

CRAQUE . . .

. . . O'DOOM

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"The Romance of Dollard,"
"The Days of Jeanne d'Arc,"
"The Spirit of an Illinois Town,"
"Old Kaskaskia,"
"The Lady of Fort St. John,"
"The White Islander."

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CRAQUE-O'-DOOM.

CHAPTER I.

CHENOWORTH'S DAMSEL.

LIKE two night-birds who had strayed into the wrong season, a pair of girls flopped about on the snowy walk or huddled together outside of the Hill-house. The house was lighted. They could see, through one uncovered window, which extended to the veranda floor, the ruby gates, the cut-glass candelabra, and the luxurious furniture. The girls were on the west side of the house, which was a large square structure with extensions at the rear.

Below the hill an old turnpike town straggled eastward, its lights barely twinkling through a winter fog. The evergreens and old forest-trees all around the grounds were weighted with soft snow, and there were occasional slides from the roof which dropped with a half-liquid splash.

The sound of a piano made the air delicious to these girls outside. Light falling upon them

from the window showed that one wore an old shawl over her head, and the other a dirty hood. The dusk blurred their outlines, and they shrank farther into it every time a pair of waltzers inside whirled near the window.

The waltzing pair were also two girls, near one age, beautifully draped, glowing, and handsome. Another young lady, in an outline of pearl-gray, could be seen at the piano. She threw her hands about with abandon, and a ring or two flashed in the firelight.

"I wish I knew how they done that," said the taller of the girls outside anxiously. "Ketch hold of me that way, Tillie, and le's see if we can't do it."

Tillie obediently caught hold of her sister, but, being much smaller, could only reach her elbows. Placing their toes near together, they spun round with the motion of a top.

"'Tisn't the way," pronounced the older girl despondently. "I could do it, though, just as good as they do, if I knew how they fixed their feet."

The piano and the waltzers went on. Tillie was not willing to stop: she spun ahead after her sister released her, inventing steps and skips.

"Don't go so close to the window: they'll see ye."

Tillie dropped back. The piano, as the waltzers

flagged and began to promenade arm in arm, leaped from the waltz to a quick, gay melody, and Tillie's arms and feet responded.

"Can you knock that tune?" inquired her guide, philosopher, and friend in the old shawl.

The child "knocked" it to a nicety. Her cow-hide shoes were dulled by the snow, but their muffled pat was true to the music. The figure she danced could not be called by any name. It was not a jig or a clog,—she had never heard of such things,—nor a double-shuffle such as plantation darkies and the rustic foot everywhere delight in. It was a skipping, patting dance of her own. She put her hands on her hips: from them downward she was electric motion and flopping scant skirt; from them upward, immobility and gravity. Her breathing became audible, but she knocked away. Her older sister sat down in a chair they had with them, and watched her. She knocked herself into the bar of light and out again. She was in a rapture of motion, when the other jumped up and a gate clanged.

"There's Tom Mills comin' from down town. Le's hurry in: he'll ketch us."

Tillie immediately took hold of her side of the chair, and, carrying it between them, they hastened toward the kitchen-door and knocked.

A colored man opened the door. Neal had come to his present home a contraband, sent

North by Captain Mills at the close of the war. From a shuffling boy he had grown into a colored gentleman who conducted the gardening and the stables at the Hill-house. He also moved the heavy machinery of housekeeping: fires and errands depended on him. He had grown to his place, and ornamented it with a good-looking black face and ceremonious airs. But there was one thing in the world that Neal hated, that thing being a poor white: he could see no use in such a person. With all a negro's respect for what he considers magnificent, and contempt for small resources, Neal would rather have been kicked by Captain Mills—though he never was—than fairly spoken by any of the Chenoworths. The Chenoworths were the "lowest-down lot" he knew. When the two girls on the step faced him he was stirred by an antagonism of race begun, perhaps, generations back in Tennessee, before a Chenoworth had come to Ohio.

"We brought home the chair Aunt Sally Teagarden sent to daddy to get a bottom put in it," said the elder girl.

"Oh, yes," said Neal, receiving it. "It's just a kitchen chair. Didn't know she's *your* aunt Sally."

"Folks always calls her so," returned the girl curtly.

"Didn't know she was aunt to Chinnyworth's

Damsel," persisted Neal, putting the chair against the wall as he chuckled sarcastically.

"My name ain't Chinnyworth's Damsel," said the girl, letting the shawl drop from her head and standing in the kitchen before her sister. There was only a ruddy light of wood-coals in the stove, beside which Neal had been basking. The cook was down-cellar with the light.

"That's what folks always calls you," said Neal,—"Chinnyworth's Damsel. Ain't got no other name, have ye?"

"It's Tamsin," said the girl with a heavy intonation. She was scowling, and the little one, taking the cue from her, was scowling also. "You mind your black business."

"Them is mighty ellygant words. Shows your bringin' up."

Tamsin looked at him fiercely. She had a pair of black eyes which suggested lancets. The stove-light threw her head into relief against the dark door. She was olive-colored, with flaxen hair. All the Chenoworths were tow-headed, but their type comprised almost invariably, in addition, livid skins and weak blue eyes. The younger sister showed the impress of her ancestry. She was yellow, flaxen, and blue-eyed, but she had a mouth and jaw which gave individuality to her little face. Her lips were rosy, and she had rows of small shining teeth which seemed to extend

from ear to ear. This gave her a gay, good-natured look. She held to her sister's dress with one claw-hand and looked at Neal with dislike.

"I'll tell Mis' Teagard' you brought the chair," said Neal more kindly. "I's just a-teasin' you when I called you Chinnyworth's Damsel."

"I'm goin' in to see her myself."

"Wouldn't, now," argued Neal. "They's young ladies—visitors—in there."

"S'pose I'm afraid o' seein' them? They ain't no better than *I* am."

"Phu!" ejaculated Neal behind her back.

She made her way, without any announcement, through the half-lighted dining-room, with Tillie beside her, and presently appeared at the ruby grate, where Aunt Sally Teagarden sat alternately knitting and turning the leaves of a book on a table.

This noble-looking, portly old lady, with hair as white as puffs of thistle-down on her rounded temples, looked up quickly from her treatise and gave the two girls a pleasant "Good-evening." She had a peculiar twitching of the corners of her mouth when she spoke, not at all unbecoming to her, but of which she was quite unconscious. "Come up to the fire, Tamsin and Tillie," she said, with a twist of benign expression.

"We brought home your cheer," said Tamsin, spreading her fingers to the fire.

"Oh, you brought home that chair? Well, Thomas is in the other room, and when he comes out I'll get the money to send to your father. My pocket-book is up-stairs."

A male voice and the voices of girls sounded through the open archway of a parlor which branched from the side of this. Tamsin wanted to see the young-lady visitors, but in order to do so she would have to walk boldly up the room.

"Take seats," said Captain Mills's aunt; and Tamsin sat down on a haircloth cushion, but Tillie stood by the mantel, resting one foot upon the other.

Aunt Sally glanced through her glasses at the new page of her treatise. "I am just reading a little in Andrew Jackson Davis's great book while I knit," she observed benignly, willing to share her favorite *ism* with anybody. "It's a wonderful book. Remarkable what a power of language he has. Has your mother finished reading that *Banner of Light* I sent her?"

"She pasted it up on the wall," said Tillie. Her sister was listening to the other voices.

"Well," said Aunt Sally, pushing up her glasses, "I didn't intend that. But perhaps," with energetic twists of her mouth, "that is as good a way as any to keep some of the remarkable séances in her mind. There was a beautiful account in that paper, given by Mrs. Cora L. V. Hatch, of com-

muning with a spirit from New Jersey." She went on rapidly, pouring Spiritualistic lore into her hearers.

Their eyes wandered up to the high ceiling and down the tinted walls, over velvet carpet and painted landscapes, bronze busts and a cabinet-world of bric-à-brac. Tillie started when the mantel-clock told the half-hour with a chime like music.

"Now, aunt," said Captain Mills, sauntering through the archway.—"Good-evening," in short parenthesis to the girls.—"I hear the Spiritualist drum beating a rally."

"Thomas," replied his aunt, "I never expect you to be a believer. The construction of your mind is such that you will not accept the most positive proofs. And I never thrust my opinions on anybody. The girls here are waiting. Have you got some change about you to pay for reseating a chair?"

The captain went into his pockets, and, having ascertained what amount was wanted, paid it. While he did so, Tamsin watched him with speculative eyes. He was her single type of a gentleman.

He had come home from the army as hairy as a monkey, the townpeople said, but at this date he was a smooth-shaven, prematurely iron-gray man of perhaps forty, with a thick black moustache and smiling eyes. He bore a family resemblance to

his aunt, having her smoothly-rounded temples and high-arched head. The benignity displayed in her face became graver in his.

"Are you busy at anything now, Tamsin?" inquired Aunt Sally.

"No, ma'am," replied the girl, fingering the money in the corner of her shawl.

"Then you might come here and help about the house while we have company. There are a good many things up-stairs and around that need attention when the whole house is in use. I thought about sending down to see if your mother could let you come."

"She won't care. Have you got a good many visitors?"

"Three young ladies,—the captain's cousin and two of her friends. They came to spend the holidays with us. Very well. In the morning, then."

"I can come back to-night, after I take Tillie home."

Captain Mills was sauntering off through the archway.

"If you are not afraid of the dark—" suggested Aunt Sally.

Chenoworth's daughter smiled slowly. What difference did it make to anybody whether *she* was afraid of the dark or not? "I can run right quick."

"Well, you might come back to-night, then."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHENOWORTHS.

TAMSIN and her sister ran down the hill, crossed the pike, and walked along the middle of the road which led toward their back-street residence. Some dogs jumped out of the enclosures around large houses and barked at them. Though there was little traffic on the old canal at that time, Tillie was moved to point at a light far off floating serenely through the fog and say, "There goes a boat."

"Tisn't!" observed Tamsin, hugging her shawl; "must be a lantern around the tavern."

They came to their home, standing dejected, unpainted, and humble in a wilderness of dried corn-stalks which rustled sadly in every breath of air, their dull bleached outlines suggesting ranks of diminutive ghosts.

Tamsin opened the door and looked in at a scene she had never loved. The interior was bare and coarse and smelled of onions. There was the open fire, but its light was dull. Her mother sat mending stockings by a tallow candle; her father stooped over the hearth smoking. He was a de-

cent old man who seemed to have given his family up as a hard problem. Sarah Jane sat there holding her baby. Arthur had come in, and John and George had for once forbore to go down town, and were growling at each other. All, excepting Sarah Jane, looked clay-colored and bleached, as if the weather had held them at its mercy for generations.

Tamsin disliked her family. She had no filial affection for her parents. Their apathy and general thriftlessness roused unexpressed indignation in her. She felt her existence as an indignity which they had cast upon her. She compared them with people whom she considered admirable, and silently hated them. She hated the two lazy boys who crowded her in the humble house. Her scorn was of the high-bred sort which shows no outward sign but indifference. When they ate their food she despised their loud chewing, their greedy dipping into dishes. When they lounged down town with their hands in their pockets she despised them for following the gypsy instincts of their blood, and avoiding, or accomplishing nothing by, labor. She was a magazine of silent rebellions and hatreds. No empress ever had a mightier pride or stronger will. The spirit which her people had lacked for generations was perhaps concentrated in her. She resented all her conditions of life. Under its pressure she was old. In a less

aggressive way, she was as cynical as Timon. A reticent and dignity-loving nature thus became secretive. But, while silently denying the stock from which she sprang, this girl had been known to scratch her school-fellows for disrespect toward the name of Chenoworth. It seemed to her secret consciousness the last humiliation of all that folks should ever know how she despised the Chenoworths herself. There was vast endurance in her. Natural girlish delicacy and sensitiveness, which in her were extreme, had long since protected themselves by a thick shell. At that time she had no room for more than one strong affection: she loved her youngest sister, and she loved nothing else.

Tillie pulled off her hood and approached the fire, but Tamsin merely stood and announced that she was going back.

"I wouldn't work for them proud things," said Sarah Jane, who had an aquiline nose and lines which made a triangle of her chin.

Mrs. Chenoworth had nothing to say: her children always did as they pleased. She looked up, and observing that her nephew Arthur was about to leave the house also, suggested plainly, "Stay longer, Arter."

"I guess I'll walk along a piece with Tamsin," said Arthur.

"I guess you won't!" retorted Tamsin scornfully. "I don't want you along of me."

"You'll get over your spiteful ways, miss," remarked Sarah Jane, "when you've seen the trouble I've seen."

Tillie clasped the black-eyed alien round the waist, and they looked most confidently into each other's eyes.

"Come up to-morrow," said Tamsin.

"I will," replied Tillie.

"Don't kick the kivver off to-night. You might git a bad sore throat again."

"Then mammy'd make me poultice it," laughed Tillie.

"I s'pose," remarked Arthur as he left the door behind Tamsin, "you wouldn't have anything against me walkin' on the other side of the road from you if I's goin' the same way?"

She did not reply or wait to see which side he chose. Her shawled head flitted away from him, though he could hear heavy shoes beating the snow till their rush died in the distance.

As Tamsin ran up the hill the oldest of the young-lady guests was holding a skein of yarn for Aunt Sally to wind, and saying, while Captain Mills and the girls were occupied with themselves, that she did wish Aunt Sally would tell her some of her recollections or experiences. The girls had said she knew charming Irish fairy-stories.

"The wee folk," said Aunt Sally, pulling off a long thread.

Yes, but Miss Rhoda Jones preferred to hear about real folks,—the people in this little town, for instance. Mrs. Teagarden must know all about them,—their peculiarities and trials and unwritten histories.

Aunt Sally knew that Miss Jones was what is called a "writer," and that this was a hook thrown out for a good catch of "material;" but she inclined toward furnishing material. She was convinced that if she had not lived a busy practical life she would have been literary herself. Andrew Jackson Davis and Mrs. Cora L. V. Hatch were dearer to her because they "wrote." There had been one lovely school-girl niece in the family, Captain Tom's sister, who died at her blossoming, but whose poems were turning yellow in Aunt Sally's treasure-box. How could she look otherwise than affectionately on an author, when her namesake-girl had been prevented only by death from taking the lead in letters?

"Well," said Aunt Sally, with an energetic preliminary twist of the mouth, "most of the trials of the people about here are caused, as they usually are, I have observed, by their own thriftlessness or carelessness. The Chenoworth girls came in here awhile ago, and I was reading Andrew Jackson Davis's book: somehow, I got to thinking of the strength of hereditary tendencies."

"Chenoworth?" questioned Miss Jones as she turned her head for the passage of the yarn. "That's rather a pretty name,—much higher-sounding than Jones."

"The people who know them wouldn't say so," continued Aunt Sally, always with the beneficent twitching. "It's a name that means around here everything base and good-for-nothing. I have known the Chenoworths from my childhood, and I never saw one of them amount to anything, except one that died in Tom's company during the war, and he was a notorious thief before he 'listed. But it's a shame to bring up charges against the country's dead," Aunt Sally admonished herself solemnly. "He was sent home in his box after Lookout Mountain: Tom saw that he was sent home."

"There are girls in the family, you said?"

"Oh, yes: there is a large connection of them, —all about alike, except that the younger ones seem to grow worse than the old ones. I heard it said there was a solid county of them in Tennessee before they moved to Ohio. Always living from hand to mouth, the men usually with no trades or business of any kind, and the women struggling to support prolific families."

"Poor things!"

"Yes, indeed! Such people are always multiplying their helpless offspring. I have thought

sometimes Tamsin might turn out a little different from the rest, and I do what I can for her and encourage her; but," the old lady paused in her winding to say impressively, "hereditary tendencies are stronger than life itself. Her history was all written down before she was born."

"Tamsin?" murmured Miss Jones.

"Yes. She was here with her little sister awhile ago. I feel sorry for that girl. Nobody knows any harm of her, but what good can she ever come to?"

"Why not?"

"The name of the family will drag her down. Good blood," said Aunt Sally, who saw it coursing gently through the thin veins on her very round and handsome wrist, "is the best inheritance a child can have. But where a stock has sunk below respectability as far back as you can trace it, what can you expect of it?"

"How old is this Tamsin?"

"About fifteen or sixteen, I should think."

"Pretty?"

"Not to my notion. She had a sister who was called rather pretty,—Sarah Jane. Sarah Jane went up to the capital to learn millinery, and she's just home with a child in her arms, trying to give it away to somebody to raise, I hear. There was poor Mary. She was the oldest girl of the set, and she did real well for a while. One of our rich

farmers' wives took her and made a daughter of her; and I have always thought it was fate against the poor child, and not her fault, that she didn't do better. The family she lived with made everything of her. Mary was good-looking,—that is, as near good-looking as I ever saw a Chenoworth. She had a beau, and I think he disappointed her. It would have been a fine match for her, and she certainly loved him. But he went off, and she turned and married one of her trifling cousins: the Chenoworths intermarry to that degree it seems as if they can't mate with anybody outside of their own stock. So there the poor thing is, tied down for life, with half a dozen miserable little ones to follow her around and no living provided for them. The farmer's family were so indignant at her throwing herself away that they would have nothing to do with her."

"Poor thing!"

"Yes. And there was the oldest,—Sam. He married Mary Mann. He was a poor half-witted thing, and she lived a jade's life; and finally she took poison one night, and he lay there drunk beside her, and she told him what she had done and begged him to help her. While she groaned and cried, 'Well,' said he, 'you oughtn't to took it!' and went to sleep. When he waked in the morning she was cold."

Miss Jones hid her face on her arm. She saw

the dying and helpless woman, and felt the tragedy through every nerve.

"The second boy is in the county jail for stealing, and the two young ones are common loafers. Old Mr. Chenoworth is a harmless creature, so far as I know, and his wife doesn't seem to be a lazy woman, but probably in the generation before him are to be found the seeds which ripened in this." The chronicler ended with a meditative twitch of her mouth.

"That poor girl!" mused the other.

"Tamsin? Sometimes I think there is something in Tamsin."

"Why couldn't she study? Why couldn't she make a woman of herself?"

Aunt Sally shook her wise head: "It isn't in the stock to take to education: they are all ignorant. Once in a while I send a copy of the *Banner of Light* there, but I doubt if any of them read it."

"Or if she had some talent that would lift her up?"

"Tamsin hasn't any gifts out of the common, that I ever heard of. She's just a good ordinary girl."

Rhoda Jones shook her head slowly, having this melancholy figure in her mind: "It is like living under some crushing weight, or in swamps where the live-oak moss would make one want to com-

mit suicide,—worse than being a homeless and kinless orphan. If she were an orphan without relatives, somebody would take pity on her, but, as she has *too* many relatives, they despise her.”

“She’ll probably marry her cousin Arthur, a hulk of a fellow ; but he hasn’t much harm in him—or anything else. Some one told me he was hanging after her. And she’ll go the way of the rest of them.”

The dining-room door, which had stood ajar, moved silently back, and Tamsin came in with her shawl around her shoulders.

CHAPTER III.

"SEEDS OF TIME."

BOTH speakers looked at her with a start, but Tamsin's face gave no sign of what she had heard. She did not meet their eyes, but went and sat down some distance from them in the unconscious dignity of loneliness. Rather than have them know that she had heard and was tormented by this formulated statement from other tongues of her own nebulous convictions, she would have hugged her blistering shame in secrecy if it killed her.

Aunt Sally felt disturbed, and the fountain of her kindness flowed: "Come nearer to the fire, Tamsin. Ain't you cold?"

"No, ma'am."

"Is it thawing out-doors?" inquired Miss Rhoda, wishing to open communication between this girl and herself.

"Toler'ble soft." She sat as immovable as an Indian, her eyelids lowered.

Rhoda scanned her with two or three keen looks, and, finding this scrutiny apparently unnoticed, studied her with a silent gaze, turning her skein-supporting hands now to this side, now to

that. "There is great force in her," thought Miss Jones,—*"an individuality which is going to assert itself. She looks good: the oval of her cheeks is splendid. How do people who rarely have enough to eat get up that curve and rich olive color? Black eyebrows and eyelashes and light hair! A reticent expression, but one, also, that seems to be absorbing everything around."*

Aunt Sally wound the last end of yarn upon her ball. "Now, Tamsin," said she, rising, "you come with me up-stairs, and I'll show you what to do there."

Captain Mills and the girls were very merry in the other parlor, and after gazing at the fire awhile Miss Rhoda joined them. At eleven o'clock he bade them good-night.

Aunt Sally always retired at nine, after ordering breakfast and seeing to the fastening of all the doors. She left Tamsin the choice of going to bed at that time or sitting up until the young ladies had gone, to see that the fires were well down and read Andrew Jackson Davis. Tamsin took her place with no light but that of the grate, and without Andrew Jackson Davis, on a small sofa beside the arch connecting the parlors, where the group of young ladies could not see her. Her object was to look at them as much as she pleased. As to their talk, she did not think of overhearing it, yet when she began to notice it she listened

keenly. Jennie Mills, who was really a beautiful brown girl, pleased her eye. Louise Latta, a very sweet-natured blonde, was pronounced by Tamsin the image of pride, because she had pretty airs and turns of the head and a fine clock-stockinged and slippered foot resting on the fender. The Chenoworth doubted not they all three considered her as the dirt under their soles. She put out her own foot and looked furtively at it. The leather was heavy around its shape, and that looked big compared to the one on the fender. Jennie Mills threw up her hands to exclaim, "Oh, girls!" and Tamsin looked at her own hands,—not white and sparkling with ornaments, but chapped and red. More attractive to her than the others was Rhoda Jones, the wearer of the pearl-gray dress, who had played the piano. How wonderful it must be to play the piano! She seemed to be a person who could do anything she wished.

Tamsin tried to detect how the other two "did" their hair. There they all three sat toasting themselves by the deeply-red fire, saying they must go to bed, but lingering to tell a story or a joke. What good times rich folks' girls had!

"If we go up-stairs," said Jennie, "there are only the registers, and of course the furnace-fire must be low: so let's bask as long as we can. Oh, how I should love to spend *every* winter in Florida! Cold weather kills me."

"You ought to marry a Southerner, Jen," suggested Louise.

"And have the yellow fever every summer? You horrid thing!"

"Oh, you could spend the summers with us."

"How silly you girls would be to think of marrying at your age!" exclaimed Rhoda.

"We don't think of it: it's the farthest possible thing from our thoughts. But look here, Rhoda Jones: we're twenty-two,—that is, I am, and Lou is going to be soon. Gracious! we're pretty near old maids!"

"Old maids," said Rhoda scornfully, "are things of the past."

"I know they are," said Louise: "they feel it themselves."

"No, they don't. Come to that, *I'm* one."

"You don't look a day older than we do, Rhode."

"Why, certainly I do! I've years of experience and thought that you don't know anything about. But I tell you the scarecrow old maid *is* a thing of the past: it was set up to frighten silly women away from the fields of independence. The woman of to-day, when she gets ready to marry, marries, and it doesn't make any difference to her whether she's twenty-five or a hundred. We don't live in the hard conditions that our grandmothers lived in. We aren't old at forty any more; our bodies ripen

on instead of withering. We learn how to take care of them and how to bring ourselves in happy relations to society, and we get a few dabs of art-knowledge; and literature is a mighty preservative of the tissues. When I was fifteen I was a skinny little thing; but look here." She held up one half-revealed plump arm, and her face seemed to sparkle. "I just learned how to live, and I'm *going to live*—all over, every faculty of me—as many days as are granted."

"Now, come, Rhode," coaxed Jennie, catching the uplifted hand: "*do* tell us if there's anything in this splendid turquoise ring."

"My finger, as you see."

"If *I* were engaged," remarked Louise in an injured tone,—“and, mind, I don't say I ain't, but—I should tell my friends about it some time, especially my real old friends.”

"Well, you two ancient goddesses—"

"Ah, Rhoda, you are!"

"Of course I am. Because I expect to be married before very long."

The other girls uttered little squalls and crowded closer to her: "Oh, tell us all about it. Is he light or dark? Is he real fascinating? Oh, what *is* his name? Is it Smith? Is it some gentleman where you are living now? Oh, Rhoda Jones, to think we have known you all our lives and don't know who you are going to marry!"

"I meant to tell you when I got around to it. Why, what's the use of making such a fuss about it? Marriage is only an incident in men's lives,—an important one, of course,—and why should it be more in ours?"

"Mercy, Rhode! you're getting to be strong-minded. But, oh, do tell us his name!"

"His name is Mr. Burns."

"Burns? That sounds nice."

"Of course it does: it *is* nice. I shan't be Burne-Jones, but Jones-Burns. He is a most agreeable old gentleman."

"Old!" Both girls emitted a low shriek.

"Why, certainly! You don't think I would marry a boy, do you? Don't you know I'm thirty? but I think I shall stay twenty-nine until after the wedding,—not that I am afraid of thirty, but twenty-nine seems a more interesting age to be married at. Yes, and the top of his head is bald."

"Bald!" Both girls emitted another choral shriek.

"Oh, you needn't make a fuss. He has a very nice fringe above his ears and around the back of his head."

"And is he rich?"

"Yes, of course he is rich. Do you think I have been poor and deserving all my life to bestow myself on a poverty-stricken husband at last?"

Tamsin was listening intently to these revelations from a higher sphere. She leaned farther forward to ponder on the speaker. Was that proud, commanding, well-dressed girl poor? Here she was, a guest in a rich man's house and going to marry another rich man. The Chenoworth division of all society was simply into rich and poor. The rich were favored in every way; the poor were necessarily down-trodden. How, then, was that girl different from Tamsin Chenoworth, being poor, according to her own testimony? In a dim way Tamsin comprehended that there was a strong individual spirit in that pearl-colored figure, and that education was a species of riches. Her mental receptiveness was roused to the fullest action. Rhoda loomed before her suddenly a vast example. What Rhoda said became seed, which she strewed plentifully without knowing it.

"I used to think," exclaimed Jennie, "that you and Cousin Tom might make a match some time."

"Captain Tom? I don't see how you could think that, when we've always been such excellent friends."

Louise looked up from the grate with a pensive expression: "Are you very much in love?"

"With my future prospects? Yes, I am. I'm going to have everything I ever wanted, and a comfortable husband who knows my untamed

ways and won't thwart me." Rhoda took out a great many hair-pins and let her mass of hair come down to her waist while she declaimed to the two fair faces near her. "If there is anything on earth I am sick and tired of, it is all this nonsense about sentiment. Now, there you sit, both of you, stuffed full of love-stories without a grain of practical sense in one of them, expecting a knight, if only in the shape of dear, simple Davy Crockett, to ride up and carry you off. When you see that very excellent backwoods play—it has literary merits—don't your heart-strings ring to Davy's rough rendering of 'Young Lochinvar'? 'I want my bride,' says the knight.—'Git out!' says the dad.—'Whoop!' says the knight; and he disappears from the scene with the willing young lady. That's all very entertaining, but *I* like civilization. Not to put too fine a point on it, I like luxury."

So did Tamsin, though she had never defined her delight in beautiful and sumptuous surroundings.

"And I can't do without it," continued Rhoda. "I like the things money will buy, and I've never had enough to buy them. In the Middle Ages, when everybody was fighting against everybody else, the strongest baron was the safest man to have for a husband. Money is the feudal power to-day; the strongest baron now is the man who can make the most money."

"I should be afraid to marry for money," sighed Jennie. Her thoughts flew to a very handsome youth in her father's law-office.

"You'd a great deal better be afraid to marry without it."

"But is it quite right?" murmured Louise.

"You've been reading Miss Mulock's novels," puffed Rhoda scornfully. "I haven't a bit of patience with that woman. She harps on the same old silly string year after year, and you girls listen and weep and long for an impecunious young man on the altar of whose fortunes you can make a sacrifice of your youth and comfort. Don't you know that the key-note of the times is not sentiment, but practical sense? Just after the war, when the country was wrought to a high pitch of nerves, current literature overflowed with self-sacrifice. According to that showing,—and current literature ought to be a good reflection of the times,—everybody was running around trying to outdo his neighbor in the broken-heart and self-renunciation business. One heroine gave up her lover to a friend who fancied him; another sacrificed her future prospects to nurse somebody. All that sort of thing was 'noble.' I think it was mawkish. It isn't natural and human. I am a healthy, selfish girl,—not mean or unjust,—but I have had some sharp, and even cruel, experiences. I know to my own satisfaction that poverty causes

more evil than perhaps anything else in the world, and that easy circumstances are a great nourisher of the virtues. Why should I let my own observations go for nothing and take the dictum of sentimentalists who have no gauge for my individual life? Ah! dear Charles Lamb!" mused Rhoda, leaning forward and resting her elbow on her knee. "He told the truth, for he had felt the pinch: 'Goodly legs and shoulders of mutton, exhilarating cordials, books, pictures, the opportunities of seeing foreign countries, independence, heart's ease, a man's own time to himself, are not *muck*, however we may be pleased to scandalize with that appellation the faithful metal that provides them for us.'"

"Oh, my! I should hate to be real poor and nobody at all, and have no parties or dresses or good times," exclaimed Jennie.

"So should I," murmured Louise. "But then I should hate to marry a man I didn't like at all."

