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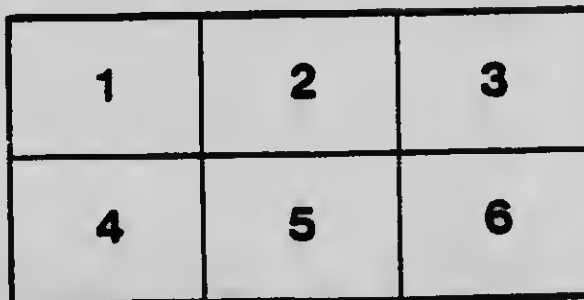
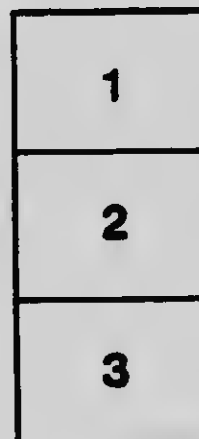
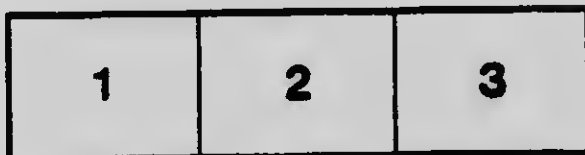
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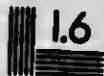
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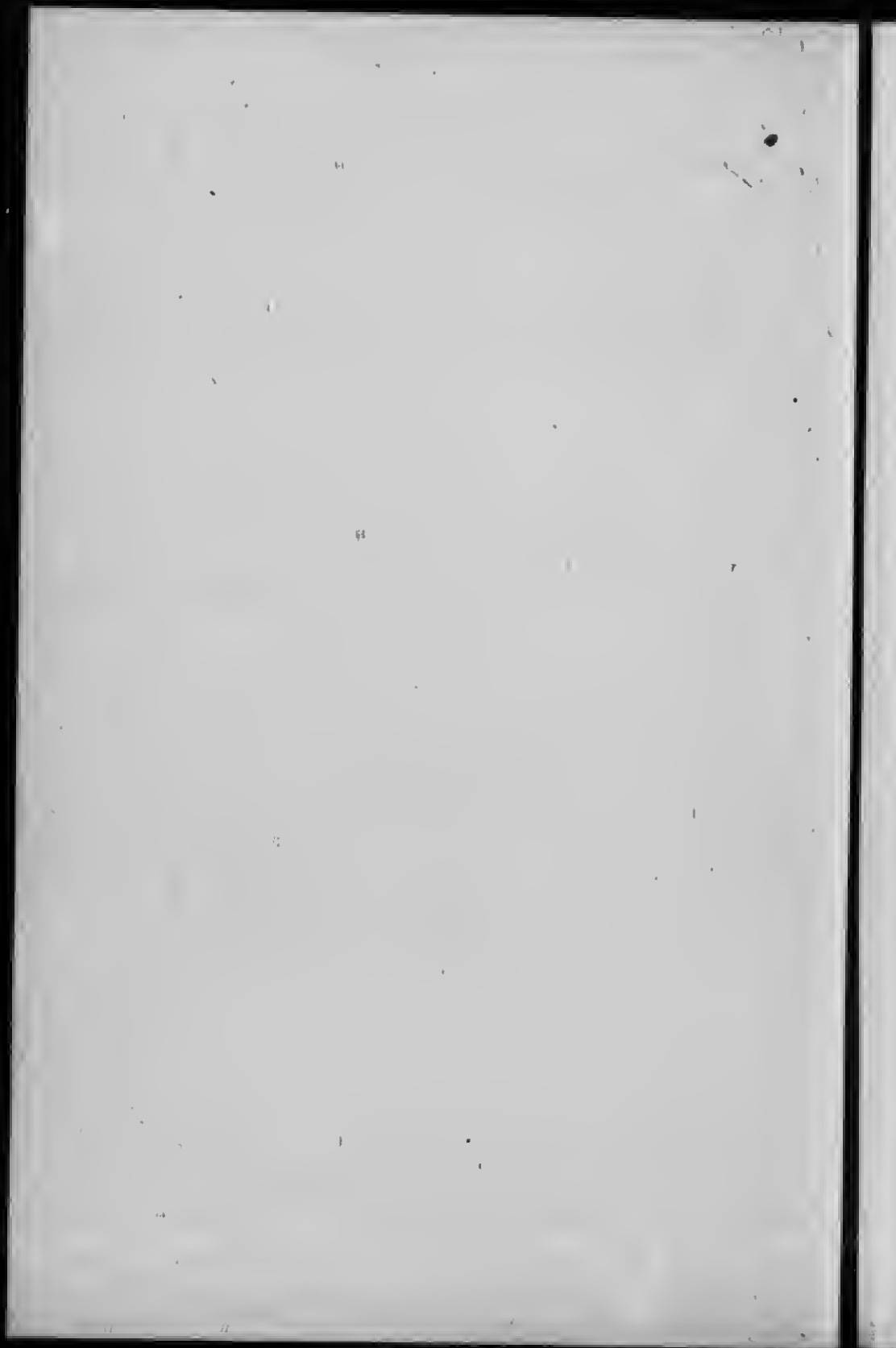
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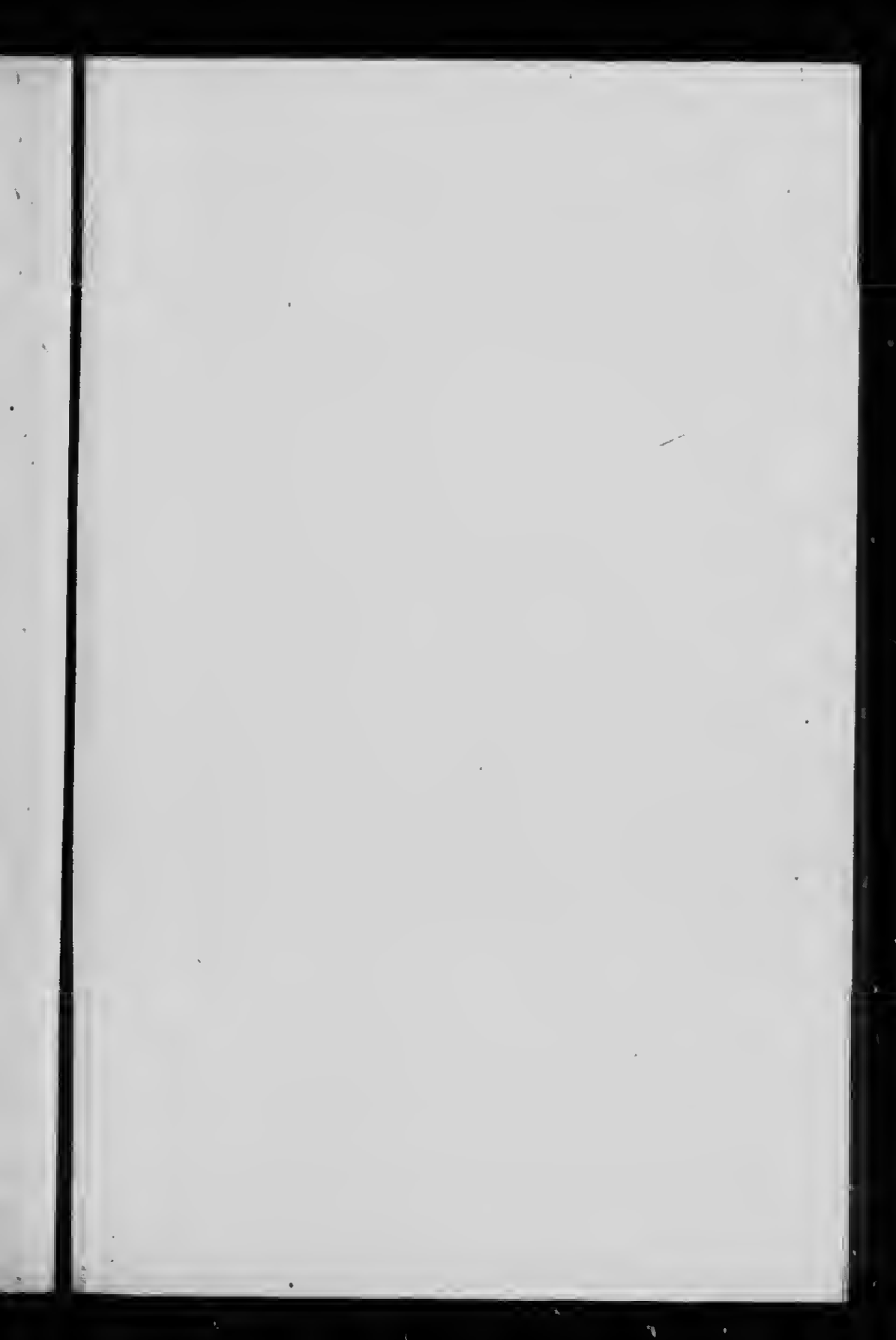
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I SAID NOTHING ABOUT FORGIVENESS

