



"Viola, seeing her opportunity, caught the cigar from between the fingers, and, quick as thought, threw it into the fire."

Page 220.

# WHAT A BOY!

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM?  
WHAT WILL HE DO WITH HIMSELF?  
WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE CONSEQUENCES?

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BY

JULIA A. WILLIS.



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TO  
THE NEPHEW

WITHOUT WHOM THIS BOOK COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN,

AND TO

THE BROTHER

WHOSE LIFE HAS VERIFIED ITS BEST AND TRUEST SCENES,

I LOVINGLY DEDICATE IT.

JULIA A. WILLIS.

# CONTENTS.

## PART I.

### WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM?



	CHAPTER I.	PAGE
The Question Stated . . . . .		II
	CHAPTER II.	
His Arrival . . . . .		13
	CHAPTER III.	
Anticipations . . . . .		15
	CHAPTER IV.	
Initial Experiences . . . . .		17
	CHAPTER V.	
As a Matter of Course . . . . .		23
	CHAPTER VI.	
Wisdom Defeated . . . . .		26
	CHAPTER VII.	
Equal to Circumstances . . . . .		28
	CHAPTER VIII.	
Not to be Outdone . . . . .		32
	CHAPTER IX.	
Ready for Anything . . . . .		38
	CHAPTER X.	
Wanted, Patience . . . . .		42

	CHAPTER XI.	PAGE
Problems Thicken . . . . .		49
	CHAPTER XII.	
Experiments in Order . . . . .		53

## PART II.

## WHAT WILL HE DO WITH HIMSELF?

	CHAPTER I.	
In the Natural Process of Things . . . . .		63
	CHAPTER II.	
The Conceited Years . . . . .		67
	CHAPTER III.	
Experiential . . . . .		73
	CHAPTER IV.	
Is it Original Sin? . . . . .		77
	CHAPTER V.	
The Boy-Man . . . . .		85
	CHAPTER VI.	
Certain of Nothing . . . . .		88
	CHAPTER VII.	
"'Tain't the Head we go by" . . . . .		97
	CHAPTER VIII.	
Reverse Estimates . . . . .		103
	CHAPTER IX.	
Far from Clear . . . . .		108

## PART III.

## WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE CONSEQUENCES?

	CHAPTER I.	
Facts interspersed with "Preach" . . . . .		119

	CHAPTER II.	PAGE
A Brilliant Stroke . . . . .		125
	CHAPTER III.	
A Hopeful Outlook . . . . .		132
	CHAPTER IV.	
The Question of Original Sin further Illustrated . . . . .		140
	CHAPTER V.	
New-Year's Day and a New Acquaintance . . . . .		149
	CHAPTER VI.	
Rushing Things . . . . .		156
	CHAPTER VII.	
Corned Beef and Custard . . . . .		166
	CHAPTER VIII.	
"Done up in Style" . . . . .		175
	CHAPTER IX.	
"Yours to Command,"—Papa . . . . .		182
	CHAPTER X.	
Touring it, and Home Again . . . . .		189
	CHAPTER XI.	
The Folly of Anticipating . . . . .		197
	CHAPTER XII.	
Nothing to do—Nothing . . . . .		204
	CHAPTER XIII.	
Quite like Married People . . . . .		213
	CHAPTER XIV.	
Facts to be Accepted . . . . .		222
	CHAPTER XV.	
Varied Experiences . . . . .		229
	CHAPTER XVI.	
A Difference in the Angle of Vision . . . . .		240



	PAGE
CHAPTER XVII.	
Exactly Suited . . . . .	249
CHAPTER XVIII.	
The Beginning of the End. . . . .	257
CHAPTER XIX.	
Which shall we Censure? . . . . .	266
CHAPTER XX.	
Now we go up, up, up, and now we go down, down, down . . . . .	275
CHAPTER XXI.	
Poor Phil! Poor Viola! . . . . .	283
CHAPTER XXII.	
The Nature of a Bargain . . . . .	291
CHAPTER XXIII.	
In the Bramble-Bush . . . . .	299
CHAPTER XXIV.	
Dark and Darker . . . . .	308
CHAPTER XXV.	
Twilight and Daylight . . . . .	318
CHAPTER XXVI.	
Which will he Choose? . . . . .	327
CHAPTER XXVII.	
A New Centre . . . . .	337
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
A Happy World . . . . .	352

## PART I.

## WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM?

A\*

# WHAT A BOY



## CHAPTER I.

### THE QUESTION STATED.

THE genus boy, as he appears in America, is altogether different from anything we have before heard of. Whether it is the climatic influence, or the effect of our political institutions, or free schools, or the want of parental discipline, or all of these combined, is a question still open to investigation; but the boy himself is a fact; he is constantly peeping at us from the cradle with the startling intelligence that he is no longer a *baby* but a *boy*; he is, therefore, a reality which we cannot ignore; we have got him, we shall continue to have him, and the question is,—what shall we do with him?

Our boy is not necessarily vicious. Indeed, it makes very little difference to him, so that he finds a channel for his surplus energies, whether they are expended in the right or the wrong direction.

Ten to one he will grow up to be a worthy, respectable member of the community, but you would not stake a half-penny upon it now.

Who can tell whether he will turn to the right hand or to the left? If saved it must be "so as by fire."

Our elephant stares upon us not only from every street-corner and every school-room, but we find him domiciled by every fireside, and a member of every Sabbath-school; besides all this, we love him, therefore, again, what shall we do with him?

If only these self-active, vital forces of his would rest for twenty-four hours we might be able to solve the problem; but while we are discussing methods he is finding a solution for himself, and we are forced to adopt *his* results,—not he *ours*.

This particular species may or may not reach maturity, but the genus boy will be ever young; he will be with us as far as we may look into the future; and it becomes a question of interest what we shall do with these embryo statesmen and presidents. Shall they be left to drift with circumstances, or shall we apply the lever necessary to move them in the right direction? and—who will furnish it?

A representative boy! one might as well attempt a representative love-scene. To be sure the results are manhood and matrimony; but the processes by which these are attained are as varied as humanity itself.

Boys are alike as sunsets are alike: full of warmth, glow, beauty; forever changing, shifting, continually surprising us with new forms, attitudes, and motions. I do not know all boys; I only know my boy; he will be like yours in some respects, he will differ in others. I simply present him, as he appears to me, with the problems which attend his growth to manhood.

## CHAPTER II.

## HIS ARRIVAL.

LITTLE girls may be wafted to us on rose-leaves, as poets say they are, but boys are born in the veritable old-fashioned way, and come into the world by pain, anguish, and peril. Once here we are very glad of their safe arrival, and, perhaps, shed a few tears of joy at their advent,—not by any means the last we are going to shed over them.

Our hero, Phil, opened his wee, blue eyes upon the world one pleasant September morning some ten years since. Hearing of the young gentleman's arrival, and being one of the family over whom he was expected henceforth to wield the sceptre, I went to look upon my future sovereign. The moment he was unrolled from his blankets he doubled up his little red fists and struck out right and left, probably to warn us of his native-born prerogatives and let us know what we were to expect in future.

We—aunts, cousins, mothers, and grandmothers—beamed down upon him serenely, after the Raphaëlitish pattern, with smiles and looks of love sufficient to have melted his heart for all time, had it been any other than the heart of a modern boy. As it was, we have proof conclusive that he cared not a whit for these things, for he spent his time chiefly in rooting round for something to eat. As there was no one then or thereafter who shared his dinner with him, the seeds

of selfishness were undoubtedly planted at that early period.

Baby-life is pretty much the same the world over; the great difference (to baby) lying in the fact that red and yellow flannel are vastly more comfortable to grow in than purple and fine linen.

Phil was born into that easy, middle class who never really suffer for anything, and who are able to gratify every reasonable wish, even the expensive one of boy-babies. The young gentleman grew "amazing fast" during the first weeks of his existence; he put forth sturdy limbs and strong voice, which spoke of a healthy animal life. As he was the only youthful scion of the house, we gazed upon him with wonder and delight. His mother and myself, who, by the way, am only a doting aunt, would talk of his future by the hour. It would be so delightful to instruct him,—to plant the seeds in his young mind, which would germinate under our tender care and some day bring forth abundant fruit. His mother loved especially to dwell upon the fact that he was hers to mould for a noble manhood.

That he would think for himself, that he would act on a plan of his own, and, above all, that a thousand other influences would act upon him over which we would have no control, never for an instant entered into either of our calculations.

## CHAPTER III.

## ANTICIPATIONS.

As I am writing a book of mathematical fact, with the solution of a problem for its object, I must be sure that my  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$  are right, or I shall fail to arrive at a correct solution for my  $a$ ,  $b$  (*i.e.* a boy). I shall, therefore, skip over the baby-years of our hero's life, and reach hastily the point where his career fell under my immediate observation.

He had attained the remarkable longevity of nine years when he came to take up his abode with us.

The announcement of his coming was hailed with delight by grandparents, brother George, and myself.

"The house is so lonely without children," grandma said.

"Kate is very foolish to think we shall mind his childish pranks," was grandpa's remark.

"It will be jolly to have them here," said Uncle George, who is rather a young bachelor; "I shall have something then to play with and amuse me."

"Kate must find the care of him a great trial now that his papa is gone," I sagely observed.

"A real pleasure, you mean," answered grandpa.

"He's her only comfort," responded grandma, "and I'm very glad she's got him; so write and tell her that we shall be only too happy to have them come. I'm really astonished she could think of Phil as an objection," was added, in an undertone.

The letter was written and dispatched, assuring our sister that we should consider Phil's boyish pranks as merely a pleasant diversion and an amusement to us in our quiet hours.

One week from that day we were all expectant. Grandpa, somehow, could not find anything in the newspaper, and so kept walking to the window, looking in all directions to see if there were any stray grandchildren around.

We talked a great deal about Kate, but I know that over all, much as we loved her, the chief joy of having her with us again was that she would bring the boy, and the house would never again be sad or lonely; for we all consider that children are very necessary to our happiness in this life, and probably will continue to think so to the end of time.

Our young hero came at last; he burst open the carriage-door, sprang upon grandpa's neck like a young hyena, and, lifting his feet from the ground, suspended himself for a moment, then darted to grandma and repeated the same operation.

The dear old lady was hurt; her cap was all askew; her spectacles and grandpa's were somewhere on the ground, but still they both laughed and seemed very happy in spite of this sudden shock; for they were hale and hearty, and believed in children,—above all, in grandchildren.

"Phil," said Kate, "didn't I tell you not to be so rough?"

"Yes, mamma; but I forgot," was the reply.

"Oh, never mind," we all began in chorus; "he's excited now, you know."

Thus endeth our first experience.

## CHAPTER IV.

## INITIAL EXPERIENCES.

PHIL came down-stairs next morning sliding on the banisters, and immediately after breakfast darted out of the house and was gone before we had time to say "where is he?" At dinner he was nowhere to be found, which Kate assured us was only a very commonplace difficulty. About the middle of the afternoon he came in with six boys, all of whom started on a vigorous run up-stairs to Uncle George's room in the third story.

I managed to arrest them in the passage. "Why, Phil, this will never do; have you had your dinner yet?"

"No."

"Don't you want any?"

"Yes, kind'r."

By this time Kate made her appearance; in truth, it had been my object all along to detain the enemy until her arrival.

"Phil, your little friends will have to excuse you to-day," she said. "I want you to eat your dinner now, and then stay in the house the rest of the afternoon."

The boys turned and went down-stairs; but Phil came into the room with blazing eyes and cheeks. "Mamma, it's real mean to treat me so; how would you like it if I should turn your friends out-doors? I tell you I ain't a goin' to stand it, and neither would any

other man!" Phil threw himself on the floor, face downwards, supporting his head with both fists, which he thrust into it somewhere.

It occurred to me then and there that Phil had *his* rights, his code of honor, his insulated individuality, as truly as any of us; he was not a mere sponge to absorb, but a pencil which would make its mark, and which we might as well begin to handle with some degree of caution. It used to be a simple thing to manage children, because there were children to be managed; but nowadays, when stature is the only obstacle between babyhood and manhood, the problems of how to treat the boy-man become difficult and intricate.

"I suppose you all think," said Kate, as soon as Phil had been sent down-stairs, "that the child has never been disciplined at all; but you see he considers himself on perfect equality with everybody, and I can't help it. All my fine theories of government have been wafted to the winds; I no sooner plant a seed in his mind than he goes to work and digs it up; maybe you could do better with him——"

Of course I thought I could; it's the easiest thing in the world to see how to bring up other folks' children. I only said, "It's rather late to begin."

"Begin?" Kate repeated. "Why, Maria, his father and I began when he was six months old."

As I could hardly have expected to antedate that, I held my peace.

Master Phil was not allowed to go out the rest of the afternoon, but he could take his book and read in the back parlor quietly until supper-time. In less than half an hour the house was full of smoke and the smell

of burnt wool; we rushed to the parlor. Phil had been all the time playing with the fire in the grate, and had finally succeeded in getting some lumps of burning coal on the real bear's-wool mat, which was Uncle George's especial delight. I wanted to shake the child: it would have been actual joy; but then I had read in books, and, besides, it had been my own pet theory, that grown people should never permit themselves to become angry with children. Therefore I could only say, "Oh, dear!" "What a pity!" "I'm so sorry!" "Phil, how could you?" etc. All of which did *not* restore the real bear's-wool mat. Kate looked troubled, but the expression soon passed away; evidently she had reached that upper region, into which so many mammas enter, where none of these things moved her.

Next day we invited some friends to tea to meet Kate and her boy; but what was our surprise at supper-time to find that the peaches, with which we had provided ourselves, had disappeared and Phil along with them. Shortly after our guests had departed our young hero came into the room whistling Yankee Doodle, hat on, as usual. Kate called him to her side.

"Phil, did you take any peaches out of the pantry down-stairs?"

"Yes, mamma."

The boy's one goodness is that he doesn't lie, though I think the real cause of such virtue is his utter audaciousness.

"What did you do with so many?"

"I took them out to the boys."

"What did you think Aunt Maria had put them in the pantry for?"

"Why, to eat of course," answered Phil, laughing.

"You may go up-stairs to your room, Phil, and wait there until I come," was Kate's answer. "What *shall* I do with him?" she asked, as soon as the boy was safely beyond hearing. The world is his, and everything that is in it; he considers he has a perfect right to appropriate all things unto himself; his papa——"

Just at that moment Phil came to the top of the stairs, screaming, "Mamma! mamma! Uncle George! grandpa!"

We all ran of course. George reached the room first, and the rest of us got there in time to see the curtain blazing away to the ceiling, and George pulling it down as rapidly as possible. I ran frantically to the kitchen after water, forgetting there were half a dozen ways of getting it more easily; the fire was safely extinguished by the time my pail and I reached the scene.

Phil was standing in the centre of a breathless circle, who were waiting for the hero to explain the incident. "Mamma didn't come, and I was just trying to see how near I could get the gas to the curtain without making it catch fire. I didn't mean to get it quite so near that last time," said the young incendiary, and then poor Phil broke down into actual sobs. "I didn't mean to be so naughty, I didn't; and if you'll only just let me begin over again," he pleaded.

Phil was always ready to "begin over again;" there was no trouble on that score, but the trials all ended in the same result.

"Whatever you *begin* on, boy, don't *end* by setting the house on fire," said George, leaving Kate to settle the case with her young hopeful as best she might.

When she joined us after awhile, she told of Phil's sincere repentance, and that he had promised her again and again to be a better boy in future, and had even said, "Mamma, I want you to punish me; anything you think I deserve." This conquered us; we were all melted, and declared he was "the dearest little boy in the world, after all."

It was deemed expedient, notwithstanding, that Phil should have some sort of punishment meted out to him, and it was decided in family council that he should be obliged to remain in bed until just before dinner next day.

The dear boy submitted heroically when he heard his fate in the morning, and, after his breakfast of bread and milk and a dish of berries had been given him, he was left to solitude, while the rest of us formed a congress to decide as to the best method of dealing with the little rebel in future.

"Hang him!" was George's advice as he left the house that morning.

Some one suggested that we had blamed him too much, and that another plan might meet with better success. "Why not adopt the Friends' system?" I queried; "they never scold, you know. It's always, 'I think thee hadn't better do that,' or, 'Hadn't thee best do so and so?' Let us try it for awhile with Phil."

The motion was seconded and adopted, and it was agreed that henceforth we should "speak gently to the erring one."

We were all, except Kate, sitting quietly in the room after our discussion, thinking it must be almost time for Phil to be released, when that individual opened



the door quietly, sprang at grandma quicker than thought, twisted the dear old lady's nose between his thumb and forefinger, and before I had time to make up my mind that he had done anything more than kiss her, he had tried the same experiment upon my nasal organ. What were theories now and plans of government! I sprang to my feet in high wrath, and entirely forgot to say, "Phil, I think thee hadn't better do that." The young rebel himself was in great glee, laughing with all his might at the "funny way grandma and I looked with such red noses." I tried to speak, and finally gasped out, "Phil, you are the worst boy I ever saw in my whole life." I knew he was not; but even grown people are human. I went in search of Kate to see again what was to be done with him. I found her in the bedroom he had just left, examining the ceiling. "What is this, Maria? I should think the house had broken out with an eruption."

We looked carefully, and found the ceiling to be covered with paper wads and grape-skins. Phil had amused himself during the long morning throwing these upon the wall. The grapes had been provided by Mary, the kitchen-maid.

"What *is* to be done with him?" we both exclaimed, as we looked in dismay at each other.

"There, Maria," said Kate, "get ahead of him if you can; for my part, I confess I cannot even keep up with him."

## CHAPTER V.

## AS A MATTER OF COURSE.

AFTER having been with us a week we come to the conclusion that Phil is an entity,—an individuality which there is no gainsaying, with ideas of his own and opinions formed upon every point. He knows who he is going to vote for at the next election, and why; he knows who is the best preacher, and who the best schoolmaster; he knows the richest man on the avenue and how he got his money; he knows that our neighbor and his wife over the way do not live very happily together; he knows where he can buy the best apples, and who owns the lot on the corner; he's "hail fellow well met" with all the dignitaries around us, and even talks familiarly with the policemen. He can tell the name of every boy in the street for half a mile either way; he knows which he can depend upon for a good time, and which "go home and ask their mothers."

He never keeps still a moment; he never gives us a chance to think *what* we shall do with him, for he's always doing something for himself. While we are considering the matter of schools and the best method of education, he is going to school on the street and getting his education on a plan of his own. The child cannot be kept in the house all the time, you know; he must have exercise, and where will he get it if not on the street? It is quite impossible to confine a boy



in a yard six by ten; if you attempt it you'll soon be glad enough to let him out.

Of course our boy never takes his hat off when he comes into the house; when told to, he always throws it on the floor; he never, *never* thinks of such a thing as closing the door after him. He jumps into grandpa's easy-chair whenever the old gentleman rises from it, and even tells him he'd "like to sit there sometimes himself," he "don't see why grandpa couldn't take another seat." It may be urged that one could hardly expect a boy full of life and vigor to get along with a couple of elderly people, and none but women to govern him. But what are we going to do with the grandparents? they exist more or less in every household, and we do not wish to dispose of them even for the sake of the rising generation. Then again, boys as well as girls are born of women, and it is they who must necessarily have the charge of them. It is only in very exceptional cases where the youth receives other instruction, disciplining, or home-training than that which is given him by his mother.

Phil's case is by no means an extraordinary one. Whatever he is, was, or may be, women for the most part have the care of him and others like him. It does not help the matter at all, therefore, to say that he ought to have had a man to govern him.

Phil's father was dead; but other fathers are in business, and are only too glad to have the children in bed and out of the way when they come home tired and exhausted at night.

Grandpa tried to make our hero mind, but Phil hadn't a particle of reverence for old age, and grandpa

wasn't half as quick as he. George tried it, but he got angry after telling Master Heedless for the fiftieth time to do something, and declared he'd have nothing more to do with him. But what if *we* are tired and provoked? the boy is before us just the same; he is, he was, and he will be, and we may as well prepare ourselves for the situation.

I am ashamed to confess it, but we found ourselves, at the end of a month, saying, "You troublesome child!" "Phil, you naughty boy!" and then, occasionally, "You're the worst child I ever saw!" all of which was in direct contradiction to every theory of government we either collectively or individually held.

There is no denying it, the whole family necessarily assumed a hostile attitude toward its common enemy,—the boy. It is impossible to amalgamate him into the body politic of our household so as to produce a homogeneous result; he must and he will remain through all changes and transformations his own unmistakable, mercurial self. This is the position which we naturally fall into: Kate, general; I, lieutenant; grandma and grandpa, staff officers; George, the scout; Madge, soldier; our common enemy, Phil. At first glance this would seem a most unequal contest, and Phil's chances of success very small; but such a judgment would be hasty and premature. You have but to reflect that on Phil's side there are no proprieties to be regarded, no reputation at stake, no especial future to look out for, no laws more stringent than those of the household, no muscle behind the throne stronger than a woman's.

Besides all this, Phil's ceaseless activity, his inventive

powers, his calm indifference to impending fate, are more than a match for the whole of us combined.

We can no more anticipate the direction in which he will put forth his energies then we can anticipate the movements of an eel or the coruscations of an aurora borealis. He may move according to certain fixed laws of his own, but it is impossible to put ourselves in his place and readjust them, he alone has the power to regulate the machinery.

Query.—Since men are only boys grown up, can any one tell where all the good men come from?

## CHAPTER VI.

### WISDOM DEFEATED.

Books on the government of children say that childhood should be made happy.

Phil's birthday had come, and we determined it should be a joyful one. Uncle George had furnished a velocipede; grandma a beautiful Bible; grandpa a complete set of small tools; I, a bat and ball, while his mother gave him a handsome set of book-shelves; then there was a fine large cake from Madge. The whole house had placed itself under contribution to make this "the happiest day of all the year." We arranged our gifts upon the large dining-table, blindfolded our little boy's eyes, and led him into the room. He was at first almost speechless with delight, then he danced and capered round and round in high glee. It

was a matter of doubt which of us was the happiest; grandpa laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks, while Phil rushed at each one in turn kissing and hugging as only a boy can.

His joy would not be complete, we knew, until he had shown his presents to "the boys;" so off he went—velocipede, Bible, tools, bat, ball, and cake—to enjoy their surprise and admiration. It was a grief that he could not take the shelves, but they were rather too cumbersome.

Phil did not make his appearance at dinner; and, though we were sorry, we did not wonder at it so very much; probably some little friend had invited him to dine. Our hero came in toward night happier, if possible, than when he went away.

"See, mamma," he began, "see my popgun and book!"

The book was a very dilapidated volume of Robinson Crusoe, and the gun might possibly have been estimated in value at three cents.

"Well, my dear," said Kate, with a pleasant smile, determined that no shadow should fall across the day, "who gave you these?"

"Oh, I let Jim Applegate have my velocipede for the popgun, and a little girl—I don't know her name—gave me this beautiful book for my Bible; wasn't she good?"

We did not express our admiration of the "good little girl" just then, but simply asked, "Where are the rest of the things?"

Phil put his hand in his pocket and brought forth a mallet.

"Why, mamma, these tools ain't strong a bit; the boys said the bat was too long, and so we tried to saw it off, but the saw broke, and then we tried to chop it and the axe broke, and this is all they is left," said Phil, as he placed the one poor little remnant on the table that had shone forth so gloriously in the morning.

Upon further inquiry we ascertained that the ball was lost, and as the bat could be of no possible use without it, he had given that to a boy for two ginger cookies, upon which he had made his dinner. Words were useless to express our emotions; was this boy a remorseless little ingrate or what? In mercy tell me what!

## CHAPTER VII.

### EQUAL TO CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE summer days were fairly upon us, and the mountains attainable; we determined to reach them now as soon as possible.

Phil was more deeply happy than I had ever seen him the first night we sat at the farm table, and his great eyes took in all the delights of country life. The species we had brought was the only one of the genus boy in the house; but Phil, being a host in himself, did not grieve over that long. (To go fishing was the one desire of his heart.) *Run 1, 1, 2*

Not far from the house was a creek, which at the end

of a mile lost itself in the Hudson; in this creek Phil could fish with perfect safety.

On the afternoon of the second day he came running into the house drenched from head to foot, and, with his light hair hanging about his neck and eyes, very much resembled a water-rat. "He couldn't catch any fish in the creek," he said, "and so had gone down to the river, and somehow," he never could tell how, "he tumbled in and the fishermen got him out."

We were so thankful to have the little fellow back again that it was quite impossible to be harsh with him; but as the trunks had been delayed, there was no alternative but for him to undress and go to bed while his clothes were hung to dry by the kitchen fire. The little linen coat pocket was very full; Kate put in her hand and drew out the handkerchief which was on top; but she drew out something else at the same time, which was greeted with screams and cries by the kitchen-maids, for a little snake was making its way as rapidly as possible toward the door. The examination of the pocket was continued with great caution, and found to be stored with a very substantial roll of angle-worms for future use.

As soon as Kate entered the room where Phil lay he asked, imploringly, "Oh, mamma, won't you *please* take care of my angle-worms? I've got one great big fellow, and I mean to see if I can't catch a shark with him." This was only the beginning; for though Phil never stuffed snakes in his pocket again, we were utterly unable to arrest the angle-worm business; there was always one or more in each pocket, which Phil had forgotten all about.

Our little boy's first experience at tumbling in the water was merely the beginning of a long series; only after that he took off his clothes and called it "bathing;" collars were lost, neckties, a stocking was missing, and occasionally a shoe was nowhere to be found. The matter was getting desperate, and Phil was told he mustn't go in bathing any more without special permission; but somehow he "always forgot," or he "didn't think," or "something was to be reached," with additional excuses, so plausible and logical that they would have carried conviction to the most prejudiced mind.

Phil frequently complained of a pain in his side, and, though he utterly repudiated the thought of being sick, a physician was sent for.

"You are not very well, young man, I believe," said the doctor.

"Yes, sir, perfectly well," answered Phil.

The doctor opened his eyes. "Weren't you ever sick in your life?"

"No, sir."

"Don't you ever have a pain in your side?"

"Yes, sometimes; but it goes off pretty quick; I don't mind it much."

"So you feel tip-top always?" asked the doctor, beginning to understand our hero.

"Yes, sir, always."

"Never get tired?" continued the doctor.

"No, sir, never," Phil answered, laconically.

"I hope you'll always be in such prime condition," observed the physician; "and now, young man, if you'll unbutton your vest, I should like to listen to the beating of your heart."

"Please be quick, doctor," said Phil, as he unbuttoned coat and vest, "for I want to go out to play."

Time was when the saddle-bags would have frightened children behind chairs and into the corners, but not so in this our day. Have we not lived long enough to know that "pertness" fifty years ago is "independence" now? The doctor looked up after a moment with a troubled expression.

"You can run about as fast as any other boy, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," answered Phil, triumphantly; "there ain't a boy anywhere around can beat me."

"I thought not," said the doctor, with a professional shake of his head. "How often do you go in bathing, young man?"

"'Bout twice a day," answered Phil, to the consternation of us in the background.

The doctor began to look stern. "Did you know that people sometimes get cramps by staying in the water too long?"

The doctor surmised that we were pleased to have him talk in this manner, in the hope that it might inspire Phil with some sort of dread of the water; but what was our despair when the answer came,—

"Yes, sir, I've had 'em myself; but I feel just as well as ever when I get over 'em."

"It might not be so pleasant to have water boils though," suggested the doctor.

"Why, Jim Applegate, he had 'em, and he said they wasn't bad at all," answered Phil, not in the least intimidated.

"We'll excuse you, sir, that'll answer; only let me

tell you one thing: if you go in swimming as often as you have done, you'll never live to grow up to be a man."

Phil stopped a minute at the door. "Will you tell me then, please, how soon I'll be strong enough to go in every day?"

"Not till you're grown up," was the reply; and Phil went down the stairs with a shout and a laugh, which plainly said he considered all this mere nonsense. That afternoon he went into the creek again. "He didn't know," he said, "as he'd got to begin that day."

Whoever imagines the ordinary American boy is to be deterred from any undertaking by difficulties, obstacles, or even penalties, will find himself or herself sooner or later greatly mistaken.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NOT TO BE OUTDONE.

THE good angels take care of children, of that one thing I am confident; why else are they able to do with perfect impunity what a man would break his neck in attempting?

The next day Kate and I went off for a drive. Phil never liked to go, he "had to keep still so long." It was not exactly safe to leave a wild animal like him loose about the premises; therefore it was decided to put him up-stairs in his room, with a kite to make, and

lock the door after him; we wondered we had never thought of this before.

As we entered the yard on our return home Kate gave a piercing shriek, and attempted to jump from the carriage.

"Look! look!" she cried, in a tone that of itself was sufficient to frighten one; and, looking up, there—horrible! was Phil suspending himself by both hands out of the third-story window, a fall from which must inevitably have killed him.

All this we saw much quicker than you can read it, and then we flew up-stairs, almost on wings, to the rescue. Alas! dreadful! Kate had lost the key.

We screamed to Phil that the door would be opened in a minute, and while the landlady and myself ran down-stairs and piled feather-beds under the window, lest the poor boy's strength might give out, John, the driver, had broken open the door with one mighty bang, caught Phil in his arms, drawn him into the room, and placed him in his mother's arms, who was shedding tears of joy over him.

"Mamma," said Phil, looking extremely pale and exhausted, "I got so tired I would have let go if I hadn't thought papa was dead, and you'd feel so bad to lose me; I couldn't scream any more, but I held on awful hard!"

"My darling! my darling!" was all Kate could utter, and each one of us felt as if he was indeed rescued from the dead.

It was very difficult to keep either ourselves or anybody else from making a lion of him during the remainder of the day; although the boy in truth deserved



punishment for doing such a naughty, hazardous thing, who could have the heart to administer it? / *Am*

Phil felt that he was a hero, and on the strength of it ventured that afternoon to jump off the hay-loft in the barn, striking his head against a beam, and was brought into the house insensible; this was bad in itself, but we were learning to meet tragedies with calmness. Phil recovered after a little, and we—mother, aunt, boarders, and landlady—were becoming now so used to shocking events and hair-breadth escapes, that they were considered as in the natural order of things.

Evidently the family were growing hardened or had exhausted their epithets; for, whereas they used to run to their doors with exclamations of surprise, they now sat calmly in their chairs upon hearing any extra commotion, remarking, quietly, "It's only Phil."

It was now fast becoming time to think of home again. Grandma and grandpa, who did not care for these summer jaunts, would be looking for us.

We were sitting on the veranda, Kate, Phil, and myself, when we saw a gentleman come up the long path which led to the house. Phil, in spite of all previous instruction, sprang to the railing and leaned over it to discover, if possible, who the new-comer might be. In half a minute he shouted out, "Halloo, Mr. Tompkins! how are you?" with that peculiar twist to the "how are you?" which every boy knows so well how to imitate, whether he knows the Lord's Prayer or not.

Now, as Mr. Tompkins was a member of Congress, and Phil's senior by several years, this could hardly

have been considered the exact method to address him.

"Oh, you young scamp," said Mr. Tompkins, as he stepped toward us; "irrepressible as ever, I see."

The gentleman was an old friend of Phil's papa, and as that youth had sundry recollections of long and dry debates between the two, he made his exit now as rapidly as possible.

"What are you going to make of that boy?" was asked, after a little.

"Oh," answered Kate, laughing, "he's making himself so fast that there's very little left for me to do, except bind up his numerous wounds, and see that he's kept decently clean; the office is no nominal one either, I assure you."

"I suppose he's a pretty fair sample of the average American boy," said Mr. Tompkins, "so you needn't be discouraged by thinking he's the only one of the sort."

"I can't imagine what mothers do who have a whole menagerie of these wild animals," Kate answered.

"I tell my wife," said Mr. Tompkins, laughing, as he stroked his beard, "that if we had any of these untamed creatures to manage I should have an iron cage made for each one of them, and hand them their food through the bars,—as Barnum does, you know," he added, immensely pleased with this little practical scheme. But then Mr. Tompkins has been in Congress so long that he has learned how to discriminate nicely between the visionary and the practical.

"Oh, Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Hood," called Kate, appealing to two ladies who were passing us on the

veranda, "do come here and tell us what you do with your boys!"

"Well," said Mrs. Hood, a pretty little woman with side locks, who looked about as competent to manage boys as she would have been to navigate a vessel, "I have a very easy method of getting along: I never see anything the boys do that is out of the way; I always contrive to have my head turned in the opposite direction."

We all laughed, and some one said, "But you must hear?"

"Indeed, I do not; I stuff my ears with cotton the moment I get up in the morning; I take it out, of course, as soon as the boys are off for school, and replace it promptly at two o'clock."

Mr. Tompkins looked at the lady admiringly, and with an expression which plainly indicated he had received one or two valuable suggestions, which in his official capacity he would have an opportunity to put into practice.

"Now, Mrs. Murray," said Kate, "will you favor us with a bit of your experience?"

We all looked interested as Mrs. Murray replied, with some enthusiasm,—

"I have found out that the best way to get a boy's affections is to understand something about matters in which he is interested. I know how to spin a top and play a game of base-ball as well as any of my boys."

We each responded by an expression of surprise and admiration, and the lady went on: "My children always bring me the first news from the ball club or the yachting races, and they have come to the conclu-

sion, because mamma understands all these things, that she's the most wonderful woman that ever lived."

"I should say so," responded Mr. Tompkins, heartily; and the lady proceeded:

"I don't see how we can sympathize with a boy unless we can feel something as he feels, unless we understand something of his desires and his pleasures."

Again Mr. Tompkins looked as if he had received an inspiration, and I at once inferred that he had conveyed himself to his official position, and was reflecting upon "Lo! the poor Indian!"

"One thing is very certain," the gentleman said, "whatever we do or don't do, the youngsters are getting along so fast, and are developing so many new traits, that family government is completely remodeled since my day. I can remember when my father used to bid me do a thing, and I expected at once to go and do it; but it's twenty years at least since I've seen a child obey the simplest command without having all the why's and wherefore's carefully explained to him. I really do not wonder," he went on, as he tipped himself back in his chair and thrust a finger into each vest-pocket, "that we have such fearful scenes among us, when children are so utterly without reverence for everything and everybody."

"Haven't our caricatures of prominent men much to do with this lack of reverence in children?" I asked.

"Undoubtedly," responded Mr. Tompkins, who is accused of having his eye upon the presidential chair.

"It seems to me," I went on, "that one observes a change in almost every department of life; even the

prayers of the pulpit have an irreverential, business-like air and tone, as if the speaker were negotiating a bargain, or demonstrating some point to a judge."

Mrs. Murray laughed. "That is true," she said; "our minister crosses his hands behind him when he begins to pray, and then proceeds in as lawyer-like a manner as if he were trying to convince an unreasonable jury."

The ladies left us presently, when Mr. Tompkins unfolded the especial object of his visit, which was to learn if Kate could be induced to join a small party on a trip to Europe. This was exactly what Kate had for some time desired, only—what should she do with her boy?

"Let Philip take him," I suggested; "he has always wanted Phil to make him a long visit; and, besides, he's his namesake, you know."

So it was settled that Phil should be sent to his uncle during Kate's absence.

## CHAPTER IX.

### READY FOR ANYTHING.

OUR hero was perfectly delighted at the thought of going to Uncle Philip's, a personage whom he had only seen semi-occasionally, and who had never appeared upon the stage since Phil's arrival without some munificent present for his little namesake.

We had naturally expected that the young gentleman

would grieve somewhat at the thought of his mother's absence, but that seemed entirely a secondary consideration.

The evening before Kate went away, she drew her boy upon her lap and asked him, "Doesn't my little son feel very sorry mamma is going away?"

"Yes, but I want to tell you! Uncle Philip says two boys live right next door to his house; and won't we have fun?" Phil added, with a chuckle.

Anything for change—anything for play; only to be kept in one perpetual whirl of excitement, is all the American youth requires to complete his happiness.

The mother sobbed herself to sleep, very much in the fashion we had expected the child would do. The night was a beautiful moonlight one, and I lay awake congratulating myself upon being a spinster, and consequently having no ungrateful children to mourn over. I was engaged upon this and sundry other wise reflections, when the door burst open with a bang, and master Phil's voice shouted, "Halloo, mamma! halloo, Aunt Maria! I'm up first!"

This was indeed too much; I should like to have drowned him in the bath-tub, and but for the unpleasantness of hanging, I don't know but I should have done it then and there. Slumber was banished for the night, and Kate so much needed the rest. I looked at my watch; it was half-past one, and the young gentleman was dressed from head to foot. Phil protested against being sent back to bed again, but there was no help for it. He was sound asleep in five minutes, while we lay waiting for the morning.

Have we any idea how divine the forbearance with



which we should accredit our mothers during the first twelve years of our existence? I trow not.

It was ascertained by circumstantial evidence next day that Phil had surreptitiously drank a strong cup of tea which had been prepared for his mother, but which she, in her sorrow, could not swallow.

The grand excitement of going away had fairly come, and of course Phil was delighted. At the last moment, having got tired while the home farewells were being said, he had run off to play, and was nowhere to be found to bid good-by to mamma.

"George, I *must* see him," Kate said; "find him somewhere, and take a car down-town; Maria and I will go on in the carriage."

Master Phil concluded to let himself be found after awhile, and, fortunately, he and George reached the steamer some minutes before its departure.

Phil was in ecstasies at being on board of an actual live steamer. He ran about examining the wheels, the cylinder, the compass, the state-rooms, and all, as rapidly as he could fly from one point to the other. More than once George and myself caught him and held him fast, but while we were being introduced, or shaking hands, he would make his escape again. Then came the confusion of leave-taking, and instead of a great ship-load, as we had supposed, the majority had only come to say good-by to the few who were going.

"Where's Phil?" called Kate from the deck of the vessel.

We looked in every direction, and were genuinely frightened now, as the missing article was nowhere to be found. It was too late for any one to return.

George could only scream out, "He must be on board the steamer; look everywhere; send him back on the pilot," and we saw Kate turn away with an agonized expression.

"That young rascal!" said George; "if he ever *is* found, I'd like to put him in the penitentiary until he's twenty-one."

"But suppose he isn't found?" I suggested.

"Nonsense!" said George; "that boy'll never die of anything but old age; he's been through too many hair-breadth escapes already to leave us in this easy fashion now."

Nevertheless we were very anxious during the next few hours of suspense. George indulged himself in various little tender remarks upon the peculiarities of his nephew, such as "The boy is an idiot," "I can't imagine where on earth he got these demoniacal tendencies from," etc.

Phil reappeared with the pilot vessel, as I in my heart thought he would.

"You monkey, you!" was George's salutation.

Our hero was, as a matter of course, in high glee at having had such a delightful adventure.

"Mamma almost ate him up," he said, when she found him on board the steamer, and laughed and cried both together. He "hadn't meant to get out of sight," but he was watching the captain's parrot, and trying to make it say some new words, so he didn't hear the whistle, and, besides, he "didn't think;" and it's a matter of doubt in my mind whether or no he ever learns how to think. Most people in this world don't *think*; they just rush into things, and get out of

them the best way they can. Not one of us but can sing with Mrs. Goose:

"There was a man in our town,  
And he was wondrous wise;  
He jumped into a bramble-bush  
And scratched out both his eyes.

"And when he saw his eyes were out,  
With all his might and main,  
He jumped into another bush  
And scratched them in again."

And the most that any of us do in this world is done by blind scratching. /

## CHAPTER X.

### WANTED, PATIENCE.

Now Uncle Philip and Aunt Agnes have been married ten years, and never having had any children, they are supposed to know all about how to bring them up; at least, so Philip took pains to inform us upon sundry and several occasions, whenever he had heard of the misdemeanors of his nephew.

Phil's uncle came after him, bringing with him several valuable trinkets which he thought might appease the boy's sorrow upon leaving home; but no such sugar-coated pills were necessary, as Phil was only too glad to do anything that promised change and excitement.

Philip had brought with him a stranger gentleman, who seemed very much amused and interested in Phil. He called him to his side, and, after placing him upon his knee, began with the usual time-honored question, "Well, my little fellow, what's your name, and how old are you?"

"My name is Philip Frost," he answered, promptly, "and I'm eleven years old; now, what's your name, and how old are you?"

The gentleman looked for an instant at Phil, as if various methods of chastisement were flashing through his mind; finally he gave himself up to a hearty laugh as he said, "Jump down, Young America! I'll finish my conversation with you some other time."

Not long after I heard Philip explaining, in an undertone, that "Phil had never had anybody but women to manage him, and he hoped the boy's rudeness would be overlooked on that account."

For the first few days after Phil left us, a delicious calm pervaded our household; it was as if we had been wafted to some enchanted isle where all was peace and harmony; then we began to wonder how he was getting along, and at the end of two weeks, when his first letter came, we would have given anything to have had him with us again. The letter was, to our utter amazement, beautifully written and well spelled. It began:

"DEAR GRANDMA AND GRANDPA AND AUNT MARIA,—  
I am having a jolly good time; Uncle Philip and Aunt Agnes are very kind to me, and I am improving very fast: Uncle Philip says so. I shut the door now every

time and come in punctual. When I leave my hat on the floor, Aunt Agnes throws it down the cellar-stairs, and I have to hunt after it in the dark, which I don't like very much. I let Uncle Philip's horse out of the stable the other day and it most got lost; I think he was pretty mad about it, but he didn't whip me. I am going to learn the African language, Uncle Philip says so, so as I can go some day and be a great explorer like Livingstone. Aunt Agnes gave me a new top; I am going to spin it now, and then play the rest of the afternoon. Time passing,—good-by.

“PHIL.”

Grandpa and grandma had been leaning over my shoulder smiling with evident delight as I read the letter. I think they would have been pleased at some little word of love or remembrance from their grandson, but Phil could not afford to spend the time; besides, thoughtful, unselfish children are nearly obsolete, and the way to make them so is one of the lost arts. “Philip always said he could manage him, and I guess he has,” said grandma.

“And he is so orderly and regular about everything, that probably Phil has fallen into his ways,” added grandpa.

“I am very glad,” I said, “that the child is so contented; I only hope he will continue to remain so until Kate returns, for I think perhaps Philip can do better with him than I.” Inwardly I knew he couldn't.

“There is so much more to interest him there,” pursued grandma; “and perhaps, after all, we expected too much of him.”

A sweet old age, I find, always leans to the side of mercy.

“It only shows,” she continued, “that oftentimes what one person cannot do another can; I never expected him to write such a beautiful letter; it really is beautiful!” And the dear old lady put on her glasses to look again admiringly at the square, boyish letters. Old people are not so far off from childhood as their years would lead us to suspect; and how happy children might make them!

Another fortnight passed, and then there came a letter with two stamps, and directed in Uncle Philip's own handwriting. It contained one from Phil; and, as we were most anxious to hear from him, we read that first. It was rather shocking to find several huge blots upon opening the paper. The spelling and capitals I will give as we found them:

“DEER GRAMMA AND GRAMPA AND ANT MARRIRER,—  
Hear at Bassel thay is a colage, unkle Philip and ant  
agnis took me there. (Evidently Phil thought no  
one's name was to be spelled with a capital except  
his own.) thay are twelf proffessers and a large mew-  
zeum in the colage fool of all sorts of birds and ani-  
mals, the largist in the uniteded stats. The outhur day  
a whol lot of fokes went with us to the woods to get  
chessnuts, we stade till five o'clock and et our supers  
out thare. About a week ago a young man came  
and went away who youst to no unkle georg. i like  
the boys that live next door verry much, last Tust-  
day we went to a pound in the woods and stade all  
day long, we tryed to fish but cood not for the fish

woodent bight. we go to the jimnaism moste evry day.

"Your neffew  
"PHIL."

What did this mean? was the child retrograding at this rapid rate? But there was the letter from big Philip; which, as I consider it simply insulting, I know of no better way to retaliate than by putting it here before the public.

#### UNCLE PHILIP'S LETTER.

"Good heavens, Maria! what sort of an animal is this you have sent us? It walks on two legs, it stands erect, it talks and even laughs, but still I have never saw anything before resembling it. Agnes and myself think the only available use to which it can be put is to send it to Barnum. At times it resembles a monkey, then a hyena, and not unfrequently, when it goes downstairs, an elephant. Has it ever been taught anything? (I groaned at this inquiry, remembering the unwearied pains that had been expended.) As Kate has chosen to name it after me, for which I shall never forgive her, I suppose I must call it a boy. As his visit to us (thank heaven! it is only a visit) is an epoch in our lives, I forthwith proceed to give you its history.

"The first night he reached here, considering his separation from you, and that he was heir prospective to all our worldly goods, we placed him in the guest-chamber which opens into ours. In the morning we heard a crash in the room, and going in, found the young scamp had broken the pitcher belonging to the

toilet set of antique china, and which is not to be replaced in this country; worse and worse, he had broken it tossing the pillows about; not the real pillows, that would have been nothing, but the ornamental ones, trimmed, Agnes wishes me to say, with linen cambric ruffles, which are, of course, utterly destroyed. I made him dress and leave the room in short metre, and then discovered that he had left the soap on the polished walnut slab of the bureau,—of course it is ruined; for all of which this young rascal was just about as repentant as a fly might be supposed to be for leaving a dot upon this paper. He sleeps in an end bedroom now, and has a japanned washbowl and pitcher. His toothbrush we made him take to the bath-room. The second morning he came knocking on our door about daybreak, waking us both out of our choicest nap, and when I opened it, he said, blandly, 'I wanted to ask you, Uncle Philip, to please not use my new toothbrush when you wash you this morning.'

"Maria, did you ever seriously contemplate hanging that child? If you have not, I have.

"My lord found the towels hung too high for his use, and after various endeavors, has at last succeeded in breaking the marble bowl in the bathroom.

"But all these offenses are slight in comparison with his one great crime. I had my crocus and hyacinth bulbs set out just before Phil got here; the other night he came running to me in the stable with the joyful intelligence that he had dug up all my onions, and wouldn't I please now give him some money to buy a ball with. Words fail me here; therefore I shall not attempt to describe my emotions. Phil, of course, has

had access to my library, and has discovered that he and Livingstone are kindred spirits. He begs me daily to teach him the African language; and I, as often, wish he could speak no other.

"Agnes found him at my hunting-case the other day examining my pistols, and when she opened the door the young Hottentot pointed one at her and pulled the trigger. I cannot tell why it was not loaded, as I usually keep them so.

"As to Phil's letters—this one which I inclose is abominable; I could not open a second siege with that boy during one and the same month, and so send you the raw manufacture. His first I did try to have him at least spell correctly; *you* received the sixth edition. He has an idea because he has shut the door twice and hung up his hat once that he is ready for translation. What *is* the matter with him,—has he too much brain or too little? Freely, frankly, and humbly, I confess I cannot solve this conundrum, neither do I believe there is any solution to it.

"Yours meekly,

"PHILIP GILES."

## CHAPTER XI.

### PROBLEMS THICKEN.

THIS letter was a grand conquest for us, and we—grandma, grandpa, and myself—enjoyed many a hearty laugh over it, inasmuch as Philip had often asserted that our young hero needed nothing but "steady government," and that he knew he could master him in a month at the most.

Notwithstanding the letter we did *not* send for Phil, and in a few days more another epistle came, saying that "as Agnes was going to visit her mother, they had better send the boy back to us, as there would be no one to take care of him." In spite of Philip's attempt to conceal the real motive, I felt that even a blind man could have seen through the transparency. Evidently there was no other way of getting rid of Phil, and they had resorted to this as a last expedient.

In another day or two the boy was back again, as pleased to return to us as he had been to leave us. We had resolved to put him in school immediately; accordingly one was found which seemed to possess the requisite virtues, including high price and all. There were cheaper schools, no doubt, but this one, having an airy price, was supposed to impart certain undefined and nameless graces, which would develop themselves the course of time, and which, for the present, must be taken upon trust.

He was in ecstasies; he would now have more boys

to play with. School never associated itself with work in his mind; it simply meant a place wherein to play, only this and nothing more.

What blessed institutions these educational nurseries are! How would Mrs. Grundy be enabled to make her morning calls but for them? How would the good Marthas find time to try the last recipes but for them? How would pretty young mammas manufacture so many new bonnets but for them? And how would I have kept my front stairs in an ordinary state of decency except for this particular one?

All went on smoothly for a day or two, then I received a note,—“Would Phil’s aunt be kind enough to see that he left home sufficiently early in the morning to reach school by nine?” Hadn’t I sent him off every morning with a large allowance of time at either end? Phil was questioned; he “went after some other boy who lived a mile out of the way,” which thing he was strictly forbidden to do again. Then there came another note,—“Would Miss Giles please see that Phil observed study-hours out of school?”

This began the campaign in earnest; books, slates, pencils, paper,—“ammunition enough,” grandpa said, “to set a whole regiment going when he was young.” I applied myself to the task as patiently as possible.

“Well, Phil, where are you in arithmetic?”

“Don’t know,” answered the young disciple; “teacher said to go from there to there,” pointing with his finger at the two pencil-marks which indicated the compass of the lesson.

“But, Phil, what is it in? what’s it about?” I questioned.

“Don’t know; ain’t got nothing to do but those four sums.” And he began to whistle, while I began to sigh. I looked at the heading of the page. “Phil,” I asked, “what does ‘Miscellaneous Examples’ mean?”

“Don’t know. Why, Aunt Maria,” and this time Phil was provoked, “I told you I didn’t have nothing to get but just those four sums; teacher said the fathers and mothers must show us how to do ’em.” And Phil picked up pussy and trotted off to the kitchen with her, as if aunts were under a double necessity of doing all the work. Evidently my winter’s task, as well as his, was mapped out for me.

Then came the bill. Grandpa looked at it, shook his head, and said, “Hum! well I declare!” There was so much for drawing, so much for gymnastics, so much for fuel, so much for stationery, so much for French, which “all the pupils were required to study,” so much for books, so much for general damage to buildings and furniture, and last, though not least, the grand item for tuition itself,—and *this* was to make its appearance every nine weeks. I looked in vain to see whether there was a deduction anywhere for the services which I was expected to render.

Accompanying this was another one of those state notes, which I now looked upon as governed by the law of certainty,—“Would Miss G. please see that Phil came to school more regularly, and would she prohibit his exchanging books and toys with the other pupils for their lunch?” Then was annexed,—“We require the hearty co-operation of parents and guardians in the government of our pupils, otherwise we cannot expect to meet with moderate success.”



This was, to say the least, moderately aggravating; hadn't I "co-operated" every evening since Phil went to school? turned our pleasant parlor into a study-room, and sent George off up-stairs, who declared "there had never been any peace or quiet in the house since that young rascal came to live with us"? I concluded it was time to visit the school and have a talk with the teacher.

Accordingly, I went. I took pains to pay the bill first. "I regret that Phil has occasioned you so much trouble," I said, addressing the principal, "but I prefer that you yourselves should correct him for the misdemeanors which he commits in the school-room, as I cannot possibly become acquainted with all the circumstances attending them."

"That is precisely why we have adopted the note system," he rejoined, "that the parents may be made aware of all that is going on in school, and administer their own form of punishment."

"But," I answered, "I am quite willing that you should correct and punish Phil as you think best. I wish him to be disciplined, and placed him in a gentleman's school that he might receive it," I added, with some asperity.

"You have entirely mistaken the atmosphere of our institution, madam (I notice that madam has long since ceased to be a mark of peculiar respect); "it is not a penitentiary, and we do not administer corporal punishment; you cannot have studied our catalogue. Our institution is based upon the principle of moral suasion, and where a pupil is found intruding we desire the parents to withdraw him."

"But what is to become of him if he cannot be harbored in any school?" I demanded.

"That is not our affair, madam," he rejoined, with crushing dignity.

I was not at all surprised, shortly after, to receive a note asking that Phil might be withdrawn; "his careless and indifferent habits had a pernicious effect upon the other pupils."

If the boy had only done something criminal it would have been a relief,—something besides carelessness, forgetfulness, indifference, want of reverence; but after all, at the utmost, one of these was ever at the foundation of all his difficulties; he was always ready enough to mind (after awhile), always sorry, always going to "begin over again."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### EXPERIMENTS IN ORDER.

AND now—what was to be done with him? "Boarding-school!" The thought shot through my brain like a sky-rocket in a dark night. It was luminous, and involuntarily I thanked God there were such places as boarding-schools. The difficulty now would be simply to find the right one. It proved, however, in the long run, to be anything but simple. I advertised for a small school, which involved a correspondence I had never dreamed of.

