

THE LISTENER.

"SHEA STOOD UP BEFORE HIM WITH HER BOY IN HER ARMS."

THE PLAYER.

A Woman in Armor.

BY
MARY HARTWELL.



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A WOMAN IN ARMOR.

CHAPTER I.

A BIG BOY.

STANTHORNE looked out of his den and saw a rainy night settling upon Little Boston.

He was a lithe man, so compacted as to express both delicacy and strength, like a fine machine. Neither puffy muscle nor protruding bone marred his slight outline. His face was the face of a thinker and enthusiast; eyes sometimes filmed with absent-mindedness, sometimes intense as burning coals, again leaping and laughing like rain-drops on water.

Stanthorne's den was a high room in a brick block, where he gathered astonishing traps, delved into ink-bottles and scribbled when the day's earlier work was done. The day's earlier work was a newspaper.

Within these walls he had a museum of pictures, skulls, Indian axes, books, shells, pieces of furniture with no kinship, Chinese gods, statuettes, and cobwebs. The writing-table ran over with papers into the waste-basket, and the waste-basket spread a lake of them upon the floor. No natty, methodical habits of composition had my young gentleman. He charged a subject on snorting quill; scattered leaves like the autumn blast. When he finished he let the pen stable itself, left the leaves till the spring-time of counting pages, and turned his attention elsewhere.

Little Boston, though given to glowering under coal-smoke at all times, was not ugly in the rain. She stretched before Stanthorne's eye away to east and west, her pavements shining, her streets full of wet vehicles and draggled hats.

Little Boston had a history. Like that favored juvenile in Watts's hymn, she thanked the goodness and the grace which on her birth had smiled. She was not born, as thousands of towns are, the child of railroads, and cradled in pine-board houses. No; again she rendered thanks and took airs; *her* parents were stalwart pioneers from Massachusetts, who hewed her out of an Ohio wilderness. They gave her the sanctified odor of exclusiveness, and left her in the hands of their descendants to be held against all the world. Schools were born unto her. An

aspiring "University" began to cover one of her hills. Thus would Little Boston have continued—mother of learning and conservator of the past—had not labor and the rushing age forced themselves upon her. Manufactories blackened her outskirts; big blocks crowded her squares; cottages stared in at the windows of those mansions where her beloved stock luxuriated; coal-carts, omnibuses, horse-cars, invaded those avenues where the elect were wont to take a silent and stately airing. A foreign population—why, the whole world! cried Little Boston, holding her nose—pushed into her atmosphere. So, since it could not be helped, she made up her mind to prosperity; consented to divide her natural advantages among a larger family of children. But favor her chosen Isaac and set aside barbarous Ishmael she always would!

Umbrellas, like processions of little shining domes, paraded under Stanthorne's eye. Street cars were filled to the steps, and each drawn by a sad and solitary mule, convinced one on the evidence of his eyes that large mountains may be moved by little magnets.

From the medley of passers he singled one woman whom he followed with half-attentive eye. A pliant column of water-proof was all her umbrella revealed until she turned into a music-store. Stanthorne waited her reappearance with the ridiculous interest we sometimes lavish on trifles.

"By the law of symmetry there ought to be a pretty head at the top. Wonder whether she's light or dark? Young, of course, with that quick motion. There she is! Lifts her face to look at the weather—that's a fine face! Up goes the umbrella!"

Stanthorne planted an elbow on the sill and watched her down-street, describing her as if she were one of his paper heroines.

"Hair part tucked under her hat and part clustering on her neck. Turned her head like a bird. Forehead white and rising—a Clyte forehead. I should think it must look like marble when a fellow's close enough to see the polish of it. I like a fine white front! Doesn't she walk! Used to it probably. Talk of a boat beside a motion like that! There's none of your avenue hobbling, and none of your Indian squaw jogging! Wonder who she is? Alas, that corner!"

He stretched over the sill a minute after her disappearance, his great eyes lighted with fancy; then leaned back, put his heels on a cabinet, and gave himself up to twilight and the rainfall.

If I were writing a novel I might finely hint here that the big healthy muscle under Stanthorne's left ribs was thrilled with emotion; that he tried to grasp a lock of his close-shorn fleece by which to tether himself to the outside of his skull, because the inner Stanthorne was borne away. But this is no novel. Is only a record of

folks. And folks have an every-day way of behaving.

Had Stanthorne fermented enthusiasm over this floating woman's umbrella, it would have been no new thing for him, however. For he was a dreamer and had always an ideal. Its migrations were endless. When he was a very little juvenile it abode in the person of a damsel, his mother's handmaid, whom he proposed to marry as soon as he was promoted from aprons. But ere that happy period the ideal removed and shone upon him from the eyes of a little play-mate, at whose feet he laid all his sweets, well licked and moistened by his own longing tongue and palms.

Once he fell in love with his school-mistress, and sighed secretly until she thumped his head soundly for dropping a hazel-nut on the floor, when the inflammation retreated in a flash from his pericardium to his pericranium!

Thus fled Stanthorne's vision from one vestment to another, for many more shrines had he. But latterly it had come to him in robes less tangible but more appropriate. It was far off and called him. It dropped suddenly on his breast and shot a whisper into his ear. It sometimes gave him a laughing glance through the leaves of a magazine. It was lovelier than woman—nearer than a friend. It both separated him from his kind and gave him more unto his kind. He followed it over long white roads half

through the night ; loved it ; gave it the spiritual muscle of his manhood. You know I mean the Art of Letters.

Stanthorne's mind darted unscathed from the floating woman with the umbrella to fragments of his own affairs. He wondered if that washer-woman had sewed his buttons on this week ; whether Slow were going to prove a good general reporter ; what the senior would remark on to-day's editorial ; whether his sketch in this month's *Buncombe Gazette* would receive as much attention as the last ; how he should outline his historical paper for the New York *Review* ; what the dickens that woman down at his boarding-house would do if codfish were to become extinct ; what the state of the country indicated ; whether there was any more boot-polish left in that bottle ; how all his relations were faring ; and if he should make a success of that "book."

When thought touched "that book," he turned a phosphorescent eye toward his table. Darkness surrounded it as darkness yet swaddled his work.

"I'll light the gas presently, which will bring it out clearly enough. Will it come out as clearly in the broad day glare to the eyes of men ?

"Easy enough to write a book," soliloquized Stanthorne, as he felt for matches and turned on the gas. "No trick at all. Anybody can write

his book. The trouble is to get somebody to read it !"

He picked up his manuscript and sat down to review it. Over some pages he chuckled as fondly as his mother had chuckled over him. Others he frowned at and stabbed with reeking pen ; and a few leaves he clenched into balls and threw at his Chinese gods.

Then diving into the ink he wrote again. His watch lay by him, and its hands travelled up toward the stem, passed the symbol XII, and began to count the hours over, while the inky young man ceased not to write.





CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE BOY.

HELEN DIMMOCK entered her house, stamped, shed her wet wrappings, and wondered while she hung them up why clattering little feet didn't come to meet her. She opened the door into a small, bright room—the parlor of her house. A glowing grate, heavy drawn curtains, pictures half revealed, bits of living green were in the ascendant over worn carpet and plain furniture, and gave the place a look of home.

Nina, in the centre of it, had a taper lifted to light the gas. She was a girlish woman, blonde, tiny, with silky hair and large appealing eyes. Her face broke into bunches of dimples at sight of Helen, but was drawn back to sudden gravity.

"There!" she cried in a whisper, turning her head over her shoulder, "run and surprise Aunt Helen. Quick!"

At this a manikin rose, like Jack-in-the-box,

from some ambush, and charged on Miss Dimmock. He was perhaps four; a curly, dimpled sailor, with anchors on his broad collar, in trousers a couple of spans long, and boots which might have belonged to puss.

Helen lifted her hands and stood aghast.

"Why, bless the child! He has legs!"

"An' plant'loons, an' boots!" he sputtered, strutting, "an'—an'"—laying hold of Hope's emblem on his collar—"yankers, Toola, yankers!"

"This is what mamma has been doing slyly!"

"Doesn't he look too cunning?" murmured Nina, putting away the gas taper and dimpling with enjoyment.

"She's been taking the robes off my king! Where's Georgie?" continued Helen solemnly, as she sat down before the grate—"my baby in plain petticoats? I left him here this morning, and thought I should find him when I came home. He is gone! I shall never see him any more!" A long sigh.

George poised on one leg, then on the other, trying not to be infected by the sigh.

"Suppose I shall have to take up with this new boy. Stand there, sir, and let me examine you?"

The youth complied, his countenance glistening with oil of delight.

"So you want to take the place of my baby in petticoats, do you?"

George looked at his boots, jumped, and ignored allusions to the baby in petticoats.

"What's your name?"

"Deorge Dest."

"George Guest, what do you know?"

"Noey's Ark, an' Cain an' Abel, an' Busy Bee, an' Who was Firs' Man, an' Now me Lammer, an' Fadder in Promis' Lan', an' lo's of udder sings!"

"Very well. Granted that your education is not deficient. Yet, Mister Guest, how are you going to take the place of my baby?"

George stared into Helen's serious face.

"Me was a baby," he pleaded, "but me's *drowed*," rubbing his head against her shoulder and reaching up fond arms to crush her frills. "Say, Toola, you fink me'll dit big rike Sank Smif, nex' week?"

"Bigger than Frank Smith, maybe. But not next week—though soon; oh, so soon! You'll grow too tall to sit in my lap." She drew him up against her.

Nina, in the next room, moving between closet and tea-table, at these words turned her head and looked at the boy with passion in her wide, sad eyes.

"And when that calamity befalls," pursued Miss Dimmock, "what am I going to do? Georgie, *you* don't love Toola?"

"Do!" he cried, throttling her to prove it.

"Why do you?"

"'Tause—'tause she's mine—'tause—did you dit some tandy?"

Helen probed her pocket and lifted a package high over his head. George leaped for it and shouted. They romped and teased each other till Frederika rang the bell for tea, when Master Guest came out on Miss Dimmock's shoulder, spreading sweets over her hair, and kalsomining his own jaws a taffy color. She had some man-like ways; one was flinging George to this perch. She was the nearest approach to a father that he had.

"Say, Toola," he remarked, dabbing her ear with a stick to command attention, "Rikka jus' *laf-f-t* when her saw my plant'loons!"

He had found the name Toola for her in babyland. Why she was Toola to him, instead of aunt or Helen, I know not. Child dialect must be a fragment of some forgotten language. Perhaps he had the same reason as had another child who seriously substituted *Lud* for No and *Ti* for Yes. They were the only striking symbols of her meaning.

Rikka, who stood for commands, not only laughed again at George, but beamed upon the whole family. She had a chronic grin. Her German face was broad and rosy, two furry ropes of flaxen hair hung down behind it, and her short calico gown revealed feet which, for size and sound, were equal to chariots. Her eyes were mild and comforting as blue china tea-

saucers, and her ruddy-fleshed lips were continually at low tide around her teeth, for, as I have said, Rikka was always grinning. She grinned while her soul was being torn from Fatherland. Gottlieb Shuster, his frau, and seven younglings came to America to find room and to accumulate. Did you ever see an unthrifty German? They pushed inland from New York, until Gottlieb stuck his spade into Little Boston, sent his frau out washing, the younger children to school, and the elder to service. Thus Frederika rose on Helen's household and shone like a faithful moon.

She stood by the plain table and served with elbows and ardor, lifting every dish with awe, and gripping glasses in fear and trembling and eye-service as a man-pleaser, for Rikka always saw in the far perspective her father, Gottlieb Shuster, smoking his pipe and watching her and admonishing her—for waste of property was grievous to his soul—"dot efery dime she preaks etwas he gifs it to her so as neffer vos!"

The two women did not chatter at table. Master Guest had the air to himself, and he made it resound. He was partially listened to, and always answered. But, excepting with eyes or with touching hands, they had little to say to each other. They gave each other short, meaning glances, and rested in company. I dare say the day had been full of happenings to

both, and its happenings would be made known, but not through much talk.

"Mister George Guest!" shrilled Rikka, clapping his reeling goblet, "you covers dat wasser all ober mit floor!"

In addressing an individual, Rikka ever accorded him his full complement of names and titles, and would, perhaps, have added his genealogy if she had known it.

"How can you be so careless, Georgie?" said Nina, turning his glance toward Helen, as mothers are wont to remind their households of a critical paternal eye. "Aunt Helen doesn't like rude boys!"

Georgie's heart went into his boots, and reached out to his Toola under the table. He pressed her knee softly, beseechingly, and made conciliatory grimaces till she lifted her preoccupied eyes and answered him with a look which restored him to full vigor and appetite, so that he fell upon cookies and stowed away a full cargo of them in the hold under the anchors.

He revered and admired his Toola. He studied her between potations; yea, while a glass was inverted upon his nose he pierced that transparent substance with a glance still fixed upon her face. He thought her cheeks beautiful, and always wanted to follow her eyebrow-line with his forefinger, to snuggle his fat white pigeons of hands in her hair. Mamma was mamma, of course, but Toola was one who

commanded in him what mamma could not command.

Her hands undressed him when he began to nod before the grate, and on her bosom he breathed his "Now me lammer down to sreep," and there slept according to his word.

Rikka's chariots rolled in the kitchen amid a battle crash of crockery. Rain dripped outside, or dashed in sudden gusts against the windows. But these three hung together, ripening their love in the glow of the hearth, for Nina, on an ottoman, leaned against Helen's knee, and Georgie clasped unconscious baby hands around Helen's heart.

Mother and child were grouped that moment in their true position. They had no refuge but her, and no other home than the house she held over them.

Look at the hand she divides between Nina's cheek and Georgie's clustering locks. It is slender but strong, with a wonderful cunning. It is the hand of a musician. Music is the flower of her life; and the deeper its roots are buried, the brighter this bloom bursts out. Rent, coal, gas, grocers' bills—the strain to make ends meet—never put bits of compositions out of her head. Her pencil stops on accounts to draw bars for the imprisonment of sudden songs.

From childhood Helen's life had been against the tide of circumstance. She fought her way

to the instrument she loved; stole time from sleep, from heavy tasks, from tormentors, to live with it. No friends doated on her gift or placed her choicely before masters. Her only masters were men who spoke to her through their works. Her skill came of love and patience. She rose to womanhood, developing every spiritual and mental muscle.

Gulls fly long and far; they get used to the tossing of the sea. Meadow-larks do not so, therefore these must be sheltered inland somewhere, while the gulls do the seafaring. Helen had a half-sister who was early separated from her and adopted by distant kin, and bred up to society. During years the girls saw little of each other, but never broke off their child-love. The smallness, daintiness, and trustfulness of womanhood expressed themselves in Nina. She was not wise, but she was true; and before this child knew good from evil she loved a man, and sacrificed self and prospects to him. The man was not consoled by "self," when he found "prospects" melting in his grasp. He felt himself a swindled individual. Her friends disinherited her; the fat of the offering was gone. So after he had made her the mother of his child he grew tired of the little clinging thing—bored by her incense. Why does a man want a wife in this world, anyway? Confounded drag, you know!

Therefore, one fine morning, he lit a cigar,

left her at a hotel breakfast-table, took his valise, and started on a little journey from which he forgot to return.

Nina waited with Moses' patience. She grew ghostly with hope deferred, haunted the post-office for letters, and staved off doubt till strangers forced her position upon her. What did she? Raved, I suppose, and stood with streaming hair and maddened eyes before her fate. But people survive their agonies, and she had a little child hanging with warm hands to her breast and teaching her that life must ever be renewed.

She thought of one on the earth who had loved her through everything, and to Helen she cried. Helen came, bundled white-faced mother and pink-faced babe in her arms, paid their bills, and carried them to Little Boston, where she made a home and kept them.

Helen was organist in Grace Church at a modest salary. She had a large class of music-pupils, to whose various homes she trod through all weathers. And there was a certain publisher of music in an Eastern city who bought her manuscript, pleased the people with it, and made money on it. Such were her sources of revenue.

Having assumed the burden belonging to a man, she carried it with manlike devotion, making the dependence of her dependent ones peculiarly close and tender. They felt themselves on her heart—not on her hands.

Between George's hair and Cornelia's cheek Helen's hand kept wandering. Sometimes it was pressed stealthily against the cheek by Cornelia's thin hands; sometimes it followed the curve of Georgie's face down his warm little chin; but between the two it evenly divided itself.

Thus Saturday night crept up the clock with them.

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CHAPTER III.

IN CHURCH.

THE bells of Little Boston began promptly at half-past ten on Sunday morning to clang and call unto all people and each other. Grace Church clashed its silver against the brass of the First Presbyterian, Welsh and German tinklers sounded from all the outskirts, and the Baptist iron gong thundered its creed of "Under! under!" across them all.

Little Boston prided herself on her keeping of the Sabbath. Other towns had low loungers and Sabbath-breakers, fast driving and afternoon promenading. But Little Boston put on her Sunday clothes at six in the morning and wore them until ten at night. She took her children to church by the ear. Her horses moved in subdued trots, and her wheels turned with a modified whirr. She gave more money to the heathen than perhaps any other corporation on this terrestrial ball, and had her own missionaries in Africa, China, and the Isles. In

short, she would have been a most righteous and sanctified town had there not been so many wretches in her outskirts—so many breaking hearts and starving souls. Souls who wouldn't be *patronized* by her churches—impaled on the lance of her critical eye. However, this was not Little Boston's fault. She meant to be a model, and did all in her power to drive such tarnishers away.

"Chime-tinkle-dong," chorussed the bells, while Helen and Nina and George mingled with the church-going crowd, Helen walking quickly because her hands must touch the organ before the last sound died away.

Grace Church was built of rough-hewn stone and capped with beautiful towers. You entered its great door, went through a vestibule and up spacious steps into the assembly-room, a dim, religious place with Gothic arches and mysterious chancel. Paintings and texts were on the walls, and here and there in niches were exquisite marbles. The windows were many and narrow, and filled with glass which turned common white light into the very wine of light.

This church was Helen Dimmock's dearest place. She came to it nearly every day and sat with her organ, living the life she loved. The arches had quivered a thousand times to her music, and through those dusky windows she drew many of her compositions.

Even when much people crowded the place

her sense of *aloneness* was not destroyed. She sat in her organ-loft, the great pipes glittering above her, the choir below and separated from her. And when her hands fell on the keys at the final clash of bells, she neither saw nor heard any one, save the God whom she thus worshipped with all her soul.

The cream of Little Boston belonged to Grace Church, and it rose richly this morning.

Nina and George moved softly to their own quiet seat. Nina wore widow's weeds. It was her fancy, and Helen did not oppose it. George displayed himself to an admiring world as a very small and jolly but Sabbath-keeping sailor. He manipulated his "yankers" on the sly, but kept an eye on the clergyman.

A thrilling voluntary filled the place, while silken garments ceased not to rustle up aisles.

The Stokesbury-Joneses were not late, however. They were a model family, and were never late. Precisely fifteen minutes after the first bell they filed out of their residence and began a stately march upon the house of worship; so that just as the last bell lifted its voice Mr. Jones stood holding the pew-door open for the entrance of Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, Miss Stokesbury-Jones, Misses Clara, Emma Stokesbury, and Flora. Thus they always had time to compose themselves, settle their bonnet-ribbons, attend to their personal devotions, and array their faces in disapproval against late comers arrived.

Now, if you do not know the Stokesbury-Joneses, you ought to know them. Think not of going to Little Boston without a letter of introduction to them, unless you mean to live unknown and die as the beasts perish! The Stokesbury-Joneses are the flaming sword which guards the Little Boston Eden. If they let you pass, you are "one of us." If they "don't know you," go hide your head; you are a cipher in the universe; there is no place for you; you are outcast from society!

The Stokesbury-Joneses live on an avenue in a substantial brown house. All its appointments are perfect but unique, as befits a family superior to all others. Their greatness came through the mother. Mr. Jones is a slender, gentlemanly person, of very little account. *He* cannot trace his blood back through an old English house to renowned folks! To be sure, he made much of the money which supports this grandeur. But he is not a Stokesbury. His wife is; and likewise are his children. He feels his position; but it is good to stand even on the steps of the throne. They all love him dearly—as an inferior creature. One can almost imagine those daughters standing in a solemn row, each with her own prayer-book in her hand, chanting as a response: "For having been born Stokesburys through the agency of one Jones, Lord make us truly thankful!"

Good it is to have the blood of brave and true

men of yore transmitted to you ; but, alas, dangerous to set yourself up as an exponent of the great past !

When Stanthorne came to Little Boston, some friends, more mindful of his social life than he himself was, thrust into his hand the necessary ticket to Little Boston society. Stanthorne took it absently and threw it into a desk. Weeks afterwards it turned up, and he presented it as an amusing experiment—for Stanthorne had something of the mustang in him, and did not propose trotting under social harness. But he was graciously received, his connections investigated, and himself passed. Young men may always be quoted as in good demand in the markets of this world, if at all near the average. Little Boston was not glutted with them—not mentioning, of course, the university students, who might come and might go, while the Misses Stokesbury-Jones, like Tennyson's "brook," went on forever ! Accordingly, Stanthorne was made at home among "Us ;" accorded the privilege of meeting the young ladies, and pressed to occupy their pew in church.

Unconscious of the great honor done him by the offer of sitting room on this sacred bench, he came this morning with a matter-of-little-consequence air, and placed himself among "Us," while the voluntary yet filled the place.

Stanthorne was keenly sensitive to musical influence, as are all imaginative natures. The

chords made him quiver : he turned his head ; but the organist was high up in a dim loft, her face from him. Yet by this swift glance he discovered the woman, and traced her dark, slight outline.

All through service he was with her. Again and again he quivered under her touch. I dare say he never made responses more heartily in his life. There were such power and meaning in those sudden music bursts.

The clergyman preached a sweet discourse with trilled r's. I am ashamed to confess it was Stanthorne's habit in church to take a dish of spiritual hash. That is to say, he chopped the meat of the discourse among the potatoes of his own thoughts, and onions of jokes he meant to put in next paper, and scattered throughout a little pepper of criticism and a little salt of compunction. He was peculiarly a sinner. I will not undertake to excuse him to a righteous world never touched by such infirmities, but will merely mention, by the way, that he had an electric temperament, and could only follow a good conductor.

To-day, however, he took no spiritual hash, but worshipped like those who followed a star towards a new life.

"Who it that organist ?" he inquired of himself after service. Yet of the Stokesbury-Joneses he inquired not.

Stanthorne resisted the ebb-tide, and anchored

himself within range of that face up aloft, unmindful of the attention he might attract.

Helen was alone when she came down from her bench. The choir was gone, and few footsteps sounded below. She looked across the church, uncovering her face before her God.