"The man I am going to marry," said Rhoda, tossing her head back and winding her hair in a knot, "I do decidedly like. As to being in love with him, I am not a bit so; that would be very disagreeable and give him an advantage over me. Besides, love is a fleeting quality, while you can put your hand on abundant means and always find them there. I have been desperately in love—"

"Oh, Rhoda!"

"And desperately disgusted with it; while I find that comfort never disgusts me. I like power and a good position."

("I'd like such things too," thought Tamsin.)

"And I like travel and culture. It is very kind of this excellent man to lift the burden of life from me and give me the delicious sensation of not having to slave for an actual living,—though, of course, I've always tried to get a full life. I expect him to have faults, and acknowledge it is not agreeable to hear him drinking as if his œsophagus was outside instead of inside his throat, and smacking his mouth at table. Still, I can forgive him that. A man whom I doted on might let me carry my own packages or pierce me with unmerited reproaches. My observation is that men can be very tyrannical and abusive toward the women of their families."

("Oh, can't they, though!" muttered Tamsin, breathing through closed teeth.)

"Therefore I want to protect myself as much as possible from the miseries of matrimony. A girl of my acquaintance married for love, pure and simple and plenty of it. She expected too much. She took a very fair young man and spoiled him with flattery and free service, and exacted no courtesy, no respect, no delicate consideration, in return,—nothing but his protested love. The last time I saw her she was a faded, jaded creature, effervescing

sourly at the world, pinched by a paltry income, while her dear lord rode high and free, enjoying life in his own way, though doubtless loving her still. You see, love-matches are just as apt to turn out badly as any other kind."

"I shall be afraid ever to marry anybody if you don't quit saying such dreadful things," exclaimed the brunette.

"That won't hurt you," said Rhoda sagely as she rose. And, laughing, she added, "What a gallop I have been taking on one of my hobbies!"

"And you haven't told us a *word* about your wedding-trip or what things you are going to have!"

"Oh, I am promised the foreign tour. As to my wardrobe, I shall have to do as well as I can: in my case, you know, there is no rich relation to insist on decorating the sacrifice. I rather like the situation: it would gall me to owe a trossseau to parties not responsible for me. When we arrive at Paris, I think I shall have been married long enough to warrant my accepting a dress or two from my husband if he insists. He is very generous, and would load me with gorgeous presents now if I would allow it."

"I should allow it," exclaimed Jennie. "You make me perfectly green with envy."

"Me too," chimed Louise as heartily. "Oh, Rhoda, can't you find each of us a nice old gen-

tleman with that pretty fringe above his ears and plenty of money?"

"This is what I will do, girls: when we come back and are settled down, I'll have you to spend several months with me. It's a very gay little city; you can have germans and rides and parties to your hearts' content."

Both girls clapped their hands lightly with quick enthusiasm.

"We must go to bed now," declared Jennie. "It's getting near the witching hour, and I am such a coward! There isn't a soul up in the house except ourselves."

They gathered up as many of their belongings as they had scattered about, and Jennie blew out all the candles except one, which she transferred to a china candlestick to light the way. In its rather feeble company, and encircled by an outer rim of darkness which it could not pierce, the girls tiptoed through the hall and up-stairs, seeing long distorted spectres of themselves stretching up the walls.

When the noise of their closing doors came to Tamsin's ears through the deep stillness, she slipped into the front parlor and stooped down before the remaining coals. Like an automaton she took the shovel and heaped ashes upon their trembling light. Fire has the color and the motion of a living thing. Tamsin hung over it with

a sensuous pleasure in its beauty. Every point where a violet flame reared suddenly from the red-hot bed received a benediction of ashes. Her hand forgot its mechanical business. "You needn't think you are going to be slighted," said Tamsin, talking to a little coal gazing reproachfully at her through a hole in the ashes. "Here's a good lot for you,—enough to wrap yourself up in all night. Every feller will be served alike. Now, you're winter wheat that's sowed in the fall and comes up in the spring. The grain's all buried deep; dirt's over top of it. Folks couldn't tell the's so much seed kivered here ready to sprout."

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARATION.

Two or three busy days passed rapidly by. The whole village of Barnet knew there was to be a party given in honor of the young-lady guests at the Hill-house. There could be no loftier pinnacle of festivity. Like every country town over fifty years old, Barnet had its solid people who formed its society,—people whose goods increased with every generation, who lived in time-tinted, hospitable-looking homesteads, sent their sons to college, their daughters to seminaries, and loved to prove to all strangers that they were not a whit behind the age. In such mature villages you find, instead of the provincial manners you have a right to look for, a jealous conformity to what these villages consider city life. But while the citizen is a free agent, with his own set, perhaps his club or several clubs, and his amusements, aside from the serious business of life, the villager is hampered by a heavy etiquette and a servile imitation of what he considers standard models.

The Barnet girls were preparing for the party with delight; the young gentlemen were also an-

ticipating, according to their several temperaments, the pleasure or terror of a white-glove assembly in a community averse to dancing and card-playing. It is true that the very flower of Barnet society patronized the great yearly ball at the tavern which celebrated Washington's birthday; but generally sentiment was against such frivolity, and ministers about that time waxed very warm in denouncing the pleasures of sin which are for a season, and indulgent parents felt compunction that their pretty girls or spirited boys succeeded in gaining permission to partake of this exhilarating wickedness.

Barnet was not intellectual, but it had long since discarded the plays and marching chants which belong to primitive society. At its fashionable assemblies it stood up straight and conversed with miserable effort, or promenaded, or listened with hypocritical enjoyment to piano-playing.

But very cheerful preparations were going forward at the dwelling which had been locally known as "the Hill-house" ever since the Mills's grandfather built it there to be away from the fumes of his distillery, which, half a mile distant, had discharged slops into the canal at its side and vast clouds of blackness from its monumental chimney into the sky. The silent distillery at this date leaned as if it meditated making a noise in the world yet by coming down with all its bulk

into the canal; the street leading toward it, which in earlier days had creaked with loads of grain, was still called the "cinder-road," and owed its hardness to ancient ashes from the distillery; the chimney stood as inflexible as the shaft of Bunker Hill. But the Mills barely deigned to own it now, and perhaps felt no gratitude toward the venerable edifice for the fortune it had given them.

Wax candles, multiplying themselves thousands of times in pendants and looking-glasses, shone all over the Hill-house. They were a light peculiar to that homestead, whose venerable mistress disliked modern lamps and the smell of oil. The Mills had always afforded wax candles. Aunt Sally moulded dozens of them after the best recipe known to man, which could be found only in her recipe-book on the page with spring beer and mince-pies. The faces of her neighbors and neighbors' children never appeared so pleasing as when swimming in the mild radiance which wax lights alone can shed. If the candles ran down or sputtered—though hers seldom did—or pointed lengthening spires of wick knobbed with "letters" for the young people to take off on their fingers, that was the nature of candles. One branch of Neal's business on company-nights was to tiptoe around at least once with the silver snuffers and tray and snuff all the candles.

A house prepared for guests seems to sit smiling

expectantly while it listens for the first arrival. The piano is open ; doors or curtains are drawn back that parlors and library may meet hospitably together ; the dressing-rooms are warm and light ; the fires are banks of burning color ; the flowers are as fresh as the first girl in white who bends her neck to smell them. Our familiar haunts are not ours for the time ; they belong to the genius of Hospitality, and we are merely its purveyors.

Precisely at half-past seven o'clock Aunt Sally left her last order with Neal and turned toward her own room to put on the black brocade and lace bosom-piece which all Barnet honored. She was a most capable hostess, and her face shone in the glory of its white hair and benevolence. It was never a weariness to her to have guests in the house ; and guests were there constantly. Jennie Mills or any other cousin felt privileged to bring troops of friends at all times, and the captain had constant satellites,—old comrades, new and odd acquaintances, sporting gentlemen who came to hunt with him in the season.

"Tamsin," said Aunt Sally, looking at the girl and remembering how rapidly and willingly she had worked, "I should have let you run home to change your dress before it got dark. But Tillie is here ; you can take her for company."

Tamsin stood still, looking at the long and glit-

tering table in the dining-room. "They won't mind me," she muttered.

"Remember not to stay long," admonished Aunt Sally.

Tamsin looked up in real anguish: "Do I have to?"

"Have to what, child?"

"Put on something else."

"Why, that dress is dirty."

"I know't," fingering the threadbare cotton folds with a trembling touch and speaking in a whisper. "I thought I'd git time to run home and wash and iron it; but I didn't." Her fingers tightened and twitched the faded thing.

"Haven't you any other dress?"

"No, 'm," fiercely, as if the confession were torn from her.

"I wish I had known it," said Aunt Sally, pushing up her glasses. "I wanted you to help pass the supper. Why, that's too bad, Tamsin! You ought to have bought yourself a dress with the last money I paid you. Let me see: when was that?"

"Father wanted it," Chenoworth's daughter deigned to add, with her eyes on the floor.

"Well, I'm sorry," said the fair old lady kindly, and she went up-stairs with the benevolent intention of speaking to one of the girls in behalf of her humble Cinderella.

Tamsin stood still, fingering the old dress, her olive face heated and her mouth curved down in scorn. "It's always going to be so, it's always going to be so!" that strong spirit which ground her down mocked in her ear; upon which her own spirit defiantly retorted, "It isn't! it shan't."

Nobody would ever learn from her own lips that her father was in the habit of borrowing whatever she could earn and charging up her board and lodging to her as repayment. If the old man suspected himself of meanness, he silenced that suspicion by pointing to the fact that he had a large family to support and somebody must support it. One or two small producers fare badly among half a dozen non-producers.

"I wanted to git Tillie a dress, daddy," Tamsin had petitioned on the last occasion.

"Dresses is all vanity," said the old man.

"And I'm nearly naked myself."

"Well, where's corn-meal and side-meat to come from, and all the sugar that you eat up, if so much money has to be spent on clothes?"

"Why don't the boys work? Why don't you *make* 'em work at something?" she cried fiercely; at which the old man had growled helplessly and put her earnings in his pocket.

"I might 'a lied and hid it," whispered Tamsin, winking back a glare of tears which made the few lights in the dining-room each put a nimbus over

its white length. "Then me and Tillie needn't be shamed as bad as we are. But somehow I never do: I always give it to him. And folks believe I don't care how I look. Folks don't know what you're thinking about." To keep folks from even suspecting, she changed the expression of her face the instant the kitchen-door opened, and looked to see Neal enter in his best black coat and air of politest superiority. "I hate niggers!" she hissed under her breath. "They feel so smart when they've got plenty to eat and to wear and a nice house to live in."

But it was Tillie who came in and ran up to put her arms around her elder's waist. Every curve in Tamsin's face became maternal and tender. She smoothed the flaxen poll. "I hain't seen ye for so long," said Tillie.

"Did you miss me, honey?"

"Yes; I don't like to git shut of ye."

"What they doin' down there?"

"Nothin' Sary Jane's baby ain't very well."

"You might 'a come up and stayed with me awhile yesterday."

"I hate to stan' round in the way. When Aunt Sally Teagard' saw me comin' in awhile ago, 'peared like she'd think my room was better than my comp'ny."

Tamsin laughed and rocked the wide-mouthed little creature to and fro in her arms as they stood:

"'Most anybody'd think that of such rag-bags as you and me. Oh, honey, how I wish I was rich! If I was, I'd give you everything heart could wish."

"We're poor," said Tillie lightly, but with conviction. "We won't never be rich."

"Sometimes I b'lieve I *will*," stated Tamsin with fierce energy. "There'll be some chance. I'd take you off, honey, to see everything in the world. You wouldn't have to stick in the mud here. Fine dresses! A 'cordion to play on!"

"Oh, Tam, *would* you git me a 'cordion?"

"The finest kind of a one."

"I'd play it and knock the tunes while I's a-playin'." Tillie began to shuffle her feet and spread her hands with an imaginary accordion between them.

"And decenter shoes than you ever had on your feet yit," added Tamsin savagely. "What would you like to have the best of anything now?"

"All the good cake I could eat, iced thick," replied Tillie, gazing on the glittering table.

Tamsin rocked her to and fro: "Oh! And we've got to go into my bedroom and stay hid."

"What for?"

"Because I ain't fit to be seen. You don't look so bad, but I do."

Tillie looked grave. Her guardian cast about

mentally for cheerful entertainment with which to pass those hours that the guests would spend in gayety.

"And Mis' Teagard' needs me to help pass the supper, too! But you can say all your hymns out of your little pink book to me settin' there in the dark together."

Tillie assented dubiously and suggested as a specimen, "I thank the goodness and the grace." She moreover plunged at once into the recitation, knocking the time with her head instead of her feet: "I've said 'I thank the goodness and the grace' more times 'n I've got hairs in my head, Tamsin:

"I thank the goodness and the grace
Which on my birth have smiled,
And made me in this happy place
A happy Christian child.

"I was not born, as thousands are,
Where God is never known,
And taught to pray a useless prayer
To blocks of wood and stone.

"I was not born without a home,
Or, in some broken shed,
A gypsy baby, taught to roam
And steal my daily bread."

("You was born pretty nigh as bad off, though," said Tamsin under her breath.)

“My God, I thank Thee, who hast planned
A better lot for me,
And placed me in this happy land,
Where I can hear of Thee.”

“Tamsin!” It was Miss Jones looking out from the parlor. She was in a loose cashmere dressing-gown, but her hair was elaborately finished. “Will you come up to my room—and bring your little sister if you want to—to help me a minute?”

CHAPTER V.

AN ARRIVAL.

THIS was Rhoda Jones's device for playing a brief part as godmother. Aunt Sally had gone to the girls to have her lace bosom-piece set straight and mention Tamsin's predicament. "If I had known it in time," she said with a sympathetic twist of her mouth, "I could have provided something for her to put on. There are several good calicoes of mine she could have, but they would need a considerable amount of taking in."

"Haven't I got something?" cried Jennie Mills through a mouthful of dangerous pins and a checked laugh as she manipulated the lace on the old lady's noble shoulders.

"You leave it to me," called Rhoda from across the hall. "Your girl down-stairs, Mrs. Teagarden, is one of the royal personages in disguise who are sensitive to all approach. She will have to be surprised into raiment not her own, or she will not put it on."

"Tamsin is a good, quiet girl," said Aunt Sally; "but you don't know the Chenoworths."

"She is the revolt of the Chenoworths," ex-

pounded Rhoda, appearing at the door. "I haven't had my eyes on her nearly a week for nothing."

"You have such queer ideas, Rhoda!" laughed Louise, looking back from her dressing-glass, in which a glorious blond head was being constructed. "Give Rhoda a stump and an old woman with a blackberry basket, with a little patch of sky overhead and a bit of woods at the back, and she'll get a story out of it, when I couldn't put it into a decent pencil-sketch.—Oh, where is that powder-puff?"

"That's because you draw so abominably," exclaimed Jennie.

"I'll draw a ribbon out of my box for Tamsin, at any rate. Here's one."

"Gracious! she can't dress herself in one ribbon.—I might give her my black cashmere, Aunt Sally. She's larger than Louise, but she's about my height."

"Janet," said Aunt Sally, "don't say another word about it. Your black cashmere is nearly new, and your father and mother would have a fine opinion of me if I encouraged you in such extravagant generosity."

"But you will need her."

"I think I can manage with Neal. And the young gentlemen are always very forward to assist."

"There goes Rhoda down-stairs," said Louise, setting a knot of ribbon in her hair where it would do most damage to beholders.

And very shortly Rhoda returned up the back stairway with two other pairs of feet following her. She shut her door, murmuring, "This must be a close séance. Other mediums—even the most noble—might spoil the communication."

Tamsin waited, erect and folding her arms, without betraying that she tingled in her raiment beside this wealthier poor girl's fine half-toilet. Tillie sat down on a cane-chair by the corner of the open fire and curled her rough-shod feet out of sight.

"The others are over there together," said Miss Jones, unfastening her wrapper, "having no end of fun while they dress. So I thought of you, Tamsin, and wondered if you *would* sew that white frill under the edge of my velvet train for me. There are needle and thread and thimble. Just baste it,—pretty strongly, though: I haven't any doubt some masculine hoof will be set through it. The girls are going to look like angels. Have you seen their dresses?"

"No," replied Tamsin, bending her head over the sewing.

"I keep pretty steadily to black and rich, heavy things. They are less expensive in the long run. Louise is going to be a fluff of lavender-color with

a fashionable name, further neutralized by lots of lace. Jennie is going to be a blaze in the landscape: she has a scarlet satin that makes her look like a dream of Egypt."

Tamsin actually felt no sting in these things, told to her as to any young girl. She glanced up at Rhoda Jones, and half smiled with interest.

Rhoda paused in the occupation of pencilling her eyebrows to laugh back. "They were always so pale," she explained. "Not black and straight, like yours."

Tamsin brushed the back of her hand across one eyebrow with a hasty gesture. She rose up with her little task completed.

"Ever so many thanks. Now I wish you'd put on this black skirt and red basque and little red cap, will you. I have a great fancy to see how you'd look in them."

She brought the garments out of a wardrobe. The skirt was cashmere; the jacket and tasselled cap were velveteen. They were full of sandalwood odor.

"Now, don't refuse," begged Rhoda. "I don't mind telling you I made these things over for you myself since I first saw you."

"Made 'em for me?"

"Yes; you're picturesque, and they'll make you look more so. You can afford to put on odd things: all girls of your style can. The cap and

jacket I had for some private theatricals. I believe they will fit you to a dot."

"Oh, dress up in them, Tamsie!" put in Tillie.

"Do!" said Rhoda, turning from her dressing to extend her large beautiful arms in argument. "Why shouldn't you make yourself fair to look upon, as well as any other girl? And those things are yours; I fixed them for you."

Tamsin took up one piece after the other. Tillie came to look around her elbow.

"And you'd better hurry, my dear," said Rhoda. "Oh, I nearly forgot: here are a pair of low shoes and scarlet stockings which go with that dress."

"I'm very much obleeged." Tamsin spoke the words slowly, as if she were struggling against the gifts.

"Not a bit. I'm obliged to you for helping me."

"I don't see how you come to fix 'em—for me?" with a slight upward inflection of her voice.

Rhoda came forward laughing, but as if she did not observe the hesitation and trembling of this chrysalis woman. To Tamsin her manner seemed completely charming. It was neither too reserved nor too familiar. It conferred kindness as a matter of course, and started an exhilaration like joy through veins accustomed to torpor.

Without a word of warning Rhoda powdered

the flaxen hair and olive face, and Tamsin submitted, laughing with her.

About ten minutes thereafter there was the noise of a vehicle in front of the house, and in due season the door-bell rang.

"Now, there are the Balls," exclaimed Aunt Sally, bustling out of the chamber where Louise and Jennie had impressed her willing hands in their service: "they always drive in early. I wonder if Tom is down-stairs? Make haste, girls, and tell Miss Rhoda to hurry down." She looked over the stairway. "Where's Neal? Why doesn't he answer the door?"

"I'll answer it," said a figure hurrying forward from the back stairs. "Shall I?"

"Why, Tamsin Chenoworth!" exclaimed Aunt Sally, bringing her glasses to bear. "Who on earth did fix you up in that kind of a way?"

"Don't I look right?"

"Why, yes, you do. You look real well, considering," said Aunt Sally with discretion. She followed the figure down-stairs with her eyes before turning to descend by the back way.

The bell rang again. Tamsin opened the door wide and looked out at night. The hall-lights were behind her. She saw nobody, and heard only the sighing of the wind in the evergreens.

Suddenly, it seemed at her feet, a voice spoke, and she saw a man's head on the top step as if it

had just emerged from the shadow where the bell-handle was. There seemed to be a very little excepting the head, and it was all muffled up. But the face was raised to this picture of a black-eyed, light-haired girl in scarlet and black and black-lace frills, slim in figure, beautifully oval in face.

Tamsin looked down at the head without uttering a sound. She was terrified, but with instinctive compassion betrayed no terror.

"This is Captain Mills's residence?" The head's voice was pleasing and mellow rather than heavy and masculine.

"Yes, sir."

"Is he at home?"

"Yes, sir. Will you come in?"

He did not see the pallor around her mouth as he grasped the side of the door and swung himself up into the hall. Whatever his length of limb may have been, it was concealed by a tiny ulster. The top of his head was not on a level with Tamsin's waist when he pulled his cap off. He drew a card from some inner pocket and handed it up to Tamsin. It bore the name of "Isaac Sutton." She closed the door, and was directing him toward the open parlor, when Captain Mills came into the hall, exclaiming, "Why, Craque-o'-Doom, how are you? Come in, old fellow, come in!"

CHAPTER VI.

"ISN'T HE HORRIBLE?"

It looked very grotesque to see Captain Mills and the mite to whom he was obliged to stoop, shaking hands. They went into the front parlor.

"I made use of your general invitation to drop down on you for what they call the holidays," said the mellow voice near the floor. "I wanted to get away from the people, and from the hubbub they make at this time of the year."

Captain Mills seemed to feel his height an encumbrance as he pushed a chair near the hearth. But he took another himself, and this brought his head nearer to a level with that of his visitor, who climbed dexterously into place and stuck a pair of small shoe-soles toward the fire.

"Well, I'm glad you're here," said Captain Tom heartily. "But I'm afraid you've dropped down right upon a hubbub. There's going to be a party in the house to-night."

"A party?" The tone expressed unmistakable disgust.

"Yes. Given for some young ladies,—a cousin of mine and her friends."

"Young ladies?" Distress was added to the disgust. "Come, Tom, I must get out of this. I don't see how I got the idea that you lived like a Crusoe because you were a bachelor, but that seems to be the impression I labored under."

"You shall not stir a step," exclaimed Captain Mills, putting his hand on the figure. "A few neighbors shan't frighten a man's choice spirits out of his house. If you don't want to partake of the festivities—"

"Your pardon, Tom. Look at me!"

Captain Mills did so almost affectionately, and without removing his hand.

"If you don't want to be tormented with people," he continued, "you can adjourn to your room, and as soon as I can disappear we will hold a session of our own with closed doors."

"That will do very well. There are the young ladies though," reflectively. "I wish—I always wish—I had Gyges's ring."

"Pooh! Three first-rate, comfortable girls. And here's my aunt, Mrs. Teagarden. Allow me.—My friend Mr. Sutton, Aunt Sally."

Captain Mills half arose; the dwarf bent his large head with beautiful deference. Aunt Sally made the old-time courtesy and came forward to receive Thomas's friend. Her mouth twitched spasmodically as she brought her glasses to bear upon him, but she was charming, and took his

hand, giving it a stately shake: "We are very glad to see you, Mr. Sutton. I have heard Thomas speak about you. Did you find it cold driving from the railroad?"

"That reminds me," interrupted the captain: "have you got your own rig with you?"

"Yes; I usually take it," replied the other half dejectedly.—"It's my trap," he explained to Aunt Sally. "I ship the whole thing when I travel, because there is less risk about it than in trusting myself to chance."

"Your trap?" said Aunt Sally. "Yes, Thomas sometimes hunts, but he uses guns; though the very sight of a musket makes me feel sad since the war."

A smile appeared on the strange face, now flushed with fire-heat: "I mean my carriage. It is a snug one, built on purpose for me, and with it I bring a horse and a coachman."

"Neal will show them the way to the stable," said Captain Mills.

"They have gone to your hotel. I saw by the light that you were at home: so I gave my man directions before coming in."

"Where is Neal, aunt? He must go after them.—Lots of empty stalls here, Craque-o'-Doom, and room in the carriage-house. It wasn't kind of you to doubt it."

"Well, when a man has to carry his house on

his back, he ought to hesitate about encumbering his friends with it. My valises were put inside the gate."

"Here is Neal," exclaimed Aunt Sally, perceiving him in the vista.—"Neal!" She moved toward him with a crackle and swish of the rich brocade. "Go out and bring the valises that were left by the gate, and then you must hurry down to the tavern and tell this gentleman's man that he is to put up here with the horse and buggy. Tamsin can mind the door until you get back."

"And, aunt," called Captain Mills, as Neal's unwilling feet went through the hall, "let us have a room right away." He rose, for Neal's exit was forestalled by a ring at the door-bell, the first arrival.

The dwarf got down from his seat and sauntered behind a large chair, while the people who entered were ushered to dressing-rooms.

Aunt Sally then led the way up the cleared stairs, while Captain Mills stayed below to receive the guests. She was flurried, and conscious of a spider-like creature climbing rapidly behind her, and positive she could not have borne to see him climb ahead of her; so she did not see a beautiful dark head stretching out above to peep down, or a timorous blond one appearing behind that.

"Isn't he horrible?" whispered Jennie.

"Oh! oh!" whispered Louise.

In turning a bend of the stairs, the dwarf gave them a swift look. His face, seen dimly, expressed neither pain nor resentment. He was accustomed to such words.

Rhoda Jones's hand, put out of her room, pulled them both into it.

"Oh, I hope he didn't hear me!" exclaimed Jennie when the door was shut; "but he makes my flesh creep."

"Of course he heard you," said Rhoda. "And what a mass of nerves and anguish such a creature must be!"

"Well, I can't help it. I never saw anything so horrible in my life!"

CHAPTER VII.

A NABOB.

WITHIN an hour the latest guests had arrived, and the three girls were in various parts of the buzzing parlors, making themselves agreeable to the flower of Barnet society. Louise promenaded on the arm of an elderly gentleman, while half the matrons dissected her dress; Jennie had drawn around herself a court of airy young ladies and admiring young gentlemen; and Rhoda Jones was trying to make life less excruciating to a youth of twenty, with a large Adam's apple and a blushing countenance, who had the reputation in Barnet of being "smart."

Everybody talked with strained gayety,—as poor human nature, gentle as well as simple, always will do on festive occasions,—excepting some quiet women who got behind tables and buried themselves in photograph-albums or stereoscopic views until they were marshalled out by Aunt Sally and catechised about the health of all their distant relatives and the best method of making black-berry-balsam.

There were two or three young girls who would

evermore remember this event as their first party; and who hung protectingly to each other, tittering and squeezing each other's fingers at unspoken jokes and mutual understandings. They were afraid to cross the room without their arms interlaced, and were so desperately anxious to behave correctly that they stumbled and overturned things with their elbows, and very much desired to take off their hands and feet and float. The "town girls" were constantly watched by them. They admired Louise and Jennie with all their souls, but Rhoda Jones, so approachable that she considered herself quite Bohemian, was an awful mystery to them. They told each other in thrilling whispers that she "wrote," and they both envied and ridiculed the temerity of the young man with the Adam's apple, who stood up grasping the lapels of his coat and talked his intelligent talk to her. If she looked toward them, they were desperately afraid she saw something about them to impale and hold up before the public. They promenaded the halls, and were after a while overwhelmed to find themselves on the arms of their elder sisters' cavaliers, who took them up in a patronizing, paternal way wholly delightful. When Tamsin Chenoworth was helping to pass refreshments, these young girls, her contemporaries, pitied her because she could not sit on the stairs with an elderly beau to fan her and hold her plate,—or they would have

pitied her if they had considered her worth the trouble.

Before supper was served, however, Captain Mills made his way slowly, past groups with whom he stopped to chat, to Rhoda, and offered her his arm, saying, "I'd like to consult with you a minute, if you can excuse yourself."

"About what?" she inquired, moving away with him.

"I hope I didn't break in on anything very interesting?"

"Why, yes, you did. You took me away from an altar where clouds of incense have been rising to my delighted nose. Don't you call it interesting to be gazed upon as a goddess, when you know that hard work and plenty of it is the law of your life."

"Very interesting," laughed the captain. "You're quite a lion down here, you know."

"And what a comfort that is, when I consider that I am a mere lamb in Park Row and Madison Square! The gentleman from whom you took me was discoursing the sweetest flattery, without a suspicion that I have had a book published for which I never got a cent of royalty." They both laughed as they entered the dining-room.

Tillie Chenoworth was sitting there, with her feet curled under her, by the fire, listening to the buzz of society. Tamsin stood beside her, with

one hand on her shoulder. They were quite at the other end of the room.

"What has been done to that girl?" said Captain Tom, looking at her shapely back, as he paused beside the table.

"Oh, she has merely put on a bright kerchief and washed her face, as Fanchon did," said Rhoda. "Men will always notice a woman's new gear either in effect or detail. Did you ever feel interest enough in that girl to draw her out and see whether she has a thinking, sensitive nature?"

"Well, I don't know," returned Captain Tom drolly. They were speaking in a low tone, so that their voices reached Tamsin as a heavy murmur. "Your speaking of Fanchon reminds me that I gave her that book to read once,—the English version of it. She was dusting the books and looking into them. I picked up 'The Cricket,' and said I, 'Here, Tamsin, here's something you will like. It's about a smart little girl who made a woman of herself.' She took the book, and I went on elaborating: 'It's been made into a play and put on the stage, and it's quite popular. People like to see a poor girl come out at the top of the heap.'"

"And what did she say?" inquired Rhoda, smiling slowly.

"Well, she read it when she got time, and when I thought of it I asked her how she liked it. The

girl has brilliant eyes, you know. She looked down and answered, 'Very well;' then she looked up with a sort of flash, and said, 'I don't think that Cricket had much spunk, or she wouldn't let 'em see when she felt bad.'

