

So things went on, until at last Pietro Farroll seemed to be arousing out of his moroseness and growing to be quite lively and different from what Celeste had ever seen him, and this pleased her, and she set herself in her quiet way about the task of discovering the cause of this change.

One morning when Julia Redux came in, sweeping the studio floor with her long dress in her stately way, Celeste could not help but see that she had something to do with it; for Pietro's dark face lighted up, every wrinkle was smoothed out of it, and his black eyes looked brighter and brighter than she had seen them for a long time.

This woman was tall and pale and beautiful.

This Celeste saw at the first glance, and she saw as readily that there was something she did not like—something repellent about the very beauty that attracted her gaze.

As Julia Redux's cold grey eyes stared unwaveringly into her face, Celeste dropped her gaze to the floor.

There was something in that calm, chilling glance that told her they two could never be friends; and gentle and unsuspecting as she was, she felt that whatever was the strange influence of this woman over her husband, it could not, from the very nature of things, be a good influence.

Celeste had often heard Pietro speak of Julia Redux in term of commendation, and knew that, like many others whom she had never seen, she had frequently visited his studio.

With one hasty glance at Celeste, Julia Redux swept past her and laid her white hand for a moment in that of the artist.

Womanlike, Celeste felt instinctively that with that glance she was contrasting her diminutive, childish appearance with her own stately, haughty beauty.

"Good morning, Mr. Farroll," she said, looking him straight in the eyes with a gaze that riveted his own.

Celeste could not but note the sudden fire that shone from his dark eyes as he warmly returned her salutation.

"Come here, Celeste," he said, after a moment or two, during which the visitor had talked rapidly about the weather, his pictures and a dozen other things. "This is my wife, Miss Redux."

Celeste bowed and reached forth her hand, which Miss Redux just took in her cold fingers, saying with another repellent, depreciatory glance darting serpent-like out of her steely eyes—

"So this is Mrs. Farroll? I am very glad to see her."

These words were accompanied by an unpleasant smile, which seemed to be formed to her thin, straight-cut mouth by a vigorous exertion of the woman's strong will; and something told Celeste that she lied.

Recalling her old sweet smile with an effort, Celeste said—

"I am always glad to see any of Pietro's friends."

She felt relieved when the woman dropped her hand and turned her eyes on her husband.

And when they began to grow interested in the discussion of the picture on the easel, half-displeased even with her fulsome praises, of Pietro's work, Celeste, glad to get away, retired to her old place by the window behind the easels.

For a time she sat there, trying to read, the sound of the woman's metallic voice, as she conversed in an undertone with her husband outside, jarring on her nerves, and each letter on the printed page changing, under her steady gaze, to a cold, steely-grey eye, like that of Julia Redux.

Tiring of this, she arose, and with a nod to the two, who scarcely heeded her as she passed through the studio, she went out to talk with old Ijo Kugil about the land which she was never to see again—her native Italy.

Poor Celeste!

A month slipped by, and Julia Redux came every day to the studio of Pietro Farroll.

He said he was copying for her the portrait of a very dear friend who had long been dead.

But Celeste did not see her, not having been in the studio very lately.

She was unwell, and was daily growing worse.

Her face grew paler and more *spirituelle*; her bright brown eyes appeared larger and more lustrous; her slight form was wasting away all the time.

Each successive day found her weaker and weaker, and she sat bolstered in a large chair, reading when she was able, chatting with old Ijo sometimes; and half-shivering, once or twice, when Julia Redux's metallic laugh was borne to her from the studio.

One day the artist and Julia Redux were together in Pietro Farroll's studio; he painting, she sitting close by and talking to him in low, eager tones.

He listened attentively, and answered as occasion required.

"How is your wife?" she inquired, in a half-suppressed whisper.

"Not so well."

"Still growing weaker, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"How long—"

Julia Redux paused, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Perhaps a week," he answered with a quick turn of the head that averted his face; "and maybe not so long."

Ijo Kugil came in just then to dust the furni-

ture and attend to the fire. He stayed only a few moments.

"Is Pietro at work?" asked Celeste, as he returned to the little sitting-room. "Is Miss Redux with him?"

