

without it her nature is the rose tree without the rose—the dead egg among the cliffs: quickened by the grand passion, it is the eagle soaring to the stars. Your heart is a grander thing now than ever before. Next to loving God, the best thing for woman is to love a good man. Take the comfort of this thought, and leave the humiliation to the heart too hard or too light for loving.

Were I looking into your eyes, my reader, telling my story by word of mouth, I can fancy we might hold something like this dialogue. "Whom was Mary Triggillus, this keeper of a small day-school—whom was she seeking in this brilliant store? One of the under-clerks, perhaps?" "No." "The book-keeper?" "No." "The confidential clerk?" "You must guess again." "The junior partner?" "No, it was Christian Van Pelt, the sole proprietor of that fine establishment, one of the merchant princes of the city." "But what right had Mary Triggillus, this obscure school-teacher, to love this man of fortune? How did she ever come to his acquaintance?" And then I should tell you a very long story, a tedious one perhaps of two Hollanders, close friends, who settled in New Amsterdam; of how fortune had prospered the one until Christian Van Pelt, his lineal descendant, was among the leaders in the dry-goods trade of New York City; of how various disasters had befallen the family of the other, until the daughter of the house, and its only lineal descendant, Mary Triggillus's mother, had married an intemperate spendthrift, who had at his death left her penniless, though the grandchild, Mary Triggillus, had inherited the small house in which mother and daughter found a home.

In the back parlor Mary kept a school for small children: the front chamber was let to a quiet man, who went down town at eight and returned at five, and whom they seldom saw except when he rapped at the sitting-room door on the first day of every month to hand in the three five-dollar bills which covered his rent. Besides these sources of revenue there were a few day-boarders, who sometimes paid for their keeping and sometimes did not.

An intercourse and a show of friendship had all along been maintained between the families of these Hollanders; and now Mrs. Van Pelt, the young merchant's mother, was to give a large party. Mary Triggillus had been invited, and her mother had insisted on an acceptance of the invitation.

"They are quite friendly to you, Mary, and you can't afford to throw away such friends," the mother said.

So it was for Christian Van Pelt's broad, square figure that Mary's eager eyes were seeking; but in vain they sought: it was nowhere to be seen. A choking feeling of disappointment rose in her heart—a disappointment very unequal to the occasion, since she had meant nothing more than to get a sight of the loved figure and then to go on her way. Having satisfied herself that he was not in the store, a yearning desire possessed her to enter the place where he every day walked—a place to her invested with romance, haunted by his presence—a place to which her thoughts often wandered as some stupid child stood by her side in the little school-room spelling out his reading-lesson. She had not for months entered the store—not since that evening when, in her poor parlor, Christian Van Pelt, the rich young merchant, had looked into her eyes with a look that thrilled her for many a day, and spoken some nothings in tones that set her heart throbbing. Indeed, since that day she had avoided passing the store, lest she might seem, even to herself, to be seeking him. And yet her poor eyes and heart were ever seeking him in the countless throngs that passed up and down the busy streets.

"I'll get my dress from his store," she said mentally. "I shall wear it with the greater pleasure that he has handled it. My patronage will be to him but as the drop to the ocean," she said with a little bitterness, "but it will be a sweet thought to me that I have contributed even one drop to the flood of his prosperity."

So she entered Christian Van Pelt's trapezoidal, and said, in answer to the smart clerk's look of inquiry, "I am looking for a silk that will do for the evening and also for the street—something a little out of style, perhaps, might answer."

"We have some bargains in such silks—elegant dress-patterns at a third of what they cost us in Paris. Step this way," and Mary found herself going back and back through the spacious building, with her image advancing to meet her.

In a few seconds the counter was strewn with silks at most enticing figures, and the clerk showed them off to such advantage, gathering them so dexterously into elegant folds, shifting them so skillfully in the brilliant gas-light, persuading the lady, in the meanwhile, in such a clever, lawyer-like way: "These cost us in Paris three times the money I am offering them for, and they are but very little used; there is an extraordinary demand for them; they are going like wildfire; country merchants are ordering them by the score; we sent eighty pieces to Chicago, to one house, yesterday, and fifty patterns to Omaha this morning; one hundred and ten we last week shipped to the South; the whole lot will perhaps be sold by to-morrow," etc.—that poor Mary felt like a speculator on the verge of a great chance. So she decided on a light-green brocade, and could not gainsay the smooth-tongued clerk as he assured her, while tying the bundle, that she had secured a very handsome and elegant dress at a great bargain.

