

CHAPTER XLI

THE lamp was almost out. He woke from his tense reveries and turned towards the door. The heavy log was braced against it: he moved it carefully so as to make least noise. He felt the bar of iron, freeing one end a while, to make sure it would not hinder at the last. What there was to do must be done swiftly, adroitly — there must be no impediment.

He began rehearsing mentally; anticipating every act and movement of what was soon to be the closing drama of his life. He must not fail nor falter. He would lower the bar, cautiously, silently. He would hold the phial with one hand, the door-knob with the other. Then he must move rapidly. He would drink the poison to the last drop—enough to kill a whale—then quickly open the door.

And then again?

He dared not think on that. But now the Tadpole-Man did the most extraordinary thing of his whole life. He took down the little shoes, one in each hand, and gently, reverently, kissed them! Then, just as gently, just as reverently, slowly and deliberately, Guido placed them back upon the shelf above — the little shelf that come to be the Altar of his Love.

"Celeste," he whispered, "I make amends — I will requite!"