Faces are strange creations. You meet your friend every day of your life, yet perhaps never see him. He *looks* jolly, or woe-begone, or comical. I have seen fools masked in the gravity of wisdom. What he *is* may be sheathed from you as long as he wears flesh, unless you some time surprise him and steal him out of himself.

Stanthorne recalled Helen's face, but it now awed him. He was sensitive and imaginative, as I told you, and Miss Dimmock would probably have left an impression on him deeper than any made by his mother's damsel or the school-mistress, had he not immediately struck cool air and caught sight of a typo across the street. Which let practical affairs over him with a rush.



CHAPTER IV.

MRS. STOKESBURY-JONES CONFERS A FAVOR.

MRS. STOKESBURY-JONES made up her mind to take her daughter's music-teacher into confidence, so she waited graciously for that young woman's Monday morning appearance.

The back drawing-room where she sat was well adorned by specimens of the Stokesbury-Jones talent—paintings, worsted-work, and all *et cæteras* being the work of mother and daughters. If guests ever mentioned to Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones the Old World wonders, or the endeavors of native artists, she always glanced about her with a superior smile. She had in her dining-room one special game-piece by which she measured every new candidate for her favor. This piece was the work of her eldest genius. If the candidate was forewarned by hints from the installed, he approached it looking carelessly and gracefully around until that gem of art struck his eye. "What!" he must then exclaim, striking an attitude, "are

these stuffed pheasants? How admirably they are preserved! Why, why!—really! it is a painting! My dear Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, whose work is that?" Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones would then reveal that it was the work of her eldest daughter, and on the merits of the same would she dwell as long as her happy candidate could stand in a state of gently simmering idiocy to listen.

The woman had been socially cajoled until she was a ridiculous social despot.

She was large and firm. While waiting for the music-teacher, she did not throw herself back in her easy-chair, as many women do who contemplate the exhausting feat of lifting the social ball to their backs. She sat upright, netting vigorously. Her forehead was low; strands of blonde hair were parted and combed smoothly from it. She had the century-old Stokesbury eye—a white-blue, calculating orb, so well accustomed to this world's sunshine that it rarely winked. Her mouth and lower jaw were ponderous. She had a discernible mustache, and these physical traits, together with a heavy voice, gave her that decided, manly air which Mr. Jones lacked.

"Miss Dimmock is late this morning," remarked Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones in her Boanerges tones, turning an eye from her open watch to Miss Flora at the piano. "Isn't her hour nine o'clock?"

"Half-past nine, mamma," replied Flora, scampering up and down the scales.

"Ah!" breathed Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, disappointed of a criticism. "But," consoling herself, "if nine *were* her hour she *would* be late!"

Far down the street Helen Dimmock's feet were coming, sure to be on the Stokesbury-Jones threshold at the appointed minute, but guilty of many turnings-aside. Shabby or dirty or vicious-looking folks met her and greeted her and talked eagerly to her. They cast back looks over their shoulder after passing, as we turn toward the lamp when we venture down dark alleys.

Helen Dimmock had a mother-heart for all the world; she was tender with insects, with starved dogs, with forsaken children, with the scum of the earth. Both her ear and her hand were ever open to their cry.

Did you ever see bugs lift their antennæ like interrogation points as they contemplate some object? Thus women who needed her not, and to whom she was consequently negative, contemplated Helen Dimmock. They "didn't know what to make of her." She was "odd." She wasn't "one of them." Yea, no human alchemy could have dissolved her into the great sea of *THEY*. I see her in my mind's eye standing on the shore of their talk; its waves run in like ramping lions, but always fall short of her

feet and sink away. Her eyes and ears are for the ships, the little craft and the wrecks afloat at the mercy of this cruel, irresponsible sea. Her hurt people knew what to make of her, however. They made her *sanctuary*. After once sheltering in the cathedral of her heart they evermore took refuge there. All this may sound like an attempt at fine writing, for love is not a coherent speaker and will throw up his cap rhetorically. I cannot show you my fine, faulty woman as I see her. I had best tell you in plain words what she did.

About her she found all manner of young girls—working girls—some of whom drooped, some of whom strutted defiantly; girls without homes, groping fearfully around the world; girls whose parents had given them nothing but life, and of them demanded all things; girls hiding peculiar talents for fear of custom. These she drew toward herself. Perhaps they told her their nonsense; their undying or unrequited loves, or their hard times; their various "awful" things. Perhaps they told her nothing. But none failed to catch from her bosom the throb of a higher womanhood than theirs, and they got up out of their griefs to try to live into it.

She met frowsy men, glaring at all their kind, and she saw how things went against them. She met children little better than the young of brutes; to them she opened other life. She

had flowers and stories and sudden tender cuddlings for them. She met poor bodies who never had half a chance to be women, and into their drawn natures she charged the fulness of her own womanhood. Such money, counsel and influence as she owned she gave them all. She never dragged them up before charitable associations to blunt such delicacy as they might have left. But, best, she gave herself an ever-present help in time of need. Nothing was done from a "sense of duty." I have observed that whoso goes over to Macedonia from a "sense of duty" is liable to be well pounded by the Macedonians. We hate to be benefited. We could knock down the man who makes our need the advertisement of his goodness. Helen Dimmock loved these people with something like divine passion.

Strange friends were they. Coming and going continually—for so few of the poor have an abiding city—they met her, were helped by her, and saw her no more for years, perhaps, but they kept the memory of her.

While Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones was frowning at her watch, Helen was smiling into the face of Billy Sinks and sponging away some trouble for him. She and Billy Sinks were united by peculiar bonds; he was her organ-blower, a stumpy youth with bead-black eyes and wholesome freckles and stout arms and legs.

When he left her his mouth was puckered up

to an honest whistle ; and Miss Dimmock, walking swiftly, entered the Stokesbury-Jones mansion on time.

Flora's mamma sat in a critical attitude while Flora worked under her teacher's hand. Occasionally she stopped the lesson to hold examinations or offer advice. Miss Dimmock's method might be very good, but of course her best was not what Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones might do if she chose. Thus teacher and pupil were so harassed through the hour that the instant it was finished Flora flew from the keys and Helen snatched up her gloves and hastened to change her atmosphere.

But——

"Have you a little leisure, Miss Dimmock? I wish to speak with you," announced the great woman, pulling out a thread of worsted with a lofty flourish.

Helen looked at her watch. "I have just fifteen minutes, madam. I am due at the house of my next pupil five minutes before eleven."

"Very well. I will detain you but a short time. Sit down, Miss Dimmock."

Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones netted vigorously.

"You compose music, do you not? I think I've seen some of your pieces somewhere," she said kindly, running her worsted hook through her hair, as if to stir up her memory. "Yes, I'm sure I have! Now, I think of giving an immense party soon. I tell you confidentially,

Miss Dimmock; of course we don't want it whispered around before the cards are out. The occasion is the twenty-fifth anniversary of my marriage. My silver wedding. I do not intend to make it an exclusive affair, but rather a general jubilee through the very outskirts of society. And it struck me that it would look well to have a piece of music composed for the occasion. Of course there will be an orchestra in attendance for the dancing. But I want some striking vocal piece—say a duet—or a quartet, for that would bring in all the girls! You could afterwards sell it, I suppose," remarked Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, thereby intimating that honor was the only equivalent Miss Dimmock might expect at her hands. "And you might mention the names in the printed copy, you know. The whole thing would be a pleasant souvenir to many. Now, what do you think, Miss Dimmock? Do you think you can do it?"

Helen Dimmock was so frank a creature she almost laughed this patroness in the face. She tossed a dimpling glance that way, and replied quietly that she would consider the proposition, and in case she could find leisure she would do what she could to oblige Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones.

"I shall not issue the cards until next week," pursued her patroness encouragingly. "Oh, yes, you'll have plenty of time. And we shall have *you* here! But——" Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones became uneasy; she changed positions;

spread her netting on her lap and picked at it; stabbed her back hair with a hook, and gathered her lips till the mustache bristled. "You have a sister, haven't you, Miss Dimmock? Is it a sister—or a—cousin? I think I have heard some one mention it."

"My sister worships in Grace Church."

"So! I was sure I had seen her, and now I recall her appearance. Ah, yes! with the little boy. A fair person wearing black. A widow?"

"She has lost her husband," replied Helen, coldly.

"Yes, I thought so. You are boarding at her house perhaps! It is rather a delicate matter—I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance—"

"And you are not at liberty to have that pleasure, madam," returned Helen Dimmock, bluntly, nettled by her handling of Nina. "My sister does not wish to mix with society. She declines any overtures that are made to her."

Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones regarded this bold-spoken alien with astonishment. But relief predominated in her breast. She drew a sigh of satisfaction.

"Yes, yes. Well, think it over," returning to her original subject, "and be sure to accommodate it to the girls' voices. Remember, I put great confidence in you, Miss Dimmock, in telling you my plans so long before the affair. I hope you'll feel at liberty to run in at any time to assist the girls with their performance. And,"

nodding patronizingly at Helen as Helen opened the door, "you'll be remembered when the cards are issued. Good-morning, Miss Dimmock!"





CHAPTER V.

THE GENERAL JUBILEE.

THE night fixed upon for the general jubilee came over Little Boston's hills like a giant among nights. It came with stately steppings and carried ponderous luggage. It had been whispered and sighed about many days. Long domestic consultations were held over it. The immense preparations which the Stokesbury-Joneses were making clothed it with majesty and terror in the eyes of quiet folks. They looked at their old clothes, felt their long, lean purses, and lay awake o' nights.

In those days every man inquired of his neighbor: "Knowest thou what Smith or Johnson hath selected to present to the Stokesbury-Joneses?"

And there were blue faces on the streets, which were *not* the faces of them that dealt in silver!

The firm of which Mr. Stokesbury-Jones was the figure-head met, groaned, cursed custom,

and subscribed for a colossal ice-pitcher, to be engraved with their names, compliments, and the date of the occasion.

The Charitable Society on whose neck was set the executive foot of Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones held a secret meeting, and being elated by such unusual liberty, wrangled half a day on the rival merits of dinner-services and argent-clasped Bibles, and finally separated like a convention of cats, looking fire and hissing venom at each other.

But the night arrived and confronted all, and Little Boston rose bravely out of her misgivings to meet it. She took hold of the Stokesbury-Joneses' bell-handle, and ceased not ringing till her very suburbs were rung in: her great and small; her avenue residents; and her little street householders struggling to get into society.

Mr. Jones and that scion of superior stock whom he had twenty-five years previously transplanted into his own ignominious lot received their guests in the very vestments they had worn on that occasion. Poor Mr. Jones, shrunken from his youthful proportions, was scarcely perceptible in the broadcloth draped around him, while Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones burst out of her scant white satin like a peony in full bloom. Miss Stokesbury-Jones—who inherited her mamma's majestic proportions and mustache—supported her position and an elegant toilet with stern and soldier-like demeanor; but the

younger girls, in airy dresses and as much of girlish freedom as their daily discipline left in them, fluttered from room to room, or hovered like vestals about that altar whereon shone the social tithes and offerings. That altar made a striking background to the figures of Mr. and Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones. It was a large rose-wood table, bearing no end of precious things extorted by them.

Had you watched the stream of guests flowing past host and hostess you could have estimated the value of every man's gift by his demeanor. People who felt they had been weighed and found wanting took the hospitable hand in fear and trembling, and shrunk immediately away to some far corner, out of sight of that burdened table, which glared at them like a convinced jury! while those acceptably heralded advanced with bold fronts, and afterwards gathered round the silver to examine it in detail and estimate its cost.

There were bowls and services, spoons, forks, napkin-rings, castors, crumb-scrapers, cake-baskets, vases, thimbles, nut pickers and crackers, ice-pitchers, goblets, salvers—I might hazard to say, everything in silver which has been invented by man.

A few—a *very* few—folks cast amused, contemptuous eyes at the whole array and deigned not to approach it—but these were eccentric people, not in tune with society, who failed to

see the beautiful balance thus given to hospitality.

Such an one was Stanthorne.

"Jove!" sniffed Stanthorne as he sauntered past, after doing duty on the right-hand gloves of the Stokesbury-Joneses. "JOVE!" emphatically, with a broad smile levelled at the costly, shining tax. "Tell me no more we are a civilized people! We only differ from the aborigines whom we supplanted in not wearing our victims' scalps and wampum upon our persons! We like to take 'em just the same!"

It struck him to fancy the Stokesbury-Jones family decked out in their spoil. He saw in his mind's eye the ample neck of Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones clasped by a tinkling necklace of goblets, a caster swung from her pierced nose, and strings of napkin-rings depending from her ears. Then he gave the meek Jones a savage aspect by sticking silver-knives in his belt, inverting a pitcher over his brow, fringing his pantaloons with bristling forks, and binding him with salvers for snow-shoes. And having finished his picture, by adorning the young ladies plentifully with cake-baskets, he felt he had placed the family in their true position!

The rooms were filled, many dances danced, heat and fatigue were descending on the crowded mass, and it was nearly time for refreshments before Helen Dimmock arrived. Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones was vexed. She had on her mental

programme set down Miss Dimmock's performance as one of the opening entertainments of the evening.

When Helen floated quietly down from the dressing-room, Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones met that young lady in the hall, intending to show her displeasure and extort apologies. But the young lady had the air of a person who could do nothing for which she need apologize! She had simply chosen not to enter as a guest, when she was invited merely to make herself useful.

She bowed to Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, and said, "I am ready," like the well-bred woman, consenting to do a favor for another woman, that she was. Something about her awed the hostess. It was not her perfect dress, though that was so perfect that its whiteness and gauziness and grace seemed a part of herself; she looked like a rose in flesh; she had the same exquisite, sweet-breathing presence. Nor was it her manner. I suppose it was the Helen Dimmock, the self-respecting, finely made, tenderly kind nature, whom Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones never recognized before.

"I am ready," she repeated, standing on the lowest step of the stair, her gloved hand resting on the balustrade, her eyes meeting that lady's with perfect good-will and complaisance.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, coming off her high ground and offering a cordial hand; "so I see, and I'm glad of it. I was afraid you

were going to disappoint us all, you chose such a very fashionable hour. Well, we are ready whenever you are, Miss Dimmock."

"I will go directly to the piano, then," replied Helen. And, crossing the drawing-room, she seated herself to wait until the hostess marshalled up those two daughters whom the musician had chosen to sing her composition. These were Miss Stokesbury-Jones and Miss Flora; the child had a bird-like voice, and the eldest a heavy contralto. Both of them she had trained into sympathy with the subject; so she drew her gloves, arranged her manuscript, and waited without any tremors.

Miss Stokesbury-Jones came up on Stanthorne's arm, and Flora on mamma's—looking flushed and vexed at being called out of an interminable round dance with a most engaging student. As soon as she saw Miss Dimmock, however, she took her place and her interest in the performance.

Guests crowded near to listen. Stanthorne wondered where *she* had been all the evening, that he hadn't caught a glimpse of her before. Standing at Miss Stokesbury-Jones's left hand, he watched those deft hands on the keyboard, the round and supple wrists, her perfect poise, the waxen full lids shading her eyes, the floating hair, soft as mist, confined yet not confined. She had a changing face, but its usual expression was childlike and restful.

The two young women sung their duet. It was sweet and natural, and breathed of home. It drew tears to your eyes; but just when you were ready to shed them some quaint, humorous turn set them to dancing with laughter. I do not know that this composition made mention of silver weddings in general, or hinted at the amount of silver which may suitably be presented on such occasions. It was a fireside song; it put the family group in your eye and filled you with that feeling—strong as life and only next below patriotism in the scale of emotions—which men and women have for the sanctuary of their love.

Helen's touch was full of suppressed power. Again Stanthorne quivered under it. He felt a sudden sympathy with Prince Geraint, who wanted to kiss the little thumb his unknown love flattened against the dish with which she served him.

The song ended and everybody murmured applause. Youths crowded around the Misses Stokesbury-Jones to compliment them, and to look wistfully at Helen Dimmock. She rose from her place and would have gone as she came, but Stanthorne marched immediately upon her with Miss Stokesbury-Jones as his right wing, and cut off retreat by getting himself introduced.

Helen had never seen him before. She glanced quickly over his compact frame, his

fresh, genial face; met the true boy-eyes under his thinking forehead and liked him.

Stanthorne at once offered his arm and led her out of the crush into a cool, wide hall.

Most young men moving against a fortress begin their siege—very appropriately—by taking observations of and making comments on the weather. But Stanthorne had original military tactics.

He began directly to tell her how he had heard her play in church, and how her music touched and pleased him. Thus he drew her to speak of the art she loved, and having begun to discuss it, they found it was a subject of which neither could tire. So, when brisk, aproned waiters appeared with refreshments, and chattering guests grouped themselves in every available pleasant place, Stanthorne and Miss Dimmock sat on the stairs talking as naturally and reading one another as well as if they had been bred up side by side.

He was fastidious about her supper, and went himself for half a dozen things he imagined she wanted. But finding on his last return a lanky, tallow-faced student—whom he suspected of being the author of villanous poetry thrust weekly at his paper—gazing aloft and making Helen his Muse, Stanthorne remained vigilantly by her thereafter, looking all the contempt at that student which he felt.

The orchestra began to breathe again the

"Beautiful Danube River;" young girls hurried on their gloves, pair after pair flitted out, and distant feet throbbed in music.

"Would Miss Dimmock dance?" he asked.

No, Miss Dimmock did not wish to dance. Then neither did Stanthorne. It was better than dancing to watch her rhythmic motion and quiet power.

But presently she was going home. It had been her intention to go late and return home early.

Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones sincerely regretted her adieux. The duet had been a "decided hit." She intended taking some notice of her daughter's music-teacher after supper was off her hands, and bringing that young woman out a little.

"You have given me a great deal of pleasure, Miss Dimmock," she confessed warmly, when Helen would not be detained.

"I am glad!" said Helen. "That is what I came to do. I am always glad to accomplish what I undertake."

For a moment Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones was puzzled to know why she should thus be acknowledging a favor who had meant to confer one! But this perplexity passed from her mind as Stanthorne also offered his adieux.

He had discovered that Miss Dimmock came without escort or carriage, and the knight was uppermost in him.

"Don't trouble yourself," laughed Helen, but with a slight, haughty, backward sweep of the head, when she came down furred and cloaked, and was recaptured by him at the threshold. "I'm never afraid. I've always been accustomed to walking alone after night."

But Stanthorne went demurely out under the sky with her. There was nothing impertinent about his persistence. It was his nature to protect. He drew her wraps closer around her, tucked her under his arm, and assured her solemnly that she was reasoning against his instincts. So they both laughed, and together threaded gas-lamp mazes or unlighted streets.

Hours afterwards Stanthorne leaned from his den into the town's smoky air.

He pictured the little house he had seen, the last glimpse of her face turned over a white shoulder, and he saw himself tramping feverishly from street to street to bring up before that house again at the end of every half-hour.

He did not then tell himself what had come to him, but he leaned on the sill thinking far into the night. And he could but notice how many sweet-eyed holy stars there were.





CHAPTER VI.

STANTHORNE.

WHILE gray dawn crept into his rooms, Stanthorne lay in waking dreams. A slight happening had greatly changed him. He turned the matters of yesterday over and found the happening. All his life his mother had been dearest of created beings to him. Women generally he honored; in his enthusiasm he had as often idealized men as women; but now an *individual* fascination possessed him.

Love comes to you according to your nature. If you are corrupt, he is corruptible. But if, in the darkness and wrestling of this world, you hold him as a being divine, he will bless you like the Angel of God. In that man or woman who carries a child-heart into maturity love becomes perfect purification.

Stanthorne had a dashing, daring spirit, which led him all over his native land, and even afar on great waters. And in these roving he prob-

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ably touched smirch. But his wholesome nature never took to it. Now, while the dawn climbed up its ladder of tints, and he knew this strange life rushing through his veins, he felt unworthy of it. He wished he were a better man, who dared to confess to himself that he loved such a woman. A door stood open, half-revealing his den and his implements of daily labor. His ambition at once joined hands with this new motive power. What could he not accomplish for her approval!

It was Helen Dimmock's habit to begin every day's work by talking with her organ. Sometimes she unlocked the church only to stop a few moments; but oftener she came early and spent whole hours there.

Billy Sinks never failed her. If she passed the house where he ate and slept, while he sat at the morning meal, he promptly chucked his rations into his jaws and rose after her aloft, where he chewed his breakfast between strokes. Helen Dimmock never knew this item of his devotion.

Stanthorne passed Grace Church on his return from breakfast to his office. Hearing the organ he hesitated by the steps, but the unconscious siren aloft drew him farther. He went in and found a quiet, dusky seat under galleries, where he could listen without being seen. Here he sat, a happy thief, while he should have been producing an editorial and filling up various

crannies of his paper. When the organist closed her instrument he rushed to the office, and charged the senior's head full of ideas from the battery of his own restlessness and brilliancy.

Thus he formed a habit of going to church of mornings. No papist was so zealous as he became. The sexton, busy about affairs, grew to notice this young man, and to smile approvingly on his rapt eyes and bright face.

It was his fashion of enjoying Helen's society until he might approach her. Stanthorne had very little vanity and self-consciousness. The more he wished to make her his friend, the less deft he grew at setting about it. His bold, go-easy manner parted off him like a cleft mask in her presence.

Sometimes he broke a paragraph in the middle and dashed out of office for a long tramp. How he communed with himself, and how his Mother Nature reassured her trembling, impassioned boy, I cannot relate.

But do not infer that he worked less. On the contrary, new vigor and spirit cropped out in his style. Love is that fountain of perpetual strength which poor Ponce de Leon sought so far. Because Stanthorne was becoming a lover he was becoming a better worker. His sketches reached farther over the country; his paper gathered earnestness and lost flippancy, and he originated so many taking and brilliant witti-

cisms that editors in surrounding counties lived off his columns for months.

At first it was enough for Stanthorne to know that he loved, but the desire to be beloved took its overpowering turn. Though he grew quick at interpreting her moods through her touch on the organ, and thus gathered many lines of her nature into his hand, he held them jealously and silently.

They met and greeted each other on the street every day. He took the trouble to be sometimes present at choir-rehearsals with the tenor, an acquaintance of his; and he wrote up an organ concert given in Grace Church so genially as to waken jealousy in the breasts of neighboring choirs.

By degrees he made Helen Dimmock feel his friendship, and her quiet acceptance of it for awhile sufficed him.

Then he grew impatient standing in the vestibule, and pushed his way and got himself admitted to her house.

Nina at once made friends with Stanthorne, and he lost no time in winning George over to be his ally also. So on divers evenings he laid eager hand on the bell, trembling before the temple of his divinity.