Eve's Second Husband

By

CORRA HARRIS

Author of *A Circle Rider's Wife*

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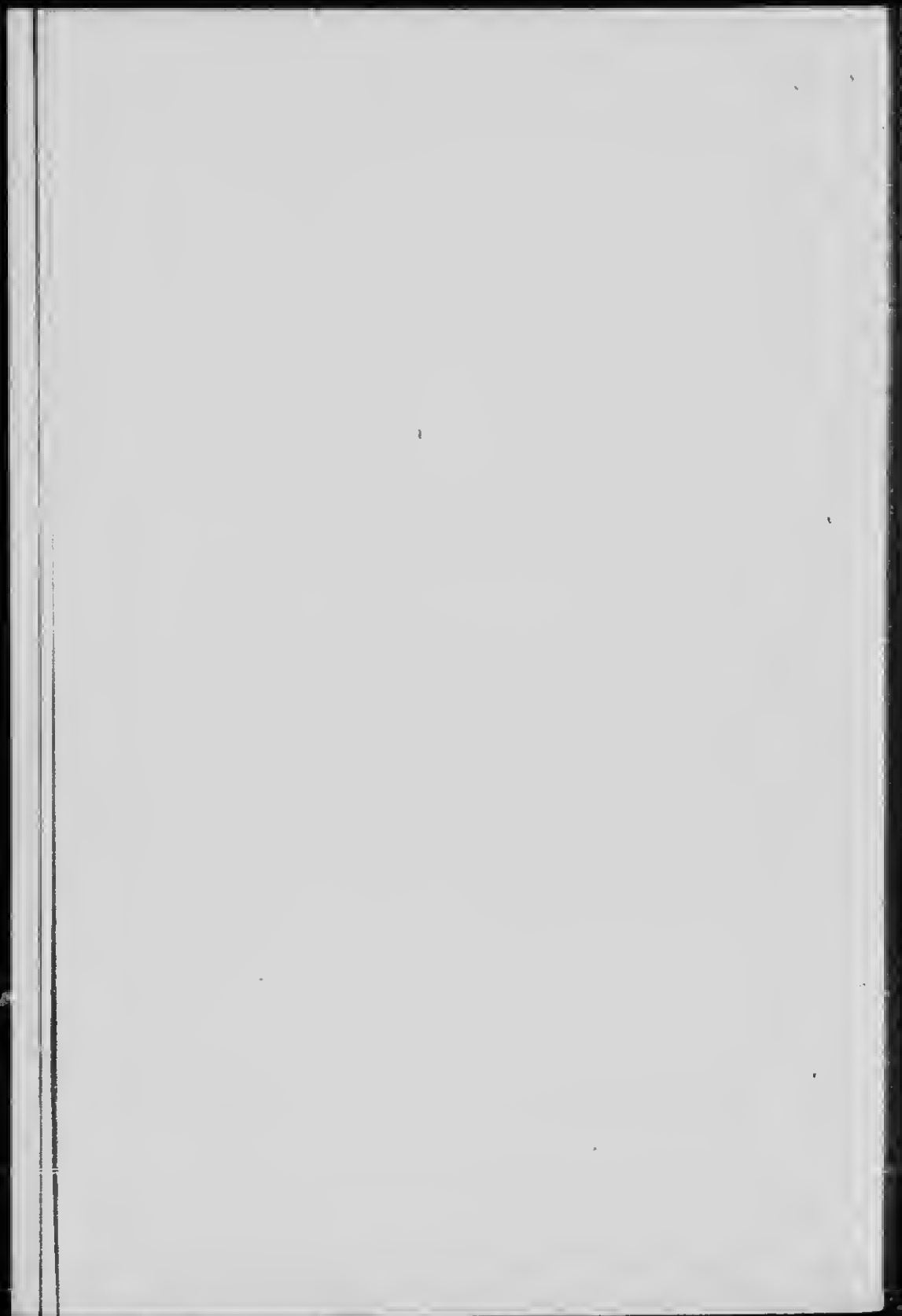
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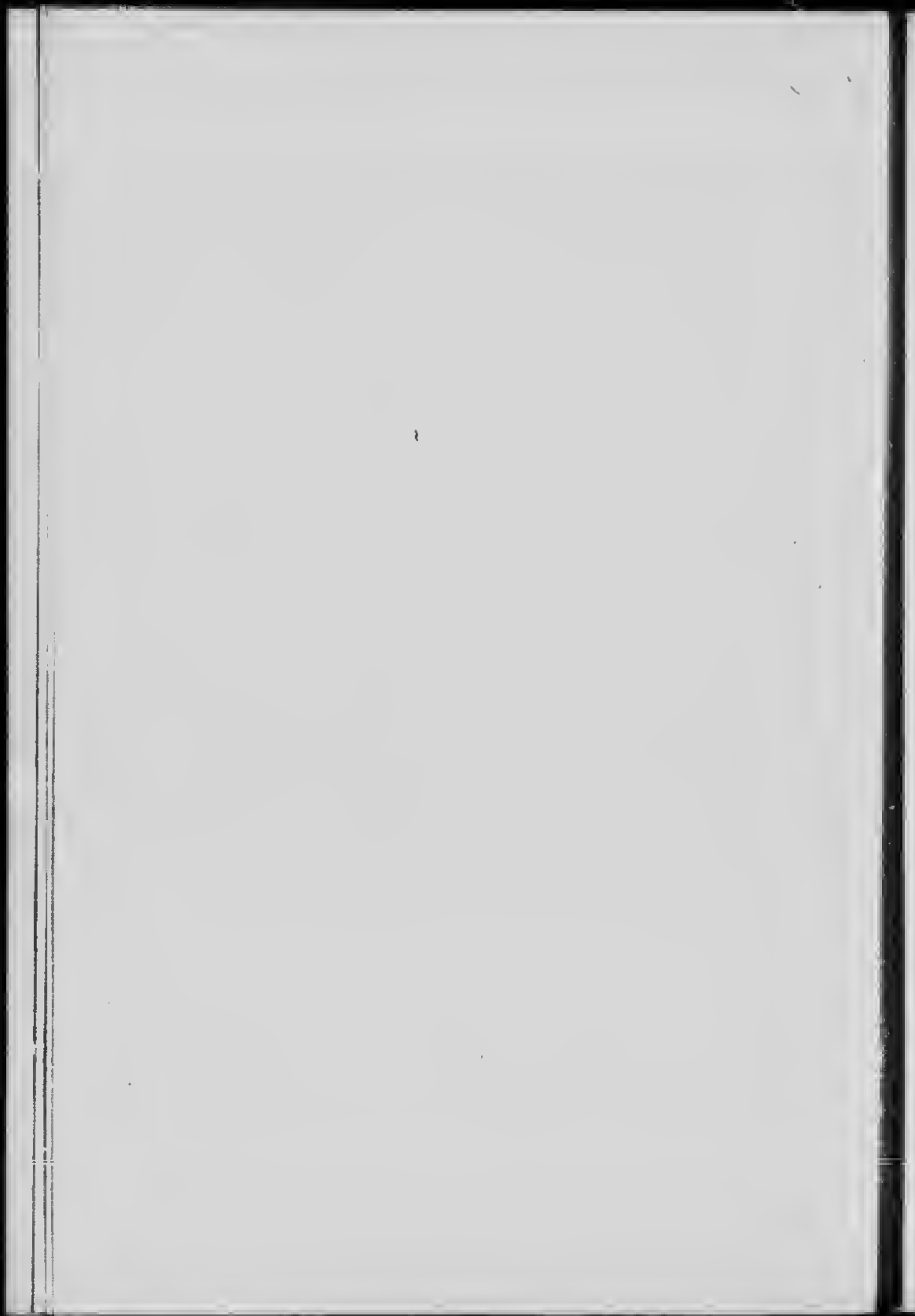
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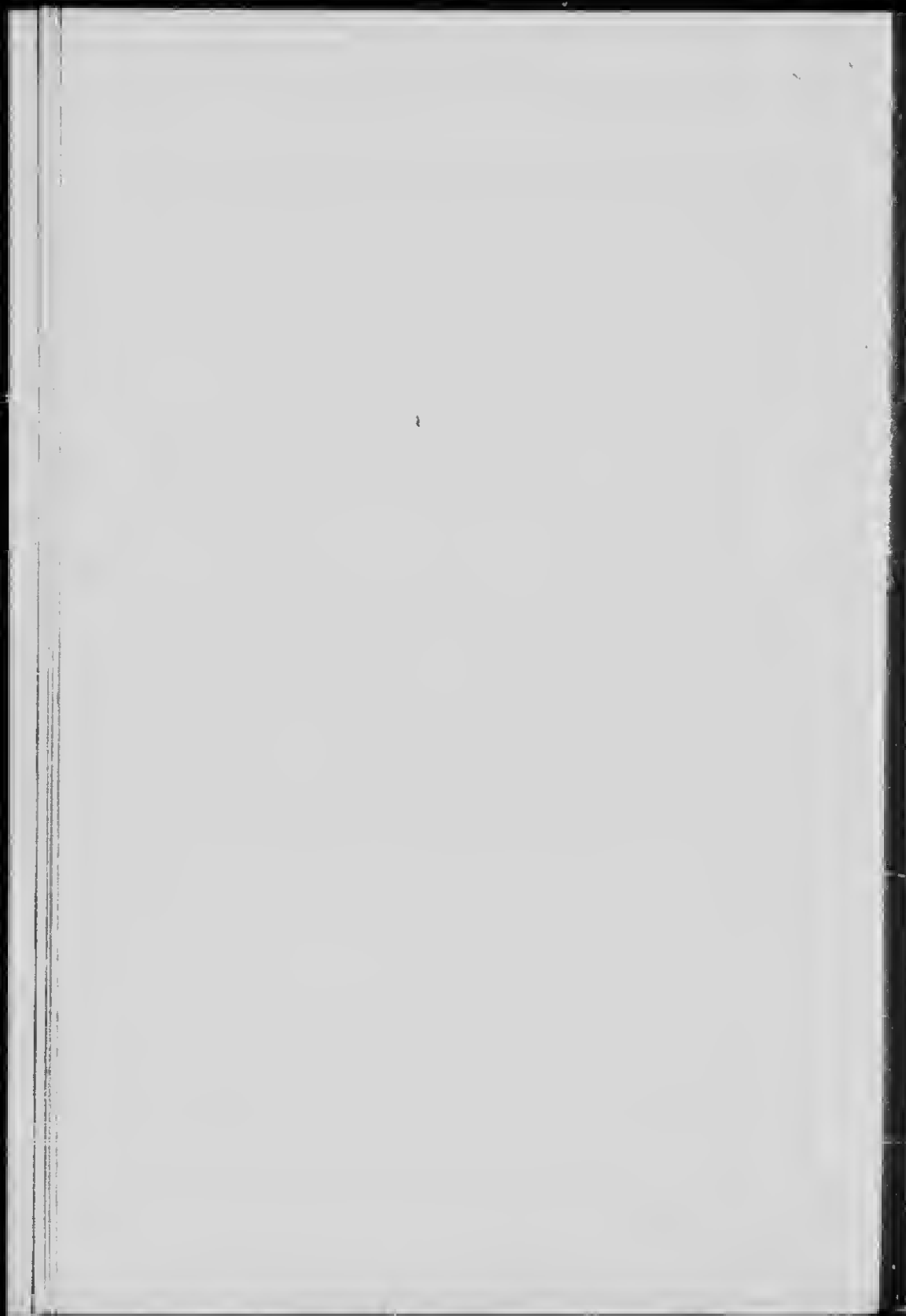
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**THE YOUNG EDEN
WIDOW**



CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG EDEN WIDOW

WHAT I am about to write is not a story; it is the truth, set down with no more style in the telling than shows about the face of a middle-aged woman in an old-fashioned sunbonnet. There is a certain truthfulness in women, very remote, hard to find, harder to express, that never is modish enough for fiction and that does not even belong to their times, but to just them. It is homely, double-chinned, wears a sort of prayer-hood, walks softly before the Lord, keeps an Eve-eye upon man, and it outlasts mere styles and times, like the whiskers of Moses.

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If you find it in what I am about to tell you will recognize it by the manner in which it differs from the feminine anemia and the backaching matrimony that is so often dramatized in the fever-blistered, neurasthenic novels of the day.

