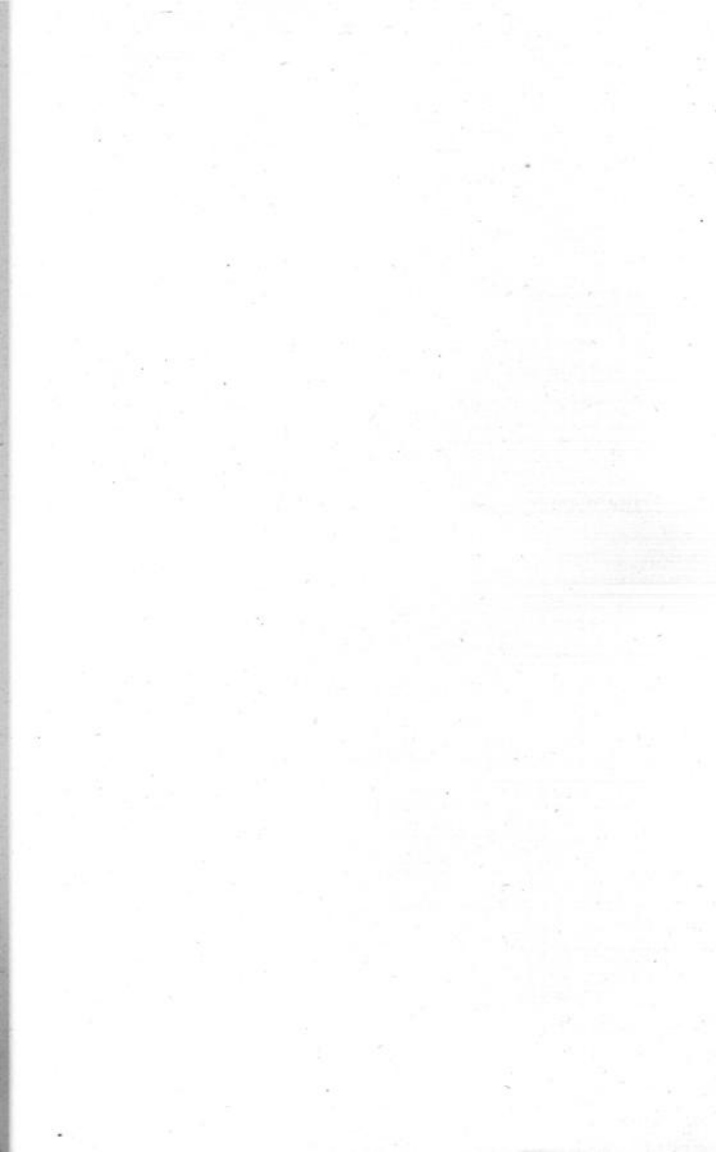
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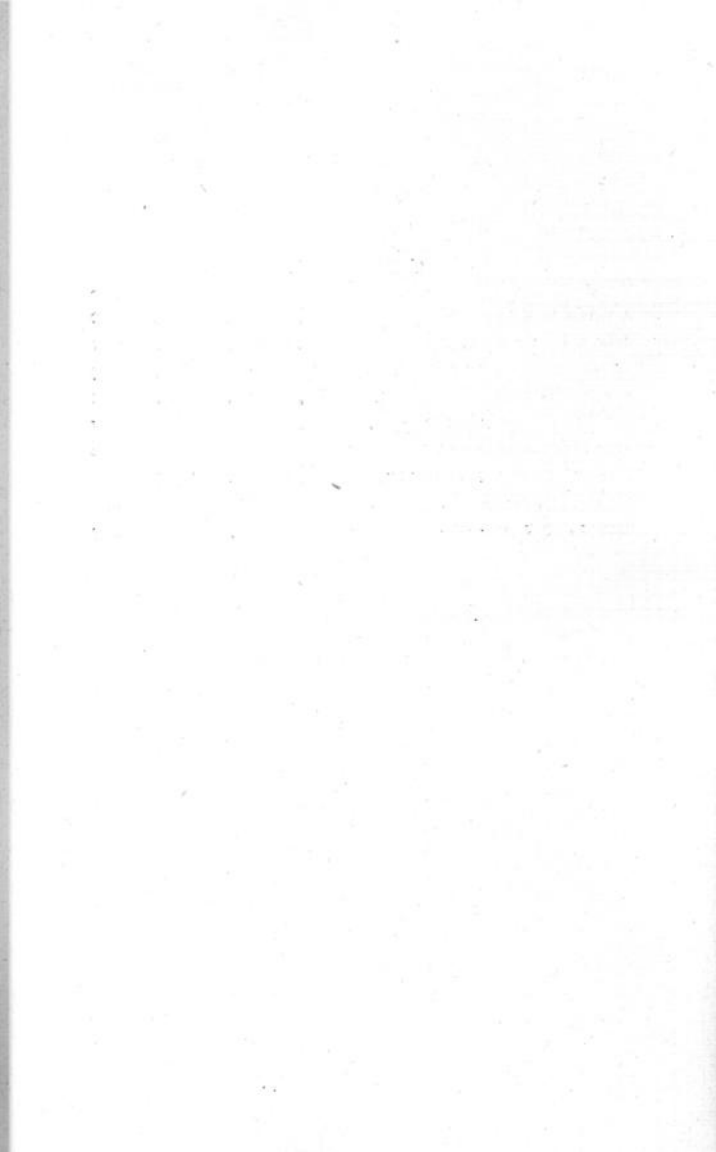
*Two of these stories have been published before:
"A Gentlewoman," under another title in the Arena,
1893, and "An Adventure of a Lady of Quality," in
Harper's Magazine for January, 1895—more than a
year before the announcement of a book with a similar
title.*

Book again



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A VISIBLE SIGN



A VISIBLE SIGN

IT was at first a matter of indifference to Captain Lee that in the dismemberment of the Confederacy the records of his regiment had been destroyed. The memories so overwhelmingly present with him must, he thought, be part of the universal knowledge, not to be lost. Later it seemed to him that all the world but himself had forgotten. He tried to find his old commander, to get some accredited statement of his services; but the Colonel was dead, and the other officers were scattered beyond finding.

The letters that the Captain had written to his wife had been lost in moving to town from the plantation, and his body servant who went up to Richmond with him when he enlisted had died in the first yellow fever year. It came at last to this,—that there was not one record, not one scrap of paper,

no person or document by which his devotion and service to the Confederacy might be proved,—nothing but his old uniform.

A person who did not know him well would not have guessed how deeply he felt on this subject. He was a most reserved man, and it was a part of his reserve that he could not speak of the time of the Confederacy. He said to himself that he feared to make the subject commonplace or even tedious by talking of it to his children; he had seen that happen in families of his acquaintance. But the real reason was not that he did not want to speak—he could not.

The uniform, at first almost unconsidered, then a saddening relic, came to be very precious. Sometimes in the reverent silences of the church, or in the watches of a wakeful night, he found himself thinking: “I shall leave no inheritance to my grandsons so priceless as that old uniform will be. Looking at it, our cause will seem real to them, and because of me they will study the story of our struggle.”

The Captain's wife and daughters regarded him as a being set apart, a person too high and fine for the affairs of this world. There was even in the family an appearance of making up to him for something lacking, although he himself would have resented such an idea. The ladies understood him partly, and their affection carried them the rest of the way in their loving and gentle family life. They were never so busy that he was not the one to be considered first. All the little social news was told in his presence. It was not addressed to him directly, but was intended to divert him.

He liked to hear of the historical societies and of the organizations of women formed to perpetuate the memory of the heroic past. His daughters brought him many stories from the meetings of such associations.

"Mrs. Conway's great-great-grandfather was one of the signers!" said Patty.

"Yes; but she can't prove that he was *her* great - great - grandfather!" exclaimed

Fairfax. "Now Mrs. Pinckney has the actual letter that her ancestor wrote from Valley Forge."

"But didn't that letter fade away into insignificance when Mrs. Fauquier brought out *her* relic?"

"And what was that?" inquired the Captain, with much interest.

"Only think, father, she had the hat, the actual *hat*—cockade and all—that her ancestor wore through the North Carolina campaign!"

"Yes," said Patty, "we walked up to look at it without a word. It seemed so wonderful to see it after all these years. It almost made me tremble,—it was so near and real."

The Captain did not speak; it made his heart beat to think of his own sacred gray, and of a past that it would some day revivify.

In the earlier years the Captain had often looked at his uniform. Of late he had not cared to take it out; it was like going to

the cemetery,—he came away unsatisfied. It pleased him to think of it as safe in the little trunk in the attic, but he did not wish to see it. That night he remembered that it had been a long time since he had looked at it. He troubled himself about the chance of moths and resolved to examine it the first thing in the morning.

But in the morning his desire was gone. Indeed, it was only when the trunk was to be emptied that he might put in it the things for a little journey, that he spoke of the uniform.

Then he went to the foot of the stairs and called to Patty, who was getting together what he was to take with him.

“Daughter, bring down my old uniform when you empty the little trunk.”

He heard her sweet, clear voice: “Yes, father!” He heard her light step as she walked about the bare floor of the attic. Then she came hurriedly to the upper balustrade.

“Father, it isn't here! There's nothing

in the trunk but a roll of silk pieces and an old white vest. And I've looked everywhere else!"

Mrs. Lee appeared at the door of her room. She thought that her husband had replaced the uniform in the trunk after it was out the last time. He supposed that she had done so. Patty was called from her little studio.

"Patty, come here! Do you know anything about father's old uniform?"

Patty came, rosy and graceful. She stuck her brushes in her hair and pondered.

"I have not seen it since father took the trunk to Tennessee six months ago. Then I hung it in the attic just over the place where the little trunk always stands. I knew father always liked to fold it himself."

"Has anything been given away lately?" asked Mrs. Lee.

Fairfax overheard her mother's question. Her face turned blood red; she put her hand to her head.

"Oh, wait a minute till I think!" she said. "I met a tramp at the door one day

last fall—I was just going to a card party; I called to that light-colored Tilly we had then to give him any old thing that might be lying around the attic.”

Her father turned away with the stooping gesture of a man who has had a heavy blow. The side of his face that they could see was gray and sunken.

His daughter rushed to him; she clung to him wildly; she spoke as a little child might speak. “Oh, papa, papa, *don't!* Indeed I didn't know! Oh, please forgive me, *papa!*”

The Captain could not speak at first; his old throat made queer choking noises, but he patted the girl's shoulder reassuringly.

“Do not blame yourself, my daughter. It is a misfortune; we must learn to bear misfortunes.”

The Captain's business had not been pressing for many years, and shortly after the loss of the uniform he gave up active connection with the firm of cotton-factors of which he had been a member. His

health had never been very strong, and he spent many hours at home with the ladies. On fine afternoons he walked out to attend the meeting of some board of directors or to spend a little while in the office of his old firm. Once or twice when he came in he spoke of the dust, and how it showed on his dark clothing.

"I wonder, Mrs. Lee," he said, "if it would be out of the way for me to get a suit of light-colored clothes, such as the young gentlemen wear—one of those tans, or, maybe, a nice gray?"

He spoke of it again: "Of course a man of my age wouldn't want one of those bob-tailed coats—if I *should* get a light suit."

The suit came home; the color was a clear gray; there was a long frock coat. The Captain buttoned it around his neat figure with grave satisfaction.

"Father may not know much about the styles," said Fairfax, "but he's awfully distinguished."

He wore his gray suit so constantly that

the ladies laughingly spoke of it as his "uniform." This was only to one another; when they were in his presence there was no recognition of the fact that there was anything to be remarked about his clothing. It was felt that any comment would hurt him. Later the coat was sent out for some repair. When it came home, Patty said, in some surprise, "Why, father, the tailor has put brass buttons on it!"

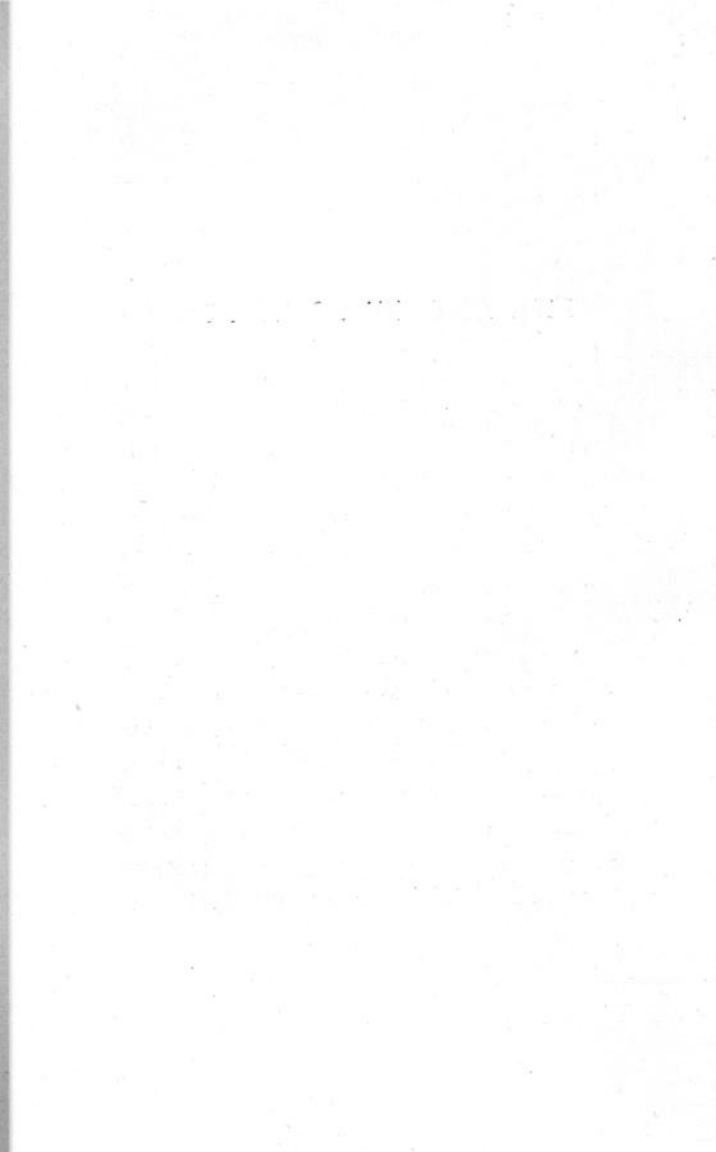
"So he has!" exclaimed the Captain; but the buttons were not removed.

The Captain had always liked a slouch hat. Now he wore one constantly. He let his beautiful smooth hair grow long and parted it far down over one ear. "What picture is it that father looks like?" asked Fairfax. "He looks like one of those old daguerreotypes taken during the war that grandmother used to show us on Sunday afternoons when we were little," answered her sister.

As he sat in a shady corner of the veranda in the long mornings, the Captain

sometimes looked tenderly at the sleeve of his gray coat, as though he loved to see the color near him. And in the evenings he might be seen pacing back and forth for hours on the gallery in front of his house, silent, stern, wrapped in contemplation of a lost time, clad in the insignia of an unforgotten past.

THE END OF SOCIETY



THE END OF SOCIETY

("The end of society is the individual."—*Law maxim.*)

THE cabin had but one room; at one end of that was a bedstead high puffed with a feather bed, though the month was August; at the other was the stove on which Alfaretta was cooking the supper. A child of two hung on her skirt, and a six-months-old baby was tied in a high chair.

Occasionally she looked out over the swampy prairie toward the direction from which her husband, Sol, might come.

Nine months before, on their way to Dakota, they had halted their wagon here when Sol had hired out to clear the swamp, and Alfaretta, with her tow-headed child in her arms, had climbed out of the back of the wagon, and set up the stove, and put the bed together.

Sol's partner and employer, Asaph, lived

in a cabin three miles west. He had undertaken to clear two hundred acres of land for a company in La Fayette. He kept an account of the work done by himself and Sol and settled once a month.

This was settlement day and Alfaretta knew Sol would be later than usual; nevertheless she kept looking out for his approach with a sort of formless anxiety. Asaph could read and write, Sol could not. Sol thought Asaph had cheated him the last two times. Alfaretta did not doubt that this had been the case, although her experience of life had not been extended enough to give her much reason for thinking one thing or another. She had married at fifteen, and her life before that had been passed partly in the mountains of Tennessee, and partly on the little clay-soiled farm in Southwestern Indiana where her father had "squatted." The three years since her marriage she had spent for the most part in the wagon. Sol had been anxious to better himself. This determination and the fact

that he possessed a wagon and team were evidences that he was, although only twenty-one years old, a man of some capacity.

At sunset Alfaretta saw him coming across the clearing. He was over six feet high, and blond in hair and beard. Though he carried an ax over his shoulder he walked with the easy swing of symmetrical strength. Alfaretta perceived this with an appreciation for which she had no medium of expression.

When he came in without addressing her she did not wonder. He was silent by nature, and at any time had but little to say. Besides this the months the two had passed in almost entire isolation had developed between them an understanding independent of speech. She knew his thoughts as a dog knows the moods of his master. The child toddled toward him; he took it in his arms and sat silent while Alfaretta spread a newspaper on the top of a box and put on it the skillet of fried pork, some corn pone, and two tin cups of coffee.

When Sol had eaten his supper his wife asked, "Wha'd he give you this time?"

"Fifty cents for a month's work."

"He's give us some meat and meal."

Sol made no response, but after a quarter of an hour he spoke again.

"He says I owed him ten dollars last time. He says that was in the paper I signed."

Alfaretta did not ask if this was true; she knew it was not. But she did not know that she had any right to be specially indignant. That they should be forever cheated and betrayed was only a part of the order of things.

Sol went outside of the door and sat there with the child in his arms while he smoked his pipe. Malarial mists rose heavily and almost obscured the dull after-glow of the sunset. The child went to sleep, and he brought it in, and unclasping its little arms took its apron off and put it on the back of the bed.

The baby was fretful; Alfaretta soothed

it to sleep again and again, only to have it waken with the peevish wail of a teething child whenever she tried to put it down. Mosquitos and gnats came in swarms and clouded the light of the dingy little lamp, in the oil of which floated a red rag—put there with decorative intent. Sol sat on the bed for another half hour in deep thought. Then he rose and went toward the door.

“Where you going?”

“I’m going to try to make Asaph square up.”

“Well, he won’t.”

He had taken his gun up as she spoke. Now, he answered, “Well, if he don’t I’ll kill him.”

Such a threat gave Alfaretta no particular concern at the moment. She had heard such threats all of her life; they were the recourse of the injured, the argument of the angry. She had seen men who had killed others; she had even witnessed a shooting or two in which no one was hurt. But no

sooner was Sol gone than she became troubled. She tried with all the intensity of which she was capable to make the baby sleep, to force him to stay asleep. When she had succeeded she came out, shutting the cabin door softly behind her. She stood for an instant as if in doubt; then with her arm held before her to shield her face from the low-growing bushes, she ran at full speed across the marsh toward the cabin of Asaph.

As she came near she heard the sound of loud talking. The men seemed to come out of the door together. Their tones grew fiercer. There were two shots, a shriek, an oath, and then silence.

As Sol strode through the slashes Alfaretta slipped to his side and touched his arm. He clutched her (he shook from head to foot) and dragged her out into the moonlight and looked at her. She was crying aloud.

"Damn you, be still!" he said, and drove her before him along the way home.

In the morning Sol put on his other shirt

from the box under the bed. He lingered awhile, as if waiting for something. At about seven, however, he took his ax and went to work.

The shirt he left on the floor was blood-stained—his left arm had been grazed by a bullet. When he got home Alfaretta had washed the garment and it hung drying on a stump near the door. He looked at it and then, sharply, at his wife.

At first Alfaretta had no thought but simple horror at the deed. She had been so far away from everything that she had no constant realization that there was anyone in the world but themselves. By the second morning she began to fear. She knew that it was wrong to kill and the possibility of some human vengeance occurred to her mind. In her sleep she had visions of the streets in Indianapolis through which they had passed on their way. There were crowds there, always moving, and moving.

She had moments of that strange physical apprehension of danger that some women

call nervousness. She was frightened into speechless trembling when at the end of the third day Sol, speaking for the first time, said, "If you blab you ought to be killed, too."

By this time he did not eat or sleep, but sat in one position all day long. As Alfaretta had looked about for a place to lay the little baby, Sol had held out his hands. After that he had cared for it altogether, except when he gave it to the mother to be fed.

One day he put his head forward as if to listen. Then he laid the child down gently and walked to the door. Alfaretta heard him give a long sigh. In a moment three men on horseback came in view—the sheriff and two deputies. Sol went with them without resistance.

While Sol was in jail he was approached by a shystering lawyer who had heard from a turnkey of his wounded arm. "Give me twenty-five dollars," he said, "and I'll get you off. It was self-defense." Sol listened

to what the other had to propose and then said simply, "I 'low it wasn't self-defense, I reckon I wasn't afred of Asaph's killing me." When the lawyer lowered his price to five dollars Sol would not even give him so much out of the money for which his team had been sold, and as soon as he could he gave every cent to the sheriff to be kept for Alfaretta.

At the opening of the trial the judge, finding no lawyer acting for the prisoner, asked an attorney who was in the courtroom to take charge of the case. It was the same man who had approached Sol in jail. "Your honor," said he, "I have consulted with the prisoner already, and I can only advise him to plead guilty."

The trial was soon over. When Sol was asked if he was guilty or not he looked up as if bewildered at so superfluous a question. "Yes," he said, "I done it."

The Land Company in La Fayette had sent a skillful lawyer to represent them in the prosecution. There had been deeds of

violence among their men before and they were sensitive. He was able to show that the murder had been wanton and cold blooded. The newspapers were saying, "There has been too much monkeying with life sentences, and getting pardoned out in a few years. What this county needs is a little hanging." Because the community had felt themselves outraged by recent failures of justice, Sol's plea of guilty did not serve, as it ordinarily would have done, to mitigate the sentence that was to be passed on him.

Alfaretta was not at the trial. The county seat was far away and she had no one with whom to leave the children. Some of the neighbors were able to go and drove four miles out of their way on their return to tell her that Sol had been sentenced to be hanged. She got one short letter from her husband; it was written by a fellow-prisoner whose lack of facility in writing had made him abbreviate the sentences out of all meaning. A few days before the time set

for the hanging she walked, carrying both children, to a farm five miles away and got the woman of the house to engage to take charge of the older child on the day of the execution. In preparation she had already made for the six months baby who was to go with her a little dress of pink calico and a sun-bonnet of the same.

The day appointed was late in October, and, although clear, very chilly. Alfaretta left home early in the morning and took her way across great fields of soft black prairie earth newly plowed for the planting of winter wheat, or sometimes she jumped from one little grassy pyramid to another across the frost-stiffened swamp.

The nearest railroad was five miles from her cabin, and there were four miles more for her to walk to the county seat after she left the cars. She was admitted at once to the inclosure at the Courthouse when she made herself known. Someone asked her if she would like to see the prisoner, but while she dumbly hesitated a deputy said it

was pretty late already and he reckoned Sol oughtn't to be bothered.

As she sat there in front of the scaffold the silence grew deeper and deeper. The crowd around her changed into a thousand presences, near and oppressive. The officers moved back and forth with grave and automatic directness. Everything began to swing over her in rhythmic risings and fallings. Then the silence, the multitude, the swaying of the universe, seemed to her sense to unite in the cadences of some awful force hitherto unknown.

"It is over, life is over, hope is over. You two have never been alone, never—not even in the woods. A multitude has watched you. They all have watched you—and now they have taken him, and now they are going to kill him!—to kill him!"

She saw them lead out the condemned man. He had on new black clothes. His eyes were glassy, his mouth hung open, his head wobbled from side to side. He had been filled with morphine and brandy. Men

held him up on either side. The sheriff, pale as ashes, turned to test the ropes for the last time.

Alfaretta got to her feet. She made an effort like the terrible struggle of nightmare, but no voice came. An agony clutched her whole slender little frame. She screamed, she shrieked.

"He never knowed! You're doing just what he done! It ain't right! It ain't right!"

She was pulled down into her seat. The baby began to wail. She opened her dress and put it to her flat young breast.

She still sat there as the crowd dispersed. The young reporters passed near her. One said, "Oh, there's the widow!" and taking out his note book turned toward her. The other drew him away. "Oh, hell! Ain't you sick enough already?"

A deputy came to inquire if she wanted the "remains." She made some sort of affirmative sign, and when Sol's body was put in the coffin she came and sat down

beside it with her arm over the box. The sheriff said he would ask some of the folks that were going that way to carry the body as far as the train. Later he came back and said in something like apology that the Balzer boys were the only ones he could get.

