

at the very threshold of accomplishment.

"My father had a cousin, also a farmer, whose land joined ours. The two had been always like brothers, and his daughter Amy had been the only sister I ever knew. She was a little younger than myself, rather small for her years, but well advanced in her studies and with the promise of beauty in her face.

"When I returned from college, I was astonished to see that in my brief absence she had become a woman, and the promise of beauty was fulfilled. I felt a little shy toward her and she was no longer my little sister. Still, I went to see her quite as frequently as before, and summer evenings, when we sat out on the long porch, I held her hand while I told her of my dreams and ambitions, and how they must all come to nothing because of lack of means. It never occurred to me that she, too, had plans and dreams. Like all young fellows, I was selfish and thought that those around me must be interested only in my welfare.

"Still I was very glad when one evening she told me that she had obtained the district school for the winter, and her voice that night was so soft, and she seemed so happy, that I kissed her for the first time since my return, and on the way home I felt that I was really very much in love with my sweet cousin.

"Not long after this my father one day surprised me with the information that he could give me another year at college, and a week or two later I bade them all good bye—kissing my pretty cousin a little carelessly, perhaps, for I was so full of the delight of going that I forgot how much I was in love.

"Well, I worked hard at college, and had little time to think of those at home. However, I wrote twice to Amy, who answered and said she liked teaching and hoped I was getting along well with my work.

"When I came home the next summer, I thought it was for good, but my father advised me to begin reading law during my vacation, saying that he thought I might be able to finish my education and take a law course afterward, as had always been my desire.

"That summer it seemed to me that my cousin was more shy and more beautiful than ever. I didn't have very much time for love-making, but I resolved that some day, when I had got a start in my profession, I would tell her of my love and take her away from the little farm-house to keep her near me always. She had given great satisfaction as a teacher and was to have the school again.

"My last year at college was the busiest of all, for I was now reading law during every spare moment, in order to be ready for the course the following summer. I graduated at the close of the term, but



SAINT CECILIA'S DREAM.—AZAMBRE

did not go home, for the law class was to begin at once and money was too scarce for me to make any unnecessary journey.

"Amy wrote me a letter of congratulation, which she enclosed with one from my father, for there was nothing in it that a sister might not have written. I replied to it in a brotherly way—not sorry that we could be as brother and sister—for of course it would be a long time before I could think of a wife, and besides, after all, my cousin was only a little country girl.

"That fall I took my degree, and returned home for a week or two, preparatory to beginning the battle with fortune in the great city.

"I was twenty-one and full of hope. My education and my profession were completed. The world lay before me.

"I saw my cousin Amy nearly every day, but it seemed to me that she was less beautiful than formerly. She appeared paler and thinner, I thought; so I assumed a patronizing air, and told her that she was too fond of money and working too hard, for she was teaching now at the academy and studying French and Latin evenings at home. But she only laughed and when I went away, she cried a little as she let me kiss her, and then I thought how good and pure she was, and could hardly keep back my own tears. But I was not as much in love as I had been at twenty. She was not as attractive, and, besides, my head was full of the future and the prospect of city life.

"Well, I left them and came to Chicago, a stranger in a strange city. For three years I had a hard fight, and no thought of a wife entered my head. I was very poor, and twice my father sent me money to keep away the wolf.

"By and by, I began to climb the ladder and felt that success was coming at last. Then sometimes I thought of Amy, and wondered if she had fitted herself to be the wife of a man who, as people said, was going to make his mark. I had heard from her only through my parents, who had written to me regularly, but I knew that she was still teaching and unmarried.

"I determined now to pay a visit to my old home and come to a final decision as to my future. That night I received a telegram from my father. My cousin Amy was dead.

"My father met me at the station, and as we drove home, he told me what he could no longer conceal. It was with the money earned by my cousin that he had paid for my last two years at college. It was her earnings that had paid for my law course and that had been sent to keep me from want in the great city.

"Then, as I bowed my head in shame and anguish, he told me how for two years past she had been growing thinner and paler, they thought from over-study, and how a sudden attack had finished the work of destruction almost before they thought of danger.

"That day, as I stood by the coffin and looked at the quiet face, from which every vestige of beauty had been striped for my sake, I said, 'For your sake, sweet cousin, I will live and die alone.'

"This was the story that Howard Taylor told me as we sat looking out over the water waiting for the boat to take us home. And sometimes, since, as I have thought of that big-headed man going through life alone, I have wondered, if Amy knows.