She could not keep a sharp white line from encircling her mouth, or Ijo Kugil from seeing that it gave her pain to speak of Miss Redux.

"Miss Redux is there," answered Ijo. "He is copying a portrait of her. I think it is nearly done, for I heard him say something about a week or sooner."

"I hope it is," said Celeste. Then she thought: "I'll be glad when Julia Redux will have no more business here. I don't like her. Her very voice repels me, and her queer eyes seem to bore themselves into my heart every time she looks at me. I wonder if Pietro will come in and talk to me a little while after she goes?"

Then she lay back in her chair, her head resting on the pillow, and closing her eyes, seemed to Ijo to sleep.

An hour passed, and the old servant, busying himself with a book of engravings, wished that the two in the studio would talk lower so as not to disturb her.

After awhile Pietro Farroll called him to attend his visitor to the door.

As he passed the easy-chair before the fire, something in the calm while face of its motionless occupant attracted his attention.

It was the seal of death.

If a moment he had alarmed the two in the studio with a quick, sharp cry, and Pietro Farroll and Julia Redux came hurriedly into the room.

"See there!" said Ijo.

The next instant the faces of both were whiter and more ghastly than that of the dead woman.

Farroll staggered across the room like a man drunk with wine.

But Julia Redux, aside from her paleness, was the same calm being as ever, and unmoved, she hurried down the stairs and out into the street.

The winter passed away, and when spring came, a new mistress came with it to the house of Pietro Farroll, the portrait painter.

And old Ijo Kugil felt himself shrink and shiver as he recognised Julia Redux.

She was with Farroll nearly all of the time while he worked, and Ijo noticed with a jealous pang that he never seemed to tire of her, as he had done of Celeste.

By and bye he began to paint his new wife, and Ijo thought, as he saw the outlines of her thin, well-shaped face on the canvas, that it would freeze everything in the room by the time it was finished.

He watched his master as he sketched the outlines of feature after feature, and then began to lay out the elaborate work on her drapery, and saw that the brushes were not used with his old steadiness of hand; his face was pallid, and his restless eyes, instead of being fixed on the canvas as of old, were unsteady, turning hither and thither quickly at every sudden sound.

"Pietro," said she, whom Ijo Kugil could bring himself to think of only as Julia Redux, "you are working too hard. I am going to make a request—the first since our marriage. You must promise not to paint any more for a fortnight. You need rest. You are nervous—very nervous, Pietro."

"I will do as you say," answered Farroll. "For two weeks I will not enter my studio. After that I shall work day and night until I finish your picture."

It had always been the custom of Ijo Kugil to sleep in his master's studio.

This he had done at the request of Pietro Farroll, who would not have his pictures remain unwatched a single hour knowing, as he did, that the accident of a moment might easily undo the work of months, so, on a little couch at one side of the studio, half hidden from the centre of the room by the many paintings standing here and there about the place, the old servant had slept every night for years; and he had been instructed times without number to be on the alert and discover, if possible, the source of any strange phenomena that might awaken him.

The days came and went; and still Pietro Farroll had found no rest for body or mind.

His face was paler and more haggard than ever; his brilliant, scintillant black eyes deeper sunken under his heavy, overhanging brows; his step more tottering and uncertain; and despite his two weeks' inactivity, he appeared like a man worn nearly to exhaustion by hard work.

His wife wondered at this, when she reflected that, true to his promise, she had not known him to go in his studio, and that he had passed most of his time in quiet, retiring quite early every night.

And she marvelled yet more to see the strange half-frightened look with which old Ijo Kugil followed his every motion, as he walked about the house nervously at times, or sat for hours staring out of the windows or reading.

At last the morning came when Pietro Farroll's two weeks' rest was at an end, and he was again to resume his work—the work of painting the cold, bloodless, and repellent face of his new wife.

But he was not rested.

"Come with me, Julia, and see how eagerly I take up my task," he said with enthusiasm. "I'm going to paint a face on my canvas that shall be the wonder of the world; so beautiful—so faultless—so perfect!"