These evenings were always happy ones. Stanthorne, with George on his knee, and Nina's sweet, sympathetic face near by, looked at his love and glowed with talk and ardor, or he stood

beside the piano and sung with her and loved her through every tone.

He felt as if he were in a boat rising and falling on the swells; though the oars rested not in his hands, yet for a time the motion intoxicated him, and he rode toward his fair island in all reverence slowly.

Being a determined lover, he would risk no avowal until he could hope for one in return; and what encouragement of this nature did Helen Dimmock give him? Always tenderly kind to him as she was to everybody, without prudery or boldness; enjoying his companionship because she was young like himself; she yet gave him no special marks of favor which a vain or a hopeful man might receive as signs of capitulation.

His life resolved itself into a circle which he rounded weekly; on Sabbath day he rested and worshipped with her; during the rest of the week he worked and worshipped beside her as often as she could see him.

But one afternoon, as he sat in his office, the busy pen fell from his hand and his young face glowed. The thought of her had been with him all day. He decided to go to her that evening, and, begging audience, to tell his love. If she could accept him as her husband, God be thanked! If not— Stanthorne dropped his head in his hands and determined he would go in any event—

When a small boy waited upon him with a thin yellow envelope, the sight of which drove the blood back upon his heart.

He tore it open and read a despatch from his native town:

“Lancelot Stanthorne, Office Little Boston *Courier*: Come home immediately. Your mother is dying.”

So Stanthorne was whirled hundreds of miles away in steam and smoke that night, clenching his hands in agony because he could not go faster, and forgetting the woman of his first love in utter grief and despair over the woman who first loved him, and who was dying!

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CHAPTER VII.

G. GUEST, ESQ.

IN a late October afternoon Rikka was covering the grate with a fresh layer of coal; for October, that royal month of the year—month of purples and scarlets and the fine linens of sheeted haze—lays down its sceptre with chill dignity.

George suspended coasting down the sofa-arm to superintend this business, with his hands folded behind him and a meditative look on his chubby face. Nina, up-stairs, was searching her bureau for such of Georgie's little garments as needed mending, and humming softly under her breath because mother-love lightened her heart.

While at the door, surveying the house keenly and ready to break its inward quiet, there stood a man. He had a rosy face, somewhat puffy about the eyes, and with fleshy, sensual lips, but on the whole a handsome face, ornamented by that soft, tawny, waxed mustache so much

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doated on by this generation. His big, comfortable figure was attired in a dusky suit. He wore the very latest hat, and carried such a cane as would have moved your heart to envy.

He put his large, exquisitely gloved hand on the bell-knob and rung.

The bold clang brought Rikka immediately with the poker held upright in her hand, but on her face the blandest of smiles, very composing to the person thus confronted.

"Mrs. Guest resides here, I am told?" he begun, swelling his bosom pompously.

"Yah," assented Rikka, seeing no reason for disputing the assertion. She shifted the poker to an easier position and smiled.

"Is she in?"

"Yah!"

"Tell her, if you please," advancing a foot and signifying that he desired to enter, "that a gentleman wishes to see her."

"Komm in!" cried Rikka, throwing the door wide, as if the idea had suddenly struck her. She marshalled him in like a sheriff conducting a prisoner, hurled an easy-chair at him, and tramped up-stairs to inform Mrs. Guest that "dere vos a man!"

The stranger placed his hat upon a table, glanced keenly around, seated himself, and crossed his graceful legs.

George gazed respectfully at him.

The stranger raised his eyebrows; an unpleas-

ant smile curled up his lip. "Must be the *young one!*" he murmured, stroking his waxed mustache.

Thus he and George continued taking impressions of each other until Nina's feet and garments, still as snow-fall, floated down the stairs.

Her mother-song still echoed on her lips. She opened the parlor-door supposing she should find the gas collector, or some other individual with a quarterly bill to present. But as this "Man" drew up his handsome length to meet her, she gasped and staggered and clutched the bodice over her strangling heart.

"Oh, George!"

"My little wife!" cried G. Guest, Esq., extending his arms with a dramatic flourish. "How *do* you do!"

Then, because the habit of loving him was still strong within her, and because in the absence of his daily meanness she had glorified his better traits and lain in the ashes of her own faults, Nina flew to him, clung to him, poured her broken heart at his feet.

"Oh, where had he been! Oh, she had almost died! Nearly four years, George! Oh, did he love her? What had she done to deserve this, love? Oh, George!" with her calla-face dropping against his arm.

G. Guest, Esq., took out the best of hem-stitched cambric and wiped his nose and eyes. He was very sympathetic. Then he sat down

to put himself in an easier position for holding his unaccustomed matrimonial burden.

He snuffled affectingly.

While considering how he should answer her questions, G. Guest, Esq., remarked that this was indeed a happy meeting.

Nina recoiled from him. In an instant his whole nature stamped itself on her knowledge. He was grosser, and emphasized himself. She saw the utter hopelessness of her lot. The roughest boor's wife in the swamps was happier than she. A rough man has the quick of tenderness somewhere within him, but it was not in this man to love. He had burnt all that was good and natural out of himself. He could admire the reflection of G. Guest, Esq., in another person, but utter forgetfulness of one's self in a beloved object he believed an impossibility. His was one of those great minds sceptical of all things beyond their own experience.

I suppose that instant was worse than death to Nina Guest. She had tried to keep faith in her husband. She and Helen rarely spoke of him. They never railed about George's father.

Her soul was so bitter within her she begged her God to blot her out. She wondered how she could endure eternity with this misery fastened upon her.

He, like a big animated mass of putty, patted her with his cool hands, and smiled down into

her face until she felt the victim of some horrible placid nightmare. All her old landmarks were swept away. *This* the man who had seemed grandest of all men in her eyes!

She crept out of his arms and buried her eyes in the sofa that she might lose for a moment that face so dead to her, yet so full of an easy possessor's complacency.

"And isn't this the youngster?" inquired G. Guest, Esq., agreeably. "Hi! how do? Kit-chee! kit-chee!" facetiously poking Georgie in the ribs with the point of his cane. "Been a long time since you saw your Pa, hasn't it? Nice little fellow!"

George slunk back, strangely frightened and humbled.

"How old is he?" inquired G. Guest, Esq., incidentally of Nina.

She dragged her black garments to a window, and leaned heavily against the sash, to be near some air—some light—some *natural* creature. George instinctively took refuge by her; she held his little hand. G. Guest, Esq., tapped his cane on the floor and watched her indulgently. When she gathered power she turned and talked to the man. He saw the revulsion in her, but he felt master of the position. An oily smile lubricated his large face. To hold the vantage-ground in any affair was all that G. Guest, Esq., asked of life.

"Where had he been?" she asked, seeking

perhaps to justify him and get back her old ideal of him even now.

G. Guest, Esq., spread his shoulders and his rhetoric. He had been here and there, up and down, in city and town, in every spot on this verdant earth, seeking his little wife.

"Then you never went back to the hotel where you left me to inquire?"

Yes, he did! He stirred up the whole place. His mental anxiety was so great at the time that he sweat great drops of sweat—a thing unusual to him! He got the proprietor by a button—in fact by the whole coat!—and so nagged clerks and waiters that they finally fled before him like wild grouse, without eliciting a bit of information. Nobody could tell him anything about his wife. She was gone. That was all they knew, excepting that a woman took her away! Ah! how cruelly she deserted him! took the little one—"Kit-chee! kit-chee!" with another attempt to reach George's ribs)—and disappeared, leaving him no clue to her whereabouts!

"Then your leaving me months and months among strangers to wait in vain for some sign from you was not intended for desertion?"

Desertion? Certainly not! Preposterous idea! Why, he was sick. Yellow fever down in Mobile. Wonder he hadn't died! Sick among strangers, with no little wife to smooth his pillow or cool his saffron-colored brow!

Nina clenched her slight hands. She would not let herself look at his impudent face. She begged a great many times inwardly for God to help her; to help her, for this man was her husband! It must be the very agony of the lost—this consciousness of having poured your *best* before them that trample and rend!

"Whew-t, little fellow!" whistled G. Guest, Esq., condescending to George as he would have condescended to a dog. "Come here!"

But the "little fellow," with his hands behind him, and darkening face bent on G. Guest, Esq., refused to "come here."

"Dimmock—Dimmock—Helen, is it?" pursued the gentleman, taking up a paper-cutter to amuse himself with in lieu of George. "Helen Dimmock. Is that the name of the person who brought you here?"

"My *sister's* name is Helen Dimmock."

"Ah, yes! Now I remember hearing you speak of her. Well, sister or no sister, *she* had her mercenary designs! I can see through them clearly. But we'll frustrate them yet!"

Nina's eyes blazed.

"She's a shrewd person," tapping the paper-cutter on his thumb-nail, with the smile of a shrewder person drawing down his face. "Of course, she knew of circumstances which were to your advantage, and so she pretended to shelter you in order to reap a harvest!"

Nina stood up before him with her boy in her arms.

"I could bear your insulting me," she panted, "but I *cannot* bear your insulting the one who is more to me than myself!"

G. Guest, Esq., stood up also, with his back against the door. He smiled a smile of impudent superiority in her face, and showed her how simple-minded she was—how unversed in the lore of the world. *He* could show up this sister in her true colors! *He* could see through Miss Dimmock's game from beginning to end! (Then, changing his rôle, he swelled his bosom and enacted the injured husband.) More than this, Miss Dimmock had interfered between him and his wife. Had turned his wife utterly against him. He supposed his wife even now meant to intimate that she wanted him to leave the household! (When G. Guest, Esq., was injured he assumed a drawling, petulant tone infinitely becoming to him.)

Nina's humbled face was hidden in her boy's hair. She clenched her mouth and endured without any sign.

"Very well!" (Another change of the stops, which brought out a hard, clear tone.) "Now I'd like to inquire"—expanding his shirt-front—"if you know you are *my wife*, Mrs. Guest?"

Yes, she knew it. Lifting her head to look at him with wide, hunted eyes, she acknowl-

edged the fact with all its hopelessness. She was his wife. She would have loved him that moment had there been any point in him on which to fasten love. "For better, for worse," and this was worst, yet she would be as true to her vow as she could be! He had taken her from a luxurious home when she was a child in experience, had made it impossible for her to find happiness in any one else by making her his wife;—but though she lay before him a trampled *woof*—a torn *woof*—a woof in which the sweet home pattern was never to appear, she was still his—woof for *his* home-web alone!

He did not see the loyal soul in her fine body, but continued stating her position in order to show her the steel claws of his power. "Now, I am well aware that appearances will give you a divorce! I came here to take you away with me. Of course! But you have been prejudiced against me. Now, let me tell you, I came, principally, for that child. That child is mine in any case! The law gives him to me unless special provision is made by a court, and this is not a case for special provision. You can go with me and have the child, or stay with Miss Dimmock and do without the child! I have my reasons for wanting him, as she has her reasons for wishing to retain him and you."

He showed her his hard, villanous face for one instant without any mask. The child-hearted woman thought she was going mad.

Presto! Douce and debonnair again, he reached out a soft finger to pat her cheek, as a playful cat cuffs its mouse!

"Child or no child, which is it to be, eh? I'll give you one day to decide! By-by till to-morrow evening. Don't be an obstinate little wife!"

Then G. Guest, Esq., took up hat and cane, blew a kiss from his glove tips to the woman, who crouched midway of the stairs with her child in her arms and her wild eyes turned toward him;—and, closing the street door carefully after him, he gracefully swung along the pavement, humming a love-tune in his full, smooth throat.

"How things do turn about!" soliloquized G. Guest, Esq., shining on passers like the sun. "To think that that nuisance of a baby, whom I really wanted to drown, should turn up to be such a trump card! What a mistake it would have been," he continued, smoothing his waxed mustache and smiling humorously, "if I *had* drowned him!"





CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHILD.

HELEN came home after dusk. The parlor was dark. She opened the door and saw a low fire smouldering in the grate, and detected a foreign musky odor in the air.

Rikka was pitching china at the supper-table in the dining-room.

Miss Dimmock closed the door and went upstairs toward her own room, and tapped at Nina's door as she passed to let her boy and girl know that she had come.

Everything was still.

She tapped again, delicately, yet with a feeling of apprehension. Nina was never out at that time of the evening. The house was wont to be full of wholesome, cheerful sounds when Helen came home.

The bolts shot back, the door swung open, and Nina, wasted and skeletonish, looking as if she had been drowned, admitted Helen into the gloom.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed the elder sister, bringing her outdoor rush and freshness across the place, shaking Nina's stupor off and half rousing George, who turned and murmured in his sleep to "T-l-o-o-la!"

"What *is* the matter?" repeated Helen throwing her wraps from her, closing the blinds, and turning up a jet of gas to enlighten the situation.

Nina tried to speak. I do not know what she had fought in circumstances and life during the hours she was alone. If she had been hysterical and stormy, that point was passed.

She had put on a long, softly draping wrapper. It hung down her little shape and curled in waves round her feet. She stood with folded hands in the middle of the floor as quiet as her boy in his crib. She tried to tell Helen in a few words what had come to her. But the horror of it was too new. She broke down midway, reached for her comforter, and wrung her hands over and over.

Helen got this little sister on her bosom instantly. Few words sufficed to show her what had happened. Her first feeling was intense indignation. She rose against the man as if he had been a housebreaker or an assassin.

She put Nina on the sofa, and cooled and soothed her with every sweet name which women know. Nina was the first love of her heart. Nina had been the pet of her childhood.

In Nina and Nina's boy were vested her family ties and her family life. She loved with brother-like devotion. She clenched her hand and burned to strike that coward in the face who had turned the close and chivalrous relation of husband into the power to own, abuse, and torture.

She determined that Nina should not again be exposed to him without a protector at hand; and tramping down-stairs with martial foot-fall, on Rikka's furry pig-tail she laid a hand, and on Rikka's plastic mind she endeavored to impress a command.

Rikka stood still, holding a cake-basket in her hands. Miss Dimmock's touch was caressing, but at the same time it was intended to be a strong brake on Rikka's train of habits. Between it and that distant hand of her father, Gottlieb Shuster, who would "gifs it to her so as never vos" if she failed in any duty, she was quite imbecile for several minutes. "Nopoddies," she repeated blandly, after Helen.

"Nobody *at all*," said Miss Dimmock; "you are to let nobody into this house while I am gone. Mrs. Guest is sick. If the bell rings while I am out do not answer it."

"Ven die pell ring," gasped Rikka.

"Yes, when the bell rings, let it ring. *Don't let any one into the house.*"

"In das haus ven die pell ring."

"Now do you understand, Rikka?"

"Yah!" with a victorious flash of teeth, "ven die pell ring, let any one in das haus."

"Frederika Shuster!"—putting the cake-basket on the table, and standing before her maiden in such an attitude that no other object could attract the attention of the same. "Understand what I say. You are not to let anybody come into the house. Not to let"—pressing each word into Rikka's forehead with the tip of her finger—"anybody—come into—this house—while—I—am—gone!"

"Not—to let—anyboddies—komm—into dees haus—w'iles I been gone!"

Thus, after Helen went up-stairs, Rikka chanted monotonously to herself; chanted over the cheese while she cut it; chanted with the tea-kettle; in the cupboard where she thrust her head. Even at midnight, when she turned upon her bed, she had not ceased droning faithfully "dot anypoddies not let me komm into das haus w'ile you been gone!"

Nina was on her knees beside Georgie's crib, smoothing his fat hands, when Helen came up with a waiter delicately spread. He looked most beautiful, like some strong cherub who was made without taint. The sister lifted her up and put her food before her, bound up her loose hair, and held her reassuringly upon a firm, hopeful bosom.

"Try to eat," begged Helen. "The darkest days will pass away. And *whatever* comes,

Helen's going to stand by you! This, too, darling," continued Helen, on her knees feeding her charge; "beef and buttered bread as well as that morsel of jelly."

Nina's heart rose up in her throat. She was obedient. She smoothed Helen's cheeks with her thin, trembling hands, trying, in her still, intense fashion, to make Helen feel her love.

George turned in his sleep and tossed one round leg over the crib rail. His mother caught her breath with a dry sob.

"Oh, Helen, he said the child isn't mine! He said the law gives a child to the father!"

"Never fret about the law," faced Helen stoutly. "I'll search all that out to-morrow morning. Law protects, it doesn't rob!"

"Those men who make the law," Nina went on brokenly, half revealing, half hiding her heart's secrets, "how *could* they separate a child from his *mother*, even when she can obey the child's father no longer? Ah, whose was he when nobody but I knew that he was coming from God to me? I loved him then and afterward; when George was gone; before you came; when the child was so little and I so ignorant; and he fretted and woke me much of nights. I kissed him for the very trouble he gave, and loved him! Oh, my lamb! Oh, Helen, can any one understand?"

"And yet, if I do not obey his father now—

(oh, Helen, Helen!) — his — his — father — can take him away — oh, Helen! Helen! Helen!"

Her little figure shuddered unceasingly in Helen's arms. Her low, strangled utterances were more woful than loud lamentations.

They said very little more. They knew not what to say to each other. Women of different casts, in such circumstances, might have spouted forth burning denunciations against G. Guest, Esq., the social system, and mankind in general. These two merely hung closer together, each striving after her peculiar sort of self-control, and the elder trying to engineer a mental track through this trouble as she had engineered through every other trouble she ever met. Both recognized Nina's hard fate. When bad men tangle their lives in other lives the innocent suffer.

Helen put the two children to rest—Nina and Nina's baby—turned the light low, and sat down beside Nina's head to continue her engineering, and occasionally to kiss the heavy purple veins on the front of that head.

"Little love!" murmured Helen Dimmock, brooding over her child-sister, "*will* the law let this man, who has robbed you of everything else, take your child, too?"



CHAPTER IX.

MYRON D. CHANCERY, ATTORNEY AT LAW.

THIS was the sign :
MYRON D. CHANCERY, ATTORNEY AT
LAW.

Helen read it over several times while she hesitated on the broad steps leading up to Mr. Chancery's office.

In this office Mr. Chancery sat opening his morning mail. Books were on the table at his hand ; books lined his walls ; the air smelt of books ; the very dust dancing on the sunbeams was the dust of old law books.

Myron D. Chancery was a tall, dark, deliberate man, who stood at the head of his profession in Little Boston. The powers of his youth had been given to the study of law. Law was now the only wife he had. Personally he was an enigma—as your polished lawyer always is. You never could guess at his opinion by the play of feeling on his face. He listened to everybody courteously without committing himself. His

MYRON D. CHANCERY.

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gestures were always slow, except in the heat of argument or appeal, when he lashed courts and juries with swift eloquence, and moved like a lion before them.

He lifted his eyes when his door opened, perhaps expecting to see some driving farmer, with a title-deed in his fist ; perhaps some town client, who had a case in the next session ; or an excited German, with currency, coming to buy legal powder for the blowing up of some man "dot no vill pays !" When he saw, instead of any of these, a young lady hesitating on his threshold, he arose with the same courtesy he accorded all his clients, and seated her. Perhaps you would not believe that Mr. Chancery—while he sorted his envelopes and put several letters on file—observed that she had a beautiful figure, and a fine, earnest face ; that she had the self-respecting air of a woman who holds her own in the world ; and even that her hair was disposed of gracefully, and her dress had an air of style independent of material. But he did observe these things without turning his eye upon her. He was a lawyer.

She told him she came to find out the legal relations of parents and children. Using no names, she mapped Nina's position before him, and waited anxiously for him to speak.

Mr. Chancery leaned on his elbows and drove the case into a nutshell ; that is, into a crack of his table.

"The lady in question wishes for a divorce?"

"Don't mention divorces in my hearing!"

Helen Dimmock threw the subject aside with impetuous hand. "She *married* this man, and cannot be *un-married*! She only asks him now to leave her alone with her child. Will not the law protect the child and her?"

The lawyer's jaws relaxed. He was amused at her simplicity. "The law can afford little protection," he said, "to a woman who, even nominally, keeps up the relation of wife."

At that same instant Helen's eyes were caught by a sentence in a book which was spread open on the table. "The theory is"—said this author, concluding some exposition—"that marriage makes husband and wife one person, and that person is the husband!"

Helen Dimmock's heart and eyes sunk.

Divining what she had read, Mr. Chancery took up the gauntlet for his love, the Law, with an ardor he rarely used in private. "But the law," he said, "was made to insure happiness and protection to the many. It is a ponderous system—the outgrowth of centuries; but with all its changes and modern additions it cannot be always fitted satisfactorily to exceptional cases. I could wish it dealt more liberally with your sex in some respects, while in others I cannot but admire the latitude which it gives you."

"But, putting women aside, how does it deal with young children?"

Mr. Chancery looked seriously at his client and satisfied himself that she was not a caviller; she simply asked to know the truth, not that she might find fault, but that she might govern herself by it. (He supposed, of course, the case she stated was her own.) So he began and expounded to her how a father has legal custody of his own child; the mother may simply exact respect from the child. But a court of equity, by virtue of its guardianship of minors, can interfere, on its being shown that the father is what the court regards as an improper person to have such custody. In that case the custody of the child may be given to the mother or other suitable person. A jury would be bound to give a child to his father, but such cases fall under the discretion of the judge.

"What constitutes an 'improper person'?" asked Helen Dimmock.

"Well, if the man were a common drunkard, or dishonest, or grossly immoral, he would be an improper person to have the custody of his child."

Then G. Guest, Esq.—who was not a common drunkard; who—as far as Helen could learn—was not of a nature to bestir himself enough to be even dishonest; and whose immoralities were all quite refined!—G. Guest, Esq., *was* a proper person in the eyes of the court to seize the custody of his child from its mother. The court cannot be too nice.

She went no farther. There might be a way

of escape. But the way of escape looked as dark for her Nina as the way of endurance. She was hemmed in, and had but this choice: to give up her child or to come up in public and let the eyes of the law and the fingers of the law probe all her sorrow and shame, and then have that law sit gravely on the question as to whether it should give her her own or not.

Mr. Chancery, with his arms folded on the table, began in his turn to ask questions.

"Why did this father return after a four years' absence, so desirous of obtaining possession of the child?" Miss Dimmock did not know. "Was there property involved in the case?" Miss Dimmock knew of none. "Had she ever known any person who, in dying, would be likely to make a bequest to the child?" No. The mother's foster parents had never forgiven her her marriage. Besides, they were still living.

Myron D. Chancery rubbed his temple and meditated. He had an interesting problem in his hand, for he knew human nature well. Like a skilled naturalist, from one or two words spoken by Helen Dimmock, he had supplied and built up to himself the whole character of G. Guest, Esq., and he knew such a man never would be impelled to the course he had marked by natural affection. He had some other motive? What was the motive?