The sheriff's wife left her hospitable kitchen—she had a lot of company to dinner that day—and came across to where Alfaretta sat in front of the jail and begged her to come in and get a comfortable dinner with the folks. Alfaretta looked at her in silence as she continued with kindly insistence. "Oh, come right on, Miz Hopper; you know you'd ought to eat to keep up your strength." Later a bareheaded little girl ran over, bringing a plate on which was a large piece of custard pie and some sweet pickles, and a cup of coffee over-sugared and creamed. Alfaretta gave the baby a little of the coffee.

At five o'clock the Balzers came by. They had been drinking, but were quiet. "I

reckon they'll have sense enough not to talk any blaggard talk while she's along," the sheriff said, anxiously, as they passed out of sight.

The first mile they were silent. Then they stopped and drank from a jug which lay at their feet. Alfaretta sat in the rear end of the wagon on some straw. Before they had gone another half mile they were singing and yelling. From then on they were drinking constantly, at one minute making frightful threats to anything and everything, at another uttering horrible blasphemies. Later it occurred to them to ask the dead man to drink. They turned in the seat and poured whisky on the head of the coffin.

It was dark when they reached the station. The Balzers had grown sullen and quarrelsome. The agent came out and helped them to put the coffin on the platform which made the station—it was only a place where the train took water. Then after the wagon was gone the agent told

Alfaretta that he'd got to go to his supper, but he'd come back in time to flag the eight o'clock train. She saw his lantern fade and go out down the road.

As she sat there the night grew cold. Heavy mists rose from the earth. She took off her shawl to put around the baby, and then her sun-bonnet to wrap around its little feet.

And as she waited alone with her dead husband she knew not of any mercy in the hollow swinging earth beneath her, nor in the empty heavens above.

AN ADVENTURE OF A LADY OF
QUALITY



AN ADVENTURE OF A LADY OF QUALITY

THE regular Saturday afternoon meeting of the Woman's Club was over. It had been a delightful occasion; the club members standing about the room in little groups said to each other that it had been a "beautiful" meeting. They were prosperous-looking women. Some of them were pretty, some far from it, but they all had the look of belonging to that class which subordinates the physical, and gives the intellectual part of their natures at least a fair chance.

Many of them lingered to speak to the President of the club. She had read the paper of the day. Her theme had been "The Divinity of Man." Everybody was charmed.

"I don't want to be an angel!" said one

lady. "Now that I've heard you, I'd rather be a human being!"

"I seemed to recognize it as my own subconscious thinking," said another. "'Humanity shares in the holiness of the universe!'"

"Oh!" cried a third, "I *did* like it when you said that we are all of the same essence — 'Call no man common or unclean; he is in God, as we are in God!'"

Mrs. Owen stood smiling and flushed in the middle of the eager group. Her breath was still coming fast from the emotion of her subject. She gave both hands to those near her. "Thank you, dear." "Oh, how kind you are!" "Yes," to another, "when one gets possession of the thought it clears away everything. All that is wrong rights itself."

Some young girls stood at the edge of the circle, waiting for a chance to approach her. "Isn't Mrs. Owen *lovely*?" said one. "She herself makes everything she says seem so exquisite!"

"I'm not sure we have a right to feel that," answered her friend. "The truth ought to go by its own strength, without any charming woman to fire it off. For myself, I try to listen to everything I hear as if it were uttered by a young man with big feet, no chin, and a prominent Adam's apple!"

"Well, that doesn't make Mrs. Owen any less lovely, does it?" asked the first.

"Oh, no!—and *she* believes all she says!"

The club members passed out. Mrs. Owen remained to speak to the custodian of the rooms. As she waited she was conscious of a sort of exaltation. She reveled in the thought of her own happiness. Everything pleased her. From the first she had had great faith in the woman's club idea. Her society had prospered beyond all expectation. She looked about her; the beautiful building in which she was had been built by the members of the club, and consecrated to the uses of women and children. In the rooms nearest was an art school for working-

girls; upstairs a Delsarte teacher was instructing fifty children.

Every day brought to her fresh signs of the intellectual activity of the town. And, she thought, spiritually everything was better than it had been—there was surely less gossip, less malicious criticism! It seemed to her that she might count the time near when men would be true and wise, and women free and strong.

She went smiling down the stairway, a crowd of children from the upper floor trooping after her. From the club she was to go for her husband and take him with her to a reception; it was because of this reception that she was dressed more showily than she would otherwise have been. The four-o'clock whistle of a factory around the corner had just sounded. At the foot of the steps she looked ahead of her quickly, and then turned to the children above her. "Go back!" she cried; "Go back instantly!"

As she reached the street she had come between two men. One had run past her,

bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves. There was fury in his face, and shame too. He stopped suddenly, his hand at his hip, and turned on the man who pursued him. "Don't you touch me!" he shouted; "I've got a gun!"

As he spoke his pursuer closed with him; they went to the earth together in fierce writhings. Mrs. Owen threw out her hands and looked about for help. The people who a moment before crowded the street had moved back into a ring. She was in the middle of it, the two struggling men at her feet. She said to those nearest her: "*Can't* you stop it? This is awful!" The spectators grinned sheepishly. One nudged his neighbor with his elbow, and said, in a low voice, but with a distinct imitation of her tone, "*Can't* you stop this, Jim?" Mrs. Owen tried to look away, but she could not. Either the horror of the thing had deadened her senses so she could not feel it, or it was *not* horrible. At any rate, she looked; more than that, she knew she *wanted* to look.

She scrutinized the two men; they were shabby, undersized, ill fed. She heard the blows, and even wondered: "I did not know that flesh striking flesh would make a sound like that!" She saw, too, another thing that surprised her—a blow did not bring blood at once; first the flesh was white, then the blood oozed to the surface.

They rolled and tossed from edge to edge of the sidewalk. One bit the other's ear, and chewed at it furiously. The other heaved and tossed in fierce effort to get at his opponent's throat. As they fought they uttered sharp little cries. It seemed that the pursuer was getting the best of it; the other man for a moment made no resistance. Immediately the reason was evident; he was trying to get his pistol out of his pocket. Another half-turn and he would have it. "Let me up!" he shouted, as the other ground his elbow into his chest; "I don't want to kill you!" The other gave no heed; his face was full of inhuman fury. It seemed as if nothing could reach him. The first

man got his hand on his pistol—in a breath there would be murder!

Mrs. Owen sprang at the two. She clutched the upper man by the arms. "Get up this minute!" she said. "*Drop* him!"

He looked around stupidly. A lady, pale and beautiful, held him by the shoulders. A slow surprise came over his distorted features. His hands fell. He let her drag him to his feet. She held him tightly by the wrists as they stood.

The other one sat up and looked blankly at the bloody pavement. "Go!" she cried. He staggered to an upright position, his pistol in his hand. As he turned, the man she held began to cry. He looked hideous—like an ugly baby. "Lady," he said, "I never gave her a hard word since we was married!"

The pursued man had reeled a few feet down the street; he turned, and without a word of warning shot full into the crowd once—and again.

By some chance no one was hit, but on

the instant the silent street broke into motion. Men shouted and pushed forward and back, and, as if they had sprung from the earth, two policemen appeared, swinging their clubs as they ran. One seized the man with the pistol, who looked at him with a silly, bewildered smile on his bloody face. The other bore down on the whimpering wretch that Mrs. Owen still held. He laid hold of him with that ferocity that makes manifest the majesty of the law. Then he turned.

"Lady in the scrap?" he asked, indicating Mrs. Owen with a fat thumb.

The crowd surged down the street, leaving Mrs. Owen almost alone. Some street boys, torn with vain regrets, rushed by her in hot chase. The janitress of the building hurried down the stair.

"Won't you come up and wait for your carriage?" she asked.

"No," said Mrs. Owen; "I'll wait here." But it seemed to her that she must move.

"Tell the coachman to come to Mr. Owen's office for me."

As she started she had a mechanical sort of perception that her beautiful garments were not suited to the street. Then she knew that she was saying to herself, "That is what I *might* think; really I don't care in the least about it—or about anything!" She loathed herself; she had a sickening consciousness that she was part of it all, and that those brutes were part of her.

Suddenly she thought, "Oh, how sleepy I am!" Then, with the woman's club habit of analysis, "How strange that I should be sleepy!" She was in front of a wholesale hardware shop. She leaned for a moment on a convenient keg of nails, to the admiration of a banana peddler.

A little later she walked into her husband's office, past a boy who was screwing down a copying-press and a young man who talked a denunciatory letter into a phonograph. She opened a door marked *Mr. Owen*. Her husband sat at a desk writing;

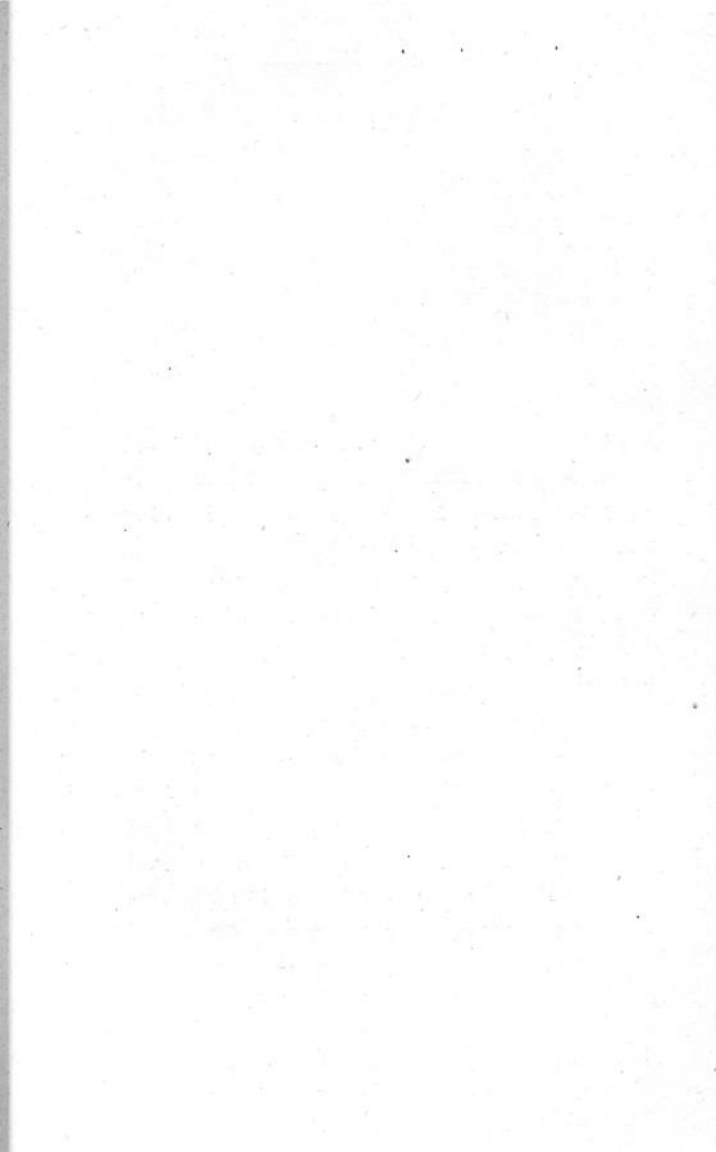
he smiled, but did not raise his eyes above the border of her skirt.

“That you, Amy? Sit down; I’ll be done in a minute.”

She put her hand against the casing of the door. It seemed to her that she could go no farther. At the end of the line her husband looked up. “What is it, Amy?” he cried, hastening toward her. “What makes you so pale?”

She smiled at him mistily. “I guess, Richard,” said she, “I guess *you’d* be pale, too, if you’d just been in a scrap!”

A PART OF THE NEW SOUTH



A PART OF THE NEW SOUTH

AT the time of Lee's surrender the Captain was in Virginia; it was six weeks later when he reached his plantation. The driver of the wagon hired to bring him from Natchez put him down with some pretense of apology at the big gate a half mile from the house. Weak and ill though he was, he did not object, for he wanted to be alone a few moments before he reached home. He had been stunned by defeat and disaster, and thus far had not been able to think clearly of the future.

As he went up the leaf-strewn avenue he saw the whole situation plainly. The fight was over, the old hopes were dead, he must bury them out of sight and take up with single mind the life that lay ahead. He had served through the entire war, his health

was broken, his fortune was gone; but he was not dismayed.

"A man's spirit is his own," he thought. "Defeat cannot crush it, nor, unless he consent, can any misfortune take it from him." And then he saw his wife's white dress float across the gallery as she came to meet him.

It was evident almost at once that Captain Lee must give up the plantation to his creditors. Before he went into the army he had been admitted to the bar, but they had nothing to live on while he should wait for a practice. He took the first employment he could get—a situation as clerk in a cotton house—and went to work as earnestly and simply as if he had never meant to do anything else.

The new way of living upon which the Lees entered was very different from anything which they had known before, but Mrs. Lee went into its hardships as unrepiningly as did her husband, and gayly too. She found a score of new interests. She bor-

rowed recipes and learned to be a frugal housekeeper; she practiced her economies with the air of a princess. She went much into society, wearing her old finery so convincingly that other women thought they had been misinformed about the fashions.

The Captain's salary was soon increased, and before many years a partnership was offered to him. He and his wife had meant that as soon as their affairs grew a little brighter he should take up the practice of law, but, when the time came to decide, he at once gave up all idea of following the profession which he loved. His own preferences and, stronger still, the traditions of his race were set aside for the chance of more speedily securing ease for those dependent on him.

They went North for a few weeks every summer, and it sometimes happened that the Captain was asked if he were related to the great General whose name was the same as his own. He answered in the negative as briefly as was possible in so court-

eous a man, nor did he ever follow the lead thus given and talk of the time of the Confederacy.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Lee to him one day at Mackinac, "that you did not respond more cordially to that gentleman. He showed such a nice spirit. I should think you would be interested in talking the subject over with an intelligent person on the other side."

The Captain looked at her with his fine, gentle face drawn with feeling. "Oh, Mrs. Lee, don't you know that I cannot talk it over? It is too near—it hurts too much."

But after that, he might have been seen trying to make special amends in the way of courtesy to the Northern gentleman. He played whist with him for a partner, and watched him lead from a short suit with unflinching politeness; and he listened with interest to all that the other had to say of the surpassing attractions the state of Iowa presented as a place of residence.

To his wife only did the Captain speak

of the past. She listened always with tender interest, but one day she said: "Those times must always be sacred and precious to you and me, but is it wise to dwell much on what is over? Should we not fill our minds as much as possible with other interests?" He thanked her for her candor. "You are right, dear; we must think of the present."

The Captain's two little daughters were born after the circumstances of the family had grown brighter—they were a part of the new and prosperous life. In their childhood he spent much time with them, and he invariably treated them with the courtesy he would have shown to young ladies. The thought of reproving them, or finding fault with them, would have given him pain. He listened to the talk of his associates on the fertile theme of how to bring up children as if he had no share in such cares. "No doubt a boy may need at times to be disciplined, but a little *girl!*—I have not

known any instance where a little girl did anything that you could call wrong."

The Captain's daughters grew up into beautiful, capable young women. They were sent North to school and came home with an amount of Latin and science that startled their father. Their natural charm still further heightened by cultivation and by conscious endeavor, they soon were recognized belles. Their fondness for dancing and finery and all kinds of social gayety was, in their father's opinion, only natural. But they united with these seasonable instincts others that were less easy of comprehension. Miss Fairfax hastened to join the Woman's Club, and studied, and, it was said, mastered the Previous Question. Miss Patty worked in the Art League. The Captain in his heart did not quite see the use of all this, but he stood by his daughters loyally.

"There's a lot of foolishness going on!" said an old gentleman to him as they walked down the magnolia-shaded street one morn-

ing. "These clubs are no place for a woman. A woman ought to stay at home and attend to her house and her children."

The Captain saw that his friend had forgotten that he was speaking to a man whose wife and daughters were active in the very work that he condemned. He had a moment's embarrassment; he would not mortify the gentleman by reminding him of it, but he could not even seem to acquiesce in what might be a criticism of the ladies of his family.

"I have looked into the matter rather closely," he hastened to say, "and I do not find any ground for the misgiving that you entertain. The ladies meet as ladies, to discuss in a modest and thoughtful manner themes of an elevating nature. And," he continued, warming up to his subject, "it is my conviction that anything a lady does is right. The hand of woman, sir, glorifies and blesses whatever it rests upon."

He came indeed to take pleasure in the

doings of the societies. When Fairfax was appointed to write a paper on the Poets of the Elizabethan Age, he was more interested in the subject than was the young woman herself. He sent away for books and went over the half-forgotten volumes that had come to him from his father's library; and when her paper was completed he read it with much pleasure.

"I certainly was surprised at its excellence," he said to Mrs. Lee. "The essay not only evinces study, but also manifests a very considerable degree of taste and sensibility, and a not unfeminine perception of humor. The style might be thought a little abrupt, and the language in some places inclined to colloquialism; but those are faults that may be cured by observation and application. I shall recommend her to the careful reading of Addison for a month or two, with something of Washington Irving to give her expression the modern cast."

In the infancy of the little girls the Captain had said to his wife, "Our children are

our dearest possession and we want to keep them near us. Let us always respect their individuality and ever encourage them to approach us with perfect freedom." In this there was no doubt that he succeeded; the young ladies were free to utter their thoughts on any subject that might come up. As they sat at the table one evening Miss Fairfax mused deeply. Suddenly she spoke:

"The whole theory of this government," said she, "is wrong and impracticable! The answer for our difficulty lies, I have no doubt, in some form of socialism!"

The Captain almost jumped out of his chair in horror and indignation. "Good heavens, child, what are you talking about? Socialism means atheism—the destruction of private rights—anarchy—everything else that is bad!"

"Oh, that's not argument, father," she responded calmly, "that's just violence. We will talk the matter over, and I am almost sure I can convince you."

The Captain looked for an instant at the

pretty and fashionable young person who had gravely made this suggestion, and then (a most unusual thing for him) he broke into a laugh. "Well, my dear," he said, "I wonder what *my* father would have done if I had made such a speech as that to him."

But it was plain that he had something on his mind all the evening, and before they separated for the night he spoke to Fairfax seriously.

"Daughter," he said, "I can hardly believe that you were in earnest in your talk about the theory of our national existence. A republic like ours is the best form of government on which the sun ever shone; the principles on which it is founded are the noblest ever conceived by human intellect. An American should be proud to lay down his life in the defense of these principles, and he should feel, with reverent gratitude, that they have had the special blessing of the Almighty as well as the applause of the world."

"I was right much worried to see that you took Fairfax's nonsense so seriously," said Mrs. Lee, when they were alone. "You mustn't mind it,—it's just her way of talking."

The Captain was not to be reassured. "I feel," said he, "that I have neglected one of the most sacred duties of a parent. I have not, as I should have done, day by day instilled into the minds of my children that patriotism which is one of the highest qualities of any soul, and without which a nation, like an uprooted plant, will surely perish. And the natural outgrowth of my carelessness is the alarming view held by my own daughter."

"Oh, I guess you're feeling it too much," his wife answered. "We're just like other parents. Nobody talks much to their children about that sort of thing nowadays. I *know* they don't in the North. Perhaps the way you and I were brought up is a little out of style now," she added, laughingly.

"My love, this is hardly a matter of

fashion," said the Captain, with dignity. "It is a question, is it not, of what is true?"

Shortly after this, in his gentle way, he asked his daughters to read the Declaration of Independence, and spoke more than once of Washington and La Fayette. "They belong to us as much as they did to our forefathers," he said, "and we may well profit by the study of their lives and motives."

One beautiful evening in April the Captain stood on the gallery and looked down across the lawn. The magnolia trees were in full bloom and there were roses everywhere. The air was deliciously sweet, and there was something peaceful and reminiscent in the scene. It brought back to him the time when all the year was glowing and tender as an April afternoon.

As he stood, he heard the sound of a horn, then merry shouts and laughing and the noise of wheels. He saw the coach coming on which his daughters had gone to the races that afternoon. In his dignified

way he started down the long drive to meet the young ladies, but before he had gone ten steps some young men sprang to the earth and held outstretched arms to the girls. The Captain saw his daughters jump from what seemed to him dizzy heights, he saw them light like bubbles in a swirl of lace and silken flounces. The coach drove away, good-byes were shouted and waved, the horn sounded out merrily as the great vehicle swung along under the trees.

As the Captain looked at the scene, memories came to him. He thought of his gentle mother, dead in his youth; how softly she moved, how frail and fine she seemed. And then he remembered his wife when he was courting her—"the lily of Tupelo County," they called her. He saw her again, stepping from her father's carriage; the tip of one tiny satin shoe peeped from the folds of her rich robe, and she lightly touched with the ends of her gloved fingers the arm of the gentleman who, hat

in hand, eyes on the ground, had the honor of assisting her to alight!

The young women saw him coming toward them. They noticed his fine military bearing and his clear-cut, high-bred features. "Doesn't he look awfully swell?" said Fairfax. "Doesn't he look awfully *sweet*?" answered her sister.

They quickened their steps into a run. "Bless your heart!" cried Fairfax, "how solemn he looks, doesn't he, Patty?"

"I should say so," Patty answered, putting her arm around his slim old waist. "He looks as if he'd lost something and couldn't find it."

"I guess he thought he'd lost his supper," declared Fairfax. "He'll feel better when he's had a 'square meal'—as mother would say," she added, roguishly.

The Captain looked at her with reluctant disapprobation. He stopped as they were entering the dining-room door. "My dear," said he, "I do not *think* I ever heard your mother make use of that expression."

The sisters smiled at each other. "Oh, father, you are hopeless," said one of them. "I don't believe you'd know a joke if you met it coming up the big road."

"Then that's a good reason why you all shouldn't tease him," said Mrs. Lee.

At the table the two paid their father every pretty attention. They told him, as they knew he liked to be told, fully and in detail, about the races and everything that had happened. They were very bright in their talk, and he was, as he would have said, much "diverted" by it. He admired their wit, their grace, and their shrewd common sense. But their point of view was not his; he had felt this vaguely before, now he saw it clearly. There was a difference; his wife could come to a subject in the way that they did; but he felt himself an alien.

And yet, even as he perceived this, it seemed to him that he saw a forgotten self reflected in his daughters. The spirit of his college days came to him like a faint

echo through their gay discourse; he almost heard his own voice as they spoke.

“Something dreadful must have happened to me!” he thought—“something *awful*—or I should have kept on being quick and free-minded, just the way that they are.”

He was disturbed and bewildered. The pressure of a situation he could not understand was on him. When the young ladies were gone he turned to his wife. He recognized fondly as he did so that through everything she was the same. He thought that she looked as young as her daughters, and her face, with its colorless olive skin and its soft, dark eyes, had an effect of distinction that was lacking in the blooming beauty of the girls. But he could not find words in which to express his question, and he hardly knew what he wished to ask.

“Well,” he said, “our daughters are certainly very pretty.”

His wife looked at him with candid, laughing eyes. “Is that all you can say, Mr.

Lee? Now, I think they are the nicest girls in the world."

"Oh, so do I," he hastened to declare. "But are they like other girls?"

"Certainly they are," she answered, "except that they are brighter than most girls."

"But, my dear," he urged, "they are not as *you* used to be!"

"No," she sighed. "I *try* not to be envious when I see how much better a chance my daughters have than I ever had."

"Of course," said the Captain, "I know the times are changed, but do you think that with this modern spirit there is reverence for the old ways—respect for the things that stand for them?" He hesitated. "Do you suppose that Fairfax or my little Patty would care for those ideas that have been dearer than life to me?"

His wife answered easily, "Oh, Mr. Lee, the girls are young; we mustn't expect much of them yet."

The Captain turned his head and saw Patty coming toward him. She had been

in the next room and had heard his questions. There were tears in her eyes.

"Father," said she, "we are *not* fine, like you and mother." Then she smiled. "But you must remember that we hadn't the same advantages in our youth."

He put his arm around her fondly. "You two are father's dear treasures."

Shortly after this Miss Patty went to visit a friend whose husband, an officer in the regular army, was stationed at the Post at San Antonio. In her first letters she often mentioned Lieutenant Walters. It was he who sent the flowers and arranged the riding parties. Then she wrote no more about him. Later she said, "They all talk a lot about what a good family Mr. Walters belongs to. Ask father if he ever heard of a Colonel Horatio Walters who was in the Federal army."

"Patty is too absurd!" exclaimed Fairfax. "She thinks as we did when we were little, that father knows everything and everybody in the round world."

"Her instinct, if it be instinct, is not misplaced this time," said the Captain; "I have known of Horatio Walters for forty years!"