Rhoda nodded her head several times. The scarlet bodice stood in relief against the black mantel. Tillie stirred restlessly, and said in an undertone, feeling for the hand on her shoulder, "Tamsie, when we goin' to have some cake?"

"Soon's they have supper."

"Will you gimme a piece of that one all over flowers?" the wide mouth showing its pink gums.

"Yes, honey, if Mis' Teagard' lets me."

"They're goin' to begin now, ain't they?"

"Not till about 'leven."

"But *them* ones is goin' to begin."

Tamsin looked over her shoulder at the host and his companion.

"I brought you on purpose," said Captain Tom to Rhoda, "to have a tray of something he would like fixed up for him. I thought you'd be the most likely person to hit off his fancy."

"Much obliged for the compliment. Do you know what he ordinarily prefers?"

"No, I don't think I do. Somehow, I can't recall him eating. But he's a hearty fellow, too. He was up on the Canadian rivers last summer with several of us."

"What! that little creature?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I suppose I got used to his being little. He is as swift and active as a bird."

"The girls were peeping at him when he went up-stairs." As she talked, Rhoda selected a bit here and a bit there and covered one of the ready salvers. "Jennie said he was horrible."

"Craque-o'-Doom isn't horrible: I don't find him so. He seemed queer at first. But men aren't so particular as women. The camping-party I met him with all voted him first-class."

"Craque-o'-Doom! That isn't his name?"

"His name's Sutton. I don't know how he got the other, but that's what he's called. I do hope you'll be good to him while he's here: he'll be apt to take to you. And he's a rare gentleman: there's something delicate and fine about his nature. It is like a woman's; and yet, deformed as he is, I never thought him effeminate."

"I am anxious to meet him: I always like new experiences and unusual people. Won't he be visible this evening at all?"

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Tom. "Come up-stairs now. He and I have been having a good talk ever since I got away from the crowd."

"So I will. Tamsin, is the coffee made?"

Tamsin came up the room to Rhoda and paused beside the tray. "I don't think it is yit," she replied. "Do you want it right away?"

"We're going to carry some supper to the gentleman up-stairs. Yes, he will want coffee, of course.—Captain Tom, have you got a little preserved ginger? This tray looks rather tempting. We'll take it ourselves."

"Of course we will," said Tom: "Craque-o'-Doom will appreciate that. Ginger-root? Yes,—Tamsin, isn't there a pot or two of preserved ginger in any of the closets? Aunt Sally would know."

"I know what you want," said Tamsin, stopping on her way to the kitchen: "as soon as I tell Ann Maria you want the coffee made, I'll get it."

Rhoda looked after her approvingly: "That girl has great adaptability. She has improved within two or three days. Do you know I'm interested in her? She silently attracts me."

"Does she?" said Tom, smiling. "She's an odd creature. Aunt Sally's had her about the house a great deal, and I've tried to encourage her, but I never could make her out."

"She'll surprise you some time if the sun ever shines upon her. That girl's frozen by her circumstances. She feels nothing but the pinch, and thinks nothing but rebellion. Let her be thawed and fostered, and she will reveal herself in a way you will be far from despising."

"I hope I'm far from despising any woman."

Rhoda looked up with an admiring expression :
" You're such a man as women cannot help approving of. Certainly you are far from despising any woman. You're a universal Wing over them ! We're waiting for that ginger, aren't we ? I wonder if your friend likes it ?"

" He probably does. In his camp-stores he had all manner of odd foreign stuff. He has queer tastes, and gratifies them to the utmost."

" He must be a nabob.—This is it. Thanks." Rhoda received the ginger-pot from Tamsin's hand. Tamsin hesitated for further directions on the edge of the conference.

" He ?" replied Tom. " Craque-o'-Doom is worth his hundred thousands. He has a lovely place down at Swampscott, they told me,—summer-place,—and a rich old den up the North River. He's rich as a lord, and it's a good thing for him."

" Of course it is."

" He has bonds and stocks, and I don't know what all. His family was a first-rate one, too, but I believe they are all dead except himself. He's desperately fond of music. I think he's a sort of a genius. Oh, you'll find him out by degrees. I don't know how he gets on with ladies: he doesn't like to show himself. But I have seen him endure staring and remarks in perfect silence."

" Take the salver now," said Rhoda, " and we

will go up the back stairway.—Tamsin, as soon as the coffee is done, bring a hot cup of it, with cream and sugar, on another salver, please.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“WHY DON’T YOU SHUDDER?”

AFTER the captain and Miss Rhoda had gone up-stairs, Tamsin stood beside her sister, looking into the fire. Tillie’s face was scorched by the pleasant heat. She leaned sleepily on the back of her chair, untroubled by her elder’s train of thought.

Tamsin lifted one of the claw-like fists from her sister’s lap and looked at it.

“They’re clean,” pleaded Tillie thickly.

“I know it,” said Tamsin. Her palm wandered over the sharp protuberances of Tillie’s little shoulder-blades. “You’re made straight, ain’t you?”

“Yes,” replied Tillie. “So’re you.”

“Do I look tall? Do I look like other folks?”

“Yes, and you look pretty,” added Tillie.

“Did you see the little man that Mis’ Teagarden took up-stairs?”

"Uh-huh!" grunted Tillie affirmatively. "I was in the hall, lookin' for you to come back. It scar't me so I run to your room and jumped under the bed."

"Did he look ugly?"

"Oh, he looked orful! He walked along this way." The supple child dropped from her chair, doubled herself up, and danced across the floor with her legs half abbreviated. Tamsin watched her without comment. The effort was exhausting: so Tillie returned in the natural manner to her chair.

"Would you like me," said Tamsin, "if I was that way?"

"No," returned the little one with frank decision; "I'd run from ye like a white-head. Everybody would."

"But if I had lots of money and could give you everything you wanted, and was that way, wouldn't you like me at all?"

"No; that wouldn't make no difference," explained Tillie. "I'd run from ye all the same."

Tamsin's eyes filled with anguish. She stooped over her sister and looked into the light, laughing eyes.

Tillie gave her a bony little hug: "You ain't all hunched up, Tammie."

"But I might 'a been!"

Tillie drew her lips together over her gums,

and was settling against Tamsin to meditate comfortably on such a possibility, when the elder put her by: "I must take that coffee up-stairs." She put the necessary things on a salver, went into the kitchen, and returned past Tillie with fragrant steam issuing from a cup of Dresden china. She had daringly taken one of Aunt Sally's treasures for the service of the dwarf. If that heavy Dresden cup and saucer got broken, Tamsin Chenoworth dared not think of the consequences.

"I thought it over," announced Tillie. "If 'twas *you*, Tam, I don't b'lieve I'd run from ye. But"—Tillie shook her forefinger impressively—"I don't want to see that chap up-stairs *no more*."

The captain and Rhoda had been hurriedly demanded down-stairs. When Tamsin turned the knob of the chamber-door after knocking, she was surprised to find only the occupant. He sat comfortably before the fire, buried in an easy-chair, a table at his side holding the salver Tom had brought. The room, like all the other rooms in house, was spacious and high, yet he, a mote of humanity, remained its principal point. A Persian rug worn silky smooth trailed across his lap, concealing the lower part of his body: it was a constant habit of his to drape himself thus. His blond head had a square massive look, and his neck was strong and cleanly smooth as tinted ivory.

Tamsin saw his entire face for the first time. It was not weazen and shrunk, but ample, delicately featured, with a luminous expression. He wore a close-trimmed moustache; the head tilted back against the stuffed chair had an actual manly beauty of its own, which was multiplied when he turned his glance toward the girl. His eyes were very gray, with a velvet quality hard to describe. They were large and set wide apart under brows so full of expression that their slightest motion changed the whole face. He looked at Tamsin, and she paused inside the door with the coffee-tray.

Their steady gazing on each other was first realized by the dwarf. He smiled, parting his lips over teeth as fine and clear as polished shells. "Well?" said he with an interrogative accent.

Tamsin approached and set down his coffee, rearranging the other salver afterward, so that everything was within his reach. Having done so, she again met his eyes, resting one hand on the table and placing the other behind her. Her whole appearance was innocent and fascinating. She felt herself in an atmosphere which gave her peculiar ease, as if she had mental lungs inhaling and exhaling an air full of scents and hints and influences of some higher world. The same feeling had struck her on early summer mornings when a branch of wild roses shook dew in her face, or on

winter evenings when the sun left a warm red bar above snow-fields and skeleton woods. Of this sensation Tamsin would probably never speak to any other palpitating soul. It was her glimpse of immortality, her recognition of the fact, "I have lived heretofore in other conditions than this, and I shall live again in glory now unknown to me." Her face had no self-consciousness: she was for the time without personality.

The deformed man said suddenly, the words sounding strange to his own ears and as if spoken by some one else, "You don't shudder at sight of me. I believe most women do; but you do not. Why don't you?"

"I don't see no reason to," said Tamsin slowly, as if weighing her convictions. Taking her hand from the table, she turned and went out of the room, but put back her head to inquire, "Is there anything else, sir?"

"No, thank you. This is abundance,—more than I could have asked."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FLIGHT OF A WHITE-HEAD.

BEFORE the young ladies came down to their late breakfast next morning the captain and his friend had breakfasted and started for a short drive in the latter's carriage. This snug vehicle was of the coupé pattern, with steps particularly adapted to a gentleman whose legs were only a couple of spans long. The padded interior had a smell of wild flowers.

"Drive us up the pike," said Tom to the stolid coachman.—"On the ridge you can get a good view of our village, Craque-o'-Doom. It isn't what it once was. The bisection of the National Road and Ohio Canal made this place, and the increase of railway-traffic everywhere else killed it. We have warehouses, flour-mills, and distilleries standing empty and idle. That pile yonder belongs to our family. My father let the business die out, and I don't think that I should ever care to revive it, if circumstances were ever so favorable."

"What occupation do you claim for yourself?" said Craque-o'-Doom, lowering the window to get at the pleasant winter air.

"Well, I'm that lazy dog a gentleman farmer. When I came home from college I was full of enthusiasm about law. I began to read; but about that time the war broke out, and after my four years' service I found the old estate running to seed, and settled down to improve it. In various ways I've been improving it ever since,—experiments here and fertilizers there, study of crops and soils, and all that coquetting with labor which the out-and-out farmer despises. If I had nothing, I should be considered half a loafer; but, as I'm tolerably well-to-do, my neighbors think I can afford to loiter."

They heard the spat of boot-soles on the flinty pike behind them, for that hard-grained thoroughfare clove through snow when all the by-roads were covered.

"If I had been allowed to choose a career," said the dwarf, "I should have chosen something that would bring oratory into play. I can't imagine anything greater than standing before an assembly and shaping its opinions."

The spat of boot-soles now overtook the carriage, and a crew of five or six small boys ran along on each side of it. "That's him!" panted one. "Here he is, on this side! He aint no bigger'n a baby!"

"Lemme see," struggled another, with curiosity as callous as if the dwarf had been beyond sight

and hearing. "He's got arms, 'cause I see his hand. What show does he travel with?"

"Look out!" panted the others in warning to this bold youth, who seemed about to climb upon the step: "he might shy somethin' at ye. Them kind is bad when they get their tempers up."

Craque-o'-Doom laughed, but Tom, in high displeasure, opened the window beside him. "Boys," cried he severely, "get away from this carriage, or I'll have you all locked in the calaboose. I'll take down the names of every one of you. Don't you know any better than to annoy a gentleman in this way?"

They fell back, somewhat abashed, but one said, "Then you orter take down Billy Mac's name too. He's up behind, peepin' through the curtain."

Captain Mills struck back at the curtain, but at the same instant heard a thud of some one dropping on the pike. "The little scoundrels!" he exclaimed.

"Don't mind it," said Craque-o'-Doom. "I have had time enough to grow accustomed to my notoriety."

Captain Mills put his head out of the window and directed the driver to turn into a by-street: "They will find it isn't so easy to follow us along the soft roads." He looked back, and saw the boys reluctantly giving up their chase. They seemed aggrieved and disconcerted, and from

among them came a well-aimed snow-ball, out of the arc of whose descent Captain Tom dodged into the carriage.

The winter landscape looked desolate. They crossed from one street to another. Detached from other houses and standing among the skeletons of last year's cornstalks was one house which Craque-o'-Doom pointed out as embodying his idea of all that was dismal. "Though, with appropriate hollyhocks and sunflowers and climbing plants, it might look better in summer," said he. "But the sodden door-yard and bleak background are enough to give a mere passer the blue devils. How do people support life in such places, I wonder?"

"Oh, *that* place!" replied Captain Mills. "That's where Tamsin lives,—Tamsin Chenoworth, the girl my aunt has with her up at our house."

"She opened the door when I arrived?"

"Maybe she did."

"And brought up my coffee last evening?"

"Yes."

"So she lives there? Your aunt has her engaged as a servant?"

"Well, no. We are afraid of that word around here, Craque-o'-Doom. I can call my black man my servant, but we have to be careful how we apply the term to whites in a rural community."

"Domestic, then?"

"Not exactly. Aunt Sally has her about the house frequently, and takes some interest in her. She belongs to a miserable family, and seems to have rather more to her than the rest of them. Miss Jones has taken a fancy to her, too."

They had passed the house, when they saw an old man picking his way along fence-corners, carrying a chair on his shoulder. He looked up with a dull eye.

"How d' do, Mr. Chenoworth?" saluted Captain Mills good-naturedly. "That's the girl's father," he explained to Craque-o'-Doom. "The old fellow mends chairs, when he can get them to mend. He has a prodigious family, and a family connection that ramifies through our lowest population. When I was younger I used to have romantic ideas about digging up and fertilizing this lower stratum, but I've come to the conclusion that the best thing you can do with such people is to let them alone."

"Entirely?"

"No. I throw jobs in their way when I have any, but I don't intrude my advice or expect them to have the political intelligence they ought to have, considering they are in numbers sufficient to control the vote of the township."

"The women of any kind of barbarians always have to suffer. Did you ever think of that when you let such old patriarchs of misery as that one we just passed gang their ain gait?"

"Well, what can I do for their women? I tell you, Craque-o'-Doom, these poor devils whom we pity have a strong aristocratic tang. There's that girl Tamsin Chenoworth, for instance: she's as proud as a queen in her way. She looks at you furtively and suspiciously; her dignity is not to be jarred by any fatherly encouragement or advice. I'm as free with my old neighbors as any man can be, yet I couldn't say to her, 'Tamsin, you had better take this course, or that.' If she goes to the dogs, as one of her sisters has been doing, or breaks out with the family weakness for stealing, it isn't my fault; I can't help it. But at present she's a very good girl, and my aunt takes an interest in her."

They returned home long before the mid-day dinner. The young ladies were lounging in the back parlor, in Watteau gowns and easy slippers. Jennie lay on a sofa, with yards of garnet cashmere trailing over her feet; Louise had an easy-chair and a hassock, a novel and an amethyst-colored shawl; but Rhoda Jones rocked vigorously, stopping at intervals to scribble with a pencil on paper held by a reporter's clip which lay in her lap. "I'm just taking down some impressions," she had condescended to explain to the girls, who regarded her performance with a mixture of amusement and dread: they were afraid the remorseless spider in her head might at any time rush out to seize upon and make meat of them. They had seen her dem-

onstrate that material is material, even if you find it in your blood-relations.

"If you take down impressions of me," requested Louise, "make me immensely stylish. I've always wanted so much more style than I have. You might pile up my blond tresses and leave out the switches and top friz. I want a good many lovers, because they're rather scarce in real life."

"I don't," murmured Jennie; "I want just one, —as handsome as he can be, with blue eyes, and golden hair, and a moustache the same color, that droops down to his chin, and long white hands. And he must dance just elegantly, and be three or four years older than myself. He'd always have to wear nice boots, and those lovely round coats without any tails to 'em."

"And probably he could make the money to buy them just about as well as you could," said Rhoda.

"Oh, of course he'd be wealthy and polished."

"The gold-locked men out West, three or four years your seniors, usually have the polish which grinding for a living gives them, and the wealth of hope. They have their fortunes to make, and if they dance themselves into fashionable society, usually dance into debt too. 'Swing low, sweet chariot.' Men are strong, plodding fellows. Women don't marry angels any more. It made a great fuss before the Flood."

Tom Mills's voice and one much mellower than his were heard in the front hall, together with a tramping and lighter patting of feet. The captain and his friend were taking off their wraps.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Louise, starting up. Jennie kicked her train off her feet to make a dart for the dining-room.

"Sit down!" said Rhoda Jones menacingly. "You shan't run away. I could shake you both!"

"I shall die if I have to look at him," pleaded Jennie. "He turns me positively faint."

"I don't care if he does," said Rhoda: "he's your cousin's guest, and you are bound to receive him."

"He isn't *my* cousin's guest," began Louise,—when a door opened, and Tom entered with the dwarf.

He made his good-morning bow to Rhoda, and was presented to the younger girls. They sat in embarrassment, looking down at the toes of their slippers.

Craque-o'-Doom found a ready place on a low hassock at one side of the fire: it spared him the confusion of having to scale a chair. His body tapered abruptly from shoulders to feet; his arms were rather long. In a gentleman's business- or morning-suit he appeared a masquerading child, while sitting still or until he turned his mature face towards the beholder. When he walked,

however, his short legs and small feet seemed hardly capable of carrying his upper bulk. He did not in the least expect any attention, and his manner was modest but self-respecting.

Rhoda noticed how fresh a tinge the ride had given his face. She put the reporter's clip aside, and cast a warning look at the two girls, who in their turn cast pleading looks at Tom.

Tom felt complacent about his own inches, but he could see no reason why any woman should not find Craque-o'-Doom agreeable society. He stood by the mantel and warmed his feet.

"Did you have a nice ride?" inquired Rhoda.

"We had a royal progress," laughed Craque-o'-Doom: "the populace followed us."

"A lot of the town boys," explained Captain Mills, with a lingering shade of annoyance. "They tagged the carriage as if we'd a live boa-constrictor or an ape inside."

Louise telegraphed by a look to Jennie her concurrence with the boys' opinion. But Jennie was scanning the little man's face with astonishment that she could do so without screaming. It was rather a pleasant sight than otherwise.

"You couldn't put any heroism in the hero of such a scene, could you, Miss Jones?" said he. "I understand you are one of those fortunate people who go about making mental photographs for reproduction in letters."

"Do you call that fortunate? Why, I have often thought my lot a miserable one. If you would only be kind enough to say you envy me, now!"

"Certainly I envy you such resources."

"Good! I always wanted to be envied. It has been my dream to stalk about the world so fortunate and immaculate that everybody who saw me should turn fairly green. To that end, I am always magnifying my good luck and concealing my crosses. But don't ask me to have any opinions about heroism: I don't think I like it. It's a strained, uncomfortable effect; it's stagey. Heroic people seem to stand under colored or calcium lights in a tableau with the curtain just going down."

Craque-o'-Doom laughed.

"Ah, I *like* such things!" exclaimed Jennie spontaneously.

The dwarf half turned his face toward her with respectful attention. But Louise, with nervous precipitation, sprang up and begged Captain Mills to come into the other parlor and try a duet with her.

"Craque-o'-Doom plays capitally," exclaimed Tom, moved by the obtuse zeal of his sex.—
"Come on, old man, and give the girls some music."

"If they will remain seated here and not watch my contortions at the piano," he replied, with a

delicacy which touched Louise, "perhaps I can entertain them."

"Please do," murmured the young ladies.

"But we may applaud?" said Rhoda.

"I am not accustomed to applause," replied the dwarf, smiling, as he rose.

Tom and he went in to the piano, and they heard him rolling a hassock to the piano-stool and saying, "I have to mount these revolving light-houses carefully, you know." Then the keys responded to such a touch as had never before visited them. He began playing a movement from Liszt's "Tarantella."

"I don't know what that is," murmured Jennie. But Rhoda Jones sat rapt. His execution was wonderfully brilliant, yet of so sympathetic a quality that a listener was always strangely moved by it.

Tom stood, with one hand on his hip, at the end of the piano, and watched the dwarf's lithe, floating fingers with interest. He would have preferred a good tune to which he could pat his toe in accompaniment, but it gratified him to see a little monstrosity like Craque-o'-Doom so well up in a higher kind of gymnastics. It escaped his observation that Tamsin Chenoworth's younger sister was at the long veranda-window flattening her cheek against the glass in a vain effort to see who could be creating such sounds within.

When the selection was finished, a feverish hand-clapping in the back parlor succeeded.

"I shall not touch that piano again while I am here," said Rhoda decidedly.

"Isn't it queer he can play so?" whispered Louise.

As Tom moved out of the way, Tillie, on the veranda, got a look at the dwarf wriggling off the piano-stool. She gave a jump which landed her in the path, took to her heels, and banged the gate behind her in a mad flight toward home.

CHAPTER X.

"GIVE ME YOUR HAND."

A WINTER thaw made Barnet the most dismal place on earth. The pike stood up like a causeway between sluggish streams of water. A landscape of mud and fog, through which the canal crept like a yellow snake, cheered the looker-out. A smell of stables, of fat burnt half a mile away, and an all-prevailing odor of old clothes, invaded the most unlikely places. Drip, drip, drip, all day and all night long, the rain splashed from the eaves. And there was no pleasure in a heaped-up fire, for it suffocated. The homesteads looked draggled, and smoke trailed along the ground, leaving a sediment of soot on fence and despondent tree. Every umbrella perambulating the streets as if under protest said to every other umbrella it met, propelled by a pair of high boots with pantaloons stuck in them, "Well, what do you think of this weather?" Trains three miles away could be plainly heard breathing, and their whistles seemed shrieking in people's front yards.

The young ladies at the Hill-house tried to return their calls before the date of their depar-

ture, but after one or two attempts came driving home with flecks of mud on their faces. Barnet streets were bottomless. Tom could not take his deformed friend out to see his barns, or his vineyard on the side-hill, without the risk of swamping him in mud. The most reliable spots of soil had grown strangely spongy, and pools stood on flat surfaces.

The first day of this weather the inmates of the house laudably attempted to amuse each other, but after that there was a natural falling away into groups of one or two. The girls lounged in Rhoda's room, where there was an open fire, declaring that the register in their own apartment was more than they could endure. Rhoda shut herself in the small library, which was little more than an alcove off the back parlor, and entered upon inky mysteries which she called blocking out a short sketch. Captain Mills and his friend had each other for constant company.

Tom was obliged to ride away late on an afternoon to attend to some urgent business. "If we could take any kind of a vehicle, I would ask you to go along," he said ruefully: "the drive might be better than moping in the house, though I don't relish the prospect. You'll have to try and amuse yourself. I guess the girls have all taken to novels."

"Don't be disturbed about me," said Craque-o'-

Doom. "Though I like your society, as you know, I'm accustomed to having a great deal of my own. A fellow of my sort studies his resources. Do you think I shall disturb anybody if I thump the piano softly?"

"Not a bit: they enjoy your playing."

"I don't mean to play, but to see what you have in your collection of music."

"You won't find anything to your taste," exclaimed Captain Tom. "The fact is, we ain't musical down here. The girls may have brought some new pieces, but that old yellow pile all belonged to my sister. I used to like her playing, but I didn't know anything about it. Well, I have to be off."

"I hope you'll have a pleasant ride."

Tom twisted his face: "That can't be done along the bank of a yellow ditch oozing with slush."

"Tamsin," said Aunt Sally to her young handmaid, "here's a new calico dress-pattern I've had around the house since last summer, but never made up. That's Merrimac print, and will wash and wear well. This sack and skirt you've got on is too good to wear about your work in the mornings. You ought to have a calico; and now, while there's nothing doing, we'll cut this out and begin to make it up for you."

Tamsin's face, richer in its tones and softer in its

lines than it had been a week before, grew warm with a flush singularly veiled by its transparent olive skin. She said slowly, "I'm much obliged. If you will let it go on my wages—"

"Now, nonsense!" exclaimed Aunt Sally. "I shan't do anything of the kind. It's stuff I've had about the house, and it'll make you a good dress: so say no more about it, but let us get to work."

The capable old lady got out her lap board and shears: she had a poor opinion of anything not cut on her lap-board. She cut out a yoke for the calico dress. It was to be gathered full into a belt, hang straight without an overskirt, and have a ruffle around the bottom. That was the way they cut calico dresses just after the war, and Aunt Sally saw no occasion for changing such an excellent fashion, if the girls in town did rig themselves out and cut good cloth to silly waste. Tamsin, on her part, accustomed to the more ancient cutting of her mother, who made even Tillie look like a small but unrevised edition of our pioneer grandmothers, found the fashion of her new calico pleasing to her sight. She dimly foresaw the effect on a pliant figure, and stitched awkwardly at the gathers while Aunt Sally sewed the long seams on her old Wheeler & Wilson,—the first machine which had ever come into Barnet.

Over its clatter, minor and major chords, swelling and receding, came through the dining-room

door with the regular lap of the tide. This music stirred queer sensations in Tamsin; she half resented being so moved. Time and circumstances melted from around her; she was in a great city, in a musky atmosphere, living with intense eagerness and delight. Or some dormant unknown power within herself half awoke and muttered inaudible promises about her future.

The sewing-machine clattered on until, all the long seams being done, Aunt Sally took off her spectacles. "You can go right ahead with your work, Tamsin," said she. "I must have my nap before tea-time. There was a remarkable piece in my *Banner of Light* I wanted to glance at, too." She added afterward, from the back parlor, "Tamsin, come in here with your work, and see that this fire doesn't go down. I told Neal to let the furnace die out; but we must have some heat in the rooms this damp weather."

Tamsin brought her sewing to the grate. She sat there alone. The eaves dripped, and the woods tore rags of cloud which scudded over them. Craque-o'-Doom played softly, as if he were whispering to the piano. The thread knotted as if it knew it was in a Chenoworth's fingers, and as fast as she conquered one knot another harder one challenged her. She forgot the sound of the piano, and was not conscious of any changes in the room, until, looking up vaguely disturbed, she

saw the dwarf sitting down on a hassock at the opposite side of the fire.

Neither party gave any sign of having noticed the other. Craque-o'-Doom warmed his delicate hands at the blaze: he loved fire, and huddled toward it as toward a companion. The coals murmured faintly in their self-communing way, and occasionally a bit of slate cracked in the heat and popped over the bars, as if entirely dissenting from what it heard around it.

Craque-o'-Doom looked at the girl's bowed face and motionless eyelids. Her hand went to and fro, drawing a long thread: it was a red hand. Her posture was one of reticence and repose.

"I saw your father this morning," said Craque-o'-Doom.

Tamsin raised her head, her black eyes seeming to shoot out in her face. She did not speak, but looked thoroughly on the defensive.

The dwarf rested his gaze on her: "He is an old man, and appears as if life had not used him kindly." This mellow voice seemed to be making tender excuses for the old Chenoworth's thriftlessness. "There is a large family of you?"

Tamsin replied, under constraint, "Yes."

"What are you going to do?" Here again he touched her bruises with a delicate hand. He assumed that she meant to do something in the world.

"I don't know," said Tamsin slowly and gropingly. They still looked straight at each other. She added, "Something for Tillie,—my little sister."

"You love Tillie?"

"Yes," said Tamsin. But the change in her face made him pore over it.

"Don't you love your father and all your family?"

Her face became opaque again, just as cloud grows dense over a breaking through of light. "No: I hate 'em," she said deliberately, as if having made up her mind to this confidence.

He appeared to weigh the statement. "I have no family," he said wistfully. "If I had a father, I think I could love him."

"Yes," assented Tamsin, "because he wouldn't be good-for-nothing." She rose up suddenly, startled by the loss of her self-control and life-long reticence. The calico and scissors fell from her lap. "What makes me talk this way to *you*?" she said under her breath.

"Sit down," said Craque-o'-Doom. His eyes were lambent; his face worked. Tamsin sat down, and reached to gather her materials again. He sprang and picked them up for her. "How like a frog I move!" he muttered, looking up at the woman's perplexing face, and, turning, he walked across the room, then came back and stood before her. "Did you ever see anything more ridiculous

than the figure I cut?" he asked. The girl did not reply. She looked at him. He put his hand out and seized hers with a grip: "There! Does your flesh creep, child?"

She certainly recoiled, with that glow under the skin which was her habit in blushing. Still, the recoil was not of a quality which expressed utter aversion. He locked his nervous fingers about the hand. "I am going to do so strange a thing! Child, you are miserable; I can do so much for you. Give me this hand,—marry me! I can see great possibilities in you. You shall have a full life. Why need you live like a slave, when I can open such advantages to you?" He dropped her hand: there was the sound of running feet coming down the front stairway. Tamsin moved quickly toward the dining-room door. "If you can consent to what I have asked," said Craque-o'-Doom distinctly but guardedly, as she turned her cheek over her shoulder, taking one more frightened glance at him, "reach out your hand toward me."

She disappeared through the door. The supple red hand lingered on the knob, was thrust suddenly toward him, and withdrawn just as one of the young ladies came into the parlor.

CHAPTER XI.