The next day Mary and her mother spent in studying and discussing the latest fashion-

plates, but the elaborate descriptions of expensive costumes plunged the girl into another fit of bewilderment and slough of despond. She bitterly regretted having accepted the invitation. She began to dread the party as an execution—to shrink from exhibiting herself to Christian with the fine ladies and gentlemen who would form the company at Mrs. Van Pelt's. However, the dress was cut and made, and in this there was a fair degree of success, for necessity had taught these women considerable skill in the use of the scissors and needle. The dress was trimmed with some handsome old lace that had been in the mother's family for years. Mrs. Triggillus pronounced the dress very handsome as she spread it on the bed and stopped off to survey it, and even the despondent Mary took heart, and as she surveyed her image in the mirror at the conclusion of her lot for the important evening, she felt a degree of complacency toward herself—a feeling of admiration even.

"You look like a snowdrop, dear," said the mother fondly; and the comparison was not inapt, for the young girl's Saxon complexion and fair hair were in pretty contrast with the lace-decked silk of delicate green falling about her.

As she had no attendant, she went early to Mrs. Van Pelt's, feeling at liberty to be unceremonious; and she thought, with a beating heart, that Christian would be her escort home. Mrs. Van Pelt was not in the parlor when Mary entered, but Christian received her kindly, though with a slight embarrassment that embarrassed her. She tried to keep the love-flicker from her eyes and the love-tremor from her voice as she sat there alone with the man she loved, trying to reply indifferently to his indifferent remarks, and wondering if he could not hear the beating of her heart. She was greatly relieved at the entrance of Mrs. Van Pelt. When this lady had kissed her guest, she stepped off a few paces and looked the girl over.

"Your dress is very becoming, my dear," she said, "but why did you get a brocade? Don't you know that brocades are out of style. Nobody wears brocades; and they are not trimming with lace at all. I wish you had advised with me."

The blood rushed to Mary's face. Though she did not turn her eyes to Christian's, she knew that they were looking at her—that he was noting her confusion and comprehending its cause. "He knows why I have bought this brocade," was her thought, "and he knows that I am humiliated in having my poverty held up to his view. Of course Christian knows that I am poor, and he must know, as a consequence, that I wear poor clothes. I can endure that he should know this in a general way, while I shrink from having the details of my poverty revealed to him. I would not wish my patched garters and darned stockings held up for his inspection."

Mary hesitated a moment before replying to Mrs. Van Pelt's criticism. Then, with a feeling that it was better to acknowledge a poverty of which both her companions were cognizant than an ignorance of style, she said, with a slight kindling of the eye, "I decided on this dress from economical considerations, and the lace is some which my mother's great-grandmother brought from Holland—I have reminded them, at least, that I had a grandfather," she thought.

As she finished speaking she lifted her eyes to Christian's. She could not understand the expression she saw there. But the poor girl's satisfaction in her dress was all gone. She was ready to reproach her mother for the reassuring words that had helped to generate it. "What if it is pretty? It is old-fashioned. No matter that the lace is rich, when nobody wears it. I must look as though I were dressed in my grand-mother's clothes. I wish I was back in my poor home. There I am at least sheltered from criticism. I am a fool in darning to face fashion: I am the silly moth in the candle."

If these were Mary's thoughts as she sat there with her two friends, what must they have become as the regally-dressed ladies, one after another, were announced? There were the majestic sweep of velvet, the floating of cloudlike gossamer, the flashing diamonds, the starry pearl, the flaming ruby, the blazing carbuncle. There were marvelous toilets where contrast and harmony and piqueness—the effect of every color and ornament had been patiently studied as the artist studies each shade and line on his canvas. And when the laugh and the jest and the wit were sounding all about her, and the intoxicating music came swooping in from the dancing-room, there came over Mary a lost feeling amid the strange faces and voices—a bewildered, dizzy feeling, such as the semi-conscious opium-eater might have, half real, half dreaming. It was all so strange, so separate from her, as though, herself invisible, she was watching a festival among a different order of beings. Everybody was coming and going, continually varying his pastime, while she sat as an unobserved as though invisible. Occasionally an eye-glass was leveled at her, or some lady accidentally placed beside her superciliously inspected the lace and green brocade.