"Well, I always *did* say that you were the most remarkable man alive! How did you ever happen to know him?"

"It was when we were both young. Every spring for many years my father carried us all to Newport. The Walters family had a place there. 'Raish' and I were together every day and all day long through many summers."

He mused smilingly for a few minutes, then he said:

"He was a mighty nice boy. It certainly is curious—I never have seen him since we were eighteen—never but once; and yet positively I think of him oftener than I do of men whom I've been meeting every day for years."

"You *have* seen him once since you were grown, did you say, father?"

"Yes, once when I was about twenty-

five," he answered. But he did not seem inclined to say more.

When they were alone Mrs. Lee said to her daughter, "I think I can tell you when your father met Colonel Walters again."

"I thought you could," answered her daughter; "that's why I didn't tease him."

"Of course I wouldn't tell you if I thought he would object," said Mrs. Lee; "but he just doesn't care to speak of those things himself. He told me long ago that one day in Virginia at the time when it began to be plain that the Confederate forces could not hold out, he found that an old friend of his was in command of the Federal regiment just in front of him. He was wild to see him, so he took a glass and went to an elevation inside the lines. By some chance the other man was looking for him and they saw each other at the same instant. He said he saw his friend throw down his glass, swing his cap around his head, and he heard him give the long shrill whistle—'Oo-ee-ee!'—by which they summoned each other

as boys. And to his surprise he found himself doing the same thing."

"Dear me!" said the girl, "I wonder if that was really a pleasant experience?"

"It was to him. He said that all day he kept thinking of his friend's gay affectionate face, and of how handsome he looked in his fine uniform."

"It would have made *me* awfully *mad*!" said Fairfax.

Miss Patty was absent for three months. When she came home her mother and sister thought her a trifle absent-minded, and she was no less so on the Saturday after her arrival. On that day the Captain came from his office with great news. Mr. Walters had been with him for some time that afternoon. He had been courting Patty all winter and now asked her father's permission to address her. The young man had behaved with great propriety and candor. The Captain could not but be satisfied with what he learned of his character and prospects. He had only stipulated for a longer

acquaintance before an engagement should be entered into, in case Patty should feel inclined to accept his addresses. Concerning this the young man had shown a degree of doubt that was most becoming, but when Patty was called from her room where she had locked herself it became evident that the two understood each other pretty well. As the family sat together some hours later the Captain suddenly broke a silence by saying, "He looks just as his father did that day!"

"Oh, father," said Fairfax, "you *don't* expect us to believe that you *can* remember how anybody looked thirty years ago?"

But Patty rose at once and came to her father's side. "Thank you, father," she said; "I think that means that you like him."

The Captain had early acquired a competence, and by the time his daughters were grown he was a wealthy man. Having leisure and means, and a genuine interest in all that was for the good of the community, he

was constantly, in spite of his reserve and modesty, called on to fill places of prominence. His absolute integrity, his wide and temperate judgment were valued most highly. In many of the ceremonials of the region, such as the opening of the great bridge, or the dedication of the monument, he made, with his distinguished bearing and his pale, sad face, a most impressive figure. One day as he sat reading, while Mrs. Lee by his side worked at her embroidery, he put down his newspaper with a sad smile. He had been reading an announcement of his daughter's engagement, which included a tribute to himself as a successful man and a public-spirited citizen. It closed with these words: "Captain Lee is a part, and a characteristic part, of the New South." His eyes took the look of one who recalls with undying love a dead and buried past.

His wife rose and put her hand on his shoulder. She had it in her mind to catch his thought and then to lead him out of it. "I wonder," said she, "if you are remem-

bering that this week is the anniversary of the fall of Richmond?"

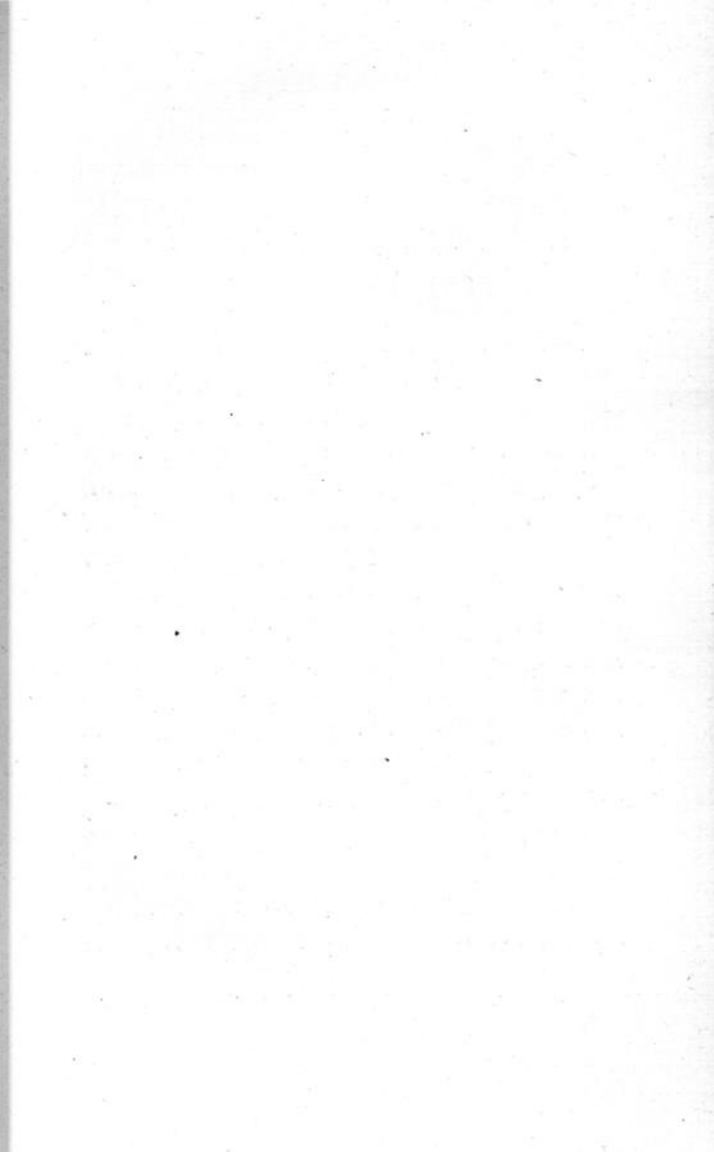
He looked at her with startled, bewildered eyes. She made the quick effort of a wife to bring him to a happier mood.

"We have lived a great deal since then, have we not?"

He put his hand to his brow; the look of distress flamed up into angry pain.

"No, no!" he said. "It seems to me that I have been dead ever since then."

A CONFLICT OF RIGHTS



A CONFLICT OF RIGHTS

I

AT six o'clock in the morning a train slackened and stopped at the little station. It was summer still, and the atmosphere had in it the memory of a hot day just passed, and the promise of one to come. The freight agent came out of his little office and stood by the baggage car. He was pale and sleepy-looking, but he smiled with the good humor of a man who finds something rather amusing in his own overworked condition. The blinds were down in the Pullman car and only one passenger appeared at the end where the white-coated porter had placed his step. He put her bags into her hands and sprang back on to the car.

The young lady looked up and down the cindery platform, and across the little grass-

plat and its gay beds of foliage plants, as if in expectation of someone to meet her. Then she walked to the baggageman, who had put her trunk on a hand truck and was about to wheel it into the depot.

"Do you know Mr. Amos Peabody?" she asked. "Has he been here this morning?"

"Oh, yes," he said. I have known Mr. Peabody and Miss Dezzie ever since I was a little boy. But they ain't been here this morning. They went up to Chicago yesterday afternoon. They laid off to do some trading, I guess."

The girl for an instant seemed dismayed. "When will they return?" she asked.

"I don't exactly know, but I heard her telling somebody she must get right back, —some of her folks was coming. Now, I reckon—"

The young lady did not prolong the conversation. "Thank you," said she; "I will send for the trunk."

The man followed her respectfully to the edge of the platform. "The house is

straight down the street. It's the old-fashioned red brick with a big orchard in front. It's been here since the Indians, 'most. Row of mill hands' cottages built up pretty close to the far side of the lot."

As the young girl walked down the dewy street the station agent looked after her with interest. He knew all about her; he knew that Mr. Peabody and his maiden sister, Miss Dezzie, had several years before adopted a little orphan niece, and that they had kept her at school in Vermont, where every year they spent the summer, and that now, having been graduated, she was coming to Indiana to live with them.

"I don't wonder the old folks are so soft about her," he said. "She's a hummer for looks."

The town through which Elinor Fletcher walked was just beginning to awaken. It was a pretty, ready-made town grouped around the works that made the heart of it. The same architect had planned it all. Whether one looked at the great mills them-

selves, or at the long rows of operatives' houses, or at the library or the theater or the showy residences of the proprietors, half hidden in trees, with stretches of lawn, the same features were evident; the same red brick, the same deep set windows, the same olive shingles, the same green grass, close-cut and water-drenched, and the same beds of red geraniums all in full bloom. The town looked as if it had been put down all at once. Only here and there, through its spick and span woof, there protruded a house of an older time, a residence like the Peabody's, which held in its aspect a memory of the period before the great factories had been dreamed of,—a time, still to be boasted of, when Greenfield had a Presbyterian and a Methodist and a Campbellite church while Chicago was only a swamp.

The girl walked up the long path, between rows of blooming perennial phlox and clusters of gladioli, to the door of her uncle's house. At the foot of the steps she stopped. The front porch was dusty, and some wind-

blown leaves and twigs lay about it. In the door-recess were two newspapers, rolled and still keeping the boomerang shape in which they had been thrown. Under the door was tucked a yellow envelope which the girl recognized as possibly containing the telegram she had sent in notification. She looked at the closed door in thoughtful consideration of what was to be done.

Across the garden at one side was the last of the row of cottages. Evidently its inmates were stirring, for smoke rose from the chimney. Some children, who had apparently with one bound left their beds and the house, stood around the back door. They stared awhile and then ran into the house. A woman came back with them; she also stared, adjusted the neck of her gown and came to the dividing fence. Elinor went toward her with an inquiry.

"Their hired girl was over here night before last," the woman responded, "and she said they didn't look for you till to-morrow;

and so when they went off she was going out to see her folks in the country."

"It is quite my fault," said Miss Elinor. "I found I could get through sooner. Have you any idea when they will come home?"

"Law, yes! They're going to get here to-night sure. The train gets in about nine—that is, if it ain't late. You know," said she, with a certain air, "that this is Labor Day."

"Is there any hotel near?" asked the young woman.

"They ain't none in town, none nearer than New Greenfield—that's three miles up the road."

Miss Elinor turned with a smile. "Well, then, Mrs.—oh, Mrs. Montague, thank you! I guess I'll have to ask you to give me some of your coffee and let me spend the day with you."

Mrs. Montague flushed with pleasure. "That's right. I'll take good care of you. Montague's gone off already to get the

transparencies for the procession, and you and me'll have breakfast right away."

The two went into the kitchen. It was a dreary, disorderly place. A few large goods boxes stood about; they had not been unpacked, but part of their contents had been dragged out, and the rest were spilling over the top. "We have been here four months," said Mrs. Montague, "but I don't feel really settled so as to have any ambition to get out my things. We come here from Pullman, and he's wanting to go on to Alton, to the wagon-works there. If we can sell our things and get the money I reckon we'll get off this week."

The woman looked tired. Her figure was flat and bent. She spoke in a sharp, querulous voice, not because she was bad tempered, but because that tone might claim attention when a milder one would not avail.

The young lady took her cup of coffee and slice of bread in her hands and sat down on the steps behind the kitchen door. She

talked pleasantly with Mrs. Montague and tried to make friends with the children. When her breakfast was done she coaxed them to let her wash their faces, and bribed the little one to have her hair curled.

Within Mrs. Montague was packing up the basket of dinner that was to be taken to the Labor-Day picnic. She explained the program as she worked; all the unions were to march through town in a big procession—two bands—at the grounds there were to be speeches, everybody was going, and, best of all, there would be grand fireworks.

The whole suggestion of Mrs. Montague's talk was quite new to Elinor and most interesting. The things of which she spoke and her easy confidence in her own claim to be as good as anybody were, the girl thought, a manifestation of the free Western life, the real American life, something quite different from anything possible in New England—which, after all, was still England and no longer "New." Before many min-

utes had passed, Mrs. Montague, with the appearance of regarding the picnic as an entertainment of her own, asked Elinor to accompany her, and pressed the invitation with hospitable importunity. After a little hesitancy the young lady consented. As they went on their way she had an amused consciousness of the emotion the Bennington Institute would experience at the sight of her on her way to a public picnic, leading two white-haired children and chaperoned by Mrs. Montague with her basket of lunch.

At the grounds they were joined, when the procession disbanded, by Montague, who looked at Miss Fletcher with some timidity and then ignored her altogether. The crowd grew larger every minute; families greeted each other and pushed on. Babies cried; women called. Little groups formed around peddlers and venders, and those who were anxious to get near these attractions no sooner got within hearing than they were equally anxious to get away. At intervals great wagons loaded with beer

kegs pushed through the crowd. "Here, Mag! Here, Miss!" cried Montague, "let's get up to the speaking place."

They held close together; Montague first, then his wife, basket-laden, hot and breathless, then Elinor with the two babies. Aided by the man's elbows they got to the center of the space where some boards put across trestles made rude seats.

By the time they found their places the girl was very uncomfortable; the crowding offended her, the noise was bewildering. But as they sat in the comparative ease of their position she recovered her spirits. She said to herself that a little inconvenience was nothing, and anyway it would be over in a few hours.

She looked about her with renewed interest at the audience that was assembling. There were family parties like the Montagues and herself who pushed about looking in vain for seats near the front. But there were others who were more significant; these were the older workingmen who

had come early to pre-empt good places, and now waited in patient silence for the speaking to begin. She saw their bent backs, and their nervous, tired, honest faces. She compared their hard mutilated hands with her own, sensitive and daintily kept. There is no entailment of crushed fingers and swollen joints. At birth the hands of all children are alike. Did God mean that later they should come to such difference?

The air cooled as they waited; little breezes played about. The crowd found places on benches, and beyond their limit on the grass. The people grew quiet, the faces of the younger men, which had seemed coarse or silly when in action, now relaxed into apathy or into a look of timid hope that was more pitiful than despair.

The Chairman and the chief officers of the Union took their places on a stand made of rough lumber decorated with flags and green branches. Elinor had heard of labor agitators, of "loud-mouthed, beer-drinking demagogues." She looked at the men on

the stand; they were pale, thin and sickly. One of them had the deep-set, rapt aspect of a fanatic, and the eyes of another shifted nervously from side to side; but they were all sad. The girl who sat in the midst of this perceived that she had never before thought of a great concourse which, whether it rejoiced, protested or denounced, had not a hope and courage that their gathering seemed to lack.

The meeting was opened; some reports were read. There was trouble in New Jersey, and a lockout at St. Louis; in local affairs there was nothing better, nor was there anything new to be complained of. There was nothing in these reports to encourage and nothing to stimulate. The meeting sat apathetic and dumb.

By and by a whisper passed about, "Dick Morgan comes next." As Elinor listened to the Chairman's last statement she got, in Mrs. Montague's hoarse undertones, some information about him. "He's great! He belongs around here and they all think

they's nobody like him; grew up in the shops, but he's a delegate now." A young man came forward and began to speak quietly. The older men settled themselves to listen, a woman near Elinor lifted her painted face from the shoulder of the man who sat beside her, and fixed her eyes on the speaker with the same absorbing attention that showed in the face of her lover.

At first Elinor resented the man's appearance, his clear skin, his strong, easy youth. "Of course *they* like him, poor things! They think (and no doubt he agrees with them) that it's very fine for them to have a representative who looks like that." She thought that he was out of place, an intrusion. If the cause of the laboring man had any force, it lay in austerity, in simplicity. This man's good looks made it, so she thought, theatrical. What influence he had he had got in the cheapest and poorest way.

But as the speaker proceeded his manner grew more forcible. He looked older and

sterner. Whatever beauty of feature she might have observed passed from notice when his face was worked upon by the earnestness of his thought. His aspect, growing less personal, seemed to her more and more the expression of uncolored intellect, as if he were turning on the state of things the light of an unbiased intelligence. Each sentence was plain and direct, meaning apparently no more nor less than its words; but as Elinor came under his influence she felt that his thought went ahead of his word—the suggestiveness of his presence so outran his utterance that he left with the hearer a sense of his moderation rather than his violence. His language had been commonplace, and his sentences even halting; now the words poured out of his mouth with what seemed to the girl an incomparable felicity, originality, exactness. “Great heavens,” she thought, “the things I have studied are dead; this is alive.”

The audience at first clapped and shouted in approval, but as Morgan proceeded they

kept still as if for fear of losing something. He spoke of their hardships, but more of the wrongs of others; he spoke of faith, of love, of manly truth and womanly courage. And then he spoke of their rights. "Let no man deceive himself," he said. "There are more rights than yours or mine. We must try to see farther than ourselves, to be as afraid of being wrong as we are of being cowardly. It is easy to curse the order of things. It *is* wrong, but it went wrong centuries ago. We must try to get back to the loving, the beautiful order of nature, the order that is free from fear, from tyranny, from selfishness. God's creatures never were meant to hate each other. They would not, if they had half a chance at any other way. But as it is, a man *must* be greedy; he must fight for his life. If he turns aside to help another, he and those he loves go to the wall. Have we been endowed with a hundred faculties, a hundred aspirations for what is beautiful and gentle, to give them all up, to spend ourselves eternally

in belittling strife? We are all of the same flesh—if it were only class against class, that would be easier. If it were Right against Wrong, that would be easier. But it is not Right against Wrong. It is right against right; and because we have known poverty and misery, it is to us, rather than to the rich and fortunate, that God will give the wisdom and courage to work for a better day—a millenium of peace and love.”

His spirit seemed to surge through the crowd as he continued. The men's faces grew pale and flushed under the eyes. Elinor's last critical feeling melted away. She yielded to the emotion of the moment. There seemed to her no possible life so glorious as the one given to the help of humanity; nothing, she thought, could be so sweet, so satisfying, as to put aside every thought of self as a joyous sacrifice to this one purpose. “Oh, my friends,” said the speaker, “do not doubt that you are equal to whatever may come. There is a strength

in the heart of every man of which he has never dreamed. There is a force on which he has never drawn. There is a will which rises strong and refreshed at the chance of loss and danger. We are in a losing fight—what of that? The struggle is almost hopeless—does that scare any man? I tell you there is that in you that will welcome sacrifice, poverty, pain and defeat, as a man puts out his arms to his sweetheart, graceful and beloved. To know this—and it's true—to feel it, if only once, lifts a man forever, and lets him say through all time and eternity: I was poor, I was humble, I was despised. But in my hour I chose—and chose greatly—and now I stand above all that any wealth or power can give, with those who for love and for right counted all else as nothing. It is a chance for which we thank God."

"This," thought Elinor, "is the glorious ministry; this is the spirit of the saints and martyrs. With such inspiration I could dare anything, give up everything."

When the speaking was over the audience scattered aimlessly about. There was nothing to do. Everybody had been anticipating a very delightful time, and was so abstracted in looking for it that no one could settle down to talk with everyday friends.

Only a few had brought luncheon with them. The others purchased thick sandwiches and balls of popcorn wrapped in gay colored paper. Everybody was thirsty; but there was no water to be had, and men clustered about beer stands, or went back from them to their friends with a half-dozen mugs of beer strung on the fingers of one hand. As Elinor moved away with her companions, Dick Morgan's voice was ringing in her ears. When she saw him through the crowd the blood came to her face. She wanted to speak to him, she wanted to tell him that she knew—that she understood.

She could not eat the luncheon, nor drink the mawkish lemonade that Montague brought them. The crowd had grown

noisier. Gayly dressed women drove up in shabby open carriages, and, alighting, walked in twos and threes through the grounds. Sometimes a man rougher and more nearly drunk than the others joined such a one and bought beer and candy for her with noisy extravagance. Elinor tried to amuse the children; she told them little stories, and made a doll out of her handkerchief; but she was conscious that she was stared at, although her modesty kept her from guessing what a marked object she was with her delicate face and the fashionable plainness of her traveling dress.

Over her shoulder she heard Morgan's voice addressed to Mrs. Montague. She looked up and the two were introduced, but he continued to talk to the older woman. The latter began to fidget—she had left her umbrella at one of the stands. Morgan offered to go for it, but she could not describe the place. Elinor rose at once and proposed that they should go together, but Mrs. Montague objected. "No, I don't

want to lose this place; it'll be right in the middle when the dancing begins. You and Mr. Morgan stay and keep it for me. I'll come right back."

The two were left alone. Elinor spoke first: "I heard your speech." "I know it," he answered; "I saw you. At first I was afraid I could not please you; later—"

"Later you saw that I was pleased," she said.

He laughed a boyish, half embarrassed laugh; then he grew serious. "Later I did not care—No, I don't mean that; I forgot whether I cared or not."

"I understand; you must not care."

"Oh, I might care, but I would know that that was not the thing for me to think of."

"I wanted to tell you something," she said, hesitatingly. "I felt what you said very deeply—I had not thought of those things before."

He looked at her. "Do you really care?"

She blushed a little. "Indeed I do. You must believe that!"

"I shall be glad to believe it," he answered.

Suddenly the two became conscious that there was noise and movement all around them. Some musicians were playing near by. "Partners for the Matrimonial Quadrille!" someone had shouted. They saw that a set had formed of which they were the last couple. The girl looked about; Mrs. Montague was not to be seen. Everywhere were coarse, suspicious-looking faces. Men and women were calling on them to get up and dance. She turned to Morgan with a frightened appeal. "Oh, I can't. Let me get away from here!"

A woman's sneering voice rang out. She was a dark and glowing creature with hate in her black eyes, and wickedness on her painted lips. "Oh, she won't dance—she's too good for us. Dick wouldn't let her dance with us."

Morgan gave one quick glance at the three men who, with their partners, waited. "It's the McCoy gang!" he groaned. He

spoke to the girl gently. "I'd like to break the heads of some of these fellows, but a fight would only draw a crowd around you. Could you go through this?"

She looked at him and then at the others; her color came back and her eyes flashed. "Certainly I can," she said.

She went through the dance as coolly as if it had been a calisthenic exercise in a school gymnasium. The men showed some signs of growing respect, but the women looked at her with only more cruelty as they observed the change in the demeanor of their companions.

They were in the last figure, and Elinor found herself at Morgan's side in a line of couples who were moving toward a man standing on a table. She heard the guffaws of the men, and the shrill forced laughter of women over-merry at a coarse joke. Then she saw that each couple paused a moment before the man on the table, who went through some mummery to which they responded, and then broke

away to join the crowd. Morgan saw it also; his face grew black. "Oh, what is this?" asked Elinor. "It's the infernal nonsense they call the matrimonial quadrille. Don't look, don't speak; it can't last but a minute longer, and then I'll get you out of this crowd at once."

The next moment they stood before the mock minister. She heard his drunken voice saying, "I pronounce you man and wife." Then she felt herself hurried through the crowd. Mrs. Montague appeared from blurred space, and Morgan spoke to her. "Please keep close by Miss Fletcher—you'd better take her home!"

The woman was tired and peevish. "I don't see what Morgan's jawing *me* about," she said to his retreating back. "I've lost my umbrella, and *he's* run off, goodness knows where, and the young ones are acting like the Old Scratch, and I ain't had a bit of pleasure yet, and it's most night now."

The children dragged at their mother's

skirts. "Let me take them home, Mrs. Montague," begged Elinor. "I am sure I can find the way. We are all so tired."

Mrs. Montague finally agreed to this. "The truth is," said she, "I never seen any fireworks figure pieces, and somehow I just can't bear to leave 'em. I reckon the children 'll go to sleep and your aunt 'll be there before long, anyhow."

"Oh, yes; indeed it's quite right," urged the girl. She got out of the grounds and stood waiting for a car. She held in her arms the two-year-old baby, and the four-year-old child began to cry to be carried, too. She was trying to soothe it when Dick Morgan took the little one from her, and lifted the other one to his arm.

In the five-mile ride they hardly spoke; and they walked in the bright moonlight down the street to the house with the staid manner of old people. "Give me the key, please," he said. "I never once thought of that!" she gasped.

They looked at each other blankly; each

saw what the other felt. "I can sit here on the steps till my aunt comes," she said.

"Well, I'll go." But as he spoke a wagon went by full of men singing and swearing. "I'll not leave you here alone," he said.