Institutions which numbered at least two or three hundred pupils sent me catalogues. Private families consented to take the boy at a very exorbitant price, and "treat him as their own child." Colleges proposed to attend to his education through a preparatory course, fitting him for matriculation in their institutions.

Finally, after looking through scores of catalogues, and receiving letters innumerable, all of which meant, "Your child may or may not study; he may or may not obey the rules of the school," I selected one whose prospectus read, "Thorough discipline will be maintained, and strict obedience to the rules enforced." Here was a man who, evidently, was not afraid to say what he meant, and who was not afraid to mean something.

I visited the school, Phil in hand, who was again enraptured at the thought of another change. The boys were evidently happy, as boys always are when "thoroughly disciplined." The master was "kind but firm;" the catalogues had all said that, so I knew it by heart; this man hadn't said it, but his face and bearing meant it. Besides, he had a charming little wife, who might prove a helpmeet; certainly she appeared to take a vast interest in the boys.

I was tolerably well satisfied, remembering that perfection is not easily attainable, and left our young hero.

Before saying good-by, I drew Phil to my side and told him I had just made arrangements with the principal, if he were a very good little boy, to allow him to come home once a month. Phil's brow darkened; what could it mean?

"Will that suit you, dear?" I asked, tenderly.

"Why, Aunt Maria, don't you see?" was the reply.

response, as the little boot made various digs at the carpet; "it'll make me lose one day's play every four weeks."

To be sure, so it would. I kissed the boy and said good-by, wondering if love and gratitude were left out of his nature altogether.

We watched eagerly through days and weeks for some word from Phil, and finally received—an empty envelope. This was manifestly meant for joke No. 1, and we took no notice of it. Shortly after there came a letter from the principal.

"Phil is doing very well," he said; and then further on, "I consider him a very fair specimen of the modern boy: threats, praise, entreaty, punishment, are all alike to him; he slides over each with equal indifference. Just at present he is mustering his crew for an expedition into Africa. He talks very seriously of running away, and that will probably be the next difficulty we shall have to contend with."

I closed the letter with a groan, for I know—grandma says she feels it in her bones that he will be dismissed before another month; and in piteous accents I demand, *What shall I do with him?*

Phil is home. I knew it the moment I returned from market and put my nose inside the front door. There was the unmistakable boy smell; a mixture of boots, woolen clothes, stable, and mother earth generally. Why stable nobody knows; but nobody ever found a boy without it.

Phil made great professions of delight at seeing me; and I—well, I waited for a proper explanation of affairs before I reciprocated.



"Teacher had said it was a holiday (St. Patrick's or St. Bridget's, or something of the sort): and the boys could do just what they were a mind to." And Phil had a mind to come home.

I looked at the young heathen in amazement. He was minus collar and necktie; hair had not been cut since he left home, and his finger-nails, long and dirty, would have done credit to a Chinese mandarin.

"Phil," I questioned, with inward despair, "where are your collar and necktie?"

"Why, Aunt Maria, you don't expect a fellow's collars to last him forever, do you?" Phil looked up innocently. Evidently he had been an apt scholar in some things at least. "My neckties are all gone," he went on.

"Gone where?" I again queried.

"Why, I gave 'em to the boys for candy."

Once more I smothered my natural emotions and proceeded: "Your hair and finger-nails are in a very shocking condition, Phil."

"Well, Aunt Maria, I meant to have 'em cut before I came home; but you see they wasn't no time this morning."

Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced;—parental care cannot be bought and sold, even though we pay an extra hundred for it.

I feel impelled to annex something in regard to an aunt's care, but I find no word in the English tongue to express it; there is parental, fraternal, filial, but no auntal, therefore I am obliged to succumb to necessity and keep quiet.

I made Phil over completely in what Uncle Philip

calls "short metre;" in fact, I converted the boy from a street rowdy to a respectable-looking member of society; then I let him go out to play while I went upstairs to meditate. A conviction by no means forced told me that this state of things could not exist much longer; Phil might stay the term out; then he should come home and *remain* until some shadowy ideas pertaining to filth and cleanliness should begin to dawn upon his mind.

In the mean time we would make the day as pleasant as possible, then send Phil back on the evening train; whereupon I put on my hat and ran to the baker's for extras, with which to delight his boyish appetite.

In the lot on the corner a regular congress of boys had assembled, and were talking back and forth in loud and excited tones, very much after the manner of that august body which they so closely resembled. I scrutinized them carefully, but did not see Phil, and went on comforted. They were, I honestly believed, somebody's boys; but my boy was not among them, therefore, why should I be troubled?

On my way back I observed that the combat had deepened; several gentlemen (well, they were well dressed) were sitting on the fence enjoying the sport hugely. One remarked, "That little fellow is plucky."

"That's so," was the response. "I tell you he's got grit."

I stood for a moment and looked, after making sure that none of my friends were visible.

The boys had ranged themselves in two companies on either side of the combatants; most of them stood with hands in their pockets and hats tipped back at an

angle of forty-five degrees. Each side cheered on its respective champion in words which betokened a high order of street culture. "Go it, Bill!" "Give it to 'im now!" "Make 'im see daylight!" etc.

The heroes themselves appeared very unequal in strength and stature. The larger boy made several desperate but ineffectual plunges at the smaller, who, agile and dextrous, sprang past him and dealt more blows than he received.

I looked about anxiously for a policeman; no one familiar with New York and vicinity dreams for a moment that I saw one. While searching in vain, I heard louder and exultant shouts from the boys. "Give in now, Tim; Bill's got you," was sounded, with variations. And, in very truth, the smaller of the two boys had the larger one under his arm, and with clinched fist was punching his face without any regard to organic structure.

And now there was a general shout from the boys of "Fair play!" and the victor let go of his antagonist and lifted his head. Good—but words are altogether inadequate to express my emotions; it was—yes, it was Phil. He looked like a young savage with his eyes glaring out of his head, one black and swollen. His face red and bloated with passion, it was no wonder I did not recognize the fair, neatly-dressed boy I had parted from half an hour ago. There was a fence between me and him, but somehow I got on the other side. I grasped Phil by the arm, who looked up at me with a face that fairly appalled me by its passion.

"Phil," I said, in tones that were meant to be very authoritative, "I want you to go home with me at once."

He did not answer, but turned to the boys and asked, "Is it all right?"

"Yes, all right; fair play," was the answer; "we'll go in for you." And Phil, evidently entirely satisfied, turned from them toward me and signified his readiness to accompany me.

We did not speak at all on the way home. I watched Phil's face very closely, and saw it rapidly change as we walked through the street, from pride and anger to humility and mortification. We entered the house carefully, so as to avoid meeting grandpa and grandma; as soon as we were fairly safe and alone, Phil burst into a perfect agony of tears; it was such an utter abandonment to grief and woe that I was alarmed. It would not do to comfort him, and I seemed unable to relieve him. It occurred to me that nature would soonest restore him by herself, so I went away and left him.

After time enough for an April shower to subside I returned, and found him sound asleep with his head on the ottoman and grandma bending over him and bathing his black eye with wormwood. Grandma could not imagine how Phil had hurt himself so, and I did not inform her.

That night I questioned Phil closely as to the cause of this quarrel. The larger boy had dared him to knock a chip off his shoulder, and as that, according to a boy's code of laws, was the most expressive method by which he could indicate his sense of Phil's inferiority, Phil, as a matter of course, knocked the chip off, hence ensued the pugilistic combat.

There is no question about Phil's education now; he is getting it as fast as possible. We have been expend-

ing considerable upon the boy, it is true, but after all, the greater part of his instruction he receives upon the street, without any tuition bills payable in advance.

Just as we fancy we have secured him by good and pure influences, he breaks free, as Samson broke the withes that bound him, and the work has to be done over again from the foundation. And now, in the name of all who suffer with me, I send this petition to the public, asking, what shall I do with him?

Grow he will; but how and where shall he grow? Read he will; and where shall I find literature enough to cram him incessantly with only the pure and good? Talk he will; and how shall I teach him just the right inflections, so that "how are you?" won't mean slang? Learn he will; and how can I keep him from learning evil as well as good?

In deep and deadly despair I put these questions to the wise.

And now we have come to believe in two things:

1st. We are not perfect ourselves.

2d. We believe in original sin.

We have also ascertained that the smallest part of a child's education is that which he receives in legitimate directions; and we have felt ourselves compelled to indorse the following honored sentiments:

1st. "The best way to bring up a child in the way he should go, is to walk that way sometimes ourselves."

2d. "It's very plain to see how to bring up other folks' children, but not quite so plain to see how to bring up our own."

## PART II.

### WHAT WILL HE DO WITH HIMSELF?

## CHAPTER I.

### IN THE NATURAL PROCESS OF THINGS.

WHAT blessings the years bring with them to a mother of boys! It is an epoch in her life, as well as theirs, when noise is no longer the chief aim of existence; when slippers begin to take the place of boots, and a general sense of self-respect and personal decency becomes manifest. Above all, when that boyish idea of degradation in having to "mind a woman," gives place to a refined, manly chivalry, which deems it a pleasure to obey her commands.

We all think Phil has "turned over a new leaf;" grandma says he has "got round the corner, and we shall never have so much trouble with him again;" to which sentiment, whether we express it audibly or not, I am sure we all mentally respond "amen!"

Phil actually seems to enjoy a clean shirt nowadays, and is not wholly indifferent to collar and neck-tie. Nay, more, he sports a pair of patent-leather boots, and even buys a bottle of German cologne. He uses the clothes-brush too, which is still more marvelous, and looks in the glass the last thing before he leaves the house. We really become alarmed lest he is developing foppish tendencies. The conversion is so sudden we are sure it argues something more than mere reform.

The mystery is explained, however, when we see

Phil run up our neighbor's steps and greet with a smile and blush a very pretty, but bold, forward girl, whom we have seen parade again and again past the house with all the different boys who live on the street, and quite a number who do not. We are not specially alarmed about this young love, for we say, "at Phil's age it can make very little difference either way." We know better now; there's nothing like a little experience, even to grown people; and we have learned that lasting impressions and permanent ideas of womanhood may be tintured by this first love-making, and the worth or worthlessness of its object. We venture to banter Phil a little upon his choice, but the poor boy turns such a pronounced red, and looks so as if he were just about to cry, that we do not insist upon the cruel sport. He *may* adore Amanda if he wishes to, no one shall interfere.

Kate came home long ago, and was delighted with Phil's improvement; that, however, was before it became manifest to less prejudiced eyes. George gave a significant grunt, and said "there was nothing like having a mother's glasses to look through," and that "the whole of them were demented on the subject of their own children." Whereupon the young bachelor walked off, and soon after committed matrimony on his own responsibility. It took us by surprise, naturally; he had raved so about an "old bachelor's ease," and sent so many arrows after poor Phil, we never supposed he would be willing to incur any similar liabilities for himself. There is no telling, however, into what tangents the male mind will develop itself; the more he condemns matrimony, the more

probability that he will embrace it speedily; the more he inveighs against children, the more likely he is to become the progenitor of a great and mighty race, and to adore each one in turn as a newly-arrived deity.

Knowing all these things by a wisdom which is simply instinct in woman, we were not surprised some months ago to find George low on his knees before a tiny mogul who had lately assumed the sceptre in his house. George called him "Charlie," Sophronia, "*angel* Charlie;" but George outdid Sophronia far in his zeal at making the young tyrant display his wondrous powers.

Did he cry? George snatched him up eagerly; did he still cry? George walked with him unweariedly through half-hours and hours. Did he want his dinner? George insisted he should have it at any time. Wouldn't he sleep without rocking? George sat patiently by his cradle far into the night. Did he enjoy a noise? George rapped on the window-pane, or drummed on the piano, or blew a horn. Did he like to be trotted up and down? George did it till the perspiration rolled from his face. After spending a day or two in the family, where everything from attic to cellar is considered in its relations to "baby," the atmosphere becomes oppressive, and I conclude to go home, wondering meditatively on the way what strange alchemy of nature has suddenly changed this young man, whom I have known for twenty-five years, from a despotic tyrant to the meekest and humblest of subjects. I simply propound the question to myself, I do not pretend to answer it.

Kate has felt herself called upon once or twice to

denounce a growing tendency toward extravagance in her young heir; otherwise everything goes on smoothly, and Phil is among the best of boys. But, alas! not even the sun itself is stationary. Phil has ceased to black his boots; he stays out late evenings; the bottle of German cologne is no more reduced than it was a month ago; and worse and worse! it is—yes, we are sure—we hesitate, we dare not speak it, and yet there is beyond question an odor of tobacco-smoke in his clothes. Kate is almost prostrate at this discovery; she cannot, will not, have it so. True to himself, Phil acknowledges: "Yes, he has smoked one or two cigars lately,—nothing to make a fuss about, though."

The maternal mind, however, looks at these things from a different stand-point. Kate takes Phil to her own room, and pleads with him as only a mother can. She tells him what, presumably, he has known all his life: that he is her "only son;" but those two words will always have a pathos of their own, an unanswerable argument on the side of purity and truth, when a mother's hand rests on the wayward head, and a mother's tearful voice pleads with her wandering boy.

Phil confesses at last, with his face buried in his mother's shoulder, that he is "going to the devil; he is, he knows it; his mother must keep him in evenings, or there is no telling what may become of him!"

"Why, Phil, I thought you spent almost every evening with Amanda."

"Amanda!" Phil shoots the word out of his mouth as a fireman spurts water out of a hose. "I don't go there any more at all,—she's got another fellow."

Poor Phil! he has actually begun to experience some of life's disappointments. He probably thought Amanda's heart was as beautiful as her face, and the discovery that it is not tinged with a sense of disappointment, not in her alone but in humanity itself. It is evidently something deeper than loss of faith in one which so affects Phil; he is beginning to see farther into life, and like all others, he is forming general conclusions from his own personal experiences.

Phil makes any number of promises, like a good, dutiful boy, and why not? There's nothing easier under the sun than to promise.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CONCEITED YEARS.

BUT it is not so easy to perform as perhaps either Phil or ourselves had imagined. The truth is, the boy is nearing the rapids of life. That perilous journey which can be taken only once, and upon which all his future may depend, lies just before him.

He is entering the trying, formative years of experience. The boy-man is able to comprehend everything, judge of nothing. His morals are and will be, for some time to come, in a chrysalis state. He never did and never will know as much as he knows now. Matters of state, religious and political questions upon which the world has been at issue for centuries, are all clearly settled in his own mind; and he considers his opinions



not only worth listening to, but as fixed and unalterable as the laws of the universe. Moreover, he pronounces them with all the dignity of superiority, and, we are delighted to see, "commands respect and invites admiration." He has fairly and legitimately reached the conceited years,—time alone can rid him of them.

As a matter of course he has left the Sabbath-school, and it is with difficulty that we persuade him to attend church. Adam, Noah, and Job were fabulous characters; he is thoroughly and satisfactorily convinced of it. He begins to have serious doubts concerning the Trinity; "it isn't according to reason," he informs us, and he refuses to accept anything that his intellect is not capable of comprehending.

We attempt to argue with him, but he is really very well posted upon references and statistics, and hurls them at us with such voluble rapidity that we are quite bewildered and predict for him future eminence. Indeed, our boy is thoroughly wide awake; there are very few topics upon which he is not more or less informed; at all events it appears so, because he never says he "doesn't know," but, whatever the question discussed, has always some plausible argument to produce. He is not lazy, not in the least, for he does not mind running up-stairs or down after a book, to prove to us that we are wrong and he is right. On the whole we are quite dazzled by his scholastic attainments, and learn with delight that he supports a fine reputation at school. *Why* and *how* is the mystery, because we never see him study. To be sure, he reads and dips and skims, but there's not the faintest suggestion of anything like hard work in his methods. Doubtless the American mind

has outgrown that necessity for application considered so important a part of the education of preceding generations.

Phil pronounces himself on the side of reform, and discards all time-honored dogmas as old fogysm.

The boy himself has not the faintest idea that he is in the rapids, nor have we, until, in later years, he recounts to us the perils of that voyage. We know, however, that he is fast assuming an individuality which can hide itself no longer under another's protection,—he is rapidly becoming the man—Philip, who must rise or fall for himself. A mother's arm can no longer shield him from the perils of the street, a mother's hand can no longer avert his eyes from the dangers and temptations which beset him thick and fast. Her love and her prayers can only follow him silently, invisibly, perchance with the same protecting power by which the glistening dew preserves the blade of grass from the scorching fires of the lustful summer's sun. Whatever sorrows and disappointments come to him, henceforth she can only stand by and suffer, but she cannot save. Whatever mistakes are his, *he* must bear the burden. It is pitiful, but it is nevertheless true, that the great questions of life are decided in these weak, immature years.

How gladly would Age lend to Youth the benefits of its experience! But Youth very much prefers to find out for himself,—thank you!

Phil has begun to grope around on his upper lip for a moustache; he succeeds after awhile in finding one, at least so he informs us; and we take his statement upon faith, as there is yet no ocular demonstration of the same.

And now the old question is once more re-agitated, "What shall we do with him?"

It is perfectly evident, even to prejudiced eyes like ours, that Phil must be removed from present surroundings and influences. He is older than when we last tried the experiment of his going away to school; doubtless would know enough to cut his hair now before it was sufficiently long to become a salable article.

Kate, who has been rather sad and sober of late over her wayward boy, begins to look happier at the prospect of a remedy which she hopes will result in good. Phil himself sticks his hands in his pockets and announces that "he thinks it's time he made a change and began to see a little of the world."

Even grandma and grandpa approve, for Phil has grown more *boysterous* of late; moreover, he has suddenly expanded into such huge and uncontrollable arms and legs, that we are each of us in constant danger of stumbling over one or the other of these extremities. As a matter of self-preservation it becomes in every way desirable that we should remove the offending members.

Accordingly, Kate and I enter upon the work of preparation with willing zeal. We cut and tear and baste and stitch, for there are shirts for day and shirts for night, collars, cuffs, and—but that's all. Oh, what infinite joy and satisfaction to be able to count the list of one's home-made garments upon the fingers of a single hand! Will some woman try it? Every article of Phil's wardrobe is carefully marked and put away; and Kate gives to each a little loving stroke as she lays it in the trunk. They do indeed look very nice, all those

new-made garments,—clean and stiff and starch, with that wholesome smell of fresh cucumbers about them which clean linen always possesses.

Phil looks on complacently and says it's "all right;" he has not quite reached the age yet where shirts are "all wrong."

Phil must be instructed how to make a bed, as that is quite an essential part of a school-boy's life. In vain we try to make him comprehend that the wide hem of the sheet is to be placed at the head, and the narrow one at the foot; that the under-sheet is to come off every week for the wash, the upper to take its place while a clean one supplies the deficiency.

Phil professes to know the lesson by heart. Kate questions him the last thing, to make sure that he is clear on these points.

KATE.—"What are you to do about your sheets, Phil?"

PHIL.—"Oh, mother, I know that perfectly. Put one of the hems at the head and the other at the foot."

KATE.—"But, Phil, *which* hem goes at the head?"

PHIL.—"I think—yes, I remember now, it's either the wide one or the narrow." And Phil looks triumphant, as if he had solved a mighty problem, while Kate concludes to let the hems take care of themselves.

KATE.—"Well, Phil, how are you to change your sheets?"

PHIL (after another moment of intense thought).—"I'm to put the upper one under, and the under one on top, every week; but"—his face becomes suddenly illuminated with a ray of domestic intelligence—"but where's the one for the wash then?"



Kate explains the whole complicated process once more, and Phil listens now with something like reverence at woman's mastery of a science in which he can never expect even to attain excellence.

But we cannot detain our boy any longer; he kisses us each good-by, runs down the steps and hurries along the street.

Kate looks after him with wistful, longing eyes; there is a cry in her heart which Phil only hears; for his pace grows slower, and in a moment more he turns about, runs up the steps and into the hall, throws his arms around Kate's neck, while a genuine tear glistens in his eye as he buries his head in her small shoulder and whispers, "Mother, dear mother, forgive me for all the pain I have caused you; I will be a better boy in future; God helping me, *I will*." Then there was another kiss, a warm, motherly embrace, a few helpful, loving words, and Phil was gone.

There is nothing on earth more beautiful than the love between a mother and son,—when that son reaches the years of early manhood, and begins to look upon his mother tenderly, reverently, with an almost passionate admiration. The love, the care, the romantic devotion which she received in early years as a maiden is given back to her once again through her son. For him she loves to deck herself in ribbons and ornaments; for him she watches the lines softly creeping over her face, dreading them only lest they mar her beauty in his eyes. His taste she consults in all her arrangements of dress or house; his step she listens for impatiently at night. He is to her at once husband and son, uniting in one these sweet reciprocal relations.

How proudly, how often, she repeats the words, "My son"! She seems in step and bearing a queen when walking at his side and leaning on his arm. And he—his mother is to him the fairest among women; all others may be false, she, he knows, is true. How proud he is of her growing confidence in him,—of the thought that he is to be her protector and adviser! How quick to detect any neglect in her person! he would have her scrupulous in dress,—always young, always attractive.

His heart throbs with joy and gratification when some one jokes him about "that young lady he was with the other night." He is too proud and happy to explain; he keeps the story for her ears.

Beautiful love! sinless pride! even the angels might look with longing upon an affection so pure and holy.

### CHAPTER III.

#### EXPERIENTIAL.

PHIL won't confess that he is homesick, though his letters both look and sound as if the boy wrote them with tears in his eyes; for in spite of his attempts to make them sharp, they have a very decided minor tone all the way through. Then the homesick cry suddenly disappears, and we have glowing accents of boyish sports and frolics.

And now comes a letter which at first fills us with indignation, and then finally, in spite of ourselves, we

are laughing over it till the tears run down our cheeks. Those merciless boys have been hazing our Phil.

"What do you think these fellows did?" he writes; "they got in my room the other night somehow or other, took me out of bed, and before I could get my eyes open they had set me in a chair on top of the table; then they made me sing through every single verse of 'I want to be an Angel,' though I was almost frozen, with nothing but my night-shirt on, and my teeth chattering so I could hardly speak. I tell you, mother, if there hadn't been so many of them and I'd had a revolver, they wouldn't have got along quite so easy, (probably not!) but next year it'll be my turn, and I'll put the new chaps through in a style that won't be slow."

"Do unto others as they do to you" is the first learned of all axioms in a boy's code of morals.

Phil writes that he's got his bed "all right now; the under-sheet's tucked down, and, if he knows himself, it won't be changed again this winter." He sends us two or three specimen feathers out of the bed, with a request that we will return them soon, as he shall miss them until he gets them back again. "As for buttons," Phil writes, "what Spaulding's glue or the darning-needle won't make fast has to go undone."

In a few months Phil sends home a wail for some more new shirts; we hear the cry with amazement, knowing that he was more than amply provided. Kate thinks it wouldn't be a bad plan to go and visit her young heir, and ascertain, as Phil would say, a "thing or two" for herself.

Phil was delighted to see his pretty young mamma,

though Kate said he didn't seem to know what in the world to do with her after he had told her so. He had found out that everybody at home was well, and there was nothing more to say about them. Kate tried to gather some information from him concerning his companions and teachers; they were "all right," Phil said, and that seemed to exhaust the entire subject.

Then Kate tried the wardrobe question, but where was the use when Phil couldn't tell whether he had one shirt or a dozen? She asked if his new black suit was warm enough for winter, but Phil "didn't know; he'd never thought anything at all about it."

Kate was almost in despair when she made a discovery. "Why, Phil, what makes your bed look so queer? there's a regular camel's hump on one side of it."

"Now, mother, *please* don't go and alter that," Phil pleaded. "I just shook the feathers all up on one side, and sewed the bag down through the middle with my darning-needle; there's no use in having it spread all over like a plaster just for the sake of making the thing look nice, when I can have it as soft as a bread-and-milk poultice by managing this way."

After Phil had gone to class there was a further discovery of stacks of peanut-shells under the bed, a lot of pop-corn with husks braided together ready for use, besides any quantity of old boots, slippers, rubbers, etc. Kate set herself to work vigorously to dispose of the whole, and Phil, in consequence, became woeful over the loss of his rubbish; he "should have to buy nuts now by the bushel," he said, "to reimburse himself, as he was depending upon the shells for kindling."

He was going to clear these monuments of antiquity away some day himself, but it was too much to contemplate and execute during the same term."

Then Kate, with Phil at her side, made a raid on his wardrobe; she drew out his shirts one after the other, thin, ragged, and slazy, fit only for paper-rags.

"Phil, where in the world did you get all these miserable old things?" Kate questioned, indignantly.

"Why, mother, don't you know?" asked Phil, innocently. "Those are the nice new shirts you and Aunt Maria made me just before I came away."

"Philip Frost, are you crazy?" said Kate, in a tone slightly deeper than indignant. "Don't you know that every one of your shirts are marked right here behind?" And Kate pointed to the band where the missing cognomen was not.

"Why, mother, no fellow'd think of such a thing as looking behind for his name; besides, how could he?" Phil added, with charming masculine stupidity.

Kate was not disposed to answer a question so profound, she dropped her head and felt strongly tempted to cry; to think of all the labor she had put into these garments, making them herself because it was a pleasure to work for Phil, and because she was sure they would be nicer every way.

Phil was really troubled to see his mother looking so unhappy, and put on his thinking-cap to account for the difficulty if possible.

"I believe I've got it now," he said, after a minute's pause; "there was a fellow here last term who was always borrowing shirts of me; he gave them back clean, so I chucked them in the drawer and thought

they were all right of course. The boys said he wasn't honest, but he was a capital good-hearted fellow, and I always liked him; I'm sure I never knew till now but what they were just the same shirts," Phil added, in a tone that would have melted down into tears had he been ten years younger.

There was no help for it now, at any rate; there was nothing to do but go home and make some more.

Kate positively averred that she never saw Phil study once while she was at school, except to open his book after the bell rang for class; and yet Phil was pronounced among the first in scholarship. Happy country! happy climate! It is no longer necessary for our youths to study; we have found the royal road to knowledge.

Once only Kate heard Phil say that he "might as well expect to batter down Gibraltar with baked apples as to get Prof. Brown's lessons,—and, for his part, he wasn't going to try it."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### IS IT ORIGINAL SIN?

BUT Kate has forgotten to take Phil's measures, and the boy is growing larger every day, so we send to him for them, thinking they will be accompanied with a meek and humble apology. But not a bit of it; Phil has found out what he didn't know a few months ago, that shirts are a nice point; through them he has got-

ten hold of a masculine weapon which he may henceforth wield uncondemned over the head of defenseless woman.

"I want some decent shirts this time," he writes;—this certainly sounds very threatening, but Phil is only fencing about with his new weapon, he doesn't mean anything dangerous,—“broad, plaited bosoms, made to fit, long, and not a button on them; no cuffs; opened behind.” (Truly, very intelligible so far!) “How the deuce can I measure my own arm? no fellow could measure his own arm. I wear a fourteen-inch collar and nine and a half socks, am five feet five inches high, and weigh one hundred and thirty-five pounds; have a good moral character, and am the only son of my mother; any further information necessary to a perfect fitting shirt will be cheerfully given.”

As the directions are not exactly what we desired, we cannot commence work at present, and I conclude to make George and Sophronia a visit, especially as Sophronia has any quantity of mending which she is patiently waiting for George's old-maid sister to assist in diminishing.

As I run up the steps I hear a drum from within which assures me that the angel child is not far distant. Sophronia herself opens the door and greets me with a kiss; then I turn to speak to Charlie and call him affectionately to me, but he only answers with a stare and a louder tattoo on his drum. Sophronia, with a laugh, holds out both hands and says, “Come here, you little angel, and speak to Aunt Maria;” but the “little angel” only beats one or two vehement strokes, then drops on the floor and indulges in several spas-

modic yells, after which he sits upright, gazes at me calmly for an instant, and then repeats the same process.

Sophronia is evidently somewhat mortified, and the following dialogue takes place:

SOPHRONIA.—“Well, never mind, dear, he needn't speak to Aunt Maria until he feels better; go down to Bridget now, that's my own little angel boy.”

ANGEL CHARLIE.—“No me von't do.”

SOPHRONIA.—“Tut, tut, dear; don't talk like that to mamma; go down-stairs and Bridget'll give him a cookie.”

ANGEL CHARLIE.—“No me *von't* go down-'tairs.”

SOPHRONIA.—Well, darling, then go *up*-stairs to the nursery and ride on his horse.”

ANGEL CHARLIE, with a scream.—“No me *von't* (prolonged accent); me 'tay *here*.”

SOPHRONIA.—“Well then, love, be a good little boy and keep quiet.”

After which Sophronia endeavors to carry on a slight conversation with me, but the little angel picks up his drum, and makes such a fearful racket with it, that I find myself trying to listen with a hand behind each ear, while Sophronia is looking utterly exhausted in her endeavor to do two things at once.

I propose to run up-stairs and take off my “things.” Sophronia follows me into the hall and whispers a request that I will “go down-town with her, as she has some nice shopping to do.”

“Certainly,” I answer, glad of an opportunity to display my excellent judgment; “I should like nothing better.”

But Charlie catches a glimpse of us as we are about to leave the house, and sets up a fearful scream which presently dies down into a dismal howl; and when we think his force is nearly expended he opens again on the key-note and carries out the entire refrain, howl and all. Unfortunately, just at this point our next-door neighbor's little boy, Johnny, comes in "to 'pend an hour wiv Charlie," he says; and now Sophronia declares it is impossible for her to go; "she would never think of leaving those two children together, Charlie would be sure to get pushed downstairs." And I mentally reflect that naturally nothing of that sort *could* happen to Johnny.

And this is only the beginning. I very soon ascertain that there is to be a continual feast of this same sort of thing served up during the entire day. At night, when George makes his appearance, Sophronia is utterly exhausted, and I am ready to cry "Amen!" to that noble sentiment ascribed to an eminent statesman, "that the next thing to the d—l is a boy."

It does us all good to hear George's voice through the house, the day has been such an insufferably tiresome one. But I am filled with righteous indignation when he begins to cuddle the execrable boy, to call him "darling child," and "angel Charlie." Sophronia, too, kisses him and tells papa she "don't think he can be very well, he has been so nervous and fretful to-day;" after which the sweet child receives a perfect deluge of caresses.

At table, where all of us are obliged to wait until Charlie is helped, Phil's name is mentioned, and George says, "The great trouble with that boy, Maria,

is, that neither you nor Kate ever made him mind, you never really conquered him."

"Indeed!" I responded, helping myself to the butter, and pursing up my lips in a way that I had been trying to break myself of, knowing it to be a peculiarly old-maidish habit.

"It isn't a good plan for boys to be brought up entirely under the care of women," he went on; "they always take advantage of them in one way or another; if I should die I don't know how Sophronia would get along alone with Charlie."

"Humph!" said Sophronia, losing sight of the conditions, "I think I could manage him alone quite as well as you."

After dinner George brings forth a paper of candies, which he tells Charlie are "all for him."

The young gentleman immediately seats himself upon the floor, and proceeds to devour the contents of his little package, looking round with an air of aristocratic superiority upon us less-favored individuals. Presently Sophronia reaches out her hand, and says, "Give mamma one, darling."

"No; dey all mine," answers the lovely child, as he holds the paper tighter, and shrugs his shoulders in a way that may be very pretty in a baby, but is very disagreeable in a boy.

George laughs at the gesture, which, of course, encourages Charlie to hold on tighter than ever, while Sophronia looks up at me and says, "Isn't it very strange Charlie should be so selfish? I'm sure George isn't so, and I hope I'm not; I think I must have marked him after Phil."

"Phil?" I almost screamed.

"Why, yes," said Sophronia; "George and I think Phil is very selfish,—don't you?"

"No," I answered, decisively. "I think Phil is generous to a fault."

Sophronia laughed. "Oh, well, of course you'd think so, for you've always had the care of him."

"I can see Phil's faults as well as any one," I persisted; "but he never showed as much selfishness in his whole life as Charlie has shown here this one evening."

"Now, Maria, that's too much," said George; "of course, Charlie is only a baby, but he's got ten times as much mettle in him as Phil'll ever have."

In topics of this sort it isn't of the slightest consequence whether one sticks to the original point or not; the one point *never* to be given up is, that your child is better than anybody's else.

We were fairly launched now, and I was determined to stand by Phil to the death, or all night, if necessary; but fortunately, Charlie, who had been delightfully quiet for the last five minutes, now set up a vigorous cry in consequence of having the stomachache, in consequence of eating too much candy, in consequence of having very injudicious parents. To my mind this was a simple, logical train of thought; I pursued it further, and saw how very easy it would be to bring up that child in the right way; that these two couldn't see as plainly, was simply because they belonged to that demented class against whom George used to inveigh in the days of bachelordom. How delightful it was to me to draw a mental comparison between Charlie and

Phil, especially upon the one point of "bringing up"! I felt an inward satisfaction to the very tips of my fingers.

Next day Master Charlie favored us with the same tunes and prolonged variations. I began to have a queer throbbing about my head, and to feel that insanity might be possible even in such a well-regulated family as ours. The very thought of enduring this for days, weeks, and even months,—I wondered some such punishment had not suggested itself to Dante for his "Inferno." In the afternoon I boldly and courageously picked up my work and went upstairs to my own room, where the following treasonable ideas cropped forth in spite of my most Christian endeavor to repress them.

Idea No. 1. It is very possible for a child to have too much love.

No. 2. I question if it is exactly wise, whatever his conduct, to pad and bolster him up continually with "my love," "my darling," "angel child," etc., *ad infinitum*, as he may not be able always to fall against such soft cushions.

No. 3. I wonder if it is absolutely necessary to his happiness that he should be made to feel that the whole world was created for him alone? and closely allied to this is the reflection, how disappointed he will be when he finds it isn't.

No. 4. I wonder if it is strictly kind on the whole to permit children to feel that there are no opposing elements in life? and then it occurs to me that parents might convey this idea more tenderly than brickbats or policemen.



No. 5. Might it not be a good thing occasionally to consider a child's future, morally and physically, as well as his present happiness and inclination?

No. 6. Would a little self-control even in a child be a dangerous thing, especially as people in general are so absurd that they object to being ill-used by any but their *own* children?

No. 7. Finally and consistently, I thank God that He has so wisely ordained the family relations that a mother's love is able to compass all infirmities of mind or body.

A call from below tells me that Kate has sent Madge with a note: grandpa is sick and they wish me to come home immediately. I am so glad!—oh, dear, no, not that grandpa is sick, but that I have a good, reasonable, authentic excuse for not staying my week out. I give Madge my satchel to carry, bid Sophronia good-by, Charlie I dare not interfere with; but just as I open the front door that "angel" sends down an immense ball from the upper story, which strikes on my head, breaks my ostrich plume in two, shatters my temper, then bounds against the large mirror in the hat-stand, which I am glad—yes, glad—it breaks. Sophronia rushes to the head of the stairs and I pass out, for not even a promise of Paradise could tempt me to stay another hour.

"Yes," I said to myself, as I walked home, indulging in a pursed mouth, too, as there was no one to see me, "Phil was always a very different boy from that. Charlie is absolutely vicious, while Phil is only careless, heedless, indifferent——" But we had reached home before I had finished the list.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE BOY-MAN.

THE house is heavy with sorrow, for grandpa is really dangerously ill; Phil has been sent for, as grandpa has expressed a wish to see the boy.

It is a long, anxious night; but morning comes at last, and with it Phil. He is dusty and travel-stained, and but for our greater trouble we should be worried by the worn, exhausted look on his face.

Kate throws herself in his arms, with that beautiful dependence, that sense of protecting care, which a mother feels in presence of a strong, manly son. "Oh, Phil, I am so glad you came right away!" she says, as she holds him closer.

"And I am very glad you sent for me, mother dear," Phil answers; "but I did not get your telegram until after the stage had left, and had to walk ten miles to the station."

Dear Phil! How sweet it was to have him with us! to know that there was some one strong and helpful upon whom we could lean! The sense of responsibility was growing in him, and I could not but feel that this sixth sense would be of more value to him than all the other five.

Grandpa's eyes lighted up as Phil entered the room, and he seemed so much better for awhile that our hearts were filled with hope. How easily and how tenderly Phil lifted him! Kate and I looked on with

astonishment, for it had required the strength of both to move him; but to Phil grandpa appeared scarcely heavier than a child; and the dear old man seemed to delight in his strong, firm touch.

Phil rested during the afternoon, and then insisted upon sitting up at night. "It wasn't fit for his little pale mother nor for Aunt Maria," he said, "while he was strong and healthy, and it wouldn't hurt him in the least. There was no use remonstrating," Phil said, "he intended to take the entire care of grandpa at night, and then rest in the day-time; we must be systematic about it, or everybody would get sick."

Could this be *our* Phil? so resolute, so strong, even *systematic*! We very soon found out that Phil's plan was the right one; there were so many calls upon us during the day, to which only a woman could respond. We told the doctor of the boy's arrangement; he smiled approvingly, and said, "one good, loving heart was better than twenty hired nurses."

Phil wrote down the doctor's directions every day and pinned them to the wall, so that questions would be unnecessary in changing nurses, a plan which we considered admirable. Those were very proud, happy days to Kate, in spite of all the sorrow. Phil seemed to have sprung at once from boyhood to manhood: he no longer leaned on his mother's shoulder, it was she who leaned on him; the command of the house seemed his: we went and came as he bade us.

(I have often noticed that character, unlike other fruitage, develops itself quickly, spontaneously, without any previous admonition of its intentions.) There had never been anything until now to call forth Phil's

manhood, but the opportunity had come and he was equal to the occasion. We all felt the presence of a master,—young and inexperienced to be sure,—yet competent. I cannot express the happiness that this sense of reliance upon Phil produced in Kate's mind; she could talk of nothing else when we were together but the wonderful change in her boy.

George came often to the house to look in and see how his father was, but "Charlie was so apt to need attention in the night, that really he couldn't think of leaving Sophronia alone with him;" and so Phil became more and more our dependence.

The last sad hour came. Grandma sat silent and tearful by the bedside. Kate and I wandered about the house, feeling that a strong object drew us from place to place, yet unable to remember its purport when we had reached the spot. Phil alone was calm, and seemed to know with that instinctive tenderness, which in a man sometimes surpasses even that of a woman, every need of the dear suffering one. It was wonderful that he, so young, should possess such self-control. But when the physician, stepping back, said, "All is over," Phil turned and fled from the room; no one noticed his absence until we heard such agonizing sobs and groans that we looked from one to the other with anxious fears. The doctor and Kate went to Phil's room; the door was fastened; and the sobs came faster and heavier. They called, but there was no answer.

"What shall we do?" asked Kate, helplessly.

"Break the door open," answered the doctor.

"Phil has kept up so manfully that his entire nervous

system is overwrought, and just now there is no one who needs so much care."

Fortunately, the lock was not a strong one, and our good doctor did not take long to break it open. Phil had thrown himself upon the bed, and seemed perfectly oblivious of everything. "It's a severe case of hysteria; he will be all right soon, I think."

The doctor remained by his side, and in a short time Phil was with us again, strong and helpful as ever; and through all the sad days that followed, sadder and more trying even than those we had just known, Phil remained our chief support. It was he who was consulted in every arrangement, he who attended to all necessary changes, he for whom every one called, and who seemed to be needed everywhere. Dear, brave Phil, I can never forget the strength, the comfort, you were to all of us in those dark hours!

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## CHAPTER VI.

### CERTAIN OF NOTHING.

THE doctor advised Phil to remain home awhile, and we were only too glad to further his advice; the very idea of being without him again would send us off any time into a fit of melancholy. It was near the end of his school year; indeed, for that matter, of his academic course, and then we should have him home for a time, at least, until he decided what to do with himself.

Matters were adjusting themselves to this shape now; Phil was emphatically his own master, and it was for him to determine henceforth what should be done with "that boy."

The house seemed very lonely to all of us now that grandpa had gone away. The absence of that sweet, tranquil life left a great vacancy in the home. We had never supposed, never thought, that grandpa did very much, but now that he was gone, it seemed as if, in his own quiet way, he had done all that everybody else left undone, and of which no one had thought of taking note. It was he who had made our little yard so pretty and attractive, who watered the plants, who took care of the bird, who locked up the doors at night, who looked over all the bills to see that they were right, and who more than once detected errors in them. It was he who kept the thousand little things about the house straight which are continually getting out of order. Indeed, it seemed as if there were not a spot on the premises which did not bear silent testimony to his unnoticed, unobtrusive handiwork.

How we observed all these things now which had seemed so trivial before! But above all, how we missed his dear presence; the genial, quiet tones, the innocent joke which he never lost an opportunity to perpetrate; the calm, unruffled face that was never disturbed by the daily events of our more mortal lives!

We did not know, until afterward, how much strength we had gathered for our own petty conflicts from that content and tranquil life, so calmly poised, so strong even in its weakness.

We were talking it all over with tearful voices as we

sat together that evening, scarcely more than a week since the loved presence left us, though it seemed a long-drawn, weary month; we wondered more than once we had not realized that we had been entertaining an angel visitant. But so it is through life; our spiritual guides are but mortals, and we do not recognize their sweet influence, nor their heavenly message, until they are gone from us forever.

Perhaps it is for this God calls them,—that we may spell out through the darkness what we would not stop to read in the clear light of noonday.

Phil had spent all his evenings so far at home with us, but to-night we had urged him to go out and seek recreation.

We had written to Uncle Philip of the genuine strength of character his namesake had developed, and that very afternoon had received from him a letter full of gratified delight, and expressing, to our indignation, a belief that “something could yet be made of Phil after all.” As if we had ever doubted for an instant that he would some day—mark!—some day be the best, the bravest, and noblest man in the world!

It was growing late, and still Phil did not come. Grandma had retired long ago, and Kate and I were becoming anxious. More than once we went to the door and looked up and down the street; the lamps were dotted here and there like the bright colors in a patch-work quilt, and all the intervening spaces grew more and more dark and dreary.

Kate walked back and forth in the parlors with nervous, anxious step.

It was near midnight. Presently the church-bell

near by began to strike the hours. Kate clutched my arm. “Oh, Maria, something has surely happened to him—my Phil! the only one left to me in all the world.”

We are very apt to forget, as we mourn our lost ones, that the living too have some claim upon us, and that one day we may stand with equally sorrowing hearts by the side of those whom in our grief we quite forget now.

Suddenly we heard footsteps outside; we both sprang to the door, but neither of us could open it: it was evidently held by a stronger hand than ours. We looked at each other in consternation; not a word was spoken outside the door, though the movements and shuffling indicated that there must be at least two or three persons there. We should certainly have grown timid and afraid but for the thought that this was in some way connected with Phil. It was a long moment to us, but still it could not have been more than a moment, when the vestibule-doors closed with a slight bang, and Kate and I eagerly pulled open the inner ones.

Down on the floor in a very ungainly heap lay Phil. Instantaneously with this knowledge came the conviction, by virtue of those sickening fumes, that he was “dead drunk.” Kate pulled the cap away which had partially covered his countenance, and we both looked at him without the power to speak a single word.

His face, which was ordinarily like a woman’s in fairness and beauty of complexion, seemed bloated to twice its natural size, while every vein was distended and bore a purplish hue, which rendered him an almost

frightful object. His hair pointed in every direction; his neck-tie was gone, and his shirt and clothes generally were in a shockingly demoralized condition.

I was the first to speak. "We must get him into the house," I said; and though I spoke very low, it seemed as if the words screamed themselves back again into my ear.

"Yes," Kate answered, and attempted to lift Phil's head. He opened his eyes, drunken and bloodshot as they were, and looked at his mother without the least suggestion of recognition, while he muttered over two or three words in drunken gibberish.

We both attempted to lift him now, and this seemed to rouse Phil into a momentary state of half-consciousness, just sufficient to let him know that he was being moved without his own volition. The thought seemed to anger him, for in an instant he lifted his arm and struck,—not heavily, to be sure, he was too powerless for that, but the blow came upon Kate's shoulder.

"My God!" she cried, as she dropped on the lower stair in the hall and buried her face in her hands, "let me die now!—now! I would not live another hour!"

"Hush, dear," I whispered, as I pushed the inner doors to and locked them, for we had fairly dragged Phil inside the hall, where he lay in the same stupid condition we had first seen him; "he didn't know it was you; he would sooner have killed himself than have done that thing." I did not dare to mention the thing myself, it was so horrible.

"Oh, Maria, you cannot understand—my God! my God! let me die *now*!" she pleaded in broken tones,—

tones that came from a heart suffering agony such as it had never before known.

The tears rained down my own face; it seemed as if death and darkness and destruction were about us everywhere. I felt myself powerless to comfort Kate. It must be to her indeed an anguish worse than I could know, even with all my love and sorrow. "If they had only brought him home dead," she murmured, "that would have been joy by the side of this."

Poor Kate! poor Phil! poor me! never will two of us forget that night as we sat and watched its long hours out, eagerly looking for some trace of intelligence in the face before us. Toward morning I persuaded Kate to go into the parlor and lie down on the sofa; then I tried to rouse Phil, and, after making various attempts, he at last looked back at me with an expression which signified he knew he had seen me somewhere before in his life. I might have been an old nurse-girl, perhaps; at any rate, I had crossed his path somewhere. Acting upon this I persuaded him, and helped him to rise; then I enforced the necessity of his getting to his room somehow. This was not such an easy task, but I assisted him, and Phil seemed docile, muttering all the way what sounded to me very much like algebraic formulas, and just about as intelligible. Never was I so thankful as when I had got him to his door. He did not lay himself upon the bed, he tumbled on it; I spread a blanket over him and left him. For the second time in my life I fervently thanked God that I was a spinster.

Who can predict one hour in advance, for a boy, what the next will bring forth? We should have said

that never in his life had Phil been so morally strong as now; never had we felt so secure in his goodness and strength of purpose, and yet, everything he had ever done grew pale in the presence of this last act.

Next day—but it did not seem next day to us, it was all a long, frightful, dreary night—Kate was sick, just as I had expected she would be. Phil was still sleeping, as if a hundred years of unbroken slumber lay before him, and I was decidedly out of sorts. We thought best to send for Dr. Gilman, hoping that we might, by this amiable deception, conceal Phil's real condition from grandma's eyes.

The doctor came; dear, kind, wise old man! and Kate told him with broken voice and a broken heart the whole story.

Now Dr. Gilman had seen Phil through all our trying days, and knew how strong he could be; moreover, he had come to love the boy, as everybody else did who had anything to do with him. I trust I am not betraying any weakness or partiality in making this statement, although I think I have heard parents and relatives make the same in reference to other boys.

The doctor looked sad, but by no means hopeless or despairing.

"My dear Mrs. Frost," he said, "you must not be so utterly cast down, even by this great offense. Phil's whole nervous system, from its recent continued restraint, is in an unusually excitable condition. Some of the most reckless deeds of which the world knows have been committed immediately after great sorrows. The nervous energies and the will-power are in a relaxed state, and it is dangerous for a man to be placed in the

way of temptation at such a time. Believe me, Phil will come out all right, and I doubt if he ever touches another drop of liquor again."

"But he struck me," said poor Kate, with a tremulous voice, to whom facts were stronger than philosophy.

"Yes, I shall tell him of that," said the doctor.

"No, no!" pleaded Kate; but the doctor rose and left the room, saying, "I have no remedy equal to it."

In little more than half an hour he returned, and said he "thought, if Kate felt able, it would do both her and Phil more good to see each other and have a talk, than anything else he could suggest."

"You too, Maria," Kate said, as she started; and so we both entered Phil's room.

The good doctor by some sort of magic had completely metamorphosed the boy. Phil was sitting up in bed, looking vastly more as if he were recovering from a fever than a drunken debauch.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, with a subdued yet glad cry, as if he had been separated from her for months; and then as Kate flew to him and would have kissed him, he buried his face in the pillows, sobbing, "I shall never dare ask you to forgive me. Oh, mother! mother! how could I?" There was no answer; we were all crying, and no one had any voice to speak for the few moments that followed. Then Phil insisted that his mother should show him where he had struck her, and he kissed the little black-and-blue spot over and over again, promising each time "that if there were such a thing as honor left in him, he would never touch another glass of wine." And we all believed him.



"Mother," he said, as he threw himself back on the pillow, "I do believe the devil is after me; he seems to like to have it out with a fellow like me every time he can get a chance."

"But you mustn't give him the chance, dear Phil," Kate answered; "for of course he will make the most of his opportunities."

"I meant to be so good," said poor Phil, breaking down; "it's a mighty hard road to travel anyhow," he added, with a heavy sigh. "I wonder what becomes of all the poor devils," Phil went on, multiplying his highness at a fearful rate, "who don't have any dear little mothers to help them around right at last?"

"Nor any mother's God to pray to, Phil."

"I don't understand you now," he answered; "you're my deity, little mother, and you know it, too." And he threw his arms around her and kissed her.

"Oh, Phil, don't think this makes me happy," said Kate. "You don't understand because you *won't* understand, not because you *can't*. There are some things, Phil, that we understand with our hearts, not with our intellects." Phil knew that his mother seldom attempted argument. "My love for you has taught me more of God's love than all the books I ever read in my life. I'm sure, Phil, I don't love you because you're the *best* boy in the world."

"I should think not," said Phil.

"But because—well, really, I don't understand exactly why, but I know that I do, and would lay down my life for you any time."

"Oh, no, mother dear," broke in Phil; "not for a rascal like me."

"Yes, I would for just you," insisted Kate; "and that's the way I understand God's love."

I saw the humble look creep over Phil's face, and then I left them, for I thought he wanted to be alone with his mother.

"Boy of the nineteenth century," I muttered, "even the counsels of God must be made clear to your understanding, though that understanding is befogged by a recent drunken spree."

"It matters not how young, how ignorant, how inexperienced, how finite, God must be comprehended in all *His* magnitude before you can trust Him. In short, you must *be* God before you can trust God."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### "TAIN'T THE HEAD WE GO BY."

KATE and myself are very much alarmed because of Phil's atheistic tendencies; we therefore put our heads together and conclude the best thing we can do is to invite the minister to dine with us, informing him privately, by note, that we wish him to converse especially with Phil, and see if he cannot remove some of his "peculiar ideas."

Bless us! how ignorant we were! We never dreamed that these "peculiar ideas" were the fashion; as surely and as certainly the fashion with young men of Phil's age as the last cut of the coat or the latest twist of the

neck-tie. We might have saved ourselves all that trouble and anxiety had we known then, as we know now, that Phil would have outgrown all such notions as naturally as he would outgrow his old clothes.

It isn't "the thing" for a young man at Phil's time of life to accept all the old dogmas and beliefs handed down from his forefathers.

It shows a want of spirit and mettle in him not to branch out on the side of reform. It is emphatically behind the age for a young fellow to be a member of the church and all that sort of thing, you know. Not being familiar with these points at that time, however, we send our invitation to the minister, and it is accepted.

Now, there is no gainsaying the fact that Dr. Barlowe is a clergyman from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet; you would know him to be one on the ferry-boat, and you would never think of calling in question his divinely-appointed apostolic right to preach the gospel to every creature; although at the same time you would be quite convinced that he would not consider it his duty to act upon that privilege. He is not a very elderly man, but he is a very grave one; his white neck-tie is immaculate, and no poor sinner would ever think of pulling at the hem of his garment, lest she might soil its perfect neatness.

Phil looked, when we introduced him to the reverend gentleman, very much as a mouse might be supposed to look when it makes the unpleasant discovery that it is caught in a trap. After the customary greetings were over, we each lapsed into an uncomfortable self-consciousness of our own diminutiveness. It oc-

curred to me that I had never seen Phil look so small and boyish before, and I felt mortified that we had asked so great a man to come and hold converse with a youth not yet out of his teens. We ventured to speak of grandpa's death, and the peaceful close of his long, beautiful life.

"Ah, indeed; I am glad to hear it," responded Dr. Barlowe, as he stroked his smooth chin; then taking out and unfolding his white handkerchief, thereby displaying its embroidered monogram, he dusted the knees of his pantaloons. Presently he reached forth his ministerial hand and took up a prettily-bound copy of the Bible which lay on the table.

"I hope you make a study of this book, young man?" he said, without looking at Phil.

There was something in the way he spoke, and in the patronizing tone, that was admirably calculated to touch a proud-spirited boy like Phil to the very quick.

