

assist my genius!" he soon proceeded, levelling a look of supreme appeal at Pauline. "I thought that you had separated my poetic veracity from the sham of Trevor and Corson! I—I thought Mrs. Varick, that in you I had found a true worshipper!"

Pauline was at last amused. "I usually reserve my worship for divinities, Mr. Prawle," she said, "and I have found but a few of these in all the history of literature."

"I see!" cried her companion, "you mean that I am *not* a genius!"

I did not say so. But you have given me no proof of it."

"No proof it! What was the poem I have just read?"

"It was . . . well, it was resonant. But I objected to it, as I have told you, on personal grounds." As she went on, Pauline tried to deal with a rather insubordinate smile of keen, sarcastic enjoyment. "So you really think," she continued, "that you possess absolute genius?"

"I am certain of it!" cried Mr. Prawle.

"That is a very pleasant mental condition."

"Do you doubt it? . . . Ah! I see but too plainly that you do!"

"Frankly," said Pauline, "I do."

Mr. Prawle flung both his hands toward the ceiling. "It is Kindelon's work!" he cried, with an effect of very plaintive lamentation. "Kindelon is among those who yet oppose me!"

"Mr. Kindelon is not responsible for my opinions," said Pauline. "However, you probably have other opponents?"

"Their name is legion! But why should I care? Do you join their ranks? . . . Well, Shelley almost died because of being misunderstood! I had hoped that you would assist me in—yes, in the publication of my book of poems, Mrs. Varick. I do not mean that I wrote to you, for this reason, the poem which you have just refused to hear me read. Far from it! I only mean that I have cherished the idea of securing in you a patron. Yes, a patron! I am without means to bring forth *Moonbeams and Mountain-Peaks*. And I had hoped that after hearing me read what I have already told you is my most nobly able creation, you would . . . consent, as a lover of art, of genius, of . . ."

"I understand," said Pauline. "You wish me to assist you in the publication of your volume." She was smiling, though a trifle wearily.

"Well, Mr. Prawle I will do it."

"You will do it!"

"Yes. You shall have whatever cheque you write me for . . ." She approached Prawle and laid her hand upon his arm. "But you must promise me to destroy 'Her Vindication'—not even to think of publishing it. Do you?"

"Yes . . . if you insist."

"I do insist . . . Well, as I said, write to me for the amount required."

Prawle momentarily smiled, as if from extreme gratitude. And then the smile abruptly faded from his pale face. "I will promise!" he declared. "But . . . oh, it is so horrible to think that you help me from no real appreciation of my great gifts—that you do so only from *charity*!"

"Charity is not by any means a despicable virtue."

"From a great millionaire to a poor poet—yes! The poet has a sensitive soul! He wants to be loved for his verses, for his inspiration, if he is a true poet like myself!"

"And you believe yourself a true poet, Mr. Prawle?"

"I?"

It is impossible to pourtray the majesty of Mr. Prawle's monosyllabic pronoun. "If I am not great," he enunciated, slowly, "then no one *has* been or ever *will* be great! I have a divine mission. A truly and positively divine mission."

Pauline gave a little inscrutable nod. "A divine mission is a very nice thing to have. I hope you will execute it."

"I *shall* execute it!" cried Mr. Prawle. "All the poets, on every side of me, are singing about The Past. I, and I alone, sing of The Future. I set evolution to music . . . what other poet has done that? I wrest from Buckle, Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley—from all the grand modern thinkers, in fact—their poetic and yet rationalistic elements! If you had heard my poem to yourself *through*—if you had had the patience, I—I may add, the kindness, to hear it through, you would have seen that my terminus was in accord with the prevailing theories of Herbert Spencer's noble philosophy . . ."

"Shall I ever cling to or love Herbert Spencer again?" thought Pauline, "when I see him made the shibboleth of such intellectual charlatans as this?"

"In accord," continued Mr. Prawle, "with everything that is progressive and unbogoted. I finished with an allusion to the Religion of Humanity. I usually do, in all my poems. That is what makes them so unique, so incomparable!"

Pauline held out her hand in distinct token of farewell.

"Belief in one's self is a very saving quality," she said. "I congratulate you upon it."

Mr. Prawle shrank offensively toward the door. "You dismiss me!" he burst forth. "After I have bared my inmost soul to you, you *dismiss* me!"

Pauline tossed her head, either from irritation or semi-diversion. "Ah, you take too much for granted!" she said, withdrawing her hand.