I was born in Booneville, Boone County, Tennessee, a small town on the Cumberland River. Father kept a drug store. His name, including his title, was Colonel John Spotteswood Langston. He had simply gravitated into the drug business because it was the least profitable. He was the only aristocrat and by the same token the laziest man and most influential citizen in Booneville. He was a tall, withered-looking person, with an unbecoming military mustache and a nose that proclaimed his lineage. It was immense, like a noble monument to many honorable ancestors. The rest of his face seemed to draw back from it, as if unworthy of a too intimate association. I do not know whether my mother respected him or whether she merely

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accepted him as women do curious dispensations of Providence. She was splendidly plebeian, made of the same furrow-dust that grows great corn. She was large and brown, wrapped in a kind of silence that seemed to last like a sort of spiritual cerement even when she talked. She believed in God as you believe in daybreak while it is yet dark, and she was as frank as a child about her prayers.

We lived in a very old house on the street that ran parallel to the river. There were rows of boxwood bordering the walk from the low veranda to the front gate, and the greater part of the house was covered with ivy. All the houses in Booneville, indeed, were old and ugly and covered with honeysuckle or madeira, or some other running fig-leaf of Nature's modesty.

There was a church on the west side of the town that had the air of keeping a perpetual Presbyterian Sabbath; it was so austere unpainted and weatherbeaten, so uncompromis-

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ing in its steeple that pointed like a doctrinal forefinger into the Heaven of heavens. On a hill beyond the church was a cemetery. And, as far back as I can remember, there was always to be seen some woman in this place tending her graves. This is the nature of women, that they cannot leave the dead to bury the dead. They must be forever trying to resurrect dear dust, at least into flowers. And in the late afternoon, when the apple boughs cast sweetly swinging shadows upon the red and brown roofs of the town, a flock of geese climbed out of the river and took their stately way down the streets, quacking of the time when they saved Rome. At this hour, also, there issued from our house the aroma of strong coffee and frying bacon. The supper table shone white in the brown gloom of the old house. A thousand fireflies arose from the grass outside. Father came slowly up the walk between the rows of boxwood. Mother untied her kitchen apron and laid it aside as a priest does his

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cassock when altar service is over, and we took our accustomed places at the table. Father asked a "blessing"—his one contribution to faith in the supernatural—and we began to eat in that kind of silence persons acquire who know each other so well that they have no more to say.

These were my parents, this the place in which I lived and acquired my being. It was as though I had been born in an ode or in an old book of ballads. There is nothing in such an atmosphere to warn men and women against marriage. The unhappiness of wives wears such a sweet look of domestic placidity that no one suspects it, least of all the wife. I am sure mother never knew that she was not happily married. She had reduced her sorrows to a formula of prayers, and enjoyed them in a pious way. Father, like many other men in Booneville, was that very emblem of contentment, a satisfied failure. People accepted their marital relations; so there were no divorces.

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As for me, I read life by the blossom, by the blue of the sky, by a sweet anticipation that coincided more nearly with the spring song prophecies of birds than it did with the resignation of mother's face. At the age of eighteen I was that simplest of simple creatures, a village belle without a beau. I was what was called "overgrown" that is to say, I was tall, and I had a figure of an integrity so Grecian that I was never able to draw my waistline into a fashionable smallness. Nature had made me for the plow of destiny, for the deep furrows of life. The fate of a small, nervous, fascinating woman would have become me as little as her bonnet. But no one warned me. My face was plain, being too large and expressionless for beauty, although I had a fair skin and regular features. And in this connection I will confess a curious hallucination that has bewitched me—I have always felt beautiful. Even now, when I am past fifty years of age, with no vestige of the fairness of youth left, the sen-

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sation of beauty is so grave, so inwardly convincing, that to look suddenly into a mirror and behold the patient, passionless homeliness of middle age invariably confounds me. Somewhere far within it does not resemble me—what I really am. I have a young image there of such love'iness that it is a mystery to me how the heavy crown of buff-brown hair I once had ever darkened and then turned gray. The flesh and bones of me tell lies in wrinkles and rheumatism.

At eighteen, I say, I had such an appearance as I have described, and an expectation of happiness based upon the evidences of things about me. So I went a-courting—discreetly, of course, as all women go. I arranged my hair into a golden proclamation of this fact. It is not the proclamation that is written in words that attracts the most attention. I wore white muslins that were flags of surrender to love, finished with little lace ruffles as aimless-looking as a coquette's deceits. And every afternoon, about the time mother

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sat down behind the vines on our veranda, with the darning-basket before her, I went forth to conquer and to be conquered. Nothing could have been more innocent or effective.

There was a square in the center of the town, a square of blazing sunlight scalloped by the irregular shadows of the "business" houses of Booneville, with a pump and a puddle in the middle of it. If the day was warm the puddle was occupied by Colonel Middlebrook's sow—I mention the sow not because she will figure again in this narrative, but to indicate the tolerance and democracy of the community.

On the east side of this square stood the courthouse, with numerous split-bottom chairs, congregated in skeleton groups upon the long porch that reached to the sidewalk. In the afternoon these chairs were occupied by county officials, by that class of "leading citizens" who "controlled" the county politically, and by "promising young men."

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Colonel Middlebrook, the Boone County representative, was the bellwether of this company. He was a large man, with a long chin beard, a flat, thin upper lip, a bald head, a balloting eye and a short bull-terrier nose. He was always to be seen hatless, coatless, with perspiration spots on his shirt, waving a palmetto fan, and engaged in explaining to his comrades how to save the state from the Republicans in the next election.

There was a long line of horse-racks on the north side of the square, to which were hitched some of the best-known horses and mules in Boone County. The stores where general merchandise was sold occupied the south side. But across the square, opposite the courthouse, in the full glare of the afternoon sun, stood the postoffice, the office of the Booneville "Banner" and father's drug store. Beneath the awning of each sat the other "leading citizens" of Booneville, those who represented the reform element and who stood for "law and order," and for all those

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ideals that distinguish the minority everywhere and at the same time render it so impotent.

You will understand why it has been so necessary to detain you with a description of this man-burdened square in Booneville when I explain that it was also the trading-post of love. In the afternoon every young girl in Booneville made the circuit of the square upon one pretext or another. And I cannot forget even yet the trepidation, the agonized modesty, with which I accomplished this pretty pilgrimage—or the furious disappointment I experienced if something prevented my making it. To pass the stores was an easy matter. One could be interested in the show windows, where there was a display of prints and laces, artificial flowers and fashionable ladies' shoes. But the exquisitely feminine suffering with which I advanced from that corner to the next, past the long courthouse veranda, can only be understood by a woman whose nature has driven her

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forth to similar experiences. Under no circumstances could I have lifted my eyes; at the same time I was conscious of the gaze of every man upon the veranda, a gaze so distressing and offensive that I was ready to sink with mortification. My delicacy was outraged, my eyes suffused with tears. Yet the following afternoon, or at least the next after that, I might be seen again undergoing the same torture, cheeks reddened to angry scarlet at some compliment overheard from the row of men tilted back in every attitude of insufferable complacency; or, maybe, a low whistle from Clancy Drew, a briefless young attorney in the company. Nothing can be more humorous or more pathetic than this maiden-peddling of love. Sophisticated women never succeed at it so well. No matter how chaste they are, they are not sufficiently virginal in their minds. Some beam in the eye betrays them, however demurely they go.