THEIR PLANS.

RHODA JONES was the first of the household to draw with appreciation toward the hearth-flame as dusk set in. Neal had remembered the fire which Tamsin had deserted; it glowed up to the chimney, and its glimmering cheered Captain Tom when he rode by to the stables.

When he entered the room, Rhoda was basking there,—alone, as she supposed; but while Tom was turning himself and putting a boot-heel on the fender, Craque-o'-Doom let himself down from a sofa at the other end of the parlor and approached them.

"I didn't know anybody was about," said Rhoda with a start. "It's so dusky back there!"

"And I start out of the dusk like a spider out of a web and sling myself off on an invisible thread." He leaned against the mantel, opposite Captain Mills, who immediately felt gigantic, and said so.

"I feel myself turn into a sort of Gulliver when he is by," said Rhoda. "It seems as if he were the proper size, and all the rest of us monstrous growths."

"You are very kind people," said Craque-o'-

Doom: "I'm sure you do your best to consider me human." He laughed. "But I am about to tell you something which will shake your faith in me as a model pigmy." He braced himself against the mantel and looked up at Tom, as if dreading that veteran's hard sense and practical force.

"If I am *de trop*—" said Rhoda, half rising.

Craque-o'-Doom motioned her back into her seat: "Not at all, Miss Jones. I really think I want the support of your presence.—Tom, when we were roughing it up in Canada, did you ever think I was soft-headed?"

"Why, no! What do you mean by 'soft-headed'?"

"I mean liable to turn fool. I've expected to have a lonesome life of it, and prepared myself. I give you my word of honor, I never thought of marrying till I came here. Richard isn't the shape to attract, and, in face of this truth, I never have done any woman the dishonor to think that my money might buy her; but not two hours ago I asked a woman to marry me."

"The dickens you did!" exclaimed Captain Mills, aghast. "Well, that was better than slumping along a dirty canal-bank in the rain. What did she say?"

Craque-o'-Doom folded his arms: "She didn't refuse.—Miss Jones, I want you to tell me candidly if I am taking unfair advantage of that girl."

"What girl?" interposed Tom. "You're taking unfair advantage of me. I don't get hold of the thing at all. You say you've proposed seriously to marry somebody?"

"She has a struggle before her for the bare means of life," continued the dwarf, still addressing Rhoda, and keeping a check on himself. "Every circumstance is against her. I could give her education, travel, refining surroundings. I feel certain she could be developed into a remarkable woman."

"So do I," coincided Rhoda.—"It's Tamsin," she said, nodding her head toward Captain Mills.

He put his hands in his pockets and walked across the room whistling.

"Now, do you think it would be an unnatural and horrible thing to—to—I've been puzzling. Perhaps I took an unfair advantage of the lonely child. She touches me so," pleaded the dwarf. "Miss Jones, I can't tell how she moves me. She is a mere unformed child: I have thought I might educate her and leave her free. But that wouldn't do,—that wouldn't do. Besides—" He paused, and broke out with a half-fierce exclamation: "I *want* her! Do you see me? She has no horror of my shape. Isn't it wonderful there should be a woman who can look at me without shuddering? Come back, Tom: I'm not going to be sentimental any further than this." Captain Mills approached

the fire with his face awry. "So, you see, I'm afraid my selfishness is going to take undue advantage of her. But now tell me honestly, both of you: if I make her my wife only in name, and give her the opportunities she ought to have, and when she is a woman let her choose— A great many things might happen,—my death, you know,—in case she elected not to—" He looked down at his hands, as though he held his ravelled sentences hopelessly there.

"Craque-o'-Doom," said Tom, resting one palm on the wall above the mantel, like a man bracing the established order of things, "I'm afraid you're going to make a confounded fool of yourself.—Excuse me, Miss Rhoda.—Now, what under the heavens can you want of that girl?"

"Captain Mills," put in Rhoda decidedly, "I think the whole thing's splendid. I never should have thought of it; but it's like a fairy-story for Tamsin."

"For Tamsin? Oh, yes! But see here, now. Here's a man, he has money, education, and talents enough to balance his deformity, and he's going to pick up one of our Chenoworths! Why, Craque-o'-Doom, they're low: they couldn't appreciate the barest idea of yours, and they'd all prey on you like rats. I don't say but the girl's a good girl—"

"She is," pronounced the dwarf, frowning.

"But she's not your equal, and never will be."

"You don't know that," said Rhoda.

"Pshaw!" growled the captain. "Why, I'm thunderstruck! Marry, man, if you want to, of course: you don't have to ask my advice; but I do hate to see you stoop down to the gutter. Oh, yes, she'd take you: I don't doubt it for a minute. Why shouldn't she? But after you'd mismatched yourself, what then? Good Lord, boy! you ought to see the whole tribe of Chenoworths! A pretty connection they will be. Because you are unfortunate in one single particular, there's no use in throwing yourself away entirely."

"Tom, I don't expect you to see the thing as I do, and a man of my sort must necessarily suffer more crosses than anybody else." The dwarf's nostrils flared, and the clear white of his face became more apparent. "I simply beg of you to forbear with me. I cannot explain to you how I am impelled to this thing, nor how I regard this young lady, with all her drawbacks."

"This young *lady*." Rhoda patted her palms together.

Tom stooped over the hearth and offered his hand to his friend. They exchanged a hearty grasp. "You must pardon me, Craque-o'-Doom. I don't mean to offend you: I was sort of taken back. They say folks always will meddle with other folks' marriages. I won't say another word."

"But what are your plans?" inquired Rhoda with energetic interest.

The dwarf replied to her inquiry with a puzzled face: "I haven't any. Must I make plans?"

"Certainly. I am going to be married, and I have lots of plans. Are you going to take charge of the child soon, or let her be as she is awhile?"

"Soon, I should think, if she is willing."

Tom groaned. Both looked up at him. "I didn't say anything," said he.

"You didn't make half so much fuss over my prospective taking off," said Rhoda, shaking her head at him.

"The whole thing is so new to me," pleaded the dwarf. "I don't know what is best for her. I never had much experience with women."

"You'll have to ask her father, you know," mentioned Captain Mills, pulling down the ends of his moustache.

"Of course," said Craque-o'-Doom with child-like simplicity. But his eyes still turned to Rhoda for counsel. "If that odd preliminary which you call getting married were over," he continued, "I think I should like to put her to some good school of your choosing,—right away."

Miss Jones inwardly ejaculated over the weakness and helplessness which men are constantly revealing between the joints of their noble armor. Craque-o'-Doom had impressed her as a condensed

man of fine quality: he ought to come out a bold cavalier under circumstances which belittled his brethren. "Well, but that 'odd preliminary' requires consideration. You have to prepare for it; you have to set a day, and get the legal papers and a minister; the friends of the contracting parties must be consulted,—unless you steal your bride away, as the Romans despoiled the Sabines."

The dwarf pressed his handkerchief to his forehead: "I wouldn't do that, of course. I should want to take her honorably and deliberately into my care."

"Now you're talking sense," exclaimed the captain. "Give yourself time; deliberate over it. Tamsin's not much more than a child, as you say. Six months from now, if you insist on making a match of it, will do well enough."

"But meantime she ought to be improving herself."

"Oh, she won't do any worse than she's been doing."

"You would counsel me to let her lose six months of her best time?"

"I'm not saying anything, mind. Why, man, you act as if she were a suddenly discovered gem whom nobody could properly set but yourself!"

"You never thought of setting her or bringing out her brilliancy, did you?"

"No, I never did: the Chenoworths are too many for me. If I began that sort of thing, I'd never get to the end of it."

"What you have to do," exclaimed Rhoda with a slight tinge of impatience, "is to consult Tamsin and see what she wishes."

Craque-o'-Doom folded and unfolded his arms and braced himself more firmly against the mantel: "Miss Jones, you are very kind, and you know a young girl better than I do. Perhaps, after all, I have presumed in taking a mere motion of hers for a consent which I very much desired. If *you* would see her—"

"Tamsin never has much to say for herself," corroborated Tom in a relieved tone.—"If you had a downright talk with her, Miss Rhoda—"

"I'd try to make her appreciate the position," said Rhoda.

A tinkle at the farther end of the room, followed by the mild outblossoming of a wax light, another and another, called their attention to Tamsin lighting the three-branched candlestick on a table. Aunt Sally had sent her down by way of the front stairway to supply Neal's place while he went on an errand. The group remained silent while she wheeled the table forward. She then carried a taper to the candlestick at each end of the mantel.

Both men looked at her as she stood on the rug extending her arm.

"We were just talking about you, Tamsin," said Captain Mills. "You'd better leave the lighting up to somebody else: these two want to say something to you."

"Now, if that isn't just like a man!" thought Rhoda. "He puts things in a jumble and expects somebody else to get them out."

Having touched the candles, Tamsin threw her burnt taper into the grate. She stood with her eyes down, visibly quivering.

"Sit down," said Miss Jones, drawing her to a convenient chair. "Don't be alarmed by this solemn fuss: it's in the masculine nature to be pompous and cumbersome. Captain Mills merely wanted to congratulate you. Mr. Sutton has been telling us, you see. I congratulate you with all my heart: I think it's wonderful and delightful. You're quite the heroine of a fairy-story. While I consider fairies things of the imagination, and sentiment quite out of place in this present world, there's some sentiment or witchery in this which I appreciate." While Rhoda rattled ahead, the younger girl was gazing at her with piteous appeal, as if in a torment she could not express, and the dwarf in some pliant and bewildered mood strange to his experience, waiting to be placed or guided. —"Captain Mills, you haven't taken Tamsin by the hand and congratulated her formally, however you may have done with Mr. Sutton."

The captain took Tamsin's motionless hand and congratulated her, with helpless grooves in his cheeks. She made no response.

"And now," said Rhoda, seizing her wrist in a confidential way, "Mr. Sutton says he will see your family at once."

Tamsin winced. Rhoda felt it, and patted her hand caressingly.

"If you wish it," said Craque-o'-Doom, gazing on her averted face, "if you *wish* to—to come into my care. If you do not, my child, I will think nothing of the little sign you were so kind as to give me. It would be my desire to take you away with me immediately and place you where you could be educated under the oversight of a lady like Miss Jones. But if you would rather take six months to think about it, I will leave at once and wait. Or I will go and never come back again, if you say so."

Tamsin sat like a stone figure.

"Well, Tamsin?" said Captain Mills interrogatively. He felt strained and annoyed.

It was a surprise to see Tamsin turn toward him. She looked up his length and dwelt on his face; then she looked at her wooer. He was turning whiter every moment. "I could go now," she said. "But there's Tillie."

"You can have her with you," said Craque-o'-Doom,

Rhoda noticed a tremor pass through the wrist she held.

"Thank you."

"I thank *you*," said the dwarf. He shaded his face with his hand. "You can have your sister with you in everything," he continued, "and give her whatever you wish."

"Thank you," whispered Tamsin, again.

"You see, I don't want to make you unhappy in any way," explained Craque-o'-Doom.

Tamsin looked into the fire.

"Now, Tamsin—" said Aunt Sally, entering from the dining-room.—"Why, here you all are around the fire.—Tamsin?" She put on her glasses and looked at them with a puzzled face.

"We're going to part with Tamsin, aunt," said Tom, wheeling slowly. "My friend here proposes to marry her and send her to school."

Aunt Sally stared at every one in turn: "Who?—Mr. Sutton? Going to marry Tamsin?" The unnaturalness of such a match rendered her speechless. She said no more, but went to the table, and, taking up Andrew Jackson Davis, began to turn the leaves with an air of intense preoccupation and interest.

The clock ticked very loud. But Rhoda kept on patting and stroking that poor hand which was being given away under general disapproval.

CHAPTER XII.

TILLIE.

It was the very next forenoon that old Mr. Chenoworth was surprised by a call from the dwarf. He was hammering at a chair-bottom. The naked floor showed a stain or two of grease, trodden into it by careless feet around the breakfast-table; his wife sat mending variegated trousers; Sarah Jane, with her sickly baby on her hip, trailed disconsolately about at some domestic task; ridges of dry mud stood on the rough boards; a sobbing stick of wood on the rusty fire-irons sent out puffs of smoke at the old man, as if to further cure his dry, shrivelled skin.

Tillie leaned against the unpainted strip which served as window-sill, in one of her rare quiet moods. Her eyes looked deep, and her lips moved occasionally as she told some story to herself or repeated odd scraps and words which the outside world suggested to her. "I see a horse and buggy comin'," droned Tillie. "It's Tamsin, comin' to take me to a picnic 'way up in the clouds. We'll wear dresses that hang out behind us ever so, like them girls up at Mills's. We'll have tur-

key and cake and ice-cream. Here's the carriage. Stop, carriage, and let me git in.—It *is* a-stoppin'!" concluded the child in astonishment.—"Daddy, the's somebody come."

"It's just Arter," said Sarah Jane: "I saw him crossin' the common."

"'Tain't, either. Oh, my! let me git under the bed!—It's that little bit of a man, mammy! He's comin' into our house!"

Out of the mud-splashed coupé Craque-o'-Doom descended to the gate, and made his way with difficulty on chips and bits of board to the door-step.

"You open the door, Sary Jane," said Mrs. Chenoworth when his rap was heard.—"Come out from behind my cheer, Tillie. Nobody ain't goin' to hurt you. How simple you are!"

The old man suspended his chair-mending as Sarah Jane opened the door and stood with her baby on her hip. The dwarf lifted his hat: "Is Mr. Chenoworth at home?"

"Yes; he's here. Will you come in?" He came in, and Tillie disappeared behind her mother.

To a suitor of his organization, the place was most trying. These untutored people looked at him as if he had been a strange, harmless reptile. Sarah Jane's baby began to cry, and she felt warranted to assure it audibly, "Hush, you little cross-patch! 'Twon't hurt ye!"

Tom had offered to come with his friend, but Craque-o'-Doom spared him.

"Are you Mr. Chenoworth?" said the dwarf, addressing the old man. "Yes, I remember your face: I saw you passing along the road a few days ago."

The chair-maker dropped his under jaw and peered round-eyed through his spectacles. To hear of a dwarf is one thing; to see him striding on span-long legs before you is another.

"Set a cheer, Sary Jane," said Mrs. Chenoworth in a doubtful tone; but their visitor scaled it dexterously.

"It's very muddy weather," volunteered Sarah Jane in addition. She wanted people to know she had been away from Barnet and knew how to act in company, if she was unfortunate.

"Yes, the road is bad," said Craque-o'-Doom. He saw the smoke-grimed walls, the dull, poverty-tried faces. Tillie peeped cautiously around the legs of her mother's chair, and he saw her.

"That's my baby," said Mrs. Chenoworth, with a diffident cough and toothless smile. "She's afeard."

"Don't be afraid of me, Tillie," begged Craque-o'-Doom with a thread of pain in his voice. But Tillie quite disappeared and stuffed herself under the chair-seat. His actually knowing her name was so uncanny! "Come out and talk to me. I've brought you a message from Tamsin."

Tillie ruminated before she looked cautiously at him again. He sat quite still and harmless; his legs hung down a very little distance, but his face, though it wore an anxious look, rather won on her favor.

"Tillie," said Sarah Jane, "if you don't come out o' there, I'll pull ye out, or git Arter to. Folks 'll think you ain't learnt no manners."

The hulking cousin had just entered through the back door. He was a domestic loafer, who preferred a kindred fireside to the down-town store-counters. After a prolonged gaze at Craque-o'-Doom, he took a seat by the chimney, and sat evidently congratulating himself on being there for the occasion.

"What word did she send?" inquired Tillie, popping her head wearily around the chair.

"She would like to have you come and take hold of my hand."

"I can't do that, ary time."

"You mustn't mind what she says," observed Mrs. Chenoworth, with an apologetic glimmer on her face. "We've humored Tillie so much she's spilet."

Mr. Chenoworth had been wondering what this visit meant. He now made a motion as if he intended to resume his chair-mending, but checked himself and hospitably requested Arter to give that 'ere stick of wood a kick and make it burn better.

Arter kicked it with a boot very much out of repair, and upset one of the andirons, righted it with his calloused hand, and jumped at the burn, grinning around on the other inmates as he rubbed and nursed his hand on his knee.

How cloddish and unsavory poor Tamsin's people were! They seemed to have neither the instinctive method of brutes nor the reasoning forethought of man.

"I came to speak to you about your daughter Tamsin, Mr. Chenoworth," said the dwarf.

The old man made a grimace by twisting up one side of his cheek, which he scratched with dirty nails. "What's *she* been doin'?" he inquired disconsolately.

"Nothing,—except making friends who esteem her." Craque-o'-Doom's refined face put on an appealing expression. He felt more distressed and at a greater disadvantage than ever before in his life. "I want to marry her and take her away with me, if you consent to it."

Mr. Chenoworth bent forward, puckering his tufted gray brows. He gave a half-humorous chuckle: "Sho, now! *You* don't want to git *morried*? What do *you* want to git morried for?"

"I am wealthy," the dwarf continued, his steel-gray eyes glowing with white heat: "I can give her every luxury and advantage, with the only drawback that you see,—a deformed husband. She

has signified her willingness to take me, but of course I want the sanction of her parents."

For the first time in his existence, Craque-o'-Doom felt the arrogant power of money. "I am wealthy" swept over his listeners like a wave which returned to him bearing a full freight of deference.

"Tamsin's a good girl," murmured Mrs. Chenoworth.

"She is, madam. And I will do everything in my power to make such a woman of her as you will be proud of."

Sarah Jane's face puckered with a spasm of envy. She shook the whimpering baby. Arter, with the mouth and eyes of a fish, sat devouring this astounding scene.

"How much might you be worth, Mister ——?" inquired the old man, affecting a cautious tone.

"I beg your pardon," said Craque-o'-Doom, taking a card-case from an inner pocket. "Here is my name and address: in my confusion at first I forgot to introduce myself. You can make inquiries about me of Captain Mills, one of your most reliable neighbors."

"Yes," replied the old man, nervously doubling the pasteboard with his fingers, while his mind staggered beneath this new weight of courtesy, "I knowed who you was, and that you b'longed up at the Hill-house. The boys they seed you; Tillie she seed you, too. I s'pose it's all right."

"As to the question you asked," continued Craque-o'-Doom, "I have property amounting to several hundred thousand dollars, and I have a good head for managing it."

Mrs. Chenoworth had dropped her sewing and leaned her head to one side. The old man gave a gasp and swallowed: "Sho! Did you make all that in the show-business?"

"I never was in any show-business. I inherited it from my father."

Mr. Chenoworth stared in a trance of astonishment that so much wealth should be not only within hearing distance, but on the border of his family.

"Well, what is your answer?" said the dwarf, anxious to bring this conference to a close.

"Oh, I s'pose it's all right.—Ain't it, mammy?" responded the old man with an affected indifference not to be found outside of the poor-white type.

"I hain't no objections," said Mrs. Chenoworth in a quavering, deferential tone. "The children gener'ly does as they want to."

"Thanks! Then I may marry your daughter from your house? I prefer, on all accounts, to take her directly from her own home." All eyes roamed about the place and came back to Craque-o'-Doom. Queer as his figure was, he looked so daintily foreign to such surroundings that an embarrassed silence followed. "I think it only

proper," he added, "that her own parents and home should give her to me."

Mrs. Chenoworth was touched, and wiped one eye with the back of her finger: "You and her can git married here if you want to. But you're used to so much better things than poor folks has!"

"That will make no difference whatever." Craque-o'-Doom moved to descend from his chair, when Tillie advanced and stood within a few feet of him. She had gradually crept out of her concealment and stretched her thin neck after every item of the conversation. He waited, and smiled kindly into her pale-blue eyes: "Will you shake hands with me when I am your brother?"

"You ain't a-goin' to be my brother," resisted Tillie. "You're too little." She puckered her face and drew a sob.

"Tut-tut!" said the old father sharply.

"But you may go with Tamsin, and she will give you everything in the world you want. Look at me, Tillie: am I so frightful to you?"

"You don't look as bad as ye did at first. But I don't want you to git married to Tamsin. Her and me is such friends! She could marry her sister." The Chenoworth idea of intermarriage appeared to have no limit in Tillie's view.

"But wouldn't you like to have Tamsin go to school and learn everything?"

"To play music?"

"Yes."

"And to dance like them girls up there?"

"Yes. And grow so beautiful and know so much that you would be proud of her?" He drew his pictures for the child with a wistful, patient tenderness to which she insensibly responded, and which touched the others in different ways. Arter sulked forward with forearms on his knees; poor Sarah Jane settled into piteous longing; the father and mother listened in dazed and stolid silence. "Wouldn't you like to see her in pretty dresses riding behind fine horses, or in her own house, which is very much prettier than Captain Mills's?"

"Yes; I wouldn't mind that," relented Tillie. "But I don't want her to git married."

"And wouldn't you like to go with her to the sea-side, and have a little bathing-suit, and take baths, and watch all the great people from the cities in gorgeous dresses, and have a pony and carriage of your own—a wee pony so little you could climb on him from the ground?"

"Yes; I wouldn't mind that," admitted Tillie, with a deep breath. "But she won't like me any more."

"She will love you more dearly than ever; she will have more time to be with you. You may go with her through her school course; and when-

ever I send Tamsin a gift there will be one for her little sister with it."

"He's a rich man," said the old father, nodding to Tillie with emphasis.

The child kindled with anticipations: "And will you git mammy a new coffee-pot? The old one leaks all over the stove."

"Sh!" hissed Sarah Jane, while the mother wiped her eyes and laughed weakly.

"Certainly," said Craque-o'-Doom. "Ask her to accept this as a present from Tamsin." He took from his breast-pocket a large sealed envelope, in which, before starting, he had placed a pile of bank-bills with a confused desire to do something for Tamsin's relatives and a fear that he could not do it delicately.

Tillie approached a step nearer and took hold of the envelope: "What's this here?"

"Something which Tamsin sends your mother."

Tillie felt of it.

"Give it over to me," said old Mr. Chenoworth, extending his hand. The child obeyed him. His tone and his greedy motion repelled the dwarf.

Craque-o'-Doom descended from his chair with his hat in his hand. He did not want to see the old man pry into the envelope. A sudden shudder ran through him. They were all so indifferent; it was like barter and sale. "Tamsin will return home," he said; "I will send her down in my

vehicle. I would like to have the—the ceremony take place two days from this time. She can make any arrangements she pleases.”

“I s’pose it’s all right,” repeated Mr. Chenoworth monotonously, rubbing and gripping the envelope. He was embarrassed, but quite unconscious of behaving in a singular manner. The deformed man magnetized and overpowered him.

“She ought to be thankful the longest day she lives for such a chance!” burst from Sarah Jane’s fountain of general injuries. “But Tamsin never will: she’s too big-feelin’!”

The dwarf had already reached the door. He bowed himself out, apparently not hearing this remark. Tillie followed.

“I don’t call it much of a chance,” growled Arter, lifting himself after the door closed,—“her gittin’ married to a little bit of a critter all shut up together like that.”

“She wouldn’t have you, Arter, nohow,” said the old man with a hard-featured smile as he ran his forefinger under the flap of the envelope.

“How much is it, daddy?” inquired Sarah Jane. She brought the baby and stood by him. Arter looked on with dogged interest; the mother left her mending and approached. They counted the rustling notes.

“As much as three hundred dollars!” said Sarah Jane. “Tam can have everything heart can wish,

an' me a-slavin' around, and this cross young-one—Shut up, or I'll slap ye good!"

"'Tisn't the poor baby's fault that it's here, Sary Jane," remonstrated her mother with plaintive resentment.

"I don't care," said Sarah Jane, crying; "it's somebody's fault that I have things so hard and Tam has 'em so easy!"

Craque-o'-Doom had just leaned back in his carriage, conscious that heads were staring from all the little houses around, feeling an odd sickness at heart, and convinced that Tamsin Chenoworth could scarcely fall into poorer hands than those from which he was taking her, when a voice called to him. He looked out of the coupé-window and saw Tillie sitting on the gate-post. The driver started. "Wait a minute," said Craque-o'-Doom.

"I said I'd thought it over," repeated Tillie, "and I don't want none o' them things. I just want Tamsin. I think more o' her ner anything else. Ye can't have her."

Craque-o'-Doom laughed, feeling his breath come more freely. He threw a kiss at the tallow-colored child as his vehicle started.

"Ph!" blew Tillie, dabbing her hand at him in a resentful fashion. "You quit throwin' your old kisses at me; I won't have 'em. Tamsin's *my* sister; she ain't yours. And you can't git her for kisses, neither: so you stop your old self."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ODD PRELIMINARY.

PERHAPS there never was a more wretched day than the one appointed for solemnizing the tie which Craque-o'-Doom had called "that odd preliminary." Mud and sky seemed longing to meet, and a driving rain did its best to create such a union. Smoke and draggling cloud could not be distinguished. Farmers coming to the village on loaded wagons were obliged to turn out of the impassable roads and open ways through sodden fields. The Hill-house party, having prolonged their stay from a sympathetic curiosity in the dwarf's wedding, were to be carried with him to the railroad-station that day,—a nearly impossible journey had not the railroad intersected the pike.

Of course Tamsin's preparations were small.

"If you will be so kind," said Craque-o'-Doom to Rhoda, "as to take her in charge and buy her a full outfit when we reach the city, I shall be under further obligations."

"Don't feel distressed about any obligations," urged Miss Jones: "there's nothing I delight in

more than spending money. I never had much of my own to spend, and I take a savage joy in getting hold of other people's and disbursing it. I know just what Tamsin wants,—she wants pretty nearly everything, poor child!—and you may rely on me to choose it for her."

Jennie and Louise convened in Rhoda's room, and were anxious to do something for the bride.

"I never heard of such a match," declared Jennie; "but of course it's a great thing for her. Aunt Sally says her sisters turned out badly: I hope nothing'll happen to disappoint the poor girl. Do you suppose she likes him?"

Louise shook her head very positively: "He isn't bad-looking in the face, but oh, my, Jen! just think of walking into church with a man whose head wouldn't reach the top of the pews, and everybody staring at you! Would any amount of money make you do it? He can't dance. She'll have to pay some attention to him. If I had to sit at home alone with him and look at him a whole evening, I should go out of my senses."

"So should I. But Cousin Tom is so mad about it! He seems to think Mr. Craque-o'-Doom, or whatever his name is, could marry a princess if he wanted to. I wonder if he'll get her diamonds? Oh, wouldn't she be in luck if he'd die and leave her a rich widow while she's at school! It must be splendid to be a young widow

with lots of money! Widows are so much more independent than girls."

"Well, there's nothing sentimental in that," remarked Rhoda: "still, I don't quite approve of it. But you needn't go to overhauling your wardrobes. We're not to sew for Tamsin or bestow anything upon her: she's to wear a long cloak over her red-and-black dress, a felt hat, and some gloves. They're my things; and I have to take them back when she gets her outfit."

"Won't she make a funny-looking bride?" mused Jennie.

"Poor child! She's going into the care of a good guardian, rather than getting married. I don't think of her as a bride, but as an adopted orphan starting to boarding-school."

"It's funny to watch Aunt Sally since this business came on the carpet," laughed Jennie: "she's so puzzled, and so kind. She doesn't know how to treat Tamsin, and she looks at that little man as if he were a frog going to lap in a fly and she ought to drive him off."

Tamsin had gone home the day before her wedding. About dusk Craque-o'-Doom drove to her father's gate, but before he could alight she came running out wrapped in her old faded shawl. "Don't come in," she said at the carriage-door, without assigning any reason for the request. Her eyelids looked dark and swollen

"Get in the carriage, then," said he. "You must not stand with the rain drizzling on you."

"I can't," said Tamsin; "I must go straight back."

With some authority he turned down the step and drew her to a seat. She leaned back opposite him. "I merely came to see if there was anything else for me to attend to," said Craque-o'-Doom. "Is there?"

"I don't know," said Tamsin. Her throat swelled, and the exclamation seemed to burst from it: "Tillie can't go!"

"Can't go with you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"They won't let her. They say she mustn't leave home." She hid her face under a corner of her shawl.

The dwarf's hands trembled; but he locked them together: "Poor child! that is a bitter disappointment to you."

"I've never been away from Tillie."

He meditated in deep disquiet: "But they will let her come to you often?"

"I don't know."

"At any rate, you can come to see her as much as you wish." After an instant he added, "Will this make any difference about *your* going, my child? It is not too late to draw back yet; a

young girl may change her mind at the last minute in such an important step. Speak out."

Tamsin put down her shawl. "No, it won't make any difference," she said.

The dwarf gripped his hands together.

She descended the step to go into the house, he helping her. The old shawl caught on a projection, and while he was loosening it he broke a bit of the fringe off: this he clutched under his nails into his palm. "I shall come for you at ten in the morning," said he.

At ten on that dark, ugly wedding-day, therefore, the coupé stood at Chenoworth's gate, and Tom and Rhoda dismounted with Craque-o'-Doom. The neighborhood was agog.

