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Better a Peasant Than a Peer.

CHAPTER III.
 But Mrs. Brown, warned by the absent look on her lodger's face that he is not listening, stops short, removes an imaginary speck of dust from the sideboard, and makes good her exit, fully convinced that her mysterious lodger is a struggling artist, who has come to Newton Regis in search of pupils.

Left to himself, the mysterious individual draws his chair nearer to the fire, and relights his pipe, totally neglecting the roasting muffins which Mrs. Brown has provided, and, staring at the glowing coals, smokes for some time moodily; then he gets up, and, dragging a portfolio from a corner, sits it, and slowly turns over a number of sketches. Presently he comes to a rough, but masterly sketch of a woman's head. This he takes out, and, propping it on the table, looks fixedly at it, his hands thrust into his pockets.

It is worth looking at, for it is the portrait of a woman of rare beauty—face almost perfectly oval, with the sweep of eyes, and the most golden of hair.

He looks at it long and fixedly; then he takes it up and slowly tears it across, and tosses it into the fire.

"So vanishes," he mutters, watching the fierce flames as they swallow up the paper. "The dream and the hope of a life. Let those prate of woman's love and woman's nobleness who may, my faith in them is as these ashes—vanished. Whatever folly may beguile and deceive me, that baneful will-o'-the-wisp, woman's love, is powerless henceforth to lead me astray. From this hour I stand impregnable and invulnerable—I have done with you!"

And with a grim intensity he thrusts the ashes of the exquisite portrait into the depths of the consuming fire.

CHAPTER IV.
 A GOOD SAMARITAN.

When Jeanne wakes next morning, King Frost rules supreme over Newton Regis; the casement windows are covered with a delicate filigree of ice, the roads are like iron, and the old chestnut tree, whose leaves brush her windows in summer time, is covered with white. The moment she is dressed, Jeanne drags a bonnet-box from the wardrobe, and disentombs her skates, and view them with a vague "thankfulness." For Jeanne speaks the simple truth when she hints at the anger which attended small articles at the Gate House. Mrs. Dostrell was an excellent woman, a genius at cookery, and amiable to a fault; but, like most geniuses when pushed, she was fertile in resources, and the most incongruous articles were made to do duty in sudden shifts.

So it continually came to pass that the dinner napkins were used as dust-covers, the hall chairs for impromptu ladders, portions of the best tea services for jam-pots, and Hal's skates had served to prop up the beer barrel. And if such unconsidered trifles escaped Aunt Dostrell, there was Uncle Dostrell to seize upon them as materials for his countless experiments.

Even now, as Jeanne runs down the stairs, there is a strong smell of fusing acids, mingling with the odor of the bacon and sausages, and Uncle Dostrell himself emerges from his laboratory with pieces of cotton-wool tangled in his buttons, and a shining mass of steel filings in his gray hair.

Uncle Dostrell's experiments never got any further than experiments, never produce anything more useful than a sulphurous smoke, and, unfortunately, are attended, like most chemical experiments, by atrocious smells.

"Well, Jeanne, my dear!" he says, smiling through his dazed, preoccupied eyes. "Got your skates ready?—freezing, I suppose. Strange arrangement of straps. I've often wondered why they couldn't invent something simpler; if you'll let me have them after breakfast, I'll see if I can't fix a spring instead—"

But Jeanne, made wary by experi-

ture: the thorn is gone, but the pain is left behind, and, with a wall, he falls back, and, holding up the leg, regards it dolefully.

"Why, you can't walk!" says Jeanne; "your poor foot's so swollen, isn't it? Well, never mind; I must carry you. Where do you live? Why, you are one of the Park dogs."

Master Terrier does not deny it, and whines for Jeanne to take him up, which she is about to do, when a man's voice, directly behind her, says:

"What is the matter?"

Jeanne starts—not so much at the unexpected sound of a human voice, but because she recognizes it, and turns her head.

Behind her, on the path, stands her victim of the preceding evening, his six feet looking gigantic on the path above, his dark eyes regarding her with grave amusement.

Either he does not recognize her or does not choose to exhibit such recognition, and Jeanne, with a wild hope of getting rid of him, says, quietly:

"Nothing, thank you; at least, it's a thorn in his foot."

"Mind how you handle him, then," says the quiet voice. "Dogs in pain bite sometimes."

"No, they don't—never, scarcely," retorts Jeanne, with quiet indignation. "I'm not afraid of him."

"All right," he says, coolly. "But hadn't you better let me take the thorn out?"

"I've taken it out," replied Jeanne, "but he can't walk."