Mr. Prawle had raised himself to his full height. "I refuse your assistance!" he ejaculated. "You offer it as you would offer it to a pensioner—a beggar! And you—you, have assumed the right of entertaining and fostering literary talent! I scarcely addressed you at your last reception . . . I *waited*. I supposed that in spite of Kindelon's known enmity, some of your guests must have told you how immense were my deserts—how they transcended the morbid horrors of Rufus Corson and the glaring superficialities of Arthur Trevor. But I discover, plainly

enough, that you are impervious to all intellectual greatness of claim. I will accept *no* aid from you!—none whatever! But one day, when the name of Leander Prawle is a shining and a regnant one, you will perhaps remember how miserably you failed to value his merits, and shrink with shame at the thought of your own pitiable misjudgment!" . . .

"Thank Heaven that monstrosity of literary vanity has removed itself!" thought Pauline, a little later, when Leander Prawle had been heard very decisively to close the outer hall-door. "And now I must dwell no longer on trifles—I must concern myself with far weightier matters."

This coming marriage to Kindelon on the morrow seemed to her fraught with untold incentive for reflection. "But I will not reflect," she soon determined. "I will at once try to see Mrs. Dares, and let her reflect for me. She is so wise, so capable, so admirable! I have consented because I love! Let her, if she shall so decide, dissuade me because of experiences weightier than even my own past bitter ones!"

The hour of her resolved visit to Mrs. Dares had now arrived. In a certain way she congratulated herself upon the distracting tendency of both Mr. Barrowe's and Mr. Prawle's visits. "They have prevented me," she mused, "from dwelling too much upon my own unhappy situation. Mr. Barrowe is a very sensible fool, and Mr. Prawle is a very foolish fool. They are both, in their way, taunting and satiric radiations from the dying bonfire of my own rash ambition. They are both reminders to me that I, after all, am the greatest and most conspicuous fool. Some other woman, more sensible and clever than I, will perhaps seek to establish in New York a social movement where intellect and education are held above the last Anglo-Saxon coaching-drive to Central Park, or the last vulgarly-select *cotillon* at Delmonico's. But it will be decades hence. I don't know how many . . . but it will be decades . . . All is over, now. I face a new life; I have ended with my *salon*. Only one result has come of it—Ralph Kindelon. Thank Heaven, he is a substantial result, though all the rest are shadow and illusion!"

Pauline soon afterwards started on foot for the residence of Mrs. Dares. It was nearly dusk. She had determined to set before this good and trusted woman every detail of her present discomfort, and while confessing her matrimonial promise as regarded the marriage with Kindelon on the morrow, to exhort counsel, advice, guidance, justification. Being a woman, and having made up her mind, justification may have been the chief stimulus of her devout pilgrimage.

The great bustling city was in shadow as she rang the bell at Mrs. Dares's residence.

A strange, ominous, miserable fear was upon her while she did so. She could not account for it; she strove to shake it off. She remembered her own reflections: "All is over now. I face a new life!"

But she could not dismiss the brooding dread while she waited the answer of her summons at Mrs. Dares's door.

(To be continued.)

THE SCRAP BOOK.

HISTORY OF A POOR FELLAH FAMILY.

HASSAN was not always as poor as he is now. When his father died some twenty years ago the family possessed twenty-five acres of good land, with all that was necessary to cultivate them, and lived in a large house with a stable, in which were a pair of buffaloes and a donkey. He and two of his married brothers remained united under the authority of the eldest one, and for a time things went well with them—especially during the American War, when cotton was in great demand and brought unheard of prices. Grain, too, was pretty high in price, and the members of the household who were not required for the cultivation of the paternal acres made good day wages in a neighbouring cotton plantation belonging to the Omdeh. Hassan, who was then a mere boy, earned during the cotton-picking season as much as two and a-half piastres a day, and put his earnings into the common family purse. At eighteen he married Fatima, and already the tide of fortune had begun to turn. The price of cotton, which was by far the most profitable crop, had fallen to less than a half, and the Government took to demanding the payment of the taxes a year or two in advance. In these circumstances it was impossible to make the two ends meet. A Greek, who had settled as a little shop-keeper in the village, came to the rescue of the distressed family by lending them money to pay the taxes, but the relief was only momentary and created an additional burden, for in a few months the tax-gatherer demanded more money, and the Greek insisted on the payment not only of the money which he had lent, but also of as much again by way of interest. There was no more money in the family purse, so the bastinado was applied, but without effect, and things looked very black indeed, till the Greek money-lender proposed to buy the standing crops. By dint of long and laborious bargaining he was induced to raise his first offer to about two-thirds of the real value, and the money thus obtained was spent, after deducting part of the usurer's claim, in paying the taxes; but as the debt could not be entirely paid off, and the tax-gatherer soon returned, the difficulties began afresh. The bastinado was again called in, and applied vigorously till the soles of the eldest brother's feet were so swollen and lacerated that he could not walk, but it extracted from him merely solemn asseverations that he had not a piastre more to give. This time remedy was found in the sale of the buffaloes, the donkey, and part of the household goods, and a few weeks of tranquillity were thereby secured, but in the long run the remedy only aggravated the evil, for the family, having no longer the cattle