Within, the preacher then stationed with Barnet Methodist Church waited the bridegroom's party. The room had been cleaned; a pleasant odor of coffee came from the kitchen. Sarah Jane conducted the party into the single other apartment to lay off their wrappings on a bed where her baby was asleep. Tamsin sat here, away from the fire, holding Tillie on her lap. The child's face was hid in Tamsin's neck. When Craque-o'-Doom approached them the little one looked up and kicked backward viciously at him.

Captain Mills made an uneasy attempt to be pleasant with old Mr. Chenoworth, who had shaved and looked more cured about the skin than ever,

in spite of some bleeding cuts. The mother had a clean white cloth folded kerchief-wise about her shoulders; Mary and her half-dozen squalid children were there, sitting in a sallow row, all alike excepting in size; Arter peeped in from the kitchen, scowling at everything he saw. The domicile had taken on a very perceptible air of importance: everybody in the street knew that Tamsin was marrying a man rolling in wealth. Some neighbors reprehended the match: they would not on any account see their daughters tied to such a sight as that dwarf. Others hoped Tamsin might never come to grief for jumping at money that way: Mary and Sarah Jane had both had their come-downs: Tamsin wasn't the first Chenoworth that left the family to do better and had to come back to it.

There was a gang of her kindred in the kitchen, collected to eat at the wedding-feast, but not on any account would they show themselves to the fine people, though their noses and eyes lined the door-crack to get a glimpse of the dwarf.

"They're waitin' on ye, Tamsin," said Mrs. Chenoworth, looking into the bedroom.

Craque-o'-Doom stood at a front window, but on hearing this he approached. The girl put her sister down. Tillie turned her face to the wall, and refused to look.

The two went into the general room, where the

minister stood, and Tom and Rhoda were nervously trying to converse, while Mary jerked her sharp, haggard face at her whispering offspring and motioned the yellow cousin she had married back into the kitchen.

Tom turned his face away from the pair when they were seated side by side: this unusual position was an accident. Tamsin sank into a chair, and Craque-o'-Doom took his place near her. When the ceremony was finished, Rhoda intervened between the bride and a rather pompous parade of congratulations from her friends. Coffee and some other refreshments came in, served in a glaring new set of stone-ware china, interspersed among which was a cracked plate or two of the old stock.

Then Tamsin had her wraps on. She was not troubled with luggage. She shook hands with all her people, the women kissing her and Mrs. Chenoworth wiping her own eyes with a plaintive gesture. None of them approached Craque-o'-Doom. Tillie made a plunge, and was held to the poor bride's breast until her wailings were somewhat quieted. She took refuge with her mother, and the party drove away.

Tom Mills had insisted on giving them a second breakfast at his house, but there was only time to reach the station in good season for the train. Jennie and Louise, who were waiting at home, saw

the carriage wallow out of the by-road and turn east on the turnpike, and, somewhat disappointed, hastened their own preparations for departure. Neal drove the Mills carriage on the sweep, and they embraced Aunt Sally in farewell. The old lady looked sadly through her glasses at such a wedding-day, but she did not neglect, at the last moment, to tuck two or three *Banners of Light* into the girls' lunch-basket.

Both carriages arrived at the station in a pour from the trailing skies. There was no awkward waiting about, for the train came just as the party got their tickets and checks ready.

Tom stood on the platform under an umbrella after he had helped the girls embark and taken charge of Craque-o'-Doom's horse and carriage, which the driver was to bring with him in a car chartered for that purpose, attached to a train which followed this one.

They were all seated in the parlor-car. The dwarf waved his hand as he glided past, and Tom stood looking after him, saying aloud, "Poor, poor, poor fellow!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"BUT AFTERWARD."

It was ten o'clock on the next night but one when Rhoda Jones led her charge to their joint sleeping-room in a hotel. They had been travelling a day and a night. Louise Latta and Jennie Mills left the party at a certain junction to take their own road homeward, which was very short. They escaped the all-night smothering in poorly-ventilated berths, though they breathed a couple of sighs in losing sight of Rhoda and Tamsin and the dwarf and the parlor-car.

Tamsin paused in front of the open fire,—a very special apartment had been prepared for them,—but Rhoda moved briskly around, taking off her wraps and opening her travelling-bags. She got out two dressing-sacks covered with little tabs of ribbon and lace, and, having made herself as cosy as possible, took the silent girl in hand. "You're fearfully tired," said Rhoda.

Tamsin looked dazed.

"Now shake yourself a little, and come here to this wash-stand and get a few of the cinders out of your ears, and put on this sack. You don't know

how it will freshen you up. The private supper Mr. Sutton ordered will be served in our parlor pretty soon."

"I ain't hungry," murmured Tamsin.

"Aren't you? I am,—ferociously." Rhoda was unwrapping and doing her up in the dressing-sack while she talked. It was a cream-colored fabric, and instantly improved on the effect produced by the poor bride's scarlet waist.

"Tamsin," said Miss Jones positively, "you're going to make a striking woman. I never saw any one change with clothes as you do. Oh, shan't we have you looking delightful! You can have things a little bit nicer than most school-girls, on account of your position, and in a little while you will learn to demand this or that as your irreversible right. How adaptable human beings are! Does this roar and tumult confuse you?"

"I think it does, some."

"Well, you'll get over that, and love a city as much as I do."

"I think I should like it."

"Certainly. We'll take a carriage and shop for dear life for you all this week."

The private supper was served up very soon. Craque-o'-Doom was so good a traveller that his short bridal trip had produced little effect on him. He was merry with Rhoda. Tamsin sat straight and frightened in her chair, picking up bits of

strange sumptuous food as if she could not hazard swallowing. The dwarf watched her with quick sweeping looks.

"She is very tired," said Rhoda. "All this experience is so strange to her."

"You must both sleep late in the morning," he replied. "My man will arrive with the carriage some time to-night: he had a telegram ready for me here. The carriage will be at your disposal as soon as you want it."

"Oh," exclaimed Miss Jones in ecstasy, "I am more than compensated for having to be content with a slim outfit when *I* get married.—Tamsin, the next time you do your spring shopping you will snub my memory, for I am going to be such a despot!"

The dwarf bade them good-night when they rose to go back to their room. He got down from his chair and bowed to Rhoda. Then he took Tamsin's hand and kissed it. She stood like a statue. Rhoda saw the wistful, dog-like loyalty of his eyes as he lifted them to the slim-figured girl, but she did not observe any tremor run through that figure. "Is there anything—" he inquired, hesitating to finish the sentence. "Are you feeling well, my child?"

"Yes, sir," replied the low voice.

"Tell me what it is," he persisted.

Rhoda withdrew and closed the door after her.

The dwarf drew his wife toward a chair. She sat down trembling, with one hand locked tight over the other. Her eyes were fixed on the floor; a full tear slid from each and coursed over her face.

"My little one," said the man, with the anguish of a mother in his voice, "are you wretched? Oh, I cannot bear that! I will go out of the hotel to some other place. You regret it, don't you?" He spoke this with a downward affirmative accent.

"No," said Tamsin, hurriedly. She managed to raise her swimming eyes and encounter his. "It's Tillie."

With a cautious and delicate gesture he took up her right hand and began to smooth and pat it: "Are you afraid she is ill? You want your sister, poor child!"

"It's strange being so far from Tillie," she murmured, making her muscles tense in her efforts to regain composure.

"If I could bring her to you this instant you should have her. Don't hate me for making you so lonely, will you?"

Tamsin looked down at the light-expanded face. Then her eyes sought the floor, and the flush under her skin appeared for an instant. She became quiet, and Craque-o'-Doom scarcely noticed that she made no reply to his appeal. "I'll send a telegram to Captain Mills," he proposed, "be-

fore I go to bed, and early to-morrow you can have news direct from Tillie. You go to bed and sleep soundly. Trust me to look after your happiness a little."

He led her to her room-door, and put her inside with another "good-night." It was she who was protected and led, though she towered above him so.

Rhoda had already sat down to toast her slippers: she motioned Tamsin to draw to the hearth. Tamsin sat down. So wide was the gap between her present and past life that it did not seem strange to be sitting on terms of perfect equality with a woman who but a short time ago had seemed so far above her.

"That man is a gentleman, if there ever was one on this earth!" exclaimed Rhoda. "Tamsin, you're the luckiest girl I ever saw; and the world has been perused by me considerably, my dear. I know it has hard, hideous, inhuman aspects which no amount of philosophy can gloss over. It very seldom turns out that Fortune is so kind to those thrown completely on her mercy. Mr. Sutton knows more than you or I can ever grasp; yet see how modest he is. I do hope you'll make him happy."

Tamsin sat with her hands locked.

"Of course your first duty is to make the very most and best of your school advantages; which I know you'll do. And I want to give you a hint.

You're so very quiet there'll be plenty of girls who will try to run over you: don't you allow it first or last. Assert yourself. With so many blessings, all you have to do is to hold your own. But at the same time, Tamsin, if you would try to make yourself popular, you know,—friendly among the girls,—you'll get along much better, and it will be pleasanter for you than if you are too reserved. Well, I didn't intend to give you a lecture. The position of duenna seems naturally to fit me." Rhoda laughed and shifted her feet. "When I started to boarding-school I was a skinny, shabby orphan; my dresses were calico or cheap delaine; these abundant locks were shingled close to my skull. I must have looked like a resolute death's-head or a knowledge-smitten scarecrow. I taught some of the primary fry and let it go on my own tuition: this contributed to age me. When spring and commencement fever came, my agony was dreadful. Ah! the poor little short stories I wrote at dead of night by a smoky lamp while my roommate snored, the heart-beats with which I sent them off in hopes of raising cash for a cheap spring outfit, the despair with which I received half or two-thirds of them back and saw my outfit dwindle to a pair of shoes and a hat!" Rhoda unloosened her hair and pulled it down around her half exultantly. "Slowly, slowly I had to conquer all these things. Even youth and passa-

ble good looks never came to me until I was more than twenty-five. Who was there except myself to have a vital interest in my success or failure? Nobody. That skinny waif might have died and only a few kind strangers would have moistened her with a tear. I think it has made me very practical: I used to be no end of sentimental. But my Will has grown so it has to be spelled with a capital W, and I have a confidence in myself which must seem dreadful to you. The world is all before me now. At an age when most women are buried in family cares I shall go sailing into broader life a princess; the way will expand,—expand,—expand. But you, Tamsin,—see how much happier is your lot. In the dawn of your girlhood, just as you have begun to feel the edge of circumstance and necessity, here comes a kind and powerful guardian, who will lift you over everything which hurt and hardened me, who will be sunshine and rain, earth and air, to bring you into blossom; and he asks nothing but the privilege of taking care of you."

Tamsin got up and walked across the room. Rhoda turned to look after her: "Am I worrying you, my dear? We must go to bed."

"I heard you talking," said Tamsin, wheeling and coming back, "the first evening at Mills's." She stretched her arms straight down before her with the fingers locked. Her face had an unusual

pallor which seemed the culmination of a paleness of several days' growth.

"The first evening?" repeated Rhoda, puzzled. "What was I saying? Some nonsense to the girls, probably."

"It was to them,—about getting married."

"Oh!" said Rhoda, with a sensation like a sting, though that puzzled her also. "Did I say anything which stayed in your mind afterward, Tamsin?"

"Yes."

"Well, it wasn't very silly, whatever it was. I will uphold my own tenets."

"I thought at first—" pursued Tamsin, hesitating. Then she took another tack: "It was about money."

"Oh, yes; I remember. Where were you?"

"In the other room. And I sort of made up my mind. But afterward—" She broke off there, as if there were no open communication between herself and Rhoda or what she had begun to say would not bear telling.

"Well, what afterward? Upon my word! is that you sobbing?" Rhoda sprang up and ran to her as she turned her back. "Tamsin, this will never do. You must get into bed this moment. Poor girl! you are worn out with excitement and travel. In the morning it will be very different with you."

CHAPTER XV.

"ARE YOU HAPPIER NOW?"

IN the morning it *was* very different with her. The wondrous advantages of her position began to unfold themselves to Tamsin. In the first place, with the very late breakfast came in a telegram from Captain Mills, stating that Tillie was evidently in better health than usual: she was at the Hill-house, while Tom telegraphed, showing with satisfaction a fine large doll Tamsin had left to console her.

"Why, I didn't leave her any doll!" murmured Tamsin to Rhoda. She was beaming with a new sense of power and conquest over time and space.

"Don't you see *he* did it?" exclaimed Rhoda between her sips of coffee. "He got the biggest wax baby Barnett afforded, and had me send it to your mother in your name. I do adore consideration in little things: it's much likelier to produce happiness than this everlasting silly cooing, 'Do you love me better than anybody else?' Give me the man who will look after my comfort and heart's ease. Instead of talking vapor, people about to marry ought to attend to substance, and ask sen-

sibly, 'Are you certain you can always support me in comfort?' and, 'Do you require as much society as I do?'—'What are your views about a wife's regular allowance?'—'Is your temper surly or quick?'—'What do you like to eat?' and, 'How many poor relations have you that will expect assistance?' A fair understanding on all such points will give the firmest of foundations for mutual good will."

Tamsin heard with a slight tinge under the skin, and Rhoda ceased suddenly, reflecting that the clause about poor relations was rather ill-timed. She was surprised that she did not get on to greater intimacy with Tamsin. Docile as the girl appeared, she was insulated behind a barrier which Rhoda could not pierce.

When they dressed for their shopping-tour, Tamsin seemed passively grateful for the little extra touches Rhoda bestowed upon her, but her reticence never quite disappeared. Before the day was over, however, an unusual exhilaration grew in her.

"Now, this is New York," said Rhoda, as their coupé turned away from the hotel. "Isn't it immense? The roar and glory always raise me to the seventh heaven. You'll have to find it all out by degrees. As you're to go to school and have your future home in and about the city, I shan't waste my breath describing things to you

that you'll soon know as well as I do. At present our interests lie in the direction of shopping; and we can get anything under the sun in New York, and have I dare not say how many hundred dollars in this pocket to do it with. Oh, shan't we be bowed to and worshipped to-day? Won't the clerks run out with bundles to our carriage and hold the door open?—the very wretches who have lorded it over me when I meekly purchased of them a few scant yards of cashmere."

As Rhoda had to buy material for her own outfit as well as Tamsin's, the task occupied them full a week. During this time, at the dwarf's urgent request, Miss Jones stayed at the hotel as one of his party, to be Tamsin's companion, instead of returning to her boarding-house. Tamsin was gloved, booted, slippered; women were constantly bringing her things to try on; she was driving out to be fitted; and presently, as if by magic, she found herself in a dull bronze suit of silk so rich and soft the mere touch of it delighted her, with nothing to relieve the shade in hat, gloves, or wrap except a bunch of red roses close by her neck. She saw herself in one of the many mirrors with which the hotel increased and reflected its magnificence. Her black eyes scintillated in a face which was slowly to lose the dulness of its pallor and grow transparent. Hot baths, abundant food,

and exhilaration were changing her, and she recognized it when she saw herself dressed.

Craque-o'-Doom drove with the girls, after the first fury of their shopping was over, and showed Tamsin wonders which she had never dreamed of in her previous life. Sometimes her mind reeled dizzily,—had she ever been that miserable girl in Barnet?—and again, in the midst of a keen delight, a pang struck through her breast that she should enjoy so much while Tillie lived like a clod. She saw one play: this was a few evenings before she entered school and began the serious business of improvement. It was the dwarf's good fortune to be able to present first to her imagination Neilson's matchless Juliet. They took a box. Craque-o'-Doom had never been able to meet the gaze of a large assembly of people in the body of the theatre. He sat behind the two girls, smiling to himself at Tamsin's quiet excitement. She had already a well-bred air. Rhoda had initiated her into some style of hair-dressing which made her head a pretty study. She looked back occasionally at Craque-o'-Doom, parting her lips with a smile at once timid and grateful.

"Are you a little happier now?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Tamsin. She turned immediately to watch the great curtain which still shut away from her an unknown world. The house was crowded; the gas-lights were multiplied by

mirrors and prisms; the perfume from her own drapery filled her with dreamy delight. How many beautiful and grand people there were in the world! Rhoda saw acquaintances to whom she bowed. A little bell rang; the orchestra, almost at her feet, startled her with a blare of music. What it was, and why they played it, she did not know, but it stormed her heart: she trembled with positive rapture. Then the great curtain began to rise. She watched that miracle until voices recalled her eyes, and, behold! on the stage there were two women,—a lady and her servant,—dressed in some queer fashion which made both stately. And in a short time there came running in one of the loveliest women this earth has ever borne, whose crimson mouth seemed strangely made of ripples or scallops. The people made thunder with their hands, for this was Neilson. Tamsin now seemed to live in the body of this fair woman. She loved with her, despaired with her, hung over the morning balcony after her departing husband with her, and died and was laid in the Capulets' tomb. She did not know it was over, and believed there must be a better ending, when Craque-o'-Doom was reaching to fold her wraps around her. She turned her swimming eyes to his.

"My dear!" he whispered. The crowd in the theatre was surging out, and one or two lights were shut off. "We will read the play together

some time," he added more quietly. "Has it made you feel unhappy?"

"No," said Tamsin, "not that. I'm glad I saw it." She was not excited to chatter as they drove back to the hotel; she did not say it was splendid or perfectly gorgeous: Tamsin always had more thoughts than words.

Rhoda was heartily enthusiastic over the Juliet, but she had a great many absurd things to say about Capulet's ball and the red-and-green ladies who danced the minuet in back ranks: "The poor wretches always get themselves up in segments of glaring colors; at the very best they look like figures heaped out of strawberry, pistache, and lemon ice-creams. Their trains don't train right; and how insolent the star's perfection seems, throwing their poor defects into such prominence! A real poor stock actress or actor must have the saddest life on earth,—I mean one without any talent for rising. Imagine that tawdry flock going off the stage into the wings: they pick up their sorry trains; no maid waits for them; that thunder of applause is for the star. The public must seem a many-headed monster; and the wind is so cold in the wings, the tackle and pulleys overhead so ghastly!"

"But, on the other hand, look at the triumph of such a Juliet," said Craque-o'-Doom: "she *is* the actual moist flame that Shakespeare presents

to our imagination. We do not want to see her in any other shape."

"That's just it: her one triumph is the defeat of a thousand others. And the world doesn't care a straw for people who fail or make a sorry fight of it, in any place. Come to that, we're all downright savages at heart: whoever can get ahead of us becomes our idol and chief; whoever happens to fall underfoot we do not scruple to tramp on. If he doesn't like it, he hasn't any business to stay there."

"Fortunately, you are not as fierce as your philosophy, Miss Rhoda."

"It isn't my philosophy; it's my observation: facts are facts."

Tamsin looked out of the window as their carriage moved between two rows of gigantic buildings. She was in a luxurious position: what Rhoda Jones said sounded like a painful truth which she had known in some former world.

During all this time that Tamsin was being prepared for school, the school was being selected and prepared for her. To the lady-principal Tamsin's position and characteristics were explained. It was considered best by all parties that she should enter school as Tamsin Sutton, a young girl under the care of a guardian, since she was nothing more, and it was neither necessary nor

advisable to explain her true relation to Mr. Sutton to a couple of hundred young ladies from all parts of the country. Tamsin herself was not likely to make confidences.

"Unless she falls desperately in love with some class-mate," said Rhoda to Craque-o'-Doom, "her reserve will be pierced by nobody. I think she likes me very much; still, she has never poured any confidences into my ear."

The dwarf paled a very little: "But there is no danger of that sort of thing. The pupils are all young ladies."

"Oh, well, that's what I mean, of course. Girls sometimes have desperate sentiments for each other, and bill and coo, and die of jealousy, and go through all the nonsense. I fell in love with the gymnastic teacher when I was at boarding-school. She was the homeliest and leanest French-woman you ever saw, and, as I was very miserable anyhow, I contrived to howl myself into quite a frenzy whenever I fell the least under her displeasure. It's in many young girls to take such morbid fancies; and there's really no great harm about it. It's only their modest, roundabout way of worshipping man; they are reprehended for thinking about him while at school, so they adore his reflected and refined image."

"I don't think I should like it in this child's case," said Craque-o'-Doom.

"She mayn't be of the doting sort at all. Sometimes I think she is a person who will have only one or two strong affections in her life. But she's so young yet: you can't tell what she will be."

CHAPTER XVI.

FURTHER ACQUAINTANCE.

THE day before Tamsin entered school, Craque-o'-Doom drove her out in the afternoon with no companion besides himself. He sat opposite to her in the coupé, glancing over her figure occasionally. She was his study. His expressive eyes brightened or gloomed when he fixed them on her. Wherever he was seated now, the Persian drapery trailed from his lap: once he had seen her look at his feet.

Tamsin did not know where they were going. Each day of her life was now a new pleasure. She was about to enjoy something, and leaned back in quiet anticipation.

"Would you like to pick up a few little things for Tillie?" he inquired.

"For Tillie?" Radiance appeared to stream from her face and fall across his eyes. "I wrote

her a letter," she continued in a tremulous, eager way which was so confiding that the dwarf's heart swelled within him; "I told her how I was getting along. She would like it so much."

"I wish she could be with you. But the next best thing is to send her something.—Here!" Craque-o'-Doom signalled to his man to stop.—"I believe this is a place where you can get made-up knick-knacks for little girls. Are you afraid to go in alone and buy?" He took a porte-monnaie from his breast-pocket and transferred it to her hand.

No; Tamsin had grown bold during her shopping experience. She had been treated obsequiously: what was there to be afraid of? Craque-o'-Doom waited for her in the carriage. She appreciated silently his kindness in letting her shop unassisted for Tillie. She knew what to buy. Presently the packages came pouring out, large and small, round and square. In due time came Tamsin herself, in a still, white transport of joy.

"Have you got everything you want here?" inquired Craque-o'-Doom.

"Yes." As they drove on she looked up at him and broke the paper at the corner of one package. "It's a blue wool sack: it ties with a ribbon under her chin. I used to want one for her: she takes cold so easy."

Craque-o'-Doom admired the sack, and she went on unfolding every purchase, until the merchandise was piled all around them. There were dresses of various kinds, undergarments, hosiery, handkerchiefs, and even collarettes.

"Tillie would look nice," she continued, in an eager maternal tone, "if she was dressed like the little girls at the hotel."

"Of course she would," said Craque-o'-Doom. "She looks nice anyhow."

Tamsin threw her eyes up at him with an absolute sparkling; her lips trembled. "You are good to me," she said in a sort of explosive burst.

"Am I good to you? I want to be,—God knows I do! Tamsin, will you promise me one thing? Always tell me what is in your mind. Don't keep any secret from me, will you, my child?"

She started, the color appearing under her skin, but it died away, and she replied steadily, "No, sir; I will tell you everything."

Craque-o'-Doom drew a long free breath. He looked over the confusion of dry-goods and paper. "People may think we are peddling," said he; "but no matter. Now, don't you want shoes, and gloves, and millinery, and such things? And then a fancy toy or two?"

"I told her once," pursued Tamsin in a confidential strain which made his heart yearn over her, as

she smiled and refolded the blue sack, "that when I got rich I'd give her fine shoes and everything that heart could wish; but I never thought then— And a 'cordion! I told her I'd get her a 'cordion."

The dwarf leaned against his cushion as if suddenly tired. Still, not one whit of interest departed from his smile. "She must have them," he said. "But we shall have to take a much longer drive to find the accordion. We can have a box packed and started by express to Tillie this very evening."

Again the carriage was stopped, and again Tamsin ran across the sidewalk to make purchases. There was a girlish alertness and spring in her gait which Craque-o'-Doom did not fail to mark, yet he put one hand over his eyes and crouched back as if he were hurt. "'I told her when I got rich,'" he repeated. "What's going to become of me if she doesn't grow to like me? I expect too much."

Tamsin came out, followed by some delightful shoes. There was a high-laced pair for every day, and kid button boots for Sunday; also some soft slippers,—“for when she don't feel like going outdoors,” said Tamsin,—and substantial rubber boots: “I never saw such things before; but the man said they would keep her from all damp, and she *will* run out in wet weather.”

"Would you like to get something for your mother and father?" inquired the dwarf. "While we are about it, we can pick up something for them."

Tamsin considered; her face grew heated. She cast a piteous look at him, and said, as if constrained to speak so by her promise of confiding everything to him, "Maybe we better, or they might take Tillie's things from her."

"They wouldn't do that?"

Tamsin turned her head impressively from side to side. "But you've give me so much," she said.

"Very little, my dear. And, come to think of it, there is something I have neglected to give you, and which we must drive to Tiffany's for this very afternoon. Miss Rhoda says a school-girl should not have a great deal of jewelry; but you were married without a ring, and I have not given you one yet."

He alighted from the carriage when they reached the gorgeous shop, and made his way with Tamsin between passers-by. When people turned to stare at him and direct each other's attention as to a rare spider or a painted savage who could not understand their language, he looked at Tamsin with a quick, jealous sweep of the eye: the effect on her was not discernible.

She stood beside Craque-o'-Doom when he was

mounted upon a chair, and pored over the array of precious stones spread before them with a sensuous delight which he keenly noted: for the first time in her life the diamond threw its glamour over her eyes. She took her glove off, and he put a blazing stone on her finger; the red hand which recently was fit only for plunging into any rough use already showed a fairer surface.

They drove home about dusk. Tamsin was in a gale of delighted excitement. She could not eat her dinner until all her purchases were fondled over again, the accordion especially commended to Rhoda's notice, and the whole boxed and started on the road to Tillie.

"I never saw Tamsin in such rapture," said Rhoda.

"She does seem happy," said Craque-o'-Doom. He was sitting in a large chair, leaning his head upon his hand. His eyes were of a paler gray than usual, and looked bleached like ashes.

"Now you be careful of that magnificent solitaire," impressed Rhoda, shaking a finger at Tamsin. "Two or three dozen girls will want to try it on or wear it a little while, or borrow it to receive a call in. I never lost any solitaires while I was at school, but I can foresee the danger of it. It's something remarkable for a girl of your age to possess."

Tamsin held one hand in the other and looked

at it; her glance then moved to the turquoise on Rhoda's finger. Little as she knew of precious stones, the difference was apparent to her. Her face filled with a triumph which was really arrogant. "A little while ago," she said, punctuating her sentences with the pauses peculiar to herself, "I hadn't but one old dress."

"Don't!" exclaimed the dwarf, turning his head aside.

Tamsin started. She turned her eyes upon him with a glance which Rhoda saw, but he did not.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HE IS TALL."

WHEN Tamsin disappeared within the walls of her boarding-school, Rhoda went over to Brooklyn, and was so busy that she called only once or twice before her marriage. The first time she called, Tamsin looked depressed and tired. On the next occasion, however, she was found in good spirits, eagerly interested in her studies. She had been promoted in her classes: she was learning music and French. "Isn't it strange the French people talk that all the time?" said Tamsin. "Mademoiselle got very mad at me because I thought it was funny they had the Testament printed in French." She was girlish and communicative. A shell comb was tipped in her hair behind one ear, giving her a coquettish look. The airs and blandishments of admiring school-mates had evidently been added to her own manner.

"Your position is perfectly pleasant and easy, isn't it?" demanded Miss Jones, twining a lock of hair on the girl's forehead with matronly touch.

"Oh, yes! I am beginning algebra, and I can't get it straight yet. Everything is nice: I feel like I had always been here."

"You are improving, I can see. How often does Mr. Sutton come?"

"Twice a week, regular."

"Regularly," amended Rhoda.

"Regularly," accepted Tamsin without change or shade. "And then other times he takes me to ride. We go all through the Park on nice days."

"Oh, you lucky girl, to have such life drop into your hands, when I had to slave for so many toughening years before my deliverer appeared! But, Tamsin, we expect to sail next week."

"Do you? And are you going to have a big wedding?"

"On the contrary, the ceremony will be very quietly performed at the house of a distant relative of mine in Buffalo. Mr. Burns lives in Buffalo; he has only time to run up for me before the day set, or I would let you see him. I sent an invitation to Mr. Sutton, but he declined, for you and himself both: he didn't think it best to take you out of school."

Tamsin had looked half frightened. With a reassured countenance she said, "I don't want to see strange people yet."

Rhoda laughed: "I don't know what ordeal could be more trying than the strange people of a boarding-school. But you are used to the girls now."

"Yes, now I am. At first—" she paused—"at first they whispered about me."

"Oh, that's nothing. Did you snub a few of them, as I recommended?"

"I said something," asserted Tamsin. She examined Rhoda as if in doubt whether to lay the communication at her mercy or not.

"What did you say?"

"There were some girls," ventured Tamsin, "that always watched out of the windows when he came to take me riding, and they would cough and laugh."

"Green with envy," said Rhoda.

"And when he came to call they would go through the reception-room with their music-books, when they didn't practise there at all."

"I know the breed," remarked Rhoda.

"They put *pictures* in my books,—pictures without— Pictures that hadn't any legs."

Rhoda curled her lip.

"They couldn't find out if he was any relation: so one day before chapel services they sat just back of me and sang under their breath,—

"Here sits Miss Tamsin Sutton,
Who goes to ride with a button!"

And I just turned around," said Tamsin sonorously, scowling as in past life she had scowled at Captain Mills's high-minded negro, "and looked square in

their faces. I said, '*You* are the buttons. He's tall; he's tall as the hills.'