So far you have seen how simple this nar-

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rative is, and how much has been omitted for the sake of brevity. I have recorded rather than dramatized, regarding this part merely as the preface to the real story, which has to do, as the title implies, with my second marriage and my second husband. You have missed, for example, the lazy gossip, the human clatter of the town, the sound of droning cart wheels and heavy wagons loaded with corn, the tall wains of hay drawn slowly along the streets. You do not see, as I can in memory, through the open windows of Booneville, the faces of mothers bending above little white-hooded cradles at evening. You do not hear, as I can hear, the churn-dasher dashing and the fresh voice of some young girl singing, "Come, hutter! Come!" I have given no intimation of the schism in the church. You have not been informed that my Uncle Sam Langston and his wife, Aunt Betty, also lived in the town, although the time came when they meddled sadly with my happiness. I have failed to bring out the

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fact that father was, when away from home, the most talkative man in the world, so that to this day the vocative strain of his fancy flows through the history of Booneville like the epic of a dryland Télêmaque; and that there was a feud between him and Dr. David Marks, arising from some dispute about the character of a certain bitters which father sold; a harmless, grandiloquent feud, conducted in father's great manner to the disgust of the good old doctor, who was as peaceful as a cow. I ought to have begun with the feud, but all these circumstances will appear in their proper order.

The important thing to note now is that I am born, I am christened "Eve" after my grandmother. (I have neglected to say that I have the oldest woman-name in the world.) I grow up and am about to be married. The bridegroom is not yet in sight, to be sure; but when a young girl begins to traipse the streets you may be sure some young man will come to the rescue of her modesty—not that that

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is what he means by coming, but it is what it means to the poor girl.

Now, when a woman has been married twice the scenes of her first marriage and the character of her first husband become the memorial background upon which the experiences of the second marriage are cast. For this reason I must detain you a little longer in regard to this first wedding and this first husband. The record is not interesting, but it is important.

The promenade that I so often took around the square, and that I have attempted to describe, invariably ended at father's drug store. It was here that I met Mr. John Knox Bailey. He not only belonged to the reform party, but he was the editor of the Booneville "Banner," which he conducted in the interests of that party.

This is not the time to touch upon the corruptions of Booneville and of Boone County. They were sufficiently numerous and scandalous. But my purpose is to introduce Mr.

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Bailey, to whom I was married three months from the day I met him in father's drug store. You observe that I write it "Mr. Bailey" still. Now, when a woman continues to refer to her husband as "Mister" nearly thirty years after his death it is a tribute to character, to say the least of it. And I would as soon call the Sphinx by its maiden name as to refer, even yet, to Mr. Bailey as "John." He was that kind of man, young, but with a long white beard hanging from the chin of his dignity. He was of medium height, and he had a countenance that never changed. It was a sort of covenant, surmounted by a shock of stiff black hair, composed of a rigid jaw, straight, heavy black brows, cold gray eyes, deeply set, and a Sabbath-day mouth. His nose was a kind of Ben Gaw elevation that completed the austerity of his expression. Add to this the fact that he had a mournful, yellow-streaked mind, of the kind peculiar to reformers, and you have an accurate impression of him.

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If the drawing seems severe and unbecoming the wife of his bosom I can only say that when a man that was your husband has been dead a quarter of a century, you are not one dust with him. You have that peculiar mortal advantage of having survived him, and of being able to look back and see him as he was—which a wife never does so long as her husband is living, unless she is preparing to get a divorce. The eyes of a proper wife are always sweetly holden.

At the time he asked me to marry him I accepted him as I would doubtless have accepted any other. A maid does not know how to choose a husband. She only knows she wants a lover. But a widow not only knows what kind of man she is willing to marry, she knows from experience the kind she will not marry. No woman in her right marital senses would have deliberately chosen one like Mr. Bailey. There is something revolting in masculine pluperfectness to women, once they discover it in a man. The point is, he chose me. It is

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the way more men than you might think get their wives. If women had the propriety of choice few of them would take for husbands the men they actually do marry.

So then, Mr. Bailey was my first husband. And if he had been my only husband, these scriptures of matrimony would never have been written. We lived three doors down the street from father and mother until his death from pneumonia two years later, and from the day of our wedding I had the feeling of having entered upon the everlasting study of something as tedious as a Latin grammar. There is nothing stagy about a man who is just good, once he becomes your husband. The dreadful thing is that nothing ever happens, except that he comes home for his meals and to sleep. He does not talk to you because you are a woman. Even when he does what would be startling in another it becomes in him commonplace or ludicrous. Mr. Bailey used so much violent language in the "Banner," for example, that some of the fiercest

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words known to man lost their expression, so to speak, and looked at you faintly out of the faded ink. At one time or another he called every man in the courthouse gang a "liar," but he would not come to blows when challenged by the victim. He merely wrote another editorial reasserting the said victim's mendacity in still more violent language. His powers of resentment were journalistic, not manly.

We lived together in a terrible kind of peace. Every day I felt the lack of Eve's apple. I would have given him anything that might have awakened the honest earth within him. The time came when I wished he would get drunk or do something equally startling and human—anything to break the monotony of life. The routine of merely keeping house and kissing him good-by taxed something in me that had never been taxed. It was not love; it was patience. If only he had stayed out until one o'clock some night, without being able to account for his absence, I believe I

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could have loved him. My experience is that a wife must entertain, at least now and then, some anxiety for her husband, either his life, his fortunes or his morals, in order to develop the whole sweetened character of love. But I never felt the slightest uneasiness concerning Mr. Bailey. He would not fight, he had no real ambition, his enthusiasms were vicious, and his morals would have done credit to Elijah. There are such things as respecting a man whom you despise and loving one whom you cannot respect, and wives are the only people in this world who know it.

Less than a week after Mr. Bailey's funeral I received a letter from a person who signed his name "Adam West," offering to purchase all the property connected with the Booneville "Banner" "for fourteen hundred dollars cash." He would also take my home "at a reasonable figure," in case I should not wish to live alone during my widowhood.

This letter was dated from a newspaper office in Memphis. The phrasing and chiro-

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graphy suggested a man of character rather than of distinction. But of what kind of character the turned-up noses of his vowels and the slashing of his "t's" did not indicate. However, all this was nothing to me. I immediately accepted his offer, both for the "Banner" property, which Mr. Bailey owned at the time of his death, and for the house in which we had lived, including the furniture.

I had already gone back home to father and mother, and I can never forget the sensation I had in taking up the round of daughter duties in the house that I had suddenly laid down two years before. They had not changed. There were the same feather-beds to be made, the same old clock to wind, the same yeast to set for supper bread, and mother wore the same garment of silence. My passionate weeping upon my return, with my head upon her knees, had not broken it. It was as though she knew better than my tears the meaning of life. She merely sat stroking my hair with her strong, peaceful hands. And father was no

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more changed than mother. Instead of saying, "Thank you for the butter!" he had the same way at the table of leaning over and staring with hypnotic intentness at the butter-dish, as if he expected it to move across the cloth to him. He showed the same bustling habit in getting off after breakfast, as if he expected a busy day at the store. Even the cat had her usual litter of kittens in the basket behind the kitchen stove.