"Can't say," Phil answered; and would have said more, but Dr. Barlowe was absorbed in his own reflections and went on:

"It's a grand book, a grand book, sir. There is more philosophy in it than in any system I have ever examined; more poetry than in Milton or Shakspeare; more food for reflection and meditation than you will ever again find in the same compass anywhere."

"I have been reading lately——" said Phil, aching, I could see, to express his "peculiar ideas;" but the worthy doctor went on unheeding:

"I have very little time to spend outside of my study; the larger portion of each day is consumed in the preparation of my sermons; everything else I con-

sider subordinate; and I make it a part of my life's work to refute the calumnies against this book and the teachings of this book. I have already prepared my sermons for several years ahead, and should be very glad, indeed, young man, to have you listen to the course. I trust I shall be able to prove satisfactorily the validity of each one of the books in the Old Testament," said the doctor, with a smile of perfect self-complaisance.

"About the book of Job——" said Phil.

"Yes," responded the doctor, "I am aware that there is considerable controversy as to whether such an individual ever existed, or whether he is merely the subject of man's creation. I shall reach that point," continued he, slowly, "in about—yes—about six months, I think."

"Ah, indeed," said Phil, who, seeing it was of no use to try to talk *with* the doctor, had evidently concluded to talk *at* him; "so you are going to wade through the creation and the Red Sea, and all that sort of stuff."

Kate and I looked anxious; the doctor lifted his head, for he had been gazing at the carpet in an abstracted, self-absorbed way, and now regarded Phil as if for the first time in his life he had come across an Arab or a Hottentot.

Phil, plainly, was delighted; but the doctor was much more interested in the fact that his own soundness of judgment had been called in question than that the matter could be of any vital consequence to Phil.

"Young man," he said again, as if Phil had no proper name of his own, "the investigation of this

subject is not 'wading,' as you term it; the whole matter is perfectly clear in my own mind, and before the expiration of another year I hope to establish the authenticity of the Bible record beyond dispute,—yes, sir, beyond a doubt. I have planned these sermons with great care; it will take time, sir, but I think, as I have now arranged them, that five years will embrace the whole."

Phil got up and walked into the back parlor, coughing violently. Kate and I looked at each other with blank expression; could we listen to this sort of thing for five years to come?—the husk without the kernel,—and what if we should die before the expiration of that time? Alas! we should leave the world without ever having heard a satisfactory explanation of events in which we had always believed as we had believed in a mother's love. Perhaps it was all right, and perhaps the good doctor was doing God service, but I doubt if he or we ever know till we get to the other side.

After dinner the doctor brushed his hat with his initialed handkerchief, dusted his pantaloons, and said "he should be very happy to remain longer, but that he had an engagement which would prevent his doing so."

As the door closed after him, Phil turned on his heel, saying, "The old——" but Kate sprang at him and clapped her hand over his mouth, so that the last word, which was a bad one, came slipping out between her fingers in an exceedingly mutilated condition.

"Mother, I *must* say something bad," insisted Phil; "he's a consummate, confounded——" but again Kate's hand was upon his lips.

"What does such a—there, never mind, I *won't*

say it," said Phil, checking himself; "but what does *he* know about the world, or life, or human nature, or anything else that he ought to know if he undertakes to make men better? Why don't he take off that white neck-tie and that sanctimonious expression, and go and find out what men are doing?" said Phil, getting excited. "What if I were simpleton enough to hear him preach these five years' sermons, do you suppose I'd be any better fellow when he'd got through than I am now? No! every time he laid down an argument it would arouse all the devil in me not to give it back to him. After all, it ain't the head we go by half as much as we pretend. He don't care whether he does a fellow any good or not so he ventilates his own pet ideas. He don't preach the gospel, he preaches Dr. Barlowe, and what the Almighty don't know he'll tell him."

"Phil, stop!" said Kate; "I will not have you talk so. You are getting dreadfully demoralized; you shall go back to school to-morrow."

"Just one thing more," persisted Phil; "I did want to get into a regular hand-to-hand argument with him, then you should have seen how I could holler him down. I tell you there's nothing like pitching your voice high when you're on an argument; I've tried it, and I can scream any fellow's ideas to the winds."

"Good-night, Phil," said Kate, as she kissed the saucy boy; "I am going up-stairs to pack your trunk."

Kate and I bemoaned ourselves not a little over the greatest effort we had ever made to convince Phil of the error of his ways. That Dr. Barlowe had lost a golden opportunity we felt convinced, and we were

perfectly satisfied that he was not the man to affect a boy like Phil, whatever his opportunities might be.

The doctor had but recently come among us, and as he supported a fine reputation for learning and ability, we had felt ourselves bound to admire him, or betray a great lack of appreciation.

We have come to the conclusion now with Phil, that "it ain't the head we go by half as much as we pretend."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### REVERSE ESTIMATES.

BUT school-life has apparently lost its charm for Phil. He writes that "it grows more and more insufferable every day, and as he only needs to make up on Latin, he thinks he will come home and take it in private tuition." I know we have Phil's deepest interest at heart, but to have him home again, and as well as not, is a privilege we cannot deny ourselves. Moreover, there is Miss Sissons across the way, a highly-educated and rather strong-minded lady, who, we think, could be persuaded to give Phil the necessary instruction. Miss Sissons is not a *very* young lady, she must be Phil's senior by ten years at least, and Phil is—bless me! how that boy grows!—Phil is not far from nineteen; therefore we have no anxiety on that score. We propose this arrangement to Phil upon his return home. He "would rather Miss Sissons were Mr. Sissons," he

says; "but still, if she's perfectly competent, he doesn't know as it makes much difference, after all."

We invite the lady over to spend the evening, as we have often done before during Phil's absence; he is very much impressed with her learning, and concludes to begin at once.

For the first time in our lives we see him study, actually study; indeed, he seems to think of nothing else, and throws considerable energy into the task.

"He never had such a teacher," he says; "if he hasn't perfectly mastered his lesson Miss Sissons is sure to drag his ignorance into the light."

Phil is growing unconsciously more gentle and refined: he gets along with two chairs instead of four; he asks us, when he don't forget it, "if cigar-smoke is offensive." To be sure, he doesn't stop to wait for an answer, but goes on lighting and puffing just the same; still, it's pleasant to have him ask.

Kate and I congratulate ourselves upon having done a bright thing for once in our lives, in securing to Phil the influence which he seemed most in need of. The boy has taken to reading poetry and history, and even sits up half the night to commit to memory passages from Shakspeare. He seems to be maturing very rapidly into a somewhat grave and serious manhood, and nothing gives him such undisguised joy as to be told that he looks several years older than he really is. He wears high hats now altogether, and carries a cane; moreover, the day has come when Phil's moustache is visible to our eyes as well as his; we cannot say whether all these preparations for promoting the growth of the beard, with which his bureau is covered nowadays,

have anything to do with it or not; we only know that Phil is very anxious concerning it, and that his tongue or fingers are constantly doing service to convey to his mind the intelligence of its existence. One would think that after finding it in its place every hour in the day, and every minute of the hour, he would at last become satisfied of its permanence and stability; but no! this item of personal property, of which even the midnight assassin has never thought it worth while to deprive a man, is altogether too valuable to its possessor to be lost sight of for a single instant. The only wonder is that, under the circumstances, with this care resting continually upon his mind, Phil manages to get any sleep at all.

Phil and Miss Sissons have commenced a course of reading in addition to the Latin, and Phil waxes every day increasingly eloquent over the lady's superior attainments.

But of late a change is apparent: the boy has grown so moody and fitful that it is difficult nowadays to suit his whims; occasionally he is the boy Phil once again, and almost reckless in his merriment; then he is grave and despondent, and no amount of coaxing can rouse him from a state of desperate gloom. Moreover, he has lost his appetite and simply nibbles at his breakfast; and when we ask "why he doesn't eat more," he insists he "has made a hearty meal." Besides all this, he has grown indifferent to the hour of recitation, and loiters about the house, as if vainly endeavoring to make up his mind to go. I prognosticate, after consultation with several medical works,

a genuine case of typhoid fever unless something can be done to alter the present state of things; grandma suggests that Phil shall drink composition-tea to quicken his appetite, while Kate, in alarm, takes Phil aside and questions him eagerly, determined to find out whether it is his liver or his head which so affects him. Alas! she informs me afterward, with tears in her eyes, "it is neither, but his heart." "Is it possible," I exclaimed, "that a boy can be placed nowhere under heavens without being in danger of some sort!"

Kate goes on to say: "Phil has offered himself to Miss Sissons and been refused; he told me, with tears in his eyes, that he should never marry now at all; he should stay at home and be my boy forever."

"Humph!" I respond, "that's all nonsense! You won't be able to keep him from getting married when he's fairly old enough to think about it."

"You wouldn't say so, Maria, if you could hear Phil talk," Kate answered. "The poor boy is all broken down; he says he shall never love any one again, never in his life."

"But didn't you tell him how much older Miss Sissons is?" I interrupted.

"Yes," Kate replied; "but Phil says love has nothing to do with age. What hurts him the most of all is, that Miss Sissons told him she was almost old enough to be his mother."

"Good!" I exclaimed, greatly relieved; "I'm glad enough she said that. I should have been angry at her if I'd thought she led Phil on under any false pretenses."

"Phil says she told him he would thank her one of these days for doing him so great a kindness as to re-

fuse him now, and when a genuine love came, he would find out that this was only a fancy."

"Sensible girl!" I answered.

"Phil don't think so; he says Miss Sissons is cold and heartless, and he'd give anything in the world to forget her, but he never shall."

"No, never!" I said, and knowing the tenacity of man's affection, I had a right to say it.

Phil seems to be immensely relieved now that "the cat is out of the bag," and there is no necessity for concealing his real emotions. Henceforth he sneers at woman by the wholesale; she is a "snare and a deceiver;" he swears he will never, so long as he lives, have anything to do with her again; in short, at eighteen he is "done with woman." And now he repudiates everything that bears the least impress feminine.

Do we ask Phil's opinion about a book: "Oh, it's well enough for a woman to read," he answers; but if the author is actually a woman, Phil refuses to touch it with the tip of his finger. Or, if after long persuasion he is induced to take it up, he reads it with bursts of laughter at the close of every sentence,—“such twaddle! such nonsense! such inconsistency!” he assures us “only a woman could have thought of anything so absurd.” He refuses to listen to articles from the religious papers, “because,” he says, “they are made up of woman's stuff and nonsense.”

Kate and I receive all this in the true spirit of meekness. It *may* be insulting, but we try not to know it. We are sorry for Phil, and willingly permit these slight explosions, believing that expression will act as a safety-



valve; moreover, a moderate observation of human nature has shown us that there is no such relief for a real or fancied wrong as inflicting one somewhere else. (Phil is not the first man who has tried to wreak vengeance for his follies upon the sex which he adored but a few hours previous. /

And now, that I come to think of it, it seems to me I have heard it hinted somewhere that young men in their teens are very apt to fall in love with young ladies considerably more advanced than themselves in years. That they usually get over it there is small doubt; most of us get over the measles, and, as a general thing, feel all the safer for having had them.

( Truly, the *genus homo jilted* is a law unto himself. /

## CHAPTER IX.

### FAR FROM CLEAR.

PHIL wanders about the house in the most unsatisfactory manner, refusing to make up his mind to do anything; he thinks now it would be nonsense to go to college, although at the same time there would be great satisfaction in proving to Miss Sissons that he could be her peer in intellect if not in years. Phil declares he would go into business at once if he could get hold of his own capital.

I suggest that "perhaps it would be a good idea to

learn something about business first;" but Phil says "that's all nonsense; the best way to learn is to 'go in' and get your knowledge with your experience. All a man wants nowadays is a quarter of a million or so to give him a start,—after that he's all right."

The bare possibility of having this boy loaf about the house for the next two or three years is perfectly insupportable. In my own mind, however, knowing Phil's characteristics, I do not regard such an event as even probable; but Kate, more easily alarmed, writes to Uncle Philip to know if the time has not almost arrived for him to fulfill his promise and take Phil into business with him. That individual responds that "he is perfectly willing to take Phil as a clerk, but he could never think of such a thing as giving him an interest in the concern until he had got through sowing his wild oats, and had made up his mind to settle down into a respectable member of society."

Phil is enraged; he declares "he'll never go into business with Uncle Philip now anyway, he don't care what. Uncle Philip has never forgiven him for digging up his bulbs, and thinks he'll be at the same old tricks again." Phil furthermore adds "that that's the worst of having anything to do with relatives, they never *will* realize that you're grown up and treat you decently."

By-and-by Phil informs us that "he has a splendid chance to make money if he only had a little to start with." He thinks "any smart man ought to make a fortune in six months or a year nowadays; it was well enough in old times to get it slowly, but a fellow must be pretty stupid in these days if he don't get rich at

the outset, and then have the rest of his life to enjoy it in."

Kate is finally persuaded to advance a snug little loan, which Phil immediately proceeds to invest in oil stock. Having spent his money he can do nothing now but wait for results, growing every day more and more impatient and anxious; occasionally our good-natured Phil is even irritable, and we wish from the bottom of our hearts that he might know the consequence of his speculation, good, bad, or indifferent, for the hardest task of all for Young America is the task of waiting; he will *do* anything,—brave any dangers, overcome all obstacles, but he cannot, will not,—wait.

In spite of all this, however, Phil *did* wait, because he couldn't help himself. He came home one day with a face as long as a goatee and moustache stretched out to their maximum length could make it. He threw himself on the sofa with a very bad word in his mouth; not blasphemous exactly, but still bad.

"Philip Frost!" said Kate, as she went toward him with the old gesture of putting her hand over his lips.

"Don't bother me, mother," said Phil, impatiently; "I'm out of sorts to-day."

Now it isn't in human nature to keep still after being spoken to like that, so Kate answered, "You're remarkably civil, Phil, I must say."

"The devil I am," was the respectful rejoinder.

I ran in from the kitchen to see what was the matter; grandma dropped her knitting and looked in speechless astonishment over her spectacles. Kate was evidently struggling with a whole tornado of sighs and

tears and groans, while Phil, the uncivil fellow! lay with his face buried in the sofa pillow, utterly oblivious of the fact that we three were all looking at him very much as we should look at a stray beast from Barnum's menagerie which might suddenly make its appearance among us.

Whatever Phil had been, and whatever words he had used, he had certainly never before spoken to his mother like this; I felt sure his better nature would come to him, and it did just as I had finished taking the pies out of the oven, or I might never have been able to record the circumstance.

"Mother," said Phil, suddenly, giving himself a great flout, and lifting his face out of the pillow, "do you suppose I'm the worst fellow that ever lived?"

"Why, no," said Kate, hesitatingly; "no,—not at all."

"Oh, dear, why didn't you say 'yes,' then I should have known you didn't expect anything of me? Here I've gone and lost your money, and treated you like a boor, and altogether I don't think I'm fit to live another hour," said poor Phil, burying his face once more in the pillow.

Phil hadn't yet learned that it is only an ordinary custom of fallen humanity to treat those worst whom one most injures.

Kate went over and sat by her boy, and slipped her fingers through his hair, as she asked, gently, "Is it true, Phil? is the money lost?"

"Yes," he answered, with something between a moan and a groan.

"It wasn't very much, you know, Phil," said Kate;

"not so much but that you can pay me back again some day. I'm glad just now that you're not twenty-one, and that this doesn't happen to be the bulk of your capital."

"It's no virtue in me that it isn't," said Phil; "I should have swamped the whole thing if I'd had it. I wonder," he added, meditatively, "if a fellow can't learn anything at all without getting his head bumped continually?"

"Young folks think old folks are fools, old folks know young folks are," said a pleasant voice from the corner.

"That's so, grandma," answered Phil, in his own good-natured way; "but I'm not sure but the bumps do us good after all; I know I'm an ever-so-much more sensible fellow than I was twenty-four hours ago."

"Show us your proofs," said I, laughing.

"The proof is," Phil answered, "that I'm going to try and clerk it for Uncle Philip."

"Good!" we exclaimed, unanimously.

True to his word Phil went, and we are once more without him. And now we breathe easier, for we believe that Phil is permanently settled. To finally be in business with Uncle Philip has been looked upon by us for years as the end of all things in this life for our boy. But experience proves that we move in circles, not straight lines, and it by no means follows because a man starts off on a horizontal plane that he will necessarily continue a direct path to the end; ten to one he'll run up against a stump and swing around to where he started from.

As not even yeast is always sure to rise, so we ought not to be surprised that Phil occupies a very humble position in Uncle Philip's employ. That worthy gentleman, albeit he is the oldest of our family, is a very stiff and crank individual; indeed, Kate and I have often wondered why it is that all the men in our family possess certain decided weaknesses and peculiarities, while the women are singularly exempt.

After being away three months, Phil writes:

"MOTHER DEAR,—I can't stand it, and I won't; Uncle Philip is a regular tyrant; if I don't do everything just exactly so, he's sure to find fault. Both he and Aunt Agnes are constantly on the look-out lest I shall do just the same things now I did eight years ago. Confound relatives! I hate them all! that is, I mean everybody outside of our house. The governor tries to make me understand by every means in his power that I'm not to be his heir; and goodness knows I don't want to be. He may give his old stoves and tin kettles to anybody he likes for all I care; I sha'n't starve if I never get a red from him. Anybody'd think, to hear him talk, that he never was a youngster himself, never made any mistakes, but always knew exactly the bee-line to success in everything. Somehow he's got hold of that little speculation job, and I'm under a constant dribble of lecturing about the way the 'fool and his money are soon parted,' and that the reason we young chaps don't make anything nowadays is, 'because we're all the while slipping our heads in nooses, and taxing our whole ingenuity to get them out again.' I don't say but what he's

right there. I used to think Uncle Philip was such a tip-top man, but, bless me! I believe Uncle George would be preferable, and you know I never wasted much love on him.

"Mother dear, I *am* trying to be good and patient, just to please you, but it's about the hardest thing I ever tried to do. I used to think when I was a little boy that as soon as I was grown up I'd be good of course, as I supposed all grown people were, but I'll be hanged if it ain't just as hard now as it ever was.

"Your loving, troublesome boy,

"PHIL."

There was no denying that he was "troublesome;" not even Kate herself ventured to ignore that last adjective; but, of course, Philip was to blame; almost any one, we felt sure, nowadays, could get along with such a good-natured, obliging fellow as Phil. Kate wrote her boy a good, motherly letter, and tried to tone him down, but before it got there Uncle Philip and he had had a genuine quarrel, and to our delight (I must confess the weakness) he was home to dine with us two days afterward.

"Phil," said Kate, after dinner, in the most authoritative tone she could assume, "the best thing for you now is to follow out your original plan and enter college immediately."

"The truth is, mother," said Phil, as he detected the slightly reproving tone, "you're disappointed in me, aren't you? Come now, be honest and confess!"

"Well, yes," Kate answered, "if I must tell the truth, I am a little——"

"Oh, dear! yes," Phil interrupted, with a heavy sigh, as he rested his elbows on his knees; "to tell the truth, I'm disappointed in myself. I'm not a bit the sort of a fellow I meant to be. There's another Philip Frost who's always about six feet in advance of me, and whom I have been trying to catch up with all my life. *He's* a splendid fellow; he never does anything wrong, never fools away his mother's money, never says 'the devil!' never hangs around, but has something to do and does it promptly; he is always accomplishing what I am only dreaming about. Hang it!" said Phil, jumping up, "if it wasn't for his confounded shadow I think I might get ahead in the world. Now, mother, I call you, Aunt Maria, and grandma to witness that I begin to-morrow to study medicine."

"Medicine!" we almost screamed, in tones indicative of anything but delight.

"Phil," I remarked, "while you're making yourself jack-of-all-trades be careful to see you're master of one."

"Aunt Maria, you're always sound on the preach," said that young gentleman by way of reply.

PART III.

WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE CONSEQUENCES?

## CHAPTER I.

### FACTS INTERSPERSED WITH "PREACH."

I THINK I have seen it somewhere stated that man is a "homogeneous, heterogeneous biped;" and if not, I know of no other explanation equally lucid to account for his consistent inconsistencies. / Confidentially—did ever a woman understand a man, anyway? I trow not.

And now we are all older, and the years claim us in spite of ourselves; no one asks Phil in these days whether he is of age: he carries the insignia to that honor in his face,—on his upper lip principally. Phil has voted once for President, and for a year previous, in preparation for the same, wore a high white beaver, which, at a distance, looked like the dome of a small Turkish mosque. Since we last talked about him the boy has had quite a career of his own,—he studied medicine just as he said he should, and considerably longer than we thought he would,—*i.e.* for six months. Why he should have chosen medicine none of us could tell, unless because of his extreme unfitness for the profession.

During the process of Phil's incubation into medical science his room was transformed into a most ghostly habitation. We grew as accustomed to the society of skulls and skeletons as to that of our own pet kittens. It was with difficulty, however, that we could persuade grandma that the whole thing was a most Christian pro-



ceeding; she neither could, nor would approve of anything so heathenish as having dead folks' bones set up in the same room where Phil slept. "It wa'n't Christian," grandma said, "she knew it wa'n't."

But the greatest difficulty to contend with was Phil himself; he had the hipo during all those six months, and kept us in a continual state of worry and anxiety concerning him. He knew he had heart-disease, every symptom corresponded exactly; then his lungs were affected, and he managed somehow to get up a dismal cough, and have night-sweats, which almost any one would have had with a skeleton on one side of his bed, a skull on the other, and all sorts of fearful apprehensions to keep him company; then it changed to scrofula and liver-complaint, and last of all a cancer; by the time he got to that, Kate and I had learned that the best thing we could do was to laugh at him.

"I'll bet anything, mother," said Phil, indignant, "that you or even Aunt Maria would get hipohi if you should go into the minutiae of every disease under the sun. I hate the confounded thing, anyway," he added, laughing, "and have only stuck to it for the last two months because I was ashamed to give it up; now that the truth is out, I am going to throw the whole thing overboard this very day."

"Oh, Phil! Phil!" began Kate, "when *will* you ever settle down?"

"Never!" Phil answered, half despondingly. "But, mother, you needn't think I'm the only fellow in the world who doesn't 'settle down;' I know at least a dozen chaps who have been in four times as many different occupations as I have; besides, it's old foggyish

at my time of life to talk about 'settling down;' as if I must be chained to a rock like Prometheus for the rest of my life!" said Phil, who had taken to quoting the classics.

"Like who?" asked grandma.

"Oh, an old fellow who stole some kindling and a match to light his fire, and got chained up to pay him for it," answered the naughty Phil.

The next day the boy announced to us his final determination to pursue law as a *lifelong* profession. "It was the easiest of anything," he said, "and he could get the most money for the least work." To do as little as possible and receive for it double its value is the worthy goal of most of mankind.

Phil actually did remain in a law-office the requisite course of time, and must have studied some, for he managed to pass a creditable examination.

He has a fine office of his own now, and his "shingle is out;" that shingle, by the way, is all he has ever achieved so far in the line of his profession. He came into possession of his small capital on his twenty-first birthday, and is living on it now. Kate and I remonstrated with the lad upon furnishing his rooms so extravagantly, but he assured us that was the only way to secure rich clients, which argument crushes us logically if not actually. Besides, what can we women be expected to know about the requirements of business?

Miss Sissons married a minister,—a widower with several children,—and in consequence moved away; a circumstance for which we were none of us sorry, although Miss Sissons was a thoroughly sensible girl,

and we shall always continue to be grateful to her for saying "no!" when Phil wanted her to say "yes!"

Angel Charlie has a new brother, now several years old; this second edition is precisely like the former, with all the advantage of the other's example to cheer him on. George and Sophronia begin to wear an anxious, careworn expression, and are growing prematurely old. Sophronia says she is suffering from nervous debility, and George's physician assures him he has the liver-complaint. None of us doubt the statements for a moment: the result is obvious; the cause,—a life of ceaseless unrest and irritation; there is not one nerve in Sophronia's body which is not on the *qui vive* from morning till night; not one muscle that does not hold itself in constant readiness to spring at the least cry from the innocents. Nervous debility,—indeed!

I have more than once wondered that a really skillful physician will be satisfied to look at the mere outward manifestation of disease, that he does not more frequently search out its cause, if only for his own satisfaction and the benefit to science. It would be interesting, at least, to trace the close relationship between the mental and physical organizations. To know that often when a mother is dying of consumption the real source of her illness would be found in an undisciplined household; when a father is suddenly taken away with heart-complaint, the true explanation of the difficulty would be a dissipated and ungrateful son; when children are seized with gastric fever, indigestion, and the like, it means—indulgent parents; when young men crave strong drink, and cannot resist this disease of the appetite, its origin may be traced far back to

mamma's wondering delight that her little boy should be so fond of mustard, sauces, and highly-seasoned food; (when a maiden is troubled with palpitation of the heart and rush of blood to the head, the cause of such infirmity is not infrequently too many beaux and too much consequent excitement.) *The idea!*

What an overturning of inscriptions in our cemeteries if each slab should render a truthful account of the actual difficulty which brought the individual whose name it bears to the grave! Over this we should read, "died of o'er-vaulting ambition;" over that, "of parental indulgence;" on another, "of a foolish love-affair;" and again, "of unrequited affection." We would let the liver-complaint, consumption, and softening of the brain take care of themselves; in nine cases out of ten they would have kept their own if the heart and mind had been right. But we are digressing.

Aunt Agnes and Uncle Philip are also growing old. Philip says he "didn't intend to drive Phil from him, but he had an idea the boy was spoiled, and had always had his own way about everything, so he wanted to initiate him into life as it actually is." On the whole we can see he is sorry enough he did not pursue a little different plan with Phil, as he really needs a younger brain and a quicker step than his own.

Even Age has so many things to learn, we can only pity poor Youth, who is rapidly settling the problems of life by the thoughtless, heedless plunges which he makes in it.

"If he only knew the consequences," we say, but he doesn't know; "if he would only stop to think," but thinking is the last thing he has any idea of. Is it

strange so many are ruined? Not at all; we let them alone in just the years they most need a guiding hand; leave them to take care of themselves when they are least capable of doing so,—when passion, ambition, pride, individuality, are each asserting their supremacy; when they are able to comprehend all things, to judge of nothing; when appetite has commenced to assume its sway, and the sensuous life becomes a power of its own. Then they are too often left to grope about in the dark, until they stumble on the path that leads to sin and a wrecked manhood, or, as if by a more fortunate blunder, strike the road which leads to purity and virtue. (It matters little who pins on the unthinking baby's bib, or who it is that spends hours to amuse its little foolish head, but it makes *all* the difference of his entire manhood who guides the precocious, sensitive boy, and *who* furnishes *his* amusement. Mothers think their work is done when the boy is physically able to take care of and look out for himself. The danger of bodily infirmities may be conquered, but moral diseases have only begun to manifest themselves.)

We did not know all this a few years ago, when we were bringing up Phil; now that he's up (I won't say brought up), I can see where we might have acted a great deal more wisely, and have given him less to find out in the street schools on the corners.

Grandma is very feeble nowadays, and it is beautiful to see Phil's kindness toward her. Phil did not start on any such plan, no indeed; he thought it very fine, several years ago, to make sport of grandma's infirmities; in fact, I think we could hardly consider him an American boy if he had not. But Kate closeted

him and had a most effective talk; a more powerful influence, however, was brought to bear from another quarter, of which we will speak by-and-by. Now Phil seems to delight in making grandma forget as far as possible that she is old; there is a strange affinity between the two, and grandma will often understand Phil's moods and whims when we, more ignorantly, brush against them. She always knows just what he would like to eat, and when. She knows, too, by a divine instinct, when he is cross, and has wisdom enough not to rub him the wrong way. She knows when he is good-humored, and meets his jest with a merrier one. (Ah! we women have to live a lifetime to learn how to deal with that strange creature—man.) If he would only fall in love with us at eighty instead of twenty, he would find us all that he desires,—amiable, patient, considerate, and discreet.)

## CHAPTER II.

### A BRILLIANT STROKE.

ON the whole we breathe easier concerning Phil; he is past twenty-one, and as yet is not ruined nor positively vicious. To be sure he plays cards, but we hope he doesn't gamble; he attends the theatre, but we believe he discriminates; occasionally he indulges in a bad word or two, but he doesn't swear—at least before us. He might have drank but for that one bitter experience, which taught him a life-long lesson; and we

are quite positive he does not speculate. Phil says he has a thousand temptations every day, which he supposes he should yield to if it were not for his dear little mother; as it is, he tries very hard to be a good boy for her sake.

(To be good for its own sake is altogether too puritanical a standard to be popular nowadays; the most we aim at is to meet the requirements of those who love us; consequently, virtue, like beauty, is capable of various definitions.)

We have one great trouble with Phil: he will smoke. If he tells an interesting story, a cigar is in one corner of his mouth, and we must listen with breathless attention or lose it all; and just as he reaches the most exciting part, he is sure to remove the cigar, leisurely, and then set us all in a commotion by knocking off the ashes upon one of our dresses or his own daintily-colored pants. But what are we to do? isn't he a man? and hasn't he a perfect right to insist upon any little peculiarities of his own? (Smoking is such a common infirmity that we have come to accept it as in the natural order of things, like influenza, chilblains, vaccination, etc., therefore we submit heroically. That is, we submit heroically to the cigars; but of late Phil has taken it into his head that a meerschaum is the proper thing. I hate the man who first thought of coloring a meerschaum.) The curtains are growing yellow, to be sure, the closets are filled in every nook with the vile odor, and the whole house smells,—yes, *smells* of tobacco, and still in the face of all these accumulated offenses Phil asks us every day to admire his beautiful pipe; if there is any greater bravery in the world than this I prefer not to see the man who dare display it.

I suppose if it should become "the thing" to smoke Cayenne pepper, we should learn, after awhile, to submit uncomplainingly, and to consider sneezing the proper remedy for sore throat, bronchitis, and toothache.

We have thought it best to move lately, which brings us nearer Phil's office and into a delightful neighborhood as well.

Phil has made the discovery that a very charming young lady passes our house every morning on her way to school. Several times of late he has loitered on the veranda for half an hour in a vain attempt to light his cigar, which thing, however, was accomplished instantly the moment she appeared in view. Kate and I pretend not to see these manoeuvres, still less would we presume to say anything concerning our observations to a young gentleman who has, long ago, "done with woman." The little maiden is not positively beautiful, but there is certainly something very sweet and interesting about her: such a quiet air of confidence and repose; such a womanly outlook from her pretty eyes if she happens to glance toward us in the morning, and such a genuine blush if Phil is to be seen anywhere around. Her mother calls on us, and we return the call; and now we have an opportunity to speak with the little woman, for one could not help recognizing a sweet, womanly element in her, and thinking of her, young as she is, with a respect which we elders do not often find ourselves called upon to bestow toward the young lady of the period. But no one would ever think of applying these words to Clara. Pretty and attractive as she is, (I doubt if she ever shook her handkerchief to

any young gentleman on the street, or talked slang with a manly air, or smoked a cigarette, or was engaged to three or four gentlemen at a time, or went to the theatre six nights out of the week, or treated half a dozen girls to ice-cream and then found she'd forgotten her porte-monnaie. And, although her hair ripples about her face in the most charming manner, she is minus the two-yard-long curls of the present mode, and I can scarcely imagine her in a pink silk, low-necked party dress. No, I am sure Clara is *not* a "girl of the period."

Kate and I leave the house with great inward satisfaction. We hardly wait for the front door to close before we both ask, "Isn't she lovely?" and then, as there is no one to respond, we proceed again, "Wouldn't it be just the thing?"

"I shall do my best to bring it about," said Kate.

"I too," I echoed; "but how shall we get them acquainted?"

"We can manage that after awhile," Kate answered, with a smile, as if she had already formed some quiet plan of her own.

We told Phil about our delightful call, and for one who considers woman "only a snare and a deceiver," he seemed strangely interested.

Next day Phil came home a little earlier than usual, and it took us but a short time to discover that he was in an unusually hilarious mood. He whistled snatches of every tune he had ever heard under the sun, mauled the cat until some one had to come to the rescue, drummed on the window with his penknife until Kate told him in a decidedly irritated tone to stop, when he turned, with a radiant smile on his face, and asked "if

she had spoken to him." He did not even inquire "why in thunder dinner wasn't ready?" Something must have happened; Kate and I were panting with a desire to learn what it was; but long experience with the masculine mind had taught us that (the cardinal virtue in dealing with its peculiarities is—patience.) It (the mind, I mean) can't and won't be hurried; it has told us so a thousand times at least. The whole story came out at table, just as we knew it would.

"Mother," said Phil, throwing a piece of meat on the brand-new carpet for kitty, "who do you think I got acquainted with to-day?"

Kate tapped my foot under the table. "A rich client, I hope," she answered.

"Nonsense!" said Phil, coloring, who is rather disturbed that he has had several subjects who have whittled away at the furniture while talking with him, "my office is getting too shabby for that."

"Well, I give it up," said Kate; "suppose you tell us."

"Why, with the pretty little girl who goes past here every morning. Smart boy!" said Phil, patting his own shoulder; "you've done it now!"

"I should think you had," we both responded, highly delighted. "How did you bring it about?"

"Oh, it was accidental," Phil answered, "purely accidental!" giving himself another pat on the shoulder. "You see I *happened* to go down the steps just as she turned the corner this morning, and then I *happened* to drop my handkerchief when I pulled out my gloves, and the little honest thing picked it up of course,—I knew she would; and when I turned back to

look after it, you see I had to speak to her, for she had it in her hand."

Whereupon Phil threw himself back in his chair and laughed as only a man can laugh.

"You're a very saucy boy. I'm sure she'd never speak to you again if she knew the whole thing was a regularly contrived plot," said Kate, inwardly pleased that Phil had really succeeded so well.

"Mother, when I was a little chap and used to do a smart thing you always commended me," pleaded Phil; "now this is the most brilliant stroke I've made for a year, and you haven't bestowed one word of praise upon me; I expected, at least, you'd kiss me half a dozen times and tell me to go on as I had begun. Well, never mind! I have the satisfaction of success and a quiet conscience to keep me company," he added, with the most complacent smile imaginable.

"For once, Phil, I do hope you may go on," replied Kate; "I am sure I sha'n't lay a straw in the way."

Foolish Kate! why didn't she say she should block it up at every step? Ay! and hedge it round about with difficulties.

After a little further acquaintance Phil begged Miss Clara's permission to call upon her, and the young lady, Phil assures us, "blushingly consented."

Kate cries "Success to you!" as Phil leaves the house with high white beaver, buff kids, pantaloons of unpronounceably delicate shade, moustache trimmed at the most fashionable barber's, and a cane lithe and graceful as the ever-memorable willow.

And now Kate and I sit down to congratulate ourselves; everything is just as we could wish, from the

dignified, aristocratic heads of the family to the little baby-sister with those same sweet, wondering eyes. We hope there'll be no opposition on the other side, we are very certain there'll be none on ours.

"She is just the sort of wife for Phil," I said.

"Yes," Kate replied; "such a wise little woman; so unlike the girls one sees nowadays; it would be just like Phil not to fancy her, after all," with a sigh, "men are such queer creatures. I wish I could have run over and put one or two extra ribbons on Clara, and frizzled her hair as other girls wear theirs. The first thing you know Phil 'll be saying she isn't fashionable enough or fast enough, for I suppose it all means the same thing."

"She's quite pretty, however," I replied, "even though she isn't always dressed in the most showy style."

"But, my dear Maria," said Kate, "pretty and good and sensible are very small affairs by the side of fast and fashionable and stylish. Haven't you heard Phil talk enough to have learned the lesson by this time? didn't he say, the other day, he wanted his wife to cut a swell, that that was one way fellows advertised their business nowadays?"

"I'm afraid, if that's the case," I said, "we sha'n't get Clara into the family, for she's the last woman one would think of making a show-block of, and hanging dresses on for a street parade; her sweet, fresh face would look like a caricature rising out of a stiff brocade. I can only imagine her in soft, sensible dresses and the whitest of muslins."

"Men talk about not being able to support a wife," Kate went on, evidently having been occupied by her



own reflections during my little harangue; ("it's all nonsense! if they'd choose the right kind of wife they could provide for her easily enough.") It wouldn't take much to support this little Clara Maynard, even though she's been accustomed to luxury all her life, for she has been educated with a view to common sense."

"I am glad you are so well pleased with your future daughter-in-law," said I, laughing; "*mothers-in-law*, as a rule, have a different reputation."

"Wait till I get her," was Kate's reply. "I only hope I may have an opportunity to prove to the world that where sons choose wisely mothers are satisfied."

"But wisdom is a goddess who changes her countenance nearly every time we look at her," I responded. "I don't suppose it follows because she is remarkably attractive to us, who are hovering around the first half-century, that she is equally alluring to a boy like Phil; probably he sets her down as a grim old maid, whom it's every young fellow's duty to snub whenever he gets a chance."

### CHAPTER III.

#### A HOPEFUL OUTLOOK.

NEVERTHELESS, affairs prosper. Phil calls on Clara more and more frequently, that is to say, once in a couple weeks, although he complains that the old folks are always in the back parlor, and he never can see her alone; besides, "he has to talk sensibly the whole time, which is a great bore."

Kate asks, with a twinkle in her eye, "why he wants to see Clara alone." And Phil blushes to his finger-tips as he stoops to pick up his handkerchief, and mutters over some unintelligible answer.

We notice that Phil's neck-ties are more subdued nowadays, and that he seems inclined to hide the rather showy watch-chain which Kate gave him on his twenty-first birthday; neither does he borrow his mother's diamond ring any more; he says "he's outgrowing his love of finery and display," and he laughs heartily at the young fellows who count their salaries by hundreds, and yet who "sport" more jewelry than the millionaires who control the money-market.

Kate and I have had our turn laughing at him, so we keep quiet now, only chuckling to ourselves at the influence which little Clara, all unconsciously, is exerting over him.

(It is our own private opinion that young ladies wield an influence second only to a mother's. It is they who furnish young men with their types of womanhood; they who raise or lower the standard of purity and truth; they who give to conversation its tone of slang or culture; they who too often pervert taste in dress, and who, by a wanton display of personal charms, provoke the look and word which father or brother is called upon afterward to resent. Mothers do well to pray for the young ladies with whom their sons associate. The power which youth and beauty, combined with feminine attractions, may exert is no slight one.) Heretofore Amanda and Miss Sissons have furnished Phil's opposing standards of womanhood. When Amanda forsook him for "another fellow," they were all "bold and heartless."

When Miss Sissons said "no!" Phil instantly despised feminine talent in whatever shape it might appear, and discarded the whole sex as eminently unworthy of any notice from his lordship. Still, Miss Sissons had done him good, both intentionally and unintentionally; she had aroused in him a taste for literature, had taught him how to think, to study, to discriminate, and, whatever Phil might affect, she had really inspired him with genuine respect for feminine ability. Now, sweet Clara Maynard seems the one just fitted to touch Phil's moral nature; he is always better after he has been to spend an evening with her; there is a quiet, subdued tone about everything he does or says for a day or two afterward. The naughty words have evidently been packed up and put away, for Phil hasn't given them an airing this great while. Moreover, he is always ready to attend church nowadays, and seems really anxious to get at the truth, not merely to select one or two sentences which he can bring home and argue at for the remainder of the day. The change in Phil is, after all, a gradual rather than a marked one; and yet we recognize the movement as both progressive and ascending. Kate feels as if she longed to thank the sweet girl, the very atmosphere of whose presence is on the side of purity and rectitude; but the earnest, wondering eyes would only open wider in beautiful unconsciousness of the good which they had wrought, for Clara's goodness is the simple, natural exhalation of a nature which ever holds companionship with purity and truth.

Kate and I, and even grandma, are quite sure we see white dresses and orange-blossoms and bridal-cake in a not very remote future.

"I shall advise them to have a short engagement," said Kate, as she spread out the skirt of her brown silk with an evident view to remodeling it.

And now that winter is coming, and a prospective wedding awaiting us somewhere in the future, I conclude that a velvet cloak is as much a matter of necessity to my actual comfort as the shoes which I wear on my feet. Having arrived at this conclusion by a process of inaudible logic which has been going on for some weeks, I count over my change, both small and great, and find to my chagrin that it is inadequate to the demand; or in other words, as Phil would say, that it would "swamp me in every other direction;" for of course a velvet cloak implies, without any process of reasoning, a corresponding toilet. There is nothing to be done, I must submit to circumstances, and, in future, take a longer look ahead. But in order to satisfy myself and ease the great longing of my heart, I persuade myself that it would be very wrong to wear so expensive an article of dress. "There are so many suffering poor," I remark to Kate, "that really I can't think it would be right to indulge in anything so costly."

"Why, Maria, I thought you had fully decided to get a velvet *this* winter, anyway."

"Yes, Kate; but I have been thinking the matter over, and have concluded I can't do it conscientiously; it doesn't seem to me it would be right to expend so much upon one article, when the same amount of money would actually clothe a small family."

Poor Kate looks up at me in great distress; *she* has an elegant velvet trimmed with the costliest lace.

"As for you," I went on, not having intended to

produce any result upon her morals, "it's perfectly right you should be particular about your dress; you have a son to please, and Phil is very fastidious."

Kate's conscience is evidently much relieved; but, in spite of all the platitudes with which I endeavor to soothe my secret pain, I still find myself hungering for the much-coveted cloak. I think, from some inadvertent remarks which escaped me, Kate must have discovered the real state of affairs, for Christmas morning finds me in possession of a comfortable addition to my small change, and places the possession of the desired garment within my grasp. And now, as winter is so far advanced, I conclude the poor must be clothed by this time if they are ever going to be, and easing my small remnant of conscientious scruples by buying a couple pounds of candy for some destitute children round the corner, I, like Phil, at once proceed to invest in a speculation which, I doubt not, will add a premium to my good temper at least.

What a delightful sense of repose I have as I sit in church with Kate next Sabbath! Dr. Barlowe never preached such a sermon; the world never looked so amiable to me before. It was not alone the consciousness of wearing a fine cloak which produced such entire satisfaction with the universe in general, but what a host of little mortifications were at once hushed and forever! what a sense of personal equality sprang up within my bosom! what benignity I felt in my heart toward those more plainly attired! how I longed to tell them, now that the cloak was safe in my possession, that it made very little difference after all whether it was cloth or velvet, one could be as warm in the one as the

other! All these delightful self-gratulations conspired to render this first Sabbath of the new year one of the most peaceful I had ever known.

New-Year Day! why did I pass it by, except that I was absorbed with an experience scarcely less than Phil's? How handsome he looked as he stood before us for inspection and approval on that unusually bright morning! His face was radiant with youth, health, and good spirits; his rather tall, and somewhat slight figure, was incased in a perfect-fitting suit of the latest mode; he wore a pair of brown kids of the last new shade, and a dark blue neck-tie, which color blended most harmoniously with his moustache and set it off to the very best advantage.

Kate's eyes sparkled with maternal pride, which she did not attempt to conceal, as she looked at the tall, handsome young man; and I, gazing at them, felt a twinge of regret that I had not accepted my one offer years ago, but was a self-immolated spinster, whom no such handsome youth would ever claim as mother.

A year ago, on a similar occasion, Kate and I had mourned exceedingly over Phil's weakness in dress; a diamond ring and pin, flashy watch-chain and Roman neck-tie, to say nothing of buff gloves and creamy pantaloons, had given him a rather pronounced tone. Phil had asked us if he looked "loud," and we, not comprehending, had answered "no." Now he bore an altogether different appearance, and Kate was as gratified and happy as any mother could be when she closed the door after him that morning and "hoped he might enjoy the day very much." "One thing

more," she whispered, as Phil stepped back: "you know I want you to promise me every new year that you won't take any wine."

"Mother dear," said Phil, with a reproachful look, "you have never had cause to fear since that one bitter experience; that little blow on your shoulder was an argument I have never forgotten; besides," and Phil's face brightened with a smile and a blush, "there's another little woman who I believe would feel almost as badly as you if I were to do such a thing. ( You must learn to love her, mother, for I do.)"

Kate caught hold of Phil as he tried to draw himself away,—“Have you told her?”

"Not yet; but I shall make an opportunity soon if it doesn't come; besides, I thought I would leave it with the rest of my good deeds for the new year. I didn't mean to tell you this just now, little mother," he added, with more smiles and blushes, "but it's hard work to keep anything from you."

"Oh, Phil, I am so glad! You couldn't have told me anything that would make me happier." And Phil looked back from the foot of the steps and threw a kiss first to his mother and then to me, not forgetting to glance up at grandma's window and give her another, to which she evidently responded, for Phil threw his head back with a merry laugh as he walked briskly down the street.

Kate rushed into the parlor,—“Maria, *could* anything be better than this? Of all the girls in the world I should have chosen Clara Maynard for Phil, and now to think he is going to choose her for himself!”

"But what if she shouldn't choose *him*?" I sug-

gested, determined not to go into ecstasies over anything in the line matrimonial.

"Oh, but she will, I know," Kate answered; "I don't think there are many girls nowadays who would refuse a boy like Phil. I tell you, Maria, I haven't worried over him for nothing; I always knew it would come out right some day."

"Why, then, what made you worry at all?" I queried.

"What a question, Maria! But then how can you know, when you've never been a mother."

This argument, as a matter of course, annihilates me. When Phil was little and dirty and troublesome I used to answer, "No! thank heaven, I'm not!" but now—well, it's quite a different thing; I begin to think boys pay, after all, and wouldn't feel particularly melancholy if I had one or two lads as tall and clean and delightful as Phil is nowadays.

It just occurs to me that, as I am writing a true story, I ought to be able as a matter of historic fact to state just when and where this change in Phil took place; but after taxing my own memory to its utmost limits and questioning Kate in exact categorical manner, I am utterly at a loss to be able to determine the precise turning-point; it was somewhere between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one; not even the Bible family record gives me a more authentic account. It is like trying to remember just when one fell asleep or what one had for breakfast a year ago to-day. We seldom plunge into reform as we plunge into the surf at Long Branch; we are more often content to stand upon the beach with a whole ocean of goodness lying beyond, and take our

share in small, misty-like doses, until we feel that somehow, we cannot tell just how or whence, a change has been effected.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE QUESTION OF ORIGINAL SIN FURTHER ILLUSTRATED.

WE have scarcely gotten Phil off when George's carriage drives up, according to previous arrangement, to convey us all away to spend the day with Sophronia. Sophronia is not intending to receive calls, and, under the circumstances, we conclude to waive our own and spend the day with her.

George is going to take Charlie out for the first time to make New-Year calls, so we shall have a quiet day of it at home among ourselves, with only little Bertie to amuse. Charlie is really a handsome boy, with great black eyes and dark, rich complexion. Sophronia's gaze rests upon him with entire maternal satisfaction as she surveys him from head to foot.

The carriage is ready, and George calls to Charlie to "hurry up, that he can't wait any longer." That young gentleman bids us all a very leisurely good-morning, then walks slowly down the stairs. In a moment more we hear him saying, "No, papa, I won't!" and Sophronia asks me to open the door wider, that she may hear what is going on.

"Why, yes, Charlie, *do come!*" George pleads; "Jackson can't possibly take care of the pony and carriage at the same time."

"Papa, I tell you I won't go at all unless I can have my pony."

"But, Charlie, don't you see how ridiculous it would be for me to go alone in the carriage and you on a pony?" still pleaded George.

"I don't care what you say, papa. Jackson, go and get my pony!" Charlie called out, in a loud voice.

At this Sophronia went to the head of the stairs,— "Why, yes, George, let the poor child have his pony if he wants it. Jackson can manage somehow, I'm sure. Charlie's so much like me, that I presume it gives him a headache to ride in the close carriage."

"Yes, mamma, it does," chimed in Charlie, with a triumphant tone in his voice.

"Very well," answered George. "Jackson, run round to the stable and bring the pony for Master Charlie."

"Master Charlie, indeed," I thought to myself. "Yes, he will be *master* as long as he has these two loyal subjects to govern."

"It's strange," said Sophronia, coming back into the room, "that George is so unwilling to grant these children any pleasures." We all looked at her with evident surprise, and she went on: "Of course I suppose it is a little extra trouble to take the pony; but, then, Charlie can't understand that, as he would if he were older. I want the children to be happy as long as they can. I'm sure they'll have trouble enough by-and-by." And Sophronia vainly endeavored to keep back a tear which forced its way into notice.

Poor Sophronia! she certainly was not a happy woman; with every wish gratified, still, as *she* looked

at it, life had brought her burdens heavier than she felt herself called upon to bear. We all knew that the cause of her troubles was her own weak, indulgent nature, but who had the courage to tell her of it? and what good would it do if we did?

Presently grandma spoke up in her cheery way, "Come, moreover, Sophronia, I'm waiting for that basket of stockings to darn."

"And Maria and I are to make up the rest of the baby-clothes to-day, you know," said Kate, laughing.

And in a few moments more we were at work cutting and shaping the tiny little wardrobe; and once again it seemed to me I was a child and these were but toy-clothes for a toy-baby. I lost myself in the sweet reverie until *this* was the dream, *that* the reality. And then I came back to my work, which *was* a real baby dress for a real baby; another little soul, whose frail craft would have no choice of its moorings, but which will receive love, indulgence, and mistaken kindness without measure, until it shall be all unfit to live in a world of mingled joy and pain, of tears, disappointment, and bereavement,—God's heavenly messengers of good to every human heart, if we know how to use them, but laden with despair and crime when we toss the message from us and assert our will supreme.

Bertie, the dear little fellow! has been playing with his blocks quietly upon the floor, but now he takes it into his head that he will construct a train of cars, and, after using all the available chairs, he applies to mamma for hers, which is readily yielded, while she takes a seat upon the foot of the bed; presently he comes to Kate and me for ours, and Sophronia says, "We might as well

go into the other room, for Bertie wants all these chairs to finish up his train." And, as Sophronia leads the way, there is nothing for us to do but follow.

I draw out the one easy-chair of the room for grandma, and she is just seated in it when Bertie comes rushing in, "Get up, gamma! this chair's my ingum."

I know Sophronia will put a stop to this, and I venture no remarks; while grandma begins to feel around for something which she thinks Bertie wants. The little boy is growing impatient, "Get up, you old ting!" he says; and Sophronia calls out, "Hush, Bertie! Mother, perhaps you'd just as soon——"

But now I know what to expect, and, taking the little fellow's hand, I said, "No, Bertie, grandma cannot get out of the chair; Bertie must do without it."

This was probably the first time in his young life that Bertie's wishes had ever been thwarted, for he looked at me in utter amazement a few seconds, then deliberately expectorated in my face. As nothing in this house surprises me, I receive the small deluge as calmly as if it were a drop from a baptismal font.

But even Sophronia seems to consider this a little beyond the license ordinarily allowed to children, and, taking Bertie by the hands, she drags the little fellow (for he will not go of his own accord) into the front room, where she leaves him and turns the key after him. For the next hour Bertie stands at the door kicking it with the most untiring perseverance, occasionally adding a terrific scream to vary the performance.

Poor Sophronia! "There, Maria, you see just how it is if I ever undertake to do anything with those chil-



dren ; I really haven't the strength to make them mind ; I am not well enough to go through with such scenes every hour in the day, and so I have to let things go. George says it's the best way, situated as I am, and by-and-by, when they grow older, they will naturally fall under his care and government. ( It's too much for a woman to undertake to manage boys, anyway. ) *Nonnal*

Just then I stood very much in need of my emery, which I had left down-stairs in my satchel. "It is very strange indeed," I said to myself, "that men in respectable life commit crime. The principle of self-gratification instilled at every point from the cradle up has nothing to do with it,—oh, no ! If Bertie desires to spit in people's faces, he may, certainly ; if he wants anything, he shall have it, of course ; if anybody is in his way, they must get out,—that's all. And by-and-by, when he finds another grasping at some prize he meant to win, he may draw a revolver,—why not ? The world was made for him, no doubt ; he expects it to radiate from him and then back to him, like the series of evolutions cast by a magic-lantern. Has not this one idea of self-gratification been coo-coo'd into his ears ever since he was born ? and is he to blame if at last he fully comprehends it ?"

As I am returning through the hall I hear the sound of carriage-wheels outside, and looking through the glass door, perceive my fastidious, aristocratic brother George perched up on the coachman's seat in his New-Year calling-rig, making him look for all the world like a very finely-gotten-up liveried footman ; Jackson is behind leading the pony. I am naturally interested, and stand at the window to see the play out ; presently

George alights from the box, opens the carriage-door, and Master Charlie steps forth as coolly as if his papa were the natural-born coachman of the family. George ties the horses, and walks into the house with a paler face than I have seen him wear since he took upon himself the marriage vows.