Mrs. Van Pelt found her in the course of the evening, and insisted that she should go to the dancing-room and see the dancing. Mary begged to remain seated where she was. She dreaded any move that would render her more conspicuous, and dreaded especially being recalled to Christian's aid. But the hostess insisted, so the wretched girl crept out of her retreat, and with a dizzy step traversed the parlors and halls to the dancing-rooms. The band was playing a delicious waltz, and graceful ladies

and elegant gentlemen were moving to its measures. Mary's eyes soon discovered Christian waiting with a young girl in a rose-colored silk. She was not a marked beauty, but the shoe was refined and pretty, and was uplifted to Christian's with a look of listening interest. A pang of jealousy shot through Mary's heart as she saw this and noted the close embrace in which Christian held his partner, with his face bent down to hers. Soon they came whirling by.

"There is Christian with Miss Jerome," said Mrs. Van Pelt. "Her father is said to be worth four millions."

The next moment Mrs. Van Pelt was called away, and Mary was again left to her isolation. With a dread of having Christian see her there, old-fashioned and neglected, a stranger to every individual in the assemblage of wealth and fashion, she slipped quietly away into the library, where some elderly people were playing whist. She would have gone home, but she lived in an obscure street some distance away. With a sense of suffocation she now remembered that she would have to recall herself to Christian's mind, for she must depend upon him to see her home. "He has not thought of me once this evening," she said bitterly. Soon supper was announced. Gentlemen and ladies began to pair off, not one mindful of her. She was hesitating between remaining there in the library and going unattended to the refreshment-room, when a white-haired gentleman entered from the parlor. He glanced at Mary, and was passing on when he paused and looked again. A moment of hesitation ensued while the young girl and the old gentleman gazed at each other.

"Miss Triggillus, I believe?" he said, finally. "My name is Ton Eyck. I know your mother when she was a girl, and I knew her father. Allow me the pleasure of escorting you to supper."

Mary took the proffered arm with the feeling of one who unexpectedly encounters a friend in a foreign land.

As he re-seated her in the library after supper he said, "Present me kindly to your mother: if ever I can serve her, I should be glad to do so."

At length the party was ended. Every guest had gone except Miss Triggillus.

"I'm afraid I shall have to trouble you to see me home, Mr. Van Pelt," she said to Christian with a burning at her heart.

"Allow me the pleasure, you mean to say," replied Christian with a bow.

This was but a passing pleasantry, and Mary should not have allowed it to bring the color to her cheek, and that peculiar, half-disdainful look to her eye and lip.

"I fear you haven't had a pleasant evening," said Mrs. Van Pelt as Mary took leave of her hostess.

"It was not to be expected that I should, being an entire stranger."

"Well, dear, come and spend a quiet evening with me soon; and give my love to your mother."

Mary went up to the dressing-room, and soon re-appeared, looking demure and nun-like in her white hood and black-and-white pleid shawl. How she dreaded the ride home with Christian! and yet for a whole week she had been longing for this very thing. The thought of the party had always brought the throbbing anticipation of the ride with Christian after the party. How near he had seemed then, and ever since the memorable evening when they had sat together over that book of engravings! How happy she had been then! How hopeful of his love! But now, what a gulf there seemed between them! What had she to do with this atmosphere of wealth and luxury and fashion where Christian dwelt? He had been pleased to amuse himself for a brief space with looking into her eyes, with making some silly speeches, which he had straightway forgotten, but which she—poor fool!—had laid away in her heart.

Thus she was thinking as Christian handed her into the carriage. She wondered what he would talk about. For a time there was a constrained and painful silence, and Mary tried to think of something to say, that she might hide her aching heart from his merciless gaze. Finally she remarked that the streets were quiet, and he that the night was fine; and in such commonplace the ride was passed.

Mary found her mother up, eager to learn her impressions of the first large party she had ever attended.

"I am very tired, mother," she said, determined to end the torturing inquisition, "and am aching to get to bed. I'll tell you about the party to-morrow. Don't call me early: let me have a good sleep."

With a feeling of sickening disgust she laid off the silk and lace and flowers which a few hours before had so pleased her. The pale face which met her as she stood before her mirror was very unlike the happy, expectant face she had seen there in the early evening. Turning from the piteous image, she hurriedly put the mean dress away, longing to have the sheltering darkness about her. Soon she had laid her head on the pillow, where, with eyes staring into the darkness, it throbbled for a weary while. "What am I to Christian Van Pelt?" This was the question the poor heart argued and re-argued. One sweet delicious evening stood over against this last, so full of heartache.

