

THE SILENT PARTNER.

CHAPTER I.

ACROSS THE GULF.

THE rainest nights, like the rainest lives, are by no means the saddest.

This occurred to Miss Kate Kelso one January night, not many winters ago. Though, to be exact, it was rather the weather than the simile which occurred to her. The weather may happen to anybody, and so serves a purpose like photography and weddings. Reflections upon life run your chance of at twenty-three.

If, in addition to the circumstance of being twenty-three, you are the daughter of a gentleman manufacturer, and a resident of Boston, it would hardly appear that you require the ceremony of an introduction. A pansy-bred in the sun would be a difficult subject of classification. Undoubtedly, pages might with ease be occupied in treating of Miss Kelso's genealogy. Her descent from the Pilgrims could be indisputably proved. It would be possible to ascertain whether or not she cried at her mother's funeral. Thrilling details of her life in the nursery are upon record. Her first composition is still legible. Indeed, three chapters, at the least, might be so profitably employed in conveying to the intelligence of the most farsighted reader the remotest information of Miss Kelso's existence, that one feels compelled into an apology to high art for presenting her in three lines and a north-easter.

Perhaps it should be added that this young lady was engaged to be married to her father's partner, and that she was sitting in her father's library, with her hands folded, at the time when the weather occurred to her; sitting, as she had been sitting all the opaque, gray afternoon, in a crimson chair by a crimson fire, a creamy profile and a creamy hand lifted and cut between the two foci of color. The profile had a level, generous chin. The hand had—rings.