"Why, George, what is the matter ?" I ask, as I open the front door.

"Matter enough !" he grumbled, in the old bachelor tone. "Jackson couldn't take care of the pony and carriage both, as I knew before we started, and so I thought I'd take a ride out of town to please Charlie, and then let him come home. After we'd gone a couple miles, the pony shied at something by the side of the road, which gave Charlie a fright, and he declared he wouldn't ride on him any farther ; I did all I could to get him to, but it was of no use." (I could just imagine George standing there on the street, *pleading* with Charlie.) "Of course neither Jackson nor I could ride on the pony, so there was nothing in the world to be done only for me to drive the carriage and let Jackson lead the pony home."

I wanted to laugh, but then George was my own brother, and I really did feel very sorry for him ; I couldn't help thinking that if the child didn't mind him at home, he could hardly expect him to on the street, however pleasant it might be to have him do so.

Sophronia called to George to know if he wouldn't come up-stairs. Charlie was sitting by her side, his head on her shoulder, and she was bathing his forehead with cologne-water.

"Why, George," began Sophronia, "Charlie's had

a great fright, poor child! I was always afraid that pony would be the death of him."

"Hang the pony!" said George, for once in his life forgetting the children. "I'm sorry I was ever fool enough to buy it at all."

At this Master Charlie set up a dismal cry,—“Papa, if you sell my pony I'll never speak to you again!” And Bertie, seeing that something was wrong, and Charlie crying woefully, concluded he ought to assist his brother in the chorus at least, and there went up such howls and moans as—but I need not describe them, the sounds are too familiar.

“George,” said Sophronia, “it is too bad you can't come near these children without disturbing them; you always manage to do it, somehow.”

Positive assertions are one of a woman's strongest weapons; she has a way of saying “you always do so!” when, perhaps, it is the first time her poor victim ever committed the offense. George was thoroughly provoked, and, like a sensible man, went down-stairs to cool his temper. Charlie had committed just as foolish, self-willed acts a hundred times before, but they had never happened to mortify George to the same extent as now. Charlie was not to blame that he could not discriminate between occasions and circumstances; he knew he had always had his own way at home, and why shouldn't he on the street? that people were looking on was a very small affair to him; so far as he was concerned he had no reputation to sustain, and, therefore, was not to blame for manifesting an entire consistency in his conduct.

Early in the evening Phil came; the children shouted

the joyful intelligence through the house, and everybody's face brightened. It had been such a miserable day to each of us, and Phil was always so pleasant and cheerful. The children forgot that they had been utterly wretched in having their own way, and slid down the banisters as rapidly as possible to greet him.

“Halloo, Charlie! halloo, Bertie!” as he picked the little fellow up and set him on his shoulder.

“Come up-stairs, Phil,” Kate called out.

“Not a bit of it; I hate nurseries! besides, this is New-Year's Day, and I've come to make a call, and wish to be treated respectably.”

I thanked Phil from the bottom of my heart for making such a sensible answer. I wondered if he knew how tired and cross we all felt, and how I hated the very paper on the wall, and the pattern of the carpet. How could he know that it was all of a week—and a long, rainy, miserable week at that—since dinner?

“Come,” I said, “we've sat up here long enough; let us all go to the parlor, as Phil says, and ‘treat him respectably.’”

Grandma being very feeble, is usually the last one to get down-stairs, and I follow closely, to be sure that nothing serious will happen. Phil has kissed each one as they reached the parlor, and wished them a “happy new year” in his rich, manly voice, and now he steps out in the hall to wait for us.

Charlie has been running back and forth after multitudinous presents to show Cousin Phil, and now he screams, “Get out of the way!” as he comes sliding down the banisters. Before I have time even to reach out my hand he has given grandma a fearful

knock which would have sent her to the foot of the stairs but that Phil, quick as thought, sprang and caught her in his arms. Phil handed her, very much frightened, over to his mother, then turning, grasped Charlie by the arm, his eyes flashing as Phil's eyes were not apt to flash.

"Young man," said he, "I'd like to give you such a thrashing as you never had before in your whole life. How *dared* you push grandma like that?"

Charlie had never been spoken to in just this manner during his entire existence, and was both alarmed and subdued.

"I called to her to get out of the way," he answered, meekly.

"*You* are the one to get out of the way when grandma's around; I want you to understand *that, will you?*" said Phil, with emphasis.

"Yes, sir," was the humble response.

No one ventured to make any remarks. Phil looked round as easy and undisturbed as if this had been *his* house and these his children.

"I've had an unusually pleasant day, mother," he said, presently; and every one was at once intensely interested, as people always are when they want to forget a disagreeable something which has just occurred.

"Tell us about it," said Sophronia, eagerly; and Phil, glad of an opportunity to remove any unpleasant impressions, began.

## CHAPTER V.

### NEW-YEAR'S DAY AND A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"IN the first place, mother, I'll inform you that I shall have dyspepsia for a month to come, so you can get your doses ready as soon as you please. There isn't anything except bird's-nest pudding and cockroaches' wings that I haven't tasted of to-day."

"Bless my soul!" said grandma.

"It's true," Phil answered; "so I want every one to understand that they've got to be unusually amiable."

"Tell us first about the Maynards," said Kate.

"But that wasn't first. I went after Fred Habberton first of all, and I declare I never saw so many pretty girls together in my life, and the whole lot of them Fred's sisters, too; they were buzzing up and down the stairs like a perfect swarm of bees. They didn't know I was there, as I only asked for Fred, and I heard them screaming to one another for the crimping-pins and for corsets, and for some one to tie their sashes, and to know whose turn it was to have the hair-dresser next, and if they wouldn't lend each other their jewelry, and—well, I wonder Fred knows what he's about any of the time. When the rascal came down-stairs he called out, 'Girls, I suppose you know Philip Frost is down in the parlor?' Whew! such a time! some of them screamed, and some of them giggled, and I don't

know but one of them fainted away. Of course Fred was highly delighted, and came into the room on his high horses."

"How high?" asked Charlie.

"Oh, just about as high as I am," Phil answered; and Charlie went to work at once to calculate how Phil would look on a horse in the parlor.

"Fred wanted to know if I supposed there was such a time everywhere getting ready for callers, and I, of course, had to say I didn't know; it was enough for me if the girls looked all right when I saw them. 'By Jove! you wouldn't say so if you wanted to marry one of them,' said Fred; 'I tell you, it costs about as much to get those girls up as it must have done to rig the Spanish Armada. Del's the most sensible one of them all, and as modest as a blue violet, but none of the fellows ever fancy her; she never wears any gewgaws or gimcracks, I suppose that's the reason why.'"

"But what about the calls?" asked Kate.

"Now, mother, don't be impatient! I'm going to give the whole thing in chronological order."

Grandma settled herself back and took out her knitting, while the four elders looked at the children; Charlie was listening to Phil and regarding him with that manifest respect which superiority always inspires in a boy. Bertie, who had grown tired, was engaged in constructing a grand train of cars which should extend through both parlors! I foresaw at once that trouble was inevitable, but kept quiet.

"Well," Phil went on, "the first call we made was upon a young lady named Viola Vivian; Fred knew her, I didn't; he said he always called there early in the day,

and then ran in two or three times afterward; she was so stunning he couldn't take her all in at once."

"Do tell us all about her," said Sophronia, eagerly.

"*All* about her?" echoed Phil. "I hardly know *anything* about her except that she stood in a pink cloud and the moon and stars were on her head."

"I should say you were struck, Phil," said George.

"Not a bit of it," and Phil blushed to the tips of his fingers; "I was only trying to tell mother what she wore,—of course she'd ask me."

By this time Bertie had given his father to understand that he wanted his chair, and George had slipped off from it quietly and stood by the mantel-shelf; long habit had made it easy for him to do this sort of thing unconsciously.

Phil went on: "Well, Miss Vivian sat on a sort of throne at one end of the room, and her mother was perched on a little low chair at her feet, and kept herself busy tucking up the cloud and picking up her daughter's fan and adjusting her curls."

Bertie now signified to his mother by several pulls and tugs that he wanted her chair also, whereupon Sophronia slid onto the window-sill without the smallest remonstrance.

"Phil, what a preposterous fellow you are!" said Kate; "why don't you tell the truth?"

"It *is* the truth, mother; I swear to it," answered Phil; "but then I wouldn't mind myself picking up the fan all my life for such a magnificent creature."

"I told you you were struck," said George.

"Well, suppose I own up,—I am."

Kate and I laughed; we knew this was pure bravado put on for the occasion.

Bertie now stood before us surveying each one who occupied a chair; evidently he dared not touch grandma's again, and he still retained a wholesome awe of me, which seemed to impart itself to Kate as well. Phil, however, had not yet been tested; Bertie marched boldly up to him. "Gim me your chair; gim me your chair," he repeated.

"No, no, Bertie," said George, which remonstrance, as usual, proved a gentle stimulant.

"What do you want it for?" asked Phil, who had not noticed any of Bertie's proceedings; and then as he looked around and saw the long row he said, very pleasantly, "I'm sorry, Bertie, but I can't oblige you; Cousin Phil's very tired to-night."

"Me will have it! me will have it!" screamed Bertie.

George looked troubled, but suddenly remembered that he had not yet attended to the furnace, and disappeared.

"Bertie, keep *still*!" said Sophronia, in an irritated tone.

"Me won't keep 'till, you sassy bat," answered the heroic youth.

Charlie was in great glee, laughing to himself as if this were huge sport.

"Phil," said Sophronia, "do give Bertie a candy or something to keep him quiet till you get through, Bridget isn't here or I'd send him down-stairs to her."

"No," said Phil, rising, and speaking in a manly, authoritative way that made us all feel his presence,

"I am not going to stay any longer with little boys who talk to their mother like that. Charlie, I shouldn't think you'd let Bertie speak so; I wouldn't let any one call my mother names; and you needn't either of you ever call me 'Cousin Phil' again until you've learned how to talk to your mother as you ought."

We heard George shoveling in coal utterly regardless of consequences.

Charlie had never before felt that anything brave or manly was expected of him, and Phil's speech seemed now to touch that latent sense of honor which exists in every heart not totally depraved; he hung his head, with an expression of shame and contrition upon his face.

"We really ought not to stay any longer," Phil whispered to Sophronia as he bade her good-night, "and I thought it would be a good lesson for the boys."

"They will get over these tricks by-and-by, I dare say," she answered. "Why, Phil, I've heard your mother and Maria say you were one of the worst boys that ever lived——"

"And now there isn't such a model fellow to be found anywhere," Phil interrupted; and so, with a laugh, we parted pleasantly after all.

It had been snowing during the evening, and Phil declared there was no way to get us out to the carriage only to take us in his arms each by turn. He lifted grandma up first and carried her down the steps as easily and as tenderly as she had once carried him in the years that now seemed so remote. Charlie and Bertie looked on with great open eyes; into Charlie's mind there had evidently come a dawning thought of

manhood, with its rights and privileges and duties; perhaps a dim sense that there was something nobler in life than simply being ministered *unto*. Phil came back for Kate, and I started down the steps, never for one moment dreaming that I, who had taken care of myself all my life, could, for even this once, be taken care of.

"Not quite so fast, Aunt Maria, if you please," Phil called out; "just hold on a minute."

"Nonsense, Phil! nobody ever carried me in their lives."

"Then it's time they did," he responded. So with many expostulations and much tribulation I also was safely landed at the carriage-door.

"I tell you," said Phil, when we were fairly off, "I just ached to give those children a regular thrashing. Mother, did you ever want to whip me when you didn't do it?"

"Many a time," Kate answered, quickly.

"Yes, sir," said I, "you're indebted to the laws of this State upon capital punishment for your existence; your Uncle Philip seriously thought of hanging you once, and I even went so far as to prepare everything to drown you in the bath-tub."

"Aunt Maria, you're a perfect fraud; you know you'd have picked me out the first thing, and covered me with kisses. I did act like a little rascal though, I'll admit. I remember how I used to make you and poor grandfather tug away at my boots in the morning, pretending I couldn't get them on myself, and when I was fairly late I'd go off to school triumphant, with an excuse for being tardy, and on the strength of it spend an extra hour in the street playing. It was the chief

delight of my life to outwit you two; Jim Applegate and I came to the conclusion years ago that our mothers didn't know much."

"You dreadful boy!" said Kate, with a smile.

"Oh, but I got over that long ago; I think now she's the wisest little woman in the whole world." And Phil stooped and kissed her in that proud, tender way, by the side of which even a lover's kisses grow dim.

"You mean," said Kate, "the wisest woman in the world *except one*."

"Well, I don't think I ought to leave out Aunt Maria," Phil answered, not choosing to notice the emphasis, "for I was never up to any deviltry in my life that she didn't manage to ferret it out somehow. Aunt Maria, you've missed your vocation; you should have been put on the detective police force long before this."

"Who knows but I may be yet? I don't consider myself laid on the shelf by any means, and nowadays, when women are finding their rights in their own abilities, I intend to reach after mine, always providing, Phil, that you will vouch for my capacity."

"Phil, really," said Kate, "I won't be baffled any longer; what about Clara Maynard? did you have a pleasant call there, and how did she look?"

"Just as if I didn't know that was what you were driving at all the time, little mother! Well, the fact is, Clara didn't look pretty; she has a fearfully old way of dressing; for my part, I do like the gewgaws and jimcracks, as Fred calls them. Miss Vivian *was* a little too overwhelming, but Clara is like a Quaker; I don't see why on earth she wears those fearful drabs."



"Why, Phil, there isn't one woman out of a hundred pretty enough to *dare* wear them; Clara has such a lovely complexion that anything is becoming to her."

"Mother, wouldn't it be a great pity if I should disappoint you in your daughter-in-law?" asked Phil, laughing. "Clara Maynard isn't a nobby-looking girl, and nothing on earth can ever make her so."

"For pity's sake, Phil, what kind of a girl did you say?" I asked.

"Why, nobby, stylish; it's all the same thing."

"But, Phil, she will always be as sweet as a June rose," Kate went on.

"Y-e-s," Phil answered, in the most provokingly absent-minded tone, as if Clara were the last one on earth he was thinking about.

## CHAPTER VI.

### RUSHING THINGS.

PHIL spent one or two evenings at home, to the delight of all concerned, then dressed himself in as much grandeur as he was able to command, and announced that he was going out to call on some young ladies.

"That means Clara, I presume?" said Kate, quickly.

"Well, no, mother, I don't think I shall call on Clara to-night; it's only a day or two since I was there, you know. I was going up to see Miss Vivian——"

"But 'it's only a day or two since you were there, you know,' Phil," I interrupted.

"That's true," he answered, blushing; "but then she asked me to come again soon, and even her mother said they would be very happy to see me at my earliest convenience."

"Of course they would," said Kate, emphatically; and if I hadn't known she was a widow, I should have said she looked for all the world like an old maid, pursed mouth and all. "Didn't Clara ever ask you to come again soon?"

"Why—yes; but then I never can tell whether Clara really *wants* me to come soon or not, and I'm sure her mother never puts herself out of the way to ask me to call at my earliest convenience or anything of the sort."

"No, Phil, because she's too well-bred to throw out the smallest bait for you to nibble at; she holds love and marriage in too high esteem to be brought about by any manœuvring."

"Mother, mother, what an imagination you've got! 'love and marriage,'—why, I haven't seen Miss Vivian but once. Good-night all!" And Phil kissed his mother as he was wont to do when he didn't expect to get home until after she had retired. I heard him come in somewhere about midnight, take off his boots in the lower hall, and go up-stairs on tip-toe.

"It's all over with him," I said to myself. "Miss Vivian, whoever and whatever she is, has completely captivated him; unless the young lady is an arrant flirt Kate will have a daughter-in-law before long, and one not to her fancy either, I take it."

Before the week was out Phil went to see the young lady again; and now there is no concealing the real state of things: the tidal wave is not to be resisted; Phil himself confesses that "he has got it bad," and goes about humming "Come where my love lies dreaming." Pin-money is lavishly expended upon blue violets, Lubin's best, neck-ties, tight boots, yellow kids, etc. etc. Kate expostulates with the boy, who declares he has never committed himself to Clara Maynard in the smallest degree.

"But I am sure you have shown her a great deal of very particular attention."

"It wouldn't be considered anything at all, legally, mother, I assure you, as long as I have never really asked her to be my wife."

Phil doesn't spend any more of his evenings at home with us; indeed, he comes in every night later and later. The days are unusually cold and wintry, and we are all—all except Phil—very unhappy. That young gentleman startles us one fine morning by asking "if his mother and Aunt Maria will go with him in the evening to call on Miss Vivian and her mother. They sent the invitation," he says, "and we will oblige him particularly by accepting."

"Yes, Phil, I will go," Kate answers, somewhat sadly; and I, thinking of my new velvet, say, "Certainly, I should be most happy."

"I want you to get yourselves up in your very best," was Phil's command as he left us, "for they live in great style."

Phil certainly *is* very handsome; he looked really elegant as he came down-stairs that evening, and stood

with me in the hall waiting for Kate. I do not wonder that any young lady should fall in love with him; I only know that had my lover been one-half as fine looking I should have accepted him years ago; (but—well, he had a *retroussé* nose and red hair, two offenses which I could not overlook in a man whom I was to sit opposite to three times a day.) *What a pity*

Had it been the fashion then, as now, to take lunch down-town and only two meals at home, I might have reconsidered.

There was very little said by any of us in the carriage, we were all too anxious; Phil, restless in the extreme, was wondering how Viola would like his mother, and we were wondering how we should like her. Although Phil had never intimated such a thing, we were confident we were going to see his future wife; the event, we knew, was by no means immediate; but some time, in some distant future, this was the one whom Phil would choose.

A servant ushered us into the parlor, and we sat there some few moments taking observations; at least Kate and myself were engaged in this manner. Phil was absorbed in gazing intently at the carpet, and twirling his glove impatiently in every possible shape, as if *it* were to pay the penalty for this delay.

The furniture of the apartments was an odd medley, as if some of the pieces might have been in the family a hundred years, or as if the whole might have come from auction yesterday. They were certainly very showy rooms, with a great deal of gilt and tinsel and mirror, which last reflected back mirror and tinsel and gilt, which, as a whole, would be very apt to impress

the uninitiated with a sense of magnificence. Neither Kate nor myself could help contrasting these with the rich, tasteful, substantially-furnished drawing-room of the Maynards.

There was a decided rustling somewhere in the distance, and a tall young lady entered the back parlor and came toward us half dancing, half walking; the most dazzling, bewildering, overwhelmingly gotten-up individual I had ever seen. Bright eyes, sparkling teeth, ribbons, curls, smiles, flutter, flutter, flutter; I felt my breath leaving me and was glad I was not the first to be noticed.

Phil advanced to meet her, and I could think of nothing but the worship of the magi as I caught the expression of his face; it was positive adoration.

"Viola, this is my mother," he said, simply, as he took her hand and led her, radiant in smiles, toward Kate.

"My mother, too," whispered the young lady, as she threw her arms about Kate's neck and kissed her several times in the most gushing manner. "Aunt Maria," as she stepped toward me and gave me several kisses somewhat less gushing. "I'm so glad!"

"I—I don't quite understand," Kate and I began simultaneously.

"Phil, you naughty boy!" said the young lady, as she reached up a heavily-jeweled hand and patted him on the cheek, "haven't you told them? You promised me you would last night." And she pouted her lips at him in a most kiss-inviting manner.

"I know, but I—I thought perhaps—maybe it would be better to tell them here." And Phil seemed

to have lost every particle of manhood he had ever possessed.

We had not noticed before that a little, sickly, elderly-looking woman was standing in the background; she came forward now, shook hands with us both, then putting an arm around each, Phil and Viola, she said, in the most delightful manner, "Mrs. Frost, do forgive the children for being so hasty! I believe they were made for each other, for they seemed to fall in love the first time they met. They've been engaged now—how long is it, Viola?"

"Oh, almost a week." And the young lady put up her lips for Phil to kiss.

"I'm so surprised!" said Kate, in tones full of the deepest sorrow, and which, had not Phil been entirely absorbed, would have brought him to his mother's side in an instant.

"And we're to be married," Miss Vivian went on, "the last of next month,—Phil's birthday; Phil would have it so, you know." And once more the bright eyes, dazzling teeth, and pouting lips were upturned to his.

Why wouldn't, and why didn't Phil speak? Had he no explanations to offer us? none whatever? No, he stood looking at Viola in a dazed, bewildered fashion, which plainly indicated there was nothing left but vacuum in the space which had formerly been assigned to reason and common sense. For once Phil had completely forgotten his mother, her presence, perhaps her very existence. What was it to him that she stood there with aching heart, and pale, sad face, when he had this bright beauty to look at? It was plain that she had completely fascinated him, and held him every

moment by a sort of magic enchantment. Phil was in constant demand to fix something, or arrange something, or pick up something for her; if she had given him a moment's rest there might have been some opportunity for reflection; but it was clearly manifest that no masculine nature could long retain its senses under such an ordeal.

After a little Phil asked Viola to play, evidently desirous of exhibiting her to the utmost advantage as well as keeping her quiet, that he might gaze at her to his better satisfaction. But Viola did not choose to be quiet; those two long curls had to be attended to, and the sash arranged, and the music to be fluttered over, and—well, there was no end to it all. Manifestly the young lady had not been in the least embarrassed by anything that had taken place; *she* was entirely equal to the occasion. I had pitied her in my heart several times as we sat waiting for her, and naturally attributed the delay to her diffidence; but it was Kate and I who had been the embarrassed ones; we who occupied the retired corner. For the first time in his life Phil had kept an act of genuine importance from his mother, and *this* of all things. I had dreamed more than once how he would come to Kate and tell her blushing of his engagement with Clara Maynard, and how, afterward, we should go to see her, and she would meet us in her own modest, yet self-possessed, womanly way; and how, by-and-by, after a great while, she would learn to call Kate "mother" in timid, trembling tones. Now all was different,—oh, so different!

Mrs. Vivian was evidently a worldly-wise, politic woman, who had a motive in every word and deed.

Her daughter was her idol; every time she looked at her it was unquestionably an effort to keep from throwing herself upon her knees before her; she had a shrewd, practical face, which somehow suggested a good accountant. She was plainly enough dressed, except for the little cap on her head, from which fluttered pink ribbon pendants innumerable, somewhat after the manner of her daughter's make-up. The young lady's face I could not study, except to see that she had bright, glittering gray eyes; there was too much restlessness about it and her to come to any satisfactory conclusions. She was very showily attired, and one could not help thinking what a capital advertisement she would make for an up-town dry-goods establishment, especially if her husband were one of the firm. Neither could I help querying if it would be possible to keep up this perpetual flutter through life, and the thought reminded me unpleasantly of bats flying in one's eyes continually.

Who were these people, and what were they? A body would like to know something about a family one is to hobnob with for the rest of their existence. Of course Phil could not know anything about them; it was only three weeks since he had first called there,—and now he was to be married at the end of another month. I marvelled how her mother could think of getting Viola ready in a sufficiently resplendent style in so short a space of time. I knew that Kate and I ought to be very happy that such a glorious creature had consented to be Phil's wife, but I knew that neither of us were. It was very natural to think of sitting down to darn stockings with Clara Maynard, but with this young lady—it was much

more natural to think of her wearing them undarned. I could not imagine her doing the first housewifely thing, but then it would be enough for Phil to sit and look at her all the rest of his life. At any rate, he had chosen her, I cannot say *deliberately* chosen her, for I don't think there was any deliberation about it. In two short weeks, seeing each other almost every evening, dressed up in the parlor, they had come to the conclusion that they were fitted to render one another happy through life. Temper, habits, tastes, culture, had all been ascertained and found harmonious. In a case like this, of love at first sight, these conclusions are arrived at instinctively. Unquestionably Phil and Viola were made for each other, else how could they so soon have decided upon their entire compatibility? It was nothing that they had been educated differently, with different ideas of matters and things; that all their lives each of them had been building up an individuality which must more or less assert itself, and which the other would be bound to respect; love would teach them these things, and be the only amalgam necessary to unite opposing ideas,—certainly it would.

If Viola had not been playing a very lengthy opera I never should have been able to get through with these reflections. And now cake and coffee are brought in, and after a little more talk,—I cannot conscientiously call it conversation,—we bid them good-night; whereupon a few more rapturous kisses are bestowed, and, “I shall be *so* glad!” and, “How happy we shall be!” and, “I believe we were born for each other,” can be heard above the delightful murmur.

Kate and I are glad to be once more in the carriage,

for somehow we feel that we have been the side figures in a play; it is really very uncomfortable to learn that everybody else has known something for a long time of which you are only just apprised; especially if you feel that your claim is first.) The night seemed unusually dark and cold: so much darker and colder than when we went into the house; perhaps it was because we had come away from all that bright radiance, and we realized our present condition now by the contrast. No one felt like saying anything; Phil lapsed down into his corner as if he never meant to speak to any one again except Viola. It was no longer difficult to understand why he had been so restless for the last two or three days; almost any man would have been under similar circumstances.

“Phil,” said Kate, after a lengthy silence, “I am sure I have seen that name somewhere.”

“What, Viola?”

“No; Vivian.” And then there was another silence, which lasted until we reached home.

Kate and I went up-stairs to our room at once; Phil stopped at the door a moment to kiss his mother good-night, as was his custom.

“Phil, I have so much to say to you,” said Kate, and then the tears choked her voice; “but not now, not to-night.”

And without another word Phil kissed her and passed on to his own room.

## CHAPTER VII.

## ( CORNED BEEF AND CUSTARD.

FOR the first time Kate realized that another's presence had come between her and Phil; for the first time he had kept from her knowledge a really momentous event; another's wishes were stronger than hers; another's influence more powerful; and that influence might possibly be exerted in lines not exactly parallel to her own.

We are not very happy nowadays, any of us, although we strive our best to appear so. Phil is every evening at Viola's, so that the days seem rather long and lonely.

Grandma was surprised to hear of Phil's approaching marriage, and insists upon calling the young lady "Violet." "She's too old now," she says, "to twist her tongue to say that other."

Kate and her boy had a long talk together, but I don't think Kate felt any happier after it was over with than she did before. "Phil had nothing to say especially," Kate told me, only "that he was desperately in love, and never so happy in all his life before. He did not tell his mother sooner because he knew she'd think he was very foolish, but if he had it all to do over, he didn't know as he *could* do any differently; of one thing he was certain anyway, and that was, he should never regret it."

Kate proposed, a few days after, that we should call on Mrs. Maynard and Clara. "I don't want to lose

the acquaintance," she said; "and after Phil is gone, I think Clara will come here oftener. I shall always feel as if *she*, not the other, should have been my daughter; I know I shall never be as fond of Viola as I am of Clara."

And so we called. As we entered the drawing-room where Clara sat by a back window sewing, she rose to meet us, saying, with a soft blush, "I am sorry mother is not in to-day."

We sat down near her, and Kate asked her to continue her work as she seemed much engaged in it. The soft blush deepened very decidedly as she shook out a cambric handkerchief. "Oh, I was only embroidering a few handkerchiefs for a little birthday gift for— for"—and now the blush grew positive scarlet—"Mr. Frost; you know," she went on, "he gave me this pretty work-box Christmas."

Yes, we had seen it, and remembered well with what joy Phil had displayed it to us, hoping that Clara would accept it, and to his unspeakable delight she had.

"I found out when his birthday was to be, and"—the earnest, wondering eyes asked, rather than the voice—"do you think he will like them?"

"Yes, dear, I am sure he will," Kate answered, and I knew the tears were gathering in her eyes.

It was altogether impossible for either of us to prevent ourselves from drawing that mental contrast which would force itself upon us; this soft, dove-like, yet womanly face, and a manner that seemed of itself to bring repose; that other, bright, sparkling, vivacious, yet restless, uneasy, and uncomfortable; it might be



pleasanter to spend an evening with that, but it would be heart-easing to spend a life with this.

"Perhaps you do not know," said Kate, after a pause, and trying to speak naturally, "that—that my son is to be married on his birthday."

Poor Clara! her hands clinched unconsciously in her lap, her lips turned white,—so white that I thought she would surely faint; but there was no sound, only the great brown eyes grew more gazelle-like than ever, and asked, in such a pitiful way, "Do tell me, please!"

"I do not know much about her," said Kate; "Phil met her New-Year's day; she seems to be very fascinating to gentlemen; I hope they will be happy."

"Oh, I hope so!" with such heartfelt, accentuated utterance that I longed to clasp the sweet girl-woman in my arms, for I knew that the wish was a flower plucked from the grave of her own buried hopes.

Kate did not resist the inclination, but threw her arms around Clara, saying, "I wonder if I shall ever love her as much as I do you?"

The soft brown eyes grew liquid, but the voice said, clearly, "Oh, yes, I am sure you will, and I thank you so much for loving me at all."

It seemed wonderful to Clara just then, as it has seemed wonderful to many another woman, that there should be any love left after the great absorbing one was taken away. It would not do to say any more; Phil had never "really committed himself" to Clara, and it would be indelicate to suppose any feeling on her part.

"Maria," said Kate, when we were fairly on the street, "don't you see that Clara loves Phil?"

"Certainly; but then he never engaged himself to her. It's nothing, you know, that he has called on her exclusively for the last six months, and probably told her so a hundred times at least; doubtless, too, he has tried through all that time by every possible means to win some manifestation of regard from her; but he isn't legally bound, you know, so long as he has never actually asked her to be his wife."

"Maria, you make me angry; what do you mean?"

"Why, that Phil is entirely above censure; and that he has conducted the whole transaction in truly lawyer-like fashion. If Clara dies of a broken heart, the world will never know that he has had anything to do with it."

"Maria, don't!" Kate pleaded; "it's bad enough any way. I can't believe Phil ever deliberately meant to do Clara the smallest wrong."

"Nor I," I said, softening; "but he has been a good deal more deliberate about trying to make sure of Clara's affections than he ever was about Viola's; the whole amount of it is, Viola threw herself in Phil's arms, and saved him the trouble of wooing her. Men talk about 'modest girls,' why, Viola would have ten chances where Clara'd have one; if good sense and modesty had been the requisites I should never have been an old maid as I am now."

"My dear sister," said Kate, soothingly, "I don't suppose it's ordained that everybody shall get married."

"Then, for pity's sake! since there are so many who don't; why in the world don't those who do take a little more pains about it? Kate, you and I know that even the best of folks can't get along without an occa-

sional difference, and here are two people like Phil and Viola, both young, both undisciplined, and yet who can decide in two short weeks to bear life's ills together for the next fifty years if need be. It baffles me; I don't pretend to understand it; but I do believe there's a great deal of spurious emotion called love, which a few weeks' absence would effectually destroy. If I were a minister I should consider it my duty to point out occasionally the difference between a high, exalted, ennobling love, and a base, earth-born passion; as it is now, they're thrown together in such a medley that hardly any one knows how to discriminate between them."

"Maria, I can't imagine how you, who are always talking about being a 'genuine spinster,' know these things."

"Why, in just the same way that Phil and Viola know they were born for each other,—by instinct."

The days go on, and now it is really time to get ourselves ready for the wedding. Kate sets out with samples for gloves, scarfs, etc.

"I have had such a long tramp," she says to me at night; "had to go way over on Sixth Avenue to match that drab. You recollect the store, kept by Mrs.—I never can remember the name." And then Kate tore open the parcel, and read on its brown wrapping:

"Mrs. Vivian, No. —, Sixth Ave.

"Ladies', Children's, and Infants' Underwear.

"Corset Covers, and Dressing Sacques.

"Lawn, Cambric, and Calico Wrappers in all Sizes and Styles.

"Plain and Fancy Silk, and Lisle Thread Hose.

"Ladies' Kids for street wear. The whole comprising the best assortment ever exhibited on Sixth Ave."

"There, Maria, we know more about Viola's family than Phil knows himself," said Kate, with emphasis.

I could understand now why it was that I had been impressed with a peculiar aptitude for business in the lady that first evening we met her, and I no longer wondered that the difficulty of getting up a resplendent wardrobe did not stand in the way of so speedy a marriage.

At night Kate handed the paper to Phil without a word; he read it through with a slightly deeper color in his cheeks, then turning round, "Mother, this will not make any difference with me; I have chosen Viola for life or death."

"No, I should be sorry if it would," Kate answered; "only I think it is desirable to know something about the family one is to marry into."

"I don't suppose Viola ever had anything at all to do with the store," Phil said, speaking rather to himself than to us.

"And what if she had?" I asked; "women have a right to work as well as men; in fact, I think as a general thing it makes them more sensible."

"Good heavens, Aunt Maria! what in the world would you have been if you'd had to earn your living? The only fault I have to find with you now is that you're *too* sensible."

"There, I knew it!" said I, laughing, for I was heartily glad to hear him speak in the old bantering

tone again; "men never did and never will like sensible women." *Can't believe it.*

"Of course not," Phil answered; "it's too much like living on corned beef all the while; one likes a dainty bit occasionally if only to serve as a relish."

"But for solid, substantial, every-day food," I answered, "I prefer corned beef."

"Which all means, Aunt Maria, that some one, years ago, missed a very substantial repast."

"He's not the only man who has missed it, Phil; if I'm not mistaken they're missing it every day; choosing custards, ice-creams, and *meringues* instead of—well, corned beef, if you please, since we started on that."

"Enough said," Phil retorted; "you'll allow, aint, that even doctors disagree occasionally; so we'll each stick to our own particular belief more firmly than ever."

How good it was to have Phil like his old self again! I could have given up anything or believed in anything to please him just then; for, whether others have seen it or not, we haven't been the same happy family that we were; there has been a disagreeable, chilly atmosphere around everybody, that nobody else cared to take the trouble to penetrate. Phil has gone about like a somnambulist, living in a world of his own, and entirely indifferent to ours; Kate has acted like one resigned to an inevitable, but gloomy fate; grandma, in her utter unconsciousness of any disappointment on our part, has engaged a little flower-boy to bring a bunch of blue violets every day, which are regularly laid upon Phil's plate at dinner. I am ashamed to confess it, but this

thing, pretty as it is in itself, invariably exasperates me, and I begin to wish that blue violets had never found their way into the flora of the United States. They are so like Clara; and somehow, whether fact or fancy I cannot say, she had always seemed to exhale this delicate perfume; I find it difficult to appropriate the same to Viola, perhaps because I cannot forget the heavy, sensuous, musk odor which pervaded everything about her.

But now, as the wedding approaches, we all seem to realize that we must do our best to make one another happy.

Kate has given up the resigned expression; I have even passed one or two playful remarks over the violets, and, as Phil has had to come down out of the clouds to attend to his wardrobe, he is a very much more agreeable individual than he was.

Mrs. Vivian and her daughter called on us in state, and we returned it in state; that is, we borrowed George's carriage for the occasion. Grandma shook her head rather sadly after they went away from our house, having kissed us each again and again in the most enthusiastic manner.

"She ain't much like that little Miss Maynard Phil took such a fancy to awhile ago," grandma said; "but I suppose it's just as it was when I was young: the girls who wear the most ribbons and curls get the most beaux. It don't seem to make much difference what's inside the head, if there's only plenty on top of it." Next day grandma told the flower-boy he "needn't bring the blue violets any more."

Kate and I really wished to see Viola away from gas-

light and away from Phil, and apart from any set occasion; we were not sorry, therefore, that it was the "correct thing" for us to call upon her again before the wedding. We found the young lady very handsomely arrayed; "she had been looking for us every day," she said; "and was so sorry mamma was not at home." She was inspecting a large box of very rich laces, which we might have wondered at her being in possession of had we not been made intelligent by that brown paper wrapping. Apparently none of them suited her, and she tossed them all back, saying, fretfully, "I do wish mamma would make better selections; there's so little time now, anyway."

"You must be very tired having to hurry so," Kate suggested.

"I *am* tired almost to death; I never was so fagged out in my whole life before; I shall look like a perfect fright on my wedding-day," with a very forlorn expression.

And certainly Viola showed plainly that she was almost "fagged out;" a weary, dissipated look rested upon her face, as if she had sat up late nights for years at least. There was a prematurely old, care-worn expression which plainly indicated that parties and party-dresses had rendered life a burden. By the way, Viola showed us some of these,—not the burdens, but the party-dresses, or rather, the burdensome party-dresses; words fail me to describe them; probably had Phil been Philippa I should have known more about these things, but as near as I can state it, the work upon a hundred dozen shirts would have been no comparison. Viola's eyes grew bright again, and the

weary expression quite vanished as she displayed to us miles of ruffles and tucks and furbelows, which quite bewildered my small brain.

"I don't see where in the world Viola will ever wear those gay clothes," Kate said to me when we were once more in the carriage; "I am sure Sophronia can't give a party with the twins to take care of, and as for us, we don't know a dozen young people, so it would be quite useless to try to get one or two hundred together."

"Kate," I said, just as we reached home, "I hope you have never told Phil that Clara loves him."

"No, and I never shall."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### "DONE UP IN STYLE."

AND now the grand event takes place. He is willing, she is willing, they are willing, we are willing,—or if not, we pretend we are, which last, in society, is current coin at almost any counter. The organ peals forth its majestic music in a vain attempt at vivacity suited to the occasion. Phil said "the thing should be done up in style," and a carpet is laid from the carriage to the church-door. The bride is magnificent; trained silk, illusion veil, orange-blossoms, satin slippers, bright, restless eyes, two curls, and you have her in full. The bride smiles at us, then, as Phil steps on her train, she frowns at

him. Her mother inspects her, pronounces the work "good," and now we enter.

As Viola has no male relative, at this stage of the proceeding she takes George's arm; Phil looks after her as if he could not, even for this one instant, part with her. Sophronia is not here; it being impossible for her and George to leave home at the same time on account of the children. Kate takes Phil's arm, Mrs. Vivian enters with a rather young man, who is borrowed for the occasion; while I and my beloved nephew Charlie walk side by side. I begged to be left out altogether, but Phil would not consent. I envy grandma, who is quietly seated where she can see without being seen. But all eyes are turned upon Viola, who, with her most bewitching expression and fine clothes, is certainly resplendent. Kate and I look at Phil; never, I must confess it, in spite of new garments made at The Tailor's,—never has he looked so positively homely as now; his hair has, according to the prescribed order of things, just been cut, and reveals his neck and collar most disadvantageously. Viola, however, who is busy thinking about herself, will not notice it, and the rest of us need not mind. The organ plays a soft, tender love-ditty during prayer, which is striking for its appropriateness. And now the last solemn words are pronounced, and Phil, in an ecstasy of delight, draws Viola's arm within his own; there is nothing of him to be seen except head and shoulders as they walk down the aisle, and I can only think of a bust marching off in a draperied pedestal.

Viola and Phil stand for a moment at the carriage-door making mathematical calculations; the next step

looks impossible, but it *must* be taken, and it *is* taken: Viola, curls, draperies, laces, veil, orange-blossoms, all are fairly inside; the carriage is more than full, but still Phil insists upon crowding himself in also, and appears very thankful for the small corner assigned him on the opposite seat. And now we all go to the bride's for refreshments and reception. Viola is radiant; Phil bashful as we never saw him before; evidently he cannot think of anything to say; everybody congratulates him, and he answers with a suitable meaningless smile. Mrs. Vivian is truly ubiquitous, appearing everywhere with magnificent *empressement*, intended to convey the idea that she, and she alone, is the mother of this superb bride,—this radiant creature. Kate and I endeavor to assume some responsibility, and to act as if we had a trifling share in the day's performances; but we feel at every point that we are not needed, and retire to a little circle of our own friends, where we have an opportunity to make observations, if nothing more.

The company is a singularly assorted one, or rather it is not assorted at all. Kate and I have never before in our lives been brought in social contact with just such people; here is a burly-looking individual—a livery-stable keeper, some one informs us—who has been "dying" all winter for Viola; he certainly bears doubtful evidence of mental depression now as he stands, wine-glass in hand, gorging himself with fruit-cake; there is a tall, snobbish, dissipated-looking man in gaudy toilet, who, Mrs. Vivian tells us, has been after Viola these ten years; then, anticipating our thought, she adds, "They used to walk to school

together, you know." Most of the women are luminous in a perfect blaze of showy jewelry; while the young ladies are making the most of this opportunity to display those charms of person which captivate the senses, and too often produce an unhallowed passion, not infrequently mistaken for love, but which bears no closer resemblance to that divine emotion than a smouldering heap of ruins to a sacred vestal flame.

How thankful I felt that Clara was not present! That very morning she had sent over a little note of regrets to Kate: she had a "severe headache, and would not be able to attend the wedding." Mr. and Mrs. Maynard had gone to the church, but were not at the house; for this I was more than thankful.

A box of handkerchiefs, with beautifully embroidered monograms, had accompanied a pleasant, congratulatory note to Phil; he had read the note and thrown it in the fire, remarking that "the handkerchiefs were nobby; Viola would like them," and put a couple in his pocket. Just here I shall not permit myself to indulge in any comments, for Phil is, after all, my nephew; but I love Clara more and more each day, perhaps with that obstinacy said to be peculiar to women; the more I feel that I ought to love Viola, the more I find my affections adhering to Clara. Kate and I had so made up our minds that she was to be queen-regnant of our little household when we resigned the sceptre, that it is a difficult matter for us to regard Viola as of the blood royal; what if Phil did throw open the gates of the kingdom, she is the usurper.

And all this while Viola is bowing and smiling and kissing, while Phil has groped his way down from his

entranced position and is impatiently glancing out of the window and then at his watch, wondering, evidently, when on earth all this stupendous misery is to come to an end. And now Viola disappears, and returns cloaked and bonneted; she is not quite so dazzling, but still very beautiful, with all the beauty that smiles, bright eyes, curls, and a vivacious expression can impart. Viola flutters and rustles out the front door; Phil stops to kiss the two mothers and myself, whereupon Viola, suddenly recollecting that she has omitted this ceremony, rustles back, embraces us each tenderly with one hand while with the other she adjusts her curls and frizzes. The trunks are carried down the steps, Viola kisses her hand to us once or twice, and smiles and smiles, displaying her beautiful teeth. Phil looks back at his mother; their eyes meet I know, for he seems loth to draw them away, even when Viola taps him on the shoulder.

And now they are fairly off; we need not look any longer: the carriage has turned the corner and is out of sight. Kate's eyes are full of tears, and I know by the sadness of my own heart that she longs to get away into some corner and weep until nature is satisfied.

Mrs. Vivian informs us that they are to have a grand dance now; we beg to be excused; Kate says, with a sad smile, that "she cannot be merry so soon after losing her son;" and Mrs. Vivian retorts, "But I'm sure you have gained a daughter." This reminder, however, does not particularly rejoice either of us, and I decidedly decline for both the possibility of our remaining any longer. We had played our part while Phil was there; now that he was gone we could not, even for



his sake, go back to mingle with those people. Mrs. Vivian is displeased, as perhaps she has a right to be, but there is a limit to all things human; and to some things which we esteem divine.

The house is very lonely nowadays. Phil has left us indeed; left us as never before, with no thought of the glad, boyish home-coming as a something beyond, always to be looked forward to. He had gone out from us never to come back to us again as our boy alone,—our Phil. Another claimed his first allegiance, another power was upon the throne, and that an absorbing one. It would no longer be mother's wish, but Viola's pleasure; no longer be grandma to wait upon, but Viola to pet and caress; no longer Aunt Maria's whim to gratify, but Viola's will to execute.

It would have been hard to have parted with him so fully even to Clara, but to one whom we did not know and had not learned to love, above all to one whom instinct told us we never could love, *this* was the trial; and yet by tacit consent we avoided alluding to it, and when we spoke of Viola at all, it was to notice her beauty, her grace, and her attractions, not to speak of her defects. She was Phil's wife now, and we felt bound to recognize all that was best in her.

However joyful marriage may be to the two most concerned in it, to those who are left behind it is anything but a glad event; to them there is no absorbing passion to benumb the pain of parting; no future, all *couleur de rose*, to blind the eyes to present sorrow; no certainty of harmony for those they love, but a grand possibility of discord; no perfection of character, but a very sensible cognizance of failures in qualities abso-

lutely essential. They cannot regard the two as the two regard each other; and loving truly, disinterestedly, they cannot close their eyes and revel in a future wholly amber-hued.

We knew that Phil was a very good-natured fellow, thoroughly obliging and amiable except upon occasions. But he had his habits, his peculiarities, which were as much a part of himself as his beard or his moustache. Grandmother, mother, and aunt had learned by long practice how to avoid them. Viola had known him two months, and was supposed to be as well versed in the riddles of his disposition as we who had known him nearly a quarter of a century. Viola, too, may have her peculiarities; ah, well, if she has, Phil will find them out! We each have our errors and defects, very possibly some of us have faults; but love possesses one charming trait: it knows how to excuse, if not to overlook, and even the little errors may become subjects of care and fondness; it misses them when they are gone, and not infrequently entertains a tender regard for them. I am not afraid, then, as I close this chapter, to leave them each to the other, for do they not love? has not the sacrament of marriage been performed for them? and have they not promised to cleave each unto the other until death do them part?

## CHAPTER IX.

"YOURS TO COMMAND,"—PAPA.

AFTER the twins came, George very considerably decided that it was best for him to assume the reins of family government and take Charlie and Bertie under his immediate control. Sophronia was too ill even to see the children for many days. George gave up going to the office altogether for awhile, and I was called in to act as housekeeper.

All this occurred very soon after New Year's, and Sophronia was quite well enough to attend the wedding when it took place, but George's presence was indispensable, and they had made it a rule never again to leave home at the same time, as it was uncertain whether or no they would be able to find any of the children there upon their return.

(But this last remark requires explanation.) Everything had gone on quite serenely outside the sick-room, until Jessie and May had attained the third day of their existence, when Bertie accidentally stumbled over a block-tower which Charlie had been very busy erecting; enraged beyond all bounds that his toil had come to naught, Charlie gave a low growl, sprang at his brother, and grasped him around the throat. George and I sitting up-stairs, utterly unconscious at that time of these events, heard a wild scream from Bridget, which took us both at rapid transit to the scene of action.

"YOURS TO COMMAND,"—PAPA.

We found Charlie holding Bertie by the throat, who, with blackened face, was feebly struggling and gasping for breath; Bridget was doing her utmost to free the child, but either her excitement or an unnatural strength in Charlie, made it impossible for her to assist poor Bertie.

As our eyes fell upon the dreadful scene, George sprang forward, with a cry between his teeth of "you young devil!" as he quickly undid the boy's grasp and released his brother.

Charlie gave a scream of pain and anger under his father's rough handling, while I took Bertie, sent Bridget for camphor, and tried in vain to soothe the little fellow, who, as soon as strength returned, seemed increasingly frantic at every fresh recollection of the treatment which he had received. Bridget rushed back and forth full of sympathy and anger, now shaking her fist at one, then crying over the other.

George, seeing that all my efforts were fruitless, used his utmost endeavor to calm the child, for whom we were growing seriously alarmed; but it was not until he assured him that he should punish Charlie very, *very* severely, that the screams died down into heavy sobs, and there was a prospect of calm. Never before had I understood so fully the demand in our natures for an expiation of sin. All this time Charlie had been muttering and grumbling to himself in the corner, darting occasional angry glances at us three on the opposite side of the room.

George ran up-stairs, to make sure Sophronia had not been disturbed by all this commotion, then, taking Charlie into the kitchen and sending Bridget to me, he

administered for the first time in his life a real punishment. Bertie ceased his sobs to listen, Bridget, whose sympathies were now all reversed, was shedding tears over "Poor Charlie," and wondering "why and shure ye's couldn't fergiv him." For my own part, it was not the blows, which I felt sure would be tempered with mercy, that wounded me to the heart, but the language which I mourned the door could not effectually shut out. Such words from a child to a parent! words which I dare not repeat, and which I, in my ignorance, had supposed excluded from homes of respectability and culture. But Charlie used them with a fluency which plainly showed they were familiar terms. George punished him, but he did not subdue him; he had never before made the slightest attempt to do so, never once taught the child that it was his place to yield,—to submit; never so much as hinted that there was anything in life beyond having his own way; and Charlie, with this lesson thoroughly impressed upon his mind, regarded his father merely as an instrument by which his own ends were to be attained. That this parent toward whom he had never looked, except for the gratification of some selfish desire, should assume command over him, seemed a personal insult and injury, which his stature alone prevented him from resenting to the utmost; the only weapon he could use now with any effect was his tongue, and this he managed with a skill which showed rare linguistic attainment.

"When I am big enough, papa, I'll kill you!" were the last words I heard as George left the room, with an evident sense of satisfaction that now he had accom-

plished all that any one under the circumstances could require of him.

It seemed strange to me that he could not see he had merely angered and exasperated the boy, not conquered him. George had only succeeded in placing himself in the attitude of an enemy toward his own child; the obedience which should have been exacted from babyhood was looked upon as servitude now; the parental authority which these children should have acknowledged without even the consciousness of acknowledgment, was regarded now as tyranny; the respect that should have grown with every hour of their lives was changing into disregard and contempt.

Children do not respect those whom they cannot recognize as superior, not even when the one who claims it is a parent and has a right to demand it. Those who fondled us in our childhood and allowed us every indulgence, we think of in the after-years with a half-contemptuous smile for their weakness; while those who ruled with sterner hand, who we now know withheld from us where the giving would be our injury, and who even chastised us in our hours of willful disobedience, these we regard with loving, sincere respect, we honor them for the wisdom which sought our highest good.

At table that night Charlie did not make his appearance, and indeed was nowhere to be found; George searched for him in every place where inclination might possibly have led him, but returned late in the evening with no news. He had informed the police, and hoped by to-morrow to be able to trace him, as, in his anger, he had undoubtedly run away. The next night came,

but still Charlie had not been heard from; and the police had made vigorous search in every part of the city.

Poor George! what with Sophronia, the twins, and a runaway child, it was no wonder he looked every hour graver and older. The day after, Sophronia inquired for the children; I was thankful that I sat by to say they were well, for George seemed paralyzed; he left the room as soon as possible, and Sophronia was too weak to question me further. George grew more and more anxious, accused himself of having driven the child from home, and, ordering the carriage, visited in person every station-house in the two cities. Of one thing we felt certain as the sun went down on the fourth day, and that was, that every police officer had been made aware that a child was lost, and that if his recovery was possible, their well-known vigilance in such undertakings would certainly accomplish it. George seemed scarcely to sleep at all; all night he walked back and forth in his room, or slipped quietly and hastily out-of-doors to make interrogations of some policeman whose step he had just heard on the walk. I began to fear for my brother's sanity, for I saw that under this accumulation of burdens his brain was becoming strangely bewildered. Still, Charlie did not come; George's hair grew manifestly grayer, and when I questioned him on any point, it was some moments before he seemed able to recall himself to present consciousness. Would this terrible suspense never end? I prayed God we might receive news of some sort, however bad; anything was better than this.

On the seventh day, as I sat by the window holding

one of the twins, a farmer's wagon drove to the door, and soon after a good-natured, jolly-faced man began to run his eyes along the block in search of some number which he was sure he had pretty nearly hit upon; then he commenced to pull something out from under a white awning; in a moment more I saw that the something was a boy, and I guessed that boy was Charlie. I laid little Jessie or May, I never could tell which, in her cradle, and, running down as rapidly as possible, I opened the door just in time to meet the good man tugging up the steps with his big bundle done up in a very gay, patchwork quilt.

"You don't know who I be, ma'am, but I've brought you suthin' you'll be mighty glad to see, I reckon." And he stepped into the parlor and undid his bundle, showing a boy with very sick-looking eyes, and a face covered with great red blotches. "My woman says it's the measles," he began, as he saw my look of astonishment; "and she thought he'd best be to hum, where he could git took care of."

"But where did you find him?" I asked, as I prepared the sofa for the extraordinarily docile Charlie, who seemed only too glad to have some one else make explanations for him.

"Why, I didn't find him at all, ma'am; he come along about a week ago, tired and a'most froze to death. My woman—she's a kind-hearted woman, she is—tuk him in; next day he seemed so sort o' sick and lonesome-like we couldn't turn him away, and he's ben a gittin' wus and wus ever since. We axed him a heap o' times where he lived, but he said he didn't want to go to hum, he wanted to work. That young

un's got a sight o' pluck, he has, and when he gits well I'd like jest sech a boy to work fur me."