The next morning Mary felt weary with all the world. Her home seemed poorer and meaner than ever; the boarders disgusted her with their coarseness; teachers were unrelieved drudgery, everything was disagreeable. To her

mother's renewed inquiries about the party she replied wearily, "My dress was poor and mean, mother; and had I spent our year's income on my toilet, it would have still been poor, compared with those I saw last night. For such as I there is nothing in fashionable life but heart-burning and humiliation."

A few days after this there came from Mrs. Van Pelt to Miss Triggillus an invitation to tea. She at once longed and dreaded to meet Christian; so the invitation was declined on the plea of indisposition. It was renewed two evenings later, and she was obliged to accept it. Mary never looked better than on that evening. She wore a blue empress-cloth, which heightened the fairness of her complexion and of her bright hair. After tea she and Mrs. Van Pelt were looking at some old pictures. They were discussing an ambrotype of herself, taken when she was thirteen, when a servant announced guests in the parlor.

"You were a pretty child, my dear," said Mrs. Van Pelt, rising to go to the parlor, "and you are a handsome woman—a beautiful woman, I may say—your beauty ought to be a fortune to you—but you lack style. I must take you in hand," she continued, talking all the way to the door. "I shall need some amusement after Christian's marriage, to keep me from being jealous of his little wife;" and she disappeared through the door, little dreaming of the arrow she had sent to the poor heart.

Mary caught her breath, and Christian saw her stagger at the shot. Taken by surprise, completely off his guard, he opened his arms and received the stricken girl in his bosom, and pressed his lips to hers. But Mary had not lost her consciousness. Quickly recovering, she disengaged herself and reached a chair. She was more self-possessed than he. He sat down beside her, quivering in every fibre.

"Mary! Mary!" he cried in passionate beseechment, "I never meant to win your love to betray it. We have both been surprised into a confession of our love for each other, and now let me lay open my heart to you. I do love you, as you must have seen, for I have not been always able to keep the love out of my eyes and voice. You will recall one evening—I know you must remember it—when I was near declaring my love and asking you to be my wife. I don't know why I did not—why I left my story but half told. I sometimes wish that I had declared myself fully, and that we were now pledged to each other. But the very next morning I sustained heavy losses in my business, and others soon followed, and to-day I am threatened with utter ruin. If I can raise a hundred thousand dollars this week, and as much in another week, I am a bankrupt. And now you will understand why in two days I am to marry Miss Jerome."

Mary started again. Was the execution, then, so near? She drew a long breath, as though gathering her strength for a hard struggle. "Christian," she said in a low tone that trembled with the energy underlying it, "my poor Christian, you are bewildered. These troubles have shut the light away from your path, and you have lost your way in the darkness. If this is true which you have told me, do you not see that when you have delivered yourself from this threatened bankruptcy, you are yet a bankrupt—a bankrupt in heart and happiness? How can you weigh wealth and position against the best good that can ever come to either of us? I am not afraid of poverty, for I have known nothing else; and surely you do not dread it for yourself. This love is the one good thing which God has permitted in my pitiless destiny. Am I unwomanly? If I plead for my life, who can blame me? And shall that which is more than life go from me without a word? Oh, I cannot smile and look cold as though I was not hurt; I am pierced and torn. Yet, Christian, for your sake, rather than for mine, I entreat. You would bring desolation into both our lives. I might endure it, but how could you bear through the years the memory of your deed? You are trampling on your manhood. You are giving to this woman's hungry heart a stone: you are buying with a lie the holiest thing in her womanhood."

"For four generations my house has withstood every financial storm. The honorable name which my ancestors bequeathed to me I will maintain at every hazard," Christian replied with gloomy energy.

"And you will marry Miss Jerome?"

"Yes: it is my only hope."

"Then God help you, Christian. Your lot is harder than mine. At the worst my life shall be true: I shall hide no lie in my heart, to fester there." Her words, begun in tenderness, ended in a tone of scorn. "And now I must ask you to see me home."

She left the room, and soon returned cloaked and hooded, to find Christian waiting in overcoat and gloves and with hat in hand. With her arm in his they walked in perfect silence through the gay, bustling streets, passing and knowing how many other spirits as sad as their own. When they came to the humble little house which was Mary's home, Christian stopped on the step as though he would say something, but Mary said "Good-night," and passed into the hall.

We magazine-writers have no chance in the space allotted to a short story for a quantitative analysis of emotions and situations, or for following the processes by which marked changes come about in the human heart. We must content ourselves with informing the reader that certain changes or modifications ensued, trusting that he will receive the statement without requiring reasons or the motives of events.