With a strange, startled look on his face, old Ijo Kugil crept along stealthily behind them, and, unperceived by either, passed into the studio.

He saw the faces of Pietro Farroll and his bad wife blanch to an awful pallor—such a whiteness as he had never seen on the face of the living.

Even she was moved now.

Her almost matchless self-possession was gone, and half-shrieking, she tottered and sank down in a corner.

And Ijo Kugil knew the cause of this; knew why Pietro Farroll's rest had still more exhausted his vitality.

He had seen it growing steadily, night after night, under the sunnambulist's brush.

On the easel he had seen the sharp, hard outlines of Julia Redux's steely face, rounded and subdued; had seen the picture as, with staring eyes—eyes that he knew to be sealed in sleep—aid a hand made quick and steady by his intense nervous excitement, the artist had changed it to the face of Celeste Farroll.

And now it was there before them, its lustrous brown eyes staring into those of Pietro Farroll like the eyes of an accusing angel.

"I poisoned her!" shrieked the now insane artist, "that I might marry Julia Redux—I poisoned my wife Celeste!"

Turning, the maniac threw open a window, and, with a wild yell, hurled himself to death on the pavement below.

Julia Redux fled, and was never heard of more; fled with the brand of Cain on her brow, for she had been the accomplice of Farroll.

## HER OWN LIVING.

Tall and slight, with blue, wistful eyes, lips ripe and red as a wood-berry, and a complexion all carmine and white, like a damask rose in the sunshine, Erminia Hall's was a face that an artist would have fallen down and worshipped. But it is ever as philosophers tell us; there is compensation in all things.

The pock-marked girl, who sat across the aisle from her in church, was a millionaire's daughter, and this young thing with the angel-face was on the out-look for an eligible situation as governess.

For Erminia Hall was penniless, and it was necessary for her to earn her livelihood in some way or other, and the trade of a governess was at least "genteel."

"Keep a day school," suggested old Mr. Prince, who had been wont to dine every Sunday with Mr. Hall during that eminent bankrupt's lifetime, and to consume a quantity of lobster-salad, dry champagne, and boned turkey, which was simply appalling, upon those festive occasions.

"Nobody would come to me," said poor Erminia, with tears in her eyes.

She had supposed, inexperienced child that she was, that Mr. Prince would have been ready with a twenty or fifty pound note, at least, in this her necessity.

"Needlework," suggested Mr. Clay, who had mysteriously made money out of the very speculations that beggared the dead man.

"I never learned to sew," faltered Erminia.

"I could not earn a penny in that way."

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Clay. "The education of a woman in the present day is outrageously defective. It should be reformed."

"Do you suppose," meekly hazarded Erminia, "that I could obtain any copying from your office? Mademoiselle Lefevre used to say I wrote an elegant hand. Here is a specimen."

"Pshaw! your writing may do for a perfumed note or a young lady's album, but no lawyer would look twice at it. But I daresay you'll scratch along somehow."

"How?" murmured Erminia, resolutely repressing the tears that were rising to her eyes.

"How? Why, there are ways enough. Nobody need starve in this country. I daresay if you keep on the look-out, something will turn up."

And that was all the satisfaction Erminia Hall got.

She went next to her rich cousin, Mrs. Bellairs Belton.

"I am sorry you came this morning, Erminia," said that lady, coldly; "I am busy with my accounts."

"I won't detain you an instant," said Erminia, with a sinking heart; "I—I need something to do very much."

Mrs. Bellairs Belton shut her lips together, as if her mouth were a new patent portemonnaie, and pencilled down her figures without looking up.

"And I thought," went on Erminia, her heart falling her more and more, "I could perhaps teach your little children; I would work for very little, and—"

"Quite out of the question," said Mrs. Bellairs Belton; "I have just engaged a Swiss *bonne* who will give them the regular accent."

And Erminia turned away, feeling almost desperate.

"Oh, how strange and cruel the world is," thought Erminia, with a choking sensation in her throat.

"I had so many friends when poor papa was alive—now I have none except Major Miles—but I will not go to him. He was always criticising and carping, even in the days of our

prosperity; now he would be simply intolerable."