"Let him try," says the stranger.

"He has, and he can't," says Jeanne, decisively. "His foot is quite swollen, poor fellow!"

The stranger jumps into the ditch, and bends down.

"It is swollen," he says. "Didn't you discover it at once?"

"No," says Jeanne. "It isn't my dog; I found him here; he was crying. I am going to carry him home."

The stranger looks at her skates and her muff, both lying on the path, and with great alacrity, says:

"Allow me to do so; you are already loaded, and he is no light weight for you."

"I can manage it," says Jeanne.

And she picks up the terrier and reaches for her skates; but when she has secured them, there is the muff, and by the time she has got that, one skate has fallen, the dog howls, and the stranger nods, as if he knew how it would be.

"I did not like to contradict you," he says, "but you see you can't carry him. Allow me."

Jeanne hesitates for a moment; then, with evident reluctance, motions to the skates.

"The dog's the heaviest," he remarks, quietly.

"I'll carry him," says Jeanne.

He bows, takes up the skates, and gives her his hand up the ditch.

(To be continued.)

Dostrell, and Uncle John is all anxiety to get back to his crucibles. Half-an-hour afterwards Jeanne is stepping briskly down the streets, her lithe figure clad in its serviceable blue serge, one streak of crimson across the skirt, her brown-gold hair rippling in its tight coils under her close little sealskin hat, her beautiful face bright and frank, her heart beating blithely under the influence of the crisp, frosty air.

Jeanne can walk blithely, and look frankly, for, as yet, she is in "maiden meditation fancy free." With Jeanne all is real as yet; she has not yet passed beyond the portals of the great temple of love. Love is to Jeanne as an unmeaning symbol of some deep mystery, of the very nature of which she is entirely ignorant. The library at the Gate House is small, and is absolutely deficient in works of imagination. Jeanne knows the few readable books by heart, but, although they have taught her something of the history of England, its language, and not a little of chemistry, they have taught her nothing of the divine passion, the absorbing element of a woman's life.

Jeanne and love have not, as yet, met, and the heart that beats so healthily and regularly within her bosom is that of a child, strong and fearless, true and noble, but a child's still. The greatest joy that Jeanne has yet experienced is a fair wind in the sails of the Nancy Bell, the blue sky above her, and the rushing water beneath the keel.

Jeanne is perfectly free from vanity. That she is beautiful no one has as yet told her, not even Mr. Bell, who worships her, but who would as soon dare to beard his bishop as to breathe a hint of his adoration to the frank, and sometimes pitilessly candid Jeanne. Poor Bell can only tremble in her presence, and lavish nervous, admiring and tender glances through his spectacles.

Newton Regis, generally, has not awakened to the fact that the girl who came among them a little, wee thing, is rapidly growing into a beautiful woman, and now, as she passes down the street, all who meet or see her give her a smiling greeting, some pausing on their way to look at her supple figure as it moves gracefully down the lane.

There is one ironmonger in Marly, who unearths from his extremely varied stock a pair of skates, which, luckily, are Hal's size, and with those on her arm and sundry other small purchases in her pocket, Jeanne turns toward home. There are not many young ladies who would venture a six miles' walk to join a skating party; but Jeanne's pedestrian powers are considerable, and Marly is half-way behind her when, just at the entrance to the wood through which runs the direct cut to Regis, she is brought to a halt by the low whine of a dog.

Between Jeanne and the animal creation is a sympathy vast and deep. That she has not a dog of her own is owing to the fact that no animal's life is worth a day's purchase at the Gate House, in consequence of the multifarious poisons, liquid and solid, which Uncle John leaves about the house and yard. Jeanne stops short and turns to the hedge instantly, and, guided by a long series of whines and suppressed howls, finds a small dog of the Manchester terrier breed lying in the frosty ditch by the wayside. At sight of Jeanne's pitying face, he, as is usual with his kind, falls over on his back, sticks his legs in the air and slyly wags his tail.

"Poor doggy!" says Jeanne, "what's the matter?"

The terrier weepingly explains in his own language, and Jeanne, who possibly understands him, quickly discovers that he has a thorn in his foot. Now a thorn in the foot is the one thing that utterly crushes a dog. No amount of licking will get rid of it, and, indeed, only makes matters worse. I think it was a thorn which Androcles extracted from the lion's foot. Like Androcles, Jeanne knows not fear. She goes down on her knees, tears off her gloves, and, deftly removes the cause of trouble. Master terrier watches the operation with intense anxiety and interest, and, on its conclusion, jumps in fact, but his bark is too prema-

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(To be continued.)

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