The good man was evidently altogether unmindful of his elegant surroundings, while I thought, "Yes, the devil always has pluck enough to be obstinate; it's only the Christian who has grace enough to submit."

At this stage Charlie began to cry. "I wanted to see mamma," he said. And now the really desperate state of things into which we were plunged flashed across my mind. With Sophronia and the twins up-stairs, what could I do except turn the back parlor into a nursery and keep Charlie there? I had no more fear that he would die of anything except old age than George had of Phil years before.

"Well, ma'am," said the farmer, "I'll come back in a day or two after that patchwork; my woman sets a store by it."

I thanked him again and again for his kindness, offered the reward which George had stipulated for Charlie's recovery, at which the man laughed long and heartily, saying, "Why, ma'am, I should expect you'd do the same by one o' my boys." On that point I had my own private doubts, but I thanked him again, told him Charlie's papa would be glad to see him, shook hands with him cordially, then turned back to make the best of circumstances. I sent Bertie up to Kate, in spite of very decided remonstrance on his part, turned the back parlor into a bedroom, and nurse and I managed the whole affair so nicely, that the twins never once dreamed of the perils to which they were subjected.

I need hardly tell how delighted George was to see his eldest son, how he asked his pardon on the spot for

having dealt so severely with him, and how he permitted Charlie to lord it over him as never before, and how, with that first and last experience, all attempts at family government have come to an end. In all human probability George will never again experiment upon anything so absurd.

"You see, Maria," he said to me the other night, "it's perfectly foolish for either Sophronia or myself to attempt to govern these children in any other way than by love; the moment we resort to anything else it only exasperates them; Charlie did well enough until I punished him."

I am conscious that at that moment I gave the fire an energetic poke to keep myself from saying, "Of course every child who has his own way does well enough until you cross it." But where was the use of arguing with my brother? I knew already that young as he was, upon this one point he was in his dotage.

Charlie is more self-willed and imperious than ever. Why not? he knows no one would presume to thwart him now.

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## CHAPTER X.

### TOURING IT, AND HOME AGAIN.

PHIL and Viola are having a "magnificent bridal tour," at least so Viola informs in a note written on a sheet of pink paper in a cramped, almost illiterate hand. She gives us an account of the different hotels, with the price per day, as if that were a very genuine part of the enjoyment. At Washington, she speaks

enthusiastically of the crowd and the evening hops; tells us the waiter spilled a bowl of gravy on her traveling dress, which she could not persuade Phil to make a fuss about; but not a word of all that she had seen, or of anything, in fact, we really wanted to hear. They visit the two Houses, and Viola expatiates upon the "horrid people," and how hot and uncomfortable it is in the galleries. She informs us that she nearly ruined her new brown silk; and she is certain of one thing, that Phil will never get her there again. And then she wonders what has become of mamma, as she has only heard from her once since she went away.

There was so much she might have said, so much that would have comforted Kate, such opportunities for Viola to elevate herself in our opinion; but why should she care to make the effort, even if she had thought of it? It was a great honor for her to accept Phil under any circumstances, and it was our place to feel glad and grateful.

Phil's first letter or two was nothing but Viola, Viola, Viola, her graces, her charms, her attractions; and grandma wondered he hadn't taken a sheet of paper and written her name all over it; "it would have done just as well," she said. But when they had fairly reached Washington, Phil seemed to forget everything in his delight at seeing and hearing men of whom he had read all his life.

How we enjoyed the two or three letters he wrote us from there! He was our own Phil again in his earnest endeavor to make us realize it all with him. We read them over to Clara, and her eyes glowed with pleasure at the vividness of the descriptions.

"How beautifully Mr. Frost writes!" she said, in that sweet low voice of hers; but both voice and lip trembled before she had finished the words.

Clara and I have come to be very sincere friends in spite of the difference in our years. I courted her affection, and won it, as nearly all persistent lovers do. That sweet, sad face with drooping eyes, which used to be so frank and fearless, touched me to the heart.

Kate says I imagine more than half; well, perhaps I do; but I am quite certain she is paler far than she used to be, and her eyes have a weary look in them unnatural to one so young. She seems to love to be with us, and I find myself sighing more than once for a grown-up son of my own to win and woo her. Lately I wish as never before that there were some young life about the house,—not like Phil, certainly not like Viola,—some one more disinterested than either; in short, some one who will care to tell me whether my hair is arranged suitably or not, and who will take pains to pin my collar so that the pin won't in less than half an hour insert itself into the back of my neck. Kate, I know, has always been more skillful at these things than I; but lately it seems to annoy her to look out for them in another. She, it is safe to presume, will have a home with Phil and Viola; and Viola, I think, will take an interest in her, as she is Phil's mother, but I am only secondary; there will be no one, I am full well aware, to care for me,—to whom it will make any difference whether my hair is crimped on one side and plain on the other or not. I try not to care, but I do, nevertheless. It isn't pleasant to think of being



laid aside just yet, and to have people say, "Oh, it's only Miss Giles; no one minds how she looks."

It is useless to pretend heroism; I find my heart fail me any number of times every day as I look into the future. To grow old under any circumstances may not be the pleasantest thing in the world, but to grow old alone, and to feel that every year is taking me more and more away from those I love—but where is my bravery? There is enough of the positive disagreeable in life without bringing in the negative disagreeable to help it along; and, besides, the more one tries to remove ugly forebodings by picking at them, the more they stick and accumulate like burs.

It was one of the conditions which Viola demanded of Phil that they should have an extensive bridal tour, and Phil was only too happy to accede; consequently they fly from point to point as rapidly as possible, in order to expend the amount which Phil has allotted for this extraordinary occasion. Viola naturally wishes to have an opportunity to tell her dear friends just how many places they visited and what it all cost them. Society will doubtless make this simple demand of her, and why not gratify it?

But Viola evidently concludes that, as it is winter and the traveling thoroughly disagreeable, she is paying a heavy penalty for the possibility of exciting the noble passion of envy in the minds of her less favored friends; for long before the time appointed for their return we receive a telegram from Phil stating that they will be home that evening.

It had been decided before they left that Phil and Viola should return from their wedding tour to us.

Viola had come to this decision after having carefully examined our carpets and furniture, while Mrs. Vivian, smiling sweetly, had said she would agree to any plans which the young people might make.

And now we know they are actually on the way and will be with us very soon. Clara, to whom I have imparted our expectations, runs over with a basket of flowers fresh from the conservatory, which she soon transforms into half a dozen bouquets, and the house is fragrant with their perfume. Kate is cheerfully busy, flying in and out of the room which we still unconsciously call "Phil's," putting little delicate touches here and there, until Clara and all of us decide that it bears an unmistakably bridal appearance; cheerful at all events it is, with its dainty bed-coverings, its pictures, the perfume of flowers, the lace curtains fresh and white, the soft, rich carpet, intended as a special surprise to Phil.

We could not help running to glance at it every now and then, smiling satisfactorily at the completeness of its little appointments; for all that love and taste could suggest was placed there to make the room attractive. Clara looked at it for a few moments, took in all its pretty details, then her eyes grew liquid, as they had a fashion of doing nowadays; she caught up her little basket, said a hasty "good-morning," and left us to ourselves. Later in the day she ran in with a few choice flowers for the bride, apologized for her "rude leave-taking," then stopped to twist my hair and touch me up into quite a youthful-looking, middle-aged female. As for grandma and I, we have been for the most part busy in culinary affairs. Grandma has cut up citron and stoned raisins and separated the whites of

eggs from their yolks with unwearied patience, while I have stirred them together into the most inviting compounds. We look more like a baker's shop below-stairs than anything else; while above, as evening comes on and the back-parlor grate throws the warm glow of its fire-light across the room, and the chandeliers add their soft brilliancy to the general spirit of gladness, we feel, for the moment, that there's not a happier or more inviting home in all the great city than ours. We shut out every thought but joyous ones; and now that Viola is actually Phil's wife, she will very likely put forth the best in character and disposition. All that we can do to make them happy—to make life as beautiful as a fresh, young imagination pictures it—shall not be withheld if the giving is in our power. To-night, at any rate, we are glad; to-night there shall be no anticipations but those of joy within our home; Phil—our Phil, for whom we have lived in the past, grandma and I scarcely less than Kate, and toward whom every hope converges in the future—is coming home with his young and beautiful bride. Our spirits rise as we fancy again and again we hear a carriage in the distance, and we laugh each time more merrily at our own childish eagerness; and when at last they are fairly here, the first sounds that reach us are Phil's quick footstep and the hasty ringing of the door-bell.

But Kate is by his side almost before a second tinkle has greeted our ears; Phil drops his satchel, puts both arms around his mother's neck, and kisses her with the old, boyish eagerness, while the love-lit look with which he had regarded her for years, until Viola came, is once more in his eyes.

Perhaps it was the realization to Viola that she did not altogether absorb Phil's every thought, and perhaps it was the consciousness that she had not been first in our own anticipations of this home-coming, which made her greet us all in a stiff, smileless way; we felt the influence immediately, though we tried not to notice it.

"Phil, won't you see that my trunk is opened right away?" she said, impatiently; "I'm tired to death of my traveling-dress."

"Yes, yes," Phil answered, a little hastily, I thought, and looking as if he, possibly, might be tired of something besides a traveling-dress.

Viola was very cold, she said, and we all stepped into the parlors. Phil rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction as he walked up to the glowing grate.

"This is just nice," he said, in a chuckling sort of way, while his face beamed with the joy we all experience, no matter how happy we have been elsewhere, when we are once more home again. "Aren't you glad we're home, wifey?" and Phil stooped and kissed her.

"Oh, I thought you'd forgotten about me, you're so glad to see them all," Viola answered, in a slightly vexed tone. "If you'll fix me a little wine, and hand me my smelling-bottle, and open the trunk, so that I can go and change my dress, I shall be greatly obliged to you." And she held out a bunch of keys, which Phil took, and clasped the little hand which offered them in both of his in a loving pressure.

"Oh, don't mind about the dress now, please," said Kate; "dinner has been waiting for you this long time."

"We had our dinner at Delmonico's," Viola answered, indifferently; "besides, I expect mamma will

be here soon, and I know she would be disappointed not to find me dressed."

We were all sorry; but as Viola started to go upstairs we concluded we might as well go down to dinner. Phil came after awhile and sat with us, but we felt somehow as if a chill were upon us all.

"The carpet is beautiful," he said, but said it in an absent-minded sort of way not at all satisfactory.

"Does Viola like her room?" I asked.

"Really, I don't know," Phil answered; "she didn't say anything about it; she only said it made her dismal to smell those horrid tuberose, they always reminded her of funerals."

"Then she should come down and get the odor of this Java," Kate remarked, pleasantly.

On our return to the parlors, we found Viola looking much more cheerful than when we left her. She had on a pretty blue Irish poplin, laces, ribbons, scarf, sash, etc., so that the whole effect was much more inspiring than it had been an hour previous.

There are only a few birds that we do not estimate by their plumage, and Viola was not one of these. She herself certainly held the new feathers in proper esteem, for she glanced up at us with one of her bewitching smiles, and a harmony of expression which one is apt to assume with fine clothes. Phil, quite in accordance with our expectations, rushed up to her eagerly to kiss her and tell her how pretty she looked.

And now with Phil seated between Viola and his mother before the bright fire, while grandma not only looks on but joins in the steady current of talk, and every joyous tone comes back to me like the soft reso-

nance of a possible yes I might have spoken years ago, we seem more than likely to realize the pleasant evening which we had each so fondly anticipated. We had almost forgotten that there was an outside world, when the door-bell rang. Viola sprang to her feet, saying, "It's mamma, I'm sure!" And in another moment mother and daughter hold each other in a glad embrace.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FOLLY OF ANTICIPATING.

Mrs. VIVIAN is accompanied by the same gentleman upon whose arm she leaned the day of the wedding; she introduces him to us now as Mr. Simpkins. Viola nodded to him when he entered the room, but otherwise appeared to take no notice of his existence. He is not absolutely young, but youngish; tolerably good-looking, and, but for a disagreeable way of being surprised and startled every time he is spoken to, might have passed very well. Feeling that he was almost neglected in the general joyful reunion, I sat down by his side and endeavored, if possible, to remove some of his uncomfortableness.

Viola is very wide awake now, telling mamma all about the pretty things she has seen, describing one or two extraordinary dresses which have fallen under her observation, which description Phil cuts short by asking "if he mayn't tell about one or two pair of pants he

has witnessed?" whereupon we all laugh and enter into conversation more generally interesting.

"Mamma, you didn't write to me hardly at all while I was gone," Viola says presently.

"No, dear; I was unusually busy." And Mrs. Vivian dropped her head and blushed, while Mr. Simpkins wriggled about and started in an absolutely painful manner.

Viola, however, seemed to scorn noticing any of his movements. "You must make it up now, mamma, by coming to see me every day,—won't you?"

I held my breath, for I knew this would not be a pleasant prospect to any of the members of our family. Mrs. Vivian hesitated, and Viola went on:

"I want you to do such a lot of things for me; all my dresses are half spoiled, packing and unpacking them so many times, and my laces want doing up, and then, you know, we have our receptions in a week or two, and everything's got to be arranged before then. Promise me, mamma, you'll come now every day?"

Once more Mrs. Vivian dropped her head and blushed, and once more Viola waited for an answer.

"Really, my dear," the elder lady began after a moment's suspense, "I—you see—well, I thought as long as you were married and off my hands you wouldn't need me any longer," and Mrs. Vivian lifted her eyes and looked at Mr. Simpkins, while that gentleman studied the pattern of the carpet, "and so—and so"—the lady began to pleat the edge of her handkerchief—"Mr. Simpkins and I were married a week ago yesterday."

All embarrassment was gone now; the mother lifted

her head and looked defiantly at her daughter, whose eyes met hers in a steady, angry gaze.

"You are two *fools*!" said Viola, as she sprang to her feet, and her eyes shot out scornful flashes at Mr. Simpkins, which seemed to transfix him, for he neither spoke nor moved. The rest of us felt that we had nothing to say in the matter; this was their affair, fortunately, not ours.

Mrs. Vivian rose hastily and angrily. "Viola, take back that word or we never meet again," she said, in an authoritative tone.

Mr. Simpkins came forward now. "I beg your pardon, Miss—Mrs. Frost, I mean, if I've done anything to offend you; your mother thought——"

"Hush!" said his wife, and he drew back like a whipped spaniel into the corner. "Viola, do you take back that word?"

The young lady hesitated; Phil put his hand on her arm and whispered, "Do, darling; do, just to please her;" but Viola shook him off, saying aloud,—

"I don't care to please her. No, I won't take it back; they *are* fools,—idiots, and she old enough to be his mother." And Viola, enraged beyond all bounds, walked out of the parlors and rushed hastily up-stairs to her own room.

Mr. and Mrs. Simpkins at the same time made a rapid exit through the front door, the gentleman only looking back, calm and unperturbed, to bid us good-evening, and we were once more left to ourselves.

And *this* was the joyful evening we had anticipated! *this* the family reunion! We could not wonder at Viola for being hurt, indignant; but coarse, vulgar, unladylike,

utterly regardless of all consequences, these surely were not the traits which constitute a loved and loving wife; and hereafter this nature was to ingrain itself upon Phil, slowly, perhaps, but still, nevertheless, certainly. For it is not possible that two human beings should be drawn together in the closest of all earthly relationships, one which does not admit even a disguise for one's motives, much less one's pet vanities and weaknesses, without being permanently impressed for good or evil each by the other. I knew perfectly well that as much of this responsibility rested upon Phil as upon Viola, but as to which nature would impress the other most strongly I had my doubts; until to-night I should have said Phil's, now I could not help thinking Viola's. Whatever the result, I felt it a pity that there were no erasive moral sponges to obliterate all impressions upon either side for the next ten years at least.

Phil came down next morning alone. We were not at all surprised at this, knowing how extremely agitated Viola had been the evening previous. I made a hasty breakfast for myself, then arranged a tray full of dainty morsels wherewith to tempt the young bride's appetite. Phil took the tray in his hands, promised his mother he would return in a minute or two, and I followed on up-stairs with the hot coffee, which I could not trust to him to carry.

"Phil," said Viola, fretfully, as she inspected the dishes, "how could you bring me such an enormous breakfast, when you know I never care for anything but a cup of coffee! Do take it away! it makes me sick to look at it; enough for a ditch-digger."

And so all my care and skill had come to naught;

ah, well! it was worth one experience at least to know what to do in the future.

"You might be a little more amiable about it, anyway," Phil said, hastily; "Aunt Maria's done her best to please you."

"I didn't ask her to, though I'm sure I'm very much obliged," Viola answered, feeling called upon to say something.

Phil picked up the tray and ran down-stairs with it, while Viola wore the expression of a martyr. I am morally certain now, in the light of after-wisdom and experience, that had I not been standing by, there would have been no such abrupt leave-taking. Phil would have kissed Viola, and told her he was a great bear; Viola would have patted him on the cheek, assured him he was only a great pussy-cat, and put up her lips in a more tempting pout than ever; but such charming little farces cannot be enacted easily before third parties. Pride will have something to say in the matter; and many a little difficulty that a pout and a kiss would dissipate, swells into gigantic proportions when pride and vanity are wounded in presence of another. Neither does the nearness of the other's relationship at all diminish the wound; so much the worse if a mother, sister, or aunt; an absolute stranger would be infinitely preferable.

Young married people have a great deal to learn in their new, untried element; sharp angles and slippery, treacherous rocks to avoid, wide, open seas of difficulty to flounder in, before they can afford to call upon the world to behold their dextrous swimming.

I looked about me now to see what was to be done

while Viola was sipping her coffee. There was the elegant blue poplin thrown over a chair, and all the weight of skirts and underclothes tossed upon it; no wonder a three-weeks' tour would ruin an entire wardrobe. On the bureau were the pillow shams, over which Kate and I had spent an entire day, putting them in suitable order for Phil's bride, now crumpled and tear-stained. Ah, well! I could excuse that; I knew how bitterly Viola felt when she left us last evening, and it was no wonder she threw herself upon the bed without stopping to think of such small matters.

I busied myself about the room a few moments, making it look less disorderly, then having inquired and received assurance that there was nothing more I could do, I left Viola to her own meditations.

Phil and his mother were in the drawing-room, having a quiet little talk all to themselves, which I ventured to interrupt. "Phil, are you going down-town this morning?"

"Yes, of course, I must; there ought to be something for me at the office." And he rose quickly and looked at his watch.

"Viola will want to see you before you go," I ventured.

A slight scowl passed quickly over his face, then he went to the stairs, gave two or three quick, boyish leaps, and in a few moments we heard his glad, joyous laugh. How grateful I was that the little difficulty had been dispelled so easily! But being a spinster, how could I know that love has a thousand magical charms of its own, and that many a trouble which appears extremely

grave and formidable, may assume, after all, under its mystic spell, only a surface depth?

At noon Viola was radiant in a white robe of some soft, woolly fabric, and stood at the windows watching for Phil, who had promised to lunch with us. Viola sprang as soon as she heard his step, and they were in each other's arms before the door was fairly closed.

"You are so cold, dear," she said, as she seated herself on his knees, and laid her soft cheek against his own, "and I'm miserably lonesome without you."

"I thought you'd be glad enough to get rid of me," said Phil, laughing, and holding out before the grate the one hand which was at liberty.

"You naughty boy! I haven't got anything in the world to do when you're away; and that horrid picture over the mantelpiece in our room makes me feel blue and lonesome."

"What! that beautiful Mater Dolorosa?"

"It isn't beautiful, Phil; the face is all drawn down like this," and Viola drew hers out to its utmost length. "Won't you please to take it down right away, dear?"

"Why—yes, if you don't like it," Phil said, hesitatingly; "but I'm very sorry, for it happens to be a favorite picture of mine. But haven't you got any sewing, puss, or anything of that sort, to keep you busy?"

"Oh, dear, I hate to sew; and, besides, everything's all made up, you know," said Viola, laughing. "If you'll only bring me home three or four of those cheap paper novels, that'll keep me busy until the calls begin."

"Why, Phil," suggested Kate, "there's your library



up-stairs that hasn't been unlocked these two or three months; perhaps Viola can find something in it to interest her."

After Phil had gone down-town in the afternoon, Viola took the key and went to the library, but she returned in a few moments, saying there were no nice, interesting stories there; history and poetry, and such things, she always did hate, so she lay down on the sofa in the back parlor and went to sleep.

## CHAPTER XII.

### NOTHING TO DO—NOTHING.

SEVERAL days after, Phil and Viola came down-stairs with their arms around each other, looking as radiant and happy as if it had been a beautiful June morning, instead of a miserable, chilly one in the month of March. We all looked up and smiled as they entered the dining-room. There is nothing so soothing to mankind in general as a pair of lovers, and, besides, we were beginning to like Viola better; all her moods were not unpleasant ones, happily, we had found that out.

"I am going to the office with Phil this morning," she said, "and this afternoon we are going to a *matinée* up-town."

"Then we shall lose you for all day, shall we?" asked Kate.

"Until dinner," Viola answered; "and, oh, if you'll have Marianne hang up my dresses to-day, and take the things out of my trunks, I shall be very glad!"

Kate and I looked at each other in mutual surprise; Phil never once lifted his head; how, indeed, should he know that this wasn't exactly the correct thing to do?

Marianne was a new girl, and I began to reflect at once that this work would inevitably fall on me, and to wonder how it was that Viola could have been brought up with such ideas; but then money brings servants and attendance, and servants and attendants put one on a footing with princesses in idleness.

Marianne and I did have a task of it: it took us the entire morning. Kate, who always sat with grandma, and did the plain family sewing, looked in at us several times, and opened her eyes very wide at the display of party-dresses; one would have imagined, from their abundance and the comparative dearth of plainer robes, that life was one long holiday, and that Viola expected to go dancing down into the unknown future in white satin slippers and puffy tarlatan.

Phil and Viola came home to a late dinner. They were cold, tired, and hungry, with not the most remote suggestion of a June morning about them. Under just such circumstances it would be dangerous to cross the mood of even a bride and groom, and certainly no one would be foolish enough to attempt it.

"Oh, Phil," said Viola, as they were waiting for dinner to be dished, "where is that bundle of books? I want to look at them a moment."

Phil started with a sudden sense of guilty conscious-

ness. "There!" he exclaimed, "I left them on the ferry-boat."

"That's just as mean as it can be," said Viola, reddening; "and I've got the whole day before me to-morrow, while you're gone, with nothing on earth to do. You might have taken a little pains, I should think."

Phil looked distressed, angry; he was not accustomed to being spoken to in just this way. If he had ever had a sister, it might have been very different; then he would have been familiar with such impetuous little outbreaks, and have thought nothing of them; being bantered by an old maid aunt, for whom he did not care, and by a young wife for whom he did, were altogether different affairs.

Phil walked to the window, always a delightful resource in little quarrels, and began to drum on it rather nervously; no one ventured to speak a word.

"There's that horrid, mopy picture up in our room still; I suppose I shall have that to cheer me up all day to-morrow," said Viola, taking out her handkerchief and wiping away one or two tears of vexation. / *Don't think!*

The picture, it is true, had not been removed, and both Kate and myself supposed that Viola had been persuaded into allowing it to remain just where it was.

"It shall be taken down at once," said Phil, turning around angrily; "has your highness any other commands to issue?"

Viola did not answer, and Phil left the room. Kate called to him that dinner was ready, nevertheless he went on.

Now that I recollect, Phil does have a very bad habit of not remembering things; it has annoyed his mother and myself many a time; still, it had never been the occasion of any serious difficulty, and we had supposed, if we thought of it at all, that for Viola everything would be done at once,—promptly. Men, however, are not so plastic and easily remoulded as we sometimes imagine, and this was a life-long habit of Phil's, which could be traced years back, when he wanted to "begin over again;" but then, how could Viola know all this? How could she know that habits are like millstones about one's neck, which only the most persistent effort can remove? Men may put spurs upon the wind, settle the destiny of nations, or plan the model of a universe, if need be, but they *will not* break a habit.

Let no fond maid deceive herself by any such illusion; it is her place to learn what these habits are, and then having viewed the outlook closely, and every point of attack, keep clear of them. The wise virgins understand this by instinct; while the foolish virgins batter away at the ramparts with their small pop-guns, which apparently harmless cannonading has several ways of producing serious results. / *Good advice*

Viola apparently felt better after the demands of her physical nature had been somewhat satisfied, and was evidently disposed to "make up," for she smiled sweetly at Phil when he entered the dining-room; that young gentleman responded by looking mildly over the top of her head, and by afterwards making the most of his dinner.

It is not a little humiliating to be forced to recognize how much of the animal exists even in the most

exalted manhood and womanhood, and how many of the most charming traits of mind and heart are dependent upon a healthy physical organization, or upon the natural gratification of its most simple demands.

As Phil had taken no notice of Viola during dinner, it was a little surprising to us, when we joined them in the parlors half an hour after, to find them promenading with their arms about each other, and gazing off from the pinnacle of their supreme happiness with a much more unportrayably serene expression than any which Raphael's cherubs ever attained. We all smiled upon them, and I believe mutually chided ourselves and each other for our foolish fears.

Surely love is more powerful far than anything I had ever dreamed of; it has its own sweet way of putting aside difficulties, which are only formidable when one insists upon their being so. Hereafter we should never question their mutual love and forbearance: they were unmistakably fond and devoted; these little disagreements were merely such as might naturally be expected while two young, undisciplined people were learning each other's peculiarities.

Next day was one of those intensely cold ones which sometimes come to us in the month of March; as if Winter were determined to disgorge himself of all unexpended frost and cold in a single unrestrained endeavor. Phil had a miserable, unpleasant journey before him into the country, would be back on an evening train, and to Viola the day looked like a young eternity. They were at least half an hour saying good-by, while grandma wondered why on earth they stood out in the hall so long, when they might just as well

have sat down on some chairs in the parlor and been comfortable.

I detected a tear in Kate's eye as we turned away to our work; it *was* hard to have Phil bestow his first, his last, his every thought upon another; once he had run up the steps to give his parting kiss to his mother, but that was all over now. I knew that while Kate felt it keenly she acknowledged that it was right, natural, and was too unselfish to put the thought in words. For my own part, I could not help wishing that love were a little less exclusive, and I could not exactly understand why it was quite necessary in loving one to shut out all others; but there are many things we do not quite understand.

Poor Viola—for she was really an object of compassion—was at a loss what to do with her own individuality. There was no mamma to go and see; she could neither make calls nor expect any, even had the weather permitted; the only books she cared to read had been left on the ferry-boat; she didn't like to be around where there was any work going on, and what *should* she do with herself?

In a world full of strong, passionate demands upon those who possess opportunity and leisure, it often happens that more than one woman holds her hands in listless idleness, letting these golden treasures drip from her taper fingers, and watching them fall, apparently as indifferent and unconcerned as a child would play with and drop a diamond marble. So Viola stood this day, with no thought but one, and that to be amused. Grandma was darning stockings, which in itself was odious, even had grandma been young enough to be Phil's sister. Kate was stitching away at the machine,

getting household matters ready for spring, while I was taking advantage of this extremely cold weather and the improbabilities of company to produce a complete change in my pantry arrangements below-stairs. Viola might have assisted grandma, or turned hems for Kate, or wiped off china for me, but the matter certainly did not present itself to any of us audibly, and Viola herself would as soon have thought of making astronomical calculations for the next eclipse as doing any one of them. A bright thought came to me as by inspiration, and I suggested crochet-work.

"Why, yes, to be sure," Viola answered; "I wonder I didn't think of it myself; I used to do loads of such work at home."

Whereupon the young lady produced a huge box of worsteds which had come in the trunks "mamma" sent her a few days previous, and set herself to work with a diligence that called forth my admiration. Viola was pleased when I spoke of her dexterity; an expression, however, which I should have withheld could I have foreseen that life would have little more inviting, no claims more urgent, no responsibilities more important than those which crocheting would involve.

Very naturally Viola grew tired long before night, and began to wish for any change, no matter what. Like most young people of the present generation, she had been nourished and brought up on excitement, and was only happy now when some one stood by to feed it to her in heaping spoonfuls.

We were all at the windows, toward night, watching the cold, dark, blustering day "sink in the bosom of the west." Kate put her arm around Viola, who

was pouting at the miserable appearance of everything outside, and the, to her, forlorn condition of everything within.

"It's been such a horrid, horrid day," said Viola; "if Phil had only thought about the books, it wouldn't have been quite so wretched," and the pout deepened into a decidedly cross expression. Just then a sweet young face looked up at the windows, and soft, earnest eyes rested with a wondering gaze upon Viola. It was Clara; though certainly nothing less than actual vision would have convinced us that she would be in the street such a day as this. I sprang to the door and called her; she hesitated for an instant, then turned and came into the house. Kate, grandma, and I gave her a glad welcome, it seemed so long since we had seen her, then Kate introduced her to "my daughter." Clara reached out a soft, warm hand from her muff; Viola took it and bowed haughtily, as if Clara had been a beggar brought in from the cold; then, seating herself, she folded her arms and appeared as uninterested as possible. And this was Clara's first introduction to Viola. Kate looked annoyed. I was puzzled for a moment, then concluded that it was the same species of jealousy which she had exhibited the night of their return. Being the young lady of the family and Phil's wife, she had concluded that she should be all in all to us; we had no right to care for any other.

And now I heard Clara's sweet voice saying, in answer to some question from Kate, "Oh, I don't mind going out in the cold at all; mother and I have had such a pleasant day all to ourselves; we've been planning the children's clothes for spring, and we found so

many things to give away that I took Lewis and went around to Mrs. Nichols with them."

No one made any response; we were all thinking, "mother and I have had such a pleasant day all to ourselves;" and yet they had been doing nothing more exciting or amusing than "planning the children's clothes."

Viola got up and walked to the window.

"Phil had to go out of town this morning," said Kate; "the journey must have been a very unpleasant one. I only hope he won't freeze to death."

"Oh, I *hope* not," Clara answered in such unquestionably interested tones that Viola turned and looked at her with prolonged gaze.

Viola was certainly very pretty as she stood by the window in the blue poplin which Phil liked to have her wear. One always thought of what she wore; somehow it seemed more important than anything else about her.

"You must have had a very pleasant trip, Mrs. Frost?" Clara addressed Viola.

"Yes, rather," indifferently.

People who make no effort to please are very rarely themselves pleased. After Clara was gone, Viola informed us that she was a "horrid little thing, with no style whatever about her."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### QUITE LIKE MARRIED PEOPLE.

It was late when Phil came home. Viola had pouted and fretted, and then declared she "didn't care whether he came or not," and finally we had all grown quiet and anxious. The poor boy was indeed almost frozen. Viola sprang to his side, but he did not speak to her. Grandma saw the difficulty at once, told us to bring salt and water, while she herself went off to prepare a sling. Viola kissed his cheeks and hands, smoothed and patted him, and called pet names enough to have answered for a whole courtship. All this, however, had very little effect until the remedies had begun to do their work. Kate took one hand, I the other, and we rubbed away upon them until Phil looked up and smiled at Viola. Then I thought of Martha and Mary, and how often it happens that those who *say* the loving things get the reward, while those who *do* them are very apt to be overlooked.

We were very joyful when Phil was sufficiently recovered to stretch himself on the sofa, which we had drawn in front of the fire, and lying there with his head in Viola's lap, was able to give us an account of his short journey.

"Well, dear," he said, as he had finished and drew down Viola's face to kiss, "has it been the long, tiresome day you expected?"

"Oh, dear, yes, a thousand times worse! Every-

body was awful busy, and there was nothing in the world for me to do. If I'd only had the books now——"

A shade came over Phil's face. "You shall have them to-morrow, darling. Has no one been here to-day?"

Viola did not answer, and Kate said,—

"Yes; Clara was here awhile this afternoon."

"Then she saw my little wife? Good!"

"Phil, who is Clara?" Viola asked.

"Oh, a little girl my mother was very anxious to have me marry before I saw you." And Phil looked up in Viola's face, and stroked her cheek in a manner that showed he was more than satisfied with his own choice.

But Viola pushed the hand aside, and said, "Yes, I thought as much this afternoon."

Phil complained of not feeling well next morning, and concluded to let the office take care of itself,—it was evident he had taken a severe cold. Viola considered this an especial unkindness toward herself, as their receptions began in a day or two.

"Perhaps I shall be better then, dear," said Phil, "and to-day we'll have a good visit together. I've never shown you my books and engravings, and there's my mineralogical collection, too; I think you'd be interested in that."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," said Viola, frankly.

"Why, minerals, you know."

("Well, what *are* minerals?") Viola put the question petulantly, and Phil colored as he answered it, whether from vexation or mortification it was difficult to tell.

"Why, stones,—amethysts and rubies and garnets——"

"Oh, I know what those are well enough," said Viola, interrupting; "but I never heard anybody but you call them minerals; it's a name you got up for yourself, isn't it?" *The dear creature!*

Phil dipped his face as far as he could in his moustache-cup. How indeed should he be supposed to know anything at all about Viola's mind? It might, perhaps, have been a good idea to question mutual fitness and compatibility before marriage; but then—who ever does it? There's plenty of time afterward for all that sort of thing; besides, courtship, however long, is never more than just long enough to make love in.

Viola declared to us at noon that she never saw such a queer library as Phil's: no stories in it except those tiresome ones of Dickens's, which she never could have the patience to get through with. As for poetry, it was dreadfully stupid stuff, anyway; and Phil certainly did have the oddest taste, to keep those stones tucked off up-stairs, instead of having them made up into rings and pins; there was one amethyst which Viola thought was almost the exact shape for a pin, and she meant to have one made out of it.

In the afternoon Viola got her crochet-work, and while Phil smoked his cigar she discussed with him the most desirable dresses to wear during receptions. It was certainly very amusing to us to hear Phil dilate with sobriety and wisdom upon matters of which we had supposed him in total darkness. Viola expended considerable thought and logical ability in convincing Phil that it would not be at all proper for her to wear any *one* dress during the entire receptions. Phil couldn't see why not; but having once comprehended



that under the circumstances it was necessary Viola should make an unusual display of her wardrobe, he proved a docile and valuable assistant.

Modern philosophy has puzzled itself considerably as to whether there is any such quality as sex in brain; if not, there is no possible explanation of the difference in effect produced upon the opposite sexes by—well, a cold in the head. A woman invariably endeavors to conceal the fact that she has one; if called to the parlor, she takes her daintiest handkerchief, and uses it lightly; if questioned in reference to her health, she "is getting better, and will soon be quite well." She does her utmost to be agreeable, entertaining, fearful lest her cold may make her appear dull and stupid. She takes additional pains at her toilet, conscious that her countenance is undergoing a trying ordeal; if she becomes irritable under the high pressure, why, "it is because she isn't well,—she really must have a doctor."

But a man: he doesn't feel right, and he won't try to appear so; *he* is called to the parlors, and kicks over a chair which happens to stand in his way; he tells his guest he "never felt so awfully in his life before,—never," and emphasizes the assertion by a vigorous use of his pocket-handkerchief; he looks in a dull, indifferent way out of weak, watery eyes, utterly rejecting the thought of any attempt at making himself agreeable, or, indeed, of becoming interested in anything: he "don't feel like it and he won't." His toilet and personal appearance generally is in an utterly demoralized condition; and if perchance he fails to exercise the most rigid control over his disposition, his

feelings have "nothing whatever to do with it,—the cause would have been exasperating under any circumstances."

Our Phil was in just this delightful frame of mind on the following day. If he had only kept his bed, and suffered himself to be waited upon, one could have patiently submitted to a few eccentricities. But no; he must and would be up and around the house, puffing his meerschaum or cigar in everybody's face, leaving his books and papers wherever he happened to drop them, whether from the sofa to the floor, or from the table to the chairs, depositing cigar-ashes in every conceivable place, and growling at the world in general and himself in particular. Before noon he had stepped on the cat's tail at least twenty times; had put Marianne and Catherine in high dudgeon, sent grandma off upstairs to escape the thick clouds of smoke, called forth various indignant remarks from Maria Giles, spinster, and had even vexed his mother. As for Viola,—she was amazed, provoked, bewildered, and finally angry. She had never seen a man in just this mood before; indeed! how should she? Men with severe colds have still sufficient discrimination left to call, if they call at all, upon old ladies with supplies of remedial syrups, rather than young ladies, who have merely smiles and blushes to bestow. One would naturally have supposed that the presence of a young and lovely bride would have acted as a powerful quietus to any turbulence of disposition; but Viola was a fact, not a possibility; and facts, however delightful, are never so alluring and absorbing as the "might have been" or the "likely to be." Besides, Phil wasn't well, and

why should he pretend that he was? Not that he complained at all of being sick, that would have been womanish; to make himself as disagreeable as possible was the only manly way in which he could give expression to the general state of his health.

In the early part of the day Phil had suffered himself to be amused by his wife: she had played and sang for him, but the music was certainly of an inferior sort; and now that Phil had ample opportunity for reflection he appeared to think so too, for he asked her to leave the piano and come and read to him.

"There was nothing to read," Viola said, but she finally became interested in a book of ballads, and they spent a pleasant half-hour together. After that Phil left Viola to her crochet-work, while he wandered about the house in the amiable manner which I have before indicated.

One may endure a cigar, but a dozen! (I doubt if there is a woman living of such heavenly-mindedness that she would fail to be impressed into expression of some sort under the infliction.) We had endured the delightful aroma all day with patient submission; now we felt as if it would be joy to inhale one breath of pure, unsmoked air. Late in the afternoon, as Phil reached forth his hand for another one of these domestic irritants, Kate looked up beseechingly. I put myself in mental preparation for an onslaught, while Viola said, with some petulance, "Phil, I do beg of you not to light another cigar!"

"Yes, Phil, pray don't," Kate added, and for once I kept quiet.

Meanwhile Phil had struck a match, and now pro-

ceeded to puff away with as much unconcern as if we were only so many bumble-bees buzzing about his ears.

"Phil, did you hear me?" said Viola.

"Yes, love, but then I've lighted this, you see; you'll have to wait until I come to the next one."

"But you *hadn't* lighted it, you know," insisted Viola.

"Now you are getting argumentative, my dear; pray don't! I never like to hear a woman argue."

"Philip Frost, will you or will you not give up that cigar?" Viola had dropped her worsted and was looking at Phil very earnestly.

"My dearest Viola, I will not." And Phil looked back at her with equal earnestness.

The color rushed in a great tide over Viola's face; she gazed at her husband, evidently in her heart undergoing a great conflict of feeling. All men whom she had ever known had held themselves in readiness to do her slightest bidding; if she had asked them to lay aside a cigar, it had been instantly thrown away; if she had said "do this or that," this or that had been instantly executed; if there had been any amusement to seek, it had been her convenience and hers alone which was considered. Viola, quite naturally, had never thought Phil would esteem it the slightest sacrifice to yield any of his own preferences to hers. Hadn't he told her he would do anything and everything man could do to please her? It was certainly a new experience to find that any gentleman would persist in anything to which she had objected. The conclusion would inevitably be that Phil was more obstinate and disobliging than any other man in the universe.

"Phil," said Viola, presently, "you promised me once that you would do anything in the world I wanted you to do."

"Yes, my darling, of course," Phil answered, with a blush, as he saw Kate and myself smile; "of course I meant that I would do anything in the world that was reasonable; now, if you wanted me to get you a new hat or a—pair of gloves, I would do it: that would be reasonable; but to ask me to give up a cigar I had just lighted"—Phil reached out his hand, seeking for some place to deposit the ashes, and hoping meanwhile that wife, mother, or aunt would spring to catch them and so save him the trouble. Viola, seeing her opportunity, caught the cigar from between the fingers which were holding it lightly, and, quick as thought, threw it into the fire.

We all laughed, even Phil, who got up, saying, "Ah, my little lady, you've not made much by that; I shall pay you off now by smoking at least half a dozen more."

He went up-stairs, and we heard him rummaging for at least ten minutes, then he returned to the parlors disconsolate, threw himself upon the sofa and buried his face in the pillow. No explanations were offered, but we knew perfectly well that the supply was exhausted.

Viola, who felt that the victory was hers, could afford to be generous; she went to the side of the sofa, threw her arm over Phil and kissed the small remnant of face which he had left exposed. "Come, Phil, let us make up," she said, playfully.

"I don't wish to 'make up,' thank you," in a dignified tone.

"Oh, you don't? Very well, I don't wish to either,"

and Viola left the room; presently we heard her descend the stairs and close the front door as she went out on the street.

"Phil," said Kate, anxiously, "where do you suppose Viola is gone?"

"Oh, out to buy some candy, very likely." And Phil went off to their room, and we saw no more of either of them until the bell rang for dinner.

It was a regular boy and girl quarrel; Kate and I had a hearty laugh over it as soon as we were by ourselves. We had learned, by this time, that the whole difficulty would probably be dissolved in one enrapturing kiss the moment they should again meet. But we were disappointed; we had not taken into consideration that Phil had a severe cold, and was not in an ordinarily mollifiable condition. Whether they had spoken to each other previously or not, we could not tell, but they neither glanced at nor referred to one another during the entire dinner. Immediately afterward Phil went back to his room, saying, in a general way, as he left us, that he "wished no one would disturb him, as he had some papers to look over, and should then retire, as there was nothing else to do."

This was the first evening of their married life which Phil and Viola had spent away from each other. Kate and I did our best to make it as pleasant as possible for Viola, but she was evidently provoked as well as uneasy and unhappy, and at an early hour she bade us "good-night," kissing us each as she left us, a thing she had never before done.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## FACTS TO BE ACCEPTED.

PHIL and Viola had apparently quite forgotten that there had been any difficulty between them the evening previous, and although they did not enter the dining-room with their arms around each other, nor even the remnant of a smile upon their faces, the cause of an absence of these demonstrations was an altogether different one.

To-day receptions would begin, and Viola informed us, before she had even said good-morning, that Phil had positively refused to make his appearance unless he felt better.

Circumstances were unquestionably quite annoying and unpleasant; Kate and I both said so. We felt sorry for Phil, knowing that he really was not in an agreeable frame either of body or mind; and we were also sorry for Viola; to receive alone was certainly unpleasant and somewhat mortifying.

We saw very little of either of them until afternoon, as Viola was very busy in her room, and Phil happily remained with her.

Just before the hour indicated for callers, Viola made her appearance dressed superbly, and begging that we would come and persuade Phil to get ready.

That amiable individual said "of course he couldn't dress while Viola was before the glass, but that he would go down by-and-by for a little while."

"Oh, Phil, what an awfully provoking fellow you are!" said Viola. And no one could blame her if she did frown a little.

Just then callers were announced; Viola smoothed out the frowns from her face with a ravishing smile, gave one last, fond, parting look at herself in the mirror, and descended the stairs.

Kate persuaded Phil to be as expeditious as possible, then remembering that the friends might be ours and unacquainted with Viola, we joined her immediately. They were Mrs. Maynard and Clara, and we naturally, as old friends, stepped into the back-room before the bright coal-fire.

Again callers arrived; Viola greeted them cordially as she returned to the other room, while Kate and I looked up to learn with dismay that they were the livery-stable keeper whom we had seen at Mrs. Vivian's immediately after the wedding, and a young lady of immense size, dressed in gaudy, pretentious style. We did not care to introduce these people as Viola's friends, and as they were already seated, it would not be at all necessary to bring them and the Maynards together. We heard Phil's step on the stairs, and were glad for Viola's sake that he was ready to make his appearance; he bowed pleasantly, but not at all familiarly, to Viola's guests, whom he seemed unconscious of having met before, then passing on to the other room, he greeted Mrs. Maynard and Clara in an unusually cordial manner.

Phil looked better and appeared in better spirits than we had imagined possible; he and Clara chatted pleasantly and even gayly for a few moments. More

than once I saw Phil looking wistfully toward Viola, evidently wishing she might join them; her friends left first, and Phil eagerly went after her, bringing her toward us with his arm around her waist, and looking at her with an expression of undisguised admiration and delight.

But something had crossed Viola's mood. "Yes, I have already met Miss Maynard," she said, coldly, as Phil led her toward Clara; Clara blushed slightly, and Phil looked annoyed. Evidently Clara regarded with admiring eyes the beautifully-dressed woman whom Phil still held in one arm, and evidently she felt, or at least I felt for her, that they were as different, as uncongenial, as if they had been brought together from the antipodes. Clara, with her dark, wondering eyes, sweet, pensive face, and thoughtful, earnest brow; Viola, with bright gray eyes, changeful, moody expression, and low forehead, almost hidden by tiny curls. Neither of them perhaps were strictly beautiful, but the one would always appear best in evening dress, or in showy costume on the street; the other you thought of, involuntarily, as looking loveliest by her own fire-side with a little child in her arms.

How thankful we were when the day had expended itself! It had been full of petty annoyances to Phil, who, as we knew, was not in an unusually happy frame of mind to receive them.

Viola's friends and acquaintances were so different from ours. Phil found it difficult to greet with a warmth, which Viola plainly expected, people for whom he could never, not even to please his wife, feel the least possible affinity.

There had begun to creep into Phil's mind the dim consciousness that in choosing Viola he must also choose her tastes, her pleasures, and her associations. He had never before had any opportunity to think about it, and the idea was forcing itself upon him now, —not exactly as a clear idea will sometimes force itself upon the mind and be at once accepted and submitted to, because we recognize it as truth, but it was groping its way into recognition by various little frictions and mortifications and annoyances.

Doubtless the same thought was finding a lodgment somewhere in Viola's brain, for she told Phil that night, and he repeated to us, laughingly, next morning after breakfast, that "Viola thought our friends were dreadfully poky; she was very sure she should never like any of them, least of all the Maynards."

"I am almost afraid she is jealous of Clara," said Kate, suggestively.

"To be sure," Phil looked rather gratified over it, however; "that explains her treating Clara so coldly yesterday. I never thought of it before. I'm sorry though," he went on, "for I should have liked her and Clara to be intimate."

"What!" I said, looking up involuntarily, "Clara Maynard and Viola intimate?"

"Why, yes, Aunt Maria; why not? I don't see anything so very strange about it."

Well, if Phil couldn't see "anything strange about it," I certainly was not going to be the first to cast a ray of intelligence into his benighted understanding.

All things come to an end in time; even solar systems themselves, though few of us live long enough to

witness the collapse; consequently it is not at all surprising that receptions and dress parades, and even Phil's cold, reached a terminus.

The days are warm and delightful. Phil is back at the office again. There is no grand, immediate prospective excitement, and once more Viola has nothing especial to do. Our family neither collectively nor individually could be deemed very gay society for a young lady of her requirements. As a general thing Viola made her exit from the house immediately after breakfast, returning with Phil occasionally at noon, but more frequently not until dinner; then she would display a neck-tie or a pair of gloves, or a trifle of some sort, which she had "chased after all over the city before she could find what exactly suited her." If it rained, or there were appearances of anything so "fearfully dismal," Viola perched herself in an easy-chair by the front windows, where she sat and crocheted until Phil came home to lunch.

We did not see anything of Phil in these days, for now that receptions were over, and it was quite proper that they should be seen in public, they spent no more evenings at home with us. Once or twice Phil had invited his mother to accompany them, but Viola had invariably frowned, in consequence of which Kate had declined, and Phil did not urge the matter. To all intents and purposes they were merely a couple of boarders whom we might try with unwearied pains to please, and, having done all in our power, had still done no more than they considered themselves as having a perfect right to demand.

Kate, I knew, was not happy, and in my own heart

I censured Phil more than Viola; he had no right to close his eyes to every object but one, to shut out from his heart every claim excepting those of youth and beauty, to lose sight even for a moment of the love which had never and would never, under any circumstances, forget him.

Viola and Phil certainly adore each other in spite of little unimportant differences. Phil is always ready to run up-stairs for Viola's handkerchief, or fan, or gloves, and Viola is always ready to meet him at the door with a ravishing smile, and in the prettiest possible toilets; and this we have been assured from time immemorial is the very acme of wifely duties. Still, Viola, in spite of appearances, is not altogether satisfied; to have no anticipated excitements is not exactly the right way to live; consequently, as the first of May draws near, Phil announces that he and Viola have made up their minds to go to housekeeping.

Kate and I had talked the matter over between ourselves, and are really not at all sorry that they have arrived at such conclusion. This would impart to life a reality which would deepen Viola's nature, and call into exercise whatever faculties she possessed. As to Phil, it would impose upon him a sense of responsibility which he had never before fully realized, and would, almost of necessity, correct in him those habits of good-natured indifference, which would be more than annoying to a young wife whose main dependence was upon him. As to the housekeeping itself we had our doubts; but why not these two as well as all others? if they did not know, this certainly was the best time to learn. Kate suggests a small house



in the suburbs, but Phil and Viola have already decided quite differently.

"We are going to take part of a house down-town," said Viola, decisively; "mamma always did so. There's a great deal more style about it."

"Yes, certainly," Kate answered, meekly.

"If I only had mamma to help me get ready," said Viola.

"On the whole, hadn't you better go and make up with her?" suggested Phil, who never liked quarrels under any circumstances, and always believed *he* should be forgiven at once, whatever the offense, and so end the difficulty.

"No, indeed!" answered Viola. "I shall never forgive mamma until she asks my pardon."

"Probably she never thought of such a thing as offending you, my love, when she got married."

"Oh, yes, she did, I'm sure; she knew of course I wouldn't like it."

"But she's of age, isn't she?" asked Phil, who believed in letting everybody have their own way (the only objection to this theory being that it generally prevents everybody else from having theirs).

"Phil, how ridiculous you are," responded Viola. "I sha'n't go and see mamma, anyway, so that ends the matter."

## CHAPTER XV.

### VARIED EXPERIENCES.

VIOLA and Phil are actually and fairly at housekeeping. Who can doubt the fact for an instant with the rows of shining new tins in the up-stairs kitchen, and the handsome new furniture in the down-stairs parlors? Kate and I do not favor this arrangement, but two parlors cannot be dispensed with, consequently the kitchen must step out of the way.

Viola has had abundant help in getting ready; Kate and I have relieved her of all the disagreeables; a member of the large sisterhood of namesakes of the holy Virgin presides over the culinary department, and now we leave them to themselves. Viola cannot repress the joy she experiences at feeling that she, and she alone, is priestess over this one shrine wholly and solely devoted to her.

Phil puts his arm around her and says "now they are going to begin all over again; we need entertain no fears as to their future happiness. He is so glad they had those few weeks at home to get more fully acquainted with each other."

Phil looked at Viola with all the anticipated joy of years of gladness in his eyes. More than once it had seemed to me that his gaze of admiration had been rather that of gratified taste or fancy than of a soul-lit joy; but to-night I could find no fault: they were happy, Phil even more than Viola, with all that pecu-

liar pride of ownership which every man feels when he occupies for the first time a spot over which he alone is lord.

And so we left them; but with very much the same feeling regarding them that a mother bird must experience when the helpless birdlings have for the first time made their way out of the parent nest. What doubts! what fears! what forebodings! what anxieties! as she sees them fluttering about in their feeble attempts to fly. She knows the dangers of which they are ignorant; but she must still be hopeful, for, though they fail once or twice, there is no other way to learn.

( Now every woman, as a matter of course, is expected to be a housekeeper. It matters little or nothing what her tastes and habits have been previously,—these are never called in question; she *may* be an artist, but she *must* be a housekeeper; she may be a musician, but she must also understand the harmony of the domestic machinery; she may be a fashionable woman of the world, but then she must be competent to sustain a fashionable, well-appointed establishment. Since there are very few women excluded from this positive and imperative *must*, it is astonishing how little time or effort is devoted to it, and how much to the bare possibilities of life. The young girl rhapsodized and eulogized perhaps for her very inefficiency, becomes in a single day wife and helpmeet, and is expected to preside ably and skillfully over any household arranged for her. Very often, too, this household contains parents or relatives of large experience, and, anxious to please for the sake of the loved one, life almost imperceptibly becomes joyless and burdensome; the husband

wonders, friends wonder, why the fair cheeks have faded so soon.)

Whatever might be the fate of others, our Viola had no such difficulties as these to contend with: she and Phil were alone, and a tolerably efficient cook had been provided; whatever was imperfect on the table must and probably would be remedied by loving smiles and kisses.