Rhoda applauded with her palms. She drew in a quick breath and looked keenly at Craque-o'-Doom's champion. The young girl's face was filled with color, but she adjusted her hair with a nervous motion and changed the subject. During the rest of the interview she had an uneasy air, as if this confidential burst had surprised and disconcerted herself.

When Rhoda parted from her at the door she kissed the ripening olive cheek: "This is the first time I ever kissed you, Tamsin."

"I know it."

"And the last time I bestow a maiden lady's caress on you: on the next occasion it will be a matron's. Do you like to be kissed?"

"I used to like to have Tillie."

"Didn't you ever kiss Mr. Sutton?"

The girl colored up to the soft rings of hair which she was learning to train over her forehead. Rhoda felt as if she had outraged the delicacy of a child, and went away provoked with herself.

On the day Rhoda sailed, Craque-o'-Doom took Tamsin to the wharf to see her off. She told them a great deal about her wedding in a few minutes, and introduced Mr. Burns, a portly, cheerful, rather elderly gentleman, who was easily put out of breath and planted his hand on his hip to pant.

He seemed prepared for Craque-o'-Doom, but eyed him with covert curiosity. Several friends accompanied them, and a number of Rhoda's city acquaintances were there.

The mighty steamship was ready to part from her moorings; Tamsin sat in her carriage shaken with admiring awe of it. She got down at the last minute to run to Rhoda again, where that animated young lady was divided between her clinging friends and her hastening spouse. She gave her hand for another last squeeze to Tamsin.

"I never thanked you," said Tamsin without preface or explanation. "I thank you now."

Mrs. Burns had this pleasant assurance to carry with her when she was wiping some moist emotion from her eyes as they steamed down the bay.

Her husband stood at the rail beside her. "Come, Rhoda," said he, swelling his chest consolingly.

"Oh, I ain't doing anything but enjoying the luxurious sensation of having friends. There isn't anything more delightful in this world than parting with your friends when you start on a long journey: it brings out all their good points; they open their hearts more in a brief minute than they have done before in years, and, no matter how stupid you may have thought them, their interest in you endears them to that degree that you are ready to fall upon their bosoms, but are caught

away just in time to preserve the situation,—to sort of crystallize it, you know.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Burns, smiling applause, as he always did at her sayings.

“Even little Tamsin expressed herself unusually. Don't you think she's rather pretty?—the girl with black eyes and light hair who spoke to me last.”

“Yes. The one you said was married to the dwarf. Oh, yes! He's a dreadful figure, though.”

“But he's wonderful. If I hadn't seen him I shouldn't believe there was such a person alive. He seems so knightly and upright: he is as gentle as a well-bred woman; yet I haven't any doubt there's tremendous passionate force in him.”

“Yes; that's what you told me about him before. It's a pity he's such an unfortunate shape.”

“Now, see here,” said Rhoda, making the wind an excuse for hooking her forefinger through one of Mr. Burns's button-holes: “that man, and that girl he married to educate, have exercised me a great deal. I keep observing them, and sometimes I actually believe they are in love with each other in ways wholly peculiar to themselves.”

Mr. Burns humored the idea with a laugh. “She can't think much of that little dwarf,” he said. “A woman wants a man of good appearance,—portly physique. Especially a pretty young

woman." He looked at Rhoda, and she looked at him.

"If you are going to talk and look that way, everybody on board will know we are just married. Scowl a little bit, do! I've thought it was foolish for brides to object to appear as brides, but it does make one feel silly."

While Navesink was disappearing from their eyes, the dwarf, who had left Tamsin at her school, was curled up behind his paper in an alcove of his hotel. He pulled down his moustache and gnawed at it. Some men near him, unconscious of his presence, were talking about him, and he had no choice but to hear what they said :

"That queer object you saw come into the vestibule a while ago? Why, that's Sutton, the dwarf. He has a pile of money. He always stops here, and he's been in town quite a while. Seems to have picked up a pretty young girl somewhere and married her, and he's got her at school up town, and stays here to hang around her."

"Dotes on her, does he?"

"I s'pose so."

"She can't dote on him particularly."

"I don't know about that : he's very wealthy."

Both men laughed as they moved away.

Craque-o'-Doom kept pulling down his moustache. "I am making a fool of myself," he

whispered. "If I persecute her by 'hanging around,' she'll grow to despise me. I'd better go up river to-morrow and see how things are getting on at home." He decided to take the afternoon train,—the river was not yet open to navigation,—but he had time to see Tamsin in the morning.

She came to the reception-room from a recitation. The dwarf was huddled on a sofa, his rug trailing to the floor. He had not slept very well, but if Tamsin noticed that he was pale she did not speak of it. After she gave him her hand, which he kissed, she sat down on a chair some distance away. Her eyes were sparkling. She fixed them on the floor, and then said steadily, "Comment vous portez-vous, monsieur?"

"Eh bien! Good! And are you getting on to the 'carpenter' and the 'bread' business, and 'the sister-in-law of my brother,' and the rest of it?"

Tamsin passed over his sarcasm. "I got a letter from Tillie," she remarked. "That's five. She makes Mary write them."

"And how is Tillie?"

"She's well. She sent you her very best respects, too."

"Much obliged."

"She did. And she likes the things so much! She's written two letters about the things."

"Never mind the things. Do you think so much of things, Tamsin?"

She looked at him and showed a distinct dimple at one corner of her mouth. She had been learning to laugh. "Yes, I do love nice things. Why don't you notice my apron? I made it myself. All of them are getting to wear lace aprons in the morning. I made it out of some lace Miss Rhoda bought for me."

"Do you want any pin-money now,—any money to spend for little necessities, I mean?"

"I have a great lot yet that you gave me when I first came here."

"You're not an extravagant child at all. Well, when you want anything you must write me."

"What for? Can't I tell you when I see you?"

"I am going home, up the North River, this afternoon, and may not see you again for some time."

Tamsin twisted meshes in her lace apron. She had certainly thawed from her former Indian-like stoicism. "I thought you would live here," she observed.

"No; I have only stayed to see you well accustomed to your new life. You are comfortable here, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you will write to me, and tell me how you get on, and about your daily life, won't you?"

"I can't write—a real pretty letter."

"Any letter will be pretty to me. How often shall I write to you?"

She lifted her eyes and dropped them again shyly: "I don't know."

"My child," with a sting of pain in his tone, "don't you care to hear from me?"

Tamsin started and turned her face aside. When she did look at him, it was with reproachful eyes.

"Forgive me!" exclaimed the dwarf. "You don't know how I hate to leave you."

"What makes you go, then?"

"Because I ought to. Tamsin, come here to me, will you?"

She rose and walked slowly to his side.

"Will you stoop down where I can look in your eyes?"

She settled slowly on one knee. Her whole body was in a tremor. He put out his hand and tilted her head up.

"Don't look down at the deformed part of me: look in my face. My little one, how lovely you are growing! How old are you now?"

"Seventeen next month."

"And I am in my thirties!"

An unaccountable silence fell between them. He had taken his hand away from her head. He now put it reverently back, drew her a little nearer,

and kissed her forehead. With a strong recoil Tamsin sprung up and flew from the room.

The dwarf whitened even across his lips: "My God! And I have grown to love her with all my strength and life!"

The clock could scarcely have marked three minutes' interval when Tamsin came back cautiously, guilty-looking and flushed. But Craque o'-Doom had already gone. She could do nothing but lock her hands and stare at the corner of the sofa where he had sat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LETTERS.

Craque-o'-Doom to Tamsin.

COLD SPRINGS ON HUDSON, April 12.

MY DEAR CHILD,—Pardon me for frightening you just as I came away. I am not very well accustomed to women: they have always seemed divine beings literally above my level, except the excellent Dutchwoman who, with her son, daughter, and husband, keeps the machinery of my house going.

You notice I do not call it home, though it is the dearest spot in the world, and one made by Nature so picturesque that it seems new and wonderful every day in the year. There is no use telling you about the Highlands: you must see them for yourself. The whole length of this river is dear to me. The homestead is a very old place; part of it is built of stone and dates from the early days of New Amsterdam, which was the ancient name for New York. This is an inconvenient part, with queer windows, and doors that open at the top while they remain closed at the bottom, because they are sliced in two across the middle. Addi-

tions have been built at various times: my father built the last. Altogether, they make an irregular, towered, ivy-eaten, bay-windowed, pillared pile of house so big I feel lost like a mite in it.

Pretty soon it will be fine enough to boat on the river. I have always rowed and yachted a great deal. The "Drew" and "Powell"—two fine steamers—will begin to make regular trips near your vacation-time. If you like to come up and bring some of your chums, the house may seem more like home. Any changes you would like to have made in the furniture I will attend to in good time. Enclosed is a diagram of the principal rooms, with a short description of their contents.

Don't, however, let me be selfish and rule your wishes. If you would like to go back to Ohio for the summer, tell me frankly. But perhaps they will let Tillie come and spend the summer with you.

Yours as always,

J. S.

Tamsin to Craque-o'-Doom.

AT SCHOOL, April 16.

DEAR FRIEND,—I got your letter. You are so kind to me that I lie awake to think about it. After you were gone I cried till I was nearly sick. Of course that was foolish, for you put me here to improve myself, and I am improving all the time. You must excuse me for not being able to write a

beautiful letter. I practise a great deal writing my exercises, but my hand trembles when I go to write to you, and will not let me do my very best. Some of my letters to Tillie look a good deal nicer.

One of the girls and I have been reading Tennyson's "Idyls of the King." I like Enid best. She is a Boston girl (the one I am reading with, I mean), and knows a great deal. She says every minute of our time ought to be spent in progressing; but we eat chocolate caramels when it isn't our turn to read. We are taking a course in the poets as a rest from study. She says she adores Schiller (I think that's the way to spell it), and we are going to read something by a man named Goaty or Gaiety,—I can't remember which. There is a great deal to learn. I used to love to read at Captain Mills's house, but I had no idea how many books there are in the world.

I got some new gloves for Easter; they are the color of very pale flag-lilies. The people in Bar-net didn't do anything but color eggs on Easter. I used to color them with calico rags for Tillie. This Easter Sunday we went to church, and they had very beautiful music and flowers. Life seems very different to me from what it used to.

Your house must be very nice. I don't see how anything could be nicer. If Tillie could come too, I should love to see it. This girl that I go with

(Sarah Davidge) might like to come too. A good many of the others have not got what I call good manners.

This is a long letter.

TAMSIN.

P.S.—I wrote it over two or three times, but every time it gets blotted, or something.

Craque-o'-Doom to Tamsin.

COLD SPRINGS ON HUDSON, April 19.

MY DEAREST CHILD,—Your pretty little letter did me a world of good. Why should you make excuses for a graceful hand and an original way of expressing yourself? I have it in my breast-pocket, with some English violets from the greenhouse shut in it. The very first letter you ever wrote me! It was only too short. I wanted to hear more of your reading, and your young friend, the Easter eggs you used to color for Tillie, and the pale Easter gloves you chose to feel the warmth of your innocent hands in devotion.

My little one, I hated myself when I read that you had cried,—“cried till you were nearly sick.” I must have shocked you. I forgot myself,—or rather I thought only of myself. But let us not talk of it any more. In time I shall learn how best to make you understand what your happiness is to me. I send by express some books from the library

you may like to read. The Keats I read and marked long ago when I was a lonesome boy, before I knew you were in the world or would ever come to me. But I leave it as it was. Perhaps you had better not share this book with the Boston young lady.

The hills are beginning to put on such an exquisite green! Your vacation begins the first week in June; it is now nearly May. There is more than a month to wait. I have considerable business to attend to: perhaps it will be necessary for me to run down to the city by the end of this week. As I have a regular arrangement with the Hudson River road in winter and the steamer-men in summer to ship my carriage with myself every time I go down, I might call and take you to ride, unless something interferes.

We have a good boat-house and several skiffs. I will have them overhauled at once, painted, and a pair of oars made especially for a lady to handle.

Write to me so I can get your answer by the day after to-morrow. My business in New York is very pressing.

Yours,

CRAQUE-O'-DOOM.

P.S.—Do you think that is a funny name? I gave it to myself when a boy, because it seemed appropriate that a little monster should have a little monstrous name. Would you mind calling me Craque-o'-Doom instead of "Friend"?

Note from Craque-o'-Doom to Tamsin.

23 April, IN THE CARRIAGE.

MY DEAR CHILD,—I write this on a scrap from my note-book. Not receiving the early reply I craved, but having a half-hour to spare, I have called, but find you out. It is a disappointment to me. They told me you were very well. Thank God for that! Please write to me as soon as you have time.

Yours as always,

CRAQUE-O'-DOOM.

Tamsin to Craque-o'-Doom.

AT SCHOOL, April 22.

DEAR CRAQUE-O'-DOOM,—It is a funny name, but funny names are the nicest. I meant to write last evening, but it was reception-night, and of course I could not be let alone. Sarah Davidge had some friends coming to see her, and she would have me go with her. They always dance on reception-nights, because Madame says we must learn how to appear in society. I fixed Sarah Davidge's hair like mine. She is a little near-sighted, but looks very smart. I like to see people hang eye-glasses around their necks. We wore our long black silk trains. Ever so many girls have wanted to try my ring on, but I never would let one of them touch it. It always looks

beautiful. I love beautiful things so much I have a *perfect passion* for them. Sarah's friends were nice; I danced with her cousin three times. Did you know I had learned how to waltz? It is so easy! I am in raptures when I waltz. Madame would not let me dance any more with Sarah's cousin: she was very smooth and nice, but gave me a look, and I had to talk with some old ladies. I would love to get a chance some time to dance all I want to. I was crazy to learn: nobody ever knew how bad I've wanted to dance; and the waltz is the cream of it all. In Barnet they had balls, but of course I never saw them. I saw Captain Mills's cousin and Miss Latta waltz, and it seemed as if I *must* know how.

You will think I am very frivolous. It is different with me from what it used to be, I feel so light and happy; but I am trying to get on in all my studies. They seem to think I am smart here. It is not like Barnet.

I will try to get this letter to you in time. Please call: we can have such a nice ride. I want to see you.

Truly,

TAMSIN.

P.S.—You didn't say what day or what hour.

On a scrap of paper thrust into the same envelope.

April 23.

Oh, what *do* you think of me! I supposed I had mailed this letter, and here it lies among my writing-paper! And this afternoon I was out for the tiniest little bit with Sarah Davidge and the French teacher, because it was such a lovely day, and Saturday, and you came and went away while I was gone. I thought you would send me word just when you would be here. Why didn't you? I watched for you all day Friday. Shall I always be doing things that look ungrateful and mean? Now you won't have time to come down again for ever so long, I know. I would like to put something on the corner of the paper, but you might think it very silly. Besides, you must be very mad at me.

TAMSIN.

Craque-o'-Doom to Tamsin.

COLD SPRINGS ON HUDSON, April 25.

MY DEAR CHILD,—Never mind: it was my fault; I should have telegraphed. No, I do not think I can come down again immediately: some time next month, perhaps. Besides making some spring repairs and improvements on the estate and keeping various business interests well in hand, I

have just been mapping out a course of hard reading for myself. You see, your industry has had its effect on me.

But let me beg one thing of you, little one: never again, by word or look or deed, signify that you feel "gratitude" toward me. It causes me exquisite torture. Consider my possessions yours by right,—as they are.

It must indeed be delightful to waltz. I can understand the feeling you describe: I have it in my wrists, and my floor is the piano key-board. Since coming home, I have written a little piece of music for you: I tried to put in the song of a bird down in our orchard. The birds are nearly all here. Enclosed find a rough draft of it. I have had headache, which may account for my making a poorer-looking musical score than I usually pride myself on doing. Have you heard yet from Mrs. Burns?

Put that something "on the corner of the paper," my child. Why should I think anything you do silly? Did you not leave your beloved little sister and come bravely away with me, an almost entire stranger, submit yourself to my guidance, and enter a school of other strangers having no one but me, a queer, perhaps unwholesome, sort of man, to whom you could appeal for sympathy and home affection? I am very glad you have made appreciative friends. Miss Davidge's cousin

has my thanks—yes, my warm thanks—for giving you pleasure. If you would like to include your new acquaintances in the party for this summer, do so.

But write me another little letter as soon as you can. No matter how busy I may be, they are so welcome.

Yours,

CRAQUE-O'-DOOM.

Craque-o'-Doom to Captain Mills.

(A letter which was not sent.)

COLD SPRINGS ON HUDSON, May 1.

DEAR TOM,—With the awful example before me of many unhappy wretches who have written confidential letters and afterward had them exposed to an amused public by death of the confidant or unforeseen circumstances, I am about to unload my soul upon you, and get in return the consolation that you “told me so.”

But it's not going to turn out as you told me. You ought to see her now, Tom: there isn't her match in the world. You would hardly believe two or three months could make such a difference. She's all sorts of ways,—bewitching, grave, childish, womanly. It is delightful torture to watch her unfold. But she will never care for me. I went down to the city a few days ago to see her,

—the errand was purely a pilgrimage to her,—and she was out. They told me in what direction she had gone, and I made my man drive miles on the chance of catching one glimpse of her face. You don't know anything about it, Tom.

And of course the young fellows will admire her. I think she regards me as if I were her father. God knows, no father ever carried a baby in his heart as I carry her.

I've been trying to study hard and master this fever. Nothing of the sort ever happened to me before. I never gave rein to it. And I didn't consider the danger of giving way to this.

Tom, I'm going to send her out to Barnet for the summer. I had intended to bring her home with a lot of young friends to amuse her; but I cannot stand it. My heart's pretty nearly starved; I should make a fool of myself. She's too young to understand that I want her all to myself. I didn't know what the effect would be on me; but if I had known, it would have been just the same. What I have to do, though, is to act merely as her kind guardian and keep my own feelings down. Tom, I want your aunt to take her in as a boarder while she's in Barnet. I know the favor I ask, but she can't stop down at that place where her people live. You don't know how necessary beautiful surroundings are to her. She is devoted to her little sister. Do me the favor, Tom, and demand

anything of me you please. And, while she is there, guard her like the apple of your eye. My God! what should I do if she were to be taken from me? It will be torment to have her trusted to a railway-train. But she will get tired of me if I follow her around. I'm off for another strengthening summer among the lakes. I've got to be a man. The principal of the school has strict orders to telegraph me if she has the slightest indisposition of any kind. I have one of the maid-servants down there in my pay to wait on her with extra pains.

You ought to see the pretty little letters she writes, Tom. No man ever will see them, but it might be a pleasure to any one to do so. I believe I loved her the first minute her black eyes met mine. It ought to be enough for me if I can make up to her for the privations she suffered before I found her.

You were all wrong in your predictions. Whatever the tribe from which she sprung may be, she is delicate, sparkling, upright, beauty-loving. In fibre she is a lady; in mind, a swift-moving, powerful essence. But what is the use of going on like this to *you*?

I hope you won't forget, when that brother of hers comes out of his confinement, to do as I asked you to do for him. As he is young, and it was only *petit*—misdemeanor, a good start and a

little encouragement may bring him up. He certainly showed enterprise by getting into such a scrape.

Please present my compliments to Mrs. Teagarden, and, if you can, ease my bosom with an early reply.

Yours affectionately,

CRAQUE-O'-DOOM.

Craque-o'-Doom to Captain Mills.

(The letter which was sent.)

COLD SPRINGS ON HUDSON, May 1.

DEAR TOM,—I want to ask a great favor of you. Will you receive my wife into your house as a boarder during the summer? I find I must have another Canadian bout, and, besides, it does not seem advisable to bring her home yet; and she wants to see her little sister. I know it is asking a great favor of your aunt and yourself: in return you may demand anything you wish of me. I shall feel so comfortable and safe about her if I know she is in the companionship of your excellent aunt. And it will be impossible for her to stop with her people; I couldn't allow that. She is abundantly fulfilling the promise I saw in her.

By the way, whenever that unfortunate fellow I

spoke to you about is set at liberty, be sure to notify me. A little lift may do wonders for him.

Excuse brevity. You know I am always

Heartily yours,

CRAQUE-O'-DOOM.

P.S.—How about Canada for you this summer?

Telegram from Captain Mills to Craque-o'-Doom.

Just starting for Denver. But it will be all right.
Send her.

TOM.

CHAPTER XIX.

RETURN OF A NATIVE.

TAM SIN came to Barnet early in June. Her trip was easy and delightful. Craque-o'-Doom himself saw her put in a palace-car, from which she did not have to stir until she reached the junction of the Barnet road with the trunk line on which she travelled. The railway-people were feed to make her safety and comfort their particular study. Craque-o'-Doom had thought seriously of sending a maid with her; but the difficulty of finding a suitable person, and the disinclination of Tamsin herself to appear before her townspeople so attended, had caused him to give up the idea.

"They'd make fun of me," said Tamsin. "They all remember how I used to look. And then there are father's folks——" It was not necessary for her to explain the incongruity.

"I see," said Craque-o'-Doom. He had delayed his own trip until she was safely started. Tom Mills was to meet her at the station and telegraph her arrival.

She parted from him in the gayest spirits. She had come away from Barnet in storm and misery,

like a prisoner, pitied in a way that galled her more than her proud nature would ever own; she was going back like a princess, guarded and tended, covered with splendor, and having the prestige of a great reserve power. The sensitive deformed man told this to himself very minutely. He added that she was young and rebounding from the former heavy pressure on her life. And she was just out of school: there must be something unwholesome and abnormal in any girl who would not be merry when just out of school.

Still, her gay nods to him from the open car-window jarred him. He sat in the carriage some distance away: he dared not risk boarding the train or crossing the many tracks. Now he saw her, and now a thousand objects crowded between. He wished she had not looked so exhilarated, and was in torment lest some accident should happen before she reached even Philadelphia. She started just before sunset. He thought of the run across the mountains. When the train was actually gone, he drove away, his head sunk on his breast and his face drawn. Oh, to tower up among other men! "If I had been a big animal and tyrannized over her a little, maybe she wouldn't have lost sight of me so gayly. How easy it was to persuade her to go away instead of coming to Cold Springs with me! Yet I didn't give her any choice, either. I wrote that she might go to

Barnet, for I felt obliged to take another rough Northern trip this summer. Miss Rhoda said she was likely to form but two or three strong attachments in her life."

He looked at the seat opposite him,—the carriage, although of the coupé pattern, had been built to carry four,—and thought of her shopping for Tillie and her remarks about Sarah Davidge when driving to the train.

"Are you disappointed at not bringing your chum to Cold Springs this June?" Craque-o'-Doom had inquired.

"What chum?" said Tamsin.

"This Miss Davidge you write to me about." He knew every name her pen had traced.

"No. I don't like her so *very* well."

"Why, I thought you two were banded for mutual improvement?"

Tamsin studied the toe of her boot. "Sarah Davidge is a nice girl," she conceded, "but I don't like to hear people always talking about belonging to a good family."

Craque-o'-Doom smiled under his moustache.

Tamsin, still studying the toe of her boot, continued: "And it makes me mad to hear any one say folks out West are all heathens."

"I am to understand, then, that you have had some slight disagreements with Miss Davidge?"

"Oh, no: we're good enough friends. I like

her the best of any of the girls. She can't help her airs."

It appeared that no strong attachment had been formed for Miss Davidge.

"But this summer," muttered the lonely dwarf, "will be a blooming season for her,—an impressionable May-time. Still, in Barnet she will not be thrown with anybody likely to attract her, unless the Millses have extraordinary guests. But she is by nature a high and mighty aristocrat: I really think few people could please her. Tom must make faithful reports to me: I shan't be able to stand it if he doesn't."

Very different was the expression of Tamsin's face when she arrived late in the pleasant afternoon at Barnet station; she was the only passenger for that place. Captain Mills was on the platform; at a little distance the Mills carriage waited, and by the captain's side stood a gawky child craning her eager neck at all the car-windows.

With a start of delight this child felt herself seized; she recognized the soft touch before she could turn and see that a pretty young lady had descended from the last car instead of from the baggage-van, which Tillie thought as desirable a vehicle as any. The object which did come down from the baggage-van was a huge Saratoga trunk.

Captain Mills touched his hat and took the

hand which Tamsin gave him for an instant across Tillie's shoulder. She gave him barely a glance; there was such gladness in her face as she rocked the little sister to and fro in their old way! The train glided off, and Neal, on his driver's seat, rolled a white eye at the pair; but Tamsin did not know it, or that Captain Mills wanted the check for her baggage.

"My! ain't you some!" exclaimed Tillie when they had kissed.

"Why, you've grown taller!" said Tamsin.

"Course I have. Daddy says I grow like an evil weed." Her coral expanse of lips and rows of little teeth glistened.

"You've been well all the time, haven't you?"

"Had a tech of aygur once,—that's all. Oh, Tam, you do look so pretty!"

"Do I?"

"Yes, you do."

"I didn't think *you'd* be here to meet me."

"I'd 'a come," said Tillie, "if I'd had to foot it; but Tom Mills he told me I might git in and ride with him."

Tamsin looked up toward Captain Mills with an expression of gratitude, and he took the opportunity of asking for her check. She groped in her porte-monnaie for it, and reached it toward him with one arm while she held Tillie to her with the other. He went into the station. "Are they all

well down at father's?" inquired the new-comer with sudden recollection.

"Toler'ble. You knowed Sarah Jane and Arter'd got married, didn't you?"

"Sarah Jane and Arter!" Tamsin's eyes dilated. The corners of her mouth drew down with a scornful spasm. This facial comment was the only one she ever made upon this typical Chenoworth match. Tillie understood, but it was all a matter of indifference to her. She took no care about the doings of her relatives, excepting this sister. "When did they get married?" inquired Tamsin.

"Well, it was a couple of weeks ago. I thought I wrote you about it; but I guess Mary took that letter down to her house and stuck it in the winder, and I forgot to put it in the post-office."

Tamsin looked somewhat graver: the scent of the old atmosphere had come to her nostrils. She shuddered as if it had been an odor of death.

"Ain't ye glad to git back?" said Tillie.

"I'm glad to have hold of you again, honey. But I don't like Barnet."

"Them's better places where you've been?"

"Oh, lovely places! You've got on one of the dresses I sent. And the shoes: let me see your shoes."

Tillie exhibited her boot and a lank length of

ankle: "Yes, these is some of the things. Oh, but the 'cordion!—that was the nicest!"

"Did you like it?"

"I guess I did! Tam, I can play 'Mary to the Saviour's Tomb,' and 'Greenville,' and 'Father in a Promised Land,' and 'Pop goes the Weasel,' and a whole lot o' tunes, on it a'ready." The eager quiver of the child's body was checked as if by a galvanic jerk. She looked up at her senior, reminded of what was proper to the occasion, and inquired agedly, "How's that man o' yourn, anyhow?"

Tamsin shook with laughter.

"There ain't nothin' funny in that, is there?" urged Tillie.

"Not very. He's well, and sent his love to you."

"I don't believe," observed Tillie, weighing the matter, "that he's half as mean as I thought he was at first. He's a real good kind of a feller."

Captain Mills, having seen Tamsin's trunk put into the daily baggage-wagon which ran to Barnet, now came up to help her into the carriage. She nodded slightly to Neal as she ascended the step. He made a most obsequious bow to her, but as he drove he did not fail to roll the whites of his eyes back at her occasionally. She had risen to the plane of grandeur which his race reveres, and was no longer a Chenoworth. Still, he could not rec-

oncile himself to the change; and Tillie Chenoworth sat beside this new lady: he disapproved of Tillie as strongly as ever.

Captain Mills, who occupied the front seat with Neal, turned round and chatted with Tamsin. He was under some constraint, but that wore off. She looked ripe and girlish in her close-fitting travelling suit, and her former awe of him as a great man was gone: both these circumstances placed her at an advantage. He inquired about Craque-o'-Doom, and noticed the smoother modulations of her voice. He told her of some changes in Barnet, and meanwhile was carrying on a separate train of thought based on his observations of her. She did not appear the same person he had once identified as Tamsin Chenoworth. That a few months could make such changes was miraculous. Either he had never known the girl, or girls were capable of being rapidly made over. He had expected her to put on exuberant airs in dress and manner and talk of nothing but "our school" and "the girls," higher mathematics, and her most intimate friends among the "seniors." Boarding-school young ladies always did so: no creatures on earth are more stuffed with a sense of their own importance. But she was not raw and rasping: the change had struck through her entire nature. It might not be a disagreeable job to watch over her welfare, as he had promised

Craque-o'-Doom he would do, feeling at the time he was the best-natured victim that insinuating fellow ever took in.

They drove along the pike, meeting the sunset face to face. Tamsin held up one gloved hand to shield her eyes. When they entered Barnet, how small the canal-bridge looked, how shabby the warehouses rising from the water-edge, how mean the stores, how pitiful the one or two blocks of brick pavement! She noticed these things silently, bending her head with a mere smile when Captain Mills inquired if Barnet did not appear insignificant after New York.

"But as natives we ought to feel an attachment for Barnet," said he.

"It looks best in summer," she observed. The woods on its northwest quarter were glorious in foliage. "We'll go to the woods to-morrow, Tillie."