They sat together on the little porch in front of the house. Elinor held the baby in her arms; the older child leaned against Morgan's shoulder. The moonlight showed them each other as plainly as daylight could have done, but it added to the unreality of the situation. The girl felt as if she had been picked up out of her New England life and dropped down on another planet, and that on it were but two persons, herself and Morgan. She found herself talking more freely than she had ever done of what seemed to her the true ideals of life. He responded with instant comprehension of the things she tried to say. All they said was abstract (or they believed it to be so), and full of the high purity of intense youth. If there came to him a momentary con-

sciousness of her beauty and sympathy it was not a feeling that he looked for or encouraged.

The train was late, and, as the time went on, their conversation grew less impersonal. The young man spoke of his childhood: "I was very happy," he said, "although my mother was dead, and my father, who worked in the shops, was not always kind. I had a friend, a boy of my own age, with whom I spent much of my time. We knew every foot of the country for miles around here, and, except the months when we went to the village school, we lived out of doors. It was a happy time. Then, of course, when I was old enough I went into the shops. Since then it seems to me I have always been alone."

"But what has become of your friend?"

The young man answered shortly, "Oh, I don't see him often now; we have not much in common." He added, "I suppose a man really has nothing but himself in the whole universe."

"Yes," she said, "himself, and the hope of getting what he is working for—if he knows what that is."

The young man looked past her at the sapphire sky.

"I don't hope for success; I don't expect anything of the sort. But there is one thing I do want—that is, to believe in myself—to believe that I mean to give my life to my own people. If I can only feel that I'm true to that—"

"*I believe in you,*" she said; "*in your goodness and your faithfulness;—yes, and in the end there must be success. The down-trodden shall be raised up. God will not forget his creatures.*"

She was intense and exalted; the young man thought that as she sat there with the baby in her arms she was like the Blessed Virgin, the worship of whom was his inheritance. All hope and sorrow were in her eyes.

The baby shivered. Morgan rose, took off his coat and, leaning over the two,

wrapped it around the little one. It was eleven o'clock. Far down the street the lights showed that the train was in.

"Your uncle and aunt will be here in a few minutes," he said. "I will stay with the babies."

They both rose. "I am going away in the morning and I may not come back for a long time," he said, after a pause. She spoke with sudden impulse:

"Will you always believe that I am the same—your friend, as long as I live?"

A man and woman walking by stopped and looked in curiously. It was the McCoy woman. She raised her voice:

"Oh, it's Dick Morgan and his girl, hiding in the dark."

The two scarcely heard. In a moment the train omnibus came rumbling up the street. There was an instantaneous change in the relation of the shadows on the porch and then Elinor Fletcher was flying through the yard to the door of her uncle's house.

II

It was natural that Elinor should sleep late next morning, and equally natural that her elders should wake early to enjoy the consciousness that they at last had her under their own roof. Miss Dezzie herself prepared the breakfast, and she and Amos tiptoed around the kitchen and talked in whispers lest they should awaken the tired girl.

"Poor child," sighed Miss Dezzie, "she just looked all used up last night. Now, brother Amos, when she *does* come down, *don't* go to bothering her asking her about her trip—there's nothing more exhausting to a person than that sort of talk."

"I don't want to!" cried Uncle Amos with warmth, "I feel bad enough already to think of her getting in on the six o'clock train, four hours before us—as she must 'a done, and nobody to meet her. You noticed, sister Dezzie, I shut you up pretty sharp last night when you began asking her about

it. You could see that she could hardly speak."

"Well, well," sighed Miss Dezzie, "I only hope she ain't sick. She doesn't look like she did last summer, Amos. She's real peaked and thin."

"Now, Dezzie, do hush," cried Amos. "If you had your own way you'd worry that child into the grave by forever thinking she's sick. She's just as well and strong as a young pine tree, and you know it. As to her being thin—well, I never fancied fat girls much."

"You never fancied any girl," said Miss Dezzie, with piercing sarcasm. "You think whatever Elinor is is all right just because it's she—and that reminds me, Amos; I don't want you should be so foolish about her looks. Folks will laugh at you. Of course she's a nice-looking girl, but other folks may, for all we know, think their girls are just as pretty."

"It ain't likely," said Amos. Miss Dezzie mused for a while. "Her mother be-

gan to get thin at just her age," she said, anxiously.

Amos vanished from the breakfast table. In a few minutes he came back. "I don't want to scare you, sister, but I've been listening at her door, and I can't hear breathing," he faltered.

"Of course you couldn't hear her breathe," said Miss Dezzie. "She never was one to snore." She gave him a kindly push into his chair. "Now you finish your breakfast."

The breakfast being over, Miss Dezzie washed the breakfast things while Amos attended to the canary birds. Then the two repaired to the sitting-room (a pleasant, sunny room filled with a blending of Vermont comfort and Indiana liberality), where Amos read aloud a chapter from the Bible.

"Did you notice Elinor had on one of those new-style cut skirts last night?" asked Miss Dezzie, as she settled herself to her knitting. "It's the first I've seen except that Chicago girl's who was at the Gilroys—

and that didn't look anything more like Elinor's!"

"I don't know that I noticed it specially," said Amos. "But it seemed to become her real well."

The hired girl appeared. She was late. "I stopped to see them Montagues," she said, "but they've gone; left this morning—poor tramps."

"Of course," said Amos, "Elinor will want to stay mostly with us for a year or two till she gets to feeling real well acquainted, but we must remember that we're old, and young folks like company. Have you thought of that, sister?"

"A year or two," sniffed Miss Dezzie. "Why, brother, I calculate she'll know the most of the young folks 'round here in a couple of months. We are all asked down to Martha Gilroy's to tea, Sunday."

"That's good! It's just like Martha not to wait. They're good friends year in and out. It ain't Chauncey Gilroy's fault if he started a factory and got rich while I was

satisfied to live along on my little property."

"Certainly not," said Miss Dezzie. "It's to his credit. Not that I should 'a wanted you to 'a done different, Amos. Chauncey's fortune's brought him care and trouble. The men don't act like they did thirty years ago."

"Well, I d' know as I blame the men."

"Well, I d' know as I blame Chauncey Gilroy," said Miss Dezzie. "But I'm glad John is such a nice young man, and beginning to take the load off his father's shoulders."

They heard a light step in the hall. "Here she is," said one of them. Elinor entered. She was fresh as the morning.

"Yes, here she is!" she said, "and she's glad she's here, and she's going to stay here forever!"

When Chauncey Gilroy and Amos Peabody had come West to make their fortunes forty years before, Gilroy had firmly intended, as soon as he should be able, to go

back to Vermont for a wife. But while he was yet a poor young man he married Martha Simcox—a bright, sweet-tempered, sensible Indiana girl, and in the years of his happy married life he grew to be, as his Vermont friends said, “more Hoosier than Martha herself.” His wife worked and saved and helped him to lay the foundation of his fortune. In the early days she knew the families of the workmen, and they were all good friends together. If now, when the men were numbered by hundreds instead of tens, she could not come near to them, it was surely not a thing for which she was to be blamed.

The Gilroys spent their money without conscious ostentation. Gilroy liked what was substantial; his wife enjoyed pretty things; so their house was handsome and pleasing. They knew a few very rich people away from home, but the society they prized was that of their plainer friends in Greenfield. The wife's chief cares were to save her husband from bother, to try to make

a good man of her son Jack, and to help all the young people around to have a good time.

Mrs. Gilroy met Elinor during the week. She saw for herself that the girl was not only pretty, but well-bred and lively. In short, she was what Mrs. Gilroy called "nice." When the time approached for her guests to arrive on Sunday evening, she bethought herself of her wish that the girl should be received with special cordiality. She began, in what she considered a wily way, to gossip about the Peabodys.

"I have always thought that their tenderness for that little orphan was beautiful; such people as they are the salt of the earth."

"Yes, indeed," responded John. He knew what was coming.

"Of course anyone would fear that the girl would be spoiled by their fondness—I own I *was* a little afraid of it myself."

"Dear me! were you?" asked her son.

"You know I am not one to form hasty

opinions, or to take sudden fancies," she said. John contemplated his cigarette with solemn interest, while the father smiled at him over Mrs. Gilroy's head.

"And I really am very particular about girls, but I must say I was pleased with Elinor Fletcher. She is so gay, so helpful, so exactly what a daughter should be. I really think you'll take great pleasure in knowing her."

"I am glad to hear that she is what you say," said Jack, "but as I am at present not conscious of needing the gayety and helpfulness of a daughter—"

"Now, John, don't begin that way," cried the lady; "I only mean for you to be nice to her."

"Mrs. Gilroy, please inform me if I am not always nice to your guests?"

"Oh yes—you'll be *nice* enough, I suppose; but do try to make her like you."

"Mother, I assure you I don't dare to try. My effort must always be in the other direction when I'm with the female sex. Mine

is the fatal gift to fascinate in spite of myself."

"Oh, Chauncey, make him behave!"

As the Peabodys and Elinor walked up to the house through the well-kept grounds, Miss Dezzie talked of John. "He was the nicest boy, but always in mischief. He was in my Sunday-school class, he and Dick Morgan." ("Poor Dick," said Amos). "They used to come by our house for gingerbread every Sat'day. You wouldn't dream, seeing John so elegant in church this morning, how dirty he used to get," Miss Dezzie added, to Elinor.

"What a good time those two boys had!" said Amos. "Martha Gilroy was always a sensible woman. She knew John got no harm from Dick. They grew up like brothers."

Elinor listened politely, although she had her own opinion. She had thought when she saw John Gilroy in church that he looked stiff and priggish. He on his part vanished when he saw her approaching the

house. "Mother probably knows less about girls than anybody living. But of course I'll go back when tea is ready, and try to be agreeable."

He came into the dining-room after they were seated. His slight look of surprise when he first saw Elinor would not have been recognized by anyone who did not know him well. The Peabodys evidently understood the languid manner with which their niece was at first displeased. "He must be nice," the girl thought, "or Uncle Amos wouldn't be on such good terms with him."

The meal was quite informal. A tidy maid servant waited on the guests, but in her absence Mrs. Gilroy sent her son to the sideboard. The old people talked about the morning's sermon. The ladies agreed that the preacher had been narrow. "He talked as if there was nothing right but Presbyteranism," said Miss Dezzie. "Now I think there's something good in every church."

"Of course there is," declared Mrs. Gil-

roy. "Some of the best people I ever knew were Catholics."

The young man rose and gathered his plate in one hand and his teacup in the other.

"This conversation is getting entirely too lax for me. I have never realized until now the danger the community is in from the loose views of advanced and radical women like mother and Miss Dezzie. If I cannot stem the tide I can at least, as I go down, make my weak protest against such destructive views. I shall sit by these persons no longer." He moved down the table, stopped a moment at Uncle Amos' side, then doubtfully shook his head and moved on. He stood before Elinor and looked at her sternly. "Miss Fletcher, ere I let myself sit down by you answer me one thing. Are you entirely sound on the Thirty-nine Articles?"

"I am," said she. "Pray be seated, and you and I in the middle of a degener-

ate age will together uphold the banner of truth."

The old people laughed. "It's a little queer, Jack, considering how strict your views are," said Mr. Gilroy, "that your mother has such a hard time getting you to church."

"I am misunderstood in that as well as in other matters," answered John. "The fact is, I can't get my conscience reconciled to instrumental music."

"Your situation is painful, truly," said Elinor. "No doubt, too, you disapprove of promiscuous sittings."

"I do indeed," he answered, "and I am glad to feel that the young sister agrees with me."

The conversation became divided after tea. John and Elinor went to one corner of the drawing-room to see a new picture, and remained there. Mrs. Gilroy beamed approvingly when she saw that her son was really exerting himself to entertain the young woman. She had no doubt that any

girl would like John if he would be but half way pleasant.

As the guests were about to leave, the young man addressed his mother:

"I asked Miss Fletcher, as you told me to, if she played tennis, and she's accepted your invitation for to-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, I'm *so* glad," gushed the good lady, who had never heard of the matter till that minute.

When they were gone, Mrs. Gilroy, full of the pleasure of the occasion, turned to her son:

"Well, it wasn't so *very* hard, was it?"

"Mother," he said pensively, "I'd go through even more than that to please you!"

"Really, Jack," said the father, "your devotion to your mother's wishes this evening brought tears to my eyes."

From that time on there was a great deal of tennis played on the Gilroy's court, and John Gilroy seemed to think it only common courtesy to stroll home with Elinor after the game was over. Other girls were

there, too. He knew them much better than he knew Elinor, and she thought it very nice of him to pay so much attention to her. Mrs. Gilroy was always sending over to suggest a picnic supper down the river or out on the Indian mound.

A rainy week came. John Gilroy was out of town. Elinor wrote long accounts of the picnics and tennis games to her school friends, but the days seemed a little dull. Late one afternoon she saw the young man's knowing mail-phaeton dash up the road. It stopped at her uncle's gate. The groom sprang to the ground, touched his hat and caught the reins with the same motion as his master passed him.

The young man, faultlessly dressed, walked deliberately up the path. When he rang, Elinor opened the door (such was the friendly custom of the house). "Good evening," he said; "is there any ginger-bread about the place?"

"I think so," she answered. "Will you

wait while I find out?" She came back smiling: "Yes, there's lots."

"Very well," he said, taking off his hat; "if Mr. Peabody and Miss Dezzie are willing I'd like to stay to supper."

He often came to supper, and in the evening the two young people sat on the porch, and at intervals one of them played on mandolin or guitar. The elders, perfectly happy, sat inside, Miss Dezzie knitting and Mr. Peabody reading the paper.

One night Mr. Peabody lowered his voice and said to his sister: "Do you know, Dezzie, I *think* there's a little sparking going on out there!"

Miss Dezzie flamed up in virginal indignation.

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself, Amos, to have such thoughts? If you put such a notion as that in their heads I'll never forgive you!"

The old man grinned sheepishly, and said no more.

But only a night or two later the young

people came in together through the open window. The young man's eyes shone and he laughed for happiness.

"I have asked Elinor to marry me," he said, "and she says she will if you two will consent."

"Come let me give you a good hug," said Miss Dezzie. "This is just what I've been expecting."

The personal impression which Dick Morgan had made on Elinor's mind soon faded away, but her determination to try to help the distressed and down-trodden remained almost as definite as it was at first. Early in her engagement she thought with pleasure that she would now be in a position to do more than she could have otherwise done. The Labor-Day picnic she had never spoken of to her aunt and uncle. At first she refrained because they were already so distressed at having been absent when she arrived; and then, with the Montagues gone, and many new interests coming to her, the whole thing seemed far away and irrelevant.

Nevertheless, she was anxious to tell her lover. She hoped indeed that she might bring him to think pleasantly of Morgan. It was evident that there was some coolness between the two. She was the more desirous of doing this because suddenly trouble threatened in the shops. The unions held meetings every night with closed doors. Strange-looking men appeared in town. Some of the best hands stopped work and moved away. The two Gilroys were busy and careworn. "To-night I will tell John all about my acquaintance with Morgan," resolved Elinor, in an access of conscientiousness.

He came earlier than usual that evening and sat on the porch with her aunt while she finished a letter which she was writing.

"You look tired, John," she heard her aunt say.

"*I am* tired; I'm awfully worried. Things are pretty bad at the shops. Nothing is certain from one hour to the next."

"What do the men want?"

"We don't know, and I don't believe that they know. It seems pretty rough when we've always tried to treat them fairly," he added. "However, I'm not going to complain. What disturbs me most is the fear that we may have to postpone our marriage."

"Where is Dick Morgan?" asked Miss Dezzie, after a pause.

"I don't know," replied John. "I would rather not think of him, not hear of him," he went on, in a voice vibrant with a protesting indignation. He felt that the man who had been for so much of his life his dearest friend had now, without offense on his own part, chosen to regard him as an enemy. That man was now absent, through such a troublous time as this—and working against him from a distance, probably. Far less prompt and clear-sighted than Morgan in detecting the inevitable ending of the perfect equality of their boyhood, Gilroy was hurt and angered by his friend's defection, and in the other's concern for

"his own people" he even scented the presence of hypocrisy. "You know what that man was to me, Miss Dezzie," he said, as if the words were forced out of him. "Well, he has gone back on me."

"Oh, maybe he hasn't," she said, comfortably.

"I'd give anything to think that he hasn't, but I can't see anything in it except that. What I want to do is to forget all about him. He's gone, and I hope he won't come back."

After a pause he spoke more calmly: "You don't know what a comfort it is to me that Elinor doesn't know anything about all this. There isn't a soul about here but her who doesn't know all the ins and outs of the relations of the shops and the men. It's such a relief to get away from it once in a while."

"Oh, I *can't* tell him to-night," said Elinor to herself.

The troubles blew over and the young people were married about six months from

the time when they first met. They went to live in a beautiful house that Mr. Gilroy had built for them in one corner of his grounds. With every month Elinor loved her husband better. She admired his manliness, his integrity, his generosity; and she delighted in his responsive mind and fastidious taste. She was very happy. At times she thought of Morgan and his speech with a stinging fear that she had been disloyal to what she had promised herself to do. But she dispelled her uneasiness with the thought that the men were contented and Morgan might never come back; if he did she would tell her husband of the friendship she had promised to him and to his cause.

One afternoon several months after her marriage, she drove to the works. She sent the carriage away and started to walk home with her husband. Some workmen came out of a shop entrance and stood aside to let the two pass. Elinor glanced up and saw Morgan. A look of recognition came over her face. He turned scarlet, and so did

she. But in a breath she was past him. The next moment she and her husband were joined by a young woman of their acquaintance.

"Oh, why did I not speak to him?" Elinor kept thinking. "But it was so sudden. I did not know that he was back here again, and now I can't make John understand."

She thought of it all night. To seem to have forgotten in her luxury and ease the promises she had made to one less fortunate was unspeakably shameful. "If I could see him just one moment," she said, "and tell him I was surprised out of my senses!" She even mentally composed notes to him.

The next day she went again for her husband. He was not quite ready to go, and as she waited for him she paced up and down the asphalt walk that ran past the offices and along the side of the high iron fence that shut the works from the street.

John Gilroy, standing near a window as he gave some last orders, saw Dick Morgan come out of the gate. He saw his wife ad-

vance, and the severity of Morgan's face lighten as she spoke. And then the two parted as quietly as they had met. John was bewildered. "In heaven's name, what does that mean?" he said. And then he bethought himself: "She probably took him for the gardener and asked him about the beds of foliage plants on the grass-plot." But he did not forget the occurrence.

The setting up of a new household had stimulated the social life of the neighborhood. The wealthier families of the adjacent manufacturing towns plied the young people with invitations and visits. Guests were constantly in the house. Their way of living became much more luxurious than that of the older Gilroys. There were more servants, more carriages; there was more display of every sort. This was not because either John or Elinor wished to make a show of wealth, but because it was easy and pleasant to adopt the habits of their associates.

In this manner the gulf between the houses

of employer and employed grew wider every month. John was conscious of this, and sometimes painfully so, when he saw Dick Morgan's pale face and shabby coat.

"But why should I make myself unhappy about *that?*" he said, grimly; "it's Dick's own doing—not mine."

These thoughts grew frequent, and the old yearning for Dick's friendship came back. One day he stepped to the door of his office: "Send to the East shop for Dick Morgan," he said; "I want to see him."

A moment later he added to himself, "And what I'll say to him when he comes I don't know."

Morgan came in, erect and grave. He looked straight at Gilroy. "Well, what do you want?"

"Sit down, Dick," said Gilroy, but Morgan remained standing. Gilroy rose, his feeling varying between hurt pride and the old friendship.

"Dick," he said at last, "can't we make up somehow?"

"I don't see how we can," answered Morgan, simply. The two stood and looked at each other. All conventionalities were stripped off.

"I don't see why I bother about it since you are so plaguey cool," said Gilroy, hotly; then he burst out, "Dick, don't you see this is pretty rough on me sometimes?"

"It's pretty rough on me *all* the time, Jack," said Morgan.

"Well, isn't it your own fault?" said Gilroy. "You know I'd make you foreman of one of the shops or take you here in the office or do anything else just to have your friendship—to believe in it as I used to."

"I don't want your jobs, friendship or no friendship. I only came back because the Union sent me. I earn every cent I get and you know it."

"And you slap me in the face when I try to show you I'm in earnest!"

"I suppose it seems that way, but I can't take favors and I won't," said Dick.

"Good heavens, it isn't a favor! We

grew up together like brothers. Do you remember how you used to climb up the lightning rod and sleep with me when your old daddy came home drunk at night?" In a momentary cessation of antagonism the two smiled at each other like boys.

"Yes, and it was pretty often," said Morgan. "And do you remember the time we camped out?" he added, softening still further.

"Yes," said Gilroy, "and the time when we read the 'Three Musketeers' in the old apple tree? And you got so excited you fell out of the tree into the cider vat?" They laughed and then were silent. Their faces grew stern again. Gilroy spoke first: "How did things get this way?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Morgan. "Jack, what's the use? It just hurts, and we can't change it!"

"But maybe we could change it," persisted Gilroy. "When did it begin? I've asked myself a thousand times, and I can't think."

Morgan reflected. "I think it began when you first came back from school," he said, as calmly and candidly as if he were recalling an historical date.

Gilroy flushed up. "Dick, I may have been a fool then—I was a silly boy—but before Heaven I didn't mean to brag. I didn't brag half as much as you did the time you ran away and went to the State Fair at Indianapolis. It was all of a piece with that!"

"You were kind of offish," said Morgan.

"Offish! well I should smile! I came home expecting to have a good time with you, and you'd cut off with any fellow under the sun rather than me! You know, Dick Morgan, that you left me to go fishing alone—" He stopped with the impatience of a man who feels a petty thing and is ashamed of it.

Dick stared. Could it be that Jack had actually been jealous? No, it was too absurd.

Gilroy continued: "And then when I

coaxed my father into saying he'd send you to college with me you wouldn't go—Oh, you were mighty fond of me!"

"I couldn't go then—I was too proud by then."

"Too proud! Isn't anybody else proud but you? Dick, I'd have shared your last dollar then if I'd needed it, and you know it!"

For the first time Dick broke out in a rage: "For mercy's sake, man, be still! Are you an idiot? Can't you see that I'd have shared your last dollar (as God knows I would now), but the cursed thing about it was that it *wasn't* your last dollar!" Then he spoke more quietly: "It's no use. I told you so in the beginning;" he put his hand on the door knob as he spoke.

"Well, if you've determined we can't be friends I am sure I won't beg you," said Gilroy, coldly.

"No, we can't be friends." Morgan was about to go when a sudden impulse struck Gilroy.

"Look here," he said; "tell me the

truth, anyhow. Is there any other reason why we can't be friends?"

Morgan turned and looked at him.

"There is," he said.

III

A hard winter set in early. The Chauncey Gilroy Company had a heavy load to carry. Other mill owners closed their doors to wait for better times, and advised the Gilroys to do the same. The old man refused to think of it. "The Gilroy mills have not lost a day in thirty years, and we're not going to close up now just because we're not making much." Fewer and fewer orders came in at anything like reasonable prices. There was really not enough work to go around. The Gilroys and their superintendents spent hours in consultation. Young Gilroy and the others agreed that the thing to do was to put all hands on half work. But his father objected: "I don't like that, and the men won't. It looks crooked. If we've got to do something we will keep all

the married men at the present rates—they've got their wives and young ones—and lay off the single men."

The single men did not move on in search of other work, as had been expected. All day they clustered in idle, discontented groups around the station and near the gates, and at night they filled the saloons with brawling, hungry drunkards. What else could they do, they asked? The old man knew when he discharged them that there wasn't a job in two hundred miles.

At Lunderville, ten miles away, the situation was worse. The Lunders had kept their factories open and had taken contract after contract at low prices. Then they made heavy cuts in the wages, claiming in a statement to the men that they were obliged to reduce wages forty per cent all round to work out the contracts, but declaring that they wanted to do the fair thing and to keep the men if it were possible. The men agreed, and worked for weeks on starvation wages. Many a good steady man

with a family could only make a dollar a day. Suddenly a discovery was made. The cuts were out of all proportion. Even at the low prices of the contracted work the Lunders were piling up immense profits while their men starved and froze. A strike was ordered, and two thousand men were adrift without money or employment.

It was hoped by the union that the prospect of heavy damages on unfilled contracts would bring the Lunders to terms, but the head of the firm bragged privately to the Gilroys that they couldn't be bullied worth a cent. The largest of the contracts were only begun, prices had gone down so that some of the big firms East would like well enough to take the whole thing off their hands. He showed the Gilroys letters, which he afterward left with them, from Ohio and Pennsylvania manufacturers containing definite offers. He said he was just itching to get the whole thing lifted off to another part of the country; it would teach the men not to monkey with the buzz-saw.