And so poor Erminia Hall crept into a cheap restaurant to appease the gnawing pangs of hunger.

She had a lodging and boarded herself, in order to screw the greatest possible amount of livelihood out of the least possible amount of ready cash, and she had eaten but little all day.

It was early yet—there were few customers at the neat little white-draped tables—and the proprietor was leaning against the counter talking to a woman who seemed to be some relative.

"They've struck, every one of 'em," he said. "And now, if I shut up shop, I won't have one of 'em back again. I'll employ women, hanged if I don't!"

"I don't see why you shouldn't," said his interlocutor.

"I'll advertise to-morrow for girls to wait here."

Erminia rose and went timidly towards the red-faced, good-humored looking man.

"Sir," said she, "you spoke of employing girls as waiters, I need work. Will you employ me?"

The restaurant-keeper looked bewildered.

"You are a lady, miss!" stammered he.

"I know that," said Erminia, as if she were making some damaging admission; "but ladies must live. And I am very poor."

So the next day she came in a frilled white apron and a French print dress and began her new duties.

"At least," she told herself, "I am earning my own livelihood. And when I am busy, I don't have time to think."

Mr. Bellairs Belton came in one day for a glass of ale and a plate of oysters.

"Bless my soul!" gasped he, as Erminia Hall, quick and neat, looking as if she had been born and bred to the trade, served him, "this is never you?"

"Why not?" said Erminia, laughing, in spite of herself.

"My wife's cousin in a cheap restaurant!" he exclaimed. "Good Heaven! what is the world coming to?"

"It's not so disagreeable a business as you might think it," said Erminia; "and I must live."

"Disgraceful—perfectly disgraceful!" said Mr. Bellairs Belton, as he bolted out, leaving his oysters untasted.

Mr. Prince came in for a sardine and a cup of coffee, and he started and grew red when he saw Erminia.

But he looked straight into his cup of coffee and pretended not to know her.

And Mr. Clay stared at her as if she were some rare curiosity on exhibition when he gave his order one day for a bowl of mock-turtle soup.

"So it's you, is it?" said he.

"Yes, sir, it is I," said Erminia.

"I should think you might have gone into some more creditable business," said he.

"Any business is creditable which honestly supports a girl," retorted Erminia. "And if you can suggest any improvement, I am quite ready to listen."

Mr. Clay muttered something about "distorted ideas," and burned his tongue with his hot soup; while the young banker's clerk, who came to lunch every day, and sat opposite, laughed in his sleeve.

"That's the prettiest girl I ever saw," thought Rudolph's Penfield. "If I could afford to marry, and she were willing—two rather essential 'ifs,' by the way—I would make her my wife."

"I don't think I am positively disagreeable to her, for gentle and modest as she is, I can see the color rise to her cheek when I come in, and I believe she would be a jewel of great price to shine on the breast of the lucky man who wins her."

Three weeks after, young Penfield had waxed more positive on the subject.

"I must have her," said he. "Little as the half of my salary is, it must be more than she earns here; and if my uncle looks favorably on the matter of my marriage, he'll be pretty certain to do something handsome for me. I'll bring him here to see her; that will melt him."

And the next day Rudolph Penfield ordered cold roast lamb for two—himself and a portly old gentleman with grizzled hair and beard, and keen blue eyes like a January sky.

"Hullo!" said the old gentleman; "it's Hall's daughter."

"It's Major Miles!" thought Erminia.

"Come here, my dear," said the Major. "You're a girl of courage; I like you—so does my nephew here. A girl who isn't afraid to work is the girl for my money."

And when, a few months later, Rudolph Penfield and Erminia Hall were married, the Major took them home to his house.

"Rudolph must keep on working just the same," said the Major. "I can't afford to support him in idleness. But I want Erminia in the house with me. She is pretty, and I like to look at her; she's smart, and I like to talk to her."

The Bellairs Beltons left their cards when they heard that the young couple had been adopted by the wealthy Major Miles.

But Erminia never returned the call.

"I have worked out the problem of my destiny without any help from them," she said quietly.

And so she had.