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before Aurora's car; pure as the lily kissed by dew. This precious blossom, watched by your paternal eyes, the object of your tender care and solicitude, I ask of you. I would wear it in my heart, and guard and cherish it—and in the—"Oh-h, ye-es, yes, yes," the old man says soothingly, beginning to see that Tom is only drunk. "Oh yes, yes, I don't know much about them myself; my wife and the girls generally keep half the windows in the house littered up with them. Winter and summer, every window so full of house plants the sun can't shine in. Come up to the house, they'll give you all you can carry away, give you a hat full of 'em." "No, no, no; you don't understand," says poor Tom, and old Mr. Tret now observes that Tom is very drunk indeed. "It isn't that, Sir. Sir, that isn't it. I—I—I want to marry your daughter!" And there it is at last, as bluntly as though Tom had wadded it into a gun and shot it at the old man. Mr. Tret does not say any thing for twenty seconds. Tom tells Laura that evening that it was two hours and a half before her father opened his head. Then he says, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes; to be sure; to—be—sure." And then the long pause is dreadful. "Yes, yes. Well, I don't know. I don't know about that, young man. Said any thing to Jennie about it?" "It isn't Jennie," Tom gasps, seeing a new Rubicon to cross; "it's—" "Oh, Julie, eh? well, I don't—" "No, sir," interjects the despairing Tom, "it isn't Julie, it's—" "Sophie, eh? Oh, well, Sophie—" "Sir," says Tom, "if you please, sir, it isn't Sophie, it's—" "Not Minnie, surely? Why, Minnie is hardly—well, I don't know. Young folk get along faster than—" "Dear Mr. Tret," breaks in the distracted lover, "it's Laura."

As they sit and stand there, looking at each other, the dingy old counting-room, with the heavy shadows lurking in every corner, with its time-worn, heavy brown furnishings, with the scanty dash of sunlight breaking in through the dusty window, looks like an old Rubens painting; the beginning and the finishing of a race: the old man, nearly ready to lay his armour off, glad to be so nearly and so safely through with the race and the fight that Tom, in all his inexperience and with all the rash enthusiasm and conceit of a young man, is just getting ready to run and fight, or fight and run, you never can tell which until he is through with it. And the old man, looking at Tom, and through him, and past him, feels his old heart throb almost as quickly as does that of the young man before him. For looking down a long vista of happy, eventful years, bordered with roseate hopes and bright dreams and anticipations,

he sees a tender face, radiant with smiles and kindled with blushes; he feels a soft hand drop into his own with its timid pressure; he sees the vision open, under the glittering summer stars, down mossy hillsides, where the restless breezes, sighing through the rustling leaves, whispered their tender secret to the noisy katydids; strolling along the winding paths, deep in the bending wild grass, down in the star-lit aisles of the dim old woods; loitering where the meadow brook sparkles over the white pebbles or murmurs around the great flat stepping-stones; lingering on the rustic foot-bridge, while he gazes into eyes eloquent and tender in their silent love-light; up through the long pathway of years, flecked and checkered with sunshine and cloud, with storm and calm, through years of struggle, trial, sorrow, disappointment, out at last into the grand, glorious, crowning beauty and benison of hard-won and well-deserved success, until he sees now this second Laura, re-imagining her mother as she was in the dear old days. And he rouses from his dream with a start, and he tells Tom he'll "Talk it over with Mrs. Tret, and see him again in the morning."

And so they are duly and formally engaged, and the very first thing they do, they make the very sensible, though very uncommon, resolution to so conduct themselves that no one will ever suspect it. And they succeed admirably. No one ever does suspect it. They come into church in time to hear the benediction—every time they come together. They shun all other people when church is dismissed, and are seen to go home alone the longest way. At pic-nics they are missed not more than fifty times a day, and are discovered sitting under a tree, holding each other's hands, gazing into each other's eyes and saying—nothing. When he throws her shawl over her shoulders, he never looks at what he is doing, but looks into her starry eyes, throws the shawl right over her natural curls, and drags them out by the hair-pins. If, at sociable or festival, they are left alone in a dressing-room a second and a half, Laura emerges with her ruffle standing around like a railroad accident; and Tom has enough complexion on his shoulder to go around a ladies' seminary. When they drive out, they sit in a buggy with a seat eighteen inches wide, and there is two feet of unoccupied room at either end of it. Long years afterwards, when they drive, a street car isn't too wide for them; and when they walk you could drive four loads of hay between them.

And yet, as carefully as they guard their precious little secret, and as cautious and circumspect as they are in their walk and