The matter of the strike made great excitement at Greenfield. Nothing else was talked of, and resolutions were passed denouncing the Lunders and expressing sympathy for the strikers. As for the Lunder brothers, they took their families and went off to the Mediterranean.

The indignation of the Gilroys, father and son, although not expressed publicly, was not less than that of the men.

"The Lunders lack common humanity," said John; "they are lost in greed and tyranny."

"They are dirty dogs!" roared the father. "I don't want any money made that way. I'd just like to show 'em the way an honest man treats his hands."

This thought took possession of him, and it was not long until he conceived of a plan which he hastened to put forth.

"Jack," said he, "the thing for us to do is to enlarge our plant and take the Lunders' unfulfilled contracts, and set things humming in this neck of the woods."

The young man held out against it for several days. "I don't like it, father," he said. "It's like letting out sail in a storm. On one side there are awful risks, and on the other there is no margin of profit at the contract prices unless we cut wages too."

"Who wants a profit?" shouted the old man. "Even if we lose a little we can stand it. What we want is to help the men through this winter."

"But you must remember that if we take the contracts this late in the day we sha'n't have a chance to avoid the penalty if we don't get the work done in time. Just let the men get it into their heads to strike and we're hung up with fires out, engines rusting, and a hundred thousand dollars damages to pay."

"What in thunder could the men strike about? I'm not going to cut wages—not one cent. It's cold business; the men can't strike. It's to their interest to stay—and

even if it wasn't I verily believe they wouldn't leave the old firm in the lurch."

A force of masons and machinists were set to work, and in a short time the Gilroy factory started in with increased capacity and on full time. All of the former Gilroy men were taken back and work was found for some of the Lunder men. There was great rejoicing among the town-people. The old man stood in the door of the office and rubbed his hands with pleasure at the sight of the men's cheerful faces.

"Fine fellows! I want 'em to know that no man ever worked for Chauncey Gilroy and was the worse for it."

But although as many of the Lunderville men were given work as was possible, there was dissatisfaction almost immediately among the strikers at that place. What right had Gilroy to take the Lunders' contracts off their hands? By so doing the men declared he had cut them out of their one chance of redress. Meetings were held for two or three nights, and finally resolu-

tions were adopted calling on the Greenfield men to support the strikers in their fight against Lunder and Gilroy.

The next morning the Greenfield men went to work as usual, but anxious women stood in doorways and looked down the street for news, and some little groups lingered on the street near the gates.

At three o'clock the message came from the Central Committee. At five minutes past three a delegate walked into each shop and threw up his arms. Without a word the men put down their tools and silently marched out. At ten minutes past three the shops were empty, fifteen hundred workmen were assembled on the common, and the sympathetic strike was on.

The men held meetings every day and night. Windy orators thronged in from outside and called on the men to stand for their rights—never to give up—the country was with them. A blizzard came, and a woman froze to death. Scarlet fever broke out among the children. Chauncey Gilroy

worked himself into an illness in his rage at the men's ingratitude and folly. "Let them starve," he shouted; "maybe it'll teach 'em a little sense." John Gilroy sat in his empty office all day and walked the floor the most of the night. Elinor lay awake thinking of the sick babies who begged their mothers for a little more milk, and of that woman in childbirth who had had the bed taken from under her and split up into fuel to keep her alive.

One cold afternoon Elinor and her husband came out of the Postoffice. A crowd stood around the entrance and did not move to let them pass. John Gilroy pushed a man or two aside rather roughly.

A woman thinly wrapped and coughing frightfully hung on to Gilroy's arm and begged for money. He shook her off. She grew more noisy; he called to a policeman, "Take this woman in charge." The woman began to scream. She looked at Elinor, who recognized her as the McCoy woman whom she had seen at the picnic. The

policeman seized her, but she writhed away from him like a wounded snake and spit her fury out on Gilroy. "Oh, you've got a sweet-scented wife, haven't you? She was with Dick Morgan before you ever saw her."

After this Elinor was more wretched than ever. Her sense of justice forced her to see that the McCoy woman was not to be blamed, and yet she could not (or at any rate she thought she could not) burden her husband with a fresh trouble at such a time as this.

"Elinor," said he, the next day, "I am glad to be able to tell you that that woman is sentenced to hard labor for sixty days."

She shook from head to foot. "Oh, John!—that is *too* hard—the woman was just drunk!"

"That's all right," he answered sternly. "I used all the influence I have to get some floating sentences for former misdemeanors raked up against her, and I guess she won't be drunk again soon."

A rumor got about among the strikers

that really the Gilroys were not so much to be blamed. Some one had heard a superintendent of the Lunderville shops say that Chauncey Gilroy had stepped in and kept the work from going to Pittsburg. If this was true the Committee wanted to know it, but they did not want to make an open inquiry. They therefore asked for a meeting with the Gilroys, their purpose being to ask for confidential information about that and other matters. Old Mr. Gilroy rolled over in his sick bed when he got the message and asked if the men wanted to come back. "We think not," answered a clerk. "We think they want to look at the books."

"Tell them I'll see them when they say they want to come back; tell them they can go to hell for all I care."

This message was softened a little, but it nevertheless hurt the men a good deal to have the old man treat them like that. They made another less formal attempt to get a hearing. This was addressed to John

Gilroy personally. An unofficial Committee of which Morgan was the head asked for the privilege of meeting him at any time he might appoint. The young man was in the office when the request for this conference came to him. He received very civilly the men who brought the message and took from them the list of names of the proposed Committee. After reading it he looked up and spoke coldly: "I absolutely refuse to receive, now or at any other time, any committee or delegation of which Mr. Morgan is a member."

This was an insult which even the most peaceable of the men felt must be resented. The elder Gilroy fumed when he heard of it. "Jack, I believe you're crazy. Dick's a crank, but he means to keep the men straight and he's done it time and again. I feel like sending for them and telling them you made a fool of yourself—though I don't suppose they had anything to say of any importance."

Things grew worse every day. The Gil-

roys tried to bring in men from outside, but they, poor wretches, were frightened away by the awful cry of "Scab!" which the working man fears more than God or devil. The police force was doubled. There were threats of burning the shops.

A coarsely-printed anonymous little sheet began to be circulated on the streets. Elinor found a copy under the door. It was addressed to her. She tried to put it into the fire—she knew it would contain abuse of her husband—but in spite of herself she read the article, which was marked to attract notice. It was as follows: "There has been a decision in a New York case lately that a man and woman who take each other as man and wife before witnesses even as a joke are really married in the eyes of the law. The Indiana law is probably the same as the New York law. This may prove interesting to the participants in a certain picnic two years ago, and particularly to the alleged wife of a millionaire who is living in luxury on the money

wrung from his starving employes. One thing that makes the matter still more interesting is that Jim Martin, who performed the ceremony, is a justice of the peace and authorized to perform marriages."

Elinor's heart stood still and the earth seemed to fall from beneath her feet. She looked again at the coarse head-lines in big letters: "Is She a Bigamist or Merely a Flirt?"

She threw the paper into the fire, and tried to get her scattered senses together. She was frightfully ill, but at least she could try to keep down every sign of the physical pain that accompanied her shame and misery. Jack when he came home must not be worried over her.

As she moved about the library that evening she was full of blind resentment at a Providence that let her suffer so much. "I did not deserve this," she said. "I did nothing wrong; I yielded to no temptation." At other times she was overwhelmed with remorse. "I have hurt everybody. What

will all these people think of me?—that I'm false, vain, wicked. It is I who should be in prison, and not that poor woman." She felt that because she had a secret on her conscience she had not dared to take the part of the men to her husband and his father. It was the consequence of her sin that her mouth had been closed. "If only I could atone," she thought, "could in some way help to bring about a better time, and then vanish forever!"

This longing to make some sort of atonement took a disproportionate place in her racked fancy. She was conscious of her own voice speaking to her husband. She asked him about the strike—the beginning, the claims of the men, and all the questions that thus far she had avoided. For the first time he talked to her freely; he seemed to find some unexpected relief in the discussion. He did not suppose, did not believe, that she understood, but nevertheless he went into the details. He even showed her the Lunders' letters from the other people

who had wanted to take the contracts. His wife could see that he had gone over and over the thing in his own mind till his courage and his nerve were almost lost.

"Why do you not give up to the men?" she asked.

"There is nothing to give up but the contracts, and when we give them up there will be no work for the men to do. We could not open at all if we were to do what they are demanding."

"If the strike is lasting and the works remain closed for a long time it will ruin you, will it not?"

"We are ruined, anyway, unless the men come back before Saturday. That's the limit; a week later and we cannot by any earthly possibility finish the contracted work in time."

"But can't you talk with the men? Can't you explain to them that you were really helping them?" she persisted.

"They ought to know without being told, and I won't go to begging them. I am not

afraid of poverty; mother is fixed, and I can take care of you. The thing that breaks me up is to have to go before the world as a failure, as a man who couldn't hold his own. That just takes the life out of me—when we had meant so well by the men, too. And they are hurting themselves; if we go under, and I suppose we are bound to, Greenfield bursts like a bubble. Hundreds of the men own their houses and we'll go down together."

"Do you think the men want to come back?" she asked.

"I know they do, if the Central Union would let them; but those fellows think that by ruining us they can help the Lunderville men."

All that night Elinor sat by her window; her head ached and she could not sleep. The next morning she telephoned to Lunderville, where the Union had its office: "I want to speak to Mr. Morgan." (Morgan was Secretary of the Union). When he came to the telephone, she said: "This is

Mrs. John Gilroy. I want to see you. I want to see you privately."

Whatever hesitation he felt was shown in the silence that preceded his answer. "Very well—shall I go to your house?"

"No; come to the west gate at eight this evening."

There was another silence before he answered. "All right."

That evening she left her husband writing in the library and walked out bareheaded and unwrapped across the firm snow under the great trees. She unlocked the gate and stood in the moonlight face to face with Morgan.

She poured out the story of the suffering of the hungry children, and the sick women—of her husband's goodness and anxiety, and her own distress. She grew more excited every moment; the misery of weeks culminated in a storm of tears. She begged him to help—to tell her what to do. He tried gently to quiet her, and asked a few questions about Gilroy's affairs—the con-

tracts and so forth. She understood neither questions nor answers, but she knew word for word what her husband had told her. As she proceeded the charm of Morgan's presence came over her as strongly as before. It warmed her into something like peace. But she recognized, distracted though she was, that he had forgotten about her; it was her husband of whom he was thinking.

"Oh, why couldn't Jack have told me this?" he said.

"And you can do something with the men?"

"No, but I think I can do something with the Central Committee. At any rate, I'll try. Please go back into the house, Mrs. Gilroy."

"And when shall I hear?" she persisted.

"Oh, hurry, or I shall die!"

"If I have anything to tell you I'll come here to-morrow night at this time."

"And when you do," she said, excitedly,

“put your hand up on the high ledge there, and you’ll find the gate key.”

The next day she roamed about like one distracted. She insisted on hearing every particular of the suffering in town. She asked her husband again and again if they would really be absolutely penniless. And at each answer she laughed to herself. “It will be an atonement—an expiation.”

As the great clock at the works struck eight she stood on the snow with Morgan. “Oh, tell me!” she said.

“It’s done. Orders will be sent to-night to the men to go back to work. A concession about piece work will be asked, but it’s trifling.”

She seized both his hands. “Oh, thank God!” she said. “And *now* they all may forgive me!”

But at the instant the alarm of fire rang out, clamorous, fierce. A light rose in the sky.

“It is the east shop!” said Morgan, and he rushed away.

The fire was stopped before much harm was done. The order came. In the morning long lines of men walked in single file into each shop, giving their names as they passed to the busy timekeeper, while on the streets the women cried and laughed and kissed each other.

Gilroy came home late. "I must go right over to see father," he said. "I am sorry to say," he added, "that Morgan is suspected of setting the shops on fire last night and that steps are being taken to arrest him. The watchman swears he saw him come out of the shop as the clock struck eight."

Elinor sprang to her feet.

"Oh, John, he didn't—he *didn't!*" Her husband looked at her curiously. "My dear, you will make yourself ill. I am sorry I can't stay with you, but I must run now."

She hung on his arm. "John, don't let him be arrested; he wasn't there—indeed he wasn't!" But her husband was gone.

She ran out into the grounds. She was almost frantic. Suddenly she heard a pistol shot; then shouts, the gate was unlocked and Dick Morgan turned into the grounds.

He staggered away from her. "I did not mean to see you," he said—"I ran in to get away from that gang. That scab policeman tried to arrest me—he had no warrant. He struck me, he shot through my arm. I knocked him down—I guess I killed him. I'll get no justice. If I can't get away, I shall be locked up for years."

"You are wounded," she said—"bleeding. Go into that room—that one there on the veranda, and I'll lock the gate." As he passed through the door, a policeman tried the gate, others following him. They pounded and shouted.

A crowd of frightened servants came. The police demanded entrance and the right to go through the house. Mrs. Gilroy advanced. "No one has come in," she said. "I've been here for an hour."

Then she heard her husband's voice.

"No," he said. "Get on, men—I've been here with my wife. No one has come in."

The crowd rushed off. Elinor seized her husband's hand. "Oh, come, *come!*" She led him into the room where Morgan lay senseless. As Gilroy bent over to lift him he opened his eyes and smiled. "Jack," he said, "I'm tired—roll over and let me get into bed."

Gilroy sprang to the door. "Telephone for a doctor to come here instantly," he cried to a passing servant.

The doctor came. Elinor, clinging to her husband, left the room. "Oh, let me tell you, Jack!" she said. "Not now," he answered, gently.

"Yes, *now!*"

She told him with sobs—then with defiance—then with entreaties and wild self-reproaches. She told him all—of the picnic—the McCoy woman—the newspaper. He listened with as calm a face as though he sat in church on a summer morning. At the end he rose and walked to the fire, where

he stood in silence. She could not guess of what he was thinking. She was past caring. "Well, my dear," he said, "you've paid pretty fully for whatever you may have done that was wrong. I'm afraid all this will make you ill. Try to forget as soon as possible."

The doctor appeared at the door. Gilroy turned toward him with a question. "He's been shot through an artery in the arm," the doctor responded. "I'm afraid he will hardly recover."

The young man spoke to his wife hastily: "Ring for somebody to help you to bed, my dear. I must stay with Dick."

Outside of the door the doctor asked who was to blame for Morgan's wound.

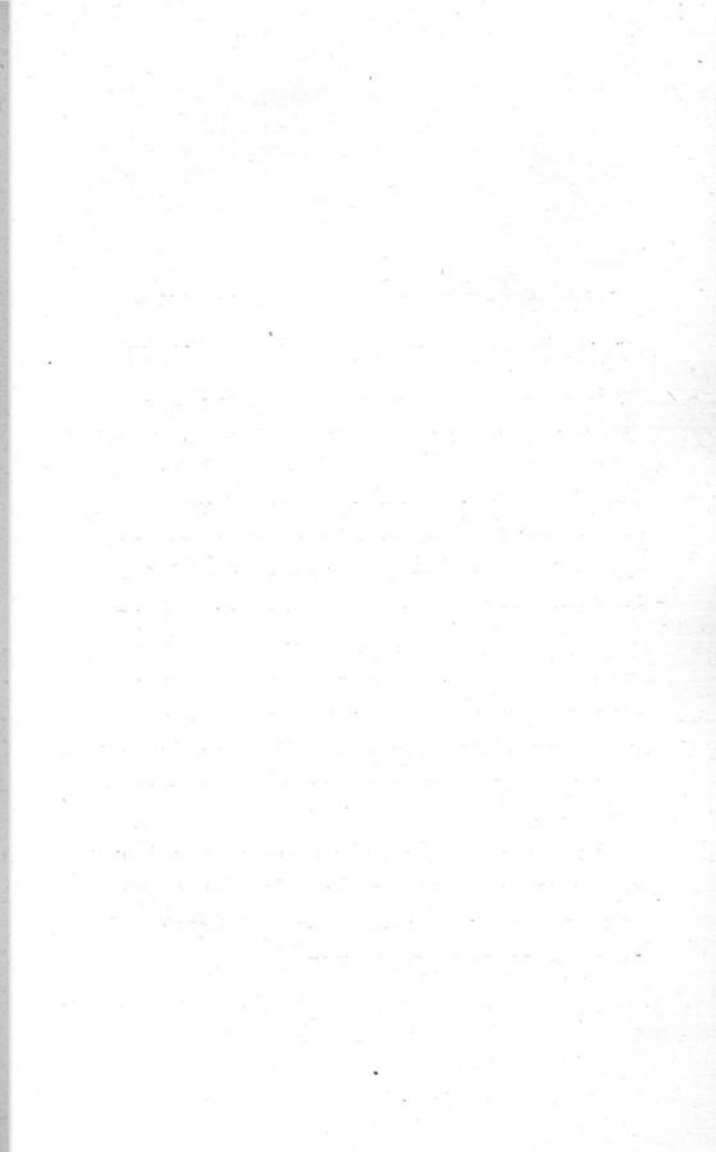
"I don't know," said the young man; "I don't know who's to blame for that or for anything!"

Elinor looked after her husband with bewildered eyes. She was no longer crushed and repentant. She suddenly saw the truth which, later, was often absent from her

mind, but never quite forgotten: that no two human beings can ever be absolutely clear to each other.



THE MORNINGSTAR ELOPEMENT



THE MORNINGSTAR ELOPE- MENT

THE sky was so brilliant, and the lake at the foot of the hill such a glowing mass of copper and violet, that it seemed for the moment strange that the men who were coming up the road should show in the twilight only as dark shapes. From the kitchen windows the lights shone down with cheerful promise of supper. The air was chilly, but the dusty path gave out a sort of sweet-smelling warmth. There was a coziness about the close shut scene; the fishermen, laughing and singing, evidently felt something of it.

The owner of the house came ahead of the others; he carried a great basket of fish. As he strode toward the door Lon Bunker, the hired man, stopped him.

"Better not go in there, Abe," he said.
"She's on her ear again."

"What in thunder's the matter with her?" shouted Abe. He spoke with the anticipatory violence of a man who is trying to work himself into a defensive rage.

"She's jawin' about them town fellers bein' late for supper, and I reckon she's mad about your goin' fishin' with 'em all day," said Lon.

"Well I 'low to run this house myself," said Abe, with an emphasis intended to penetrate the door. "The women round here got to do the way *I* say—or I'll make 'em!"

The door was suddenly opened; Mrs. Morningstar threw herself out with a fury that made even Lon quail. "Say that again, will you! Just say that again! You *dassent*, you know you *dassent*! *You* are going to run this house, are you? Well, you can just do it! I got to do what you want, have I? You just better try it! I tell you I've worked as long as I'm going to for *you*. I

ain't going to work for no more tramps *like* you! You can get your own supper, or go without. I'm tired. I've been up since four o'clock this morning, working like a dog, and I'm going to stop. And you das-sent say a word—and you know it—Abe Morningstar!"

The fishermen filed around the house to wash their hands before supper. They were a party of estimable gentlemen from a neighboring city, who, when twice a year they came to the lake to fish, lodged at the Morningstars'. Mrs. Morningstar had known them all for several years; all but one man, who had only joined them to-day. She found them profitable guests, and would have been sorry to lose them. Nevertheless she scolded, and they kept out of her way, and pitied Abe.

They came into supper hungry and noisy. They did not notice her at all. She was wretchedly tired; she knew what the meal would be—a conversation full of references to things which she knew nothing of, and

of jokes that she could not understand. She felt with a sort of dumb bitterness that the gentlemen were cruel to her. She knew that she could in some circumstances have claimed their respect, have held their interest, but they never gave her a chance. They paid her no more attention than if she had been a block of wood. The very supper to which they were seating themselves, poor as it seemed to these men, was, with its two kinds of cake and its napkins folded in the glasses, the result of tremendous effort on her part. But they did not even recognize that she had taken great pains; to pay their bill and get out of her way was apparently all they thought necessary.

To-night the new man, Mr. Vawter, was the center of the group. Mrs. Morningstar knew all about him. He was the one who was always desired. Half a dozen times she had seen everybody elated at the prospect of his joining them, and depressed when word arrived that he could not come. She

hated them all, but she hated him the most of all, because they seemed so fond of him. She looked sidewise at him. "Mighty sick-looking chap to make all that fuss over!" she said to herself. Indeed his appearance was not impressive. He was slight and would have seemed undersized but for his erect military carriage. His hair was thin, he had a funny little beard, a sallow skin, and very bright twinkling blue eyes. She knew that he was what she called "rich," and she was surprised at the plainness of his dress and manner. He had been brought up on a farm, and fell easily into the kind of speech with which she was most familiar; this made him seem less important than the others, with their crisp citified pronunciation. She wondered at the consideration in which they held him.

They seated themselves. Vawter looked about him with concern. "See here!" he cried out cheerfully; "where's Miz Morningstar going to sit? I got her place."

There was no answer. Lon Bunker tit-

tered. Tilly, the girl who had come in to help, tossed her head. "*I* can't fry the victuals and hand 'em, too!"

"Of course you can't! Of *course!*" said Vawter, with ready sympathy. "George!" he said, addressing the Morningstars' son, a hulking boy of fifteen, who had been rowing Vawter's boat that day—"George, you suffering lamb you, you just hustle those cakes along quick's Tilly gets 'em fried—d'ye hear, son? Miz Morningstar, you sit right down by Abe. I'm used to having ladies at the table. I guess this crowd's pretty rough," he added, pensively.

Mrs. Morningstar's face lost some of its grimness. She seated herself with a little offishness; she was pretty cross still.

The talk was not addressed to her, but she could understand the most of it. When a reference was made to something that had happened in town, or on the last fishing journey, Vawter demanded an explanation with cheerful persistence. They all seemed pleasanter than before.

The old man of the party, General Harbison, told in his hoarse, wheezy voice a story of Vawter in which he took much delight, and which evidently he had often told before. "That youngster was the pet of the whole brigade," he said, affectionately. Mrs. Morningstar looked at the stranger with quickened interest. She had been to Laporte in her youth, to see a company start off to the War. The memory of it came back to her. It was a day of music, and banners, and gay uniforms, and tender partings. It was the one heroic recollection of her life.

They spoke of the soldiers' reunions and campfires at which some of the company had recently been present. "Tell you what, Vawter," said one of the men, "when you got onto the tie between old comrades the other night it was just great. I pretty near broke down!"

Vawter looked embarrassed at the talk about himself. "You know Barney Sheehan?" he said. "Well, some of us went

up the other night to hear him address the United Irishmen. I saw him as we came out—he was pretty full. ‘Mr. Vawter,’ he said, ‘I’m not wishful to be egotistical, but I will say, sorr, that whin I spake on the subject of brotherly love I find myself spaking wid great aise!’ I guess I’m like Barney.”

There was much boyish fun-making. In his deprecating sweet voice Vawter rebuked the company for their disorderly mirth. Mrs. Morningstar brightened up and supported him. He declared himself flattered by her concurrence, and put on, in addressing her, a ceremonious manner brought, perhaps, from a residence of some years in Georgia.

“Miz Morningstar, Madam! Nothing could give me mo’ playsu’ then to pa’take of some pie—pa’ticuly such elegunt and temptin’ pie as the pie I see befo’ me. But I am sho’, madam, that the enjoyment I would thereby confer upon myself would be annulled by the thought of the pain which so tende’ hahted a lady would experience at

the spectacle of my subsequent and uncontrollable anguish!"

"Sir," she responded with much show of dignity, "my pie is less important than your well-being."

Tilly giggled at the cooking-stove. George, on his way with the batter cakes, laughed so that once he had to sit down plate in hand.

Vawter looked at him pensively. "George, you put me in mind of a steamboat I once met with up on the Miss'sippi. When she was going she couldn't toot—and when she was tooting she couldn't go!" He went on gloomily: "She afterward bust!"

The meal was over and the men began to move toward the front porch. "Have a cigar, Vawter?" "Yes, thank you," he answered, "but let's stay here and red up. When I'm camping out I don't cut off the very first night, and leave the cook to wash the dishes. Give me a napern, please!"

Abe bestirred himself and hunted the broom. "I'll brush up the crumbs. I've got some style about me, too!"

The work was soon done; they drew their chairs around the stove—the night was frosty. The little Morningstar girl had watched Vawter with fascinated eyes. She came to his side and put her hand on his arm. Vawter drew her to him. “George, honey,” he said, looking over his shoulder at Mrs. Morningstar, who was fidgeting about in the background, “give your mother that chair and come sit on my other knee!”