"Me and Mary's young uns has been all over them woods since the hossy-boys was in blossom," exclaimed Tillie. "Oh, it's pretty up the slope a ways! Do you mind when you and me used to go elderberry-pickin', Tam?"

"Yes, certainly I do,—along the canal."

"And we was 'fraid and hid ourselves in the bushes when boats went past,—'fraid the boatmen 'ud sass us. You wouldn't be afraid now: would you?" This was affirmed rather than asked.

Captain Mills smiled.

"Why wouldn't I?" asked Tamsin. She held one of Tillie's claws on her lap.

The child, somewhat at a loss, looked deferentially at her and tried to explain: "Oh, 'cause You ain't the same like you was then."

"What is there different about me?"

"Well, you ain't 'fraid."

"You think I'm very bold now?"

"You've been away," proceeded Tillie, clearing the matter up entirely, "and *learnt proper*." Tamsin and the captain laughed: even Neal grinned as he turned his horses toward the Hill-house.

"But I thought you's comin' *home!*" exclaimed the child, gripping both hands around her sister's arm, as she saw the carriage thus turn its back on the Chenoworth quarter.

Tamsin took the arm away and put it around her. "You are to stay up here with me," she said, "because there is more room than at father's. I shall be with you just as much. I will go there too. Mr. Sutton arranged it with Captain Mills.—Didn't he, Captain Mills?"

"That's the understanding," replied the host.

"And I told you in my letter."

Tillie readjusted facts in her mind. While thus occupied, it occurred to her, "You don't call him Tom Mills no more."

"Of course not," said Tamsin, reddening.

"You used to."

"I have learned not to take such liberties."

"Don't mention it," said Tom Mills, smiling. He looked up toward the house. Tamsin was quite rosy.

"You says 'father,' too, instead o' 'daddy,'" ruminated Tillie. "Ain't you goin' to say 'mammy' and 'daddy' any more?"

"I hope not."

"Is it 'cause you're too proud?"

"I don't think I'm any prouder than I always was."

"They said you'd git reel stuck-up. I don't think you are, though. You've just learnt proper. My!" meditated Tillie, shaking her head, "how proper you have learnt!"

When they paused on the drive beside the Hill-house, Aunt Sally Teagarden, with a white kerchief tied hastily over her head, came out, a little flurried and unsettled in her manner. She did not know just how to receive her former handmaid, of whose new connection she disapproved while having the girl's welfare at heart. The humdrum life at Barnett had produced few changes: she was astounded to see coming out of the carriage such a refined, pretty creature.

"Why, Mrs—!" exclaimed Aunt Sally. "Why, Miss—! Why—!" There she checked herself, to stand in fine dignity and put forth the good old formula, "How do you do?"

CHAPTER XX.

"YOUR WEDDIN'-EXPENSES."

IN a day's time Aunt Sally had fallen into very pleasant relations with Tamsin, and existence at the Hill-house moved in its usual comfortable groove. Tillie sat at the tea-table, and slept with her sister in one of the spacious front guest-rooms. She accepted all changes with the heedless adaptability of childhood.

The next morning, when they started down hill, she skipped beside Tamsin, delighted only to have her near, and certain that the neighbors and townspeople gazed because they were delighted too. In the back street there was a long gauntlet of humble doors framing stolid women. Some nodded distantly in reply to Tamsin's greeting and noted the style of her dress and extravagance of her parasol and low shoes; others disappeared just as she came by, and took refuge behind window-blinds, as if they could not stand such refulgent prosperity; while a few came out to their gates and shook hands stiffly, talking up to her in a way to make her feel they were just as good as she was, and that she had not been "well off"

such a very long time herself. These shades of social sentiment were lost on Tillie: she was parading her sister. It occurred to her several times to call attention to the trappings Tamsin carried, but they were merely incidental in her eyes.

"Ain't this a pretty dress she's got on, Mis' Flowers!" exclaimed Tillie to a dishevelled woman who stood with her hands on her hips and several of her dirty buds around her. Tamsin, while talking a moment to the mother, was recognizing for the first time the piggish comeliness there is about children who wallow.

Tillie's exuberance amused her, but it had a chilling effect on Mrs. Flowers. "Balls's girls has all got dresses somethin' like that," she observed. "What fer goods is it?"

"Silk," replied Tillie, rubbing the fabric between her finger and thumb.—"Ain't it silk, Tamsie?"

"Never mind," said Tamsin.

"But ain't it silk?"

"I thought 'twas callyco," said Mrs. Flowers: "the figger's like it."

At the Chenoworth gate a curious neighbor was talking with Sarah Jane beside a pail of water which seemed destined to no further use in the world than reflecting stalks of flowering currant by the fence. The doors stood open: the premises were alert with a summer look. The front windows were heavy with vines, the dry walk bordered by prim-

roses and four-o'clocks and all that old-fashioned treasury of flowers.

Tamsin saw her mother hoeing in the garden; the ancient cornstalks were gone, and lines of tender ones appeared in their places.

"I s'posed you'd be above comin' *here*," said Sarah Jane as the neighbor stood aside to let Tamsin enter the gate. It was a new neighbor,—one of the many floaters of the back street,—and Tamsin did not know her.

The sisters took each other's hands. It was a singular greeting, kindly indifference appearing on one side and suppressed resentment on the other.

"Is father in the garden, too?" inquired Tamsin.

"No; he's down town. One of Mary's young uns can run and tell him you're here."

"Never mind. I can see him soon, anyhow. Where is Mary?"

"She's washin' fer Mis' Ewing to-day." The neighbor took up her water-pail and moved away, while Sarah Jane walked beside her sister to the garden.

It was Tillie who caught the old mother around the waist and turned her remonstrating sun-bonnet toward Tamsin.

"My sakes alive!" complained Mrs. Chenoworth; "if you don't quit a-scarin' me that way, Tillie, I'll fetch you such a rap— Why, is that Tamsin? No, 'tain't."

"Yes, it is, mother." The daughter put her arms up and kissed the old mouth; yet, in doing so, she was conscious of a blank and aching feeling in her bosom.

Mrs. Chenoworth was not especially glad to see her. They seemed to be a race without emotions. "Don't step on that tater-hill," she said, and set her sun-bonnet straight on her head. "Well, we heard you got here last night. Come into the house." They all wended their way thither.

"Everybody is well?" inquired Tamsin.

"Middlin'. How's your man?"

"Well, thank you."

They entered the low door, and when Mrs. Chenoworth had selected the particular split-bottomed chair she wished Tamsin to sit in, it occurred to her to remark, "Sary Jane and Arter they've made a match."

"So Tillie told me."

Sarah Jane put her apron to her eyes; her face reddened violently.

"I hope you'll be happy," said Tamsin.

"Oh, I'll bet you do!—with a great big lazy hulk like him on my hands! You could always have things your own way, and I may take up with your leavin's."

Tamsin looked at her with mild compassion; "You needn't have married him."

"I thought mebby he'd fetch in somethin'," ex-

plained Sarah Jane, crying; "but he ain't done a lick o' work since; and when he has a job he won't stick to it. And there's that baby."

"Where is it?"

"It's asleep," snapped Sarah Jane. "I couldn't git nobody to take it, and it a-hinderin' me from doin' any good for myself. Arter he talked around and talked around till I went and had him; and now what have I come to!"

Mrs. Chenoworth drew a deep sigh. Every new complication in her family brought her greater resignation: it was the natural lot of woman to suffer. But she turned toward Tamsin with a strange look. Tamsin scarcely belonged to her. "Things is different with you," she said.

"Yes, they are different."

Tamsin felt a sudden thrill through her bosom as she spoke. She saw a bland, gray-eyed head standing out on the air with no appendage of deformed body. He had saved her from this misery of race, before which she could still only sit helpless. The fine aroma of his spirit came to her in his absence: he would have made the world different to her even had he been poor.

A tramping on the step and a shadow darkening the door caused her to look up and see her father. The old man was grayer and more hairy; he wore goggles over his eyes to protect them from sun-glare, and a coat so tattered and patched it was

hard to tell what color it had faded and degenerated from. Tamsin knew of old her father's tastes in raiment: no matter how many whole garments he had, he wore most and enjoyed himself best in tatters. He made rather a loud demonstration over her, and smacked her cheek with a kiss. John and George appeared also, and shook her glove with clumsy hands.

While she talked with her family she kept looking round with the old astonishment at their ways and habits of thought, and that aversion toward them which had been born in her was only tempered by pity. She did not like them; formerly she had loathed them. The feeling was lessened, —not because they had gained upon her affections, but because she had a scope and a world no longer bound by them.

With Tillie all to herself in the woods it was different. The summer was young with them. Every smell was pungent: the earth and grass still had an odor that one sucked in with all one's lungs. Both girls knew a hollow in the woody hill which rose west of Barnet. Tillie carried her instrument, and they went there and sat on a log so crusted with moss and reduced from fibre by Nature's alchemy that it was scarcely stronger than a heap of dust and gave way in places to the treading foot or leaning hand. It was a bank of many tiny moss-cups. Tamsin and Tillie had sat

on that log every summer for years. The woods dimmed the daylight all around them. Far off they could hear the rumble of vehicles on the pike.

When Tamsin settled herself, the little one kicked a space clear of last year's leaves, and, patting the turf with her feet, played all her tunes. The tree-trunks echoed the music. When she finally placed the accordion on the log and climbed up between it and Tamsin, her face was damp with exertion, and she lifted the bottom of her dress to wipe her neck.

"What a smart little girl I've got!" said the elder, putting her arms around the child.

"I learnt 'em nearly all myself. Just ketched 'em by ear."

"When you come to stay with me you can have a piano to play on."

"That'd be pretty nice," conceded Tillie; "but I don't see how a feller can help likin' the 'cordion best. It's so little: you can carry it round and hug it. Gne of Mary's young uns come nigh pickin' a hole in it. My! what'd I done with that young un if it had!"

"Honey—" began Tamsin.

"I like to hear that!" exclaimed the child; "sounds like you used to talk. I expect my talk does seem awful to you, Tam."

"I never found any fault with you, dear "

"I know you don't; but you've learnt proper and I ain't. I'm goin' to begin to, though."

Tamsin laughed and rocked the flaxen head. "We're sisters," she said,—*"real sisters."*

Tillie admitted it as they rocked. "Mary and Sary Jane's sisters, too," she added. "I like Mary better'n I do Sary Jane; but I don't like *nobody* half as well as I do you, Tam,—daddy nor mammy, nor nobody." ("Father nor mother," she tried under her breath.) "Not father, nor mother, nor nobody. I did miss you so. Now, don't you laugh if I tell you somethin', will ye?" She tilted her head and challenged Tamsin with her light-blue eyes: the iris was very clear and pure.

"Of course not," promised Tamsin.

"I did feel that bad, and I'd wake up in the night and couldn't go to sleep, when you first went away. The only thing that done me any good was, I'd pat my piller, this way, like it was your face, and say, 'Place hands, place hands!'" This was Tillie's individual and peculiar caress. She meant by it blessing and benediction.

Tamsin suddenly put her handkerchief to her face.

"You ain't laughin', are you?"

"Oh, no."

"Are ye cryin'? Don't cry, Tam."

"Oh, honey," said Tamsin, devouring this merry little face with eyes which dilated while she gazed, "what shall I ever do without you?"

"There's your man," suggested Tillie. "You think a heap of him, don't you?"

The warmth deepened under Tamsin's skin. She looked wistfully at the child, but made no reply.

"I don't think much o' men. I don't never intend to git married. Mary and Sary Jane has got their come-uppance gittin' married. And you've got such a funny-lookin' man, Tam."

"You don't know him, dear. If you saw how kind and fine he is—"

"Yes, he is a reel clever feller. I think consider'ble of that 'cordion."

"And didn't you like the dresses and all the rest?"

"Yes, I was very well pleased. And I like the new things you brought me when you come. But I *was* spited about that blue sack."

"Why, I thought you were pleased with it."

"I was, I tell ye. But Mary she had to borry it for one of her young uns, and she kep' a-borryin' it till they had it there all the time. I didn't min' her havin' whatever else she wanted; but that blue sack,—it was a spite for *it* to be took."

"I'll get you another,—a prettier one."

"If you do," advised Tillie sagely, "git one apiece for all the connections first."

Coming home, they passed Mary's house. She lived in what was known as the "nigger quarters,"

several colored families holding sway thereabouts. The voices of their noisy progeny could always be heard, singing, crying, or quarrelling,—but their gardens were marvellous, even in pastoral Barnet.

Tamsin and Tillie stopped at Mary's fence. She was weeding her onion-bed, but came forward, pulling down her sleeves. Her hands had that shrunken look which parboiling in soap-suds gives; her dress hung lank about her, and half the slats were out of the limpest sun-bonnet that ever hung over a dejected woman's face. Still, and in spite of her humiliations and incapacities, there was always a remnant of dignity about Mary. Tamsin took her hands and reached over the fence to kiss her, touched by this sister as she had never been before.

"How are you?"

"Tol'able, thank you. You look *real* well."

"I am well. Where are the children?"

"Some's along where he's a-ditchin', and I don't know where the boys are. That's Jinnie hidin' behind the ker'n'-bushes.—Come here, Jinnie, and see Aunt Tamsin."

"Yes, come," called Tamsin. But the white-headed child merely peeped, and refused to appear.

Tamsin looked over her sister's drawn and pinched face, still keeping a hand on her arm as both of them leaned on the fence. "You're tired, aren't you, Mary?"

"Yes: I' been washin' for Mis' Ewin'. I just got done a little while ago, and thought I could weed some before he wanted his supper." She avoided Tamsin's eyes, and gazed rather on her hands or dress or Tillie's clothing, with that nervous attempt at self-possession which is so painful to see in a woman who carries her broken pride through her misfortunes.

"I am coming to see you some afternoon," said Tamsin.

"Do," said Mary stiffly. "You're goin' to stay up at Mills's, ain't you? We heard you was."

"Yes: Mr. Sutton got them to board me."

"I thought 'twasn't likely he'd want you to stay at daddy's, where they're so crowded."

Tamsin decided that Mary had some sense, and in this respect differed from Sarah Jane.

"If you want to talk proper, Mary," expostulated Tillie, "don't say 'daddy': it's 'father.' Tam says 'father.'"

Mary's face grew hot, but she replied, "My proper days is past, Tillie. I ain't tryin' no more. Tamsin'll have to learn for the whole family."

"Tillie will make everybody laugh at me," expostulated Tamsin. "She asked Mrs. Flowers to look at my dress, and she acts as if I came out for a show. *That* isn't proper, honey."

"Well," said Tillie, twisting herself, "you can't expect me to learn everything proper right off."

The very first ripe currants were on the tea-table at the Hill-house. Neal stood by the sideboard, in his old place, ready to start at a motion from his mistress; but, before it was time to change plates in the simple country tea, he had an opportunity to ruminate long and deeply on the promotion of Chenoworth's Damsel. He saw her sitting up there as fresh as a rose, acting the lady; a few months before she was an odd-job girl, whose position he considered far less dignified than that of a regular servant. His master looked at her, too, seeing with constant surprise her many small stylish ways. Her flesh had a warm under-tint which it had lacked in her days of precarious side-meat.

When Tamsin had been home a few days, old Mr. Chenoworth came slouching up to the Hill-house one morning, looking about him in every direction, with his lips drooping apart. The cook happened to be in the garden with Aunt Sally, and Neal busy on the vineyard slope, so there was nobody about the great drowsing house except Tamsin and Captain Mills. The latter had just come in and thrown himself on a sofa in the back parlor. Tamsin was in the library, writing a letter.

The old man went cautiously around the house, and, returning to the side-porch on the east side, stepped up and knocked. Tamsin saw him through

a window. The door was open, and she reached it before Captain Mills had lifted his drowsy length.

"Won't you come in, father?"

"I hain't got time. I wanted to speak to ye a minute."

"Is Tillie sick?"

"No. She ain't been from here more'n half an hour. I've got to go over to Norwalk to-morrow,—there's some things for me to settle over there. I want you to lend me five or ten dollars."

"Yes," said Tamsin.

He had spoken low, and Captain Mills's indifferent ear did not make out the request. Tamsin went to her room and brought him what he asked for. It was money given to her to spend as she pleased. She smiled as she came down-stairs: history was repeating itself,—he still wanted her wages.

"I'll give it back as soon as I git it," he promised.

"Oh, never mind, father."

At least four times during the summer he made excursions to Norwalk, and each time borrowed a similar sum. Since he could no longer charge up board and lodging against her, he had no resource but to borrow. When the season was quite over, it may be mentioned here, old Mr. Chenoworth fully cancelled these loans. He saw Tamsin, and

said to her, "Tam, that money that I got of you—"

"Never mind it, father. It's all Mr. Sutton's, and he would want you to keep it."

"But I borrowed it. I'll let it go against your weddin'-expenses. That was some expense, but I didn't charge it up agin you at the time."

When she came in from the veranda on this first occasion, Captain Mills, lounging against the sofa-pillow, inquired, "Was that your father?"

"Yes: he's gone now."

Tom had guessed her errand up-stairs. "Did you know that your husband pays him a regular allowance?"

"No," said Tamsin with a start.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BROTHER.

THE ladies of Barnet, especially the young and recently-married ladies, all called on Tamsin. They had considered the matter well. It was a concession not so much to her altered prospects as to the Mills family, with whom she was staying. The Millses had been respectable ever since Barnet was a town: they had been looked up to, and would probably be looked up to while time endured. Tamsin had made a queer though advantageous match. She might prosper, or her new-found glories might melt: Barnet knew nothing about that, but as long as the Millses countenanced her advancement it was bound to do so.

The young ladies compared their impressions of her: they had known absolutely nothing of her in her former state except an old shawl and a pair of cowhide shoes plodding across the commons. Their opinions of her were various: one was charmed with her, but another despised a girl who would live in comfort and even luxury while her family struggled in poverty. How Tamsin was to

renovate the whole Chenoworth tribe this right-minded critic did not suggest. Some thought she made herself ridiculous, coming back where her miserable origin was known; and a few said she was a Chenoworth, and, generally speaking, that was enough for them to know. Still, outward deference of manner was not wanting, and Aunt Sally many times during the summer put on her cream-colored poplin, which gave her the stately expansiveness of a beautiful white elephant, and went with Tamsin hither and thither to tea at houses the outside of which had formerly been as awful as temples to Chenoworth's daughter. Sarah Jane stood at the gate to watch her favored sister's progress, or had spies out along the pike to report where Tamsin had been most recently honored, and Sarah Jane's sun-bonnet made frequent journeys across the dog-pound to buzz at Mary's tired ear the inequality of fortune. Mary expected no more good in the world: she had long ago received her final surprise. But Sarah Jane was of opinion that if Tamsin Chenoworth was even the ghost of a sister she would divide the dwarf up in some way among the family, or make him at least demand that invitations should be extended to all the younger branches.

In return for all this entertainment Aunt Sally gave a mighty and solemn tea, to which all of female Barnet drew nigh who were considered within

the pale of society. And here was crowning cause for complaint. Sarah Jane went up and sat in the Mills's kitchen and complained to the cook. Her feelings were so outraged she wished a variety of calamities upon her sister. That Tamsin had not the inviting of the guests was a fact which in no wise mollified her; that Tamsin might be wearied by their society was what Sarah Jane could not conceive of. There sat that girl, reared like a goddess above her own kin: either she had no business in her position or the Chenoworths had no business in theirs. Sarah Jane was in the liveliest sense a communist.

Craque-o'-Doom's letters were very odd and delightful. He wrote about nothing but his adventures. He enclosed some *épistles* from Rhoda Burns, written to Tamsin and himself both: she had a great many clever things to say about things abroad; and these two remote streams flowed through Tamsin's mind, clearing it of a great deal of perplexity. Considering herself only a simple girl, she sometimes pored over her husband's letters with awe.

Jennie Mills and Louise Latta, with a following of young gentlemen and young ladies, came down and took the house by storm. These were days of immense activity, although the July heats were come. There was a lawn-party, and endless games of croquet, rides, a little languid dancing, and a

picnic, in which Barnet turned out all its muslin and best cake and came home soaked with the usual thunder-shower. It was about this time that Captain Mills began to devote himself to Tamsin. He had been very kind to her all summer, in a guardian-like way; but, with so many young men around, he felt it his duty, as the elderly, non-marrying man of the flock, to escort Craque-o'-Doom's young wife. The young men in round coats and straw hats were not inclined to neglect her; they had heard her story from Jennie and Louise; they saw her and approved of her. But on every occasion when a straw hat threw itself down to fan a pleasant heated face by Tamsin's side, Tom Mills's cooler, smooth-shaven countenance appeared as a balance of power.

Jennie and Louise met Tamsin upon their own plane. They were delighted with her, and borrowed half her things, freely bestowing their own upon her in return. This house-stirring had a beneficent influence on her. All her girlish spirits were aroused. She talked, and waltzed, and played croquet. Tom Mills frequently stood and looked at her. Her very flesh quivered with life: she was lovely and dangerous,—far more so than the lighter girls: they could charm, but she had an individuality which could entangle itself in the minutest fibres of a man's nature. Captain Tom thought this dumbly, feeling a sample of the tingle

himself. It caused him to mutter again, "Poor Craque-o'-Doom!" and thereafter lose himself in astonishment at the change which had come over his compassion for his friend. On the occasion of the dwarf's marriage he had pitied the poor fellow for having taken a wife immeasurably beneath him: he pitied the same man now for the disadvantages which must hold him forever beneath this beautiful wife.

It troubled Tom after the boys and girls were gone. He smoked a great many cigars. He was a hardened old bachelor himself, but could foresee how it would end. By the time she was through school she would be ready for gay society, and gay society she would have. No dwarf could deny her anything. How she would sail and sparkle, while Craque-o'-Doom ambled slowly along underneath, watching her flight! Just when she was at her best, somebody,—Tom dreaded to think there were such scoundrels,—but some fellow would sever the last thread that bound her to Craque-o'-Doom; then these new-fangled notions about divorce, and all that sort of thing; darkness, trouble, Craque-o'-Doom desolated.

But she seemed very happy at receiving the dwarf's letters; she read bits of them to Tillie, who hung around her constantly, and to Captain Tom. She devoted certain days to writing, and sent out large packets.

"Distance lends enchantment," thought the captain.

Her brother came home from jail, and made the round of the family to greet everybody. He had not a prepossessing countenance, and was much soured against society. The poor boy knew that things had gone against him, and, conscious of guilt, he was ready for new mischief. Tamsin had seen Sam: she had exchanged salutations with all her cousins, including Arter, who shambled out of her way as quickly as he possibly could, expressing injury in every line of his slouch. She had sought them more than they had sought her, though she felt an indifference toward them which was tintured with no feeling but pain. But Jess came defiantly to see her. He slammed Mills's front gate. Sarah Jane was with him,—and the least liberal guardian of Barnet society was just leaving the house. It was a sultry sunset. Tamsin was languid with the heat of the day. Aunt Sally stood in the shade, talking with her neighbor, and Captain Mills had just sauntered up with his cigar. He had on a dressing-gown, and looked effeminate in the eyes of Jess Chenoworth.

"Here's your brother come to see you," said Sarah Jane aggressively to Tamsin. "He's just as good as them that's so big-feelin', if he has been in jail."

The neighbor looked upon this family group

with extreme disfavor. She confined her remaining remarks to Aunt Sally, and, after listening incidentally to what the group said, went away and told how disgraceful it was.

Tamsin took Jess's hand and said, "How do you do?" She looked pained. Tom Mills ached at the sight of her face.

"I didn't suppose you'd come to see me, so I thought I'd come to see you," said Jess, with a hard laugh and an air of braving it out. Yet she had a certain effect upon him which no female relative had produced before.

"You ought to come," said Tamsin. "I ought to see you."

"He's your own brother," repeated Sarah Jane, as if she were thrusting the fact down Tamsin's throat.

"Yes, he is," said Tamsin. "Poor boy!" she added, with a choke in her voice.

"I don't want no water-works turned on," said Jess, with an airy wave of his head. "The women," he remarked to Captain Mills, "al'ays takes every excuse they can for cryin'."

"I want to talk with you, Jess," said Tom Mills, turning to saunter around the house and indicating that he wished to be followed, "about your prospects."

Jess went with the captain. "I hain't got any prospecks," said he in a jocose tone. "The'

hain't any millionaire been runnin' after me since I come out."

"There's a man, not exactly a millionaire, but still with some means," said Tom, as they mounted the east veranda by themselves, "who offers to give you a handsome start, for the sake of your sister, if you will try to make a man of yourself."

Tamsin sat on the door-step in silence. Aunt Sally had gone to oversee the milking. The sun was down, but the burning was not yet drawn out of the day. Sarah Jane sat on the lowest step: her sun-bonnet was in her lap, but her aquiline face was overhung with shreds of hair. Tamsin never said much to her, but seemed to overwhelm her with silence. Sarah Jane had broken out for a minute or two with hysterical complaints, but the black-eyed sphinx upon the top step was apparently stone-cold and deaf to them. "You don't seem to think nothin' of your own folks," said Sarah Jane; "everybody else is more account to you than them that's kin,—only Tillie. You don't act with no natural feelin's."

The upbraiding might have passed Tamsin's cheeks like the evening wind. Her hands were folded in her lap, and she looked steadily down the hill.

Sarah Jane dug her shoe into the gravel at the foot of the step. Dusk sifted thicker and thicker through the air, and finally Jess came round the

house, and the sister who had come with him got up and joined him. "Good-evenin', Tam," said Sarah Jane with asperity.

"Good-evening," responded Tamsin.

Jess paused, with his hat pulled forward and his hands in his pockets. "That was toler'ble clever of your man," he said to Tamsin.

"What was?"

"He's goin' to stake me up for a new deal at somethin'. Tom Mills says he thought I'd turn out first-rate if he gave me a start. You tell him thanky, will ye?"

"Yes," said Tamsin. She added spontaneously, "He is good."

"Consider'ble better'n some whole men I've knowed," pronounced Jess.

"I bet *you* never put him up to it," said Sarah Jane to Tamsin.

They went away talking in an eager, sad duet: the eager tones were Jess's, the plaintive ones Sarah Jane's.

There was a whippoorwill singing in one of the large trees beside the drive. The gurgle in his throat which precedes his cry could be distinctly heard. The barn-yard calves were complaining of their evening banishment from their mothers, with that lonesome, November-like cadence which always suggests thinning trees and a sharp wind around corners. But the summer night was deli-

cious ; it did not even lack a full moon. Far down the pike, the Barnet brass-band was blaring at great Apollo to strike the lyre ; the one ice-cream saloon was doing a rushing business, for a great many promenading couples made the evening festive.

Aunt Sally saw the mantel-clock point to nine, and took her bed-room candle. "Is Tamsin upstairs, Thomas?" she inquired as she passed the small library-door, within which her nephew was smoking in the moonlight.

"I don't know. Probably she is."

"Be sure to fasten the front door when you go."

"Certainly," said Tom.

With Andrew Jackson Davis under her arm and her candle paling in the moonlight, Aunt Sally went up-stairs.

When Captain Tom had smoked his cigar out, he got up and sauntered through the parlors, giving no sign of what was in his mind or how he meant to occupy the rest of the evening. In the middle of the front parlor he stood still. "Tamsin," he said, with an indefinite sting of pain in the word. He saw her lying face downward on a sofa, her white dress rising and falling in long breaths around the shoulders. She stirred, keeping the back of one hand over her eyes. "What's the matter?" begged Captain Tom, seating himself on a chair by her head. He rested his arm on the

back and leaned toward her with what he thought a very paternal air. "What are you crying about here alone?"

For answer she broke into a fresh sob.

"My heavens!" said Tom, with a pang in his breast. "Who has hurt you?" He reassuringly took the hand from her eyes and held and patted it. It was warm and soft, and while he held it he began to tremble. "Can't you tell me?" he murmured, modulating his voice so that it sounded strange to himself. "Do you feel badly about your brother?" He raised her to a sitting posture and saw her rested comfortably against the back of the sofa. With fatherly care he put a footstool to her feet, and then resumed his chair, reaching for her hands with an unaccountable impulse to draw her close to him.

Tamsin looked into his kind eyes and revealed a new phase of herself. The silent stoic and the budding young lady were gone. She was a spirit struggling with the problems of her own being,—but a very pretty, warm, distracting spirit, conscious or unconscious of her power. "I never did like them," she confessed. "I can't do it. Tillie is the only one who seems related to me. It is horrible to feel so. When I looked at him, I thought of the brothers who came to see the girls at school. I should like to have a brother of that kind. He makes my flesh creep. I do not love

my father and mother. If they were dead I could not cry one true tear. If Sam and Sarah Jane and all the rest—except Tillie—were to die, I should not miss them at all."

Tom kept patting and soothing her hand.

"You never heard of anybody that way, did you?" inquired Tamsin.

"Oh, yes: very few brothers and sisters are so closely united as Tillie and you are."

"But why don't I care for the rest of them?"

"Natural antagonism," explained Captain Tom. "There are no points of sympathy between you. You are as different as if you came of other blood. It is useless to make yourself unhappy about it."