After the young lady passed from his sight the lawyer surveyed his problem with glittering

eyes. He would "investigate" that. He went on with his affairs, thinking of a thousand matters at once; but he found time to make a few notes and to lay in a convenient corner of his memory this case which he meant for his own satisfaction to "investigate."

Helen Dimmock almost flew through the streets that day. She hurried her lessons feverishly, omitted her luncheon, and made every effort to reach her home early.

Her thoughts fermented. "There was an old heathen law-giver," she reminded herself, as her feet turned into the familiar home-street, "who regarded children as the wards of the State. They were citizens from birth, and trained as such in public. This free and enlightened republic makes them the chattels of their father. If he were a good father they would not love and respect him less by being taught to respect themselves. But he may be a fool. He may be so selfish as to lie down on their young hands for support; he may half starve, half clothe them, work them like slaves, but in any case all their duty and their belongings are his till they reach majority. A man in Illinois two years since burnt his child to death and buried him in the garden till Judge Lynch ferreted him out. Ah! why is there never a cry about children's rights? I could head a child's crusade!" —shutting her teeth.



CHAPTER X.

THE CHILD'S MOTHER—HER DIVORCE.

IT vos a man!" sputtered Rikka, meeting Miss Dimmock at the door.

She had a dish-towel in one hand and a baker's loaf in the other. She twisted herself with frantic gestures in her anxiety to prove to her mistress how no human Rikka could have held the fortress. "I tells him ven I rings die pell dot he let's nopoddies into das haus! He puts foot insides, laughs; den I say I calls b'leece! But b'leece not round nowhere! He komm in—big man—cane! He want Miss Guest. She hears him; she komm down-stairs all scare. He not stay long w'ile. I hides Mr. George Guest in closets w'ile man's been here."

"He is gone?" asked Helen, turning faint at thought of what her Nina had been enduring alone.

"Yah!" cried Rikka victoriously. "Oh, yah! der man ist gone! Den I lock der dooi ven der man ist gone!"

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"Poor, good soul," muttered Helen, "after the thief was gone you put up the bars. But keeping him out would only have given my little girl temporary protection." She leaned against the balustrade of the stair, feeling tired and helpless. "Who can protect her? Not even I, when I would give my blood to do it!"

Rikka went back to her kitchen relieved. She had not been scolded. The hand of her father, Gottlieb Shuster, had not been called down upon her, and she felt she could look the good Lutheran minister in the face next Sunday. Germans are very severe with their children, and not less strict in supervision are the pastors.

She took up her work again and began a guttural, monotonous humming over it, which signified her heart's content, when a scream rung through the house and brought her trembling to the foot of the stairs. Miss Dimmock cried a few clear, startling words to her; her heavy brain whirled, she grasped her straw flat, pressed it on wrong side up, and clattered down the street.

Helen knelt beside the little figure she found lying in the folds of the wrapper. Oh, strange little heap! How like a sword thrust the sight of it went through her when she opened the door and found it lying at her feet.

Nina's hands were clasped above her head, and a little pool of blood had trickled down

from her mouth. Was life still in her? Helen undressed her and worked with frantic hands.

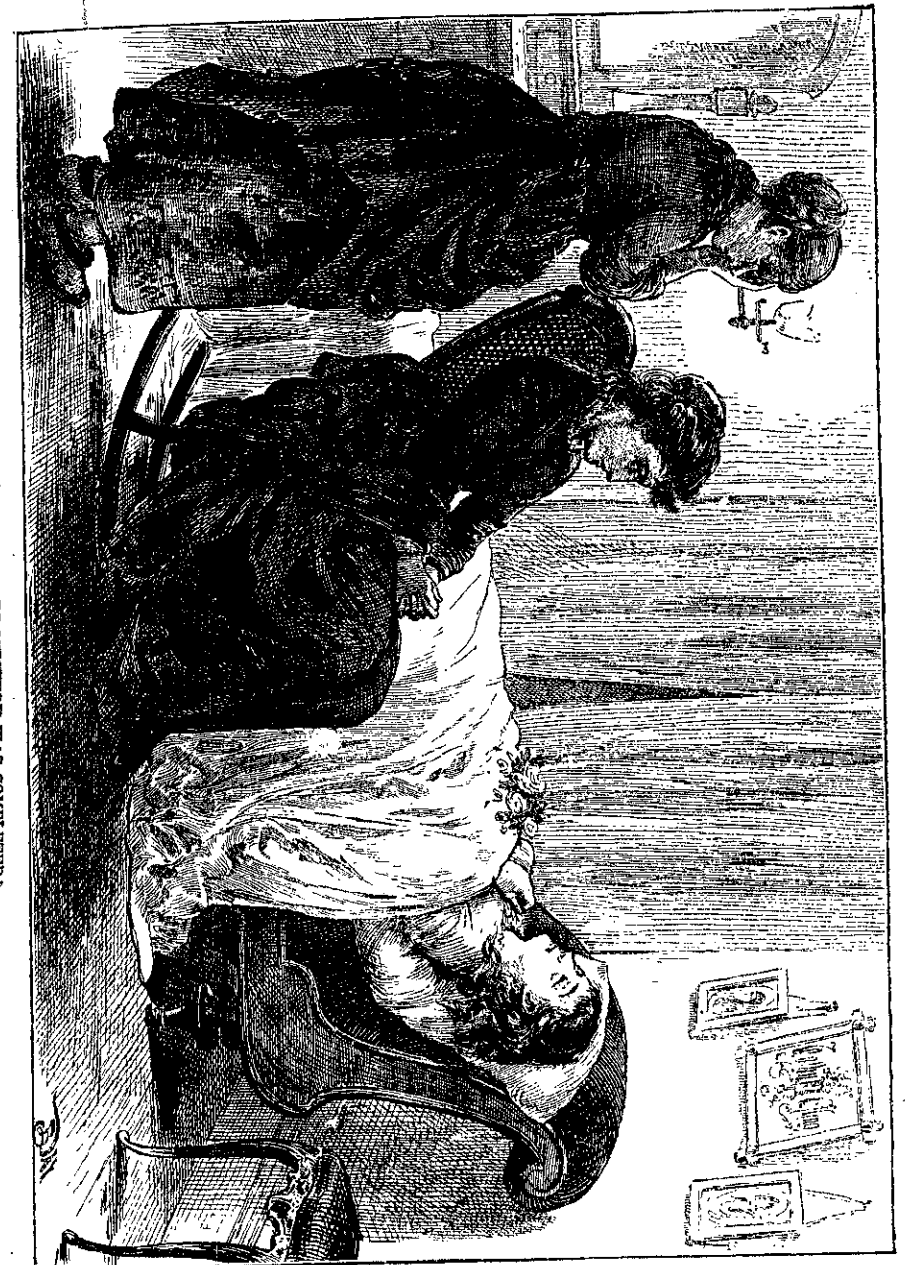
In a few minutes the medical man whom Rikka had called stood beside her, directing and helping her. His examination was eager, quick, skilful. George, roused below, labored up the stairs and cried at the door, for the first time in his life finding his Toola deaf to him.

"Doesn't her heart beat?" gasped Helen. "She is warm—feel her arm! Oh, tell me she will live!"

Without replying the doctor worked on swiftly. Hope died shade by shade out of his face. He stood up, holding the white wrist, and told Helen Dimmock that her sister was dying. He told her, too, in short swift words, how some powerful emotion had evidently overpowered this little bouy and burst the reservoir of its blood—as if she did not know it was a broken heart! He might call it by scientific names. She knew her little girl had been in Gethsemane and in the bloody sweat!

After bloody sweats come victories. But could Helen think of these when she gathered her darling in her arms and realized that she should never have her any more?

When they are going—just before they have left us—when perhaps their eyes open and *look* at us before they rise above those windows forever—we *hope* in the midst of our helpless agony.



"NINA WAS GONE. THE MYSTERY WAS COMPLETED."

Oh, sunken little gray face! In an instant it lay between Helen Dimmock and her life's blessing. Nina was gone. The mystery was completed. It was an indifferent unheeding shape she held in her arms. How *could* Nina go? They seem to forget us so quick. They lie so still; and the arms which used to be so quick are never moved to comfort us. Oh, our loves! Are you there? Do you stop and cling to us with your old-time kisses and give us some last message? And are *you* hurt, dear loves, because we rain our passion on your clay, and will not see *you* at all! O God, join our supplicating hands! O God, you hold us both!

And now there was no hope. While Helen held her the little shape became *It*. Ages seemed to roll between the now and the time when Nina was alive. It is so soon realized—this being left alone!

The doctor went away and made arrangements for every tender rite.

Good kindly souls came below stairs, and some ventured timidly up the stairs. But no one was admitted. She herself would get her little girl ready for the sleep. She could not bear another to touch her. As long as any office could be filled for Nina she jealously filled it. She could not cry. She must work; she dared not be still.

So this Helen Dimmock bathed and draped her darling, using the whitest and sweetest of

everything at her command. Often she stopped in her sacred love-task to rock the little body passionately in her arms, with hoarse, dry, heart-breaking sobs. And again she blessed God that Nina was at peace.

She spread the sofa thick and wide with white, and put the tiny body on it. She placed flowers in the bosom, the hands, the hair, at the feet. They were only red roses with bits of geranium, which happened to remain in a vase. These were poor—only her love's constrained offering. By and by she would get white flowers, and flowers signifying victory.

When she finished—when there was no longer *one little motion* to make for Nina—she fell upon the floor and writhed. But God was tender with her and made her hear Georgie sobbing outside the locked door. She was neglecting Nina's boy.

"Is mamma 'sreep?" whispered George, clearing his eyes with his fists, as she lifted him to look at Nina.

"Yes, she's asleep!" Oh, how good it was that he had not seen her just after her travail, with the blood gushing from her mouth! "Let us sit and watch her."

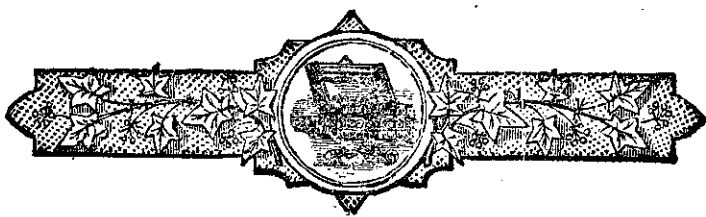
She sat on the floor and drew him to her bosom. He was awed and very still.

Twilight came down. The little face on the sofa grew very beautiful. It was a marble Peace. George fell asleep and she laid him in

her lap. Rikka, sobbing on her apron, tiptoed in and made a dim gas-light.

Without stirring she sat and watched her dead. Night grew old outside. Lights went down in the theatres. Solitary wretches skulked in alleys. Life and sin and change go on. But time is frozen in us while we sit beside our dead.





CHAPTER XI.

THE CHILD'S FATHER.

NINA had been gone two days.

Helen crept from room to room, leading George by the hand, and trying unconsciously to track the lost presence.

Or she wrapped the boy and tramped with him away out of the town's murk, and watched the winter sky in the river. Wherever she was she had him with her.

During these days there was a constant rapping at the back door. Women with shawls over their heads, or men in dirty blouses, wanted to know how Miss Dimmock was. Could they do anything for her? Some of them she went and met, and as soon as they saw her still, tearless face they wept tears for her, and would have lain themselves down to bridge her way.

To George alone she talked of his mother. All the outer symbols of death she translated for him, giving him the inner meaning. But when his heart ached for mamma, and he went up and

cried in the vacant room, she was careful not to substitute her own love for that which he had lost, so jealous was she for her little girl. She comforted him but kept his mother alive to him. Very young children are too lately from God to grieve much over death. She gave him an absent mamma, and this sufficed him.

It was a chill November night. He had eaten his supper and watched her strange face while he ate. Now, before the grate, he nestled at her breast, and put some of those questions which troubled his unformed soul—where the material and immaterial mixed grotesquely: "What house in heaven did mamma riv in? Does 'ey have stairs? Was it rong way off? Does big mans ever go 'ere—big mans, Toola, 'at come and scare mamma?"

While the big man's shadow lay over his thoughts the door-bell sent a violent clang through the house, which Rikka echoed by a crash in her department.

"Ven die pell ring," muttered Rikka, whose convictions, like the Persian law, knew no changing, "der man no lets you into das haus?" She went immediately to impress this regulation on the comer. The hall lamp was not lighted. While she blundered about it, leaving the door ajar until she could make a light with which to search her enemy out, he moved smoothly past her and entered the parlor.

Helen turned her head.

He stood in the shadow like Mephistopheles, and tried to distinguish the objects in the room.

She rose and lighted a gas-jet. Then drawing George to her knees, stood still, as if inquiring his business.

G. Guest, Esq., placed his right hand on his bosom. In his left hand he supported the latest hat, swathed to within an inch of its top in folds of crêpe.

"Miss Dimmock?" he ventured to inquire tenderly and sympathetically.

"My name is Helen Dimmock."

"Yes—ah—exactly!" He produced a card-case and handed a card to Helen. She scarcely needed a glance at the name of "G. Guest, Esq." George had fastened on her, and was drawing his breath quickly.

"Well, Miss Dimmock, how do you do?" G. Guest, Esq., extended his large, white, patronizing hand. As Helen paid no manner of attention to it, he drew it home and bestowed on her a pitying smile which she could not reject.

"I have no recollection of meeting you before," he pursued, gracefully moving toward a chair. "You were the sister—or half-sister?—of my late wife." As he made mention of "my late wife," he drew a snuffling breath, which he meant to palm off as a sigh. "Am I not right?" with a melancholy air.

Helen sat down without replying. For her

girl's and boy's sakes she would keep as still as possible before this man. It was easy to divine his errand. She knew not what to do or say, she was so broken. If she met and fought him he could return with the law on his side. He had all the advantage and knew it.

G. Guest, Esq., sat down also, turning his broad, insolent face slowly to take in the room. The very air of the man sickened her, yet she hoped, half deliriously, that there might be some solid spot in him—or whereon had Nina founded her great love? The worst men have fine strata somewhere in their characters.

"I have but a few minutes," began G. Guest, Esq., looking at an elegant chronometer and settling his pompous shoulders for business. "But I must say, Miss Dimmock, that you have used me very cruelly. Yes, very cruelly indeed. I was not even apprised of my wife's sudden decease." (His grieved, childlike manner was touching.) "I left her in good health—blooming! Went out of the city a few days to prepare a home for her reception elsewhere—" (Helen started)—"return, and find that the grave has swallowed all that is beautiful on earth, and sheds no light upon my pathway, which was lately teeming with sweet and fragrant blossoms of hope! I feel"—spouted G. Guest, Esq., who descended to flowery strains and poetic figures in order to put himself on a level with Helen Dimmock, whom he had heard was

a blue-stocking, or composer, or something of the sort—"I feel—desolate! No cheering ray blooms upon my breast! If I only could have assisted in doing honor to her inanimate clay it would have afforded me the greatest pleasure which man is capable of feeling!"

Helen was shutting her teeth, yet she scorned him too much to resent his harangue.

"Well, well!"—smoothing his full cheeks with his hem-stitched cambric. "We must forgive in this world. Forgive! To err is human, to forgive divine!"—with a patronizing glance from the corner of his eye. "Therefore, I forgive you!"

"Let it pass," pursued G. Guest, Esq., spreading his hands as if to dispense a benediction over a penitent.

"I see! You are scarcely to blame. You were occupied with your own grief. And I have a consolation left. I have my boy! Dear little fellow!" (unctuously.) "Come here, little fellow."

George clung to Helen, sobbing as if his heart would burst.

"Timid little fellow, very." G. Guest, Esq., bent forward and poked his son experimentally with one long white finger. "Doesn't know me very well yet. My business has kept me so much away from him. But we shall get acquainted."

"You propose taking him from me at once?"

She *could* speak, could she, this scornful, self-curbing girl. Good! He now knew where to plant his heel. One can imagine this man imprisoning a wretched insect on his palm and watching its contortions with real delight in the thought that, "I—I am god over you!"

"Certainly, Miss Dimmock, certainly," nodding, and pulling his tawny mustache. "I propose taking him away with me to-morrow morning! Your own heart would tell you that I would want immediate possession of my child!"

"My own heart tells me that a man who has neglected his child from its birth, and killed its mother, is likely to have very little regard for his child!"

"There you are mistaken!" explained G. Guest, Esq., indulgently. "Wrong in your premises!" He smiled a bright and winning smile. "I *did not* neglect my wife and child. Unfortunate circumstances separated me from them. I searched—as I can prove—everywhere for them without happening to discover the right place until recently. I can show you my advertisements for them!" He brought out from his pocket-book some newspaper cuttings; as Helen mechanically read them she noticed the date was clipped from all. He watched her slyly. "Perhaps you never wanted to see those, Miss Dimmock! I assure you," as she returned them, "the whole case is quite romantic! It would be very interesting *in the courts!*"

Helen looked at the man. She noted his benevolent, well-preserved face. A phrenologist would canonize him. She noted the air of candor, of tenderness, he could assume, and the triumphant insolence he knew so well how to sheathe, and she told herself there was no soundness in him. Even if she dragged up the shame Nina died concealing, and fought him in the courts, he had not enough of hard, honest wickedness in him for the law to grasp. He was a soft—a cottony villain.

He leaned back, folding his arms easily, and watched her, winking and purring like a cat. It was a snatch of some funeral hymn which had caught in his throat.

"I fear," he pursued suavely, "that my family have been a burden to you already, so my naming an early day for removing the little fellow will be a positive relief. Not that the dear departed flower could have been aught but a light—"

"Stop!" Helen Dimmock's eyes lanced him suddenly with two sharp steel points.

He smiled. He looked actually relieved.

"Thank you! Ah, thank you! I feared they *had* been a burden to you. But your tone assures me that this was not so. I learn you have no means excepting what your own exertions bring you. That seems a pitiable case for a woman so young. And when I consider that, in addition to supporting yourself by labor, you

also sustained my wife and child, I feel that I ought to offer some remuneration—to refund the money."

"That is sufficient!" said Helen Dimmock, rising. "If you wish to remain in this room any longer I will leave it. I remember that my sister was obliged to wear your name, so I shall not send for the police unless you force me to!"

How grandly she could scorn, couldn't she? He would put the heel down again! He smiled behind his sensual mouth. Thus they stood looking at each other several seconds.

"Ah, well, good-night!" he said, as if they had been taking a lingering adieu! "You are nervous, I see. I hope you will feel better after you are relieved of this urchin's noise and have a few days in which to compose yourself! I will call for him at eight in the morning, and ask as a last favor, Miss Dimmock, that you have him ready by that time. I have some little feeling against you, Miss Dimmock," confessed G. Guest, Esq., with the most charming candor, as he moved toward the door. "You, in a measure, stole my family from me. Yes, now, you really did."

Should she cry aloud? Should she appeal to the generosity of manhood, and beg him not to bereave her again—so soon and so utterly? Should she not beg to know at least whither he was taking Nina's baby? Oh, how could she bear it? But all her nature revolted from ask-

ing any favors of this creature, who regarded no one in the world excepting himself.

"Georgie—his name is Georgie, isn't it?—Hi, Georgie! Good-night, little fellow! Your pa will come for you in the morning. Good-night, Miss Dimmock; good-night!"

Bowing and waving his weed-covered hat, he backed through the door, cheering them to the last with his bright smile!



CHAPTER XII.

HEGIRA.

RIKKA thumped in, economizing time by folding her kitchen apron as she came to inquire about breakfast. But the attitude and expression of Miss Dimmock frightened her. She meditated at the effect which that man produced on the inmates of the house every time he entered it, and legends she knew of similar effects wrought by the devil made her legs quake.

Rikka's steady stare broke Helen's trance of inaction. She leaped to sudden resolution. She got up and put George on the hearth-rug.

"Put on his coat and wrap him well, Rikka. I am going to the church to-night and shall take him with me. And put some cookies in his pocket, Rikka. He may get hungry."

Afterwards when she found the buns in his little pocket, she wondered where he had got them. She felt confused, but on every stair-step her foot fell more firmly.

She tapped at Nina's door as her custom had always been, and opening into the empty place, nestled upon the floor with her face down.

"For what else can I do, darling?" groaned Helen Dimmock. "This man has all the power on his side. He will take the child and trample his child-heart as he trampled *your* child-heart. Worse than this—for he was never able to make you vile like himself—he can kill your pure baby and put into his growing body a sensual, low nature like his own.

"Yes, I know he will track me. But there may be some way of escape. I cannot think. If I can hold to your boy till I can take counsel and think for you and him! Oh, darling, how could I let him go to-morrow?"

George clamored for her at the bottom of the stairs. He was wrapped, and eager to snuff the night-air.

He danced from one leg to the other till Helen came down. She was draped entirely in black. She had a little black felt hat pressed over her hair, and she carried a valise in her hand.

She glanced into the parlor where Rikka stood mildly grinning.

"Take care of everything, Rikka," she begged gently, "till I come back."

George pranced upon the pavement. Tethered by Toola's hand, neither big, mysterious men nor terrors of the night could find lodgment in his thoughts. Lamps and shops and hurrying

passers filled him with intense delight. He stuck the disengaged hand in his overcoat pocket, tossed his head, and made his boot-toes conspicuous.

Helen avoided the brilliantly lighted square, and made many detours in so doing before she reached Grace Church. The old moon stared ghastly and gibbous at them between Grace Church towers.

"Moon's got er toofache, Toola," suggested George. "See, face all side like Missus Smif when her got toofache!"

A figure shuffled out of the shade, startling George.

"Here's the key, Miss Dimmock," said Billy Sinks. He knew her times so well that she intrusted the key to him, so that he could have everything ready for her. "I was up there and lit, but I thought you wasn't comin', so after waitin' awhile I turned out, and started off."

He unlocked the door, and they entered. Billy drew a match across the knee of his trousers, and lighted a taper. His eye fell first on George, whom he regarded with the benignity which a large dog bestows on a little dog. "Howdy do, Georgie!" said Billy compassionately. He was thinking of the death of *his* mother, who left him at as tender an age as George's, and wondering what he might now have been had Miss Dimmock gotten him im-

mediately in hand ! For Billy's faith was great in Miss Dimmock's system of boy-culture.

George was gazing in and around at the half-hidden walls, and the long, flickering shadows which the taper made.

"Miss Dimmock, are you sick?" Her faithful blower lifted his light and regarded her anxiously. "You look so orful!"

"I am in trouble, Billy. I want you to help me."

What could he do? He hung upon her word. Realizing all she had suffered in the past days, and his utter helplessness to lift the shadow of death off her who had so often lifted shadows off him, he knew not what to speak. He was distressed, and his freckled cheeks and forehead puckered themselves.