Little Myrtie whispered something, and then said it out in her shrill little voice: “Mammy’s got a fiddle on top shelf!”

Abe explained, “Loretty’s had it since she was a girl. Bought it with egg money and learned herself. She ain’t played much late years!”

“I guess I’d have more time to play if you had less!” she said. But nobody noticed her pettishness. They all begged; the fiddle was brought out; Abe looked anxiously at the guests to see how they were taking it. “I reckon they’ll all make fun of your playing,” he said, not unkindly.

She played better than they had expected, and they praised her perhaps more than she deserved. As she began to feel at ease her black eyes shone, she threw her head back, and swung to and fro in accord with the music, smiling brightly. Abe, looking at her, remembered one Sunday afternoon when he was courting her, and met her coming through the meadow. He had thought she looked like a quail, bright-eyed and graceful. After she had played a while they all sang together:—"The Sweet Bye and Bye," and "We're Tenting To-night on the Old Camp Ground," and "Lorena."

They sang, they told conundrums, they even danced. The General Manager of the Lake Side System instructed George in the two-step. Price, the handsome and cynical editor and dramatic critic, gallantly led Abe down the center in the Virginia reel.

It was a time of kindness, and wit, and happy laughter. The humor of Vawter was not only keen and diverting—it was, as Abe thought, "friendly." Everything about

him was warm and alive. He had the actor's art, the orator's charm.

Mrs. Morningstar, looking at him now, wondered that she could have thought him plain. She noticed the neat freshness of his rough surfaced clothes—they seemed different from other men's garments; and on one of his slender hands he wore a splendid dazzling ring.

She was lifted out of herself, she walked on air. The music, the wit, the courtesy, were like some grand dream. It was theater, society, literature, opera, all in one.

They did not separate till midnight. As the men were going to bed upstairs Wemys said, "Who would have thought that that woman could be so nice? I took her for a regular wildcat."

Vawter sat on the edge of his cot, contemplating the sole of his shoe. "Well," he said, "you know my wife?—no, she could not be anything but an angel in any circumstances; but if *I* had to milk eight cows, and cook for the hands, and keep

boarders, I'd be something of a wildcat myself!"

The next afternoon there was a clatter of preparation. They were departing. Loretta Morningstar helped everybody; she watched the packing of the bass in big boxes of ice; she hunted for the lost rubber boot. Her calico dress was fresh and starched; over her head a red shawl was tied, not unbecomingly. Her sullenness had vanished; they were all good friends. Vawter bade her good-bye with simple courtesy, hat in hand. "Mrs. Morningstar, I thank you for your kindness to all of us. I hope you will be well and happy till we see you again."

As he was about to step into the wagon he looked back at her standing in the door alone. Something about her moved his heart. He hurried back. "Mrs. Morningstar—I wish I could do something for you—I don't suppose I ever can, but if I can I will. Remember that!"

The wagon vanished over the top of the hill. She turned into the house. She was

not lonely, she hardly missed them—there was so much for her to think of.

It was late in October when the fishermen went home. Only a few weeks after that the Morningstar family woke one morning to find the earth covered with snow and the pump frozen. It was an early winter and a cold one. The road was obliterated by snow drifts; not a neighbor came in for weeks. Abe slouched his way a mile and a half up the hill to the store every day, and came home only at dark. He had no news to tell; if he had had any he could not have told it.

Loretta looked about the room sometimes with a feeling that everything was unreal. Here, on this very seam of the carpet, Vawter's chair had stood. Over there was the braided rug that Price rolled up when they began to dance. It was the same, but lifeless; it was revolting, like a dead thing.

Behind the house a little path had been made to the barn. She hurried along it half a dozen times a day on her way to milk,

or to feed the chickens. Around the kitchen door were untidy heaps of frozen ashes; here and there the white surface was defiled by coffee grounds and egg shells. The strata of potato peelings and the like that kind nature had covered from time to time with fresh snow cropped out in some places with sickening insistence. Loretta had no time to look beyond at the sleeping fields, the tender curves of down-swathed hills, the glittering amethyst of the frozen lake.

The steps that led from the kitchen door into the back yard were slippery with ice; besides that they were broken. Abe had promised months before to nail them into place. His wife sometimes at night reminded him bitterly of his neglect. "I'm sorry I didn't do it before," he thought, "but I won't do it now till she stops her jawin'."

Late one afternoon as Loretta put her foot on the icy step the board slipped from its insecure fastening. She had a milk bucket in each hand and could not save

herself. As she lay on the frozen ground she thought her ankle was broken. She could not move; she had moments of unconsciousness and periods of agonizing pain. She did not cry, she did not pray. Her whole being was swept with a torrent of rage and despair. As she lay there evening came on; the sky showed lavish glory, splendor piled itself on splendor, the snow-covered earth reflected the tints above, the stars throbbed in burning blue. Abe, coming around the corner of the house, found his wife at the foot of the steps unconscious and half frozen.

Her ankle was not broken, but badly sprained; she was quite helpless. For weeks she lay watching, with dark inscrutable eyes, Abe's clumsy attempts at cleaning and cooking. At first he was afraid of her, but she said nothing. She was, as she would have said, "studying." As she grew better she seemed to have come to a conclusion—or to have reached an end in her deliberation. She was calmer than before. Abe could

not understand. He made piteous efforts to entertain her. He would have been glad even to see her angry.

One night as she was beginning to move about he spoke to her; he could keep silence no longer. "Loretty," he said, but he could not find words for his thought—"Loretty, don't take on so!" She heard him as one listens absently to a child.

The next day he went to the store—he felt the need of counsel. Old Van Horn had had three wives and might be deemed an authority. Abe turned on him his honest blue eyes, heavy with trouble.

"If a sick person's extry quiet and patient do you 'low it's a sign they ain't goin' to get well?"

"Man or woman?" asked old Van Horn.

"Woman," answered Abe.

Old Van Horn spoke with rustic candor. "Well, Abe, if it's your Loretty, and she ain't talking, she'll die certain."

But Mrs. Morningstar was almost well the next week when the huckster stopped

to trade with her for butter and eggs. She gave him privately a letter to mail for her in Laporte.

Mr. and Mrs. Vawter were at a dinner party one evening in January. Price, the editor, was there, and Wemys and General Harbison's son Richard, and others of the fishing party. Young Harbison sat next to Mrs. Vawter. In a pause her husband heard the young man say, "I wonder if Mr. Vawter confessed to you the flirtation he had up at the lake with Mrs. Morningstar?"

She answered him lightly; he persisted, "Oh ask any of them. They'll all tell you!"

She smiled indulgently. The young man's face flushed; it came to him, he could not tell how, that she thought him a little rude. Yet she was kinder than ever; Vawter, watching her, thought as he had thought before, "She is the best bred woman in the world, as she is the sweetest."

He looked at her as a stranger might

have looked; he saw her radiant face, her round throat encircled with diamonds, the low bodice of her white gown sable-edged and jewel-pinned. He recalled the woman up in the country—her sharp tongue, her wistful eyes, her poor little red shawl. “I wish Judith understood!” he thought. But he knew that she would never understand; he knew another thing too—that, although she was the most sympathetic of wives, she sometimes felt that he made himself a little common.

The next morning Vawter sat in his private office. A clerk brought to him his personal mail. As he read his letters he uttered an exclamation that made his secretary turn to him. “You may go into the other room, Mr. Holliday,” he said. “When I want you I’ll ring.”

Left alone he read again the letter he held in his hand:

“*Mr. Vawter, respected friend:* I write this to let you know that I have got so that I can’t live here any longer, and I

have made up my mind that I have got to leave, and remembering your promise, I write to say that I am going to leave Abe for good. He will be in Laporte a week from Monday, and I can get away and will go to your town, so please meet me at the train and tell me what to do. So no more at present from yours truly,

LORETTA MORNINGSTAR.

The situation was bad enough at first, but it seemed worse the more he thought about it. He stepped to the door. "Telephone for my horse; I'm going to drive."

Out on the deserted boulevard he tried to get a clearer view of the case, but all that he could think of was that a married woman, utterly ignorant of the ways of the world, was about to leave her husband, and that, perhaps, as the result of something like a suggestion of his own. The wind in his face was icy, but he broke into a perspiration as he thought of the obvious and inevitable criticism to which his own thoughtless impulsiveness would expose him. He did not dare to name his wife even in his

thoughts, but he could feel the way in which any woman might say, "Were you not a little rash? Why need *you* have taken on yourself the responsibility of a declared sympathy?"

"It's no use going over and over it by myself," he said, at last. "I have got to ask somebody!"

Of the men of the fishing party to whom he might go for advice, there was General Harbison, whose age and high character might be supposed particularly to qualify him; and there was Wemys, who, perhaps, was Vawter's closest friend.

"Harbison's all *right*, he'd talk it over fully and wisely—but he'd continue talking it over fully and wisely for the next twenty years.

"And Wemys—well, *he'd* be all right after he once got down to it, but he'd want to philosophize round and round creation before he started in on the subject—like a writing-master when he's going to make a scroll eagle. And Price—he's out of the

question, I suppose. For one thing, he's too young; and for another, from what the boys say, he's had a little too much experience already. I reckon I got to tell Wemys."

He stopped in front of a tall building which was almost in the center of a whirlpool of commercial activity. In the elevator with him as he went up were a printer, carrying long strips of proof in his hands, and some young men who had that look of sodden cleanliness that belongs to going to bed at four in the morning, and bath and breakfast at noon.

"Tell Mr. Price that Mr. Vawter wants to see him." As he waited he said to himself, "I knew all along it was Price I was coming to, and yet I made up reasons against Wemys and poor old Harbison. I've got to watch out—that kind of thing isn't just straight."

In his own room, and surrounded by the signs of his work, there was a force about Price that was not so evident else-

where. There was something comforting, too, in the quick perception that made him say at once to someone outside of the door, "Don't let anybody in."

He listened gravely with a kind and concentrated interest that had the appearance of being an interest diverted for the time from his own affairs. Vawter gave him Loretta's letter. It hurt him to do it; there was a sort of violation of confidence in the act. A fear took him that Price might laugh. But Price read it through slowly, looking back at the date, with a face as unchanging as if he had been considering a poker hand.

"Poor woman, I suppose it's been pretty hard on her this winter," he said, after a moment or two. "Yes," said Vawter, "and that's one of the things that breaks me all up. You see I know all about it. Our folks were pretty well off, as farmers go, in Indiana, but all the same I know the life is awful for the women."

"She'd be nervous and cross, and then

Abe would get grumpy," suggested the other.

"Yes, I reckon he'd act like a brute," Vawter answered—"and yet Abe's a mighty good-humored fellow by nature."

"He is, by nature; but the good humor that's going to redeem a man he's got to work for."

"Well, I don't know as I exactly understand what you mean by that, but anyhow Abe's a good man according to his lights, and hardly deserves that his home should be broken up! You feel that?"

Price responded absently, looking out of the window as he spoke. Vawter proceeded with some heat:

"Don't we *both* know that? Of course she can't come—"

"Certainly not."

"But what kind of a man am *I*? Here I am plotting to get out of keeping my promise to her. I never in my life before went back on a creature that trusted me. It's awful rough!"

"That's so," said Price. "There's sometimes some comfort in finding out how far you're to blame, and taking it out on yourself, but there is nothing of that in this, to my mind."

"No, I can't see how I am to blame. I was sorry for her, awfully sorry, as I am for any human being who is in a hard place. I said so, and I don't take it back either."

"Of course the idea that you would be her friend made her think it possible to leave Abe."

"I reckon so—I'm not going to blame a woman for believing what I tell her, am I?"

"The result is pretty embarrassing," said Price, with a smile.

"I suppose it is, but you don't think I mind about myself, do you? It's her I'm thinking of—how she'll be hurt, and lose confidence, and maybe get more bitter. It's like slapping a child that holds out its hands to you."

"I see that," said Price. "I mean I can see how it would worry you." After a mo-

ment's silence he asked, "Can't you write to her?"

"Write to her? Good land, no! Anybody who chose would open the letter, and if it got out that she had ever planned to run away from Abe she'd never hear the last of it. You don't know the coarse jokes, the silly repetitions—Say! Maybe I could go up there and talk her out of it!"

"I guess not," said Price. "A man doesn't travel to the end of creation in the dead of winter, and then go fourteen miles by wagon, just to make an afternoon call."

Vawter rose. "Well, it's something to get the situation clear in your mind. She mustn't come, that's one thing; and the other is, that nobody but you and me must ever know that she wanted to come. That's as far as I can go. You can't help me beyond that—nobody can. I've got to hope for a leading."

"Yes, and I guess you'll get it. And, Vawter—please remember that you don't have to tell me what you may decide to do."

At the door Vawter stopped. "I'd like to say that I think you've been pretty nice about a thing some men would have treated as a joke."

"Don't mention it," said Price. "I don't know when I've enjoyed anything so much as seeing the way I took it. It gave me some hope for myself."

Later at his office Vawter said to himself with a sigh, "Well, if there isn't any possible way out of a thing, I reckon all I can do is to get out in an impossible way." He called for his secretary to come and take down a letter. "On plain paper, please, Mr. Holliday."

The letter set forth that it had come to the knowledge of the writer that the property of Abraham Morningstar was in danger, that great harm might come to him should he be absent for a day, that he ought to remain closely at home for some months, and that he must not tell anyone he had received such a warning. "And, Mr. Holliday, you may bring it to me to sign." As he put it

into an envelope he turned pale with his horror of it. "Great Cæsar! Have I gone into the White Cap business? Am I the sort of man that sends anonymous letters?"

That night his little daughter clung to him. "Oh, father, how good you are!" "Well, honey," he answered with grim amusement at his own distress, "maybe I'm good, but *maybe* I'm one of the lowest creatures known to society."

Before the next summer the fishermen built a pretty clubhouse of their own on the shore of the lake. Vawter went later than the others and was welcomed at the landing with joyous acclamations. At the door a spry mulatto hurried forward to take his bag and overcoat. "You Cunnel Vawter, suh?" He looked about at the gentlemen in expectation of the guffaw that he thought would follow his next words. "Woman up on the hill where we-all gets our aigs mighty keen to see you, suh!"

Vawter's steel-colored eyes rested on the

negro for an instant. Then he spoke even more gently than was usual with him. "You mean Mrs. Morningstar? As soon as the steward can spare you, you may go up there and tell her that Mr. Vawter will do himself the honor of calling on her to-morrow morning."

As they passed on into the house young Harbison lingered in the hall. "Look here," he said to the steward, "that nigger of yours is just a little too fresh!"

In the radiant morning Vawter, trim and soldierlike, walked toward the Morningstar house. Flocks of little yellow butterflies flowered the road along which he went. Beyond the fields the lake lay blue and sparkling. At intervals the song of a meadow lark rang out. He felt the beauty of it all, but he was greatly disturbed. He could not guess what Mrs. Morningstar's situation might be. Had Abe suspected the truth? Had Loretta in some desperate moment confessed it? She might be more wretched than ever; she might meet him

with reproaches. He could bear her anger, but to seem to be false to one who had trusted him, was a thought that stung him. He went over it all again with a sickening feeling that he in some way was at the bottom of the trouble.

"I have meant to do only what is right. I have tried to walk uprightly before God and man, and I guess I have blundered along like one of these wobbly-legged calves!"

Loretta saw him approaching; she came hurriedly out of the door—the house was only a few feet from the roadside. She took no time for greeting. "Some of the folks are in the kitchen. Go up to the edge of the cornfield and wait for me."

She vanished before he could speak. He walked on bewildered. As he got his breath he addressed himself: "Henry Vawter, have you gone crazy? Are you waiting at the edge of the cornfield for Abe Morningstar's wife?"

She appeared almost immediately; her pink sunbonnet was perched on the top of her head; she looked very pretty.

"I've wanted to see you awful bad—" she hesitated. Vawter's heart sank.

"I've been so—so afraid you thought hard of my not coming last winter. What's the matter?" she asked, as the man drew a quick breath.

"Oh, nothing. I ought not to go out in the sun without my smelling salts and parasol."

She laughed and went on, "You see it was this way; I really did lay off to go, but I couldn't seem to get away nohow. After I began to pick up, Abe got a notion he was poorly, and he took to settin' round the house, and after he was converted he helped me lots, and George he went up to Valparaiso to clerk in his uncle's store, and Lon Bunker got married, and there wasn't no one but Abe and me and Myrtie, and I got real reconciled. Fact is," she added, with a flash of youthful gayety, "time I could go I was plum out of notion of goin'!"

"Well, that's a heap better, ain't it?" said Vawter.

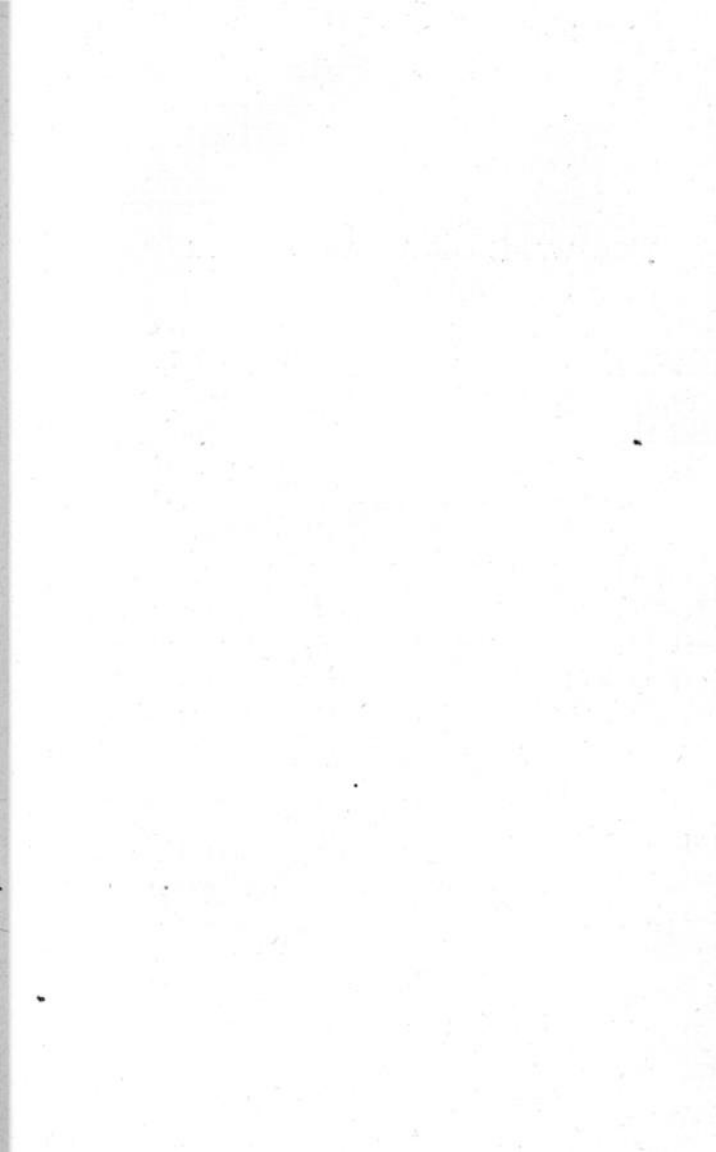
"Yes, I can see that plenty well now—for one thing, I expect I'd 'a' had a hard time earning my living teaching music." She continued, with simple confidence in his friendly interest: "I get a good deal more time to play now than I did, and Abe and me's joined the Christian Endeavors at our church, and we're going to attend the entertainments the Campbellites are gettin' up. Looky here! You won't ever let on to Abe that I had a notion of leavin' him?"

"No, indeed; I don't even let it on to myself."

That evening Wemys said, "They say Abe got converted at the big revival this spring. Vawter, when you were up there this morning did you see anything of the family altar that exhorters counsel the brother who has found the light to set up?"

"Yes," answered Vawter whimsically, "I saw it; I helped shove it round into place. It's just a plain, ordinary, home-made, medium-sized altar."

THE WIFE OF A CARPENTER



THE WIFE OF A CARPENTER

WHEN at dinner Dr. Harmon mentioned a sick woman whom he had seen that day he was not departing from his habit of professional reticence; it was not of her illness that he spoke. Her name, Moore, was that of Mrs. Harmon's kinspeople in Whitcomb County. She and her husband were from that part of the State—there might be some connection.

"I guess they are poor, and they seem to have no acquaintances. It might be a kind thing for you to go to see her," he said, regarding Mrs. Harmon with the lack of confidence in his own good impulses that overcomes a man in the presence of his wife.

It turned out there was no relationship; but when Mrs. Harmon went to see the sick woman she was so much pleased with her that she soon went again, and took

some pains to make the acquaintance of the husband.

"Mr. Moore and his wife are as timid and shy as two gentle animals," said Mrs. Harmon, at home. "I do not see how they can get on in the city."

"As to that," said the doctor, "they came here because they could not get on in the country. Moore is a carpenter, and at present there are not many lordly mansions in process of erection on the farms of Whitcomb County."

"He ought to be a farmer—that's what *I'm* going to be," said little Tom—"anyhow in maple sugar time."

"Maybe he hadn't enough money to buy a farm, Tom," said Miss Amy. "*I'm* going to have plenty of money," answered the boy.

The doctor continued: "I spoke to Moore's boss about him. He says that the man will always be able to earn his bread and butter—he's competent and industrious—but that he'll never get on much. He hasn't

enough cheek to look out for little contracts or to ask for higher wages."

Mrs. Harmon's well-filled satin bodice creaked as she sighed, "Well, it's something for a man to be able to earn his bread and butter."

"My dear," said the doctor, "you are, as usual, distinctly right."

As soon as Mrs. Moore was well she let the doctor's wife see that she wanted to earn a little money herself, and Mrs. Harmon often carried to her small bits of sewing—a lace flounce to be pieced, some frills to be hemstitched for Amy's night gowns. The children, Tom, Nelly and the two-year-old baby, were sometimes in the carriage with their mother. "It was the strangest thing to see the little woman brighten up at the sight of the babies," said Mrs. Harmon. "She forgot all about *me*. I left them with her for a while. When I went back for them they wailed and she looked so wistful that it was positively touching."

It was the desire to see the children that

first drew Mrs. Moore, in spite of her shyness, to the Harmons' house. Later she came often and sat busy at her sewing in the wide upper hall. The children hung round her and climbed over her, but she never seemed to tire of them. She was such a gentle, ladylike little creature, that all the family grew fond of her and came to call her, as the children did, "Cousin Mary." She had beautiful red hair, a thin skin, and mild, protuberant blue eyes. Her husband was enough like her to be her brother. When the doctor and his wife went off on short trips, Mrs. Moore was asked to stay at the house with Miss Amy and the little ones. At such times her husband, William, came to dinner with them. He sat up at the table, shiningly clean and very well-behaved, looking like a little boy who has been asked out to tea. When one of the children said anything bright (and the Harmon children were generally free to speak their minds), William and his wife would look at each other in silent delight and admiration.

"I wonder how they manage to exist," said Amy (she was one of the girls who are putting into the work of improving their minds the same sort of energy and devotion that their grandmothers gave to the business of saving their souls). "They seem never to have anything to talk about, even to each other, but some baby that they know."

"Oh," said Mrs. Harmon, "they have a great deal to interest them. They read the Bible to each other every night, and they always go to church."

They not only went to church on Sundays, but to prayer-meeting on Thursday nights. They were as regular in attendance at these meetings and as little noticed as the negro janitor, who slept quietly in one of the dusky corners that surrounded the illuminated center where a few old men and women and one fashionably dressed sister, whose husband was not a "professor," asked each other once a week why the young people would not attend prayer-

meeting. The Moores enjoyed it all greatly.

Once William made a joke. His wife complained of the rain. "Don't you remember, Mary," he said, "that Brother Taylor said that if there was one thing that more than another was sent for our personal reproof and correction, it was the weather? I guess you've been doing something naughty."

When this *jeu d'esprit* was reported by Cousin Mary (who had a modest pride in it), Amy fairly turned pale.

"Oh, what barrenness!" she said to her mother, later. "Have they *no* intellectual life?"

"I never have observed," responded Mrs. Harmon, with dignity, "that intellectual people have any better time than others who make less pretensions. Cousin Mary certainly seems as happy as the rest of you."

Miss Amy could admit a truth even if she did not approve of the conclusion to be drawn from it. She saw that Cousin Mary was happy; she saw, indeed, that she was

not only happy, but in a sort of exaltation. Her color was brighter than it had been; she laughed aloud as she played with the children; sometimes when she thought no one could hear her she sang aloud as she sat at her sewing. William, also, was changed. Formerly he hardly dared answer when Mrs. Harmon addressed him; now when his wife came in the morning he escorted her to the front door, rang the bell bold as a lion, and told Mrs. Harmon not to let Mary get tired.