Kate and I left them to themselves for a week; partly that they might have a fair experience at house-keeping, and the evenings to themselves for domestic enjoyment, and partly because our dear mother had not been so well, and seemed unwilling to have either of us leave her. Then, as Clara came in, and said she should be most happy to stay with grandma, Kate and I prepared ourselves for the call.

We found Viola beautifully dressed and in tears; Phil was away. "He says he hasn't had anything decent to eat for a week," said Viola, by way of explanation, "and he's gone out to get a loaf of bread. Mary's bread is sour and heavy, and Phil won't eat it."

We both looked sympathetic. "Of course I don't know how to make it," Viola proceeded; "and even if I did, I have to be dressed all the time, because everybody knows now that we're keeping house, and I'm likely to have calls any minute. Phil forgets most every day to order anything for dinner, and he's just as disagreeable as he can be about it; he even thinks I ought to go out and get it myself or send Mary. I just wish we'd never gone to housekeeping at all; I wanted to board all the while, but Phil thought it would be so much nicer to be all by ourselves."

Viola had wiped away her tears, and was evidently enjoying this opportunity to relieve her o'erfraught heart.

Phil suddenly made his appearance with a pail of milk in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other; he blushed as he saw us, but said, pleasantly, "I'm going to eat up for a whole week ahead; we're living on starvation diet now."

"Oh, Aunt Maria!" said Viola, as if a bright thought had suddenly made itself conspicuous, "why couldn't you take Mary and let us have Catherine? Catherine knows everything and Mary doesn't know anything, and it would be such a relief to Phil and me."

Now I could no more have helped pursing up my mouth at that particular moment than I could have helped being Maria Giles; it was very pleasant to be informed that Mary didn't know anything, and for that reason it was desirable I should take her; and especially as I had that very morning told Marianne we should not need her services after the end of the month; but then, for Phil's sake I could do almost anything, so I only answered, "Why, yes, if Catherine is willing."

But Catherine wasn't willing; "she didn't like young Mrs. Frost," she said, and I couldn't persuade her into considering it a matter of duty.

Phil and Viola managed to worry along with the housekeeping for all of two months, then, as both had grown dyspeptic and Viola was completely worn out with her onerous duties, she thought it quite necessary to seek change in the country.

"Phil can go home and stay, you know, while I'm

gone," said Viola, as they announced the anticipated change to us one evening.

"I don't propose to keep house again right away," said Phil; "it's the roughest two months I ever spent in my whole life."

"It's a dreadfully dull way of living if you're not awfully rich," echoed Viola. "If we could have lots of servants and company all the time and something going on, why, a person might like it perhaps, but I'm tired to death of it now." Viola's language is always well chosen and remarkably appropriate to occasions.

"But what will you do with the new furniture?" Kate asked.

"Why, we shall want it, you know, to furnish our rooms where we board. Mary's going to be married in a couple of weeks, and I've given all the kitchen things to her."

Kate and I looked at each other in amazement; of course "kitchen things" didn't cost anything; it was only dresses and ribbons which possessed a marketable value.

And so it came to pass after a few days that Phil was home once more; home in his own room without Viola, and we were living in the same quiet, uneventful way we had before he left us. We had seen very little of them during these two months, as grandma, who had had a slight paralytic stroke, required constant attendance. Phil is the same, yet not the same: he appears older, more thoughtful, and an absent-minded, grave expression rests frequently upon his face; he seems to have lost his moorings and scarcely to know where to drop anchor again. This is not and never

can be to him *home* in the sense it was six months ago, and yet where has he any other? altogether he is unsettled and restless.

Phil has been doing much better in his business of late. Grandma always said he would as soon as he got married, "that the Lord never meant old bachelors should get hold of the money." /

In a few days, as we had hoped and anticipated, Phil settles back to his old ways again; he takes up his books as if he were enjoying a privilege from which he had been long debarred.

"Viola and I must read together," he said one evening, as he closed a book in which he had seemed intensely interested. "I think she would be happier if she only cared to read more."

"Why, isn't she happy now?" asked Kate, innocently.

"I don't exactly mean that," said Phil, correcting himself; "but you know she's never been accustomed to sitting down quietly evenings as we do. She tells me she has often been out every night in the week, and I suppose it does seem a rather dull sort of life not to have something going on continually."

"Why, I'm sure there have been several parties and entertainments given especially for her," I remarked.

"Well, it isn't altogether that," Phil went on, "but there was always a crowd of young fellows there every evening; a whist-party or a euchre-party or something, to keep up a continual excitement. We've had two or three at our house, but I *hate* them!" with very positive emphasis. Phil got up and walked across the room several times. "The amount of it is, I don't like

Viola's friends and she don't like mine. Viola says 'it's as much my place to like what she likes as it's her place to like what I like,' and I certainly cannot find any fault with the argument."

Poor Phil! poor Viola! we had known from the beginning what they apparently were just finding out. The difficulty now was, not merely that they *were* so unlike, but how to bridge over the great chasm which habit, custom, and social education had placed between them. Did they possess a love large enough to reach out and clasp hands across the threatening gulf? Which of us would dare attempt to answer the question? /

As to the concrete woman, Phil of course had known nothing about her, cared nothing about her. Viola was pretty, she pleased his fancy, what other possible requisites could he demand? Does not society ask first of all of a young lady or a bride, "Is she pretty?" and having received a satisfactory reply, there is only one other question about which it ever concerns itself, "Is she rich?" As to the rest, the qualities which comprise her womanhood, the inability to make use of these by way of display seems to render them valueless. / Phil has certainly got just what he asked for, curls, smiles, and bright eyes, and if these do not satisfy him, he has no one to blame but himself. Viola is very attractive for the present, no doubt, but will it last? To be sure we do not know all her resources; we only know that a pint measure cannot, even by the most expert philosopher, be made to contain a gallon.

The Maynards are staying at home this summer; indeed, it does not seem to be at all essential to their happiness to change their place of residence every two

or three months; they have a large house and a delightful garden, and manage to keep themselves and the children almost as comfortable as if they were tucked up in two rooms at a fashionable watering-place.

As nearly everybody else is out of town we are together more than usual. Now that Phil is married, he and Clara meet each other without any of those shy reserves which existed in former times, and prevented them from becoming truly acquainted; they converse in a pleasant, natural way, very much as they might have done had they been brother and sister. It does not seem at all out of place to any of us elders that these two, with pail in hand, should go off together in search of ice-cream for our little party, or that after suggesting lemonade they should assist each other in preparing it.

Clara has grown more independent and womanly of late, and she and Phil seem thoroughly to enjoy each other's society. Phil listens to every word she utters with a sort of reverence, as if it were born of superior wisdom; and Clara is certainly a very wise little woman. They talk both sense and nonsense, and Phil gravely informs us one morning of what we had known all the while, that "Clara has a remarkably well-cultivated mind."

"Do you know," said Phil one evening, as they sat on the low window-sill, and I had placed myself just inside to escape the night air, "that I'm a miserable sort of a dog about some things?"

"Indeed!" Clara looked up from the plate of cream which she was eating with a gaze half wonder and half amusement.

"Yes, I am," said Phil, determinedly; "I'm continually getting into trouble with my wife"—Phil paused an instant before he went on—"or mother or Aunt Maria, because I don't always keep my promises; of course I mean to, but then I forget, and consequently I'm in disgrace most of the time."

It was so much like our old Phil,—the boy Phil,—that I could not keep back the laugh which would come. There was never any attempt at secrecy in their conversations, therefore I did not consider myself in the smallest sense an eavesdropper.

"It's true, isn't it, Aunt Maria?" asked Phil, piteously.

"I'm sorry to say it is, Phil."

"There, Clara, you see Aunt Maria corroborates my statement; now, what am I going to do about it?"

"Why, I should say you must try to be less selfish."

"Selfish? I didn't know as selfishness had anything to do with it." And Phil looked as if he had received the severest chastisement of his life.

"Why, yes," and Clara looked back at Phil in that tender, gentle way in which mothers look at children whom they have just punished and are trying to explain to them its necessity; "if one does not think of others,—of their happiness and comfort, or even of what will please them,—it seems to me it must be because they are entirely absorbed in themselves and their own pursuits."

Clara uttered the remark in a half interrogative. Phil did not answer it, and I could only say, "Yes, love's crown is its unselfishness."

But still Phil did not speak. What was he thinking

of? Perhaps of his own shortcomings, perhaps of Viola's. For my own part, I could not shut out the thought that in no way whatever, except by loving words and caresses, had Viola shown any tenderness toward Phil. She had made no little sacrifices for him, had never employed herself for a single hour in any special pursuit to gratify him. To be sure she had bought him several showy, expensive, valueless trifles, but these were not the outgrowth of unselfishness, or even of a strong desire to please; she had happened to see them when she was out trading for herself, and so had bought them, simply because it was a pleasure to spend money and had not cost her any exertion.

On the other hand, Phil himself was far from being blameless; he had more than once forgotten Viola's errands, and had several times failed to extend any sympathy to her when she had complained of a headache. *We* might understand it; he was young, inexperienced; by-and-by he would do better; but Viola had evidently been displeased.

We three were sitting very quietly; Phil had not yet spoken. Clara seemed to grow anxious at his long silence, and, touching him lightly on his arm, said, in that gentle, subdued voice, which even in its ordinary accents was more musical than Viola's song, "I fear I have offended you."

"No, no indeed! I was only thinking how much more it means to promise to love any one than I used to realize. Mother and Aunt Maria have always thought for me; you know I mean in little things, and now I'm just beginning to understand what a constant care I must have been. It is my place now to think of some

one else, not for a moment, but continually, and a *selfish* fellow like me don't take to it easily."

I am very sure Clara did not like him any the less for this slight unburdening of himself; in truth, it was just this boyish frankness, this willingness to take the entire blame, which had always made Phil so lovable in spite of his many faults. Any woman, as I saw now more clearly than ever before, would have had need to be very patient with him; but the divine instincts of love I still felt sure would guide the chosen woman aright, and enable her to forbear until there was opportunity to overcome.

Looking at Phil through younger eyes, through eyes unused to his peculiarities, and which would naturally expect only perfection, I could see many slight blemishes which I had never before observed.

("Love is blind," has always seemed to me an adage directly opposed to ordinary experience; there is no vision so acute and discerning as love's own; it sees faults and imperfections with painful distinctness, but it delights in concealing these from all others with its own beautiful mantle of charity.)



## CHAPTER XVI.

## A DIFFERENCE IN THE ANGLE OF VISION.

WE heard the sound of wheels in the distance, but only noticed it as one notices the clock and forgets a moment after that he has consulted it.

"I've almost a mind to promise to begin over again, as I used to do when I was a little boy," said Phil, meditatively.

A carriage was certainly drawing near; we lifted our eyes: the horses' heads were turned either in the direction of our house or our next-door neighbors. Our neighbors we at once mentally concluded, as its occupants were three gentlemen on the front seat, all smoking, and puffing into the faces of two ladies opposite, who were smiling and chatting, apparently as well pleased as if each individual cigar had been a censer especially burning to do homage at their shrine.

We could be mistaken no longer, as the vehicle drew up in front of our own door, and a lady was preparing to alight.

Phil had risen and stood in an undecided way, evidently wondering which of the occupants of the carriage could possibly be coming to visit us. Kate and the elder Maynards were at the other end of the veranda. The lady threw back a light gauze veil as one of the gentlemen sprang to the walk.

"Viola!" said Phil, with repressed amazement and indignation, and in an instant he was at her side.

"Frost, your wife says you don't attend to her traps, and she's had to come home to look after them herself," said the man, in a loud, familiar voice, as he handed out Viola's satchel and parasol.

"I am much obliged to you for your care of my wife," Phil answered, in a dignified tone, as he drew Viola's arm within his.

"Not at all, not at all; wouldn't mind if I had it to do all my life."

Phil turned without another word, and there was a flash in his eyes which I had never seen there before, as he lifted them in the quickest possible glance to the veranda.

"Good-night," said Viola, as she turned back. "Good-by. Don't fail to be on hand, will you?"

"No!" came from each of the four individuals, in tones graduated from the highest treble to the deepest bass.

Kate and myself stepped forward to greet Viola, and to express our surprise at her return.

"Why, you see," she said, as she shook hands with the others, "when Phil was up at the lake last Sunday, I told him to be sure and send up my pink tarlatan the first thing after he got home; I suppose he forgot all about it, as he always does." Viola did not say this vindictively, but merely by way of explanation.

Phil colored, and looked painfully conscious.

"We're going to have some tableaux up at the lake in a day or two, and I knew Phil would never take the trouble to get all my things together, so I thought I might as well come down myself."

Viola did not appear at all unamiable; the influence of the ride and its gay companionship was still upon her; but there were two of us standing there who knew that every word she uttered was like a dagger to poor Phil. Clara, with extreme delicacy, did not even so much as glance at him either during or after this explanation; for my own part, I wondered how any woman could willingly expose the slightest defect in her husband's character under any circumstances, except those the most necessitous.

Viola looked very pretty as she stood with gloves in hand, and her white chip hat, with its long, dark willow plume; but why do I always speak of what she wears,—I never think of it in describing Clara,—why, unless the most impressive part of her womanhood is her toilet?

Viola ran up-stairs, saying her "traveling-dress was awfully warm and uncomfortable." And before she had returned to us the Maynards were gone.

Phil did not follow Viola to their room, as it seemed but natural that he would; he entered the parlors, folded his hands together behind him, and began pacing the floor. "I'm sorry, dear," he said, as he met her at the foot of the stairs, and led her into the rooms, "that I forgot about the dress; you remember you gave me the directions very hurriedly as I was coming away Monday morning."

"Oh, well, it doesn't happen to make much difference this time, I wanted to come home anyway, to ask you about what I should wear in the tableaux; besides, there was a jolly party coming down to-day, so I don't mind after all."

Catherine came to tell Mrs. Frost that her dinner was ready.

"Come down with me, Phil," said Viola, putting her arm through his; "I want to tell you all about the affair."

Viola was in an unusually amiable mood, else why did she not make more of Phil's delinquency? They remained below a long time; then we heard Phil quickly open the door at the foot of the basement stairs; in three quick leaps he had reached the upper hall, and, snatching his hat from the stand, fairly rushed out of the house. Kate and I looked at each other in amazement, while grandma wanted to know if we wouldn't call and "ask him to go to the drug-store for her." But Phil was already far down the street, and walking as rapidly as if his object were to visit Viola, instead of to get away from her.

Presently we heard Viola's step on the stairs; each one was as slow and deliberate as if it were a plan with a settled purpose; her cheeks, which were always pale except under excitement, were positively glowing.

"Phil is the most provoking fellow I ever knew," she said, as she threw herself into a large easy-chair.

More than once it has seemed not a little strange to me that Viola coming into our home, almost a total stranger, should so soon and so easily have familiarized herself with it and with us, that from the very beginning she had occupied her place as naturally as if it had been hers by birthright. Unquestionably she was Phil's wife, and had an undeniable *right* to express herself as she chose; but it was, to use the mildest term, peculiar that she should have never

once thought how strange and even rude these expressions might seem to us. Just now I wanted to make half a dozen irritating remarks, but then I knew that Kate, who was really hurt, would wait patiently to ascertain the cause of the difficulty, and all my life I had been trying to be like Kate in disposition, so I held my peace.

"You see," Viola went on, after having waited a moment for the response which did not come, "we're going to have tableaux up at the lake next week, and Phil says I sha'n't have anything to do with them."

"Did he say just that?" Kate asked.

"Well, he said he should be awfully angry and displeased, and never forgive me, so I suppose it's about the same thing, isn't it?"

"No, not exactly," I answered, after waiting an instant for Kate to speak; "if Phil said you *shouldn't* have anything to do with them, why, then there would be no special satisfaction in trying to gratify him; but if he said he should be very much displeased if you engaged in the affair, it would be a real pleasure to show how much you regarded his wishes by having nothing to do with it."

Viola had considerable difficulty just here in reseating herself to her entire satisfaction. "Well, I must say I can't see where the harm would be."

"Suppose you tell us about it," said Kate, "then we shall be better able to decide."

"Well," said Viola, settling herself, "Phil doesn't object to any tableau but one, and that is to be the last and most beautiful of all; we are to have a Turkish

harem, and lots of us ladies are to be dressed in Eastern costume——"

"Who is the Turk?" I asked, interrupting.

"Why, the gentleman who handed me out of the carriage to-night and spoke to Phil; he's very polite, and has paid me a great deal of attention, and Phil says he don't like him; just as if he could tell, when he never saw him until he went up to the lake last Sunday."

It was not at all difficult to see why Phil objected to that tableau.

"Well," said Kate, "can't you be in all the others to which Phil doesn't object and stay out of this one?"

"No, I can't," Viola answered, petulantly; "it would be treating Mr. Maxton awfully mean, and of course he'd know right away that Phil had something to do with it; besides," and Viola dropped her eyes slightly, "I am the favorite wife, and am to be dressed more than any of the others."

Vanity after all was at the foundation of her unwillingness to submit to Phil's wishes; besides, she either could not or would not see that the tableau in itself was indelicate, and that Phil was not willing to have his wife, even for a moment, occupy so questionable a position.

The real difficulty lay in the fact that Viola could not look at things from any stand-point save her own, and that certainly was very different from the one which Phil occupied; to her there was no impropriety in assuming such a position, even with a man whose character might be notorious, provided he was polite to the ladies and spent plenty of money; society considered

such things allowable; but to Phil!—he would, I knew, much sooner have had his right arm removed than have his wife exposed to remark or publicly associated with a man whose character he could not regard with anything but suspicion. But how was it possible for two people, who looked at life from reverse sides, to regard it at just the same angle of vision? Phil had supposed that Viola would always look through *his* eyes and accept his judgment as decisive, while Viola had supposed that *her* eyes would be all-sufficient for Phil's vision, and that her *wishes* would be the only judgment requisite to a satisfactory conclusion. That, it would occasionally be necessary for two married people to occupy the same platform of taste, custom, and principle had never occurred to either of them; that love was anything more than the "silken noose" of extended popularity, by which each party could lead the other about at will, was a subject upon which neither, until safely within the matrimonial inclosure, had ever reflected.

Now Viola would very naturally conclude that Phil was absurd and arbitrary,—he seemed so to her; while Phil could no longer close his eyes to Viola's indelicacy and want of native refinement.

"I really cannot see," Viola went on, after a rather lengthy pause, "why Phil should always consider *his* judgment so much better than mine; he's not so very much older, I'm sure, that I should do as *he* thinks best; in fact, he's six months younger,"—truly, Viola was under intense excitement,—“and I see no reason why he should *always* be in the right.”

"I don't think," said Kate, by way of response,

"that Phil was pleased at the manner in which your friend spoke to him to-night."

Viola blushed and looked highly gratified. "Oh, pshaw! that was nothing but a compliment; all men say such things; Phil should have married a hideous, dowdy sort of girl, if he's ~~so~~ very unwilling to have anything said."

Viola certainly was not at all lucid verbally, however much she might have been mentally, as to what the "anything said" might be.

"I don't think, Viola," I remarked, "that looks have very much to do with it either way; I have known some exceedingly beautiful women whom no man would dare address in a manner at all familiar."

"That's just what Phil called it, 'familiar,' and of course he's got his ideas from you; for my part, I don't expect to regulate my conduct according to an old——"

Viola paused, but the drift of the remark was not at all obscure, even to a duller intelligence than mine.

She rose from her chair and walked to the window, as if an object there had attracted her attention; at all events it had certainly reminded her of something, for she turned back, quickly, saying, "It's all very well for Phil to stay home spending his evenings flirting with that Clara Maynard; no one has any fault to find with *that*, I suppose. I don't see but Phil is just as ready to take advantage of his opportunities as I am; I'm sure they were both sitting here when we drove up to-night and everybody else was at the other end of the veranda."

I instantly explained to Viola that they were not

alone as she had supposed, for I sat just inside the window.

Now justice is an abstract virtue which few women can comprehend. I never knew but two who I thought perfectly understood it,—Maria Giles and one other woman; therefore I could not but see that looking at events from Viola's platform she certainly had ground for several complaints against Phil. This last act of his was unquestionably tyrannical viewing it as she must, of necessity; then again, if appearances were anything, he was in common parlance "flirting" with Clara; though I find it difficult, even for the sake of appreciating Viola's position, to associate any such thought with their serious conversation.

Phil came into the house whistling; Viola felt encouraged; she stepped up to him, put her arm through his, and said, beseechingly, "Come, Phil, do say you don't mind my taking part in that tableau."

"I *never* shall say it, Viola."

She drew her arm away impatiently, and changed her tone decidedly as she said, "I never saw such a disagreeable man before in my whole life."

"Of course not; how should you? no other man was ever your husband before." And Phil took a cigar and lighted it, at the same time drawing from his pocket the evening paper.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## EXACTLY SUITED.

VIOLA went back to the lake strong in the determination to do as she thought best, and full of the belief that as Phil was so near her own age, there was no reason why his judgment should be any better than hers. This last difficulty, one of the ever-recurring problems of connubial life, it does not become me, as spinster, to attempt to solve.

It so happened that on the very evening of the tableaux Phil met Mr. Maxton crossing the ferry in a highly-intoxicated condition; it was therefore presumable that he would not figure at the lake that night unless in effigy.

A day or two after, a letter was received from Viola, in which she dilated upon their delightful entertainment, regretting that Phil had not been there to enjoy it; in a P. S. she added, that "Mr. Maxton had been detained in the city upon important business, and that as he was to bring out several of the costumes, the Turkish harem had to be given up.

Phil—foolish fellow!—was as much pleased as if Viola's submission had been one of volition instead of necessity; for myself, I could not understand his gratification; it seemed to me that Viola's attitude was precisely the same as before; however, old maids are proverbially harsh in judgment, and I had learned from Viola, to say nothing of politics, that platforms make

a vast difference as to one's estimate of things, both subjective and objective.

I cannot tell what passed between Phil and Viola during her short visit home, but I know that for the remainder of his wife's absence Phil saw very little of Clara, never, indeed, except where it would have been rude to have avoided her. I think Clara noticed the change, but I felt that she understood at the same time, with a woman's quick intuition, the motive. I know they both missed the pleasant, friendly talks; their amiable disagreements of opinion had only been such as to render the conversation more spicy, never unpleasant. I had not myself, until now, seen in Clara's nature this delightful mixture of humor and seriousness, which enabled her to adapt herself so readily to dispositions and circumstances, and rendered her such a pleasing companion.

Until Viola came home I am sure we had never one of us thought of the least possible danger in their apparently harmless relationship. Now I began to realize that it was wisest for these two young people, so entirely suited to each other in education, tastes, and even in principle, if I stretch Phil's a little, to see less of one another. Society bears ample testimony that the most dangerous flirtations are those which are perfectly and absolutely *safe*, where one or both parties are engaged, possibly where one is married. They may be entirely innocent of any evil intent; but the danger invariably increases as the square of the distance which separates them. That beautiful unfolding of the real nature and disposition which is friendship's peculiar delight engenders a love deeper far than that which is

built upon a mere passing fancy, or is born in the passion of an hour.

Had Phil cared to become acquainted with Viola, had he sought the only enduring basis of love, that of true-hearted friendship, he certainly would never have called upon her a second time. Viola was pretty, stylish; Phil handsome, gay; and with these qualities as capital in their newly-formed partnership, they were to brave the panics and crises of life.

Viola is home once more; or rather she and Phil are located in that perhaps innocent cause of so many mangled homes,—a boarding-house. We should have been glad to have had them with us once again as the housekeeping had proved a failure, but they had never tried boarding; that in itself was a sufficiently important reason why they should attempt it now.

Phil had looked forward to Viola's return with unconcealed joy; at the same time it was quite evident that home—the mother-home, with all its tender associations, linking themselves by memory's golden clasps away back into the far-off childhood—was never so dear as now.

Above all, Phil had seemed to find a new charm in his mother's face and life: for the first time he seemed to observe her entire devotion and unselfishness; for the first time he spoke of the possibility of her growing old and feeble,—not lightly and laughingly, as he so often had, but tenderly, and with a manifest faltering of the voice,—very possibly he is learning slowly the lesson which comes to us all at some time in life, that bright eyes do not take the place of a loving heart.

Viola had written expressly to Phil that she wished to



be down-town, "where she could get out easily to do her shopping." This, then, was life's main business,— "to go shopping," to match worsteds, to buy a new neck-tie, to order a hat, and spend a week at the shops in finding out the exact "mode." For this important occupation a residence must be near the main thoroughfares.

In large cities, where social life has lost its primitive value, and society prefers night instead of day for its gatherings, where mental qualifications are quite apt to stamp one as being "from the country," and an interest in anything but the arts—the art of dress especially—renders one an unmitigated bore, it is a natural logical sequence that much of a woman's time and a very large share of her happiness consists in shopping. What if, like Viola, she was thoroughly supplied in every department of her wardrobe but a few short months ago? A few short months are sufficient in fashionable as well as political life to effect revolutions; and as states must accordingly be reconstructed upon a new basis, so must the entire fabric of a woman's wearing apparel be re-created.

Viola was by no means an exceptional woman in regard to her choice of pleasures; it is only the strong who can venture to swim against the stream, and Viola was not one of these. It is vastly pleasanter, without doubt, to float, a cork upon the surface, than, an anchor, to dive deep and far, the safety and sustaining power of many a human life.

Phil and Viola are, as Kate and I think, delightfully located for the winter. Their suite of rooms is furnished with their own pretty, new furniture; Viola's

piano occupies the most desirable place; and Phil's pictures are grouped in accordance with his own good taste upon the wall. The "Mater Dolorosa," Phil's favorite, was left at home, as Viola declared "it was altogether too ugly for anything."

"Isn't it just splendid?" she exclaimed, after we had surveyed the apartments. "No housekeeping, no Mary or Bridget to bother me, nothing in the world to do but have an awfully good time."

Phil laughed. "What is having an awfully good time?"

"Why, to go visiting and shopping, and fix up things, and dress, and crochet, and go to the matinées, and do exactly as I'm a mind to," said Viola, as she gave a whirl about the room in quite an ecstasy of delight.

Phil caught her in his arms. "What am I to do, then?"

"Do exactly as I tell you, and we shall be awfully happy."

"You remember the old nursery song, Phil: 'If you want to be happy, be good,—be good,'" said I, laughing.

"Now, Aunt Maria, I knew you'd bring on some preaching,—you always do; but what if folks are 'awfully happy' to start with? why, then, of course, they must be 'awfully' good."

"An argument worthy of a rising young lawyer," I answered.

Phil started, drew out his watch hastily, kissed Viola, and said, "There, I cannot wait another moment; I promised to meet Simpkins fifteen minutes ago."

"What!" Viola started. "My mother's book-keeper?" She never spoke of him as her mother's husband.

"Yes."

"Phil, I will never forgive you if you have anything at all to do with him."

Phil's face flushed. "Nevertheless I shall have to go, and make my peace with you some other time."

"It's perfectly horrid for Phil to have anything at all to say to that man," said Viola, after he had gone; "I just hate him, and I always did."

Neither Kate nor myself made any response; we both endeavored, and succeeded, in drawing Viola's mind back again to her present surroundings.

"You see," she said, "it's a great deal better for Phil and me to board; it's well enough, I suppose, for folks when they're getting old to keep house, or if they've got lots of children, but then we never shall have any, and so we can just as well board all our lives."

Kate and I looked aghast. In talking the matter over between ourselves, we had regarded the prospect of a house full of Phils and Violas as absolutely appalling; but now that we were informed there were to be none, we began to view the possibility in quite a different light.

"I am not a little sorry to hear you say that," said Kate, whose heart, I knew, was full of grandmotherly yearnings.

"Oh, well, Phil and I want to have a good time; besides, I think a woman is never half as pretty after she's had a baby."

As that was such an excellent reason why immortal

souls should not be brought into the world, and as Kate and I had been away too long already, we did not attempt to answer, but bade Viola good-night, and went back to the home which we now longed to see full of happy, merry grandchildren.

But Phil and Viola were by no means so settled as we had considered them. In less than two months carpets, furniture, piano, pictures, walked into another boarding-house not far distant, because—well, I believe this time it was because the landlady had codfish too often, or because they couldn't get a good light on some picture, or—no, it wasn't either of these: it was because they wanted an up-stairs or a down-stairs room, I forget which.

All of these reasons were given at various times,—it doesn't matter particularly now about their chronological order. Whenever there was a dearth of any immediate excitement, there was always a change of boarding-houses to stimulate them to fresh exertions. We wondered that Phil should consent to so many moves, but then he had always been fond of change, and now, since his wife so desired, it was perfectly legitimate to gratify it.

We saw much less of them this winter than we should have considered possible, living, as we were, in the same town; but the season was an extremely cold one, and both Kate and myself were quite satisfied to stand at the window and draw our breakfast-shawls closer about us, knowing that our positive pleasures were within-doors, while only very possible ones lay without. More than this, our own dear, helpless mother needed constant care and attention; in proportion as

her body grew more feeble her mind became increasingly active, and she required to an unusual degree the mental stimulus of books and conversation. And so, almost before we were aware, winter had slipped away and spring had come.

Phil and Viola took dinner with us on the anniversary of their wedding; but the visit had been an unsatisfactory one, as they left early in the evening to attend the theatre. As we were so far away Viola had scarcely made her appearance at all, except as she had been out making calls in a carriage, then as a matter of necessity her visits were short and hurried. Phil had been home frequently, but never to remain; and there was always about him either an air of perfect recklessness, a mirth which drew tears to our eyes, or a reserve which not even his mother seemed able to penetrate.

As spring came, Phil complained bitterly of boarding-houses in general; "he longed," he said, "to settle down somewhere;" he did not speak of house-keeping. It certainly would have been absurd to mention that to a wife who was annoyed that life had anything more serious for her than crochet-work. Round of beef, porterhouse steak, ash-barrel, were vulgar, meaningless sounds; assuredly they have no such fascinating jingle as *à la mode*, *à la Grec*, *Pompadour*, *bouffanté*, etc. Viola knows, even to a philological nicety, what all these mean. Phil and his mother have talked the matter over between them. There are other reasons beside rooms and table why Phil longs to be home once more. He says he has come to the conclusion that a boarding-house isn't the place for either of them; he finds himself that he is

growing indifferent and careless about a great many things,—he doesn't say what; that their room is considered head-quarters for the other boarders, and above all, he cannot endure to have his wife spoken to so familiarly as Phil thinks she is, in consequence of meeting the same gentlemen at least twice every day.

We are really anxious to have Phil with us once more; now that grandma is so feeble, we have frequent need of his strong arm; he seems to turn to the old home more lovingly than ever, and speaks with boyish delight of being in his own room again. But will Viola consent to this change? we have our doubts. Phil says she likes to board, "it isn't so awfully lonesome; there's something going on all the time;" still, he is determined to use every argument in his power, and seems confident of success.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

PHIL informed us, quite to our surprise, that Viola had consented to his proposition, but that they should not come home until fall; they were going to take rather an extensive trip during the summer, and it would not be worth while to make any move until after that.

It seemed a long, long summer to us with Phil away, but we were very glad he had concluded to

take the journey, as he had been looking rather pale and sober of late, and we were grateful to Viola for having seen his requirements, and for insisting upon an absolute change.

The Maynards are also away this year, spending the summer at the White Mountains; and as our family is not a migratory one, the season is unusually dull and uneventful.

But September comes at last, and with it Phil and Viola; we are delighted to see Phil, and more than ordinarily glad to see Viola. Our house is "poky" without young people; we would rather have them in it even if they are queer and careless. Phil is very glad and happy, but then he was always glad of a change; to-night, however, we do not make any criticisms; we feel that there is something more abiding than usual in this movement, and there is a depth of tenderness in each of our hearts which we cannot quite express. I should not have spoken of Viola's heart, for I do not know how to read its tokens, but of the rest I am confident.

Kate and myself greet them to-night with much more joy than we did eighteen months ago, when they came home to us from their bridal tour. There are not so many uncertainties now to be considered; their future has been tried and proven, and we have every reason to think, in spite of little occasional difficulties, that they are sincerely and devotedly attached.

We notice that Phil and Viola do not come down to table, or walk through the halls, with their arms about each other as of old; but then it would be absurd to expect them always to have their arms

around each other. Viola is quite indifferent as to her morning toilet, but she dresses more superbly than ever for the evening. I notice, too, that she rarely smiles in the morning, while in the afternoon, when dressed, she is lavish of these favors.

Young Applegate, who is lately married, calls often for Phil, and the two seem to be better friends than ever; they are certainly together a great deal, which may perhaps account for Phil's being away quite frequently evenings. Viola does not seem to be at all disturbed by it, however; as a general thing, she has callers of her own.

And so the days go by; as days will, apparently disregarding whether they bring unutterable woe, or joy such as we dream of,—never expect to realize; to most of us, however, they bring neither, but simply a round of not remarkable events, from which we are at liberty to extract joy or sorrow, good or evil.

Phil and Viola are the same, yet not the same: there is a strange, immeasurable distance between them; possibly it has existed all the while, but it is more palpable now at least; opportunity has not concealed or bridged the chasm, but widened it. Viola is more intensely Viola; Phil more intensely Phil. Time, which should have harmonized and amalgamated their characteristics, has only succeeded in forcing each into greater prominence. Viola is more absorbed in herself and the narrow circle of her own ideas than ever; Phil more indifferent and unconcerned.

As for Kate and myself, our hearts are very full; gradually but surely the knowledge is forcing itself upon us that these two no longer love each other; that

each is living a life quite apart from the other's orbit. The passion which had been stimulated into a speedy and unnatural growth had hung beautiful blossoms in the realm of fancy, but had failed to clasp the heart by deep, strong, enduring roots.

Our evenings are spent in a manner very far from what we had anticipated. Phil is at home but little, and Viola's company, with their whist and euchre games, take such complete possession of the parlors, that we find it more agreeable to retreat to our own apartments.

If Phil would only stay at home, we cannot but feel that it might be a little different; his presence would of necessity have some effect. For my own part, I considered that he was very much to blame; because no man can reasonably expect to pursue just exactly the same course of conduct after marriage that he did before; he has a claim,—an obligation which he incurred voluntarily, and one which he has no right to ignore.

"Phil," I said, as he was about to leave the house one evening, "do stay home! it really isn't right for you to leave Viola so much."

Phil stood for a moment, hat in hand, twirled and brushed it several times, then said, impatiently, as he threw his beaver down upon the table, utterly disregarding of its recent smoothing, "Aunt Maria, I've tried it almost two years, and the case is hopeless; I cannot like the people who fancy my wife; I abhor the whole set; and if I say anything about it, Viola says I am jealous and want to make a nun of her; I don't wonder she feels so, *she* likes them and I don't.

Viola detests the Maynards and such people as I like, so I don't see as there's anything left for us only to have each our separate amusements and pleasures."

There was a sort of determined, dogged look on Phil's face, which alarmed me more than any of his boyish outbursts had ever done.

"But, Phil, this is a dangerous game to play at,—what will it all lead to?"

"The devil only knows, I don't." And Phil caught up his hat, and slammed the front door with unusual violence as he left the house.

I did not know then what I learned a few hours later, that Phil had recently bought for his amusement a horse and skeleton-wagon, which little circumstance will not be very likely to lessen the breach between himself and Viola.

A day or two after this conversation, I received word from an old school friend of mine that she had come to the city for medical treatment, and would be very happy to have me call upon her at Mrs. Pixley's, where she was boarding.

"Why, Phil," I asked, as we were speaking about it at table, "that's where you and Viola boarded all last spring, isn't it?"

"Not exactly in the spring; we were there the two months previous to our *grand trip*." There was a decided curl of Phil's lip as he uttered the last two words.

Kate and I had felt more than once that there was some secret about this trip of which we had never heard, as neither Phil nor Viola ever voluntarily alluded to it.

"It will do your heart good to see Frank Miller," mother said to me before I started out to visit my old friend.

But, oh! the idea of calling her Frank Miller! I did it, then apologized for it. She was such a blooming girl when I saw her last, now—never was I possessed of such a desire to walk to the mirror and scrutinize myself; was my hair iron-gray like that? yea, verily, I knew it was; was my face dark and sallow like hers? possibly, I could not remember; was my form thin and wasted?—no! I put out one hand cautiously that I might feel of my arm: it was plump and solid. I began to be reassured.

"Well, Maria, you have kept your youth bravely," said Miss Miller, after the first greetings; "but then you always had such perfect health."

"I'm almost half a century old, nevertheless," I said, determined not to let my vanity take complete possession of me.

"No one would ever dream it," she answered, "while I look near a hundred."

Poor Frank! I knew she was dispirited, and changed the conversation as soon as possible.

"You remember Kate?" I said, presently.

"Oh, yes, perfectly. How is she?"

"Just the same as ever; Kate has changed less than any of us."

"That means, then, that you still carry the burdens while Kate looks on and applauds."

"No, beg your pardon, it doesn't mean any such thing; Kate's burdens and mine will never be precisely the same wherever we may be placed; she is just as

lovely and unselfish as ever. I have tried all my life to be like her, but never shall."

"Mr. Willard seemed to prefer you just as you were some time ago, I'm not sure but he'd do the same now."

"Frank, how can you? I have not spoken his name for years."

"What! haven't you heard the latest news about him?"

"Nothing. I only know that he is preaching very successfully somewhere out West, I don't know exactly where, for Phil had torn the corner of the paper to light his cigar."

"Phil? oh, yes, tell me about him."

"No, not until you've informed me about Tracy."

"Well, he's coming East to live; has had a unanimous call from the Pilgrim Rock Church, and has accepted it; so you are to be near neighbors once more."

"Neighbors, five miles apart and a 'raging torrent' between! what sort of ideas do you have of proximity? besides, he's married, and I prefer never to see him again."

"Bless you, Maria! you needn't put on such a self-sustained, martyr-like air; he's been a widower these two years."

I rose and walked to the window, the room was growing oppressively warm. "You wanted to hear about Phil? Well, he's married to a young and beautiful——"

"I don't care about the beauty, what sort of a woman is she? I've heard enough from Mrs. Pixley to know that this nephew of yours is a 'high and mighty' tyrant,



but then Kate never had the decision to manage a boy, so of course his wife has got to suffer for it now."

"I don't understand," I said, rather gasping for breath; "we think that Phil has been very well brought up. Mrs. Pixley ought not to have told you——"

"Oh, nonsense, Maria! she knows I'm an old friend of the family, to whom it's no harm to tell the truth."

"But she hasn't told the truth; Phil isn't a tyrant,—nothing of the sort."

"Well, Mrs. Pixley says his wife was very anxious to stay here, and cried for two days the whole time, and didn't come down to any of her meals, because Phil insisted upon going up to your house. I allow it was very natural for him to want to be at home, but one would think he'd consult the wishes of a young wife in such a matter. Mrs. Pixley says it made her just down sick, and that all the boarders thought Mr. Frost was a perfect tyrant."

I felt both hands twitch nervously, while both feet kept an accompaniment to every word she uttered. I did not speak, for I knew she would be more likely to go on and tell me the rest if I kept quiet.

"It seems they never spoke to each other for a whole week; how in the world they managed to get along I can't imagine. Mrs. Pixley says they finally patched it up by his promising to take her anywhere she wanted to travel in the summer, if she would go up to your house afterward."

"Phil never told us anything at all about this."

"Then pray don't mention it to him; I suppose, like all men, he prefers to have his own way, and isn't a bit worse than the majority."

"Mrs. Pixley has an entirely wrong impression of Phil," I remarked; "he's one of the best-natured fellows in the world."

Frank smiled. "Yes, that reminds me of what Mrs. Pixley said Mrs. Frost said, 'that she wished he wasn't so good-natured, he'd manage to remember a little better then.'"

I could not fight Phil's battles for him any longer: I felt myself baffled at every point. I was glad to say good-by and get out into the street, that I might feel the sharp November air against my face. Phil's and Viola's disagreements were, then, a matter of publicity, while Kate and I had supposed them living in a harmony only surpassed by the seraphs. Phil's paleness, his unaccountable moods, the extensive summer trip, were all accounted for. Oh, why, *why* had Phil chosen Viola, when he might have had a noble, loving, true-hearted wife? why—except for the same reason that children prefer tarts and fancy cakes and colored bonbons, utterly disregarding of the consequences. Phil has certainly got just what he asked for, curls, smiles, and bright eyes; if these cannot satisfy him, it would have been better not to have waited until now to find out what his nature required.

Ah, that is just it! Phil *did* choose her! there were Clara and Viola, and he *chose* Viola.

Should I tell Kate all that I had heard? No; she would have enough to bear in the inevitable future.

Underneath all these strong, uppermost, surface-thoughts there were soft, green, mossy whisperings in the innermost depths of my heart of Tracy Willard and girlish days, and a love warm and tender and

true. How it all came back to me now with the unused utterance of the well-loved name! I could not leave home and the dear aged father and mother. Tracy felt that duty called him to the life of a pioneer preacher; plainly then, I must either give up my lover or my duty to my parents. I kept well concealed from him, from others, from even myself and you, the struggle it cost me, but I can conceal it no longer; I love him now as ever, though I have not seen him for twenty years; but I shall see him soon,—shall hear the clear, sweet tones of his well-remembered voice, and I need no disguise greater than that which the years have given me.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### WHICH SHALL WE CENSURE?

AUTUMN deepens into winter, and with it comes more and more fully the conviction that Phil and Viola are not happy; but then, whoever for one moment expected they would be? There is no more hopeless discord on earth than that produced by the constant friction of two utterly inharmonious natures.

Viola's life, in which there entered no plan beyond to-day, was insipid and aimless, while Phil's was assuredly becoming distorted and misshapen. With Phil good, Viola would have been better; but there was no power in herself to rise; if she ever reached a higher plane she must be lifted there by others, not mount of

her own volition. With Viola sweet and womanly, all that was best in Phil's nature would have blossomed out into form and beauty; now it seemed to lie either dormant and unevoked, or well-nigh extinguished. With all my natural partiality for Phil, I could not but feel that they were both wrong,—both very much to blame. To use Viola's form of argument, it was as much Phil's place to impress her for good as it was her place to impress him.

Viola had expected Phil to adore her all her life, while Phil wishes to be adored himself. He has grown tired of running up-stairs after her handkerchief or fan or slippers, and she has grown tired of expecting him to do anything to please her; evidently, indeed, Phil no longer tries to satisfy her demands. Had Viola been patient with Phil, had she still continued her confidence in him, there would have been, on his part, some stimulus to exertion. Had Phil surrendered his own tastes more to hers, had he sought some mutual ground of sympathy, had he tried gradually to lead her into a larger and more cultured life, the task might have been tedious, but, in the end, he would have received her gratitude and have won her love and confidence; for we are ever grateful to one who calls us out from our ignoble selves and brings us to a consciousness of the possibilities within us.

Phil sat in the dining-room one afternoon reading the paper just before dinner; Viola entered unusually well dressed, with her hair done up in a huge mass, which had lately been pronounced "the style."

"Why, Viola," said Kate, "I thought Phil never liked to have you arrange your hair in that manner."

"My dearest mother," said Phil, looking over his paper, "that is a quite sufficient reason for its being done so."

As a husband Phil was certainly developing some marked traits of character.

"Really, Phil, I don't know that you trouble yourself so very much to please me," said Viola, reddening, "that I should always be doing my best to suit your fancy; I am sure you didn't think of *my* comfort when you bought that wagon, and I asked you a month ago to bring me home some chocolate-drops from Arnaud's."

Phil looked distressed as he muttered, "Hang it! I forgot."

"That reminds me," said Viola, with provoking coolness, "that I forgot to tell you Mr. Maxton had asked us to occupy his box at the Academy to-night; he said he should stop for us himself. It's the *Bas Bleue*; I want to see it awfully, and I'm going."

Catherine came in to bring the dinner and Phil did not answer, but he turned so pale that I began to search in my pocket for my vinaigrette.

We ate dinner almost in silence; it seemed to me I could see the conflict going on in Phil's soul; would he speak again to Viola, or would he let her go on and carry out her own plans without any attempt to prevent their fulfillment?

Phil spoke at last; apparently after he had somewhat conquered himself; there was a subdued monotony in his voice, as if only this steady, firm pressure could keep down the escape-valves. "Viola, Mr. Maxton is not a man whom I am at all willing to have you associate with."

"Pray what's the matter with *him*? I've never yet seen the man you were 'at all willing to have me associate with.'"

"My principal objection is," Phil's voice had lost its evenness, "that Mr. Maxton is a drunkard and a loafer."

"I don't think drinking is the worst thing in the world," said Viola, greatly irritated. "I know some men who don't drink who are not nearly as pleasant as those who do."

Viola looked down and brushed the crumbs from her lap; it was well she did, for Phil's eyes were in a perfect blaze as he let go the escape-valves and answered, "I was drunk once and struck my mother; perhaps if I should get drunk again I *might* strike my wife."

Viola left the table and went up-stairs; Phil picked up the hat he had not yet learned to leave in the hall, and, opening the basement door, went out on the street.

No wonder Viola would think Phil rude and coarse; no wonder she would judge him as the harshest and roughest of men; certainly in her eyes Phil did not appear to the best advantage. That which ever evokes from humanity its better self is the being understood, trusted, and neither Phil nor Viola entertained any such sentiment as this toward each other.

Half an hour after, as Viola and Mr. Maxton left the house, they met Clara and Phil coming toward it, and all four bowed very politely to each other.

We were delighted to see Clara; it seemed as if she had come like a sweet messenger of peace to save us from an evening of entire wretchedness. But how did it happen?

"Why," said Clara, "I was coming over here to see if I couldn't get you all to help me make cornucopias for Christmas; Phil and I encountered each other at the corner (Clara addressed him as Phil nowadays, and this little point seemed to place them more than ever on a brotherly and sisterly footing). If it had been anybody but Phil I should have called a policeman, for he knocked my muff out of my hands, and I don't think would have observed there was anything more than a muff in his way if I hadn't spoken his name."

We all smiled, but no one ventured a remark, we knew too well the cause of Phil's purposeless haste and preoccupied mind.

"Well?"

"Well, I made known my errand to Phil, who said he would be responsible for your consent, so we went around to Miller's and supplied ourselves with material."

Clara produced several rolls of gay-colored paper, and we were all soon employed in praiseworthy, charitable effort.

"I wish Mrs. Frost were here to help us, I know she would enjoy working in these bright colors," Clara said, as she cut out the gay paper borders.

"She has gone to the opera," Phil answered.

Clara looked up with questioning surprise, but her look met no response, and for a moment we were all very busy and quiet; but the quiet did not last long; there was that perfect harmony between us all which gives the sweetest freedom on earth,—the freedom of being understood. It is only when we are afraid our

motives will be misconstrued that we hide our better self and bring forward our meaner one. What a happy evening it was altogether! Phil and Clara quarreled playfully over the prettiest combination of colors, Phil insisting upon his own judgment, which we all condemned as being masculine and in the minority, when, mounting a chair, he plead his cause with such pathetic eloquence—the cause of the weak against the strong—that Clara's liquid eyes filled with tears, and she declared that hereafter his preference should be consulted in all our undertakings.

How handsome and pleased Phil looked! how well he appeared! there was no need to press down the escape-valves now, there was nothing to escape but joy, good humor, and gladness. Clara always evoked the better nature in Phil; there was that pure magnetic charm about her which ever summons to its side the good and the best in others. Phil seemed to-night so unlike his other self, and yet so like his former self. And he might have had this sweet, unconscious influence for his own through life, this spirit of gentleness which by its own intrinsic harmony dispelled all discord. But Clara's attractiveness lay in herself, not in her surroundings; to-night, as she sat among us so interested, so animated, I felt that the qualities were not lacking within her to constitute a gay, showy, even brilliant woman, and that with her education and culture she could eclipse Viola even in her own department. But I should have considered it treason to whisper such a thought to one whose greatest charm lay in those unconscious virtues which we cannot group together in adjectives, but which we all recognize as a

subtle, pervading essence of being. The more I reflect and consider, the more I wonder—how *could* Phil *choose* Viola? With power to select, and man's peculiar prerogative to take the initiative, with the choice all his own, unbiased and unprejudiced, still, he *chose* Viola.

Ah, well! it is strange how difficult it is to solve life's simplest problems, the growth of a finger-nail, for instance; how, then, can we expect a solution of its more abstract questionings?

The delightful evening went by all too soon. Phil accompanied Clara home, and as he entered the house on his return began to hum an Irish tune we had not heard him sing for months, but which he had often spoken of as being one of the sweetest little love-songs in the world.

We had separated for the night, and were dispersing ourselves through the halls, when the door-bell rang. Phil ran down and opened it.

"Good-night, Viola."

"Good-night."

"Good-night, Frost." The door closed.

"How *can* you permit him to call you 'Viola'?" Phil asked, in a tone rather of grief than anger.

"Just as you can permit Clara Maynard to call you Phil."

Perhaps it was because Viola was so very cold that the tones sounded like the rattle of icicles; she went into the parlors to warm herself, and Phil fastened the door, giving it, as I thought, a very unnecessary bang.

Phil came down to breakfast next morning with a severe headache, and looking so pale that I felt almost alarmed.

"Why, Phil, what is the matter with you this morning?" we each put the question, almost simultaneously.

"The matter is that I cannot sleep in a close room with no windows open; I've not been used to it all my life until within the past two years, and I believe the change is making an invalid of me."

"Why, Phil, you never spoke of it before," Kate said.

"It's of no use to speak of things that can't be helped," Phil remarked, philosophically.

Neither of us made any answer, we only looked at Viola.

"It's all nonsense to be so fussy," she said, seeing that we were expecting some vindication on her part; "mamma always brought me up not to have so many foolish notions about things. I *can't* sleep with the window open; I've tried it two or three times, and it always gives me a sore throat."

None of us remembered her ever having had one; but still, she might have suffered in silence.

"And I *can't* sleep with it closed, so what are we going to do about it?" Phil asked.

"Do whatever you like; there's more than that one room in the house."

"Mother, will you or Aunt Maria be good enough to see that the third-story front is made ready for me to-day, and have my things taken up there, too, please?"

Yes, Phil was in earnest; and lately when he had spoken in that tone we all felt that it would be wisest not to oppose him.

Next Sunday Phil went around to the mission-school

after church and walked home with Clara; they went on past our house, and he left her at her own door. Viola sitting at the window saw them; Clara looked up, blushed, and bowed; but Phil was intensely interested in some remark of hers, and did not even so much as glance at the house.

During all these days I watched with great carefulness the religious columns of the daily press, satisfied that eventually they would give me some information concerning Tracy Willard, and I was not mistaken. Grandma, to whom the papers were always first carried, discovered the little paragraph and handed it to me.

"We learn with regret that the Rev. Tracy Willard, recently unanimously called to the Pilgrim Rock Church, has received and accepted a call from the Holy Bethel of San Francisco. Mr. Willard doubtless has good reasons for deciding upon a Western rather than an Eastern home, still, his decision will be an occasion of regret upon the part of his many Eastern friends, who are anxious to reap the benefit of his extensive scholarship and religious culture."

That was all, but it was quite sufficient. It was not necessary for me to throw down the paper and leave the room. I was a woman with a woman's pain to bear, of inactive waiting, disappointed hope, unexpressed longing. I should not see him now; probably never again; but no one would imagine any sorrow of this nature could come to me, and that would make it easier to bear.

## CHAPTER XX.

"NOW WE GO UP, UP, UP, AND NOW WE GO DOWN,  
DOWN, DOWN."

WIDER and wider grows the breach between husband and wife, darker and darker the shadows which seem settling around them, and yet these two eat at the same table, they sleep under the same roof, they go in and out together, and the world looking on smiles approvingly, perhaps enviously, at their youth, beauty, and happiness. But just now Viola is under a cloud,—she is as depressed in spirits as if the excitement of the holidays were not at hand. Perhaps she is not well; but then she says she is, and perhaps—yes, I am quite sure it is something else, though I had hardly thought of it as a really serious matter until now.

Phil has met Clara Maynard on the street an unusual number of times of late; more than once he has gone to the school on Sunday, evidently with no other intent than that of accompanying her home. Viola must have noticed it,—certainly Clara must have wondered at it. What if Phil did have in view the object of making his wife jealous? It was unkind to treat Viola so; it was unmanly, nay, more, it was thoughtless and cruel to be willing, for any purpose of his own, to bring the slightest reproach upon Clara. To permit Viola, or indeed any one, to dream for a moment that she would intentionally act as accomplice in any such scheme, was dishonorable and ignoble of Phil.