"No, not to-night, Billy," as he half turned toward the stairs, intending to do the thing which lay next to his hand. "I cannot go up to the organ. I want to go away! At once! I must take Georgie out of the city to-night. We are in trouble—in danger—Georgie and I! I cannot explain it to you, but I want you to help me, and to tell no one where I go. I came here because I can most safely start from here. Rikka is faithful, but stupid; I dare not let her know. Now tell me all you can about the trains!"

Though dazed by her announcement, Billy felt this request to be solid ground under his

feet. He was a hand-book of railways, for he owned a secret pulling toward "the road," and meant to try it some day.

Standing like three flickering ghosts in the light of the taper, they consulted. Helen was feverish and eager, and talked with her watch in her hand. Billy was careful and accurate, and full of paternal care. George gazed from one to the other with great velvet eyes, wherein wonder and weariness contested.

In the sequel they went out of the church, and made haste to the nearest depot, Billy carrying George.

Hours afterwards, while late trains came and went, while people skurried across the tracks, and lights flared from below, a lump of a boy sat shelved on one of the great beams—out of policemen's sight—meditating on the events of the evening, fully wrought up to the resolution of "dropping" on any man who should come in pursuit of Miss Dimmock, and proving fatal to the same!





CHAPTER XIII.

THAT.

MYRON D. CHANCERY had an excited client.

It was a crisp November morning. G. Guest, Esq., breakfasted early, enjoyed his cigar, and called for a carriage.

As he sauntered down the steps of the great hotel to take his seat in this, passing urchins regarded with awe his portly presence, his full chin, the graceful smoke curling about his waxed mustaches. Perhaps they wondered if the wheel of fortune would ever raise them to become such great nabobs!

He bullied the waiters about his baggage; he bullied the cabby about the carriage; and when he had asserted his importance to his own satisfaction he drove to the house of Helen Dimmock.

Leaning easily back against the cushions and turning a fresh cigar between his teeth, he sent the black driver to ring the bell and call for Master George Guest.

THAT.

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The black driver rung. G. Guest, Esq., contemplated the house front and smiled. He took off his hat and dusted the crêpe on it—the while he ceased not smiling. The black driver rung again. G. Guest, Esq., became impatient and spoke some impressive words to him, upon which the black driver rung the third time.

The door was opened timidly, and Rikka peered around it to gape at the black driver, who made known his errand.

“Come, make haste there!” cried G. Guest, Esq. “Tell Miss Dimmock I am waiting!”

“Gone!” shouted Rikka excitedly. “Her and Mr. George Guest gone! Last night—stay to church!”

“None of your nonsense, now!” exclaimed G. Guest, Esq., angrily, leaping out and coming up the steps. “Where are they?”

Suspicion of the truth at once flashed over him; he was furious with himself for not foreseeing it and trapping her.

At once he gave Helen Dimmock the same motives which moved him, and he believed she meant to contest in the courts for the possession of the child.

He gathered from the bewildered German girl how George and Helen left home the evening before. Then, turning his horses' heads, he dashed to police headquarters and set a detective force on her track.

Next, determined to be ready for her when

she rose to the surface, and to retain the best legal talent in the country on his side, he rushed in upon Myron D. Chancery, mopping his brows and roused to as high a pitch as his phlegmatic temperament could reach.

Thus it came to pass that Myron D. Chancery had an excited client.

Before he had spoken a dozen words Mr. Chancery knew him. This was his man. There he stood, as if evolved from the lawyer's mind.

But with courtesy and no emotion he jotted down the violent statements of G. Guest, Esq. G. Guest, Esq., had no reservations with his lawyer. In his mind money was the motive power of the world. If he applied this power to his lawyer his lawyer would move for him. It was not in him to perceive that a man may have a certain cold love for the blind woman, Justice, and for tracing out rights and seeing them established.

Mr. Chancery had This in his hand before. Now he had That. He put this and that together, while G. Guest, Esq., raged at his side, breathing out wrath and threatenings.

After his client left him he wrote letters busily. You would not have guessed, had you watched his quiet lips, his placid, middle-aged forehead, that he was like a deer-hound sweeping along in chase with a clue which filled him with satisfaction.



CHAPTER XIV.

DOLOROSA.

HELEN'S house was dark.

She sat on the parlor floor, with her head buried in the cushions of a rocker.

No soul was in the house save herself. She had kindled a few sticks in the blackened grate, but the blaze, after rising to look around the chill room, sunk into low spirits and died. She had no heart to invoke it again. She hardly knew that her flesh was cold; bitter darkness and silence seemed her best refuges.

If she had been on no mental rack, the sudden noises which may always be heard in an empty house might have set her nerves quivering. But she heard no quiet step up-stairs, no whispers along the blinds, no stirs or rappings at back-doors. The Genius of the Home Helen had made sat with her face mantled that night. Even Puck was gone—Puck who sets mischief brewing. The precious PLACE was blotted from the earth. She had no home.

Before Nina and George came to her she had lived a bright, hopeful life—what unconventional people call a “Bohemian” life. She was not bound to place. The future was all before her, and talent strong within her. She meant to go to the Old World and study her art there, and her spirit would have carried her, too. She saved money for this purpose till Nina and George were cast upon her care, creating a revolution in her nature. She made *them* the root of her ambitions and hopes thereafter, and learned to love as consecrated the little spot of earth where their lives and her life grew together.

Now, sitting by the ashes of her black hearth, she felt like them who return from weary warfare, and find only their tottering chimneys standing to show where the enemy passed.

Days eddied through her head, making her review again and again every circumstance of her flight.

She saw herself shooting past hills and woods with Georgie on her breast; now watching the engine's red eye as they rounded a curve; now wondering what waited for them beyond the darkness. She had taken a new route which had its terminus in a coal and iron region—because a wild place would be a cheaper and, perhaps, a surer refuge than a city.

She saw herself carrying the sleeping boy off the train into raw daylight, and stepping into a little box of a station where men in red woollen

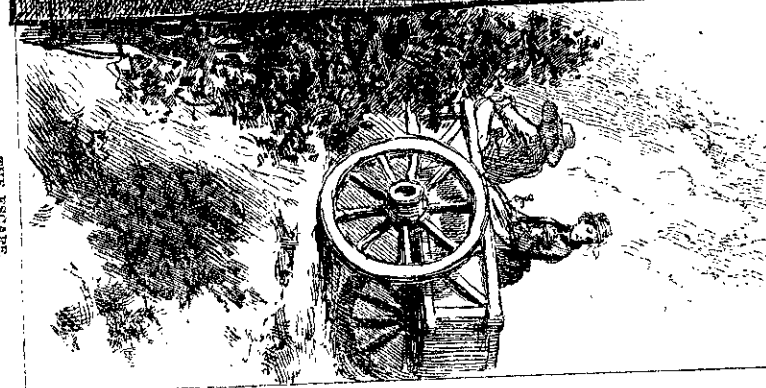
THE ARREST



DOLOROSA.



THE ESCAPE



shirts spat at the stove and stared at her. When she asked where she was they told her she was at Mary Ann Station; and when she tried to hire a conveyance into the country they bestirred themselves to call another red-shirted man, who drove a loaded ox-cart, to the door.

She saw the slow, bovine stare which this man fixed on her when she assured him she had no folks in them parts, but was seeking boarding in some family. She heard his gradually stated intention of taking her down to his old woman, and the creaking of the loaded cart as they started.

She saw George's full cheeks shaking with the jolting of the cart, his frightened eyes opened suddenly to see a cliff rising above the road, and a ravine yawning below, for it wound like a ribbon along the waist of a mountain.

She saw the smelting furnace which they passed, its massive supports of stone, its open side exposing roaring fires and hissing metal, and half-naked men darting here and there, and singing. The frost on the mountain, the glitter of bits of ice far down in the ravine, were yet before her eyes. She started violently again, lest the cart should be jerked over that frightful brink by the switching oxen, and again the old man reassured her.

She saw the tiny hut in the great hollow to which he took her. It was built of logs and chinked with mud, and it had one room and a loft.

She saw his old woman, a bent and uncomely and broken-toothed creature, to whom Nature had been kinder in soul than in body.

She reviewed her short sojourn in this place; her daily efforts to *think* some way clear for Nina's boy, her close clinging to him, her nightly weariness, the old woman's questions and cossetings, George's darling ways, their swift walks in the windy hollow, even their breakfasts of corn-bread and coffee came to her mind. The solemn pines rose above her till they pricked the sky far up.

Again she saw a man riding down the cart-road, and knew he was coming after her. And before he could proclaim her arrest, again she crouched with George on the attic floor, kissing him and praying over him, and wondering fiercely if she hadn't better stab him!

She saw the polite officer who arrested her for abduction; the old woman's fear and flying cap-frills; the departure from the hut, with that old pair looking sorrowfully after George and her.

She saw their return over the crude road; the scene after their arrival; the insolent face of G. Guest, Esq. Again he taunted her unintelligibly, and turned her sick by his grasp on George's little shoulder. She heard the quiet counsel of Myron D. Chancery, and felt vaguely that he was her friend, who hinted that she was to hope for something in the future. She heard

the compromise effected by him, the patronizing dismissal of G. Guest, Esq., and George's heart-breaking shrieks as they carried him away. Oh, Nina's baby! Those were Nina's hands reaching to her; Nina's wide eyes straining to her; Nina's heart in his little body, almost bursting again! Where was the baby now? Who undressed him to-night? Why, he had never gone to sleep out of her arms before since his soul had consciousness. Was he smothered down by some impatient nurse? Was he calling his mamma and his Toola and suffering as only bereft childhood can suffer? She dared not think of that. It made her want to go fiercely into the streets and denounce a people who leave young children at the mercy of a licentious and unnatural father.

She saw herself coming into the deserted house—into the dark—into desolation.

Here she sat, by her dead home, too broken for action, yet fighting her griefs on the ground.

She must get up and gird for work. Tomorrow she would go her rounds giving lessons, and trying not to resent the curious looks, the questions, the grating sympathy she met. Mrs. Stokesbury-Jones, that social sun, would probably be clouded by floating rumors, and all the lesser lights would shine from on high upon her.

But she must be doing. She must earn money. Necessity was laid upon her now. Expenses had overflowed her income, and the

tug and strain to meet demands could not be shirked. Neither did she wish to lie down in the harness.

"Whether I die or not," this weary girl told herself as her forehead sunk to the very ground, "makes no difference now. I will pull on the best I can. I am wounded through and through, and I can never get better! But many a soldier has bled under his armor. My armor will be taken off some day, and I shall be washed and comforted. Get up, Helen Dimmock, and go ahead."

So Helen Dimmock got up and tried to go ahead. She threw a light over the room, and put out her hand to make the place cheerful.

It was too hard.

Dry sobs tore her throat. She clenched her hat.

"I *cannot* stay here alone *now*! Oh, let me get away! To the church—anywhere! Billy will go with me. Oh, I'm so *alone*!"



CHAPTER XV.

THE WORLD WITH TWO INHABITANTS.

BILLY SINKS went before her up the church stairs, carrying a lighted taper in his hands.

She said to herself, "Thus goes my life—trailing through chill and night, yet still rising upward, thank God! and following a little light which may lead to a greater light."

Billy illuminated the organ loft and she opened her instrument.

"Billy!"

Before he got into his place she darted a hand toward him. He took it, holding it between both his gingerly, as if it were some fine trust which he might break.

"I want to look at you; I want to feel *with* folks! It's lonesome sometimes, isn't it, Billy?"

"Yes'm," replied Billy, swelling, and knowing not what to say to comfort her.

"Has anything happened to trouble you while I have been gone? Can't I help you some way, Billy?"

This was always her instinct when she found her own hurts unbearable, to creep to some fellow-soldier, offer her canteen of comfort, and forget herself in him.

No'm; nothing had gone wrong with Billy, 'ceptin' he couldn't help feelin' so 'bout her and little George. There wasn't nothin' he wouldn't do; 'nd him and another feller would foller and thrash that big feller what run off little George if she wanted them to!

The conceit provoked a faint laugh from her, but his genuine love helped her. She tried to catch some freshness from his sturdy spirit, and stirred him to tell her amusing things, and finally turned to the instrument with some heart for it.

Why would her hands only bring out low, sweet, crying music this night? Though she struck martial chords and moved never so triumphantly, the sobbing would break through, until she gave quite up to it, and wailed through her organ all that she could not speak.

After a while the voice of the pipe-spirit died in a cry; it breathed but mighty sighs.

Billy started from his place and peeped around the corner. The organist was leaning down on her arms.

"Go home, Billy," she spoke slowly. "Go at once. Don't wait for me. I shall play no more to-night."

After hesitating till she repeated the com-

mand, Billy went down-stairs, his footsteps dying distantly away like summer thunder.

She was so tired, so heart-broken, this Helen Dimmock, leaning against the organ. It looked impossible to take another step on life's hard road. Work—even work which many considered degrading—she never feared. But her loss and loneliness were insupportable. It seemed she must die under her load there.

"Helen!"

She started from her bench, her heart beating in her mouth; she looked all around the great, dark space, seeing no one. Again, near her left—

"Helen! Don't let me frighten you, but tell me I may come there to you and find comfort!"

Stanthorne, with a face as worn as her own, was looking up to her from the railing outside the choir. He dropped his valise and pulled the slouching hat off his sleet-chilled hair. His eyes were lover's eyes, dazzling her, revealing many things to her in an instant. While he called to her using that name of hers, which he had never used before excepting in his thoughts, it seemed as if he were some close friend who had been hers in another life, and who was come to reclaim her.

"I have been listening to you," he said, "while you played, and I know you are troubled. That is what made me bold enough to come up.

"I love you. Will you let me tell you so? I gave you my love freely a long while ago.

"But, oh, now I need some love, some comfort myself! Oh, Helen, if you tell me to go away I will go, and never trouble you any more! But if you *could* care for me—oh, if you *could* let me come to you now! My heart is broken! I have lost the dearest friend I had in the world—"

"Come!" Helen reached her hands toward him. He leaped the railing and came and dropped his head against her knee.

"My poor boy!" she said, touching his damp hair; "tell me all about it and let me comfort you."

So, with her mother-heart she first met her lover.

As he mutely caressed her hand his first comfort was in possessing her. It seemed no new thing. It seemed as if she had been his own for a long time. That was so much a matter of course for them to belong to each other.

He told her all about it; made her see how interwoven his mother's life and his own life had been. Young men go away from home and forget their mothers.

But Stanthorne's mother was one not to be forgotten. She filled his heart and kept the bad out. She was an ideal woman; such an one as we meet only once or twice in life, and who strikes us with astonishment.



THE WORLD WITH TWO INHABITANTS.

Men's mothers die and men regret them ; but their faces are turned from " mother " toward wife and children. It is natural, we say. But it is not natural. Who ought ever to be so holy-close to Man as his Mother, except the nearer Christ ?

Stanthorne's mother had so held her turbulent boy that her influence would *never* leave him.

It was like taking the blessed sacrament, to tell it all out to this precious woman whom he had found.

Her first office for him was to come in between him and his sorrow. And whatever he lacked Helen added unto him.

He knew nothing of what had happened to her in the interval of his absence. He came off the night train and tramped past the church because it brought her near his thoughts ; and, hearing the organ, he stopped in the falling sleet to listen. Billy Sinks came out and left the door unlocked, supposing Helen would immediately follow ; and Stanthorne went impulsively up to her by the way thus left open.

His was a loyal, simple nature. While Helen's hand lay on his hair, and she realized that he was her own—this gifted, pure man, whom any woman would trust on instinct—tears rushed to her eyes and flowed freely over her cheeks. She could cry now. The unendurable ache melted away.

He was so peculiarly precious because he came in her darkest hour.

Her lover sat beside her and took the tired head on his shoulder, and she told him all her bereavements. As often as his impulsive indignation burst out, or a caressing touch spoke his sympathy, just so often were her own indignation and sorrow eased off her. It is *so good* to divide our loads with our loves.

Thus in a little time they were grown very near, and accustomed to each other. They sat in this lighted corner of the church's mighty hollow. White statues, holy faces, letters of texts, half revealed themselves from the darkness below. They were on God's and love's consecrated ground. Who knew what changes were taking place in the heavens over their heads?

It is strange to think how the One who sets systems whirling and spreads star-dust for a pavement for His feet, yet stoops down every day to make new worlds with a man and a woman in each! "He loves true lovers."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOTEL CHILD.

THREE o'clock of a February morning in Chicago. The great city turned in her sleep, as you might say, and heard the lake whisper in her ear. It was the quietest hour of the twenty-four in the Grand Atlantic. The late arrivals were all folded in; the early morning din was yet to come.

If angels walk among men, and keep specially kind eyes on little children, there must have been a sad one standing invisible in a small back room of the Grand Atlantic. A room over kitchens, near stables, and looking into a deep court where the weekly washing was dried.

There is no room for children in hotels; the marts of men cannot be made the sites of family life. Watch those little unfortunates whose parents place them on such a highway. They wander about very homesick. There are no play-houses; there is nothing to climb except forbidden balustrades; they never sit by mam-

ma's side at the table, and laugh while the family jokes go round. They cannot run to the pantry for cookies when they want to have "pic-nics." There are so many big people, and the big people do not care for them at all. They are snubbed. The head-waiter is terrible in their eyes. When nurse takes them into the second table, strangles them with napkins around the neck, and stuffs them most uncomfortably, they watch that awful dignitary until they may be said literally to eat him and drink him. If they hurt themselves and cry, everybody in the house is indignant. If they prowl down in the office, the clerk slays them with his terrible eye, if not by his more terrible voice. Mamma doesn't want them to litter up her rooms; one is so crowded even in a suite! She has very little time to give them, too, because she is always "going out," or chatting with Mrs. Thomas, Richard, and Henry—her neighbors of like elegant leisure.

There is no "out-doors" for them. They are taken for an "airing" by Mary Maloney, who saunters at their head, pushing the baby's "perambulator." They may look at the stores, and be pushed by passers-by. They must not run ahead, nor be lagging behind, nor get run over at the crossings. They must not shout, nor dirty their clothes. There are no green, good places, no home romping—perhaps even no *cellar-door* to slide on—for hotel children. Their

parents hear them voted nuisances so often that they grow to tolerate them as such.

By and by they grow pert. They stand up for themselves, order their dishes with old tongues and tastes, and retort on passing travelers who make remarks to them. They catch all the slang in the air, state their opinions to their elders, are sly and curious about the parlor-door (which is Blue-Beard's secret door to them); they even beard that lion, the clerk, in his own den!

There is no room for children in hotels. They enter innocent and trembling. The Amorites and the Hivites and the Perizzites push them. They stand up for themselves at an age when their parents ought to stand for them—and they come out bold and bad, and no longer children.

G. Guest, Esq., had an elegant suite of rooms in the Grand Atlantic. The waiters in the house adored him. No other gentleman so free, so gracious, yet so exacting. The business which had hurried him from Little Boston seemed completed. He had only to bask in all the good which God sent upon the earth those murky February days. From the windows of his dressing room, when he rose late of mornings, he could see the hard-worked world going about its labor, and he smiled, smoothing his golden mustaches in the plenitude of his comfort.

Yet deem not G. Guest, Esq., an idle man. Nay: he was busy all day long, and often all

night long. He was known in all the billiard-rooms of the city; he was president of several clubs; he belonged to a Turf organization. The crêpe on his hat dwindled away as fast as the moon. His wealth, his ease, his handsome presence, gave him *entrée* to society in Chicago, where people have not time to inquire into your antecedents; where they weigh you and give you a trial before they cast you out. G. Guest, Esq., felt himself a patron of the whole city, and wrought hard to extract his pleasure from it.

His son he rarely saw. His son had a nursery at the back of the house, where young ones were kept out of the road, and Maggie Maloney took care of the little pest. If Maggie Maloney told him George needed anything, he threw her a frown and a bill, which latter Maggie Maloney expended as seemed to her best.

If G. Guest, Esq., had lived with George, and worked for him from the time of his birth—if he had watched the sensitive little soul spread out, and feel for love and care—perhaps even his gross heart would have learned tenderness for his own. But there was no sweet past to draw them together. On the child's side was unconquered fear and distrust; on the father's side, indifference and tyranny.

When George, in his wanderings through the great No-Home, put a timid face into his father's rooms, G. Guest, Esq., either waived him off, or, in facetious mood, called him in to

tease and bully him, to poke him in the ribs with a cane, to use him as a whetstone for sarcasm. Sometimes the boy turned on him with all his baby energy; but he oftener slunk away to cry himself to sleep on the nursery floor.

There were no pretty surprises for this child—no sudden toys, no quick-planned excursions, no arrivals of playmates. Once, indeed, Maggie Maloney took him to a matinee: but she was so long getting back to the hotel—she had so many big Irishmen to meet and inquire after on the way—that George was quite tired out; and there was no one to talk the wonderful scenes over with, either. When he got up in bed to ask a burning question about the little angels that danced, Maggie Maloney slapped him for a “little spalpeen who wouldn't lit her git a wink o' slape wid his gab.”

His pent-up life was a tragic one. His heart broke every day, if he sat and thought about his mamma and his Toola. He could not realize their being gone from him, but watched the great entrance and the stairs day after day for their coming. A shape, a garment, a voice which he thought resembled Toola's would set all his pulses a-flutter with delight. Thus, perhaps, a dozen times a day disappointments crushed him. The faintness of homesickness oppressed this child. Often, in his despair and hunger for some dear touch, he clung around

Maggie Maloney, or ventured to his father's door.

Maggie Maloney was a good creature, coarse and strong. She liked the little fellow—when he did not vex her; she dressed him and fed him, and dragged him out to walk. This was the limit of her capacity. She had no mother-heart; she loved to slip out of evenings and dance with Paddy and Mike, and she had her own settlement in life to look after. When George asked her questions, his big eyes shining through the twilight, she, thinking of Mike or Paddy, answered "Yes," or "No," or "Like enough"—at random, thus switching his laboring mind off on sad, sad tracks. She kissed him with the effusion of her race, but he missed evermore the deep, speechless love on which his life had been nourished.

Once Maggie Maloney and he were walking, and they stopped on a draw to watch the boats on the river. The bell rung—the bridge began to turn—Maggie Maloney shrieked to George to follow, and bounded to the end of the bridge where she jumped on solid ground, leaving him behind. People were crowding everywhere. George's head turned with the draw. He saw the awful gap grow between him and his nurse—he felt himself swaying into mid-river—the hot, black smoke of the passing tug enveloped him—he thought he was going to be killed.

When Maggie Maloney came back, the draw

being closed, she found the baby clinging speechless to the bridge—white even to his lips. She laughed good-naturedly, and led him on. But night after night George lived this shock over, and night after night his faithful nurse slapped him for disturbing her by screaming or sobbing in his sleep. Or, being wakeful, she told him stories to compose him:—about the Banshee that comes to the window and cries, the underground people who steal children, about murders and witchcraft, and other such somniferous tales.