In the autumn and winter she did not come often to the Harmons'. The children were taken to her house and came back noisy and happy, bearing little homemade toys that she and William had contrived for them.

In March Cousin Mary gave birth to a child which died immediately. From the first she was out of her senses, and an alarming mania developed. She was violently ill for weeks. During this time her husband worked night and day taking care of her.

His toil was incredible; he went through more than it would have been thought could be endured by the stoutest frame. But it could not be permitted. An awful day came for the poor little man. In a close carriage with Mrs. Harmon and the doctor he took his wife, tied hand and foot, to the insane asylum. As they drew near the place he made pitiful attempts to smooth her gown, to adjust her hat, though she struck at him. "Mary is always so tidy and particular about her looks," he said.

That night as Amy Harmon in her ball-room finery sat with her parents in the library waiting for the carriage that was to take her to a dance, they spoke of the distress of the day.

"Why has it happened?" the girl asked of her father. "What have Cousin Mary and her husband ever done to deserve this awful thing?" She spoke with the bewildered bitterness of one who for the first time finds her question cannot be answered.

"We must trust in a Providence that is

wiser than we are," said the mother, comfortably. The girl still looked at her father.

"Well, Amy, one woman in so many hundreds goes crazy. Poor Cousin Mary drew the marked ballot. That is all. You all take your chance."

"Oh, I don't know what 'chance' is!" she exclaimed.

"Neither do I," he replied. "But I *think* it is a segment of some great circle of the law."

After this the Harmons saw nothing of Cousin Mary's husband. He crept away like some wounded animal to suffer alone. Mrs. Harmon looked for him at church, but he was seen there no more. She drove to the little house and found it locked. A woman stretched her neck over the next fence and then addressed her:

"You ain't acquainted with them folks, are you?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Harmon responded; "I know them very well."

The neighbor brightened up with the

pleasure of one who has something of interest to communicate. "Well, you won't find her at home; she's gone crazy."

"I didn't expect to see Mrs. Moore. I wanted to find out something about Mr. Moore. Do you know if he is well?"

"Oh, he's all right, I reckon, far's *that* goes. But he acts mighty curious. He just cooks and works for himself, and never speaks to a soul. Minute his work's done he puts out his lamp. But if he don't want to be friendly, it's no difference to *us*!" Her tone indicated advances not responded to.

The resident physicians at the asylum sometimes communicated with Dr. Harmon about Mrs. Moore's condition, and occasionally, when William's day's work was done, he came to the house to ask for news. In the long summer evenings, as Miss Amy sat with her friends on the wide veranda, in the scent of the lilies that came up from the lawn below, she often saw William's slight, boyish figure in the shadow of the trees that edged the sidewalk—sometimes

when the doctor was delayed he stood there for two or three hours. And when the doctor alighted she saw the face of the young man in the light of the street lamps as he came forward. It was wild and haggard and unshaven. But sometimes, after long waiting, when William heard the carriage wheels coming, he stole away without a word.

"I wonder what Mr. Moore does with himself on Sundays?" said Mrs. Harmon. "I've sent to his house several times, but he's never at home."

"I think I saw him one Sunday," said the doctor. "I was driving past the grounds of the asylum—six miles from town, you know;—the rain was coming down in sheets. A man that looked like him was lying on the grass huddled close against the palings that inclosed the grounds. But if it was he, he hid his face so that I might not recognize him."

The day came in August when the doctor had good news. Cousin Mary was improv-

ing. Then word came that William might see her for a few minutes. He took hope immediately and was ready to talk to Mrs. Harmon about what he might cook to carry to his wife. He came to ask advice about a flannel dressing gown. He began to make a store of jelly for winter consumption, and he even tried to coax a few late flowers to bloom in the little yard.

In the autumn Mary was discharged. Mrs. Harmon sent flowers to the house to welcome her home, and they all made every show of kindly feeling. But they spoke of it gravely to one another.

"How much better it would have been if she had died," said Amy. "How horrible for her to drag through life, knowing she has been insane!"

"Does it seem so to you?" asked the doctor.

"How could it seem otherwise?—to distrust one's judgment—to watch each whim with trembling horror—to have the doubt

always hanging over you. It would drive me mad a second time!"

"Probably it would," responded her father; "but then you have had the advantage of a higher education. You, I doubt not, know much about alienism and have studied something of diseases of the mind and will. Cousin Mary has not had your opportunities. She is no more ashamed than she would be of having had the grip. It was bad, it is over, and that is the end of it."

"But her husband! won't *he* be ashamed? Won't he trust her less?"

"Oh, I never said William was a gentleman. I dare say he'll be just as fond of her as ever."

"He is not a gentleman, of course," said Mrs. Harmon, severely. "But he is an earnest, sincere Christian, and I don't see why *you* should run him down—and you always talking the way you do—"

The reunited pair took up their life just where they had left it. They were at church

the next Sunday perhaps a little paler than formerly, but looking very happy. Cousin Mary came to the Harmons' as often as before. They tried to be very considerate; Mrs. Harmon and Amy often sat with her while she sewed, and at such times one of them would read aloud from some book that Cousin Mary might find diverting. Amy talked gayly about the little things that were happening, taking the greatest pains to be as gentle and simple in her talk as might be. They learned afterward that Cousin Mary regarded these hours as times of great intellectual stimulus. As she gained confidence the mother and daughter used the tact for which they were distinguished in a wide circle to induce her to talk freely to them. One day she told them of her experiences in the hospital. She spoke quite simply, with no show of feeling or self-pity, or the least perception that there might be anything in the situation that called for special sympathy. She said that when she came to herself she felt that her mind was dis-

turbed, and was glad to be in a place where she might be helped to get well.

"I have wondered if you were not troubled about the baby," said Mrs. Harmon.

Cousin Mary's mild face flushed. "Before I knew anything else I knew that it was dead. I never asked; sometimes in the night I cried."

"Did you begin to think about your home and William long before you spoke?"

"Oh, yes; I wanted to ask about William for weeks, but somehow I could not. One day I could say the words, and I asked the attendant—" Here she hesitated. "I remember her," said Mrs. Harmon; "that big, strong Irish woman. What did she tell you?"

"She said, 'Don't bother about him—he's got another wife long ago!' Of course I knew it was not true," said Cousin Mary, meekly, "but it grieved me a little."

Amy made some gesture of indignant protest, but Cousin Mary, busy at her sewing,

did not see it. She went on calmly, saying that perhaps she had delayed her own recovery. She had found in the pocket of one of her dresses a scrap of the lace that she had sewn around the neck of one of the baby's slips. She liked to touch it, and to hold it against her face. One day the nurse suddenly pointed her out to a passing doctor. "She's pretty crazy yet, you see!" "I did not know that it was wrong," said Cousin Mary, "or I should not have done it."

"How horrible!" cried Amy; "that woman ought to be killed!"

"Oh, you *mustn't* think that," begged Cousin Mary; "I am sure she never meant to be unkind, and she was very faithful and industrious."

The next autumn Cousin Mary seemed frailer than before. Sometimes the doctor stopped her in the hall with kindly inquiries about her health. "Is there any danger of Cousin Mary's mania returning?" asked Amy.

"They say not," answered her mother.

"It was not constitutional; it was an accident, as a fever might have been."

In her heart Amy thought them all a little dull. Certainly, Cousin Mary was not well. She came no more to the house, but in the evening William often stopped for a tonic or a sleeping powder on his way home from work. He did not, however, seem any more distressed than did the others.

It was the last season before Amy Harmon's marriage. She was going out constantly. The night before Christmas she danced till three o'clock. "Don't try to get up to breakfast, dear," said her mother.

"Not get up on Christmas morning? Why, I'd get up then if I had to stay in bed a month to pay for it."

The Christmas tree was shown just after breakfast. The children screamed and shouted. Everybody was happy. The drawing-room floor was covered with tinsel cords and ribbons and wrapping paper; neighbor children ran in and out; uncles

came bearing gifts; the telephone rang itself into spasms.

On Christmas evening the Harmons always went to the house of the grandfather. There was a supper at which everybody, big and little, was seated, and in the evening dancing and games. Amy and her little sister Nelly went first; they were to send the carriage back for the others. As they were starting Mrs. Harmon gave them a basket full of little gifts for Cousin Mary to be left at her house on the way.

"Go in quietly without knocking," she said. "Your father says she is doing well, but she may be asleep."

The house was one of a row of workmen's cottages that stretched out in the shadow of a great factory. The factory was still and dark; the street lay hushed in the silence of a late Christmas afternoon. There was no light in the house except one that shone through a side window. The coachman carried the basket to the door, and Amy, gathering her finery over her arm

and followed by her little sister, ran through snow drifts as high as her shoulder along the little path from the gate to the house.

She opened the door softly and they entered. She viewed the little place—its braided rugs, its tidy poverty. There was no sound except that of the voice of a man reading in the inner room. Amy floated across the outer one; her bright mantle slipped from her shoulders and lay at her feet, a pool of shimmering gold and azure. As she stood poised in her white gown in the square of light that came through the open doorway little Nelly saw her with sudden awe. “I think,” she whispered to herself, “that sister looks like an angel!” Then she stole to Amy’s side and looked into the further room. There, white as a lily, her bright hair spread out like an aureole over her pillow, lay Cousin Mary. The light of happiness and life and love was in her blue eyes. On her arm was a baby. As they stood there they heard William read the scripture for the day:

“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

“‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’”

A GENTLEWOMAN



A GENTLEWOMAN

ONE winter afternoon three friends sat together sewing. It was the week before Christmas, and they were busy preparing for that season. Some packages, be-ribboned and addressed, lay on the table in the middle of the drawing-room in the shadow of a cluster of long-stemmed red roses. Other parcels, almost ready to be put with them, filled a chair near one of the ladies.

As they pursued their pretty work, they talked together with playful candor. But although their conversation was intelligent and free, there was a sort of repression about it which stands among American women as a sign of high breeding. The same thing was to be noticed in the composure of their attitudes and even in the simple elegance of their attire. It was an easy guess

that any one of them would regard a manifestation of mental or moral vehemence as evidence of a lack of culture.

They had been speaking of a woman whom they all knew. Then as the sun sank behind the snow-capped turrets of the house opposite, they dropped their work and talked of womankind.

"I wonder if it is true that all women are at heart pretty much alike?" asked Theodora.

"For my part," said Fanny, "I see no more reason for believing that women's hearts are alike than that their minds are, which is absurd."

"I think we are all alike," said Amy. "There are the same depths and shallows in every woman's nature. What fills the depth—love, or religion, or jealousy—is of course decided by circumstances or education."

Fanny objected: "It is easy to say that, but you cannot prove it. There are a very few instinctive passions, such, for instance,

as maternal affection (which even Theodora must admit she has in common with the lower animals), that we all may feel; but I think it probable that the highly developed sensibility which alone can engender complex and delicate emotion is the result of culture, either personal or inherited."

"I don't like to agree with you," said Theodora. "For one thing, such an idea seems irreligious."

"Yes; that's a fine reason," laughed Fanny.

"I have known many women intimately," said Amy, "and I am sure that no class monopolizes the capacity for high and intense feeling."

"I like the way you two talk!" exclaimed Fanny. "Whom did either of you ever know outside of your relatives and visiting lists?"

Theodora ventured to respond that she had gone among the poor a great deal.

"No doubt," commented Fanny, "the

worthy poor!—that is to say, the poor made in your image.”

“And I,” asserted Amy, “may have learned something from books. You know I read *anything* that tells of humanity.”

“Yes, I know,” said Fanny, “you pride yourself on your love for your kind, and you lie on the sofa all day reading stories about French and Russian women. I don’t say the stories are not true, but how do you know they are?”

“How does one know anything?” asked Theodora. “One sees by one’s imagination; one tests what is seen by one’s reason.”

“That sounds very grand; it’s a pity there’s no sense in it!” said Fanny. “For my part, I wish I could know for myself.” She paused, laughed, and then, with a look of defiance on her pretty face, began to speak more earnestly than before. “The truth is, I just long to know something outside of ourselves. I am lonely on our little desert island of culture. I want to shake

hands with the howling savages on shore. Maybe I wouldn't like it, but I wish I could get a chance."

Amy began to speak, and then hesitated. "I do not know that it would interest you—last summer I met,—but perhaps it's too long a story."

"Pray tell it," said Theodora, politely.

"Yes," said Fanny, "pray tell it. But I don't believe you ever met anybody who was not introduced to you by your mother or your sister-in-law."

Amy blushed a little as she began. "Eighteen months ago I had to go to Chicago alone. It was necessary that I should change from one train to another on the way, and I was to wait in Plymouth from noon until six in the afternoon. There was nothing alarming about this, for Plymouth is as quiet an old place as one could wish to find."

"I know it," interrupted Fanny. "The cleanest little town! There are sandy streets densely shaded by beautiful maple

trees, and here and there a mountain ash bright with clusters of scarlet berries."

"My husband had told me just what to do," continued Amy. "I was to go from the station to the La Fayette House, and stay there until time for the next train. This house is an old place which is highly thought of by the few travelers—mostly lawyers—who have occasion to stop in the little town. It is more like an English inn than one would think possible, with not one modern improvement, and yet much homely comfort.

"I walked from the station to the hotel. The day was beautiful. At the door the landlord met me with hospitable warmth. I was late for their regular dinner, but his daughter, a comely old maid, took me into the dining-room, seated me by a vine-shaded window, and served me with simple dainties—red raspberries fresh from the garden just outside, a pitcher of yellow cream, and later a little cake hot from the oven—

the 'try-cake,' she said, of one she was 'making for tea.'

"When my luncheon was finished, I went across the hall to the parlor and looked about me before I settled myself for the afternoon with a novel. I delighted in the room;—the striped paper on the walls; the pictures high-hung and tilted forward; the clean Nottingham curtains that shook in the sweet air."

"You don't say anything about the tin plaque with a one-legged stork on it," said Fanny.

"No; because I didn't see it. But there was an old glass fruit dish full of mignonette on the center table. The room seemed like the rest of the house—sweet and peaceful, as if it were the index of simple, undisturbed lives.

"In a far corner, with her back to me, sat a lady busy with some needlework. She had the appearance of being at home. Her work-basket was beside her. I did not look at her twice, but opened my book and

read for a while, forgetting there was anyone present but myself. A half hour, perhaps, had passed, when the lady rose and walked across the room. As she moved, I looked after her, at first listlessly, then astounded. I could not see her face, but her dress, her figure, above all, her carriage, fairly took my breath away. I never have seen anything like the grace of her moving. I know now that the most beautiful dancing in the world is not so beautiful as—is not to be compared with—the rhythmical grace possible in the human walk. When she seated herself, I felt a sort of pang, as if music had ceased. Then I noticed her costume. You may smile, Fanny, but I have seldom seen a woman so charmingly dressed. My own little bravery seemed tawdry and common beside the fashion of her attire. I almost thought I was dreaming."

"And were you not?" asked Fanny. "You know I've been in Plymouth myself!"

"Who was she?" inquired Theodora.

"That was what I tried to think. I con-

cluded that she must belong to one of the wealthy Sevier County families, and was perhaps waiting here after a summer's absence for her house to be opened. But I wondered that in that case I had not heard of her. She was sewing on some fancy-work, a strip of pink velvet cut in deep points along one edge, which she embroidered with silver thread and jewel-like beads. She dropped her thimble and rose to look for it. I saw it in a corner. Then we fell into conversation. Soon I was seated at her side, counting the beads for her as she used them. I know I can *never* make you understand the simple elegance of that woman's manner—her grace, her dignity!"

"First," said Fanny, "I'd like to understand something about *your* manner and its dignity. Are you in the habit of sitting down to sew with every woman you meet in a hotel parlor?"

"You know very well that I am not. It was her fineness which made it possible. It seemed just the natural thing to do. There

was no possibility of making one's self common in her society."

"Oh, well," said Fanny, "I suppose it was not so very bad. I know who she was—that young Mrs. Ridley, whose husband is minister to China."

"No, my dear," answered Amy, "she was *not* Mrs. Ridley. Of course I myself was wondering who she was, though the instant charm of her presence kept me from thinking definitely about it. By and by I carelessly asked her what her work (the strip of velvet) was for. What do you think she said—you, Fanny, who know everything?"

"For the mantelpiece in her own little sitting-room, of course," said Fanny.

"Not at all! Without haste or hesitation, as simply as possible, she said, 'For my husband's costume.'"

"Well," said Fanny, "I suppose they were going to have some private theatricals."

"I said something implying that. She looked at me with mild surprise. 'Ah,'

said she, 'I fancy Raymond would find that very tiresome.' Then we went back to what we had been talking about. She told me of a winter journey in Russia; how her husband piled furs over her till she thought she should smother; of the palaces and their conservatories; of a certain princess' gowns; of market scenes and fetes on the ice—all this, and more, with such gaiety and wit, with such pretty accompaniment of gesture and changing color and light mimicry, that nothing could have been more charming."

Fanny mused: "The Reed-Dudleys live somewhere up there; they are often abroad."

"She was *not* one of the Reed-Dudleys," answered Amy.

"Well, then," said Fanny, "you deserved no such luck; and how it ever happened in Plymouth, and in summer, is past me—but she was an actress or a singer."

"She was neither; a thought of that sort did occur to me for a minute, but I rejected it, even before I found out positively that it was not true. One look at her face would

have convinced you that never since she was born had that rose-petal skin ever been touched by paint and powder. Have I told you what she was like?"

"No," said Fanny. "I thought you spared us purposely."

"I suppose she was very pretty!" said Theodora.

"I do not know whether she was or not, but she was a revelation of what a woman may be at the high mark of physical perfection. She had in her appearance a quality that transcends any beauty of feature."

"Oh, yes," said Fanny, "goodness—I used to hear that sort of talk when I was a little girl. I thought it was out of date now."

"I do not mean goodness; though for that matter, her face did show that. It was a quality that is as much a material attribute as beauty is. She was the incarnation of physical well-being—the climax of perfect health. She fairly glowed with it; an atmosphere of it seemed to surround her,

Even to be near her was to feel a health-giving influence. Looking at her, one would say that from head to foot there was not a muscle, not a nerve, not a drop of blood, but was working in absolute order as God meant it to work. I never thought until I saw her what physical perfection might be—not physical beauty, which beside it is a poor, scrappy affair, but strong, flawless vitality. I tell you this fair creature made other women show beside her as deformities—cripples.”

“How you must love to contemplate Mr. Corbett!” said Fanny.

“Nonsense!” answered Amy. “A man of that kind is the owner of certain abnormally developed muscles—to a degree the result of special training. This young woman seemed to have blossomed into perfection as a flower does.

“But I was telling you of our conversation. She mentioned her husband again, and said he had gone to some small town near by on professional business. She had

stayed in Plymouth a while the year before, when he was on a similar journey; he felt it safe to leave her there because the people in the house were such good, kindly folks."

"And *then*," said Fanny, "I suppose you asked this United States Senator's wife what her husband's line of trade was?"

"Not quite that, but something like it, I'm afraid. She answered me at once."

"She answered you as you deserved, I hope," said Fanny.

"Fanny, are you not ashamed of yourself?" exclaimed Theodora. "You know *you* would have asked her flatly in the first five minutes!"

"She looked up at me with a smile," continued Amy, "and she said, 'Will it seem vain for me to say, what our agent has printed on all his letterheads, that my husband, Raymond Mersac, and I are the leading cannon-ball artists in the world?'"

"And what," said Theodora, "is a cannon-ball artist?"

"I'll tell you," cried Fanny. "A can-

non-ball artist—oh, why was I not in Plymouth that day?—a cannon-ball artist is a lady, clad in tights, who is shot out of an imitation cannon—Amy, you never deserved this; *you* could not appreciate it—shot out of an imitation cannon with a spring, high into the air, where she catches the hands of a gentleman who is at the moment suspended by the knees, head down, from a trapeze—that is a little swing fastened on a tight rope! Amy, it has been the dream of my life to meet, to actually know, one of these circus people. And now it has happened to *you*! It is too much!”

“I can understand,” said Theodora, “that one might be curious, not about the individuals, but about their habits. I confess that I cannot see how a person living such a life as that from childhood (and I believe that only long training makes such feats possible) could have any of the womanly charm that Amy says belonged to her Madame Mersac.”

“I do not ask you to understand it,” said

Amy, "and I do not know that her life had anything to do with her personality, though probably it had preserved for her the transcendent physical endowment with which she must have been born."

"Well, I hope you asked her a thousand questions!" exclaimed Fanny.

"No doubt I should have expected myself to, but in her presence one was not tempted to the impertinence of questioning. That would have been impossible. However, I was with her for several hours. I saw that she was drawn to me as I was to her. It seemed just the natural thing to talk freely, and by and by we gave ourselves to confidences, as children do, or as young girls will in the first abandonments of intimacy.

"What she told me of herself was in substance this: Her parents died when she was three years old. They had been acrobats. Her father was English, her mother French. They had no relatives. At their death the little Leonie was taken in charge

by an old Frenchman and his wife, who had some little employment at a zoölogical garden near London, and who kept a sort of training school for acrobats. They must have been a very gentle, kindly old pair. They gave her the best training their knowledge could secure. Her exercise, her food, her hours of rest, were carefully (and she said lovingly) arranged for her from her earliest recollection. Except the hours when she was being taught, she spent almost all her time out of doors. She had no playmates; she said she never wanted any. The other students at the training school were all older than she while she was a child; and after she was ten, she was so much more proficient in the feats of her profession than the others, that she had her lessons alone.

“I asked her if masters were not at times cruel, and if, when she was a child, she was not frightened at the danger of the exercises. She said she supposed trainers were unkind sometimes, but she fancied not often, even if they were by nature bad-

tempered. 'A master,' said she, 'wants, more than anything else, that his pupils should do him credit. Everyone knows that nothing is done well under compulsion. When there is one trace of fear in the heart, one can't think; one can't act; one can do nothing really very good. For my own part,' said she, 'I was never set to do a special feat for which I was not already so well prepared that it was easy. It was a delightful pastime, the reward often of months of work. This routine work was never hard, and only tiresome because it lasted so long; but one came to do it as one might dance—without thinking much about it.'"

"I suppose," said Theodora, "that those nets that are hung under the performers give them confidence when they are poised high in the air."

"I said that. She was very engaging and sweet in her desire that I should not guess what a primary sort of question I had asked, but her answer was clear. The net gave no confidence, because one never could

walk on a tight rope at all until one had forgotten all about the elevation of the rope. The first thing to learn was to feel that the rope was not a rope stretched in mid-air, but a line drawn flat on the surface of the earth. Consequently, the net made no difference one way or the other. With it she merely exercised on a line that rested on a surface covered with netting. As she was saying this, she stopped suddenly with a radiant smile. Then she said, 'I should tell you that Raymond does not agree with me about this.'

"'He prefers a netting under him?'" said I.

"'Oh, no,' she laughingly answered; 'but he not only prefers, he insists on one under me. He sees to it himself at every performance. The canvas men, I am sure, hate him. The whole company laughs. Sometimes, when the netting has been mislaid, he will not let me appear, and has in consequence stormy interviews with the manager. I thought it a little babyish of him at first—he is so brave for himself, and

he knows so well my strength and confidence. I said so to him.' Here she stopped.

" 'And what did he say, my dear?' I asked, with courage born of our intimacy.

"She spoke gravely, 'He said: "Should I see you in great danger, Leonie, it might not kill me, but I think it would."'"

"She had lived so quietly with the old French couple," said Theodora, "where did she get her husband?" .

"This is what she told me," continued Amy: 'I have been married four years, and I can hardly remember when I did not know that I was to marry Raymond. This always made me very happy when I thought of it, and I tried hard to be good, so that he might be pleased with me. He is ten years older than I, and was a relative of my dear master. When he had a vacation he came to see us. Sometimes, not often, he brought me a gift; and he always talked to me so sensibly, and yet so entertainingly, that it seemed to me no company could be so de-

lightful as his. And then he makes one feel when he is gone that one must try to be kinder and more unselfish, so as to be like him. I thought there was no wiser or wittier man in the world, and no finer gentleman. I think so still,' she added, simply."

"What did she know about gentlemen?" asked Fanny.

"Nothing, except what she had learned from books. She had met a good many men of the world, she said, but she had the idea that they were rude and silly. She suggested an ingenious explanation—that such people, not being forced to be constantly together, as those are who work, are not obliged to learn to control themselves and be polite for their mutual comfort; so they should be excused for little rudenesses."

