

now. Instead he pursues this will-o'-the-wisp ambition of his. He is crazy about color, always chasing a foolish sunset or some wonderful desert panorama of sky and cloud and mountain — seeing colors no one else can see but unable to put his vision upon the canvas. That's the truth, John! I have never spoken it before. Never hinted it before the children! Charles Langham is a failure. He will never be anything else but a failure!"

The words, concluded by the barely successful suppression of a sob, fell on unprotesting silence. Who but this life-worn woman had so good an opportunity to know if they were true, so good a right to speak them if she believed them true? John looked at his plate, Tayna and Dick looked at each other. It required a stout heart to break the oppressive quiet, and for the moment no one in this group had that heart. The break came from the outside, when some one ran swiftly up the steps and threw open the front door. Instant sounds of collision and confusion issued from the hall, followed immediately by a masculine voice, thin and injured in tone, calling excitedly:

"Well, for the love of Michael Angelo! What do you keep stuffing the hall so full of furniture for? Won't somebody please come and help me with these things?"

The dinner table was abruptly deserted; but quick as John and the children were, Rose was ahead of them, and when they reached the hallway, a thin man of medium height, with an aquiline nose, dark eyes, and long loose hair, was helplessly in the embrace of the laughing and crying woman.

"Oh, Charles, you did come home; you did come home, didn't you?" she was crying.

Charles broke in volubly. "Well, I should say I did. What did you expect? Have I ever impressed you as a man who would neglect his family?" After which, with