I felt myself stirred with righteous indignation. And what if Phil really cared for Clara? That was a reason stronger than all others why he should remain persistently away. For a man deliberately to put himself under the power of temptation, and then grow melancholy, disconsolate, and suicidal because he has succumbed to it, is simply the height of the ridiculous. If Phil felt himself becoming sincerely attached to Clara, he should have avoided her as if she had been a reptile, instead of the lovely woman that she is. /

There is too often, even in apparently harmonious marriages, some one else with whom he or she "might have been" so much happier; and in marriages where the elements are decidedly discordant, either party is worse than inexcusable if they permit themselves to play "cat and mouse" with their affections.

But in all probability Phil "didn't think;" doubtless his actions so far had been merely imprudent, objectless. I determined to observe for myself another Sabbath, and, if necessary, remind Phil of the dangerous position in which he was placing both himself and Clara.

Yes, I saw them coming down the street engaged in earnest conversation; Clara's face drooped under the gaze which Phil bestowed upon her, while Phil himself appeared dejected, sad, and sorely in need of sympathy. They reached the door, but did not pass it as usual. Clara put out her hand to say good-by; Phil took it, held it tenderly, caressingly, then dropped it abruptly, and hurried up the steps, while Clara turned away and walked rapidly toward home.

What did it all mean? There was then more than

even I had dreamed. But I could not speak to Phil; it seemed just now as if he had quite enough to bear, and I would not anger him for the world. It would be best to seek an explanation from Clara; indeed, I felt that she could regulate the whole affair, and that, too, in such a way as not to incur Phil's displeasure or wound his pride.

I sent Catherine over next day with a little note, asking Clara to call on me as soon as convenient. I knew it would be difficult to see her alone in her own home.

"My dear little friend," I said, when we were fairly together in my own room, "I want to ask you to do a favor for us all."

Clara glanced at me in surprise, then said, laughing, "I'm afraid I shall not be equal to the demand."

"But I know you will be; it's only about Phil."

She looked up for an instant, then her eyes drooped, and I could see them grow large with tears.

"Oh, Miss Giles," and she threw her arms around my neck, "I am *so sorry* for Phil!"

"Yes, dear," I answered, "we are all sorry for him; but we must all help him to do right."

"Yes, I know—I know," she said, hastily; "that's just what Phil and I were talking about yesterday."

"Were you?" I began to feel happier.

Clara lifted her head for a moment, then dropped it again. "Phil says it used to trouble him so much about the Trinity, and about Job and Noah, but now he says these things seem to him of less importance every day, and that the hardest problem of all is to live right."

"Dear boy! Did he say that?" I began to wipe my eyes.

"Yes, and—and"—Clara's voice had sunk away into a diminuendo—"we were talking about—about Phil's coming home with me from the school; he asked me not to say he mustn't, but I don't think it is quite right,—do you, Miss Giles?"

"No, dear, I don't."

"Then Phil said there was no harm in my being his little sister, and helping him to do right, and oh! Miss Giles, I had to tell him I couldn't be even that, and it was so hard, because—because—I used to like Phil so much."

Clara was sobbing as I had never seen her in all our long friendship. I could only draw her closer to me, smooth back the rippled hair, and kiss the fair, noble, girlish brow.

"My darling, I know it all," I said, presently, "and love you more than ever; my dear, brave little woman, you have done just what I wanted you to,—I haven't any favor to ask of you now."

"Oh, Miss Giles! did you notice it? And Mrs. Frost and all of them,—did they all notice it?"

"No, dear, I don't really think any of them thought anything about it but me; but you know I'm a genuine spinster, and it's my business to look after everybody else." We both tried to smile, but found it very difficult. "I only know one thing," I said: "that Viola isn't at all happy nowadays, and I thought perhaps this might have something to do with it."

"Oh, I am *so sorry*!" Clara spoke in those sweet tones of sympathy which were always so much more

than the mere words, and which one remembered long after the words themselves had been forgotten.

I noticed that day that there was a decided change in Phil's conduct toward Viola; he seemed to be doing his best to ingratiate himself once more in her good graces. Viola, although she did not receive his attentions with any demonstrations of joy, yet did not seem at all unwilling to accept the proffered arm and shoulder, upon which she drooped her head in a weary, languid way.

"You are not at all well, are you, dear?" Phil asked.

"Oh yes, I am; I can't bear to be sick."

When they bade us good-night, Phil took Viola in his arms and carried her up-stairs. We all smiled a smile of heartfelt gladness; for after all love would be triumphant.

Early next morning, or rather late in the night, Phil called us hurriedly, anxiously,—Viola was very ill. And for the next few days heart and hands were full. Phil was entirely devoted to his sick wife; indeed, it seemed to us all that he more than compensated by his affectionate tenderness for the many little misdeeds of the past. Grandma sat hour by hour in patient, helpless solitude that we might be by Viola's bedside.

"It is a very narrow escape," the doctor said, after the worst was over, and he compressed his lips in a cold, unsympathetic way; "it is a constant wonder to me," he added, "that any woman who dare tamper with human life escapes at all."

Kate and I had suspected as much before; now a

great pain went through our hearts as this fear was confirmed.

Foolish, foolish Viola! was she indeed so blind, so obtuse in comprehension, that she could not see that God was about to send his own heavenly messenger, bringing to our home the glad tidings of joy, love, peace, and happiness?

Could she not understand that a strong, tender, indissoluble tie was about to unite them in a oneness of interest and sympathy which they had never experienced?—that a great, overmastering love for another—and that other all their own—would unconsciously attach them in a sweet, triple, mystic union, redeeming the days of pain and sorrow by its own pure, unsullied joy?

Foolish Viola! she had thrown away the one link,—the only hope of reconciliation in the future. It did not help to make our footsteps any the lighter, or render the tediousness of a sick-room any the less wearisome, because this illness was premeditated and intentional. We were each sad and disappointed. It would have been so much less tiresome if there had been a lovely babe to beguile the hours of their dullness; a happy future to anticipate; bright, winning ways to conjure up and dream over. But Viola had preferred this illness—fruitless and unnecessary—to that other which would have been rich in joy and blessing.

As soon as Viola fairly realized her condition, she began to call in feeble, piteous tones for her mother. Phil went for her as a matter of course, and Mrs. Simpkins came, as mothers always will when they are needed, regardless of how they have been treated in

the past. Mrs. Simpkins said at once that she would take the entire care of her daughter, who seemed very happy, if one might judge from the enormous demands made upon the mother's love and patience, to have her at her bedside.

"It was not necessary," Mrs. Simpkins said, "that she should be at the store, as her husband took charge of it now; if Phil would only go around once a day and report, she should be quite free from all anxiety."

Viola's mother proved a very efficient nurse, so that Phil was able to return to the office once more; indeed, as Viola was getting better, he grew extremely impatient of confinement.

Phil, like most young men, preferred to keep out of the way of everything disagreeable and unpleasant; he was equal to a grand occasion which required active heroism, but patient heroism was a much more tedious, uninspiring affair. He would have rushed around with spasmodic haste for doctor, nurse, drugs, and he had proven that he could take great burdens and bear great responsibilities; but Viola was getting well, and he could not endure to hear her talk about her sickness. "It was all over now, anyway," he said; "what was the use of making a fuss about it?"

Phil had made up his mind that Viola did not need anything now but ice-cream and flowers and picture-papers, and with these he kept her liberally supplied.

Christmas had come and gone without receiving any attention from us; we had been too entirely absorbed in other matters, and there were no little children to force us into a recognition of its importance.

Phil came down one morning after Viola was able to sit up in her own room, and asked if any one could tell what had become of his large amethyst.

"Yes," said Viola, with some hesitation, "I had it set last summer. Mr. Maxton offered to do anything of the kind for me at wholesale price, so I gave it to him."

Phil bit his lip; perhaps he would have expressed himself if Mrs. Simpkins had not been present, now he simply asked, "May I see it?"

Viola told him where it was; he went and got it, then sat examining it for some time.

"Don't you like it?" Viola asked.

"Why, yes, the setting is beautiful; but the stone is nothing more nor less than a bit of purple glass; that amethyst was an unusually large and valuable one, and Mr. Maxton had discrimination enough to perceive it. I only wanted it," Phil added, after a moment's pause, "to have it set for you; but since you have done it yourself, it's of no consequence."

I had noticed several times of late that in any little difficulties between himself and Viola, Phil no longer spoke out in his old impetuous way; he seemed to draw himself up in a cold, dignified attitude, which left very little to complain of outwardly, but by the side of which the wildest outbreaks would have been preferable, as they were less hopeless.

Phil is riding out nowadays more than ever, and though under the same roof with us, his presence is so seldom among us that we feel he is becoming, even to mother and aunt, almost a stranger.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### POOR PHIL! POOR VIOLA!

WE were not at all sorry to have Viola well once more, as she had not been a particularly delightful invalid, and as her mother had accorded us one valuation from grandma to Catherine, according as we laid ourselves under contribution toward her daughter's comfort or amusement.

Phil and Viola are "getting along" together now, but it is quite manifest that there is no positive love on either side; no glad, spontaneous, irrepressible outbursts of affection in deed or word. Phil partly relapsed into his former indifference as Viola recovered health, though he certainly endeavored to maintain a chilly politeness toward her; and Viola seemed quite willing to accept his escort to various places of entertainment, which her long confinement to the house had rendered more than ordinarily fascinating.

I think, as Viola was Phil's wife, he would have preferred to love her; doubtless she, too, would have preferred to love him. But love, perhaps unfortunately, is not an act of volition; we may will to love and yet be powerless to bring about that desired result; there must be certain essential qualities in the object loved to draw forth this emotion within us. We may will to evoke this passion in another and succeed, but we are without power to evoke it in ourselves.

Neither Phil nor Viola had the least idea that mar-

riage meant a mutual surrendering of each unto the other; very likely they expected, as most people do, that they would love, as a matter of course, seeing they *were* married; but that this love was to be secured—that it was to be made rounded and complete by endless little sacrifices each for the other, by endless little endeavors to please—neither had evidently once thought. Love and marriage, on the contrary, had seemed to imply that each was more fully than ever to have his or her own way. In this daily turmoil of life, we are so apt to forget, even outside of the marital relation, that there is no quality of our being so delicate, so exquisite, so easily wounded and so hopeless of recall when once it has escaped us, as this—of love. And yet, forsooth, because it is fond, clinging, hopeful, full of patient inspiration, we venture to treat it rudely, indifferently, unmindful of results so long delayed. It does not follow of necessity, in any relation of life, that we shall be loved unless we are lovable; and to be lovable implies sacrifice,—self-forgetfulness,—“Ah! there’s the rub.” Phil might be true, faithful, loyal, as I in my heart believed he was, but this after all is quite apart from love. Dependent upon one’s own volition, these virtues are totally distinct from the passion of love, which, however expressive of one’s own fidelity, is nevertheless largely dependent upon stimulating qualities in the object loved.

Phil had promised to accompany Viola to the opera, and that lady now stood, superbly dressed, at the parlor windows waiting for his appearance. Phil was certainly late; but then he had not been early for some days, and had seemed anxious and preoccupied, as if he were

puzzling out a perplexing problem. We had finished dinner, and still he did not arrive.

Viola grew extremely impatient. “It’s awfully mean of Phil to treat me so,” she said; “I never know what to depend upon when he promises me anything; I suppose he’s gone after that horse as usual, and forgotten all about me.”

Viola flung herself into one corner and began to frown; it was not simply childish pouting, but an expression of anger, which one knew came from the heart.

“I think you forget,” I said, as we were alone together, “that you are better acquainted with Phil than any other man you ever saw; probably if you knew them all equally well, you would find that the most of them are no nearer perfection than Phil.”

“I don’t believe that; I know some splendid men; there’s Mr. Maxton and Mr. Wheeler and lots of them. I don’t believe what Phil said about Mr. Maxton’s changing the stone; he was so dreadfully jealous that he made the story up to suit himself.”

/ Now I doubt if there are many really angelic women; and the few there are always die under their very first trial. /

I am quite positive that none of our family have grown more *spirituelle* or saint-like since Viola came to take up her abode among us. Just now, I longed for a legal right and power to put her out of the house once and forever.

Was she to be permitted to thrust her wasp-like sting into our hearts whenever it might suit her convenience to do so?

Phil’s one unquestioning virtue was his truthfulness;

but—yes—I see; I am unreasonably hasty; Viola *had* reason to doubt his veracity; he had promised to love and cherish her until death should part them, and Viola certainly knew that Phil did neither.

He came at last, but not until very late; indeed, Viola was preparing to retire for the night. It was evident that Phil was more than ordinarily weary: he was completely exhausted.

"Why didn't you come home, Phil, as you said you would?" was Viola's first interrogative.

"I will tell you by-and-by," he answered, with a slight shrug, as if she were simply an annoyance which he was trying to rid himself of. "Mother, will you please see that I have something to eat?—I'm very hungry."

"What! haven't you had any dinner?" We were all surprised.

"No, not a bite."

"Where have you been, then?" asked Viola.

"I cannot tell you now." Phil's tones were very weary.

"And why not now as well as any other time?" Viola insisted, impatiently.

Phil made no answer; Viola, feeling that she was the injured party, and that Phil owed her an immediate and satisfactory apology, grew angry.

"Philip Frost, you're just as mean as you can be; why don't you tell me where you've been?"

Viola would have said more, but Phil partially lifted his head and answered, in a cool, icy tone, "I've been with your friend, Mr. Simpkins, if you must know."

That name was sufficient at any time to arouse Viola's

wrath; she sprang to her feet now. "Then you're a fool, Philip Frost, that is my opinion of you."

Phil darted toward her; his eyes flashed, he raised both hands over her in a strange gesture full of dark meaning; then he dropped them in a weary, helpless way at his sides, said, in a husky voice, "Don't wait for me," and once more he sought the refuge of the street. Viola went up-stairs, closed her door and locked it.

The fumes of boiling coffee came up from the basement; it was of no use now,—I would go and tell Kate. I did not inform her of all, only that they had had another quarrel, and that Phil had rushed out on the street.

Poor Phil! and poor Viola! we know that a crisis lies somewhere in a not distant future; and it is marvelously strange to us that they themselves cannot see it.

Phil came home in the early morning; both Kate and myself had been listening for him all night, and had not slept; he did not even pause at Viola's door, but went on past, up to the room which he had once before chosen for his own.

If Viola had only waited, how easily all this difficulty might have been avoided! Phil would have told her the whole story, if story there had been any, while he sipped his coffee; he was evidently not *unwilling* to tell her, but merely too tired to do so. Viola of course did not know this; people who are utterly self-absorbed can never understand anything of others' moods except that all who do not come to their terms are selfish and disobliging.

On the other hand,—for there was certainly another



side to the difficulty,—it was unquestionably Phil's place to have offered Viola at once some explanation of his delay; or, if that would have been too long a story, he could easily have said, "Wait, dear, until I am rested; I am too tired now to explain;" and I hope—yes, I think Viola would have ceased to urge the question. At least I am quite sure that any ordinarily reasonable woman would have been satisfied, and any ordinarily reasonable man would have extended the satisfaction.

We all met at breakfast next morning; neither Phil nor Viola noticed the other's appearance; if necessary, Phil spoke to her, but with extreme chilliness of tone, and somehow never anything escaped him that demanded an answer.

Phil looked almost haggard; it was doubtful whether he had had even an hour's sleep; he did not delay a moment after breakfast, but hurried away, saying he "had very important business on hand." Viola put on her walking-garments, and said she "was going over to see mamma." Kate and I had the day to ourselves. We were not at all glad of it now as we sometimes had been; there was a strange pain in each of our hearts such as one experiences after a wedding when the happy pair have left us, and we turn back to find the home empty and deserted. Joy, gladness, happiness, seemed almost forgotten words; should we ever be able to spell them out again with Viola in our midst and Phil so changed? We dared not answer the question.

Viola came home in the afternoon with traces of tears on her cheeks; it struck me as I met her that she was not nearly as pleasing in appearance as before her sickness; she was certainly paler and thinner, and a

dissatisfied, fretful expression had settled upon her countenance.

My old friend Frank Miller called late in the afternoon, and we persuaded her to remain. I am quite sure she will never know, unless she reads this book, why we were so perfectly delighted to see her that day.

We were at dinner when Phil came in at night; he was more animated, and looked much better than when he went away in the morning. He greeted us all pleasantly, then drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to Viola: "Your mother gave this to me for you yesterday," he said, without the least attempt at apology or explanation.

Frank clapped her hands together. "Well, if that isn't exactly like a man!"

"It's exactly like a *mean* man," was Viola's response, as she cut the envelope.

The laugh was checked upon Frank's lips and the smile upon our own. We each involuntarily looked at Phil; there was a deeper color in his face than usual, but its expression had not changed in the least; evidently Phil was getting the discipline now which he had failed to receive when a boy. Ah, well, we must all have our share at some time or other in life. As a general thing, however, I have noticed that it makes less serious difficulty where one receives it in childhood and has some sort of preparation to meet the unavoidable trials of existence. Just now it is altogether the most popular and fashionable to "go it while you're young," to get the fun out of life in youth, to have a good time then anyhow, and your own way no matter what it costs in the end. Phil had had his own way;

there was no one to quarrel with as to that, and now he had leisure and opportunity to figure up the consequences of his thoughtless bargain.

"Phil has got a sort of a Tartar there for a wife, sure enough," said Frank, as soon as we were alone together.

"Well, he chose her, whatever she is," I said, being more than ordinarily vexed at Viola, and so considering myself bound to defend her. "You know," I continued, "that sweetness of disposition, loveliness of character, etc., are nowhere nowadays by the side of ruffles and curls and furbelows generally. I see the whole thing acted out here every day; Phil always loves Viola best when she's best dressed."

"Well, I suppose that's what he married her for," said Frank, "and he's naturally gratified at every fresh proof that he's not been cheated at his own terms."

"There's no mistake about it," I replied; "Phil has got all he asked for: two curls, bright eyes, ravishing smiles, and ruffles and flounces innumerable. There's my little friend Clara Maynard (you've heard me speak of her before), I've not the least doubt but she'll die an old maid like ourselves; she's too genuine, too simple and unaffected, to please any but a very exceptional man."

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE NATURE OF A BARGAIN.

THAT night, after Frank went away and Viola had gone to her room, Phil sat down with his mother and myself to explain to us what we had been on the *qui vive* to know for the past twenty-four hours.

It seems that some weeks back, when Viola was sick and Phil had gone to the store every day to report, his suspicions were awakened that everything was not going on there exactly as it should. Mr. Simpkins had appeared uneasy in the extreme whenever Phil presented himself. His eagerness that Mrs. Simpkins should be informed her presence was not at all needed, made Phil, with his lawyer-like scent after mischief, conclude that Mrs. Simpkins was certainly not wanted. After two or three visits, during which Phil's suspicions were more and more confirmed, he employed a detective to watch the store and its proprietor especially. That official soon informed him that matters were even worse than had been anticipated. After the business of the day was over Mr. Simpkins had closed the store, then admitted an accomplice, and together they had emptied the boxes of their contents and restored them to their former places. After Mrs. Simpkins had returned to the store, the detective went in several times to make some necessary purchases, but to the lady's surprise the articles were wanting, and Mr. Simpkins had each time informed her that there must be a new stock of goods

procured immediately. These had been purchased, and the same process as before continued, except that none of the boxes had been quite emptied, but only a portion of their contents removed.

These goods were placed in large packing-cases which were nailed as soon as filled, labeled, and carried into the cellar; a place which the detective said was made impossible for a lady to enter by having had two or three consecutive steps in the stairs knocked away; he had heard Mrs. Simpkins several times ask her husband to have them repaired, but of course that gentleman had failed to do so.

On the day previous, just as Phil was leaving his office, he received a line from the detective, telling him to be on hand at once, as matters had reached a crisis. The store was closed; but from the light and noise within, as well as from what they could observe through an almost unrecognizable knot-hole, they knew that preparations were rapidly going on for a removal. After waiting an hour or more, the door was opened cautiously and some one went out on the street. Phil said that to his surprise, and certainly to our very great amazement, he recognized the face as Mr. Maxton's. In a few moments a large double wagon was driven to the door, and the process of loading commenced. By a pre-arranged plan Phil went off to procure greater police force, while the detective (having accidentally(?) appeared on the scene) offered his services as a porter. After some little time purposely spent in chaffering as to the price, he went to work.

And now Phil said the way was perfectly plain before them. The police, whom he had called, had dispersed

to make their appearance at opposite corners; the wagon was entirely loaded, and Simpkins was mounting to his seat when the detective suddenly gave a strange, peculiar whistle, which made the two guilty men stare at each other in fear; but it was too late to escape: in a moment more they were in custody.

"Viola's mother would have lost everything," Phil said, as he finished the story, given much more minutely than I have related it here. "Simpkins had the whole thing in his possession; we found to-day that he had converted all he could into ready money; that the store itself had been sold, and that he held the deeds. He must have had in some way great control over his wife, for there was a will made out, subsequent to the one which she made in my presence last summer, which left the bulk of her property to Simpkins."

Viola then and her mother, but for Phil's penetration, would have lost everything; Viola, too, must have known it when she came home to-night, for Phil had immediately informed Mrs. Simpkins of the whole affair; and yet there had not been, either in word or tone, one expression of gratitude. There was no way of accounting for it, except that she was angry that Mr. Maxton was just what Phil had said he was, and that Phil had the satisfaction of knowing it.

"But, Phil," Kate asked, pleadingly, "what made you go away last night? it was just four o'clock when you came in this morning."

He rose and walked once or twice across the room before he attempted to answer; then we knew by the steady, repressed tone in which he spoke that the question had been a dangerous one.

"I was angry, mother, very angry; no one ever spoke to me in that way before, least of all a woman. Had Viola been a man, I hardly dare say what I would not have done; I know I was capable of almost anything."

There was a moment's pause. "For better or worse;" Phil threw back his head, as he said these words with a sneer; "what a happy combination of syllables! and when a fellow's said them, he's in for it the rest of his life." Phil's head drooped now; there was about his whole attitude an expression of helpless, hopeless dejection.

Neither of us could make any response; it seemed to us each as if life had never brought a burden quite so difficult to bear as this. Viola must remain in the house: we had no right to expel her from it; and yet, after all, Viola was not wholly to blame; looking at it from the other side, one might have thought the fault almost entirely Phil's.

"Phil, my dear boy," said Kate, as she rose and went toward him as he stood by the mantel, "what did you do with yourself all night?"

Phil put his arms around his mother's waist, and drew her toward him without seeming to heed her question.

"What should I do without you,—you dear little mother!" And he looked down at her with fond but sorrowful eyes.

Miss Mulock says that "the love between a son and his mother often amounts to a passion," and looking at them now, I felt that her words were true.

"Mother, I was a coward last night," and Phil sat down on the sofa and folded his mother in a close

embrace, as if her very nearness were a shield against all possibility of wrong. "I was tired of living, tired of the struggle, and most of all, tired of the thought that I am getting to be a worse man every day of my life." I went down to the ferry, and crossed the river back and forth, looking into the water, and—going over Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be, or not to be.' "

Kate was crying, and Phil having noticed it had evidently concluded to make as little of the affair as possible.

"You need never fear that I shall try that again, mother," said Phil, almost gayly; "there is always more than one way of solving a problem, as I learned long ago when I was a school-boy."

"How?" we both asked.

"Not to-night; it's too late to make any new disclosures."

And so we parted; Kate lingering for some whispered word of love or comfort to her son.

I had often, in years gone by, laughed at the idea of despair in a person possessed of youth and health; but riper experience has taught me—or perhaps the approaching mellowness of age—that youth is more often despairing than advanced years. (Unreasonable in hopes and expectations, undisciplined by disappointment, inexperienced as to results, life's difficulties seem often insupportable; the strength of maturity is needed to meet and overcome them.)

Phil was very anxious that the trial of Messrs. Simpkins and Maxton should take place immediately; why it seemed a matter of such importance to him we did not understand until afterward. There was, as always,

some weeks' delay; and Phil was urged again and again, by several generous politicians, to "let the whole matter drop, and give the poor fellows their liberty;" but as soon as Phil assured them that he should carry it through if it took a lifetime, the case was speedily ordered into court.

The trial was a short one, as facts and evidence were too undeniable to admit of much dispute. It appeared, in the course of the investigation, that Messrs. Simpkins and Maxton had been the tenderest of friends in childhood; that both were at present mutually interested in a small store up-town, which had been kept stocked for some months with goods supplied by the parent establishment, over which hung Mrs. Vivian's sign. It was also ascertained that Mr. Maxton was the proprietor of a bogus-jewelry shop in Broadway. The charges against him were not at all difficult to prove. With Mr. Simpkins it was somewhat different, as he was Mrs. Simpkins's husband, and consequently his proceedings as to the disposal of her property might have been perfectly legitimate. Maxton, however, was kind enough to turn state's evidence, and the city was relieved of their presence for several years.

Since that night of unusual sadness to us all, Phil had seemed for some unaccountable reason less hopeless, and a shade more like his former self. Kate and I had been so often deceived by these little changes into large expectations, that this time we dared not indulge any anticipations of future good. Phil was polite to Viola, spoke to her whenever it was necessary, and Viola occasionally replied to him,—always if she were angry.

About a week after the arrest, as we were loitering at the dinner-table, and Phil was carelessly feeding puss, he said, in the habitually indifferent tone over which he seemed to have such control nowadays, "I went to dine at the restaurant to-day with half a dozen young married chaps; we got to talking about it, and every one of us came to the conclusion that we wished we were bachelors again."

Viola's face grew scarlet; Kate and I looked pleadingly at Phil, but he went on feeding puss without lifting his eyes.

"And so you wish you had never been married, do you?" asked Viola, excitedly.

"Why, my dear wife," said Phil, with most provoking coolness, "I had to say it, you know, to be on the popular side."

"Philip Frost, you did say it, and you meant it, too." Viola was extremely agitated.

"Well, I *did* say it, and I meant it, since you like to have it so; you see I knew you were wishing the same thing at home."

"Yes, I do wish it from the bottom of my heart." And Viola in an angry burst of tears left the room.

Plainly these two were so constituted or so educated that they could never touch the circle of each other's lives without striking fire.

"Phil, how could you?" said Kate, beseechingly.

"Why, mother, how could all those other fellows?"

Phil answered, indifferently evading the question. "There's Jim Applegate,—after he was married he went to his wife's father's, only intending to stay for a little while; now his wife refuses to leave until he

can afford a brown-stone front and corresponding style; he can't endure her folks, they're a lot of vulgar snobs,—but what's he going to do about it? his wife won't leave her own home, and he can't make her."

"Didn't he *know* her folks were 'vulgar snobs' before he married her?" I queried.

"Why, yes, I suppose so; but then he *didn't* know his wife was going to act like that."

"Of course he never saw anything in her but what was perfectly angelic before he married her," I went on; "if a young lady is self-willed, it's only a pretty, entertaining little exhibition; if——"

"Aunt Maria, you almost make me angry," said Phil; "you don't know what you're talking about."

Phil walked several times across the floor. "Then there's Henry Spencer, his wife flirts the whole time; he says she don't care a rush for him except when he gives her something new. She's a beautiful woman, and he used to be very proud of her, until he found out she was a little more fond of other men's admiration than of his."

"Really, Phil," said I, "it strikes me that you young men understand less about the nature of a bargain than I gave you credit for; your friend Spencer married his wife because she was beautiful; she's probably just as beautiful now as when he married her; he's got all he thought of or cared about, so I don't quite see that he has anything to complain of. As for Applegate—I remember the laugh you two had here over some account he gave you of his lady-love's high-strung disposition, and how he said that was just what he liked in her."

"Yes, I recollect," said Phil.

"Well, then, most assuredly he's got exactly what *he* expected to have; it's very strange what effectual blinders curls and ribbons may prove. If men would only choose sensible, kind, affectionate girls like Clara——"

Phil sprang to his feet. "Viola is right; I am a fool; at least, I was once." And he rushed out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### IN THE BRAMBLE-BUSH.

SITUATED like Phil, Indiana naturally suggests itself to every thoughtful American mind. This was the other solution of the problem at which Phil had hinted; perhaps it was to this end he had repeated the drift of the conversation at the restaurant; certainly it was for this he had been eager to have the Simpkins and Maxton trial disposed of.

Phil has discovered that he and Viola are "incompatible." These French terms afford charming shelter from plain Anglo-Saxon truthfulness; peeping out from behind them the whole world is in a delightful daze, with no clearly-defined outlines of right and wrong anywhere discernible through the mist.

And so Phil has come to the knowledge of a simple truth which was quite as plain—quite as perceptible—two years ago as it is to-day. If Phil did not stop to



ask himself one wise, sensible question then, why should he ask it now? If Viola's heart and mind and disposition were a matter of indifference then, he has no right, now that he is her husband, to reverse the standard by which he first chose her as supreme above all women.

Kate and myself not being, as Phil says, "up" on French literature and modern ideas, are altogether shocked at this proposition of an absolute and final separation. In vain we plead with Phil; he looks dark and desperate; "Viola never loved him," he says, "never gave any proof of devotion to him or his interests beyond crocheting two or three knick-knacks for the house; more than this there is no bond of sympathy between them,—none whatever." Foolish Phil! there is just as much to-day as there ever was. Viola seems to me after two years' acquaintance the same Viola she was when I first saw her in her mother's parlors; she dresses even more finely, she flutters as gracefully as ever, and the curls she wears are nearly half a yard longer; upon all grounds for which Phil admired her then, she has certainly gained rather than lost. But what Phil demands in her now are qualities of which he never then dreamed as being of the least importance, and I protest against the injustice of such requirements.

As to Viola, she receives the announcement of Phil's future plans and purposes at first with a sort of stolid submission, then bursts into a deluge of tears, declaring she "thought Phil loved her; he had promised her over and over again that he always would." This state of things lasts for a few days, during which Viola cries a

great deal and we like her all the better for it; but as a stroke of policy it is a poor one. Plainly, men do not like women in tears. (It is doubtful if ever a wife won back her husband by looking at him through these watery lenses; no, she must smile and smile, and smile the more if her heart has lost its trust, and she cares to win him once again to her side.)

Viola's mother, very unexpectedly to us all, refused to have anything to say about this new difficulty. She was quite crushed by her own troubles and disappointments, and possibly some sense of gratitude toward Phil, as well as a faint suspicion that a daughter who could so treat her mother might not make an altogether perfect wife, kept her from expressing an opinion upon either side. "Viola could come to live with her," she said, "and as she should not continue the business any longer, her capital, together with Viola's alimony, would support them nicely."

That part of the affair was no small consideration to Viola; "she was still young," she said, "and no one could tell what might happen." Phil laughed—a bitter laugh—as he repeated the tender remark to us. Although Phil had quietly been making every preparation during the past few weeks for his journey, he had said nothing about it until after the trial, and we learn now with added pain that there is no longer anything to detain him; he may as well go at once. "The sooner," Phil says, "the plaguey thing is over with, the better." In vain Kate and I urge him to remain. In vain we place before him every motive of propriety, reputation, and principle; but to all he only responds that "the die is cast; it is useless to argue with him any further."

I cannot help feeling sorry for Viola, much as I dislike her. I have had several talks with her, but Viola is not by any means an easy person to talk with; she always provokes me before I have had an opportunity to offer her sympathy.

"I suppose Phil will marry that Clara Maynard," she said, to me one day, "as soon as he comes back from Indiana."

"No," I answered, "you need not anticipate anything of that sort for Phil; Clara Maynard would never marry a man who had been divorced; she doesn't think it the worst thing in the world even to be an old maid."

"I might have married two or three splendid fellows if it hadn't been for Phil," said Viola; evidently my last remark had been a suggestive one, and Viola was not particular as to numerical husbands.

I could have retorted that Phil would have married the loveliest girl in the world if it had not been for her, but I bit my tongue and kept quiet.

More than once during our troubles I wished that even Miss Sissons had said "yes!" Perhaps it would not have been such a dreadful thing after all, if Phil had married a woman a few years older than himself; at least, being an educated woman, she would have known at the outset that a straight line is the most direct course to pursue, not only in mathematics, but in morals and matrimony.

Once more Kate and myself are busy at work preparing Phil for his journey. Kate does not stroke each separate article in unconscious lovingness, as she did in those happy years gone by, when the boy went out to school, glad, joyful, care-free, with no burden upon

his heart heavier than the necessity of taking care of his wardrobe. Now the mother lingers sadly over the open trunk; there are no glad anticipations of the future,—no promise of a joyful home-coming; at the best it must be filled with sorrow and disappointment; the brightest dreams of early manhood darkened by a sad reality; the past a retrospect of difficulty and gloom; the future a weary, hopeless vista. We know that Phil will be lonelier far in that distant, shadowed future than if the sweet possibilities of love, home, happiness had never nestled within his heart.

The one thought of what he is escaping from seems to absorb, in Phil's mind, every other consideration. "It is not because I am *angry* at Viola," he said to us one day, "that I wish to be separated from her; it is because we could never live happily or even comfortably together; we don't understand each other, and we don't either of us care to now. I am tired of her pursuits and unreasonableness, and I suppose she is tired of my indifference. It might not have been so under other circumstances, but it's too late now." (It would have been gross folly to have reminded Phil that he was not yet quite twenty-seven.) "Viola will probably marry again," he went on, regardless of State laws; "as for myself,"—he got up and walked several times across the floor,—"I have my two mothers left; at all events, I shall be happier then than I am now."

Philip has certainly left the boy Phil far, far behind him; he really seems quite an aged individual nowadays, whom one must treat with the respect and reverence due to years.

I think we have never, all four of us, observed such

absolute decorum and politeness toward each other as we do now; there is no longer any quarreling between Phil and Viola; they meet at table the same as ever, and are most delicate in their observance of each other's wants. Kate and myself, by some strange contrariety of human nature, are disposed to treat Viola with more positive kindness than usual. We cannot lose sight of the fact that Viola, being a woman, and the one sought, is, therefore, the most wronged; she gave Phil herself as she was, not as he dreamed she was; and she certainly cannot understand that she has committed any misdemeanor by acting out her own individuality. Very likely, too, we are prompted to unusual consideration by the knowledge that we are so soon to be separated, and can afford to exercise a generous forbearance. A stranger looking in upon us at this time would have referred to us in after-years as a model family.

Viola has decided to remain in the house until after Phil's departure, and indeed this seems best to us all. There is no necessity for agitating Mrs. Grundy as long as a collision can be avoided.

After Phil is gone, it will be perfectly natural for Viola to prefer to spend the time with her mother during her husband's absence. By-and-by, to be sure, the world will know, but in the mean time we shall have opportunity to recover ourselves and be prepared for the coming onset.

Grandma has only learned that Phil is going away; why or wherefore she has never been informed. We know perfectly well that it would be the labor of a lifetime to convince her of the practicability of any such

undertaking. In the first place she would not understand how it *could* be accomplished; and we should never in the world be able to persuade her that the whole idea was anything but an instigation of the devil's; then again, no such thing had ever been done when she was young, and that of itself would be sufficient condemnation, even if the New Testament writings had maintained a conservative silence upon the subject.

It would be quite useless to inform grandma that the French and several other European peoples, to say nothing of our own, had sanctioned the feasibility and even desirability of occasional divorces. Grandma, being tolerably well read in history, would only answer that there were no such nations when Christ preached the sermon on the mount, and that his teachings were shaped *for* them, not modified *by* them. Altogether, we concluded not to let her know anything more definite than that Phil was going West on business, and that he would be away some time.

"I don't know what Clara will think of it all," Phil said, the day before he was to leave us; "I shall probably forfeit her friendship, but then—I am not worthy of it any way; some other man"—Phil stopped for a moment as if seized with a sudden physical pain. "But no!" he added, presently, "I doubt if ever Clara is married, unless to some wretch of a fellow with whom life has been a failure. What an unfortunate thing it is that goodness and beauty of character cannot be festooned on a woman's person like the curls and ribbons that are always tangling themselves before our eyes and keeping us somehow from a knowledge of the truth!"

Phil has grown wonderfully contemplative of late, and not infrequently surprises us with the most philosophical remarks upon life, fate, and destiny.

"After all, Phil," I said, sadly, remembering the conversation of several years previous, "corned beef is better than French knicknacks for solid every-day fare, even if the knicknacks are more tempting at the outset."

Phil came and took a seat by me. "Aunt Maria, when I was a little chap and you set these dishes before me, you always compelled me to take the corned beef first, however much I might protest against it——"

"Yes, Phil, but you *were* a little fellow then," I interrupted; to tell the truth, I did not want him to finish the sentence. Like most people who walk into error with their eyes open or who make mistakes which it would have been the simplest thing in the world to avoid, I knew Phil was busy seeking for some excuse or for some one upon whom to lay the burden. He did not push the point any further, as I knew he would not; it was too feeble to be carried out.

Phil got up and shook himself. "We talk about 'years of discretion,' and I'm sure I don't know what it means; do you think a young fellow full of passion and ambition, with the blood boiling in him at the least opposition, has reached years of discretion? or an old man wily, avaricious, remorseless, full of the devil generally,—do you think he's got any discretion beyond his own selfish interests? I tell you I don't know what it means," said Phil, excitedly; "I used to think I'd have it, of course, with every other good thing, when I was twenty-one; but the truth is, I'm

farther off than ever from any and everything that looks like sense and wisdom."

"My dear Phil," said I, "answer me one question truthfully: have you honestly tried to live up to your best convictions?"

Phil gave an impatient jerk, with a more impatient "humph!" which wound up with a hoarse laugh.

"If you'd been a man, Aunt Maria, you'd never have put that question; a man would have known from his own experience, if nothing more, that no one ever lives up to his best convictions. I'm not so obtuse that I can't see what you're driving at, though; you want to know whether I thought all the time that Viola would make me a better wife than Clara."

I was conscious of a confused, self-convicted sensation, but I let Phil proceed.

"No! to tell the truth I never once thought it; but she seemed to me, in my verdancy, a great deal more attractive than Clara, she took my fancy at the outset, and, above all, Fred Habberton said he was going in for her if I didn't, so of course that settled the whole affair. There! Aunt Maria, you've got the truth in a nut-shell," said Phil, with another of those hoarse laughs; "when I'm gone you can crack it open and give the pit to my mother."

"But, Phil," I said, seeing him move toward the door, "you *did* choose her; whatever she is, you chose her, and choosing her you are bound to remain with her."

I heard the door close for my answer. Poor Phil! he is fairly, undeniably, in the bramble-bush; not content with having scratched his eyes out, he is seeking a remedy just as perilous to scratch them in again.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## DARK AND DARKER.

THE fatal day has come at last. As long as a single night intervened between us and it it did not seem so certain, so unavoidable; while darkness remained, we felt that daylight might dissipate the impending evil; but the garish sun sends its rays into the room and spreads itself across the floor, forcing upon our hearts the dreaded, inevitable conviction that *the* day—almost *the* hour—is at hand which must separate us from Phil, and which, by his own volition, is to separate him from wife, home, love, all the dear associations which cluster themselves about the marriage-altar.

We meet at the breakfast-table. Phil has carried grandma down-stairs in his arms, ostensibly that we may all be together during this last meal, really, because he knows that the subject which most occupies our thoughts will not find expression before her. Viola is looking paler than I have seen her since her illness. Kate's eyes are red and swollen; the night has been a long and painful one to her, and the morning has brought no joy. As for Phil, he looks one moment pale, depressed, and care-worn; the next he is full of life, youth, and daring; it is impossible to arrive at any satisfactory conclusions regarding him. We conjecture that he is filled with sorrow at the future, and the next instant we are sure his anticipations are only pleasing ones.

Phil is to take an early train. It is arranged that

Kate and myself are to accompany him in the carriage to the depot; we cannot leave grandma alone, and Clara, who is always our good little angel in times of need, and who knows that Phil is going away for a long journey, has kindly offered us her services.

A carriage has been ordered for Viola, and before we return she will be at home under the shelter of her mother's roof. Strange as it may seem, we bid each other a quiet good-by, knowing that it will be a long, long time before we shall meet again, if ever. My heart was filled with sincere pity as I looked at her for this last time, so pale, so young, with an unknown and perchance joyless future before her; I did not attempt to restrain the impulse: I put my arm around her and kissed her affectionately. Viola seemed surprised and startled; she threw her own about my neck, and burst into an agony of tears. Phil had left the room, but standing in the door he had seen it all; something, too, impelled him to return to Viola's side; he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Viola, we have both made a great mistake in life; I acknowledge my share of the guilt. I am going away now to rectify the wrong I have done you. Good-by!" And Phil stooped and kissed her cheek.

Viola did not move, she made no response, and Phil left the room.

"Oh, Aunt Maria!" said the poor child, as soon as he was gone, "I love Phil more than any one in all the world beside; I shall never be happy now again,—never!"

Phil called from the foot of the stairs that we must not wait another moment; again I kissed Viola, and

more heartily than I had ever done. At the door we met Clara; I whispered to her to seek Viola and try to comfort her; Phil detained her a moment to say good-bye, and to bestow a farewell kiss. I was sorry that under the circumstances he should have done this, but it was the first as well as the last which he ever offered until the day that she became a bride.

I could not but think, as we rolled along for a few moments in utter silence, of that other ride we three had taken together, on the night when Kate and myself first went to visit Viola. None of us were happy then; surely none of us were happy now! We could think of nothing to say then, though our hearts were full; there seemed nothing to say now, even when our thoughts were struggling for expression. So we talked, after a little, of the many things we had spoken of before: how soon Phil would write, and how long it would take a letter to reach us, and how often we should expect to hear from him, and his visit home at the holidays.

How often it comes to pass in these puzzling lives of ours, that when there is most to say, we say least; and just now we feared to touch the depths lest we should be overwhelmed. I know Phil was glad when we reached the depot; he had seemed uneasy and restless all the way, as if anxious to have this parting over with; he had told Kate again and again that it was "only a year;" still, each time he had repeated the words, the year had seemed to grow longer,—more dreary and more hopeless.

And now we are at the depot. Kate and I sat drearily waiting while Phil made the necessary arrangements for his journey. Parallel to our carriage, but a little

in advance, stood a barouche; its occupants were a gentleman in the silver decade of life, a young miss who had scarcely entered her teens, and a young man, who, by his dress and the attentions bestowed upon him, was evidently the only one of the party who contemplated traveling. One takes in all these little points at a glance; more than this, it was quite evident, from the tones which occasionally reached our ears, that the elderly gentleman was father of these other two, and that their love for him was deep and tender.

And now Phil returned, and I was no longer interested in my observations. We had only a moment for good-byes, for hand-shaking, for tears and smiles and kisses. The train began slowly to move away, and the three gentlemen sprang to the ground. Phil was certainly the handsomer of the two young men, but how well they both looked! tall and manly, with the peculiar, distinctive air of a gentleman about each.

The stranger jumped upon the platform. Phil turned back, looked at his mother's tearful face, hesitated, then gave a decided, resolute spring toward the step. Good God! it breaks! Phil is hurled around with sudden and awful force against the side of the car, then he falls. Kate screams,—I hold my heart,—I feel that it will never beat again. A gentleman—the gentleman who was in the barouche—springs, lifts him, drags him away from those horrible, remorseless wheels. I see the crowd gathering around, and Phil senseless, blood-stained in their midst; every movement, every face, writes itself upon my consciousness with photographic distinctness, and still I am powerless to move. I see that Kate has fainted, I hear the gentleman give direc-



tions to those about him, I see him move toward Phil, lift him carefully, tenderly as a woman, and then I know that somehow they have arranged a bed for our Phil, and are lifting him to it. The gentleman comes to the side of the carriage, the crowd gathers closer, and Phil is shut out from view.

"You are alone?" The question is asked hurriedly.  
"Yes."

"Then depend upon me! We must put him in the barouche and take him home at once; it might be impossible to get him there later."

"Yes, yes," I answer; "anything,—do as you think best."

In a moment more, the young lady brings me a vial of camphor. "Papa said some one had fainted," she remarked as she handed it to me, and then she stays to assist in restoring poor Kate to consciousness.

Again the gentleman comes to our side with card and pencil in hand.

"Your address," he says, quickly; "I shall go with him. Trust me!" he added, as he saw the pained look in our faces, "I think I shall be able to do for him perhaps even better than you; you must return in this carriage, and I will send at once for a surgeon."

"Oh!" said Kate, beseechingly, "what shall we do? I do not know of any surgeon,—no one I would dare trust."

However undecided we might be, there was certainly no indecision on the stranger's part; he saw that we needed some one to act for us, and act promptly, and he did not hesitate any longer. He turned quickly, called his daughter to him, gave her some hurried

directions in an under-tone, of which I could only hear, "Tell him not to delay an instant; I shall wait until he comes." Then I gave the name and the address; he received it with an unmistakable expression of recognition; something I thought even like a smile crossed his countenance; and I noticed it, as we always notice, in times of pain or peril, the most trivial incident.

What a long, terrible ride followed! Now that Phil's wounded, perchance suffering body was being carried over the pavement, it seemed as if each stone since less than an hour ago had grown into a huge boulder; every jolt brought with it to us a physical pain, as we remembered that he might suffer by it.

A carriage stood in front of our door; Viola then had not gone. As we neared the house, I saw her and Clara standing in the window with their arms around each other, and I remember now, wondering at it; but it was only for an instant. I ordered both carriages to move out of the way, gesticulating in a strange, excited manner.

Clara opened the door; I recall now her pale, anxious face. "What is it, Miss Giles,—oh, what is it?" she asked, tremblingly.

"Phil is almost killed," I said; "they are bringing him home; he will be here in a minute."

I did not think how this terrible news would sound to another, until I heard a low moan from the parlor, and a heavy fall. Clara's white face had frightened me as soon as I spoke the words, but she was the first to spring to Viola's side, to remove the hat and cloak, to bathe her temples, and then to kiss her as tenderly as if she had known and loved her all her life. I am

quite sure that Viola would have gone from the fainting fit into hysterics, if it had not been for Clara's sweet soothing tone and manner. "For Phil's sake, dear," I heard her say, "try to be calm."

And just then Phil was brought in; we all stepped back into the parlors to make room as they carried him up-stairs. Viola clung to Clara; she hid her face in her shoulder; she clasped her closer and tighter as the orders, "Slower!" or "More careful!" fell upon our ears; it seemed as if Clara alone could strengthen and comfort her.

Neither Kate nor myself spoke to Viola; as for Kate, I knew it would be difficult for her not to hold Viola responsible for this accident; and as for myself, I was much too busy to bestow attention upon any one, or even to see anything, save what I could not help seeing.

I do not know what we should have done during the next hour, but for the stranger gentleman; under his direction we made every needful preparation for the surgeon, and it was he who sat by Phil's side during the examination and operation which followed.

Clara and Viola crouched on the stairs with their arms clasped about each other, just outside the room which we were all forbidden to enter; Kate had thrown herself upon the bed; and she, grandma, and I were waiting in tearful silence the decision we so much longed yet dreaded to hear.

At last the door opened, and the stranger stepped into the room; he walked up to the bedside and took Kate's hand in his. Clara and Viola, hearing his step, drew near the door.

"My dear lady," he said, "we believe your son will

recover; just now it is very difficult to say, but we hope for the best. I need not tell you all," as he looked around and saw for the first time the pale, tearful faces in the doorway, "that everything now depends upon his being kept quiet; he may not be conscious for some time, but do not be alarmed, it is better that he is powerless to think.—And you are his sisters?" he asked, as he reached out a hand toward Clara and Viola.

"No, I am only a friend," Clara answered. He looked questioningly at Viola.

"I—I am his wife," she faltered, "and oh! I love him so!"

Was it for our ears, or for his, or only because she longed to tell all others what she knew Phil could neither hear nor understand? "Certainly you do, poor child!" he answered, as he rose and took her hand, "but I believe our good Father will yet restore you to each other."

Viola looked into his face anxiously,—almost prayerfully. He saw the mute appeal and answered it.

"My dear child, I cannot promise you that he will get well; I can only hope and trust and pray; shall we ask the dear Lord now to give you back your husband?"

"Oh, yes, ask Him,—please ask Him!" said Viola, who seemed eager to grasp at any means by which Phil's recovery might be made more probable.

And so the stranger knelt and prayed a simple, almost child-like prayer of perfect faith in God; of earnest petition that our wills might be rendered submissive to the divine will; that if it pleased the Saviour, He would again perform that loving miracle, and re-

store the son to his mother. He spoke of the young wife,—of her love and sorrow, and then he seemed to plead, as a father for the children who were dear to him, that God would not separate them now in their youth.

Oh, how glad we were that he did not, could not, know the truth! and when that prayer was ended, we felt as if we had almost received the promise of Phil's recovery, or if not that, of a peace which no earthly sorrow could take away.

The stranger left us, promising to come again tomorrow. Viola looked up at him pitifully as he bade her good-by; he placed his hand upon her head with a benign, fatherly look of sorrow and compassion as he said, "God bless you, my poor child! God bless you!"

What did all these little mysteries mean? who was this stranger who seemed to feel a personal interest in us all? Why did Viola have her arms around "that Clara Maynard"? and why had she clung to her like a poor shipwrecked soul clinging to its last hope of rescue? Above all, why did she seem so changed? why was all that coldness and utter absence of feeling in which she had wrapped herself for weeks now entirely thrown aside, and she as anxious, as sorrowing, as if she had been the most loving and devoted of wives?

I could not understand any of these things, but I felt sure that I should by-and-by; there was no time to ponder over them now; they were merely thoughts which flashed across my mind on the instant, and were then quite lost to sight.

Both Kate and myself would have been much better

pleased not to have found Viola in the house upon our return; but we certainly could not send her away now; and indeed we had no desire to do so as soon as we realized the change which had come over her, and saw that her sorrow was genuine and wifely.

"Is there any one to whom you wish me to telegraph? any one who was expecting him?" the stranger asked as he left the house.

Viola shuddered and drew closer to Clara. No one seemed inclined to answer, and I whispered, hurriedly, "No, thank you,—no, no one."

That was such a terrible day to each of us; it seemed without beginning or end. We moved about on tiptoe, the house was darkened, we scarcely spoke in audible tones lest we should in some way add to the sufferings of the dear one we loved so well. Viola's carriage was sent away, and Viola herself, crouching in some obscure corner, wept until even Kate grew alarmed, and all Clara's efforts were powerless to soothe her.

Toward night Mr. Maynard came in to stay with us, and seeing Viola's pale face and tear-stained cheeks, insisted that she should go home with his daughter.

"Oh, I cannot leave Phil," she said; "please, please don't send me away!"

"No, my dear, no one will send you away," he answered, as if Viola had been a little child; "but you must keep well or we shall have both to take care of; besides, as soon as Mr. Frost gets better you will be needed a great deal more than you are now."

Viola stood irresolute; but Clara brought her hat, and, wrapping her shawl carefully about her, decided for her that she was to go.

Clara slipped back quietly from the lower hall, to place in my hand a card which she said the gentleman had left with her.

I glanced at it hurriedly; the name was "Tracy Willard."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### TWILIGHT AND DAYLIGHT.

It was not until after many weeks of weary watching and almost hopeless suspense that there was anything like a prospect of recovery for our poor Phil. There had been a fracture of the thigh as well as of the skull, and our dear boy lay day after day motionless, senseless, growing ghastly in his paleness, and so emaciated that our hearts were wrung with anguish each time we looked upon him.

Kate, after the first terrible shock, had proved herself a brave, resolute little woman; a power was certainly given her that she had never before possessed, to do for Phil, however painful, whatever was needful or necessary. Viola was always on the alert to do anything for Phil, if there was anything which she could do; and if not, she sat by the bedside watching the face of the dear, sick one, as if her very life were bound up in his.

"Yes, Viola loved Phil. There was no need now to state the question interrogatively. All the woman-

hood within her was aroused, all the love of which her nature was capable was stirred into activity.

Viola did not know how to do anything well; but she endeavored again and again under Mrs. Maynard's direction to prepare broths and bandages, and no amount of failure seemed to lessen her ardor or check her loving perseverance. Mrs. Maynard and Clara had taken Viola under their especial care; and from them and in their household she was learning lessons as new to her as the laws which govern the universe; learning that love means something more than the mere iteration of loving words, and to think of one's self ever first and foremost as the very subversion of all that is implied in the act of loving. Viola was proving herself to be not absolutely incurable; indeed, it is a theory of mine that no one ever is; there are remedial traits somewhere in every character, if we have only patience to search for them.