Nothing had changed but myself. I wore a black dress, and in the pale simplicity of my face imaginary grief—which may be, without our suspecting it, the subtlest satisfaction in the world!—was beginning to draw an expression. The lineaments of prayer appeared dimly mirrored in my own lineaments—when your heart is buried in somebody else's grave prayer is the only proper language left you. And I imagined that my heart was buried in the tomb of my husband. It is what every woman imagines, no matter what kind of person the husband may have been. Women are

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often capable of being more faithful to the dead than they could bear to be to the living. You never see upon a widow's countenance that look of relief and timid animation, like signs of early spring upon the poor brown sedge-ground of an old field, that may so often be observed above the beard of a widower's face. This difference between the bereaved husband and the bereaved wife is accounted for by the fact that the sense of decency in women, to say nothing of their natural proprietary interest in sorrow, is stronger than their love of liberty. But if you tax him far enough you will find that even a bridegroom's love of liberty is the strongest affection he is capable of.

As a matter of fact, no one can be faithful to the dead, because the dead no longer exist. They are not. At best, one is faithful only to a memory, to thoughts you think yourself.

But women, particularly widows, are not analytic. So, every day I put the long black

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veil over my mourning bonnet, took my way sadly through the streets of Booneville, out upon the road that led to the cemetery on the hill beyond the church. Mr. Bailey's remains had been buried at the foot of an arbor-vitæ tree in our family plot, where there was an iron seat upon which I rested. Undoubtedly, it was the most reserved, desolate-looking grave at first. You will have observed that about new graves. It is not till the grass grows and the flowers bloom above that one feels a little as if one had established communion with the dear dust below. Doubtless this accounts for the passion women have for cemetery horticulture. Anyhow, as soon as the spring advanced sufficiently—Mr. Bailey had died in January—I began to plant bulbs and seeds about him. In a few weeks I was suffering the keenest anxiety upon their account—whether the frost would nip them or the rains be too cold. My affections and interest were being gently raised from the dust of Mr. Bailey below to the growing, living

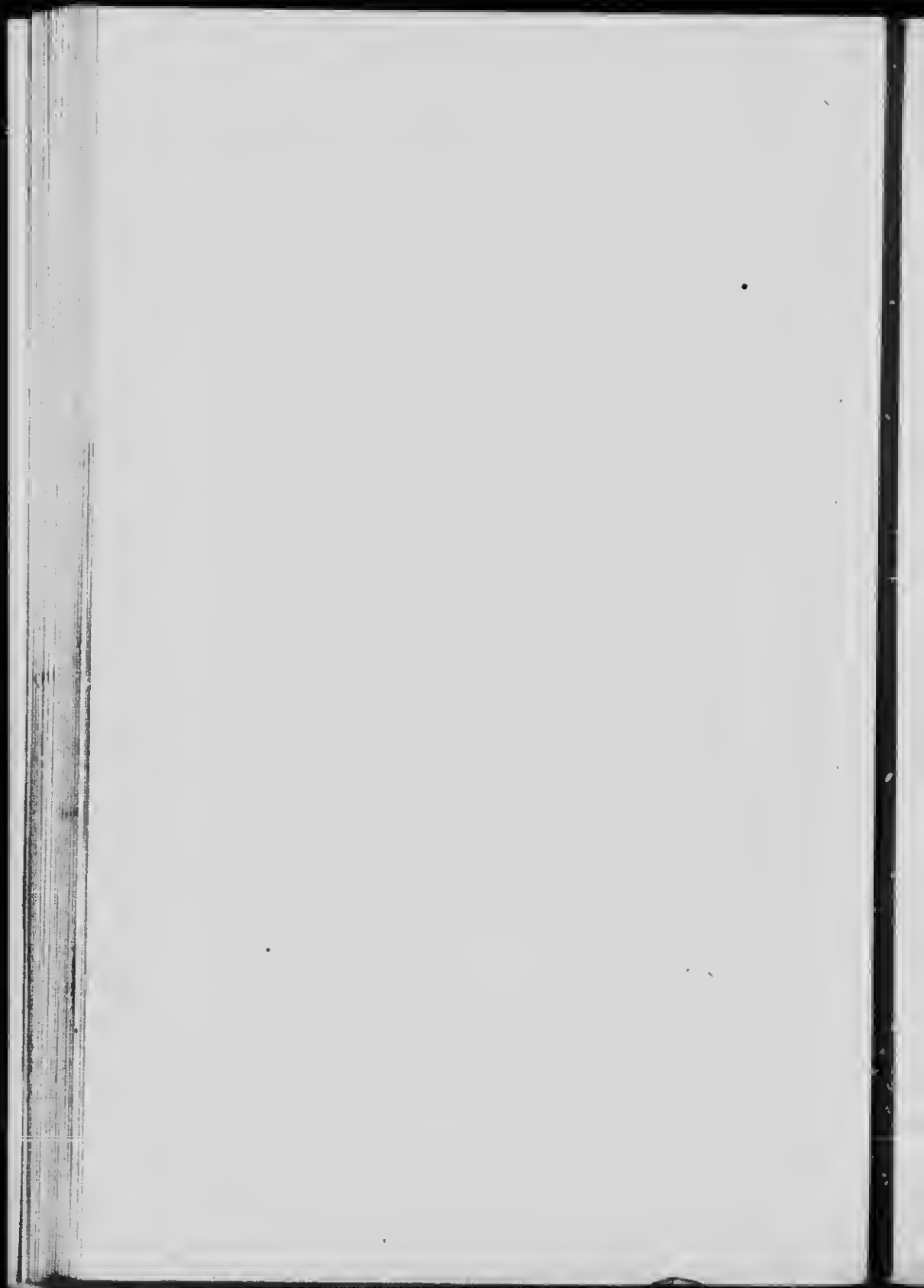
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things above. I began to take a sad, weeping-willow joy in the heartiness of the white hyacinths, narcissuses and pale trumpet lilies, standing in coffin-shaped rows, like little white and green prophets of life everlasting. Many a dead man has been cheated thus by his widow and the world is none the worse for it. The fact is, my health and spirits improved as my little mourning garden throve in the summer weather. Without being aware of it, I experienced all the pleasant relaxation of a person taking a vacation after a long strain. At the same time, all unconsciously, I acquired the reputation in Booneville of being wonderfully faithful to my husband. I was invested with a certain romantic interest by the women and treated with awed respect by such men as I met in the seclusion of my widowhood.

But love is the burier of the dead, and the evergreen that grows above.

ADAM IN EVE'S
GARDEN

3—Eve's Second Husband.



CHAPTER II

ADAM IN EVE'S GARDEN

LATE one afternoon in October I was returning along the road from my daily visit to the cemetery. The sun, which had been obscured all day, dropped below the clouds and hung red above the horizon. At the same moment the town arose in the distance, as though it had not been there before, with all its gables glorified. This glow fell upon the earth far and wide, to where the shadows deepened between the brown breasts of the hills beyond the town. I was experiencing that leisured, sad pensiveness that married women never have because

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it is a premonition of romantic love. Not love, you understand, but the sweet, fallow prayer ground where love springs so easily into life. I lifted my veil and sighed, not for Mr. Bailey, but for nothing at all. It is the mood a woman is in when she is willing to throw kisses at her guardian angel—very high, but not pious. Suddenly I perceived what I had not observed through the gloom of my veil—the figure of a man approaching along the road; a man who, even at that distance gave the impression of being out of keeping with the phantasmagoria of light that was falling upon him, as though one had seen a fool in Heaven.