Tamsin rested against the back of the sofa and thought. "I wish," she said sincerely, "that I had only had one sister, and that Tillie, and only one brother, and that you."

Tom Mills started up and walked to the other side of the room.

Tamsin looked after him: "Have I made you mad?"

"No," said Tom, returning. His eyes had a singular glow. "All my life I have missed my sister."

"It would have been *so* nice," continued Tamsin. "Before Mr. Sutton came I used to want to be related to you, and after he came I wanted it more than ever. What makes your hand so cold?"

"Is it cold?" murmured the captain, looking at it stupidly. "That must be because it has always missed a little hand like this."

"I used to watch you, and be afraid of you."

"Afraid of me! Why?"

"You seemed my idea of a gentleman; and I—What was I?"

"Always a rare girl, if I had had the wit to notice it," said Tom with some bitterness.

"I always loved to be here," still ruminated Tamsin. "Why can't people pick their relations? I would have picked you from the very start. I hope you ain't provoked because I feel so?"

"No—no—heaven knows!"

"Home!" her eyes wandered around the moon-lit walls. "And I never could help calling *her* Aunt Sally; and you—" She turned her eyes back laughing to his face.

He was as white as a statue; his jet moustache added ghastliness to his face. He gripped her hand in palm and fingers which were jetting with blood hot from his heart.

"What's the matter?" asked Tamsin, startled, as he drew himself away from her and rose up, turning his back.

"Nothing," replied Captain Mills, huskily.

Almost as soon as he had spoken, there were feet on the door-steps and feet in the hall, a swish of clothes, the cough of a man, the sound of a

mellow voice which made Tom Mills want to stab himself, and of Rhoda Burns, exclaiming, "Who is in here having such a remarkably cosey little *tête-à-tête* that carriages rolling up and people arriving fail to disturb it?"

CHAPTER XXII.

TWO MEN.

TAMSIN rose and met the party with agitation. She kissed Rhoda, took Mr. Burns's hand, and, last, stood like a young giantess with her hands in Craque-o'-Doom's.

Tom made a great stir about getting lights. But Neal and the cook were out making calls, and the matches eluded him. "I had some in the library a little while ago, but don't know where I put them," said he. And he shook hands all around the group with a manner very different from his usual beneficent one.

"Never mind candles," said Rhoda: "they just draw bugs to bang against the screens or sail in at the door and land down your back. You seemed to be getting on charmingly without illumination when we came in."

"Yes," said Tamsin. "I hate lights in summer.

I sat on the step till long after the moon came up."

Thought Mrs. Burns to herself, "I wonder how long this philandering has been going on? And Tom Mills, of all men! I never saw him look so agitated. Hasn't she a particle of sense? I could shake her!"

They were grouped in seats, in and out of the moonshine. Rhoda unfastened her hat and scarf; the two gentlemen sat with their hats in their hands.

"Did you send your carriage to the stables?" inquired Tom.

"I didn't bring mine this time," said Craque-o'-Doom. "We came in a conveyance from the station. Mr. and Mrs. Burns whirled me out here without any warning."

"Yes," said Rhoda; "we stumbled on him roasting in New York City, just by accident, at his favorite hotel."

"It's very hot in town," remarked Mr. Burns. He fanned his face with his handkerchief, as if the recollection overpowered him.

"But I thought you were in Canada for the summer, Craque-o'-Doom?" said Tom.

"I got tired of it sooner than I did last year."

"You didn't say a word about leaving in your last letter," said Tamsin. She had resumed her

seat on the sofa, and Rhoda was sitting in the chair Tom had occupied.

"No; I took a sudden fancy to run out here. Then I changed my mind and sent the carriage back. Then I met Mr. and Mrs. Burns, and we concluded to make a flying visit to Barnet and take you back with us to the sea-shore for the rest of the summer."

"I had a little matter of business West," murmured Mr. Burns, to explain his concurrence in such eccentric proceedings. "I have to go on to Chicago."

"Don't say flying visit," urged Tom in a nerveless voice.

"Come with us to Swampscott, Tom," said Craque-o'-Doom. And Rhoda turned sharply round and looked at him. "Mr. Burns has promised us as much time as he can spare during the rest of the summer. We can make a comfortable party."

"Fifth wheel to a coach," said Tom. "Bachelors are always in the way. Louise and Jennie have just made us a visit," he continued, addressing Rhoda.

"I wish they had extended it; only we might tax your aunt's housekeeping pretty heavily. You haven't told me how she is, or even noticed that I am just back from the grand tour."

"Oh, Aunt Sally is always well," said Tom.

"And you must remember I am just a provincial farmer, blind to the splendors of travel. Provincial is the word, isn't it, Mr. Burns?"

Mr. Burns laughed and rubbed his hands. "Yes, that's the word. Pretty good sort of word; but I don't like it myself. I don't like New York airs."

"I do," said Rhoda. "I like everything that suggests magnificence. If you will own to being provincial, I will glory in being cosmopolitan. We have had sumptuous times, haven't we, Mr. Burns?"

"Very," he responded.

"My head is stuffed full. I am richer by a grand division and many hundred years. Is that your aunt Sally coming down-stairs?"

It was Aunt Sally, in an immense wrapper. Her light sleep had been broken. She welcomed everybody, and had lights burning all over the house, and June-bugs bumping against them, and a hearty supper set out, and all the travellers' wants attended to, before the minute-hand on the French clock had passed three characters.

"Tamsin," said Mrs. Burns, coming into her young friend's virgin chamber when every inmate was supposed to be retiring, "have you said a word to Mr. Sutton this evening?"

"Of course I have." Tamsin had a downcast expression. She had her light hair around the shoulders of a very pretty tinted *peignoir*, and was

brushing industriously. Rhoda also had her hair down and plied a vigorous brush. "Do you think we shall really go to-morrow?"

"Of course. It's time, isn't it?"

"Then I wish Tillie had stayed here to-night. She has slept with me every night but this since I came back. She took a freak to stay at home to-night."

"Have you had a pleasant summer?"

"Oh, *such* a pleasant one! I have had her with me so much. The other day we went out to the grave-yard, and sat in the grass and talked as we used to do when we were children."

"Children! what are you now?" sniffed Mrs. Burns. "That must have been very cheerful."

"It was.—I wish she was here."

"Tamsin," said Rhoda boldly, "what were you and Captain Mills doing when we came in?"

"Doing?" The girl raised her black eyes as if with a sudden effort at recollection. "Why, talking, of course."

"What tender subject occupied you?"

"I shan't tell you," replied Tamsin, after turning the matter over in her mind. "I don't have to tell everybody how I feel."

Rhoda sat down by her and put a hand on her lap. The girl's eyes met hers with great wistfulness: the oval face looked so innocent. "She is

the slyest flirt I ever saw," thought Rhoda, "or else the most guileless of women."

"You delicious young fiend!" she exclaimed, "I am equally divided whether to shake you or fall upon you and devour you with kisses. Have you been making fools of any men this summer? Not to mince matters, have you transfixed this silly old Tom Mills, with his white poll and black moustache and years of what ought to be discretion?"

Tamsin pushed back her hair and flashed a glance at Rhoda which was actually haughty. "I'm married!" she said, as if this were a sufficient reminder.

"Yes, I know you are; but how are you to realize it, living as you do? And plenty of married women flirt, you will find as you go on."

"If you think that," said Tamsin, retiring an inch from Rhoda, evidently smarting with a new sting which neutralized the old, "I don't care what you know. My brother got out of—jail. You don't know how I feel."

"My dear!" exclaimed Rhoda affectionately.

"I wished I had had a brother like Captain Mills. He has always been a nice man. I want," she burst out passionately, "I *do* want nice relations!" And, turning her back on Rhoda, she hid her head in a pillow.

Mrs. Burns was about to begin a dissertation on

the ridiculous folly of that platonism between the sexes known as "brothering" and "sistering" each other, but the door opened without warning, and Tillie came in. She had reached the front door just as Aunt Sally was herself locking it for the night. Her hair was damp with dew: the odors of hay-fields and sweet sod were suggested by her untrammelled presence.

"I couldn't stay away, Tam," said the child. She gave a "How do you do?" to the new lady, and huddled on the bed by her sister.

"They are a couple of Phœbe-birds," thought Rhoda as she retired. "I'm not half as brilliant in the management of human nature as I thought I was."

Meanwhile, Captain Tom was crouching against the mantel in Craque-o'-Doom's room. The dwarf was half lying on the bed, with a pillow under his elbow. "Is that all?" said he.

"I think it's enough," said Tom. "I give you my word I behaved like a man and a gentleman till to-night. I'm growing daft in my mature years. When I came in and found her crying, you can't picture my sensations."

"Oh, yes, I can."

"I had an affair once that I thought would keep me from ever thinking of a woman again."

The dwarf looked up with interest.

"She died. I expected to live a bachelor, and

have never since thought of myself as a marrying man. It sounds odd: I don't speak of it, for people would consider it ridiculous. I can see how I came to make such an ass of myself to-night. All summer this one has been thrown on my care; I watched her, and studied her, and grew to her, as you might say."

"Yes; that's where I was wrong. It was my fault," said the dwarf.

"How did you know I had such a weak spot?" continued Tom. "Throw the blame on me, where it belongs. All at once I came upon her sobbing as if her heart would break,—I know all her drawbacks— Oh, heavens! how a man's heart will yearn!"

"Yes, how it will yearn!" breathed the dwarf, covering his face with hands which had grown almost gaunt.

"So I said, and did what I told you, and half compromised her in your eyes and the eyes of the other two."

When the dwarf had been silent a minute he seemed to have collected his forces, and said, "Tom, I hope you won't mind my saying I think of her and not of you?"

"Certainly not. What consideration do I merit?"

"You are a good fellow, and I have liked you well, and taxed your friendship more than I ought

to have done. But, Tom, I could willingly strangle you where her happiness is involved. The great question with me is, Does she love you?"

"No, she doesn't. Of course not."

"Tom, she has known you all her life. You were, as she said, her idea of a gentleman. Besides, you are a man to match with a beautiful, perfectly-made woman. What am I? A twist of nature, a man-monkey, whose most dignified gesture is ridiculous. I have been struggling against the tide. I have believed it possible for her to care for me: I don't believe it any more. Why, her repugnance overcame her so she ran from me, once! Her affections—and they are strong in proportion to the narrow scope they take—are bound around this place and you. You must take her; and, by God! if you ever make her unhappy I will shoot you with my own hands!"

"Old fellow, you can shoot me and welcome. I couldn't feel much worse than I do. But exercise a little common sense. One man doesn't marry another man's wife in this country, no matter how much he may have courted her," the captain sneered down at himself.

"She isn't any more my wife than she is yours. I gave her the protection of my name and guardianship, and she's nothing but my ward. In these days it won't be hard to cut the slim legal tie which binds us together. You may remember I mentioned

some such possible emergency when I first spoke about taking her. You can marry her and make her happy. If any odium attaches to her, it will be, like the rest of her drawbacks, her misfortune and not her fault. Confound you! why didn't *you* think of giving her a chance?"

"Why didn't I? I'm a pretty kind of a fellow for a man to resign in favor of, ain't I? Now, you listen to me:" Tom approached and sat on the bed. "You're working yourself to a high pitch for nothing."

"Are you going to say you wouldn't have her?" Craque-o'-Doom's eyes narrowed themselves to fierce gray slits.

"Have her? you don't want to make a fool of yourself, asking me that? I tell you, she crept in on me unawares. You ought to slap my face for it, but I love her. A man can't say more than that, if he's a man with red blood in his body. What does a man generally want to do when such a thing happens to him? But she wouldn't have me, even if all was fair and open. She was as cool as a mermaid. She thinks I'm a good old fellow—trustworthy in the main—and would make a creditable relation; and that's all she thinks about me."

"You held her hands?" said Craque-o'-Doom.

"Yes, and she wondered that mine were cold and trembling, and was as much moved as if I had been my aunt Sally."

"But she didn't run from you; she confided in you."

"Yes, I happened to be handy when she was in a troubled mood. Now, don't take this matter with so much confounded seriousness: I have been a fool, and have got to smart many a day for my folly. She is an innocent child who has been drawn into an absurd situation without realizing it. That's all there is about it."

"Tom," said Craque-o'-Doom, still pursuing his own train of thought, "come down to Swampscott with us."

Captain Tom laughed, but looked at him sadly: "I'm going to start for the Pacific coast as soon as you folks are gone."

"What for?"

"For medicine. I've meant to go a long time, and this furnishes the occasion."

"Will your aunt go?"

"If I can persuade her. I think she has some relations in San Francisco,—a brother-in-law's family. We've often talked of the trip, and there's no time like the present."

"Tom, bless you, old fellow!" said Craque-o'-Doom. After a space he added, "I owe you this much, anyhow. If there's a turn in my favor within six months, I'll let you know by telegraph; if there isn't by the end of that time, we'll meet somewhere and settle the thing."

"That's all nonsense!" said Tom. "Don't talk so crazy, boy. You've changed since last year."

"Yes, I have. I can't stand this much longer. It has been a hard mill. A lifetime of preparation for a lonely middle and old age has been destroyed in a few months. I had no idea this sort of feeling could work on a man so."

"I'd better say good-night," said Captain Tom.

"Well, good-night."

The two men did an unpremeditated thing. Opening their arms, they hugged one another for one silent instant, and then parted, half shame-faced.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"PLACE HANDS."

THE party started next afternoon, and again Tillie stood on the platform beside Captain Mills. Her father had refused, with the stubbornness of an unreasonable old man, to let her go with Tamsin for even a month's stay beside the water. Tillie took occasion this time to very scantily commend the dwarf. "You're a pretty nice kind of a feller," she said, looking into his face with unterrified eyes. They stood quite on a level when he had his hat on.

"I thank my little sister for that," he replied, with a bow,—which caused Tillie to put her hand before her mouth and laugh and take some unseen confidante into the joke: "Ho! he called me his little sister!"

Tamsin stood on the back platform and exchanged signals with the lank light child until what had been Tillie became a mere speck beside a toadstool station and then went out in the dazzle of the afternoon sun.

The dwarf's party found but an uncanny coast when they arrived at his summer cottage. There

was no storm, but a sullen fit of rainy weather set in, stinging the sea with perpetual javelins, the handles of which barred distant views. The east wind prevailed, and they had two dismal August weeks, soaked with fog, very salt, wherein the roar of the sea only tempted man to suicide. It was too chilly to bathe; there were no chances to make excursions; fires could not drive out the dampness. A great many nice people in cottages round about rolled themselves up in rugs and hibernated, while others prepared to go back to town a full month earlier than usual.

Craque-o'-Doom tried a piano he had in the house, but the strings were all rusted; it was horribly out of tune. Instead of seeking the society of the ladies, he stayed a great deal by himself, pressing and classifying sea-weeds which his man brought him from the sand,—a tall servant, who went and came under an umbrella and looked as if life were not worth living when the umbrella occasionally turned wrong side out.

Rhoda wrote letters to her husband in Chicago, and was in a craze over house-furnishing. Tamsin sat with her before the fire, holding a book, and they had long woman-talks, which began and ended nowhere and were like the foam left by the out-crawling tide,—they only marked the hours. "I never saw such weather," said Rhoda, "or knew the fall to threaten so early. The papers

say it is just as bad inland, and clear out West. We had better pick up and leave. Mr. Sutton is moping himself to death. Don't you see he is?"

"He looks paler than he did last spring," said Tamsin. She fixed her black eyes seriously on the fire. "He studies a great deal. All the time he is learning something new."

"His health may be failing," said Rhoda.

"Why, how can that be?" exclaimed Tamsin. "He never has a doctor. He is not sick."

"He is not particularly well," said Rhoda sagely. "Men have the instincts of wild creatures when anything ails them: they mope by themselves and 'act injured.'"

There came a day on which the sun showed a watery eye and the sea looked a shade lighter.

"Maybe we can go somewhere to-day without getting soaked," exclaimed Tamsin.

Craque-o'-Doom handed her a letter from the package the tall servant brought in: "And here's a letter from Tillie, too."

It was Mary's hand, of course. Mary was Tillie's amanuensis. Craque-o'-Doom examined his mail, and Rhoda was tearing the wrappers from hers. Neither of them observed her eyes dilate or her free hand lift and clinch itself. "Oh!" she cried, "oh!—oh!—oh!" each scream becoming more piercing. "She is dead— They have buried her in the ground!" So, tottering

toward the dwarf, Tamsin fell down with her arm across his knees. She had not fainted. They got her up, and she sat ghastly and shaking in a large chair. Craque-o'-Doom rubbed her hands, while Rhoda bathed her face. Her screams still rang through the house, though they told her it could not be true, and the man whose heart she pierced talked wildly to her.

Tamsin was like a giantess in her grief. She pushed her comforters aside and writhed about the room, supported by Rhoda against her will, with her hair streaming around her face. Craque-o'-Doom huddled at the chimney-side, straightening the letter out and trying to read it. He felt numb, and so widely separated from her now that he dared not offer her one word. Rhoda got her to her own room, and was busy over her for a long time. Finally, Craque-o'-Doom looked up, aware that Rhoda stood on the hearth-rug, pale and troubled in expression. "It must be true," said he, indicating the paper he held. "What can I do? I feel dazed."

"Yes, it's true. From what she has been repeating over and over I know the contents of the letter. It's come upon her in the cruellest way."

"Is she any better?"

"She's unconscious, and will be better. I have her under the influence of chloral."

"I'd better telegraph to some responsible per-

son in Barnet," said the dwarf. "Tom and his aunt are gone. If they had been there it wouldn't have come to her in this way."

"No, indeed," affirmed Rhoda.

"You see I can't shield her from a single trouble." His head dropped on his breast. "She'll hate me. Sometimes I think it was for Tillie—"

"Don't say it," entreated Rhoda, putting a hand on his shoulder. "After you send this telegram, I think you had better have treatment similar to Tamsin's and go to bed."

"If you will take care of her," he said with quick resolution, "I will go to Barnet myself, and if they won't let me bring the body away, I may pick up some kind of consolation for her."

"Don't you do it. Was there ever such a man! I wish Mr. Burns were here, to make you be quiet."

"I don't want to be quiet. You'll let me know if she falls ill, won't you?"

"Yes; but she won't be seriously sick: she's strong. It's the effect of the shock."

"If I could have seen the letter first, and prepared her."

"Yes, if you could surround her by a medium through which no pain could pass,—if you could make an out-and-out goddess of her. Mr. Sutton, Claude Melnottes are charming on the stage, but in real life they are painful."

"Grotesque, you mean, in my shape. Well, good friend, don't mind me."

He left the room, and Rhoda in her turn picked up Mary Chenoworth's letter. It was brief enough, written in a delicate, half-formed hand, and frequently misspelled:

"DEAR SISTER I take up my pen to tell you death has Entered since you left Tillie died the day befour yesterday and we buried her to-day She got sore Throat after you left and it run on to Dipthery the weather being so bad that the first thing I knowed they sent for me Tillie is dying She died very easy at the last though Suffering much before and she wanted you Sary Jane said the Whole time Pap sayed they did not know where to Write to you for sertain and nobody thout she would die She plaid her cordeon the very day she died the deer Innocent the very last Thing she done was to slick her piller and whisper
Place Hands

"You must excuse my writing I ain't the scribe I used to be and my eyes ache and Smart

"Tamsin I wish he had let her go with you It mite not have happened but God knows Jess is doing reel well now We buried her in her White dress you give her O Tamsin i know what your Feeling will be for she was deer to you

"Respectfully your sister, MARY,"

Tamsin woke in the night and sobbed with her first conscious breath. A night-lamp was shaded near her head. She heard the boom of the sea, and her imagination threw up—like a mirage over her trouble—a vision of schooners poised on the water as if it were a wall hemming in the land.

Rhoda appeared beside her as soon as she made a sound, changed the cloths on her head, and said, "My dear, you must take another spoonful of this liquid."

Tamsin took it and looked all about the room with her heavy eyes.

"He's gone," said Rhoda.

The patient seemed to drag her eyes to her nurse's face. "Where?"

"To Ohio. To do anything he can that will be a comfort to you."

"I wanted," said Tamsin, swooning under the strong sleeping-mixture, "I wanted—"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"YOU OUGHT TO KNOW."

It was full two weeks afterward that the dwarf sat at home before a library-table covered with books and papers. He did indeed seem lost in the square, stately room. There was hardly a stir of life about the premises. From his windows he could see the hills standing as companions to him in that dear fellowship hills always extend toward us, and a blue corner of the North River across which a long tow of barges and flats was moving up-stream. The afternoon was nearly gone: Craque-o'-Doom worked as if bent on accomplishing a certain task in a limited time. His temples were sunken: the luminous quality of his complexion had never been so apparent. His feet rested on a very high hassock under the table, and perhaps, with his mind absorbed by the problems which occupy higher grades of intellect, he forgot during half an hour that he was not as other men.

He had come directly home from Barnet instead of going back to Tamsin, and asked no explanation of himself for doing so. She was to enter

school the first week in September. Mrs. Burns stayed on with her, and reported frequently to him, encouraging him to think that time would rapidly heal the grief of such a young creature.

From Tamsin he got no message at all. But he had written her a long letter full of the minutest items concerning Tillie. Old Mr. Chenoworth had not allowed him to remove the body: he had therefore ornamented that plot in Barnet graveyard with everything he could devise. He had ordered a small monument, and drawn the design himself,—the child's accordion, with a branch of wild-brier thrown across it,—and he enclosed a draft of it to Tamsin. He had even been womanish enough to pick some clay from Tillie's hillock before it was sodded and send that. All the kind things the neighbors had to say about the child's last days were retailed by him, and her mother's account was minutely repeated. He had nothing to say, however, of the inconveniences and painful curiosity he had had to encounter in that small place, without a friend or acquaintance, while gathering these consolations for her, or of the cruel stupidity of her family, and the general opinion that they had let the child die from ignorant neglect. He did not tell her that her father had comfortably reckoned "he hadn't no money to waste in such tomfoolery," when asked why he did not telegraph for Tamsin. Neither did he mention

Sarah Jane's criticism of the accordion and brier branch and her loud preference for a little lamb on the monument, such as most well-to-do Barnet families displayed on their children's mortuary tablets. He spared her the news that Jess, perhaps overcome by the family bereavement, had broken bounds again and was out of prison on the dwarf's bail, determined to go West when he got through with his last difficulty, and find more scope or something worse. But, on the other hand, he did not forget Mary's tearful recital, and he beautified her in her humble state. He had talked with Mary in her own house, while her tow-headed children peeped round the door-post at him and dared one another to approach nearer. Never in her life had she felt herself so appreciated or touched the edge of a human soul that could so widen the world for her.

The dwarf had agreed with Mrs. Burns that Tamsin must go back to school as soon as possible: her mind ought to be occupied.

But, if any of these things rose to the surface of his thoughts, he pushed them under. Some wagons rattled along the road, and he heard the five-o'clock train from New York roaring at the base of the hills. Through open windows came in that sun-soaked smell of grass and shrubs which seems to be their grateful offering for a fine day. This was a very handsome, comfortable, dull old

place. Now a shutter cracked sharply,—it is strange how many sympathetic noises there are in wood,—as if uttering an exclamation of relief that the sun no longer blistered it; and now the double gates at the end of the avenue clicked, and the gardener probably moved away through the grass to his tool-house.

There were a great many neighbors bound to the dwarf by old family ties, but, living by himself, he had few visitors. It was with some amazement, therefore, after being startled by these various hints of outside life, that he looked up and saw a woman coming into the room from the outer hall. But, when the face became Tamsin's, the air thickened before his eyes, and he did not speak a word.

Tamsin approached the table. She was in black clothes: her eyes looked sunken, yet the livid spaces around them brought out their power the more. She halted, then came on, resting her hand on the table as she had done the night they first met. And the dwarf looked at her without having a word, until it seemed to him an eternity passed between them. "I've come," said Tamsin. And she still looked at him with that in her eyes which made his pulses all seem beating in his head.

"Yes," he finally uttered. "Sit down, my child. You may take this chair." He pushed it back

from the table and held to the arms. "I'm dizzy," said the dwarf. "These papers have bothered me." So he remained seated, and Tamsin stood still, folding corners of his manuscript over and over.

"Did you come alone?" he inquired.

"Yes: Mrs. Burns has gone home. She left me at school."

"And how did you get here from the station?"

"I asked the way and walked."

"Sit down; sit down here." The dwarf drew out the hassock, and Tamsin sat down, literally at his feet.

He unfastened her hat and wrap and laid them on the table and began taking off her gloves: "Crape from head to foot. How unhappy my little one is! So many times I have thought what your coming to this house would be; and you come alone, without any glad welcome, to the man who has failed to make you happy! You got the letter and the little box?"

"Yes."

"Is there anything else on earth that I can do?"

"Yes," burst passionately from her lips: "yes, there is."

"Tell me what."

The young creature bent her head forward and rested it on the arm of his chair. She looked very young and dependent. "I can't," she said.

Craque-o'-Doom lifted her face up, saying sternly, "You must!"

Tamsin began to cry. She was so weak that her sobs became hysterical cries, and the dwarf was in a frenzy. He reached for his table-bell: "You must have something. They ought to bring you some food."

"I don't want it. I can't—can't—can't stand this!" With a shaking hand he smoothed her hair back from her burning forehead and rested her against his arm until she grew quieter. Gradually her head dropped backward and she fixed her eyes on his: "Before Tillie died I could stand it. She loved me so much, and I had so many things to learn. Now I can't stand it. You have been better than an angel to me. You have done everything kind."

"Speak out," said Craque-o'-Doom, his ears ringing with strange noises.

"I can't! I never could talk. But—" She pressed her palms together in supplication.

"Do you mean," said the dwarf slowly, seeming to expand while he spoke, "that you want to stay here with me?"

Her face steeped itself in color.

"Oh, Tamsin! What makes you tremble, little one?"

"I don't know," she whispered piteously, reaching her hands toward his shoulders; "*do you?*"

For the first time in his life he held his wife against his face and breast. The throbbing of her pulses talked to him. They told him she was young and proud and full of virgin timidity; but they also told him another secret, which never let him doubt his possession of her again. "Is it possible," he said, breaking the silence of the room, "that henceforward this lonesome house will be full of you? Is it possible that in spite of my deformity you love me?"

"You ought to know," said Tamsin. "Didn't I marry you? It was from the very first. I never cared for anybody but Tillie before. But you wanted me just to improve myself. And I acted so foolish about things." She dropped brief sentence after sentence, sometimes catching her voice in her throat. A listener two yards away could not have distinguished the words. "When I carried that coffee into your room, you seemed different from all the people I ever dreamed of. Sometimes I have been very mad and very hurt. You would go off other places where you could not see me. Then I would act as if I did not care. What was I, compared to a man like you? I was a poor miserable girl. If I had been related to the Millses I shouldn't have felt so badly. You were better to father's than I ever was. You aren't like I am. I'll try to be better. I'll try for Tillie's sake. Tillie knew. I told her in her ear one night when I was

crying. The little dear hugged me. Once Mrs. Burns was saying it was such a good match for me. She made me feel sick. I began to tell her—but I couldn't."

The dwarf kept smoothing her head with a gloating leonine touch. He scarcely noticed that he was doing so. His eyes brooded over her with that expression of blessing which we see in the eyes of pictured saints. "But isn't my deformity ever repulsive to you, my darling?"

"No; I don't think about that."

"Such excuses for legs, that lower me in the world almost among creeping things."

Tamsin looked indignant. "You seem real tall," she said.

"Do I seem tall to you? Haven't you felt like laughing at me when I waddled about, looking as if my body had been telescoped in a railroad accident, for instance? You can't enjoy gazing down a couple of feet or so on your husband and overhearing remarks which may be made at any time."

"I don't care what they say," his wife exclaimed in a candid gush of words. "It's because they want you themselves and can't get you, or don't know how to appreciate a man. I think you're beautiful!"

Craque-o'-Doom laughed so heartily and so long that the house echoed in astonishment.

"Poor deluded child!" said he, but immediately afterward hid his face in her hair and shook with a heart-quaking sob. Having got the better of that, he raised his head and laughed again. "Before we ring the bell and order a great dinner and make an occasion of my wife's coming home, I must send the news to Tom."

"What for?" inquired Tamsin.

"Because I agreed to telegraph the event to him. And I didn't think it would be so soon." His eye searched the littered table for a despatch-blank. Tamsin handed him the required slip, pen and ink, and his tablets. With his hand poised to write, he exclaimed, looking down the oval of her cheek, "Your school! I had forgotten that."

"Can't I go on here?"

"Certainly you can. Under my own eye."

The despatch said,—

"DEAR TOM,—My wife and I are at home together at last. Congratulate us.

"CRAQUE-O'-DOOM."

To which Captain Mills, in a few days, responded from the Pacific coast,—

"Heaven bless you both!

"TOM."

It may be added as a postscript to this tale that a little more than two years later Captain Mills replied to another message with a duplicate of the above telegram, and an addition.

“Heaven bless you both, and Miss Craque-o’-Doom also. I send cup marked ‘Tillie.’

“TOM.”

THE END.

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