After we had left the house on that terrible day of the accident, Clara had immediately sought for Viola, whom she found weeping passionately and uncontrollably. Clara said, as she told me of it, that she had never seen any one shed such tears before, and for a while was quite alarmed. She bathed Viola's forehead and tried in various ways to soothe her, but it was some moments before her grief seemed at all assuaged.

"Then," said Clara, "as soon as she grew a little calm, she threw her arms around my neck and told me everything." Clara paused a moment; I did not speak,—what could I say? I could not bear the thought now, especially, that Clara should know of all their mutual

unhappiness and disappointment, and above all that she should think Phil capable of this one last act.

"It seemed to be such a comfort to her to have some one to talk to," Clara said, as if reading my thoughts and hurrying on to apologize for Viola; "she said she loved Phil with her whole heart, and that it would kill her to have him go away and leave her; she said, too, that she wanted to ask him a hundred times to forgive her, and to try once more and see if they could not be happy together, but Phil was always so cold and indifferent nowadays, and then there was a something in her voice whenever she tried to speak to him about it, so that somehow she could never say anything only just in that same cold way in which Phil spoke to her. Viola thinks," Clara went on, "that the whole trouble is that she and Phil knew so little of each other before they were married; she says her mother urged her to appoint an early day for the wedding, and Viola believes now it was only because she was in such a hurry to get married herself."

Whether Viola's revelations had been discreet or not, they certainly had the merit of truth upon their side.

"Oh, Miss Giles!" said Clara, impulsively, "don't you hope that when Phil gets well they will be happy again,—happier than they ever were?"

"Yes, dear child, I do hope so," I answered, from the very depths of my heart.

It was quite evident to me long before Clara had finished speaking, that, like many another woman before her, she had found her idol, after all, but clay. Whatever Phil had been to her in earlier days, and however she had invested him with ideal qualities, he

was no longer her hero; the beautiful image formed of her girlish imagination was shattered into atoms. I knew that Phil had sunk by immeasurable fathoms in her estimation.

Never but once in her life can woman look upon man as prince and hero; once and once only can there come to her a time when man is more god than human; she may love as truly in the after-years, but her lover is not her king; no chivalric charm hovers about him, no ideal worthiness born of her own girlish dreams; she weighs him, estimates him at his real value, sees his faults, his follies, and his weaknesses, then accepts him for what he is, not for what he might have been. The soft glamour of a blinding passion can veil her eyes but a single time; after that she sees more clearly than if the misty curtain had never obscured her vision.

Whatever Clara's feelings had been toward Phil, he was ignorant of them; we all knew that he admired and honored her, and had he been free, I felt confident he would have loved her; but that Clara entertained any regard for him other than an ordinary friendship, I was sure Phil never suspected, whatever he might once have hoped.

My own heart as well as Clara's was indeed full of a desire that Phil and Viola might be restored to each other.

Two young lives blighted almost on the very threshold of their marriage, and for what? not because they did not love each other, but because neither of them had comprehended the first initial in love's alphabet.

Mr. Willard came frequently to see us; indeed, at  
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first he came every day. I know that the meetings, upon my part at least, would have been embarrassing, had not our anxiety for Phil absorbed every other consideration.

It seemed as if with each new visit which he made our hearts were inspired with hope and confidence. He was so genial in his manner, so sympathetic toward each, and with all he possessed such strength of character with the judgment and ability to do always just the thing that needed to be done, that we came to place great reliance upon him. Viola, especially, looked for his coming, and was the first to tell him of any little change in Phil, confident that she would receive from him not only the quickest sympathy, but the needed assistance.

Altogether, Mr. Willard evidently considered Viola a most exemplary and devoted wife. It seemed to me, too, that he also attributed these same estimable qualities to Kate, as mother. But then, as Kate says, I am always seeing things before anybody else does.

Do I appear to forget the dear suffering one? and yet never for an instant has the strong, uppermost thought ceased to be of him and for him. Now, for the first time in his life, he lies quiet, passive, more helpless even than a child. For many days we hear no expression from him but feeble moans; then there comes a change: he speaks strange-sounding, isolated words; by-and-by these are connected into sentences, —wild, feverish, delirious sentences.

The surgeon and Mr. Willard consider that Phil's delirium has taken a very singular "turn." Now he calls Viola to him with the fondest terms of endearment,

and now he tells her, as he hisses the words between his teeth, that he "hates her." Now he wonders why Viola does not come to him, and then he upbraids himself for his foolish choice. He calls her his "own beautiful one," and then asks, with a coarse laugh, "why she doesn't marry Mr. Maxton."

Fortunately, these expressions are much less intelligible to others than to ourselves; for many a word is clipped in two, many a sentence slides into nothingness; only we—we know what they all mean. Poor Viola! It is indeed too much for her to bear. The doctor tells us that he fears the worst possible consequences will result from this overstraining of her nervous system, and he says we must enforce her absence from the room as much as possible. But Viola grows increasingly reluctant to leave Phil's bedside, even for an instant. "If they are after all to be separated," she says, "she wants to remain with him now as much as possible."

One day, after Phil had been in an unusually talkative mood, and Viola had seemed to be more than ordinarily agitated in listening to his expressions of alternate endearment and repulsion, Mr. Willard, who had been watching her closely, and with a countenance expressive of the deepest sympathy, suggested that they should go down to the parlors, as he wanted to have a little talk with her.

Viola was always ready to accede to any proposition which Mr. Willard might make, and presently they left the room together. They were alone a long, long time, and as I passed the door frequently, of necessity, I knew by the tones of their voices that the conversa-



tion was an earnest one; Viola's indicated the deepest agitation, then I could hear the strong, gentle tones of her good friend, which, even in absence of the words, I knew had a soothing power of themselves.

Viola went up to her own room after the conversation was over, and there was a something even in her step which gave me confidence.

Mr. Willard joined us for a moment. "I am sorry I did not know all this sooner," he said, sorrowfully; "and yet I am glad *she* told me rather than any one else. Poor children! we must help them; it will all come right at last, I feel most positive assurance of it." And we smiled a good-by at each other through our tears.

The day came at last when Phil spoke,—no longer in mutilated sentences or slipshod syllables, but in clear, intelligible diction. Kate was sitting upon one side of the bed, I on the other.

The doctor had told us that at any time now we might expect Phil's reason to return to him, unless indeed it was hopelessly shattered; and this new anxiety held us closely to his room.

Viola did not dream possible what we had feared from the beginning, that Phil's mind might be forever darkened. We felt it was not worth while to alarm her with any such fears, and, besides, we were growing tender of Viola.

Phil had been sleeping quietly, while Kate and I watched beside him; we were both so surprised that we started involuntarily when he opened his eyes and said, calmly, "Mother!"

It was very difficult for Kate to practice repression

under such an ordeal of happiness. I knew that she had never before exercised such self-control in her life as when she looked back and answered, quietly, "My dear boy!"

"The room is so dark," said Phil; "how can you see?"

"I will make it lighter, dear, if you like," Kate answered; and I knew she was glad of an opportunity to hide the uncontrollable joy in her face, as she stepped toward the windows and turned the blinds carefully, letting in a few rays of the twilight sun.

"Viola—where is she?" asked Phil, rather impatiently.

I motioned to Kate, and quietly slipped out of the room to call her. I was sorry as I looked at her that I should be obliged to send such a pale, delicate girl to Phil: it seemed to me he would hardly recognize her; but my fears were idle ones, for the bright color rushed to cheek and lips as soon as I told Viola Phil had called for her.

"Go to him naturally, dear," I said, as I put my arm around her trembling form; "remember, he must not be agitated now,—it would be death to him."

"Yes, yes, I know—I *will* remember; Mr. Willard told me."

I could not resist the inclination; I stepped to the door to see how Phil greeted her. Viola smiled as she entered the room,—one of those bright, radiant smiles, which must have been all-powerful in their effect upon Phil during the days of their courtship. Phil smiled faintly back at her, and reached his hand out toward her.

"My darling!" said Viola, as she caught the thin white fingers in her own and kissed them.

Phil closed his eyes, and a troubled expression passed over his countenance. Then he opened them again and they rested wonderingly upon Viola. "Dearest, have we been married very long?"

"No, love, only a little while."

"That is what I was thinking. I got hurt, didn't I? coming home from our wedding-tour, and then—I must have been delirious," said Phil, looking into our faces questioningly, "for I thought we'd been married a great while; and we didn't love each other any more."

"Oh, what a naughty dream!" said Viola, with a tremulous voice, and Kate and I began to fear that after all Phil was not quite so fully recovered as we had hoped.

"It won't do, Phil dear, to talk any more now," said Kate, as she came toward the bed; "Viola, don't you want to go and bring some of that nice chicken-broth?" Viola seemed so happy that Kate had made this simple request of her.

"Now, little one, you feed it to me," said Phil, as she came into the room a few moments afterward, tasting the liquid to make sure that it was right.

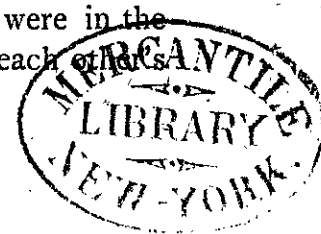
Viola certainly appeared the proudest and happiest of women as she took her seat by Phil's bedside.

"Call me if you want anything," said Kate; and so we left them alone together.

We knew that Viola had one of love's tenderest secrets to impart to Phil, and we knew she would be anxious to accept the first opportunity to impart it.

Half an hour after, Kate peeped into the room to

make sure that Phil was not over-agitating himself. Viola's head rested upon the pillow by his side, and they were talking together in low, happy tones. Kate thought best not to interrupt them. A little later, she looked into the room again; their heads were in the same position as before, their arms around each other's necks, and both were fast asleep.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### WHICH WILL HE CHOOSE?

WE have lived since Phil's accident—well, if we should count by feelings and experiences, it would be at least an entire decade; but the calendar, as well as our more logical convictions, assure us that it is scarcely more than half a year. It is now little over a fortnight since we were thrown into a delightful flutter of pleasurable excitement by the arrival of a little stranger in our midst. We had looked for the "wee one" with many fond anticipations, and yet with many anxious fears, remembering all the mother had borne and suffered; but heart-happiness is, after all, the best physician; and no one doubted that the real, substantial joy which now filled Viola's life was the sustaining power by which she had bravely met woman's greatest pain and peril.

Phil was happy as it is possible for a man to be under similar circumstances; and perhaps he is even more than ordinarily delighted, as his long confinement is growing every day increasingly wearisome to him. But for baby Maud to interest and amuse him each hour,

and each moment of the hour, I can scarcely imagine what he would do with himself.

We had just time to lay the dear babe in grandma's arms, just time for her to receive the kiss and blessing, when God sent his messenger, not now to impart life but to take it.

"She has come to fill my place," said grandma, and so it proved; we had scarcely tasted our feast of joy before we were called upon to mourn. The beautiful, matured, ripened life went out, as it seemed, to make larger space for the feeble, helpless little waif who had fluttered to our arms.

Phil is able to sit up a few hours each day, that is all.

To Phil, always irrepressibly restless and active, no discipline through life has ever been equal to this. He found out, long ago, that the "naughty dream" had been a sad reality; but before he discovered the mistake he had given to Viola a new and more exalted love. Then there came a time when Phil summoned us all to his room, and, with Viola's hand in his and her tearful face pressed against his pillow, confessed "that he had been the cause of their unhappiness; that a wife had a right to expect more attention and devotion than he had ever bestowed, and that he had been no better than a brute to treat her with such indifference, and, with God's help, he meant to be a faithful, loving husband in the future."

And Viola had lifted her face from the pillow, and smiling sadly through her tears, begged "that Phil should not bear all the blame, that she felt it was hers and hers alone; she had never tried to make Phil love her, had never——"

And then Phil drew her close to him and kissed her trembling lips, and told her "that was enough, he would not hear another word."

And we all shed tears, happy tears, as we kissed them each, and felt that now for the first time *God* had united them. Phil had seen Viola under totally different circumstances, when she was "off parade" not only before the world, but before him as well. He had been with her through her long sickness, which she had borne with a heroism that commanded our, as well as his, admiration. He had learned, as he sat in his chair or lay upon his bed, the petty details of a woman's life, and her hourly need of a patience which surpassed even his comprehension. He had learned also how much may trouble a woman, how many difficulties annoy her which she never can repeat to any man, and so he had come to understand his wife and all women better.

As for Viola herself, the necessity of restraint on her part, of constant and watchful repression for Phil's sake, has been of incalculable benefit to her. She has been constantly obliged to lay self aside and think of another, for she knows, as well as we, that Phil must be kept absolutely free from all excitement; and that he is more than ordinarily liable to agitation we have daily reminders. Phil pleaded so that his room might be made the nursery, that, although our better judgment condemned the decision, we yielded to his wishes. It was certainly very much harder for Viola, but she was willing to accept trial now for Phil's sake, and the self-enforced discipline produced a patience of which we had never, even in our most sanguine expectations, believed her capable. Besides, I am convinced that there

is much in the transforming power of motherhood; else how are so many foolish, thoughtless girls revered in after-years by fond, proud sons as the perfection of all that is noble in woman?

As Phil has grown stronger, Mr. Willard has had some long, close, confidential talks with him. Phil calls him a "square man," which with him is the very maximum of epithets. "Remember, my good fellow," we overheard Mr. Willard say to him one day, after he had opened the door to leave the room, "that two wrongs never make a right."

"I am not likely to forget it soon," Phil answered, rather pitifully, "with a crippled leg to remind me of it constantly."

"After all, you are not sorry you have got that lame leg?"

"No, no, I suppose not," said Phil, rather dubiously; "I am *sure* not," he added, more confidently, "if I could never have found the other side of life by a road any less circuitous."

"Believe me, my dear fellow, there is always 'another side' wherever wrong is involved," Mr. Willard answered, "but we have got to mount a higher altitude to see it; when we don't," he added, laughing, "we are sure to break a head or leg, or something, before we find it out."

"Yes, I know,—I own it all up," was Phil's answer.

"It's worth a whole fortune to hear you say so." And Mr. Willard left the open door and walked back to Phil's bedside. If they had been two women I should have said he went back to kiss him, but I have never

yet learned how men express their affections under just such circumstances.

We were sitting together one pleasant morning some weeks after baby Maud came; Mr. Willard had made an unusually long call, as Phil was not so well and seemed more than ordinarily depressed, when Phil asked him, suddenly, "Mr. Willard, when *in* the world do you write your sermons?"

The broad, genial mouth opened with a hearty laugh before there was any attempt at reply.

"I wonder how many times that question has been put me since I came to your city?" he said, presently; "why, I'm making—I can't say writing, but I'm making up my sermon for next Sabbath now."

"Now?" it came from each one of us almost simultaneously.

"Why, yes, why not?" he answered; "this poor battered individual," looking at Phil, "has furnished me with any number of valuable texts."

We all smiled; there was no resisting his pleasant way of making the best of unpleasant things.

"Humanity is the only really valuable supplement to the Bible that I have ever come across," he added. "I don't know how a man can study the Bible without studying humanity along with it; or rather, I don't know how a minister who confines himself to his study can preach with any effect whatever, since he must be ignorant, except in theory, of the ever-changing demands of human nature. I have learned quite lately," with a significant smile, "that society has gained several new ideas since I went West some twenty odd years ago."

I was going to give him the exact number, but grew

confused at the mere thought, and Phil got the better of me, by saying, in tones equally significant,—

“But these ‘new ideas’ came from the West originally, you know.”

“Not a bit of it,” Mr. Willard answered; “most of the fine theories which we put in practice are advanced at the East; then you raise your hands in holy horror at those ‘unprincipled Westerners.’ To do the East justice, I don’t think they ever mean to carry out one-half their speculations,—while we Westerners, not having any time to talk, put the new ideas through, and judge by the results whether they are worth anything or not.”

Phil evidently wanted to argue the point, but Mr. Willard positively forbade it, reminding him that in all disputes between them nowadays he was to have the advantage, as Phil was prohibited from engaging in any controversy.

“Mr. Barlowe thinks a minister *must* spend his whole time in the study in order to accomplish anything,” I remarked.

“Barlowe? yes, I remember him well; we were chums in the theological seminary. Barlowe started out, in my opinion,—I don’t know that I ought to state it here, but it seems to me he has made a great mistake of the ministerial profession from first to last. He claims that the work of the minister is a purely intellectual one; I remember that he used to practice praying by the hour together; he made it a regular spiritual gymnastics, and measured his growth not only in grace, but intellectually, by the length of his prayer.”

“I should have thought as much,” said Phil.

“I don’t pretend to say that he wasn’t perfectly honest in it; I believe he was. He said his prayer should be as perfect as anything else which he might wish to offer to the Almighty; there I agree with him; but I should as soon think of this baby’s practicing the cry by which it was to ask for its food,” Viola blushed and Phil smiled fondly at her, “as I should think of practicing the words by which I was to tell my Father of my daily sorrows and necessities.”

It was quite evident that Mr. Willard’s genial talks were having their effect upon both Phil and Viola. Viola had seldom in her life had an opportunity to listen to conversation which treated of anything more complicated than a ruffle, or the last new arrangement of the hair, and I think Mr. Willard’s society did as much for her mind as it did for Phil’s heart.

“I should like to know which one of you two Mr. Willard is in love with,” Phil said one day, as Kate sat rocking the baby to sleep, and I was mending the family stockings. Viola had gone to visit her mother, who, by the way, had been too feeble for some months to leave the house.

“Phil, aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” said Kate, blushing, while I held a stocking close to my face to bite the thread.

“No, I’m not a bit ashamed!” said Phil, rather amused, I thought, at Kate’s blush. “I’ve always said I should never forgive my mother if she married again, but I give up now. I should like nothing better than to have a sound man like that for my step-father.”

“Phil, I’ll throw this baby at you if you say another word!” said Kate, laughing.

"Humph! I've been wanting her this half-hour, but knew her grandmother 'd make a great row if I should even suggest such a thing."

"There! take her!" And Kate laid the dear little bundle at his side, and left the room.

"On the whole, Aunt Maria," said Phil, as he looked up after kissing tiny, pink Maud, "I'm quite sure you're the one, after all. Mr. Willard looks more at mother, but then he fairly eats every syllable you utter. Upon my word!" and Phil laughed merrily, "it's been a puzzle to me ever since I had mind enough to think about it at all, to know which of you two he was after, and I'm as much befogged to-day as I ever was; perhaps it's because I haven't yet got back my full allowance of brains."

Phil sighed. He had touched a subject which we all dreaded to have him allude to. The physicians had told us, and we felt quite sure Phil guessed, that it would not be safe for him to return to his old profession.

"A mercantile life,—one that will keep him a good deal out-of-doors," the surgeon said to us one day, after he had examined into Phil's condition. "It will never do for him to return to sedentary occupation; his nature, even aside from this injury, requires activity, and he must get all he can, poor fellow!"

No one has mentioned the subject to Phil, but Kate has written to Uncle Philip, with whom, since Phil's accident, we have kept up a lively correspondence, and we feel quite sure that in some way he will come to the rescue, for we are more than ever assured that, in spite of all past experiences, he has Phil's dearest interests at heart.

As to that other matter of which Phil was speaking, I have no doubt in my own mind where the preference lies. Kate is a widow, and widows have always had the advantage from time immemorial; besides, she is smaller than I, and a year or two younger, and then—well, he went away from here with the idea that I did not love him, and I am sure that I have given him no reason since to think that I've changed my mind. Yes, he does look at Kate, just as Phil said; haven't I noticed it from the beginning? and haven't I seen what the end would be from the very first?

It is quite evident to us all that Mr. Willard does not come alone nowadays to see Phil; he appears each time more and more reluctant to leave; but, if he feels so about it, why, for pity's sake! doesn't he tell Kate, and have the matter settled at once? I have not much longer to wait, however; there comes a time at last when the turning-points of life are reached, when Mr. Willard meets Kate in the hall, and asks her "if he can see her a few moments alone, in the parlor." Don't I understand it all now? Yes, perfectly.

I go to my own room and close the door; I walk hastily back and forth across the floor; but I will not shed a tear—no! not one; what right had I—Maria Giles, spinster—to expect that any of life's joys were yet in store for me; I am not a miss of eighteen, to be indulging in foolish dreams like this, and yet—and yet—my heart is wrung with an anguish I cannot speak.

Kate comes to my door: it is locked; she knocks, and I, waiting a moment to force back the pained expression, open it. Kate looks so happy; I think I never saw her prettier in my life.



"Oh, Maria, I am so glad!" And she throws her arms around me, while her eyes are moist with tears.

I try, but I cannot speak. I know if a single word escapes me I can no longer control myself; and not for the world would I have Kate dream of my foolish sorrow.

"Mr. Willard said, Maria, he would like to see you a little while in the parlor." And Kate kissed me.

I did not respond to the caress; I could not, and then—why should I? Kate was too happy now to need or notice the little omission on my part. I did not stop to smooth my hair; it was of no consequence just now what Mr. Willard thought of me, if, indeed, he thought anything at all.

As I was the only one left, it was quite natural, quite proper, that he should ask my consent to take away from me the only sister, the only really near relative, I had in the world. I opened the parlor door quickly; Mr. Willard was standing in the centre of the room, his hands clasped behind him, his head slightly drooped, and an expression of youthful happiness upon his face which brought back all the past with painful distinctness.

He put out both hands to greet me with a smile of cordial welcome, and as he did not speak, I felt sure that whatever I had to say must be said quickly.

"Yes, I am willing; you knew I would be," and I tried to smile; "but," and I felt my voice growing hoarse and uncertain, "I shall miss Kate so much."

I did not look at him; I did not dare; I felt that like Phil it was best to stand still and hold on to the escape-valves.

"Kate has told you, then?" with a shade of disap-

pointment in his tone; then coming closer to me and taking both my hands in his firm, gentle ones: "but, Maria, there is nothing compulsory about this; if you give yourself to me at all, let it be freely, gladly, as I——" He said more; but I do not know what it was; I only know that I heard those words, "give yourself to me," and then I saw the flowers in the carpet rise higher, higher, until I could no longer trace them, and I, Maria Giles, spinster, was shedding tears of unutterable joy in the arms of him whom I had loved,—I could not remember when I had *not* loved him.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A NEW CENTRE.

FIVE boys! I confess that even my heart grew faint at the prospect; but Phil declared it was just the thing, and that Aunt Maria had found her proper sphere at last; and he immediately proceeded to dub that individual "chief of police," "Lieutenant-General Giles," etc.

Phil, moreover, insists that all that latent energy which he was never bad enough to call forth will now have opportunity for full and emphatic expression.

Well, we had a delightful wedding; it appears to me it was an unusually delightful one, but then possibly I am prejudiced. The five boys were all present, as well as Lucy, the daughter, in whom I fancy I see a

strong mental resemblance to Clara. Phil hobbled down-stairs with the aid of his crutch, and looked as happy with Viola and baby Maud beside him as if Indiana had never been admitted into the Union. Kate flew around with a certain important air in her bearing which I knew was gotten up expressly for this occasion. Clara and the Maynards generally, and Mrs. Simpkins, were present, also George, Sophronia, and the twins, and last but not least Uncle Philip and Aunt Agnes.

As for Tracy Willard, my husband, never had I seen him when he appeared more desirable than now; fine-looking, dignified, with a certain inexpressible grace of demeanor, and a broad, open, genial countenance which bespoke the noble-hearted man. I felt, as I looked at him, that whatever of joy had been taken from me in the years that were gone, I had received the measure back again, pressed down, heaped up and running over.

Is a bride of near half a century sufficiently interesting for anybody to care to know how she looked or what she wore? For the sake of those who may possibly be equally advanced, I will say that all present declared she appeared "remarkably well," and that the rich brown silk traveling-dress which she wore was "extremely becoming." Mr. Willard himself told her so as he kissed her the last thing before they went down-stairs.

Those boys! I thought of them every hour in the day; never did general dread battle as I dreaded meeting them; even in the most impressive part of the ceremony I could think of nothing but their ten eyes

staring at me. Perhaps Tracy was wrong, perhaps right, I hardly know, but he did not want me to meet them until after we were married. "We would all understand each other a great deal better then," he said, "when I was actually his wife, than when I was only wife prospective."

But have I not been the most foolish of women? the boys—I love them every one!—came to me with such undisguised joy in their faces, such expressions of genuine welcome, that they won my heart without an effort.

"I am so glad we are going to have a real home again," said one of them. And John, the eldest, the "pattern of his sire," kissed me as he said, "You were very good to take compassion on father and us boys, to say nothing of Lucy; I am sure you could not have found a household in which you would be more welcome."

"Yes, Maria,"—it was Tracy now who spoke,—"if there is any happiness in feeling you are needed, you will have it to the full." And just at this moment I overheard Willie, a little ten-year-old fellow, say to his "big brother," "Ain't it bully, Jim? Mrs. Barber can't lord it over us any more now, anyhow?"

My eyes were moist with tears of joy, for after all one truest source of happiness, rich and satisfactory, is the being needed, the consciousness of usefulness, the knowledge that we are necessary to others; and that no one else could so well fill the place which we occupy and are destined to occupy.

Our traveling-tour was taken in a buggy. Mr. Willard drove, and I sat beside him with a great joy in my heart which I did not even care to suppress.

Years and years ago we had had many a pleasant ride in this way together, and it seemed to us now vastly more romantic, more like renewing our days of youth, to be so situated that we could be as injudiciously careless as we chose concerning epithets of endearment, which might have seemed out of place to a car full of strangers. Besides, we really wanted to get better acquainted and talk over our future, now that I had seen the boys, and a ride in this fashion would give us such a grand opportunity. So we went up into Connecticut to visit Mr. Willard's old—dear me! how soon one does forget—I mean two maiden sisters.

On the whole, I think—yes, I am quite sure we had a very enjoyable visit, but I am glad to the tips of my fingers that I am no longer Maria Giles, spinster.

I think I must have expressed something of that sort to Tracy, as we went out one evening for a stroll after tea, for he took my hand, the one that was placed within his arm, and looking at me with that amused expression which so often rested upon his countenance, said, "Now, Maria, confess, honor bright, as the boys say, didn't you always want to be married?"

"Well, Tracy, as you are my husband, and there is no especial virtue in keeping any secrets from you, I confess,—yes, I always did."

He pinched my arm (it's a miserable habit he's got into), and laughed heartily. "I thought as much, but I'm sure I don't regard you any the less highly for all that."

"And pray why should you?" I asked. "I never yet saw the man who felt at all ashamed to acknowledge that *he* wanted to be married, and further, that he

*intended* to be. I suppose that God gives to every woman, if she is a true woman at all, the same love of home, of fireside joys,—the same instinctive longing for affection and sympathy,—that He gives to every man."

Tracy did not answer,—he did not even look at me, but I was intent upon my subject. "Men berate us so," I went on, "if they detect in us the least yearning for domestic joys, as if this feeling were not the most womanly of our natures; and, besides," I said, laughing, "was ever a woman yet married that a man wasn't married at the same time? and more than all, *he* asked *her*,—not *she* him."

"Bless me! what a high-strung woman it is," and Mr. Willard stepped back and surveyed me from head to foot; "but it's too late now," he added, with mock despair; "I shall have to get along the best way I can."

"Yes, sir," I retorted; "and Phil says it shows bad blood for a man not to stand by his own bargain."

At this, Tracy—but I forget that we are respectable, middle-aged people, and that probably our love-making is not as interesting to others as it is to ourselves.

We were so glad to get home! The house was filled with flowers sent in by our parishioners; each burner in the chandeliers was lighted as if the occasion were one requiring illumination. Lucy and the boys were looking their happiest, and "Welcome Home!" was written in letters of evergreen over the arched doorway; this last, I knew, by the sparkle in their eyes when we came to notice it, was the work of Willie and James, the two youngest boys. If I had not known it before, I felt assured now with a conviction which lasted for all time

to come, that whatever "father" might do was right; and that these children would never call in question his judgment upon any matter, whether it coincided with or was opposed to their preferences.

I had heard my husband preach; I had seen him move his audiences with a power that but few possess; and yet, never had I been so proud of him as this night with his boys around him, when I saw from oldest to youngest the looks of undisguised love and admiration which they bestowed upon him; and never, indeed, had I been so truly happy as when I realized that henceforth I was to be one important centre in this loving household.

Later in the evening, Kate and Viola called. "Phil stayed home," they said, "to take care of baby Maud;" but we all knew it was because he could not ride so far. They had good news to tell me as to Phil's future. Uncle Philip was going to take him into partnership, and as soon as Phil was strong enough he should place the entire business in his hands.

"But how does Phil himself feel as to this change in his future?" I asked.

Kate smiled. "You know he has always been ready for change of any sort," she answered; "and now he confesses that ever since he was with Philip he has always had a latent desire for that branch of mercantile life."

"What a boy he is, anyway!" I said.

"Phil thinks it's about time we stopped using that expression," Kate answered; "he says he shall have to go away from home for some five or ten years before we shall ever consider him grown up."

Kate was evidently only giving me about one-quarter of her attention, the remaining three-fourths were bestowed upon the group at the other end of the rooms.

"You like your boys, don't you?"

"I *love* them," I answered, and then we turned to look at them. Mr. Willard sat in an easy-chair, with Lucy on one knee and Willie, the youngest, on the other. The four older boys were dividing their attentions between father and Viola.

"Where's Barber?" asked one of them.

"Oh, she's down-stairs!" answered Fred, "getting up an extra breakfast for the new——" He stopped suddenly, and they all looked over where Kate and I were sitting; then, as they saw we had heard, the unfinished remark was answered with a merry burst of laughter.

"Come, Fred!" said Tracy, as he joined in the laugh, "the new what? I want to hear the rest of the sentence."

But Fred was one of the bashful boys, and having everybody's attention turned toward him suddenly so completely discomfited him that there was nothing to be done only to consider himself suddenly called outside the door.

I knew that Tracy was really anxious to have him finish the sentence; I knew he wanted to hear if the noun following would be "mother." He had never spoken to the children about this. "It was one of those things which would best settle themselves," he said, when we were talking about it; "and the expression, when it did come, would be a more genuine one, if left to a natural impulse." Perhaps he was right; I am not going to dispute the point here, during the first evening in my new home.

"Your nephew has a very charming wife," said John, as soon as Kate and Viola had left the house.

"How do you know she is charming, my boy?" Mr. Willard asked, with a smile.

John, who is destined to be like his father in the years to come, but who is, at present, a rather over-dignified young man, answered, with a slight blush, "She is certainly very beautiful, as well as exceedingly stylish."

"Maria!" and Mr. Willard picked up a hand which was lying in my lap; "I'm afraid, according to John's standard, I can't consider you charming."

Both John and myself were somewhat embarrassed, though I tried to smile and look as if I didn't care.

"It's a dangerous thing, my boy, to judge a woman by her beauty," Mr. Willard added, with some seriousness; "you might as well estimate the soundness of a banking-house by the marble front which it displays."

"Come, Tracy!" I said, "you are only puzzling John into wondering what has called forth these remarks. To tell the truth," I went on, by way of explanation, "your father and I have had several amiable disputes as to the qualities which a man generally admires in a woman. I insist that beauty and a fine appearance are all that is necessary, and that a man has no one to blame but himself if, after he is married, he finds he has got no more than just what he asked, thought of, and bargained for." John looked interested.

"You haven't stated my side of the question," said Mr. Willard.

"No, I will let John infer it; besides," I added, "you admitted to me this very day that you were coming round to my opinion."

"State all your cases freely, now," Mr. Willard said, laughing, "for ten years hence I may not be so pliable."

Before the first twenty-four hours had passed, I felt myself as much at home in this house as if I had lived here always. Mrs. Barber delivered up the keys to me, I thought, with remarkable grace, but I understood it all when she said, "You have come just in time, ma'am, for my daughter was married a couple months ago, and she's been wantin' her mother to come and live with her ever since."

At the end of a month I had made up my mind that, somehow, John and Clara must be made acquainted. Now, I do not believe in interfering with Providence or anything of the sort, but I do believe in giving young people an *opportunity*; if they fall in love with each other, and the love springs, as it ought, from a mutual knowledge and admiration of each other's qualities, I believe the good Father will as truly smile upon such love to-day as he did in the beginning. One thing is very certain: God did not create Eve and then establish her outside the garden where Adam could not get a glimpse of her until after he had manifested an interest in some one of her near relations; no! she was placed just where her future spouse could not help meeting, getting acquainted with, and loving her.

Clara was not a girl who would be apt to impress the ordinary young man; one who was older,—one who, as Phil said, "had made a wreck of himself," would recognize in her his good angel; and many just such girls marry "wrecks" of men because those who are younger and worthier have yet to learn their value through personal experience. John was different from

Phil,—not nearly so pleasing to a woman, I could not but acknowledge. Phil had always been, except for a few months, so frank, so impulsive, so open-hearted and affectionate, that I wondered many a time all the girls he knew did not fall in love with him. John is somewhat reserved and over-dignified, but I know he has twice Phil's strength of character, and that he possesses one quality which, in man, is imperial,—the quality of *dependableness*. And so, thinking it quite proper young people should meet accidentally, and knowing that the planets themselves might forever have remained in ignorance of the sun's power of gravitation if they had not chanced within its influence, I invite Clara over to spend a week with Lucy and me. I want her, too, to teach Lucy various little feminine affairs which she has never had an opportunity to learn, and which instruction, I am artful enough to know, she will receive with pleasure from one so nearly her own age.

The first evening at dinner John cast various sly glances at Clara, and was extremely attentive as to her needs, but I was disappointed half an hour after when he took up his hat, saying he had an engagement for the evening. Next day I drew him aside after breakfast, and asked if he would not do me a personal favor by taking the girls out to some place of entertainment that evening.

"Yes," he said, hesitatingly, "to oblige you I will; but then you know I can't talk small talk, I don't understand how."

"Suppose you try large talk, then, John," I suggested; "to tell the truth, I don't think Clara under-

stands 'small talk' any better than you do. Just try to-night the probable inclination of the earth's axis, or any other equally weighty subject; I think very likely you will find Clara well enough posted to converse upon the matter intelligently."

"Now you are making sport of me," John replied, with a rather dignified smile.

"Not at all," I answered, "only I did feel a little surprised that a sensible young fellow like you should have that foolish popular notion in his head, that a woman should never be talked to except upon the pettiest of subjects. If you have any inclination to express a great thought or a grand idea this evening, I am quite sure my little friend will understand and appreciate it. Try it, John; there's never any harm in trying, you know."

I laid my hand upon his arm as I spoke; he drew it within his own, and we went into the study together. My husband says he is growing jealous of his eldest son, and I am only too happy to have him say so; for I know the occasion of this make-believe passion is a matter of especial joy and gratification to himself.

"Young ladies," said John, with his usual dignity, "I should be most happy to accompany you this evening either to Parepa's concert, or to hear the last of Agassiz's course,—which shall it be?"

Clara's eyes glistened with pleasure, but, sweet, thoughtful girl! she would not express her own preference until she had given Lucy an opportunity to manifest hers.

"No, Miss Maynard," said John, seeing the look of joy, and then its evident repression, "as you are our



guest I insist upon your making the decision; Lucy I know," he added, with brotherly superiority, "will be quite satisfied to do whichever you may desire." Lucy of course assented.

"Oh, then," said Clara, eagerly, "let it be Agassiz if you please; I have heard all the other lectures of the course, and should be sorry to lose this one; besides," she added, "I am very much interested in this subject of the coral formations, for father and I studied it together a good deal last winter."

John looked rather discomfited; then seeing me smile, he began to twirl his hat, and, remarking that "they must leave the house quite early," he bade them "good-morning."

"John," I said, following him to the door, "I can't resist the inclination to say 'I told you so;' be reticent and dignified, or you will betray your ignorance."

"That's just what I'm afraid of," he replied, laughing; "why,—oh, why, didn't I say Parepa and Parepa only? Now, Mrs. Willard," looking at me reproachfully, "I know you will be happier all day for this victory, but don't you dare reveal it."

"Not for the world," I said; "only I advise you to go to the library and study up the subject."

"Most excellent of women; I believe I will follow your advice." And we parted laughing.

I knew all along that John only needed some woman older than himself, and some one who had the right to talk to him familiarly, playfully, to get him down from his stilts, and I could see that the plan was working with admirable success.

After they were gone in the evening and the boys

were fairly at their lessons, I went into my husband's study for a little chat with him.

He is so occupied with his church and his work, that I look forward now to the promise of a visit quite as eagerly as in the days of our short courtship. Tonight he looks up and smiles as I enter the room, but asks me to "wait a few moments, please," and I employ the time in glancing over the library.

Now, although we have been married several months, I have never taken advantage of my wifely prerogative to find fault with my husband's methods, and to-day it occurred to me I might as well begin.

"One would think, Tracy," I said, when he had signified to me he was at leisure, "that you were a scientist instead of a theologian, by the array of books which you have here in your library; really," I said, glancing back, "here are works upon the 'Science of Music,' upon the 'Ethnology of the Human Race,' upon the 'Latest Discoveries in Electricity,' upon——"

"Yes, Maria, I know them all," he interrupted; "but what is the difficulty?"

"Why, I can't see what possible use you, as a minister, can have for such things; I never supposed a clergyman required anything but the Bible and a few theological text-books and commentaries."

He threw his head back and laughed, that peculiarly genial laugh which drew everybody toward him. It drew me to him now.

"Why, Maria," he said presently, as he took my hand in his, "do you think a minister should be less of a man than everybody else? If I were to educate myself in one direction only, I am afraid I might shoot

up like Jack's bean-pole, and perhaps be lost to sight. My idea of a man is a broad man; not a thin, spiral one, even if his head does touch the clouds. I never count the time wasted that I am spending upon scientific studies, for I am constantly enlarging my fund of illustration, and making truth familiar and practical.

"No two men have exactly the same standard for anything, and all men judge all topics by their relative bearing upon those things with which they are acquainted. I can render the truth more forcible to a musician by a musical illustration; more inviting to a lover of nature by picturing some scene in which he cannot fail to be interested; more convincing to a mathematician by making use of laws and principles with which he is familiar. I am bidden to be all things to all men, and it is my constant endeavor to fulfill that command. Lately," he added, "I have been studying up a subject I never expected to interest myself in especially."

"What?" I asked.

"Why, the divorce question."

I did not start, notwithstanding our marital relations, for I knew why this subject had received an impetus in his mind.

"And what are your conclusions?" I questioned.

"I am still investigating," he answered, "though I am more and more convinced, even after consulting Milton and various other expounders of the subject, that for reasons of state, entirely aside from every religious consideration, laxity on this point would be not only disastrous, but positively ruinous."

Neither of us spoke for an instant; I was thinking

of Phil and Viola and of their present happy condition.

"But there is a remedy for the evil of unhappy marriages," he went on, "though I do not think it lies in a judicial power; it exists rather in a general infusion of common sense and right principle among young people who have yet to choose for life; and I don't know but beneath all," he added, "I would place at the root discipline; an undisciplined man and woman will make an undisciplined husband and wife; if no restraining influence is exerted in youth, it is gross folly to expect it in manhood. If a boy has had his own way for twenty-one years, he is surely not going to begin then to yield even a fractional part of it to another. You need not be surprised next Sunday," he added, laughing, "to hear a sermon upon family government."

"Oh, I have heard them all my life," I answered, "but the practical part is always left out."

"You shall not have that to complain of this time, at all events," he responded. And then I dropped my head upon my husband's shoulder, and our topics of conversation changed.

In spite of rapidly advancing age, life never seemed fairer than now, nor its promise sweeter. I forget that I am no longer young, for in my heart I have stepped back over many a year, and taken up those glad, joyful days which they tell us, but which I no more believe, can never come but once.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## A HAPPY WORLD.

How fast the years go by! If you doubt my veracity upon this point, just take charge of a family of boys between the ages of ten and twenty-five, and you will never after dispute the question. Willie has entered his teens, and consequently, by his own unaided effort, has pushed the whole family along, father and mother included, three years in advance of where they were when we last talked with each other.

Some changes have taken place during this time, and mostly happy ones. Phil is senior partner in the firm of Frost, Willard & Co., he and John having entered, partly through Uncle Philip's generosity, into such an arrangement. Kate and Phil have moved into our neighborhood, chiefly that they may attend the church over which Tracy is pastor. Phil is so changed that one would scarcely recognize him as Phil, except for his occasional off-hand remarks. My husband's manly, Christian influence has not been without its results. Phil is a devoted member of the Pilgrim Rock Church. He says the two giants with whom he has continually to struggle are, Love of Change, and Indifference to Promises; so far, however, as we spectators can learn, he has pretty nearly conquered them.

There was one sorrow in my heart which lasted many months after our marriage, and of which these dear boys were the innocent cause; but how could they

know that above all else, above every earthly joy which they had offered me, was the one great, unsatisfied longing to have them call me "mother"? I knew they wanted to; I knew the word often trembled upon their lips, but no one dared speak it first, and so the months went by, and I began to fear one of life's sweetest blessings, and one which I had truly coveted, was to be denied me. It came at last, as many of our dearest comforts do, when we have ceased looking for them;—but I must stop to relate a little love-story.

After that week which Clara spent with us, I concluded I had done all which any outsider has a right to do; and if these two young people did not like each other, and if the acquaintance did not deepen into friendship and finally into love, it was simply because they were not affinities. At any rate, the opportunity had been given them; for the rest I trusted to time and Providence.

I observed shortly after that John, like Phil, began to develop idiosyncrasies of character; he grew absent-minded, drummed upon the window-panes (which last act I now consider symptomatic of great and peculiar mental aberration), he indulged occasionally in merry bursts of laughter, and then became reticent, as if he had vowed, "I never will speak more."

I began to wish, with the rest of the family, that this state of things might come to an end, and when John drew me out in the hall one morning after breakfast, and handed me a little note written in Clara's own hand, and then kissed me and said he was "the happiest boy in the whole world," why I knew it had; or rather that they had reached the sweet beginning of a

life of love whose ends I trusted were in God's own keeping, and so were infinite and eternal.

It was not very long before Clara came to live with us: we all wished it so; and to my little friend and myself this arrangement was a matter of special rejoicing. Clara began to call me "mother" from the first; I think very possibly I may have mentioned to her my disappointment at the boys' failing to do so; John, as a matter of course, did as his little wife directed, and the others quickly followed in his wake. But, as if my honors and my happiness were not sufficiently complete, a little "wee man" has recently taken up his abode among us, who is asked twenty times a day to reach out his lordly arms and come to "grandma." My husband smiles at me as he hears the word, and reminds me frequently that "honors are generally reserved for our maturer years."

And now it is the anniversary of our wedding. Only the third; and yet how rich and full these years have been! full of care, to be sure, as of necessity in so large a household; and yet every one has brought with it its own peculiar blessing.

And now all the relatives who are near enough for us to "gather them in" are invited to our home, or, as Phil calls it, to the "Asylum." Uncle Philip is here; indeed, since Agnes's death our house has been his home; he admired Tracy from the first, and begged in his loneliness that we would let him come to live with us. He spends his time either with Kate or myself, but our house is the one which he calls "home."

George and Sophronia too are here; they arranged their travels purposely, they say, to spend this day with

us. Sophronia reclines upon a sofa, propped up with pillows; George sits at her side rubbing his hands nervously together, and starting every now and then as if some one had called him. I can scarcely recognize in this iron-gray man of restless eye and anxious brow my younger brother George. And now I am conscious that I must go back and gather up a thread which I have never once lost sight of, only put aside, as we are apt to put away that which is painful or disagreeable, but which I am compelled at last to weave into my work even though it form a dark spot upon the canvas.

Charlie's and Bertie's names are no longer household words among us; only sometimes little May and Jessie whisper them in the evening twilight, but never in the full glare of noonday,—never to papa or mamma.

The time came at last when George felt that he must really begin to govern his boys. Charlie had committed a gross offense, one which was likely to bring disgrace upon them all, and George, angered beyond all expression, attempted to punish him; but Charlie had anticipated this and was prepared; at the first blow which he received he drew a revolver from his pocket and fired. George told me afterward that although it did not hurt him, and perhaps Charlie had not meant to do so, the thought rendered him powerless; he could only command the boy to leave the house forever; never to permit him to see his face again. And Charlie left without stopping for even one final farewell word with his mother, and has never been heard from since.

Bertie remained at home about a year longer, doing all in his power to make the little girls unhappy, and

rendering them so afraid of him that they ran in terror whenever he entered the house. Finally declaring "there was no one at home now he cared about since Charlie was gone," and in spite of expostulation and prayerful entreaty from his mother, he entered the navy as a common seaman, and left port at once for a cruise of three years.

Sophronia was very ill; and some of us felt that we hardly wished to call her back to a life so full of anguish and disappointment. When she was sufficiently recovered the physicians recommended a complete change, not only for her, but for George, and it was decided they should travel a year at least.

The twins, who had inherited their mother's nervous organization, and who had been fretful, irritable little children, had never attached their parents to them as Charlie and Bertie had done in their younger days. With Clara's assistance I agreed to take charge of them as long as they were without a home.

The little girls are changing rapidly under Clara's gentle government; we are trying to teach them both, above all else, a self-control without which no one can safely enter manhood or womanhood.

It will not be long, I know, before their loving ministry will call back father and mother to a home again; but not yet, not till they have learned more fully the lesson of self-discipline, do we wish to have them go from under our roof.

Whatever George and Sophronia are thinking of,—whatever sad thoughts are recalled by them,—little May and Jessie are radiantly happy; for are not papa and mamma here, and all the boys, and baby Maud, and

baby Maud's tiny sister Kate, and everybody else they know and love? and, besides, have not Uncle Tracy's "people" sent in flowers and fruit enough to make any number of good little boys and girls happy for days to come?

My heart gives a decided twinge of remorse as, I think how little I have said of our good people, and all they have done, not only to relieve life of its heavier burdens, but to render it beautiful and satisfactory. But the subject is a large one; I cannot even pretend to approach it.

Philip and his namesake Phil are discussing in a corner the latter's recent lawsuit with the railroad company, which has just resulted in the addition of a snug little appendix to Phil's fortune. We all knew the whole thing would have been lost, notwithstanding the counsel, if—but James has come in with the evening papers, and calls us to order, as he has something very important to read.

"It's only the tail-end of an editorial," he says, "and if you'll all keep still a minute, I'll read it. Mother, won't you take the baby? John always makes him cry." Whereupon in boy fashion, just as Phil would have done fifteen years ago, he begins: "We wish to tender to Mr. Philip Frost our hearty congratulations at the result of the lawsuit so long pending; it is quite needless to remark, for those who were in court yesterday, that but for the able and brilliant speech made by the claimant himself, his suit would in all probability have been lost. There could, however, have been no stronger argument offered in virtue of the claim than the simple fact that but for this accident

the bar would not now be deprived of one of its most promising lights." James swung the paper round with a cheer, then jumped off the ottoman as the signal that he had finished.

Of course there was a joyous shout, and each one of the gentlemen shook hands with Phil, while each of the ladies kissed him, and the children seeing there was a general commotion, of which Phil was the centre, climbed upon his knees and shoulders regardless of place or position.

Kate, it seems to me, as she takes her place now by Phil's side, looks fairer and happier than ever; she has begun to wear little dainty caps which Viola makes, and which, somehow, add greatly to her appearance. I always wonder, as I look at her, why Tracy did not propose to *her*? but like many another of life's problems with which I have puzzled myself before this, I never expect to have it satisfactorily answered.

Viola, too, has taken her place at Phil's side; they are really fond of each other nowadays; for each has learned, at last, that love is something more than the mere reiteration of loving words.

I am quite sure that Viola will never be a remarkable woman; that she will never attain great heights either in mental or moral elevation. One cannot begin to climb the Alps at noonday, and expect to reach the same point with him who commenced at sunrise; and with Viola there were too many habits of mind to be overcome, too much to be rooted out, ever to be able to gather in very largely. There is a deeper, truer life to most of us than that which we carry upon the surface; Viola's depth is shallow, still, it is better than

mere surface. I am quite sure, sometimes, as I think of them, that she does not meet all the requirements of Phil's nature; that there must be times when he would be glad if her brain were a little better stored, if her heart had a larger grasp than its own daily rounds, if she could enjoy with him the books he loves; for after all Viola has not ceased to be Viola still; but she is faithful, devoted, and then—there are the children; and if they have no other interest in common they can always talk of them; besides, each is so busy now,—Phil in the outside world, Viola with the babies and a constant increasing demand for crochet-work and embroidery, that they have very little time to be together. Phil is devotedly attached to his little girls, and with one on either knee, as we are almost sure to find him of an evening, he looks the happiest man in the universe.

Mrs. Simpkins is living with her daughter, but she cannot last much longer, for she is every day growing weaker and more feeble. Lucy is to leave us before long to become Mrs. Maynard, as she marries a brother of Clara's.

My heart fills with love and pride as I speak of Clara, for next to my husband I feel that she is the joy of our household. The boys will do and dare anything for her; the little girls look up to her day by day with an ever-increasing confidence; and her husband, John, loves her with a devotion and appreciation which I have never seen equaled in so young a man. Many women are more beautiful than Clara; many are arrayed in more brilliant costume, but to John, no princess in her purple possesses one-half the attrac-



tions of his own lovely wife. And by-and-by, not many years hence, when the home sceptre shall depart out of our hands, Tracy's and mine, we feel that they who take it up will be better able than we have been to wield it with loving judiciousness.

And thinking of Clara, I am more than ever convinced that woman's noblest work is to be man's incitement toward all that is pure and elevated and virtuous. To man as husband, to man as child, she should be, next to God, the deepest, truest inspiration of his nature; failing in which, as wife and mother, she has missed the sceptre and the crown. /

It is only the beginning of another week, and all—the babies excepted—whom we last met are gathered in the Sabbath-school of the Pilgrim Rock Church. Mr. Willard has stepped in to make a few remarks to the school; George and Sophronia are here as visitors; Kate, Clara, and myself have each classes of our own. John is instructing a large Bible-class of married people, and the others are variously dispersed about the room. Phil is superintendent of the school.

Again and again I look at him as he stands behind the desk, and can scarcely believe the report of my visual organs, as, calm and dignified, he is talking to a set of boys, of whom nine out of ten look as if they might be Phil himself as he was twenty years ago. It is to be hoped they will not all pass through the same crucible,—but who can tell?

Phil is rising upon all sides in position and importance; he begins to grow stout and to wear an air of dignified repose. He is still somewhat crippled, which

necessitates his carrying a substantial gold-headed cane.

There is something in the way in which Phil speaks to-day which touches Kate and myself to the heart; we are reminded of his childish years when we so often wondered what the end would be.

"Kate," I whispered after school was over, "I have come to the conclusion that boys are a splendid investment."

George and Philip, who had joined us, overheard the remark. George shook his head and looked mournfully away.

"You are right," said Philip; "I never felt so thoroughly convinced of it as now; but it's capital that requires a great deal of looking after," while I had my answer in Kate's eyes, which were filled with tears of pride and happiness.

I do not bid adieu to Phil in the Sunday-school because I consider that as the one laudable and desirable aim of existence, but because the Sabbath-school is pre-eminently an American institution, and nearly every active Christian in the country is more or less engaged in it.

But to those who do not favor the idea, and who are ignorant of the pleasures which lie in the direction of earnest effort for others, I will inform them that Phil may be seen almost any afternoon in the park, seated in a comfortable family carriage generally made to accommodate one more than the law allows (for Phil's carriage does service for the "Asylum" as well as for his own more quiet home), while its owner drives a

pair of handsome bays, of whose speed and "mettle" he is evidently very proud. As a rule one of our boys is at his side, for Phil is conscious of his physical infirmities, and knows that he will never again be able to spring with the quick elasticity which was his scarcely more than a few brief months ago;—but why refer to this again? A new record, cleaner, fairer, is rapidly inscribing itself upon the page of his chastened nature.

And can we desire more for Phil or for ourselves than that out of all our disappointments, out of all our failures and defeats, out of our humiliation, out of our own sinful, fallen natures, and our need of One stronger, greater than ourselves, we are learning slowly to become like little children? Then, at last, weakness is strength; and we are unconsciously taking rank with those of whom it is written—"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

THE END.

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