He was tall, with broad shoulders, and he wore a white wool hat set so lightly and sideways upon his head that it seemed to caper. He walked with a roystering gait; not drunken, but natural, as though he had been born with a slim devil in each leg. I lowered my veil instinctively, as one might seek the nearest shelter in sight of danger. As a mat-

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ter of fact, I had, with the suddenness of a shock, the same sensation I suffered before marriage when I passed the lounging crowd of men on the courthouse veranda. I had the deeper emotion of sustaining some relation to this man who was approaching. All of life is the past—what we call “the future” is only that part of the past which we have not yet recalled. The stranger had drawn so near at that moment that I felt this ancient “future” look me in the face. For the briefest instant our eyes met. His were large, dark and humorous, almost smiling. The rest of his face was grave, too grave to be in earnest. I flushed, having the feeling somehow that I had been laughed at. The reason why did not that day enter my thoughts.

Here is the trouble about a story—the impossibility of making it true to life. While you are telling some of the things that happened, the other things that also happened at the same time, and that belong to it, must wait. Thus, if you had lived in Booneville,

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you would have known that while I was taken up with my widowhood and my daily visits to the cemetery, Adam West, the new editor of the "Banner" was turning the town and county topsyturvy.

Soon after Mr. Bailey's funeral the "Banner" appeared as usual, but not as usual. If Satan had switched his tail over every page of it the effect would not have been more startling. The leading editorial was in the nature of a salutatory as well as an obituary. The editor praised the virtues of his "esteemed predecessor" with the air of a man who makes a list of the sort of qualifications he does not want himself. All the advertisements had been freshened up with phrases that winked at you and type that jollied you. The "local items" contained news that was almost mischief in its wit about some member of nearly every family in Booneville. It was as though Puck had kissed them on the back of the neck in public. But, most sensational of all, was the editorial in the column that Mr.

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Bailey had devoted to denunciations of Boone County politics and officials, and to attacks upon the "courthouse gang." This was a flowery wreath of words to the effect that every citizen should feel bound in all conscience to vote for the best man, marry the fairest woman, and never to forget the "Lost Cause!" Never was there such skrewd bombast nor such an enthusiastic reception of bombast.

The paper appeared on Saturday afternoon. An hour later the courthouse gang was seen to issue in a solid body from the door of that building, rush across the square waving the "Banner" and giving the rebel yell. They were met by the reformers from the headquarters of the minority, the drug store and the "Banner" office, also giving the rebel yell. This was unprecedented. For years these two branches of citizens had kept the whole width of the square between them. And there had been no trespassing, no mixing, not even in the church, where the same party lines were

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observed on each side of the central aisle. But now these lines had been wiped out by the stroke of a pen. All was amnesty and pleasant confusion in the square. The new editor had discovered the only emotion common to every man in the county, and he based the policy of his paper upon it. In the years that followed he never changed it. He was elected to the legislature, to Congress, and finally to the governorship of Tennessee, apparently on account of his devotion to the "Lost Cause." He never made a speech, whether political or Sabbatical; he never offered a toast or delivered an address of welcome, or sent a "message" to the legislature, that he did not rainbow it somewhere with an apostrophe about the "heroes in gray." This is the peculiarity of the South. It is not governed by issues, but by sentiment. At the time of which I write there was not a man in Boone County who could have told whether Adam West was a Democrat or a Republican, a "gang politician" or a reformer. Once or

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twice Colonel Middlebrook, observing the new editor's popularity with growing alarm on his own account, called attention to this circumstance, but his criticism was received coldly. Mr. West always conducted himself with an eloquence and a charm that could have been either Republican or Democratic, and each believed him to be of the party to which he himself belonged. It was in the days before the close communion of "primaries" and "judiciaries."

I knew the man I had met on the road was Adam West. I had frequently seen the hack of his head in church, and sometimes he passed our house in the mornings on his way to the office. I heard much of him, and thought of him, if I thought at all, with widowed indifference.

The next afternoon as I was returning from the cemetery I met him again, almost at the gate as I came out. I saw him lift his coat and put his hand upon something in the inside pocket, and then think better of it. Imme-

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diately after he lifted his hat and swung past, with the same wind of laughter in his eyes. I wondered what the man meant, and blushed. I thought of Mr. Bailey's grave as a refuge. Instantly I was overcome with the fear lest he should meet me, there next time. I said nothing of these adventures at home. Indeed, they were not adventures except as my heart exaggerated them. I had simply met a person on the road two days in succession who bowed courteously in passing. Yet his face was constantly before me—the dark hair, the brows almost femininely arched above the brilliant black eyes, and the lips, turned and modulated until they sat in his face like an eloquence ready for speech; above all, the firm chin, the severer because of the pallor of his skin. I was to learn later from this same chin that a firm one does not indicate that a man is strong morally; it only means that he is strong willfully.

The following day I determined to remain at home. It had become a sort of impro-

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priety to visit my husband's grave. Nevertheless, I went, knowing that I should be indignant if Adam West again usurped the road and deeply disappointed if he did not.

Words cannot describe my emotions when, upon reaching the gate of the cemetery, which opened almost immediately upon our lot, I beheld him standing under the arbor-vitæ regarding Mr. Bailey's last resting place with the rooster-look of a wrestler who has cast his antagonist in the dust. The audacity, the sacrilege of it appalled me. I turned and fled, hoping that I had not been observed. The next moment, however, I heard steps behind me and a voice beside me.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Bailey. This is Adam West."

I bowed coldly, recovering my self-possession the moment we arrived in the region of conversation.

"We already know each other in a business way and I have ventured to present myself without a further introduction."

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I maintained the proper air of frigidity and felt it. The man was becoming a commonplace fellow who accosted defenseless women upon the highway.

"I have something that belongs to you. I felt that I ought to restore it to you personally, since you had inadvertently left it in my care."

We were standing in the road, facing each other, he with his hat in one hand while the other reached for something in his breast pocket. There was a moment's hesitation, the brightest beam of humor or curiosity in his eyes regarding me. Then he drew forth a large envelope. I took it mechanically. The next moment I felt the blood fly to my face. It was a photograph of Mr. Bailey. I had been so absorbed in the rites of my widowhood that I had never missed it.

"I found it in one of the dresser drawers when I moved into your house," he explained. "You must have forgotten it."

His tone was meditative, offensively so;

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yet I could think of no reply. We walked on together, I holding the covenant-faced profile of Mr. Bailey at arm's length down against the folds of my black dress; he, still bare-headed, carrying his hat in his hand.

I have said that I will write the truth. This accounts for the lack of dialogue in these pages. One does not often recall accurately what one's husband said at the breakfast table, say, twenty-five years ago, nor what one replied, nor how one felt. But it is different with a lover. I never knew any woman to grow so old or so forgetful that she did not remember exactly what her lover said to her upon such and such a day. If it was at night she can tell whether the moon was shining and how many stars saw him do what he did. Just so, I have forgotten a thousand wiser things Adam West said afterward, but I remember every word he uttered that day, and the goldenrods and purple-topped irises we passed along the road, and every beat of my own heart.

