

behaviour, it gets talked around that they are engaged. People are so prying and suspicious.

And so the months of their engagement run on; never before or since, time flies so swiftly—unless, it may be, some time when Tom has an acceptance in bank to meet in two days, that he can't lift one end of—and the wedding day dawns, fades, and the wedding is over. Over, with its little circle of delighted friends, with its ripples of pleasure and excitement, with its touches of home love and home life, that leave their lasting impress upon the heart of Laura's heart, although Tom, with man-like blindness, never sees one of them. Over, with ma, with the thousand and one anxieties attendant on the grand event in her daughter's life hidden away under her dear old smiling face, down, away down under the tender, glistening eyes, deep in the loving heart; ma, hurrying here and fluttering there, in the intense excitement of something strangely made up of happiness and grief, of apprehension and hope; ma, with her sudden disappearances and flushed reappearances, indicating struggles and triumphs in the turbulent world down stairs; ma, with the new-fangled belt, with the dinner-plate buckles, fastened on wrong side foremost, and the flowers dangling down the wrong side of her head, to Sophie's intense horror and pantomimic telegraphy; ma, flying here and there, seeing that everything is going right, from kitchen to dressing-rooms; looking after everything and everybody, with her hands and her heart just as full as they will hold, and more voices calling "ma," from every room in the house, than you would think one hundred mas could answer. But she answers them all, and she sees after everything, and just in the nick of time prevents Mr. Tret from going down stairs and attending the ceremony in a loud-figured dressing-gown and green slippers; ma, who, with the quivering lip and glistening eyes, has to be cheerful, and lively, and smiling; because, if, as she thinks of the dearest and best of her flock going away from her fold, to put her life and her happiness into another's keeping, she gives way for one moment, a dozen reproachful voices cry out, "Oh-h ma!" How it all comes back to Laura, like the tender shadows of a dream, long years after the dear, dear face, furrowed with marks of patient suffering and loving care, rests under the snow and the daisies; when the mother love that glistened in the tender eyes has closed in darkness on the dear old home; and the nerveless hands, crossed in dreamless sleep upon the pulseless breast, can never again touch the children's heads with

caressing gesture; how the sweet vision comes to Laura, as it shone on her wedding morn, rising in tenderer beauty through the blinding tears her own excess of happiness calls up, as the rainbow spans the cloud only through the mingling of the golden sunshine and the falling rain.

And pa, dear old shabby pa, whose clothes will not fit him as they fit other men; who always dresses just a year and a-half behind the style; pa wandering up and down through the house, as though he were lost in his own home, pacing through the hall like a sentinel, blundering aimlessly and listlessly into rooms where he has no business, and being repelled therefrom by a chorus of piercing shrieks and hysterical giggling; pa, getting off his well worn jokes with an assumption of merriment that seems positively real; pa, who creeps away by himself once in a while, and leans his face against the window, and sighs, in direct violation of all strict household regulations, right against the glass, as he thinks of his little girl going away to-day from the home whose love and tenderness and patience she has known so well. Only yesterday, it seems to him, the little baby girl, bringing the first music of baby prattle into his home; then a little girl in short dresses, with school-girl troubles and school-girl pleasures; then an older little girl, out of school and into society, but a little girl to pa still. And then—. But, somehow, this is as far as pa can get; for he sees, in the flight of this, the first, the following flight of the other fledglings; and he thinks how silent and desolate the old nest will be when they have all mated and flown away. He thinks, when their flight shall have made other homes bright and cheery and sparkling, with music, and prattle and laughter, how it will leave the old home hushed and quiet and still. How, in the long, lonesome afternoon, mother will sit by the empty cradle that rocked them all, murmuring the sweet old cradle songs that brooded over all their sleep, until the rising tears check the swaying cradle and choke the song—and back, over river and prairie and mountain, that roll and stretch and rise between the old home and the new ones, comes back the prattle of her little ones, the rippling music of their laughter, the tender cadences of their songs, until the hushed old home is haunted by memories of its children—gray and old they may be, with other children clustering about their knees; but to the dear old home they are "the children" still. And dreaming thus, when pa for a moment finds his little girl alone—his little girl who is going away out of the home whose love she knows, into a house whose tenderness and patience are all untried—he holds her, in his

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