At three o'clock this February morning he sat bolt upright in his bed, panting with terror. He had lived it all over—the draw had turned and sunk into the river—the water was up to his neck—the black smoke was strangling him! Did his mother see her curly four-year-and-a-half baby? Did she try to soothe him when he screamed and reached into the darkness?

He was all alone; Maggie was not there! There was no one in the world to help him. Just as he realized being in his nursery and alone, a horrid yell burst through his window. He thought of the Banshee, and leaped from the bed. Yell after yell followed—a scrambling—a spitting and a war-whoop! George was beside himself; he dashed against the door and seized the knob with all his speed and strength. Maggie Maloney had left it unlocked, fortunately for the reason of this child. He fled down passages and stairways, his bare, soft feet almost winged

—his breath and voice stopped by terror. He fell against his father's parlor door, which stood ajar, and, bursting in, clasped his father's knee.

G. Guest, Esq., was just in from a champagne supper. His face was inflamed even through the eyes. He had dropped in an easy-chair—his cane fell below his hand—he was sinking down long vistas into a doze—when the child startled him. He felt irritable; his nerves were racked by that sudden jar.

"What's the matter with you?" he cried, kicking the boy off. "What doing here, hey? Go to bed. Best place folks's time o'night! Where's M'g'loney? Go to her."

"Me's—me—me—me's 'fraid!" sobbed George, finding a voice in this human presence. "Oh—papa—papa!"

You would think he could scarce help gathering the child in his arms and soothing him. You would think the baby-shape in its night-dress would appeal to all which was tender in the man; that the innocent, frightened eyes looking to him, would make him almost a woman for the time.

But G. Guest, Esq., had little tenderness, except for his own ease. His ease was disturbed by a brawling brat. That is the way he looked at it.

He picked up his cane, cut the brawling brat across the shoulders, and put him into the pas-

sage. Then he fell on his sofa, and breathed the night sweetly away in infantile sleep!

When Boots went to distribute his last night's spoils at the doors of their respective owners, he found by the dawn's light a little round white ball in the corner of the main passage. It wheezed and strangled as he picked it up. It was not cold with the February chill, but hot with fever.

"Bress my soul!" said Boots, "here's dat little chap of Mars' Guest, run off and laid all night in de hall, an' cotch de croup fer his pains!"





CHAPTER XVII.

A YEAR'S WORK.

THE leaves of night and day were turned over Little Boston and chaptered into months; the months fulfilled the book of the year, and every syllable in that book was growth and progress to Helen Dimmock.

When Stanthorne's companionship came to her she was emboldened to build up her home again.

Rikka ventured back to the house under the encouraging hand of her father, Gottlieb Shuster, and was reinstated. They took up their old habitudes, Helen and Rikka.

The house was very quiet during the day, excepting at those times when Rikka's German sisterhood tramped into her domain and brawled jovially with her in the native tongue.

But of evenings the house was usually bright, for then Stanthorne dashed in from his work, and he and Helen sat and talked and rested together.

They loved like two children. I suppose

they had little broils and disagreements; but each held the other in such reverence, each so respected the *immortality* of the other, that nothing could separate them.

His knightly name, Lancelot, she contracted into Launt.

And because she would not listen to his proposition to throw herself at once on his support, and make him a husband and the head of a family while he was yet a struggling journalist without established reputation, he revenged himself by tacking to her the name he wanted to give her indeed. He called her his girl-wife.

It would have amused you to see these two sitting and conferring together. Launt's seat was always a great arm-chair, which nearly swallowed up his majesty, and the girl-wife's place was a footstool by his knee.

Sometimes they met at Helen's door about dusk, both very tired, and hastened to throw themselves into their accustomed places, and to scold or comfort each other. When the Stokesbury-Joneses proved unusually trying, or the senior editor comported himself like a special mule, there was great soothing and indignation in the little parlor. But when the world behaved well, and they had only themselves to find fault with, they preached up various virtues to each other. Such as economy, the importance of which Helen impressed on Launt while helping him to stow away choice French confection-

ery, which he had bought at three dollars per pound; or patience, the importance of which Launt impressed on Helen while urging her to marry him out of hand and trust to Providence for good pen-luck in the future.

Rikla rolled and crashed in the dining-room while making ready the evening meal, and the thought of Nina and George would often pass over Helen like a wave. Then she always laid her cheek against her lover's shoulder, and he understood and held her from heart-break.

Often she persuaded him to have supper with her, because she could not bear the empty chairs at the table. Or he rushed into the house after the gas was lighted, with new literary plans and fistfuls of manuscript, which he must lay before her. Her musical compositions were all tested by his criticism.

They lived a beautiful life in each other. Not every man could have earned such confidence, such cherishing love. But Stanthorne had gotten a strong, pure nature from his mother, so he was never aught but a blessing, a precious gift from God, to the woman he loved to call girl-wife.

They rode and walked together. Every season as it passed was stripped of its special delights by their united hands. The first breaking buds in spring, vistas of arched trees, sunsets, snow crystals, the snug home grate on stormy evenings, new books, the best operas,

the bright spots of feeling which come on every day—all the good things of God they shared like a continual sacrament.

It is sorrowful to look about and see the sediment in the love-happiness of many people. They profane the ark of their covenant. They treat it as a thing common, not as God among them. What makes us throw dirt into our daily bread?

From the day of George's departure Helen had no news of him. She thought of him every hour, and her hopes faded over Nina's baby.

On her daily rounds she often met Myron D. Chancery, and as often as her mind was not pre-occupied it struck her that Myron D. Chancery regarded her with interest. Grateful to him for his mediation in her favor when her trouble was upon her, Helen always greeted him with earnest friendship.

Myron D. Chancery did regard her with interest. He minutely investigated all her relations. He pumped her pumper, and held casual conference with some of her "people" whom he happened to employ. Not content with grappling her present and estimating her accordingly, he went back through her past, and dug up all her ancestry to which fact or tradition pointed. He received letters full of information concerning this same Helen Dimmock, and made one or two journeys to satisfy himself and points presented by them.

The lawyer took pains to learn Stanthorne also, until a hearty friendship sprang up from his endeavors. Launt was boyish and open-hearted. Myron D. Chancery learned much of Helen through him. After their talks he sometimes walked away from Launt smiling, but with something like paternal solicitude in the smile as he muttered to himself, "I wonder if this boy knows the value of the woman he has won—in any respect?"

So a year was leaved over and laid on the shelf of Time. It held few happenings but much inward growth. At the end of it Launt and Helen stood together and witnessed the closing scene of Helen's domestic drama, which follows.



CHAPTER XVIII.

LAUNT AND HELEN.

ON the last day of her betrothal year she wrote a note to Stanthorne, lest matters should call him elsewhere.

"Don't fail to give this evening to me," she wrote; "it is the anniversary of George's loss. I mean always to keep this day sacred to Nina's death and to him, but I cannot bear to spend the evening of it alone. Bring your book reviews and we will read them together."

So Stanthorne came early, with an arm-load of magazines and papers reaching nearly to his chin.

His girl-wife heard him stamping the November rime off his feet before he rang the bell, and she opened the door for him herself.

He came in, ruddy and sharp from the wind, threw his load on a table, turned her face up to receive his frosty salutation, and took the throne-chair waiting for him.

The room was light and warm. It was home!

It always counteracted in him any dyspeptic tendencies which his daily codfish and editorial grinds created. No matter how cross and lofty a quill-driver he was in sanctum, this inner sanctum was sure to soften his bristling quills to cherub wings. His clear-cut lips parted with boyish delight and his eyes danced before the home blaze.

Helen wore a white dress looped with black ribbons. When she had made Launt snug and sat down near him, she put in his button-hole a little bunch of white violets, tied with black. There were white violets in her hair and snow-drops at her throat. It was a night of memory—she would not call it mourning. She had been thinking all day of those she had lost, and had bought for them such simple white blossoms as she could find. Green leaves and living whiteness were under the keen starlight of Nina's frost-sheet. The little girl slept too deep to mind such a Maying come to her in November, but Helen was fain to put it there and to think that Nina loved it.

Directly over the mantel-piece was a wreath of white flowers and dark-green leaves, enclosing two faces, a thin, girlish woman and a tiny child, and odd things were mingled with the colors of the wreath—such as a little top, a tin whistle, a baby shoe, a black-touched frill.

Helen's quiet hushed Stanthorne. He pushed

the hair from her temples and said nothing till she broke her own thought-vigil.

A little clock on the mantel ticked. The fire roared up chimney. The young woman, with her elbow on her knee and her chin dropped to her palm, yet lingered in the aforesaid time.

For Nina she was always glad. But for George? Her own future was so full of promise. She should have Launt, a place of her own, and perhaps little children to cling about her, as George had done; yet from self and hopes she turned her loyal heart backward, and held to Nina's baby.

But hers was too healthy a nature to droop brooding over anything long. Whatever her hands could do to forward the interests she had at heart would be done. When she felt helpless she walked on faith, and, brittle as the world considers it, it never broke under her. There are people—may the Lord have mercy on them!—who appear to have been made with their faces turning backward—they do so bewail the past. There is reason for weeping it. But life is warfare; we shall all fall soon; let us not spend all our time mopping our wounds and singing death-songs. Those who fell in the trenches *don't want* us to pause in the charge and let human victories slip because *they* could not be immortal here.

Before many minutes Helen caught up her old motto of "Push ahead and do your best." She

put aside tenderly Launt's hand and the trouble she could not help, and opened the piano to render for him a little Nocturne which she had just finished, and which was lying in manuscript ready for the publisher.

Whether Launt was partial to her music, or whether this last piece really had more power from her skilled hand, it roused him quite up to the pitch of enthusiasm, and framed his mind well to meet the reviewers of his book.

For that darling of his thoughts was at last come into the sunlight under the eyes of men.

"Now let us hear the critics," said Helen, coming back to her low seat, and piling the books under his glowing face.

"I haven't looked at these reviews yet," exclaimed Launt. "I've kept my promise to read them all with you first—faithfully. Just glanced at my title and stowed them away. Now, don't you think you ought to be *very* lenient in this matter? I *might* have sifted them; kept back all the bad and brought only the good, and so have made you believe I'd done such a successful thing that you'd give up to marry me to-morrow, out of hand. But I was honest. I didn't do that. And, therefore, I want special grace from you, mademoiselle."

"You shall have it, sir; and now to begin."

They drew nearer and turned the leaves of the first book. The fire roared—so did November outside. He felt well intrenched—did



"NOW LET US HEAR THE CRITICS," SAID HELEN.

Lancelot Stanthorne—against that good or bad opinion which kills or makes alive in the world.

"Together, mind!" cried Helen, as he held the columns at an angle and glanced jealously along them. "If any man slashes, you mean to conceal it from me, do you, and reveal only the pattings?"

"Nay, I will drink fair, Sairey," laughed Launt, "share and share alike." So they spread the leaves, and every gleaned number was to be cast over against them by Helen.

"I made it," prefaced Launt, shading the first review with his hand, "as good as I could. We know it's not a startling little book, don't we, girl-wife? But there's some thought and some human nature about it. Men and women are writing books to-day full of bad passions, which, like crooked glasses, distort the sight of all who look through them. And books with one idea floating in a sea of words—mental spoon-victuals—of which the children do not get all. My book cannot be classed with these, for I drew it out of Nature's best, and packed it close."

"Review of his own work, in the Little Boston *Courier*, by Lancelot Stanthorne himself," remarked Helen, laughing. "How long you hang on the brink of these men's opinions. Pluck up, dear boy. Kiss me. Now plunge."

Launt kissed her.

"But we'll wait a bit about plunging," said

he. "I was going on to remark that there are vast tomes of agricultural and Patent-office reports, and that I could conscientiously say my book is not one of these.

"It is not a romance. It is not a homily." With his disengaged hand he took up from the table a copy of the important work, a thin, nervous-looking volume. "It is that common plodder, the story.

"The Story is immortal. He sprung in remote antiquity, and he will march on, tickling the ears of human-kind long after you and I are shelved away, girl-wife. Because he is so unpretending he creeps into the good-will of small and great. He has many vile imitators who tramp along the by-ways of literature and get him into bad reputation. But Simon Pure Story is one of the dearest friends of the race. He soothes it in its squalling infancy; he mellows the leisure of its toiling manhood; he glorifies the lips of its helpless old age.

"There are those who say that the Muse degrades herself when she sends Story out with a moral in his fist. However that may be, he has grown so dear a fellow we generally embrace him in spite of the moral—and do our best to evade that."

"If you indulged in as many figures and fine flights in your book," rallied Helen, "I'm afraid they have dealt hard with you."

"Every nation has its stories," pursued Launt,

warming with his talk; "and the kinship of races may be traced through the similarity of their legends. Who places the story in the lower ranks of literature? It is the people's favorite. I had rather live with the people than with their critics. The story, by its very brevity and simplicity, appeals to a people who get up and lie down quickly—who must read as they run.

"To be a writer of stories is, then, a high calling. Sermons go in at one ear and out at the other, unless shot from the mouth of eloquence. Poetry is luxury above the masses. Philosophy cannot find many disciples who have leisure to sit in the shade and converse with him. But Story has winged slippers. He runs about here and there; he gives a touch—a shake; he laughs into the eyes of the laboring ranks; he costs them little and solaces them much.

"Let no man think he writes to be forgotten. We say a story is written to-day, published to-morrow, and buried the day after. But this is not true. Alas! what insufferable trash I can remember reading long ago which haunts me yet. What we read grows in us, and is in time transmitted by us. So every one who writes achieves some sort of immortality—woe the day!

"After all, success is only graded."

"And what kind of success," asked Helen, smoothing his nervous fingers, "is best?"

Stanthorne drew his brows and was grave.

"Pens are moving all over the world," he said. "Some of them will sweep like strong fingers across the harp of a whole people, and waken renown. And others will touch only a few strings, but make a sweet undertone. While a few will strike only one swift, strong note—the song or proverb of a century—and be heard no more."

"I do not know which I had rather do. But it seems to me those authors must be happiest who enter the hearts of their readers. Men will throw stones at eminence. But they will bless with tears that hand which touches the sorrow, love, and promise of their mortal lives."

"But as I was remarking," broke off Launt, "this little book of mine went forth in the fond belief that he was the genuine Story. Let us see now what the keepers of the people's taste have to say about him—if anything. And now remember," he laughed, "if the preponderance of these august opinions is on my side, you are to reward my merit, aren't you?"

"Wait," cried Helen; "let it be fair. We'll balance the accounts. I'll mark three papers, Good, Bad, Indifferent. We'll put the favorable reviews on Good, the unfavorable ones on Bad, and the snubs or passings-over on Indifferent. In the end we'll take the average. There, that's business-like, now."

"Kiss you and then plunge, you said, didn't you?" inquired Launt.

So he acted accordingly.

"The great gun of the Atlantic coast speaks:

"*Sorrel-Top*. By Lancelot Stanthorne. Phillinger Brothers.

"There is power in this little volume which promises much for the future of its author. It does not pretend to take rank as a novel. But as an American story it is fresh and stirring."

"That's good!" exclaimed Helen, patting Launt's shoulder; "I'll put that on the credit side."

He flushed as he picked up the next:

"*Sorrel-Top*. By Lancelot Stanthorne. Phillinger Brothers.

"While we all watch in expectation of the Great American Novel, it is annoying to have such puny volumes as this thrust upon our criticism. There is altogether too much writing in this age of the world. When a man has nothing to say why must he labor on a treatise or a romance—or, as in this instance, a vapid tale—to prove that he can say nothing!

"The heroine of '*Sorrel-Top*'—Janet Angelhood—is the most impossible character we ever encountered in fiction. The whole book is nothing but a group of lay figures on which the author spreads his sickly rags of fancy."

Thus, through a column and a half, did this editor tilt at "*Sorrel-Top*," by Lancelot Stanthorne.

"Never mind," exclaimed Helen, as she made

a note on the debit side. "Pluck up heart, Bluebeard, dear," running a finger across his smooth lip. "The man had certainly eaten a bad dinner. *I've* read your book, and it *is* good. Forgive his dyspepsia."

"And he didn't know how to judge my thoughts, either," added Launt, swelling with self-consolation. "If he had a place like this to rush into, and such a life as mine, he'd find my book more natural."

"Pass on. The Philadelphia *Flame* says: 'This book presents a strong contrast to another work of fiction which comes to our table with it. "Sorrel-Top" is jerky, unfinished in style, while "Bungalow" flows as smoothly as a river. The author of the first has, however, some power in the delineation of character, and were it not for the liberties he takes with established English we might pronounce very favorably on his work.'"

"Is that good or bad?" inquired Launt, doubting.

"I don't know," replied Helen. "Perhaps we'd better put it on Indifferent."

"No; that's to be kept sacred to the silent men. But this can't go on Good and Bad at one and the same time. I'll tell you what we'll do, girl-wife," cried Launt. "We'll toss up a penny for it. Heads, Good; Tails, Bad. (I hope it'll be heads.)"

"Here, let *me* toss it!" exclaimed Helen; "your hand's partial."

Up it went, and came down with the liberty head obscured.

"You didn't toss fair!" cried Launt. "Let me try it; I can do better than that. There! Heads! Good! I told you so. Put it down on the credit side."

So Helen put it down on the credit side and they proceeded.

There were kind criticisms and snubs; gushing eulogies (from new-fledged editors) and gruff barks (from old, quill-worn ones). And there was some passing over without any notice. "That most unkindest cut of all," sighed Launt with a tragic wag of the head.

Some reviewers accused him of "aiming at the very foundations of society," with intent to demolish the same; and others "could see no object in all this twaddle!"

Two hours and a half passed before they sifted all and balanced the scales.

"Taking the average of all that has been said—good or bad—and what was left unsaid," concluded Helen, "you've written a fair book, in the opinion of those who consider themselves judges."

"I didn't bring the sky down," suggested Launt.

"Nor quite tear up the foundations of society," added Helen; "but *I'm* pleased, and very

proud of you. You've lots of talent. If this book had failed instead of having been fairly received, you could have afforded it. Some men's stumbling-blocks are merely your spurs. In short," panted Helen past the arms with which he smothered her—because her heart-flattery was so sweet to him—"you are the most gifted and satisfactory boy in all the United States, and I will marry you with all my heart, some day."

"Some day!" echoed Launt, leaning back against his throne and trying to look reproachful. "You have rung *SOME DAY* in my ears till all my thoughts its melancholy cadence bears. My very writing is partaking of *Some-day's* dun hue. By the way, that reminds me. I've a manuscript in my pocket which I wish you'd patiently listen to."

"Very well. Produce it. But, Launt, dear, it isn't a geological paper for that scientific publication, is it? I don't want to hear about *ichthyo-thingums*, etc., to-night."

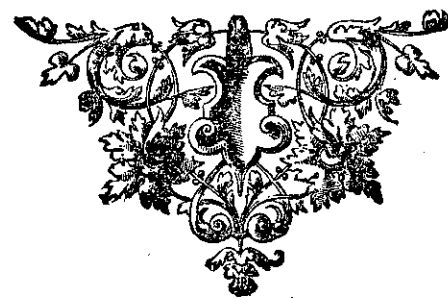
"No; it's no scientific paper. It's quite the reverse. It's a sketch; you might call it an outline for a story. Do you remember that wild, mountainous region where you carried little George last year?"

"Yes," replied Helen sadly.

"And you remember I explored it a week or two last summer, while off for a rest. And did I tell you about the old woman—*your* old

woman? You and little George are on her list of mysteries and legends now. I sat at her feet—figuratively speaking—and imbibed the lore of the mountains, from which I have prepared several papers, and this is one. An outline which I mean to work up fully if you think it worth the trouble."

Launt spread out his manuscript and drew Helen nearer to him. He coughed a preparatory *ahem!* and opened his lips to give the skeleton thought a way of egress, when the door-bell startled them by a long quivering clang, and put a veto on further literary proceedings.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAWYER TURNS STAGE-MANAGER.

LAUNT folded his manuscript and returned it to his breast-pocket. Both looked up at the clock; it was half-past ten.

"Who can be coming at this hour?" murmured Helen.

As Rikka had evidently gone to sleep in her own domain, Miss Dimmock herself opened the doors, and with unspoken surprise admitted Mr. Chancery.

He seemed actually to sparkle, this deliberate, middle-aged man, as he entered the warm room and was made comfortable before the fire. He shook hands with Helen and with Launt, making no apologies for beginning the evening with them at such an untimely hour, but seeming to feel himself perfectly welcome.

By the time he had gotten his stiffened fingers out of his gloves, however, the lawyer again predominated over the man. His St. Nicholas

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face drew its jolly curves down to business angles; he replied but briefly to Helen's remarks or to Launt's high-spirited sallies.

As he warmed himself his eye dissected the memorial wreath hanging above the chimney, without a shade of emotion.

"It is nearly a year since your sister's child went away, is it not, Miss Dimmock?"

"A year to-night," replied Helen.

"A year to-night. Have you heard from him?"

"Not once."

"Ah!" And then the matter seemed to drop from his mind.

Helen took up the coal-tongs and put some more lumps of coal on the fire.

It was Launt's usual time for departure, but he lingered in his chair.

An embarrassed silence fell upon Helen and him, which the lawyer seemed not at all to share. It did not enter Helen's mind that this unusual visitor might have some message about George. She was so hopeless about the child that she expected neither good nor bad tidings.

The heat of the fire while it seasoned Mr. Chancery seemed also to thaw his benevolence.

"Winter is upon us early this year, to a certainty," he remarked after there had been some minutes of silence. "You wouldn't keep your enemy on your door-step such a night as this, would you, Miss Dimmock? I know that you

will allow me, then, to bring in a friend of mine who was to wait outside within call until I was ready for him. With your permission I will call him now."

As he rose, Launt regarded him with utter astonishment, but tremors of undefined apprehension ran through Helen.

"Are you leading a masquerade, Mr. Chancery?" exclaimed Stanthorne, "or is there some deeper mystery afoot? The *Courier* has been languishing for a sensation for some time," producing a note-book and laughing up at his friend's unmoved physiognomy; "so if you've been so good as to plan a murder or a burglary, I'm happy to be on the spot to get it first-hand, and of course you won't object to my interviewing you."

"You may confine your enterprise to taking a full and accurate account of all which is about to transpire before you, my dear fellow," replied the lawyer. "I haven't time for making explanations or excuses. I simply came here the moment I had all my matter in hand. If Miss Dimmock thinks to-morrow morning that I intruded on her at an unseasonable hour with this business, I will ask her pardon. At present, however, I only ask her permission to bring my friend into this room."

