

ence?" she asked. "I had to tell you, but you are the only one who knows; I couldn't even confide in Miriam."

"When our friends are in trouble, they need us most."

"That means I am still your friend?"

He reassured her, and they talked on in low tones till Eben, who was to see her back to the cottage, began to shuffle about impatiently in the kitchen.

Loring heard him. "I was never taught to consider my inferiors, but you and Anne are teaching me that each individual has rights the rest of us should respect. Eben is hinting that I should be going." She rose as she spoke, and began to put on her wraps.

"You learn so rapidly that you will soon outstrip your instructors."

"There is little danger of that, my friend; and yet it is only lately that I have learned the power of my own personality."

"You have a strong soul, and a strong soul works out its own salvation."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Think it over; the solution will come to you. You see, I have no doubts."

"I wish I had none. Good night."

Anne met her on the doorsteps. "You were so late, I was beginning to fear something had happened."

"Something has happened to me, Anne. The physician is curing my soul, as well as my body; he has laid the hand of healing on my sick heart, and I shall soon be made whole." She spoke softly, still under the influence of Hoffman's tenderness.

Long after Anne had tucked her into bed like a sleepy child, she lay staring into the darkness, pondering over his words, and wondering if she had caught the meaning right. What salvation must she work out for herself to prove the strength of her soul?

The days passed quickly. A thaw set in and the roads were almost impassable. Loring kept closely to the house, and took her exercise on the half-acre belonging to her property. The little girls came to her once a week, and, after a time, Nora reappeared, shy and uncomfortable, as if she expected to be chided for her absence; but Loring had learned her lesson.

"I shall not interfere. She shall wear purples that kill her delicate coloring, and shapeless garments that hide her slim figure; but if her father thinks he can stave off the day when she will become conscious of her good looks, he is mistaken. Don't

frown, Anne; in spite of your Southern birth, you are a Puritan at heart, and you think Nora will be better off if she learns how pretty she is."

Miriam wrote: "Are you quite comfortable? Hasn't it been a dreadful winter? Don't you want me to come to you for a few weeks? Frances is engaged. Her fiance is a nice boy, and they openly adore each other. She is content to stay at home once in a while and let her family see how charming she is, so, if you wish, I can get away with any easy conscience."

But Loring had no need of her now. She had Anne in the house and Hoffman near by, and her life was full of incident.

Spring came with a rush. The snow melted rapidly, and one morning Loring awoke to find Anne standing at the foot of her bed with a handful of crocuses.

"The Doctor's greeting, to tell you we have seen the last of the winter."

Loring sat up. "Give them to me." She held out her slender hands cup fashion, and Anne dropped the yellow and white blossoms into her palms. "Spring brings us a new lease of life. How glad I am my baby will be a springtime child!" she said softly.

The first wood violets almost made her wild with joy. She gathered them herself, and kept them until they lost their beauty as well as their fragrance. She spent hours in the woods, damp with earthy odors, yet full of new life, for the sap ran in the trees, tender green shoots sprang up, and vines wound themselves around the trunks and gnarled roots of fallen timber. There were quantities of green moss everywhere. Below in the valley the river, released from its icy bondage, rippled noisily over the stones, chattering of the glories it was to view on its way to the inland sea. Eben brought her delicious trout from mountain brooks. Nature, after lying quiescent for months, her head shrouded in a mantle of snow, now awoke, eager to perform her tasks. Birds built their nests, laid their eggs and brought forth their young; newborn calves bleated in the cowsheds; a long-legged colt trotted beside its proud mother in the pasture below. Nature was teaching the earth to reproduce, and the stir of newborn things was in the air.

Now that the seal was removed from Loring's slips, she sought Hoffman daily, and talked to him of any matter uppermost in her mind.

"Let us walk to the topmost clearing; I want to fill my eyes with a golden sunset. I think, as each day dies, tomorrow can

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be so beautiful; and yet each morning ushered in with the same pale rose to promise another day of perfect. Will it be too much of a climb for

She paused and surveyed her com- sollicitiously, but he laughed at her

tonight I feel the vigor of a young coursing through my veins. Spring got into my blood and made me forget faced death."

ing shivered. "Don't speak of tonight. Let us talk of life, a life ours, full of good deeds. Some peo- can't be spared, and you are one of

to one is indispensable in the scheme eation. When one tree in the forest another springs up to take its place. n a man's time comes, there are al- half a dozen fellows ready to step the vacancy."

he held the gate open and she passed h; then he fell into step at her side they sauntered slowly along the path h led through the clearing to a broad au, from which they could command eep of the whole surrounding country. Do you make light of the work you to do?"

No; and I hope I shall live long enough carry it through."

Why don't you begin now? You have to show yourself to induce others to ow you."

You have faith in me, but the world doubts."

How long have you had this idea?"

That the worst forms of nervous dis- could be healed by a life in the open that a body wearied by toil is a bet- inducement to slumber than any seda-

? It has come to me since I have seen results in my own case. You know, I

practiced on Henry Gray and another man whom I inveigled up here on false pretenses, as he said—but he stayed with me four months, and went back cured."

Loring led him on to speak of his hobby, offering a suggestion now and then. She knew what the active life he prescribed had done for her. It was not only the quiet life of the place, the wonderfully bracing atmosphere, but the daily tasks he exacted, that had helped her to regain her mental balance, and had kept her mind contented as well as her body healthy. Hoffman dreamed of gathering the nerve-sick from the city, bringing them to the mountain solitude, teaching them a new interpretation of life and making them work their way back to health. The dream grew, and as it grew the possibility of fulfillment loomed upon the horizon.

"It is genius," said Loring; "and genius is a creative force."

"Yes, and like nature, I shall create new bodies out of old waste."

They came into the open suddenly and Loring drew a long breath, awed by the majesty and splendor of the view. In silence they watched the sun sinking to rest between a gap in the mountains. The whole atmosphere was bathed in a golden light. Then, as they watched, the sun dropped from sight, the afterglow faded slowly, the violet changed to palest lavender, the heavy clouds gathered darkly, and the air became heavy with night odors. Loring drew her light shawl closer about her shoulders.

"Shall we go now?" Hoffman said, marveling at the glory of her transfigured face. She reminded him of the portrait of an early saint. Flesh had given way to spirituality. She had communed for months with nature; the long white silences had taught her mystery; the woods