

UNDERSTUDIES

mother shrank into a little, faintly breathing, wide-eyed heap in a corner of a sofa. Amanda pulled the engagement ring, a little ancient pearl hoop, an heirloom in the Bemis family, from her finger.

"Here," said she—"here's your ring. I'll always wish you well."

Alexander took the ring between a long thumb and forefinger—Amanda's were short and stubbed—and looked at it, then at the girl, with a sort of pained and stately acquiescence. "Very well, Amanda," he replied, quite calmly, but his lips were white. Gentleman born and bred, diametrically different by nature and training, he had been very fond of this girl, who defied, with her coarse but splendid vigor, all laws and rules of growth and advance to which she did not herself subscribe.

"Why ain't the kind of English I speak as good as yours?" she had demanded of him once. They would always have spoken two languages had they lived together for a lifetime, but that had not seemed of much moment to him. She had, perhaps, supplied some inherent need of his nature, and been to him a sort of spiritual trellis-work, which had been essential for his future growth.