Helen bent her head, and the lawyer went to the street-door, where for an instant he cut the night air with shrill whistles.

Helen and Launt exchanged silent opinions. She sat opposite Launt at the right of the grate, and she lifted her eyes to the wreath overhead, signifying that the lawyer's conduct had some connection with the events which it commemorated. Launt was incredulous, but he was puzzled and alert. What Helen divined by intuition, he, as a man, would have to prove to himself by reason or experience. He shook his head, and made a comical grimace to signify that their friend was playing some middle-aged prank.

One or two quick words were spoken at the street-door, and then four feet trod upon the hall matting.

Mr. Chancery re-entered, and behind him, towering above his head, came a larger man; a man with big, comfortable figure and unmistakably swollen face, who pinched his frosty mustache with well-gloved fingers and tried to rally his insolence, but who sunk to servility as he glanced around the room and met Helen Dimmock's distended eyes.

She started from her seat and turned very white. Had he come to announce George's death to her? Why did he slink behind the lawyer in that way? What had he done with the child? It seemed that her galloping heart would trample her breath out. She did not speak, but her eyes shot a hundred stinging questions through G. Guest, Esq.

"My friend, G. Guest, Esq.," announced the lawyer, presenting him by the arm. "He will be seated, and we will at once proceed to business."

Mr. Chancery drew up a chair for him at the table, and G. Guest, Esq., sat down, disposing of his legs in the old graceful fashion, but keeping his half-shut eyes assiduously on the grate.

He did not say a word; his volubility seemed weighted down by some heavier force than his very evidently increased grossness and indolence.

Launt went over to Helen and stood with his hand on her chair. It was a boyish movement, but she thanked him for it in her heart.

Mr. Chancery having looked at the gas and screwed it up and down till it suited his eyes, and having also seated himself comfortably at the table, took a packet of papers from the inner pocket of his coat.

"Miss Dimmock," he began, "will not object to my recalling to her mind some facts concerning her parentage and early history. These notes in my hand are taken from accurate statements made by sworn parties.

"In the year of our Lord 1840, there came to the village of Ripley, Massachusetts, two brothers, Victor and Hugh Lorraine. Both were widowers, but the second had a daughter. They were Frenchmen, possessed of small means, but determined to retrieve their fortunes

in the New World. Both engaged in business. But Victor pushed across the continent, while Hugh remained in Ripley.

"In the year 1849, the daughter of Hugh Lorraine—Louise Helene Annette Lorraine—was married to John Dimmock, M.D., of Ripley, Massachusetts. Hugh Lorraine died in this same year. And the next year a daughter was born to this pair and was christened Helen. Her mother died in giving her birth.

"John Dimmock afterwards married his cousin, and had a second daughter born to him, whom he also christened for her mother, Cornelia. Helen and Cornelia Dimmock were, therefore, half-sisters.

"While these children were yet very young, Victor Lorraine returned from California, where he had been carrying on successful speculations, and was much touched to find the little Helen the only remaining one of his house. He would have adopted her had her father allowed him to do so.

"While he remained in the family, he was much confused between the names of the two children. Nellie became Nina to him, and Nina Nellie. He always called the one by the name of the other. He returned soon to the Pacific coast, and they probably retained no recollection of him. He was a quiet, eccentric man, and the family heard no more of him.

"That suffices for the history of the family.

"Now, very little more than a year ago, said Victor Lorraine died in San Francisco, devising all his property by will to his niece's daughter.

"I have procured a copy of this will. You may see," observed Mr. Chancery, handing the document to Helen Dimmock, who took it in trembling hands, "that he names his heiress 'Nina Dimmock,' his memory proving treacherous on the names again—but designates her strictly as the daughter of John Dimmock, M.D., of Ripley, Massachusetts, and Louise Helene Annette Lorraine Dimmock, of Marseilles, France. The name is several times repeated, where he makes repeated mention of his 'beloved niece,' and the estate is secured to the daughter of this niece, and to her heirs after her forever.

"About this time, my friend, G. Guest, Esq., who was doing the travelling business of a wine firm, and who rambled into San Francisco hoping to mend those prospects which he had ruined by marrying an heiress and getting her disinherited" (Helen was astonished to see G. Guest, Esq., wince), "my friend, I say, got scent of this matter, and before it could be largely advertised, laid claim to the estate as the husband of the person designated.

"I will do my friend the justice to say that at first he believed the claim perfectly valid. For he would not have given himself the trouble he took, he would not have planned and executed such attacks as he made, he would not have

squandered his slender means advertising for his deserted wife as he did, had he known he was merely harvesting a fortune into the lap of another.

"Those who held the estate in trust were easily satisfied by his proofs and representations, and he hastened to follow up the clues to his wife.

"He found her here. In order to enjoy her property he must get possession of her, and finding her in an altered state of mind regarding himself, he felt he could only accomplish this by threatening to seize her child. He could take the child, and the mother would speedily follow. That was your course of reasoning, was it not, my friend?"

Whenever the lawyer said "my friend" to or of him, G. Guest, Esq., shrunk under the thong of the sarcasm as if it had been a whip-thong. Yet the lawyer spoke it without any emotion.

"The sudden death of the mother, of course, gave him greater liberty. The child was her heir, and he was the child's heir. So, whether the child lived or died, he was safely established. He took immediate possession of both child and estate, and entered into the reward of his labors. Excuse me, my friend," said Mr. Chancery, with a slanting look in the direction of G. Guest, Esq., "lawyers must dissect motives, even though they cut through such sensibilities as yours.

"Now, if you will pardon me for the frequent use of the pronoun I, the remainder of this evidence may be shortened.

"I am fond of tracing rights and kinships. I would go out of my way to find the connection between appearances which are of very little importance to most observers. This case came under my notice a year ago; and with what leisure I could command I have traced it up, and established, in the conviction of all parties, you, Helen Dimmock, as the unmistakable heiress of the Victor Lorraine estate—into possession of which you can enter as soon as you choose!"

With this brief mention of his services, the lawyer got up and extended his hands toward Helen and Launt; they were taken and held tremulously and gratefully.

Launt even so far forgot the dignity of the law as to thump this friend admiringly on the shoulder, and to declare in his free and easy fashion that Myron D. Chancery would be an ornament to journalism itself!

G. Guest, Esq., twisted his tawny mustache with an assumption of disdain, but he shrunk lower in his chair.

Helen's eyes, imploring to know *one thing*, did not remove from the lawyer's face. Fortune's turn in her favor she felt with joyful and confused under consciousness, but her whole mind was drawn tensely to one question.

Mr. Chancery answered her voiceless cry by immediately proceeding with his business.

"We now come to the consideration of my friend, G. Guest, Esq.," said he. "G. Guest, Esq., has a *healthy little son*, who, by this reverse, becomes a great burden on his hands. The child is not, after all, heir to vast properties, and the father, very sensibly for one in his precarious circumstances, feels a desire to provide for his son, and at the same time to free himself from the pressure of supporting the same."

Helen leaned forward panting, and the lawyer noticed G. Guest's sly knowledge of this.

"Now," proceeded he, "my friend G. Guest, Esq., would like to enter into negotiations with any one who wants possession of the boy; but my friend, G. Guest, Esq., is at the same time timorous of entering on the subject with Miss Dimmock, as he has made a large hole in Miss Dimmock's estate, and is, in great measure, in her power."

Did he recall the time he put his heel on her dearest affections and felt that he had her in his power? Did he remember attributing to her the same low motives which he had himself in holding to the child? Did he remember his insolent patronage of the young woman obliged to work for her living?

He was constrained to look at her for one instant. His was that nature which bullies loudly when it is up, but droops most abjectly

when it is down. He met neither scorn nor revenge in the strong, serious face set over against him. She simply commiserated a creature who could be as mean as he.

"Therefore," explained Mr. Chancery, "he has delegated me to treat with Miss Dimmock with reference to the child. He recognizes the fact that, as sister of the child's mother, she would have peculiar interest in it, and he *almost* regrets having so precipitately removed it from her fostering care. In fine, if Miss Dimmock wishes to adopt the child to-night, I am ready to make out the papers and attend to the formalities of such adoption."

There was dead silence: Helen held her breath like one straining toward a dear goal, who dares scarcely put out a hand lest he dash his opportunity. She knew how treacherous this man was, and she feared he would hear the beat of her eager heart, and tantalize her in the prosperity he was obliged to resign to her, by withholding what she valued more.

He spoke first.

"The little fellow came down with me. Be delighted to see you, I'm sure."

She leaned forward and put the question with white eagerness:

"Will you give up the child to me?"

G. Guest, Esq., in spite of the lawyer's warning, could not resist seizing his advantage. He hesitated, slightly inflated his magnificence, and



THE LITTLE FELLOW CAME DOWN WITH ME.

prepared to extract a bargain, when the lawyer broke across it with the suggestion that as he was at Miss Dimmock's mercy he had better let his lawyer treat with her.

So he subsided, and accepted such generosity as she could bring herself for Nina's and George's sake to show him.

Mr. Chancery drew up the papers, and they were signed, and duly witnessed by Launt and by Rikka, who was roused from dreams of flax-headed youths under the high Lutheran pulpit, to put her astonishing script on record and join in the coming jubilee of George's restoration.

There now remained nothing to do but to bring the child.

Again Mr. Chancery went to the door and curdled the night air with his whistling.

Perhaps George had been kept waiting at the nearest police station. However that may be, he was almost immediately bundled up the steps into Mr. Chancery's arms by Maggie Maloney, who came under the escort of a policeman, and who, after kissing her charge with the violent affection of the Irish nurse, departed under the escort of the policeman.

Helen stood up, reaching both arms for him. She sobbed, too, her mother heart almost bursting to touch him again.

As Mr. Chancery advanced across the floor with him, George rubbed his sleepy eyes—

started, and sprang toward Helen with the child's long, joyful note, "O—O—O—O!"

She had him in her arms, her Nina's own boy, never to be separated from her any more. He clung, and cried, and laughed, fondling her cheeks, forgetting everything in his child-universe except his Toola.

Mr. Chancery drew his client slowly toward the door. G. Guest, Esq., backed step by step, watching the scene with a wicked face.

Launt drew Helen's head to his shoulder and laid a kindly hand on her baby. Rikka stood snuffing and grinning on her apron.

One could imagine an invisible orchestra pulsing full and low, under this last tableau in the drama of a home.

Thus was the shadow of G. Guest, Esq., turned from the house.

As for that shadow and the grossness which cast it, they went back to their own world to swell and strut and play in many rôles, and particularly to pamper G. Guest, Esq., the remainder of his appointed time under the sun. "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

It would not be convenient to have earth paved by the bodies of all the wicked slain at once.



CHAPTER XX.

SOME CHILDREN—AN ENTERTAINING CHAPTER
WHICH YOU WILL READ AND REMEMBER.

THE clock struck twelve. They were all gone.

Helen rocked George before the grate, and sung to him in a low undertone. He was robed in one of the old nightgowns his mother made for him, and which Rikka brought down from the stores up-stairs. He was a taller and thinner child, with older eyes and tongue. He could scarcely go to sleep for watching Helen. She pushed the hair from his forehead, giving him in bunches all that year's kisses which he had missed.

She had new things to teach him along with his forgotten prayers; the dear new names of Launt and Mr. Chancery—the names of her lover and her friend. Her eyes filled while she thought of the quiet friendship of Mr. Chancery. Tears never came easily to her in trouble; they

were her tribute to some graciousness or virtue in another.

Money he commanded abundantly from a hundred sources. He should have more than money at Launt's hands and hers. His eyes followed her only to bless; and he should have—this busy, wifeless man—some breath of home, from Launt's and her abounding home.

Ah, how much she had to give everywhere now! This new power of wealth felt like an added heart to her who had always given freely of what she had.

She never had expected to do otherwise in life than to walk the flat, hard road of labor, and to wear always the harness of to-day's working-woman.

Having declined slinking in the shade of gentility to find her bread with shame-facedness, but having walked proudly abroad and earned it alongside of them that SWEAT, she had found out glorious uses for that money of which the sensualist for a time robbed her.

It meant lifts for tired backs, school-terms for struggling girls, roofs for leaky houses, treats for them used to "going without," pictures on dull, hard walls, plenty of Christmas gifts for *Santa Claus' step-children*, summer rest and change for them dying at the wheel—all, and a thousand new things she should discover every day, as well as the best of life for Launt and the boy and her.

She thanked that unknown kinsman for his largesse; but, strangely, she thanked most her own father, who had left her to learn labor and the heart-beat of the world, and Launt's mother, who had pointed to something above money for *his* endeavor.

And then she fell to thanking the Lord for her child—the child secure at last among the hundred thousand darlings of the land.

But what of those *wretched* children?

Not the young animals tormented by too long daily confinement in schools, though these are to be commiserated: nor the orphans homed in asylums where mother-women can always find them; nor the Arabs of the street—the very breeze and liberty of whose lives sometimes blow them toward good.

But those most accursed of all young human-kind: the children orphaned while their parents live. The children whose fathers and mothers give them nothing but life. There is a society for protecting animals, but what society is there for protecting children? Men are so averse to interfering in the domestic concerns of men that they sit politely by and see their neighbor kill his child by inches, and never dream of withholding his hand! They even make a joke of his brutality, or niggardliness, or indolence, or any other instrument which he in blindness or wickedness uses against his own; perhaps they even look at the abused, distorted child as a

walking joke. A man can do what he wants to with his own child, can't he ?

The actual orphan is his country's nursling. The law dandles and cherishes him quite into his majority. But the orphan whose parents are alive walks in the long, dark shadow which they, standing between the law's warm sun and him, throw over all his little life.

The domestic existence of some children is tragedy.

Perhaps legislation might not help them. But when there is so much legislation nowadays in everybody's favor, why not allow them a little ? Why not give them a chance of being protected from men and women who oppress them ? Many are the highways cast up for escape from wedlock. What single road of escape is there for children from parental abuse ?

Yea, if family life were always clean and what it ought to be ; if might were always right ; if children themselves were ministering angels instead of *just what their parents make them*, they would never need protection. As it is, they *do* need it. And the country which will not take them up when their fathers and mothers forsake them, may be *obliged* to take them up by and by, when reckless, or hardened, or, despising government, which has always been another name to them for oppression, they forsake themselves. If they have no natural importance, why not give them more legal importance ?

On these children Helen thought while she rocked George to sleep ; and she decided to talk them over with Launt. HE would set the public thinking on some of the RIGHTS which it now utterly disregarded.





CHAPTER XXI.

SOMEDAY—A CHAPTER YOU WILL SLIGHT.

SOMEDAY came in midwinter, when the ground was covered with snow, and nature's heart seemed very cold. It came on a Sabbath day. Far and near the sky was muffled in gray, woolly clouds, like a sentinel who found it severe out of doors.

There was no outward glory added to Someday. Grace Church—which had taken great interest in Helen Dimmock's affairs latterly—was astonished that she came to church this morning, played for service, then went quietly down-stairs to meet her lover and her adopted son at the foot, and was led before the altar to be married in nothing more gorgeous than white muslin and white rosebuds.

She *might* have ordered a robe from Babylon, and all the cymbals which society ever clashes on such occasions. Bridesmaids and best men there were in plenty, and people stood ready to rush to her "reception" and criticise all its appointments. But she issued no invitations.

She did not even tell Grace Church on what date her SOMEDAY would fall. But when it came, and Launt brought her to church with his heart and face full of what he could not speak, she was ready with a more beautiful preparation than Grace Church usually saw in its brides.

She loved the pretty vanities of dress, and now that she could afford them, would have them in abundance and wear them with grace; but she wanted her marriage to be more inward than outward.

And so it was that Grace Church forgot to count her flounces, to notice the number of buttons on her glove, in the absorbing sympathy which Launt and she awakened while they knelt, holding each other's hands and making sweet, firm promises. George stood near—not separated from them even by the marriage rite—his chubby hands folded behind him and his chubby face full of speculation on the meaning of these things.

So he, Lancelot, took her, Helen, to be his wedded wife—to love, protect, cherish her through evil report and good report; for better, for worse.

And in the same way she, Helen, took him, Lancelot, to be her husband.

No rustle of bridal satin, nor *posing* of bridesmaids, nor glitter of shining things covered the wedding from the eyes and hearts of them that looked.

When the ring was put upon Helen's hand and the benediction on both their heads, and they rose up before the congregation, made one in life as they had before been in love and aims, Grace Church did them reverence, and was better pleased with their pageant after all than if it had been a loud one.

The two Misses Stokesbury-Jones, who were engaged to theological students, made up their secret minds to be married in just that way; and their mamma pursed up her mouth to hold back the emotion of her woman's heart, and had no criticisms to make.

Up-gallery—where people unaccustomed to Grace Church were gathered in costumes evidently just from the old clothes-shops—there was an audible snuffling and a half-murmur of blessing.

The organ, under strange hands, burst into a joyful march. Launt took his wife on his arm and his adopted son by the hand. So they went out between seas of earnest faces which looked on them to love them, with that quick love which we call admiration. For he was so upright and fine of face, and she who leaned on his arm, and looked made for all the delicate uses of womanhood, looked also capable of holding that arm up instead of burdening it.

In the organ loft Billy Sinks pumped both the instrument and his sympathetic nose. He

wanted to be down in the vestibule, wringing Helen's hand instead of either, and grinning up joyfully into her husband's face. But this was the last sacrifice and service he could offer her, perhaps, and he *would* stand at his post in spite of his tremors.

They went under the gray, woolly sky, got into their carriage, and went home.

The small house was full of warmth and gladness. Rikka, in a gown cut with astonishing angles and adorned by the reddest of ribbons, grinned delightedly at them from the dining-room, where she was bringing up a sumptuous banquet. They shook her hands—those two big children—they appeared to go about shaking hands with everything in the familiar room.

On this day the faces over the mantel wore a white garland untouched with black. Then Launt and his wife sat in their usual places before the grate, and George lay on the floor at Helen's feet. Though they talked little they were thinking rapidly, and they half-disregarded the chatter of the small boy, who was full of what he had seen.

They were thinking of the wide home place they would build very soon, and of the warm, true, social life they would bring into it; of the travel and pleasant luxuries they might have as soon as they desired; of their very independence of wealth; for either of them could drop that Aladdin's lamp and rub bread and butter

and a few et cæteras out of his own exertions at any time.

They were thinking of Launt's aims in journalism and general literature. They were glad of the leisure he would have to mature his thoughts; for because his drawing-room was to be full of elegance his office was not to be full of cobwebs. Stanthorne had not married an heirless to sit by her fire.

They were thinking of what they would do for the child, worse than orphaned, whom they had taken unto themselves. And they were thinking how dear a Sabbath wedding was, and wondering why everybody who had such promises to make didn't go quietly to church and make them on Sunday.

Ah, life looked just begun, then. They were sitting at the foot of the hill, contemplating it in the most prosaic fashion possible, as they thought. They were accustomed to being together, but at the beginning of this new being together they tried to see everything in a practical light.

However, Launt the dreamer could not resist gathering her face in his hands, and fancying what she would be to him when worse came after the better. A pencil of sunshine struck light across her forehead, she laughed in his face, but catching his thought, dreamed it out with him.

The curves of their young faces would shrink; they should see each other less clearly: strength

would shrivel out of their hands. Oh, these things were sad to think of on their wedding morning, till they remembered and exchanged the joy of the thought that those marks in their faces would only be the grooves of cords drawing them closer together; that the failing eyes and hands of one would supplement the failing eyes and hands of the other, making them more compactly one—though, who knew whether they might not fall in the rush and dew of their strength? It would make no difference. They were on a march TOGETHER.

And right across their soldierly meditations came Rikka's call—that call which falls pleasantly even upon the ears of a commander-in-chief—that

“Dinner vos been ready.”

So my Real Woman, my faulty but my true Helen Dimmock, marches on. She is alive. Her heart throbs near you.

If you need aid—in your living or enduring—reach out toward her, and her heart and hands will leap to help you. If you need stirring out of a stagnant, foul life, dare only to look up in her brave face and she will *stir* you!

She came into the world and groped till she found her place. Having found it she began to live, and she will live forever.

God sent her hard work and sorrow. He also sent her love and good gifts.

But had He sent her nothing except the hard

work and sorrow, she would have marched on just as she does now, under His eye, doing and giving her best, and proving to them that see, that woman is no helpless, weakling species of the genus man, but an independent, a cherishing, a strong, a daring nature, who in the armor of her own uprightness can fight the battles of the world and win them.

THE END.



OLD GARGOYLE.



OLD GARGOYLE.

QLD GARGOYLE lived in a shelf of the mountain. His cabin was a frail affair—built of poles and roofed with clapboards and stones—which he had constructed himself; working like some old enchanter in the dark, so that it appeared sprung, fungus-like, from the mountain, the growth of a night. How long it had stood in its cranny of the hill, and how long Old Gargoyle had inhabited it, no native could surely declare. Some people were of opinion that Old Gargoyle settled on the mountain thirty years ago, while others wouldn't take oath, but they "kalkilated it warn't on'y 'bout twenty." Whether he had gloomed twenty or thirty years on his eyrie, however, he seemed destined to find his lot an immortal one. The sons of men in the valleys below him died and were gathered to their fathers; their children wedded and perpetuated the race; changes were

mapped over the face of the wild country ; more roads cut through the vast armies of the forest ; more cabins built ; grimy fellows took up the daily habit of delving in pits for iron and coal, and casting the same into furnace fires ; the jealousies and vanities, from which even barbarous society is not free, rolled beneath Old Gargoyle's feet. Still he sat upon the mountain, like a torn and draggled eagle bending his shag-roofed eye downward, and outwardly changing little.

Though the people called him "Old Gargoyle" he was not an aged man. "Old" in connection with him was used as an adjective of contempt. He was little past that period which happy men call "the prime of life," and he must have been comparatively young when he first piled up his lonely altar on the mountain. His hermit life and eccentric appearance covered him with lichen.

He was a sinewy man, shaggy as a bison with hair and beard—with two coal-like eyes burning through his bush. He was not particular with his tailor—whose name, in fact, was Old Gargoyle—and who covered him with a suit of sackcloth coarse as grape-vine. He wore the most uncivilized hats man has ever invented ; and as for shoes, he pegged up various skins to serve him in such capacity. His shoulders were a little bent ; he had taciturn habits, and scarcely noticed any greeting prof-

fered him, except to glare curiously at his confronter ; so that he was a formidable object to meet when he tore through the brush across the mountain, going to or from his work.