"This is important, if true," said Fanny; "I must think of it!"

Amy continued: "As we talked, I came to see that there was a very tender union between Madame Mersac and her husband. It was a rare chance that had united two

people so untouched by what we call the realities of life. They seemed to be as alone as Adam and Eve in Paradise. She told me that they had never had an intimate friend; their whole life was in each other. No doubt there are many people who are capable of such a passion, but I don't think they often marry each other."

"Well, it is saddening," said Fanny, "to think that wedded love in its highest, purest form can only exist between a gentleman and a lady who are shot out of a cannon at each other, and who enjoy hanging by their toes from tight ropes."

Amy continued: "I do not say anything so absurd as that the calling of these two made them what they were. I do believe that a healthful existence, away from the intellectual strife in which the most of us take some part, might nourish a simple and faithful spirit, but I cannot think of Madame Mersac as belonging to one order or another. She was nature's own."

"You said she was witty and vivacious,"

said Theodora, "but had she any education?"

"As we count education she probably had almost none; and yet, as results go, she was not behind some highly educated women. She knew French perfectly—not lady's maid French, nor governess French, but that beautiful, elegant, elastic tongue that never was taught in a finishing school. I suppose she had a natural aptitude for language, for her English was charming. Apparently her words were chosen with regard to their finest meaning, and not, as ours sometimes are, in conformity to a passing fashion. She had read a great many books, but she knew nothing of magazines or newspapers. Apart from what she said, her manner of speaking was that of a highly cultivated person. Her master had a friend, an old dramatic teacher, who had instructed some of the greatest of English and French actors. This man had given her lessons in pronouncing and enunciation. Every sentence came from her lips with a high-bred accuracy that gave it

a charm quite independent of its meaning. But everything about her was fine and delicate; her accent was only part of it!"

"Did she have any curiosity about your life, such as you felt about hers?" asked Theodora.

"Yes; but I do not think her interest was as—morbid, shall I say? She did ask me many questions, but I fancy they were prompted more by her liking for me than by any curiosity. It was a startling experience. You do not know what an embarrassing thing it is to hold such a life as ours up to the inspection of a sensible person from another world. She wanted to know something of the pursuits of a person who had no special work. She had thought it might be very pleasant, she said, but that one would have to decide on ways in which to spend the time profitably. She asked me what *I* did.

"‘Oh, I keep house,’ I said.

"‘Surely,’ she answered; ‘I might have known that; and it must take thought and

much time. Raymond is a very good cook. He has taught me how to prepare several dainties. When we have a chance I cook something and we have a fête. It must be very pleasant to have one's husband and children come to the table every day to compliment one's successes.'

" 'Oh, I don't cook,' said I.

" She looked a little surprised for an instant. 'I see, I was thinking of a simpler life than yours. Of course there is no reason why a woman should cook when she can afford to hire the services of someone who can do it equally well. I can fancy there are many things one might better save one's time for—sewing, teaching the children, visiting the poor, going to church, and the like.'

" 'I was getting desperate. 'My dear,' I said, 'I neither sew, nor teach the children, nor visit the poor, nor go to church on week days, and yet I think I am always busy.'

" 'What *do* you do?' she had to ask.

“‘Well, I make visits and receive them—’
‘Ah, but you have many friends, no doubt,’
she smilingly interrupted—‘and,’ con-
tinued I, ‘I go out and buy things.’”

“Did you tell her that you improved your mind?” asked Fanny; “because, if you did, she might have thought you were chaffing her.”

Amy gave her an indulgent smile as she continued: “We talked all that long, quiet afternoon of more subjects than I can recount. We talked as women do who feel perfectly at ease and happy with each other; of large questions, and of trifles, and with every sentence I felt that this was the friend I had dreamed of—a woman who was utterly congenial and yet inspiringly different.

“The time came for me to go to the station. She put on her hat and walked with me. I shall never forget how she looked in the low afternoon sunlight. Her flesh seemed of half crystalline texture, like a perfect fruit or flower. Other women give you the impression of being clothes all the

way through, like a rag doll. Leonie moved like a living, glowing statue draped in soft fabrics that covered her, but were no more a part of her than are the clouds part of the moon that they veil. Once I slipped on the board walk. She put her arm around me for an instant. Her touch was magnetic—life-giving.

“The train came in; we stood in silence; she held my hands tightly; she looked straight into my eyes, and then we parted. Oh, how *sweet* she was!”

“What became of her?” asked Theodora, biting off a thread.

“That is not the way to put it,” said Fanny; “the question is, what happened to her? Amy, I think it is something you do not want to tell us. May we try to guess?”

“Yes.”

“Did she fall from a trapeze or anything of that sort?”

“Oh, no.”

“Before we begin guessing,” said Theo-

dora, "I want to say that you probably got an entirely wrong idea of your circus woman. It was your own artlessness and delicacy that brought her up into consideration, not hers. You took for granted her possession of qualities to which she had no claim, and from your notion of her environment and your thought of yourself or some other nice person in such a place, you built up a false conception of her character. You may as well be sensible; a woman could not live that life and be what you fancy her to be."

Amy responded with more feeling than her friends had ever seen her manifest. "I might have known you'd say that—it has kept me silent all these months when I've been thinking of her all the time. She was the sweetest human being, and the purest—not to be a child—that I have ever seen. On the way to the station that day we crossed a little stream. As I stood by her side for a moment or two looking down into the water, I had a sense of her spotless

sweetness that was like a rapture—it was like what a mother may feel for a baby.”

She stopped abruptly. She was greatly embarrassed. Fanny began to talk quickly to relieve the tension of the moment.

“I thought I should like to guess, but I shall not try if what happened was one of the things that in newspapers is headed ‘Stranger Than Fiction.’ I decline to let my imagination wander in such inartistic ways. I shall not lower myself by pursuing anything less than the inevitable. Was the end that?”

“Yes, I suppose it was inevitable—but I had not expected it.”

“They will retire from the circus business,” said Theodora, “and go to live in some little French town. Monsieur will wax his mustache and walk out often with Madame. They will have a little dog of whom they will make a great pet.”

“Oh, how cheap! You think, I suppose, that that sounds quite like Coppée and Maupassant.”

Amy had risen and was standing looking out of the window. Fanny went to her side. "Madame Mersac is dead, is she not?" she asked, gently.

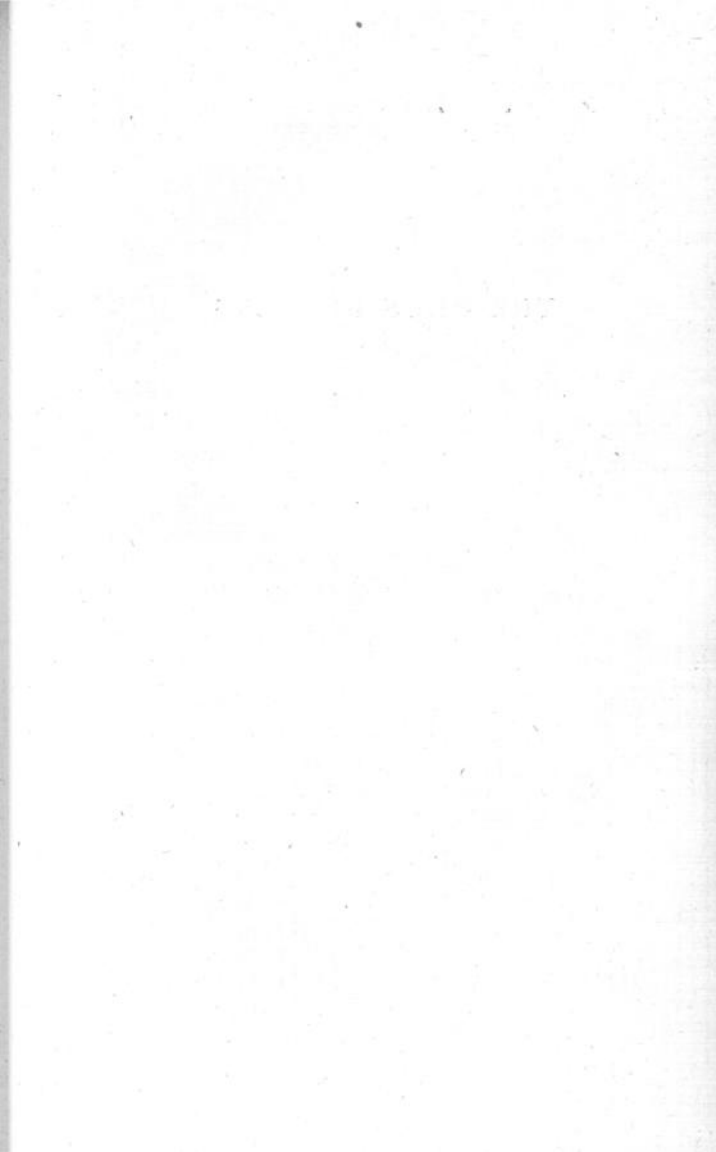
"Yes, she is dead."

"I fancy there is something about it that pains you; I do not know what that is, of course, still I am sorry. But, Amy, a woman like that must die or change. There is no place for her."

"I have said that to myself a hundred times, but the loss is the same," responded Amy.

As the two stood by the window the winter sunset grew each moment more brilliant. The snow-covered lawn shone with a pinkish glow, and on the white-capped stone pillars of the gates gleamed a faint copper luster. Nature was deep in winter.

THE BLUE BLAZERS



THE BLUE BLAZERS

THE great Triennial Convention of United Women had lasted three days and Mrs. Lodge and her friend, Fanny Wilson, admitted to each other that they were beginning to be tired. It was their first experience at such a meeting, and when Mrs. Lodge was chosen as a delegate by her own club, she at first said she couldn't think of going—it would just scare her to death. Of course she was very much interested and all that, and it was perfectly lovely to have the ability and the courage to take part in such things, but to go away off from home all by herself, and to have to appear before those awfully clever women! Oh, she just couldn't—it wouldn't be fair to the club to have such a delegate.

But Sarah Lee Wills, Mrs. Lodge's dear friend and the well-known speaker on the

subject of Equal Suffrage, said to her that it was most important that this Convention should be marked by the presence of women who were both earnest and conservative, and Auntie Montgomery told her plainly that it was her duty to go—to come out, as it were, and take her stand for the right. Auntie Montgomery was a blessed old woman who had been persecuted all her life for temperance's sake, and Mrs. Lodge would have wanted to please her even if the idea of going to the Convention had been less attractive to her than it was. Therefore she decided to go in the company of these two standard-bearers. But she invited Fanny Wilson to go with her (Fanny was a clever girl who was always ready for anything) so that they two might keep together and not be too much of a charge on Sarah Lee Wills and Mrs. Montgomery.

Mr. Lodge from the first approved of his wife's going and he was pleased at her decision. "You'll have a good time," he said,

“and when you tell me all about it I’ll enjoy it probably even more than you have done.”

She told him that he was sweet as he always was—that if he were like some women’s husbands she just didn’t know what she should do. He admitted the justice of her opinion, but confessed to a lurking doubt in the matter. It was about her, and it gave him some uneasiness on this occasion. Was she really an earnest woman? At times—rarely, to be sure—he had feared that she was at heart a butterfly.

She responded with dignity that while she did not claim to be a reformer, she greatly admired a woman who was, and that if there was anything which she had deeply at heart it was the advancement of women, and from that the elevation of humanity, and he still smiled and said, “Oh, that’s all right.”

The meetings of the Convention were more impressive than even the most sanguine had dared to hope for. The papers were of the highest quality, the discussions

following the papers were, so all agreed, simply inspiring. A session for the revision of the Constitution was so ably conducted that a newspaper that had headed the report of a former meeting with the statement that "The Woman Who Deliberates is Lost" now apologized all of its own accord! And as the committee reports were received, and adopted, and amended, and reamended, no one could help feeling that the occasion was epoch-making. But three meetings a day for three days had brought Mrs. Lodge to the end of her strength, and when Fanny Wilson declared that she was not going to the night session, she agreed to stay at home with her. Mrs. Lodge asked the older ladies if they also would not like to rest that evening, but they were sustained by inward grace, and the bare thought of another meeting was a trumpet call to them. Auntie Montgomery's face was as rosy as ever under her white hair, as they joyously started off, and Sarah Lee Wills held her slim figure with the alertness of one who

may be called on at any moment to battle for the truth.

Nearly all of the United Women were billeted out on resident club members, but the distinguished speakers, Mrs. Montgomery and Sarah Lee Wills, agreed with Mrs. Lodge and Fanny in preferring to stay at a hotel. The one which they chose, because some of the meetings were to be held there, was an immense be-mirrored place through the doors of which conventions flowed all year long. At this time it was so crowded that the ladies could get only two rooms for the four, and because one of the rooms was much larger than the other the older ladies took it with the understanding that Mrs. Lodge and Fanny were to spend as much time in it as they chose. It was to this room that they turned after they had seen their friends disappear down the hall.

"And *now*, Margaret," said Fanny, throwing up her arms excitedly, "here's our chance. Nobody knows when we'll ever

again be away from home all alone. Let's do something interesting for once!"

"Oh, if we just could! But what?"

"We might go to a theater."

"Not by ourselves."

"We might send for a carriage and go out for a drive."

"My goodness, no!"

"Let's go to a restaurant and have something to eat. I'm half starved."

"Certainly not."

Fanny sulked; then she broke out, "Well, it's perfectly awful. What's the use of *being* emancipated if you can't do anything or have any fun!"

Sadly they looked out of the window. They saw crowds on the sidewalks far below, and carriages rolled by, no doubt carrying beautiful ladies to balls and operas.

"Here we are locked up like tenement house babies!" wailed Fanny. "I wish we had some candy, anyhow!"

"There is one thing that Tom does some-

times," said Mrs. Lodge. "We might ring and order something to drink."

"Oh, that's splendid!—something sort of desperate and wicked!"

A bell-boy clinked along the hall bearing the presumably always desired ice water. "I'll talk to him," said Mrs. Lodge, "and maybe he'll think that Tom is here with me." She stepped to the door; she was tall and slim and elegant.

"Please bring me from the bar a list of the fancy and mixed drinks." When the boy stared and said, "Ma'am!" she repeated the order. Looking back into the room she added (so quickly is the sense of right and wrong blunted by evil behavior), "That is what you want, Thomas, is it not?"

They feverishly studied the list he brought. " 'Manhattan Cocktail,' 'Martini Cocktail,' 'Vermouth Cocktail,'—Cocktails are not nice, they have an awfully funny taste. 'Soul Reviver,'—that sounds nice. 'Mint Julep,'—they're historic, you know."

"Well, what I want is something contemporaneous," said Fanny.

"'Gin Sling,' 'Gin Fizz.' Once I tasted something with gin in it; it was pretty good."

"That settles it; we're not going to have anything you ever had in the seclusion of private life. Oh, *here's* the thing!" She pointed rapturously to a line toward the end of the list:

"Blue Blazer, forty cents."

"It ought to be good—it costs more than some of the others," said Mrs. Lodge.

"And it sounds so lovely and abandoned!" cried Fanny.

Fanny Wilson gave the order; she was short and brisk, and got to the door before Mrs. Lodge had started. "Two Blue Blazers, please!" Then they remembered that the boy would know that Tom wasn't there, and they giggled a great deal about it.

On the tray that the boy brought were four glasses. Two were filled with water, the other two had in them some strange mixture to which, in clumsy carrying out of

directions, he touched a lighted match. The stuff flamed up and spilt over; into the flames he threw a powder which flared up in blue and lurid fires. The fumes rose and spread heavily through the room. They were almost sulphurous. The two women left alone clutched their skirts to be ready to jump. "What can we do with it," asked Fanny; "we can't drink that ghastly stuff!"

"Let's try to blow it out!"

"Or ring the fire alarm!"

They blew with all their might; a newspaper or two caught fire, but they finally extinguished the flames. The odor, however, was not extinguished. It curled itself round and clung to the atmosphere. It was like paregoric and alcohol-barrels and burnt leather.

Mrs. Lodge rushed across the room and rang the bell. "It isn't paid for, and it's nearly ten o'clock! Won't that boy ever come?"

Another boy—with ice water—answered the bell. He was commanded, implored, to

find the first boy, to bring him instantly, and to bring also the bill from the bar. While they waited they discussed the question of getting rid of the stuff in the glasses. It could not be allowed to stay in the room—anybody would smell it. To pour it out of the window was the thing. They hysterically watched the slim liquid trickle out of the glasses and fall toward the glittering street. Mrs. Lodge feared it might get into someone's eyes, but Fanny, stretching herself out over the sill, said, "No, but it may eat a hole in the awning."

They rang the bell frantically again and again. The original boy came at length—incidentally carrying ice water. He was told to bring the bill—and to *hurry!*

Word came that the bill was not to be had. The drinks had been charged—charged to the room—and the room was the room of Sarah Lee Wills and Mrs. Eliza P. Montgomery!

"Go instantly," commanded Mrs. Lodge. "Bring the barkeeper *himself!*"

A young man appeared; two interested bell boys on their way with ice water stopped to listen. He stared with an ugly grin on his coarse face. The two drinks were eighty cents, serving them in the room was twenty-five cents more. Would he take a dollar and five cents—no, a dollar and a half—and be *sure* the charge was taken off the bill? The bell boys had moved on; he looked about him and took the money.

“Oh, why didn’t we make him carry away the glasses?” they exclaimed. Stories heard long before of shoes changed in tavern halls came to their minds. With the tray in their hands they peeped up and down, waiting till the hall should be clear so that they could slip out and deposit their load at the door of some innocent commercial traveler. Finally not a person was to be seen, except indeed a man who lingered in the diminishing distance, but he did not seem to be looking at them, and anyhow he just wouldn’t go. They scurried fifty feet down the hall, the man looking calmly on, put

down their glasses and ran back breathless with excitement and laughing. Mrs. Lodge said that it wasn't really wrong, you know, and it was funny. Fanny thought that the ways of vice were all right, but the drinks were awful. "Oh, how I wish I had some lemonade!" she sighed. A little later the others came in and told them they had missed *such* a treat.

Mrs. Lodge and Fanny went home the next morning, leaving the two leaders to take part in inner councils and committee meetings. Mrs. Lodge had recurring pangs of anxiety. What if somehow or other it should get out about the Blue Blazers? At home she told the story at once to her husband, who tried to sympathize, and, she thought, laughed more than there was any call for. "Now," she said, "have I done right? Should I have told Mrs. Wills and Auntie Montgomery all about it?"

"Oh, I guess not; you've paid for your drinks; you've been honest. You never

professed any rabid temperance principles yourself."

"But—suppose they should hear it talked about in the hotel? Of course we had a right to order what we chose, but maybe it was a little inconsiderate when we were in the same party."

He tried not to smile. "Well, if they, as you say, hear it spoken of they can just say that they are not responsible for you." He went on: "Really I wouldn't distress myself about it, and I'd never mention it again. It was an accident, your being in their room, and to try to explain will only make it worse."

The morning that Sarah Lee Wills and Mrs. Montgomery were to leave the hotel Alice Van Blaricum came to see them off. She, as everybody knows, is a lawyer, and also the strongest of the Eastern workers in the temperance cause. Her majestic appearance and fiery eloquence have turned thousands from the path of error. She perched on the bed and watched the others

pack, meanwhile talking with animation of the work and its prospects.

"Now," said Sarah Lee Wills, as she locked her trunk, "I'll run down and pay the bill, and then we'll have a few peaceful minutes."

She came back almost immediately. In her hand was the bill; her face showed the wildest agitation. "Come! Come!" she cried to the others. "Something of the greatest importance has happened!"

She hurried them into the great marble-floored rotunda, and up to a pale young clerk.

"*Now*," she said, "will you in the presence of these women say what is in that bill?"

"Certainly, ma'am," he replied, and in a firm voice he read aloud these words:

"Mrs. Sarah Lee Wills and Mrs. Montgomery, for drinks sent from bar to room 105."

Mrs. Montgomery stepped forward; her sweet, round old face was flushed; her clear

voice penetrated to the far limits of the rotunda:

"I call upon you to explain that bill!"

The place was full of men. The River and Levees Commission was in session; the Cotton Planters' Association met that day. Other clerks left their books. "Ladies," said the young man, nervously, "come into the private office. This is too public a place for a discussion."

"Sir," said Sarah Lee Wills, "we will not be hustled off into *any* private office! *We* are not afraid of the public! *We want* the public to hear our denial of your infamous charge!"

"All right," said the clerk, desperately; "have it your own way. Madam," turning to Mrs. Montgomery, "do you deny that you made this order?"

Mrs. Montgomery's short plump figure expanded with emotion; her eyes flashed, she waved her arm majestically for silence, and addressed the crowd.

"Gentlemen, for twenty-five years I was

an honored wife, for twenty-five years I have been a widow. I have raised eleven children to worthy manhood and womanhood. For a lifetime I have worked for and with the outcast and lowly, but never until this hour was such an insult put upon me! never until now has my character been attacked!"

The young man trembled, but was obstinate; a running bell-boy brought the proprietor. The crowd parted to let the great man pass through. "What's this?" he said, and then, to the clerk, "Sure this charge is right?"

"There isn't any doubt of it, sir. I can prove it by half a dozen boys."

Alice Van Blaricum now stepped forward. "Here is my card! I undertake the charge of this case. First, I wish to examine in private the person who claims to have received this order."

She came from the interview with rage in her eye. "It is a conspiracy; he describes you perfectly—one short and rosy,

one tall and thin with black eyes!" (which indeed was perfectly true).

"Bring that boy here!" called Sarah Lee Wills. "Let *me* talk to him!"

"Now," she said, transfixing him with stern outstretched finger, "*Look me in the face, and tell me if I gave you that order!*"

The boy's countenance changed as he looked at her. "No'm," he whimpered, "I guess not!"

The bookkeeper addressed the proprietor, "They ordered the stuff of this boy, and tried to make him think it was for a man inside. The watchman saw them for a half hour trying to get rid of the glasses. The chambermaid found the tray in front of a linen-closet door. The barkeeper was taken there by another boy, and they tried to get him to accept the money and remove the charge from the bill, but he refused."

The proprietor looked at the excited women and at the irreverent crowd. "All right, ladies," he said; "little dispute about

the bill. You needn't pay it." The three all answered him at once:

"What do we care for the money!"

"We have been insulted, and you offer us no apology!"

"You need not think to get out of it that way!"

He ran his hand wildly through his hair, "Ladies," he said, desperately, "we apologize—we're sorry—we'll take the charge off—we'll do *anything*!"

A look of consultation passed between the three. "We can do no more *now*," they said.

As they turned to go Alice Van Blaricum addressed the audience, and particularly the proprietor: "To be abused and slandered is no new thing for those who oppose the terrific power of the liquor interest, but this attack surpasses in virulence and infamy anything that has thus far been attempted. But do not think that we do not know the secret spring that controls your action. You,

sir, and your whole establishment are bought and sold by the gold of the rumseller!"

They went out and the proprietor passed on into his private office, making wearily a significant motion to a bell-boy. As the ladies parted at the station they said darkly to each other that they were not done with this yet; this was only the beginning, and it would be in every newspaper in America to-morrow morning.

The next day Sarah Lee Wills telephoned for Mrs. Lodge to come to her house. "Oh, Tom," she said, "I *can't*! I just know!"

"Nonsense," said he, "go on; remember that in any case you will embarrass her more than yourself if you go into explanations."

Sarah Lee Wills met her with open arms. "Oh, my *dear*!" she cried, "I am so glad that you were here safe. You could not have borne it, you've always been so sheltered from the knowledge of this evil world. The awfulest thing happened—"

Mrs. Lodge tottered to a chair. "First I must tell *you*!" she said, but before she got

her thoughts together it was too late. Her hesitation had bound her. She gasped out miserable monosyllables as Sarah Lee's eloquent flood poured forth.

"Oh I don't wonder that you are speechless with horror!" said she. "If it had been *anything* else!—but can you imagine even the vilest of women doing what they charged us with?—sending to a *bar!* and the degradation of sending for a thing with such a name!—'Blue Devils.'"

A little later she said, "The one thing that hurt me most was that that poor little bell-boy should be mixed up in such horrors, and he had a *good* face!" "So he had!" moaned Mrs. Lodge.

"And at the last, when it was over and we were going, I turned back to take one more look at those men. I *saw* that proprietor look at those clerks, and—oh, it was too *hideous*—I saw him *wink!*"

THE END.

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN PRINTED
DURING OCTOBER, 1897, BY THE
BLAKELY PRINTING COMPANY.
CHICAGO, FOR WAY & WILLIAMS.