The interior of Gargoyle's cabin was a mystery to all the inhabitants of the valley. Aged grannies who disseminated from chimney corners the superstitions of the elders, advanced the theory that Gargoyle's housekeeping was done by some of those ladies who are supposed to be able to turn the broomstick defensive into the broomstick progressive, and to prance on the same through the air ; and that he was in familiar communication with that gentleman against whom the vulgar entertain a prejudice, principally on account of some natural deformity of the feet, and his retention of our ancestral appendage, the tail. They warned their various grandsons, did these grannies, not to go a-nigh Old Gargoyle's den—when perambulating up the mountains after wintergreen or laurel or larks of any kind—"for there was no tellin' what mischief he might work 'em with that eye of his'n ! He had just such an eye as that witch down the Rocky Branch had, that used to lay in a dead swoon while her spirit went out of the winder in the shape of a bumble-bee, to work witchcrafts. And many's the one kin recollect how that witch made an *eejiot* of Taverner's child by stingin' him on the head while he lay in his cradle under the very cradle-quilt his

mother made of two green and red gownds ! And how she cast her evil eye on stock and it tuck disease and al'ays died ! And how she al'ays swallered the bumble-bee ag'in when it come buzzin' back from its goin's-out ! "

Or, if Old Gargoyle was unable to cast the wiles of the Rocky Branch witch over them, he might send the hoofed and tailed one after them—whom one of the grannies had once surely seen. "Oh, yes ! Young folks had lots of new-fangled notions since these singin' masters and school-teachers had come around, but she knew what she had seen ! It was easy to say there warn't no sech things and it was all imagination, but if you had vainly curled your har and gone to bed hopin' to kink in the mornin', and had seen him come through the winder, and heard his hoofs clatter on the floor and could 'a put your finger out and touched his hary hide while he stood twistin' the papers on your head, you'd believe, too, that Satan was around ! "

Out of the experience of all these past perils did grandmothers exhort, while they smoked with the chimneys by which they sat. But youthful man is prone to disobedience ; and the urchins were as mad after Old Gargoyle as modern navigators after the Northwest Passage. They knew he was a perilous mystery, but all the more they yearned to explore him.

In squads of four or five they crept up towards his lair ; hushing their chirp as they

neared it, hearts beating like trip-hammers under each jacket—ready to fly if his shaggy head but appeared. Summer and winter they ventured, but even when they knew him to be absent, there was such horror about the spot he inhabited, that no one got within stone's throw of it until after many campaigns.

Old Gargoyle often darted unexpectedly out of his hut when they believed him miles away, and sent them yelling and revolving over each other down the steep ! Yet did this omnipresence but increase the charm of his terrors. He resented their prowling, and often threw stones at the heads he detected growing out of rocks ! But sundry wary and Indian-like youths spied out much concerning him, and on their testimony rests such accounts as remain of Old Gargoyle's haunt and habits.

His door was hinged in wooden sockets, and when it turned it revealed one smoke-black room. The floor was made of puncheons, and a fire-place of stones was built in the wall opposite the door. He had chinked his pole-house with clay of the hills, which hardened is proof against ordinary weather, and the mountain sheltered him from the north. His uncovered rafters were swaying poles, on which he hung clothes and bedding ; in dismal twilights those poles had the appearance of affording roost to a family of collapsed mummies.

A rude cupboard leaned against his left-hand

wall; and when Old Gargoyle felt the clamors of his inner man, he frequently, without boiling of kettle, or any human, cheerful preparation, sat down before the unwholesome cupboard like a ghoul, and with a sheath-knife carved sufficient food to silence his cravings.

A bed-frame made of twisted saplings graced the right side of his domicile, and never was whiteness seen on the pedestal of Old Gargoyle's dream-structures. Blankets and buffalo robes made his bed, and he evidently stirred it but seldom.

In a torrent-like stream, flinging itself down the steeps not far from the cabin, Old Gargoyle washed his hairy body and his clothes. If the boys ever surprised him in the act of doing his month's laundry work, he stoned them with special fury.

To be let alone was all he appeared to ask of the world, and he lived his solitary, miserable life without giving sign that he needed aught of his fellow-man.

The furnace-men with whom he worked were divided in opinion concerning him. That he was a steady and sinewy laborer they all agreed; that he spent nothing in debauchery was equally evident; that he was open-handed toward any needy fellow-workman they saw repeatedly, when he stepped forward with all his hoard to relieve sick families, or to maintain those disabled in the iron-works. Yet he was not a

popular man among them, and he evidently had no desire to be such. One faction of them thought him a lunatic—none but an insane person would carry out such a course of life as his. And the other faction dubbed him daft—a harmless though formidable looking “natural.”

Perhaps Old Gargoyle heard their talk about him. But he heard as if he heard not. He did his work like a Vulcan, and went his ways, lowering and shaggy, with deeper than contempt in his heart for the opinions of his fellow-men.

Sometimes of a bright summer Sunday, when an itinerant preacher gathered a flock in the log school-house to enjoy a vigorous Bible pounding and *ex*-pounding, Old Gargoyle came slowly down the mountain and sat under the wisdom of such apostle.

He was at these times an object of greater interest to the valley-dwellers than the preacher's text. Fat and stolid farmers bent looks of sleepy patronage on the hermit of their region, and their good wives had much ado—hush-h-h-ing and fanning—to keep the children from indicating aloud the strong points of Old Gargoyle. Then did valley belles toss their heads and giggle. For it was a standing joke among them to accuse one another of “setting your cap for Old Gargoyle!”

Old Gargoyle set his face to the preacher and listened while his eyes gleamed. Few discourses

received aught but frowning though worldless comment from him. In those days the evangelist of the wilderness was often a man with more tongue than either heart or brain; who greatly enjoyed spreading his little stock of learning before a gaping congregation, and fixing anathema on all denominations except his own. He gave them one Bible sentence and a thousand pulpit oaths, one grain of solid word, and the accumulated chaff of a lifetime. So Old Gargoyle's taste was not to be cavilled at in that he disagreed often with his clergy. But he once startled all the children near him, and set them going like music-boxes of many tunes, so that their mothers made a procession carrying them out—by clenching his fist and hitting his seat hard, at the same time gritting his teeth with bruin force, while the preacher preached forgiveness of all enemies under any and all circumstances.

Thus did Old Gargoyle live, in the sight though not the company of this people, year by year. He appeared to change so little, to withstand so hardily the hill blasts of winter and every shock of time, that it became a joke in the valley that Old Gargoyle was going to live forever, unless the rocks piled above him came down, proving at once his death and funeral.

The iron foundry closed its works one stormy November evening, and those men who lived near, congratulated themselves, for a struggle

through the woods on such a night looked appalling.

Old Gargoyle took to his path. He had cleft many a rain storm in his life, and cared very little for stinging cold or whirling wind. Other men lingered around the furnace's red heart, and spoke of camping down under present shelter, and making a night of it, instead of breasting the weather to their homes. They had wives and children waiting for them; Old Gargoyle had desolation and darkness. Yet they would stay and he would go. It made no difference to him where he was. And he never shunned a wrestle with the elements.

Through thick undergrowth he pushed, trying to find his beaten path as often as lightning glared upon the world. His eyes shone like a panther's; when he found it, he was obliged to swim the beating air with all the strength of his arms and legs.

Rain roared upon the mountain, and the booming of gathering floods could be heard below.

In such a storm one can scarcely recall the world as light and dry and green; a dull certainty prevails in one's mind that it will never be so again; the raging and roaring and danger will last forever!

He had a four miles wrestle, and he fought every inch of his ground. Lightning zig-zagged past his eyes, and its thunder seemed to burst

in his head; each succeeding flash and report nearer and more terrible than the last. Streams of water sprang under his feet, and flamed up at him in the glare. Drenched and breathless he felt his way—now in the path, now creeping, lost under the laurel growth. The mountain looked strange to him when a cloven sky revealed it; unknown rocks and foreign crowns of tree-trunks turned his head; hour after hour he was buffeted about, till even his hardy body and defiant soul were beaten. Before him and behind him, again and again rose the long, whistling sound of trees beginning to fall—that cry of the dryad driven from home!—and the after thunder of their groaning through neighboring limbs.

He heard a cry of some perishing animal. It was like the scream of a wounded horse; whatever it was, he felt it might be uttering his death-note with its own, until another cannon-ading glare revealed his cabin standing on its shelf.

The wind hurled him against the door, and he fell down on his floor in the water which had streamed through, hours before, and which had drenched out the embers he left covered with ashes in his fire-place.

With his back against the shut door, he sat and panted, too exhausted to strike a light.

The house was a dismal shell, and very inadequate protection from a storm which shook

mountains. He felt the timbers shake, and heard stones and clapboards flying off the roof in showers.

But by degrees, sense of danger and sense of fatigue were swallowed up in another sense—that of some human presence. He could hear no inward sound, and bursts of lightning revealed no unusual object to him; but that some one was there with him in that cabin, he felt powerfully convinced.

Groping warily around, he grasped everything within reach, but each time withdrew his hand unsatisfied.

He crept to his cupboard and felt among the miscellaneous articles kept in strange contact there, for matches, or for flint and steel and tinder; and after long and silent endeavor, he smote a light suddenly above his head, and looked around his cabin.

The old clothes were alone on their perch; his bed was untenanted; nobody sat on his one bench—but there! at the foot of his bed, heaped down as if it had been thrown, was a man's body.

Old Gargoyle sheltered his light with one hand, and turned this body over to identify it.

As he turned it, its pain roused its unconscious inhabitant, who groaned and tried to drag himself up. He had cast off much of his clothing before he swooned; one of his legs presented a startling angle.

Old Gargoyle helped him and set him up against the wall.

He was a man of perhaps Gargoyle's age, but of very different appearance. Drenched though he was and distorted in feature, an air of gentility was yet around him. The garments tossed from him were of the world's cut, and so were his hair and beard.

"I got lost on that cursed wood road," he muttered, trying to rouse himself and explain his position to this person who had evidently come to his assistance. "Rock fell down, half crushing my horse. I escaped—hurt, however—leg broken, I believe—oh! give me something to take away this deadly faintness!"

"Yes!" Gargoyle stood up and found a sheltered socket for his light. "I'll give you something!" He folded his arms and put himself in front of the face he had detected. "I've been keepin' something for you this many a year!"

The stranger roused himself and stared at Gargoyle with fascinated eyes. "Who are you?" breathed the stranger.

Gargoyle crossed his cabin, seized his gun and levelled it at the man's head.

"Straighten up thar!" he commanded. "I want to hit you in that fine front brain of your'n!"

In the same instant the stranger recognized

Gargoyle and his own deadly peril. He shut his eyes.

The gun clicked; no report followed; for it had been thoroughly soaked by the storm.

"Never mind!" cried Gargoyle, dropping it and seizing his long knife from its sheath, "water won't cool the spirit out of this? But I want you to answer me first!"

"I'm wounded!" pleaded the stranger, "I can't defend myself!"

"You're not a man!" snarled Gargoyle, "you're a beast that ought to be shot if you tracked in blood! You know what you did to me! I wasn't got up your style, but I wasn't Old Gargoyle up in the mountain in them days. I was a law-abiding citizen, and I had a wife and two children that I ought to have this minute, and would have had—What did you do with her?"

"Give me some brandy!" begged the stranger, "I am fainting—give me something that will keep me from sinking into unconsciousness, and I'll tell you all I know!"

Gargoyle, keeping a jealous eye on his guest, went to his cupboard and found brandy, which he administered quickly.

"I have no weapons," said the stranger, reviving and noticing his distrust; "I lost my pistols when I was unhorsed, and am completely at your mercy."

His voice had a whining cadence which the

stronger man resented. He bathed his temples with the brandy, winced at the pain in his leg, and would have made further overtures to comfort.

"I crept here I scarcely know how!" he groaned.

"Tell me what you did with her and them!" grated Gargoyle, sitting resolutely down before him, and fixing glittering eyes on his finer hands, his civilized face. "I don't care how you came here; I know you'll go away in a consid'able different shape! You're the man I looked for far and near, but couldn't find no-whar. Never thought you'd come along yourself if I'd only sit and wait! Now speak up loud!"

"What must I tell?" murmured the stranger, closing his eyes and leaning weakly against the cabin-side.

"You know!" roared Gargoyle; "what did you do with her and them, I tell ye! Look at me!"

They looked at each other. The fitful candle showed plainly enough that they were opposites. The stranger was of the "long man" type; the brilliant but the weak, the intellectual but self-adoring, the bombastic but mean man.

Gargoyle, on the contrary, was that type of man who is either a god or a beast among his contemporaries; strongly built, strong in his sensibilities; strong in that degree of mind

which his type carries. When such as he centre their lives upon one person or object, and are defrauded of that person or object, they are terrible to meet, and if vengeance be not given into their hands, they turn and gnaw their own hearts out.

Both men were past the prime of life. One had the rough of the wilderness upon him, and the other a false social polish which gave him great advantage in appearance.

But while Gargoyle looked at his enemy, the years appeared to roll off him; he straightened, and was a younger man. Like a tiger couchant, he watched his lengthy adversary.

"You was my friend," he prefaced, rubbing his hard thumb against the knife. "You thought a heap of my family. Them days I believed in honor, and seeing you was smarter-tongued than me, it pleased me to see you make yourself agreeable among us! A boy and a girl; pretty little fellows; and a woman, sweet and good till you got round her. What did you do with them? Will I have to half-kill you to make you tell?"

"They died," replied the stranger, slowly.

"How long ago?" grated Gargoyle, his voice coming hoarse from the depths of his throat.

"Years. Just after she left with me. The children took an epidemic disease, and their mother caught it nursing them, and died with them."

"Is that all true?"

"I swear it is all true. Gargoyle, I know you will kill me, but if you would only consider how wounded and helpless I am now—"

The meanness of the man, like the weakness and pleading of a frightened woman, held back the arm of his manlier antagonist. Moreover, Gargoyle knew not what was within himself. Though this man was to his eye a snake whose head ought to be crushed, though his own wrongs were piled up to the sky, and he could scarcely forbear striking, he held his hand and himself.

"I never meant to injure you so, Gargoyle," whined the man.

"Hush up or I'll kill you this minute!" yelled Gargoyle, tramping about his cabin floor.

A gust of wind blew out the light. But by the flashes of the storm, he could yet see his enemy crouching white and abject by the opposite wall.

Twice he crossed the floor with the knife clenched for a blow, and twice he withheld his hand.

He threw the cabin-door wide and rushed out into the storm, which after a lull had broken out again in fury.

He stretched his arms abroad, this mightily betrayed and scarred man. Nothing but blood could wipe out the blackness of his story.

Yet Old Gargoyle, alone on the stormy mountain, now doubling himself and now reaching upward with strong crying—perhaps recognized a Maker of Life above all men and all wrongs!

"Keep me from killin' him!" he cried. "I'll kill him if I see him again! He ought to die! I *will* kill him! But, oh! somewhar feel for me and keep me from killin' him!"

Perhaps, also, the God who rode upon the storm heard this, and reached down through the tumultuousness of the man.

A sound like the last thunderings began up the mountain. Gargoyle heard rushing and crashing. He stood still and felt the visitation pass near him, knew the grinding down of his house when that was struck, estimated the depth to which the mass of rock fell below him, and remained motionless in the lull which followed.

He knew that thing had happened which the valley residents always prophesied. The rocks hanging above his eyrie had fallen upon it.

What of the man he left inside?

The rain again subsided, and a keen wind began to cut across the mountain. A late moon had gotten up in the east, and was trying to part her way through ragged clouds.

Old Gargoyle heard a human cry, and he knew whence it came.

Among the ruins of his house something was struggling. He picked his cautious way among

fragments, and got hold of his enemy's head and shoulders.

"I feel crushed across the body!" groaned the wretch. "Oh, move that stone! Oh, take those little logs away!"

So, feeling according to direction, did Gargoyle work and tug with lavish use of his ebbing strength, saying never a sentence to the enemy while he untombed him.

There were two men upon the mountain. One was long and bruised over all his length; who cried and groaned with feverish pain.

The other was built like Vulcan, but his great endurance failed this night.

A squad of men, going about to relieve sufferers from the tornado, next morning found these two men upon the mountain.

The stranger was alive, though unconscious. He was held on Gargoyle's knee, and warmed by Gargoyle's clothing, supplied to his need at intervals during the night. Yea, Gargoyle had torn his own shirt to rags and bound up his enemy's bleeding spots with them.

He sat upright before his witnesses—Old Gargoyle. Call him a lion done in bronze; shaggy but kingly.

"Keep me from killin' him!" Old Gargoyle had cried, and lo! he had lifted his own soul immeasurable heights above the abject thing he left alive.

Dead on the mountain sat Old Gargoyle, in

the ruins of his home; having held his enemy upon his knees, covered his enemy with his covering, and warmed his enemy with the last spark of his life!

Grand Old Gargoyle! He was that wonderful contradiction—that combination of weakness and power, littleness and glory—A MAN!

THE END.



THE MAN WHO "HADN'T TIME."



THE MAN WHO "HADN'T TIME."

BANGS was a pure American. And when I say Bangs was a pure American, I mean his parents and grandparents were produced on this soil. Whether he has more remote ancestors, Bangs never had time to ascertain.

He entered this world on business, and meant to make the most of his term. Ready for college in his twelfth year, he charged through that institution like a mad bull, carrying the honors on his horns. Bangs had made up his mind what line of business he would pursue, in that early period circumstances obliged him to waste in his mother's lap. So he made a flying trip through the States, gathering force as he went, and landed plump in an editorial chair, where he began to scribble before his coat-skirts fell from the breeze. "Life is short,"

said Bangs; "no time to waste in tom-foolery of any sort. Business is the word."

It is a historical fact that Bangs married. Whether he caught his bride "on the fly," or took her in a business way as part pay for his paper, from some overloaded papa, ask me not. He certainly never wasted any time in courtship. I cannot imagine Bangs lingering under a window touching the light guitar. I cannot imagine love-letters written by lightning. I cannot *quite* see him in my mind's eye with one leg bent in supplication and the other rushing off for a marriage license.

Let us merely state the case as it appeared. Yesterday there was no Mrs. Bangs. To-day, *presto*, Mrs. Bangs there is. She must have been an amiable woman—though Bangs never had time to ascertain whether she was or not—for she offered no opposition to that incarnate electric fluid, Bangs; and she made an excellent mother of his little telegrams. The only drawback to their felicity was, that Bangs saw so little of his family, he had occasionally to seek a fresh introduction.

It was a beautiful and instructive sight to see Bangs in his office. Bristling with quills, he suavely entertained a caller; scratched a leader with his right hand, and squibs on his brother editors with his left; "simultaneously and at the same time" scanning his favorite politician's speech and stamping applause of the same with

one foot, while he dismissed a bad typo with the other.

He went through his morning mail like a buzz-saw. Z—z—z—sizzle! A cloud of letters and envelopes—stamps settling on replies like swallows on a barn—it was disposed of. He would peruse with one eye Mrs. X. Y.'s effusion on the "Matrimonial Martyr," whose broom was sweeping her to her tomb, Who called all women in the land, Against that tyrant, MAN, to stand, Until his buttonless wristbands wave, In melancholy o'er her grave! And with his other eye Bangs would devour the Hon. M. C.'s letter relating to some important public movement, while in the same breath he would yell, "Confound that woman! I wish her husband *could* kill her!" and chuckle, "Fine, sir, very fine!"

Indeed, saving time became somewhat of a hobby with Bangs. He never went to church without wanting to poke the minister and whip up the choir. When he went home to meals he always regretted that he wasn't coming back at the same time. At table he took his first course at one mouthful, his second at the next, dessert in one cheek and coffee in t'other, and then bolted for the street door, like Phaeton, leaving a milky way of napkins behind him.

No living bore, not even life insurance agents (with what pleasure I write that, since one of those wretches comes dunning me for my "pre-

mium" this night), not even his mother-in-law, ever laid possessing hands on a minute of Bangs's time. No train kept him waiting; for if he wasn't put through on time by rail, he got himself sent by telegraph.

When Bangs had to attend a party, he made compliments and pumped "locals" with the same breath. He once saved time amazingly in his own family by burying three children at once.

Now Bangs had so well invested his days that public emoluments and plums generally were coming to his hand; his future looked rich, and his time more precious than ever; when Old Time himself turned on his young rival. He saw Bangs outstripping him. Old Time said to himself, "Now here's a fellow—looks nearly as old as I do. If he lives to be three-score, he'll look like my grandfather, and he'll be wanting more days and nights than I can furnish. This will never do!" said Old Time. So he spied out Bangs's weak places and dealt him some sharp blows.

Bangs lay on his bed and dictated to the Doctor while planning out his office-work for subordinates.

"I want you to give me a powder, sir, which will bring me to my feet instantly."

"Gunpowder, perhaps," suggested the Doctor.

"Not any shooting, if you please, Doctor. No, not gunpowder. Let it be a pill if you

prefer. I only stipulate that you cure me without wasting my time."

"Sir," said the Doctor, "you must lie here and rest, neither doing nor thinking; simply being. You must rest or you will die. You have used yourself up shamefully, sir. You have destroyed without building up—you—"

"But I can't waste time that way," groaned Bangs, deciding on what subject to cram Quills for that next editorial, laying out the heads of his weekly essay for the *Washington Trombone*, and coming to a mental decision about the *Credit Mobilier*.

"Then, sir, all I have to say is, you *must* waste time, or Time will waste you."

Which Time did; for he grew so indignant at Bangs's trying to improve the wakeful hours of the night by planning a political campaign, that he came back bringing Death with him, and they gave Bangs a rap on the head which finished him. It must have been a blessed after-consideration to the time-saver that his soul lost no time in separating from his body, but went up straightway like a champagne cork.

"Our beloved friend and honored fellow-citizen whose remains lie before us," said the minister, "was cut off in the very prime of his days. His life was a busy one. His peculiar virtue was careful economy of time. He probably accomplished more work in his short life

of thirty-nine years than most men do in the long probation of sixty. *He never let a moment run to waste,*" said the minister, impressively.

O Bangs, were you sitting up behind that man and shaking your spiritual head sadly? Were you crying on your immaterial fingers over the awful waste you had made? Waste of hours which might have blessed and built you up—by leading you a gallop through the nursery, giving you kisses from those red lips so early put under ground, by drawing you to feed and cherish the heart of that woman who rarely had a conscious look from your eyes. Did you see, Bangs, where it wouldn't have been waste of time to talk with this vagabond or that wretch—to look at the sunsets, and rest a moment in thanking your God?

You were like a fine-blooded racer on the track, I'll admit, Bangs. But you lost your gait and broke your heart with haste before the heats were done.

I wonder where Bangs is now? Is he somewhere astride of a comet, trying to whip up the solar system and thus save time for the sun?

THE END.

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