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He had withdrawn his eyes from me, covering my confusion with averted gaze. Still we had but one thought between us.

“Do you still love him?” he demanded at last in the soft tenor tone of impatience that some men have.

What a question with which to begin a courtship! I thought—for I perceived that I was about to be courted. I should have denied it to the last breath, even to myself; but I perceived it and remained silent. You have already been informed that I was a stupid village girl. It is not my fault if you are disappointed because I cannot record quick, brilliant replies to Adam West's questions. I doubt if any woman ever makes them when she is being courted. There would be something forward, indelicate about wit at such a time.

“Did you ever love him?” he went on after an interval.

I knew that I should resent this. As a matter of fact, I began to weep. Shakespeare was

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profoundly correct from the psychological point when he permitted Richard III to court Anne in the very presence of her dead, and when, after spitting on him, Anne yields to his advances. Love, I believe, takes no account of the dead, nor of mourning veils.

We were passing the old stile by this time which led into the Middlebrooks' sheep pasture. My companion drew me to it, and we sat down.

"I want to talk to you," he said.

"Wait!" I replied, drying my eyes. I felt that something womanly was at stake; that I must answer him promptly. "You ask me if I loved my husband. I must have loved him. Certainly I did. I could never have married him if I had not, could I?"

"Oh, yes, you could. Women do it every day and never find out. But for me you might have gone on, maybe, all your life digging and planting in that grave up there just to prove to yourself what never was true. Women are like that!"

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"Indeed!" I exclaimed, bridling. It was as near as I could come to coquetry.

"Yes, I say it. You never loved your husband. You were not made to care for a man like that."

I perceived that he not only despised Mr. Bailey, but he was jealous of him. And it comforted me to reflect that Mr. Bailey was where I need not resent what was being said about him. He was no longer my husband. He was merely my memory. Still, I tried to withdraw my hands, both of which were held folded together between the palms of Adam West. This was my last, faint effort at widowhood propriety.

"Listen to me," he went on. "You are placid, like the earth. You are one of those great, peaceful women who have no brains, and who balance the world in its orbit. But for you and your kind we should be tumbling, dead atoms in space——"

"Really, Mr. West——"

"Your name is Eve, mine is Adam. Call

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me Adam! This is just outside the Garden of Eden, this little stile—outside, mark you. And I need you to love me and help me do things by the sweat of my brow. I can't do without you. I am too light. I am not a good man. I have to be redeemed over and over. I need you for that. It is no easy life I am offering you—and not much happiness; but if you will marry me I promise you shall be the wife of the governor of this state in ten years. If you don't I'll be damned. I can't help it. I am by nature a sort of fizzle."

He paused and looked at me. There were tears in his eyes. I felt my own fill. Then I swung back from him and laughed. He caught me to him and kissed me, and we laughed together. One lovely thing about love is that it is made up so much of laughter, and that it has so few premonitions of sorrow. All lovers are babes in the woods.

An old ewe came and looked at us through the rails of the fence. I remember how grave and maternal her air was.

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The everlasting attraction such men as Adam West have for women is their fascinating veracity, and their need of us which they know so well how to express in an eloquent love prayer. They are really the greatest liars in existence, because their truthfulness produces a false impression and their very love is a kind of epilepsy, a fit that comes and goes. There was I, for example, ready to marry Adam because he had confessed the very worst limitations, thus casting the responsibility of the future upon me if I accepted him, because he needed me. Never once had Mr. Bailey expressed or felt such a lack. He was entirely sufficient—morally, mentally and spiritually, at least. There was nothing a wife could do for such a man. He produced, in fact, the most depressing of all impressions upon a woman—that of being and feeling superior to her. It is a prerogative with us to have this feeling of superiority ourselves. I was a simple brow-smitten woman in my first marriage.

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But now we were two lovers sitting on the bottom step of the old sheep-pasture stile.

"How did you ever come to know me well enough to love me?" I asked.

"How did you come to know me well enough?" he retorted.

"I didn't, but I do!"

We laughed and kissed again.

Then Adam changed his face. From gayety it cooled into gravity, the kind a man shows when he remembers pitying a woman.

"I will tell you how I came to know you well enough to love you," he said, looking away from me.

"You recall that it was late in February that I bought your house. It was still warm with your passing presence when I moved into it. There were red embers in the fireplace and the hearth was brushed so clean, as if you had considered me. There were little tokens of you and your sweet industry everywhere. I went about at the very first, taking note of them in each room. The stiff,

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ruffled white curtains at the windows were so feminine. That row of polished platters on the kitchen shelf touched me. All was swept and garnished so particularly. You must have been lonely, you were always so busy. From the first day I missed you, a woman I had never seen. Then, in the spring all the things you had planted came up, little orphan flowers in my yard, that looked for you. They had been your children I knew—a little spelling class of bachelor-buttons along the garden walk, lonesome young lilies that bloomed like candles in the evening waiting for you." He paused, dashed his hand across his eyes and exclaimed:

"God! it was awful; living in Eve's garden without Eve!"

Men like Adam have a histrionic talent so well developed they think they are being truthful when they are only dramatizing their fancies.

"One day I found Bailey's photograph where you had forgotten it. And then I un-

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derstood all your little indefatigable labors. You were trying to pass the time, poor child! Your heart was empty, and you did not dream that it was so. You thought you were a happy housewife. But you were only the keeper of the house, the little widowed Eve-mother of the flowers in your garden!"

He lifted my hands and kissed them.

"And that is how I came to know you well enough to love you!" he concluded.

We were married the following April. There is no need to describe the day. All April days are so nearly alike. The years do not change them as they do brides and grooms. There were the thin, misty wings of sweetly transient clouds in the blue above us. The earth was blossom-crowned. And, I remember, there was a tomtit wedding going on under the eaves of the old church as we entered.

One thing only darkened the edges of that bright day for me. A woman may be married more than once, but she can be a bride but

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once. The trance is broken ever after. She cannot even look like one but once. She may wear what she will of wreaths and whiteness, but the look of the bride never is there. I feared in my heart that Adam might notice this.

And now since that day I have been the wife of Adam West. This is not so much my distinction as it is my state of being. I have no distinction, but he is a celebrated man. This is as it should be. In a proper marriage the husband may be distinguished if he can, but it is better for the wife to remain a restful, unknown person. Fame is not nearly so becoming to women as it is to men, anyhow. It is more than apt to cast them or their husbands out of drawing. Adam and I knew a man in Nashville once who had a celebrated wife. He far surpassed her in the dignity of real intelligence, and he was designed for that graver success in life which does not depend upon the public fancy. But she had inherited a curious, figurative use

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of words from an old, backwoods, stammering grandfather that accounted for what was regarded as fascinating literary style which had made her famous. She had what I always call a hunch in the use of language that made you jump. This was her gift, and it did not extend to her very commonplace mind.

Her husband preferred the gentle peace of obscurity, but she kept him in the glare of publicity because it was her pleasure to be surrounded constantly by a cloud of admiring witnesses. He suffered that final humiliation of man in being known as "Mrs. B.'s husband." And he bore it all with a Periclean twinkle in his eye, a sort of humorous forgiveness that always excited my admiration. But I could never bear his wife. She was a kind of literary caterpillar, devouring a situation that by right belonged to him.

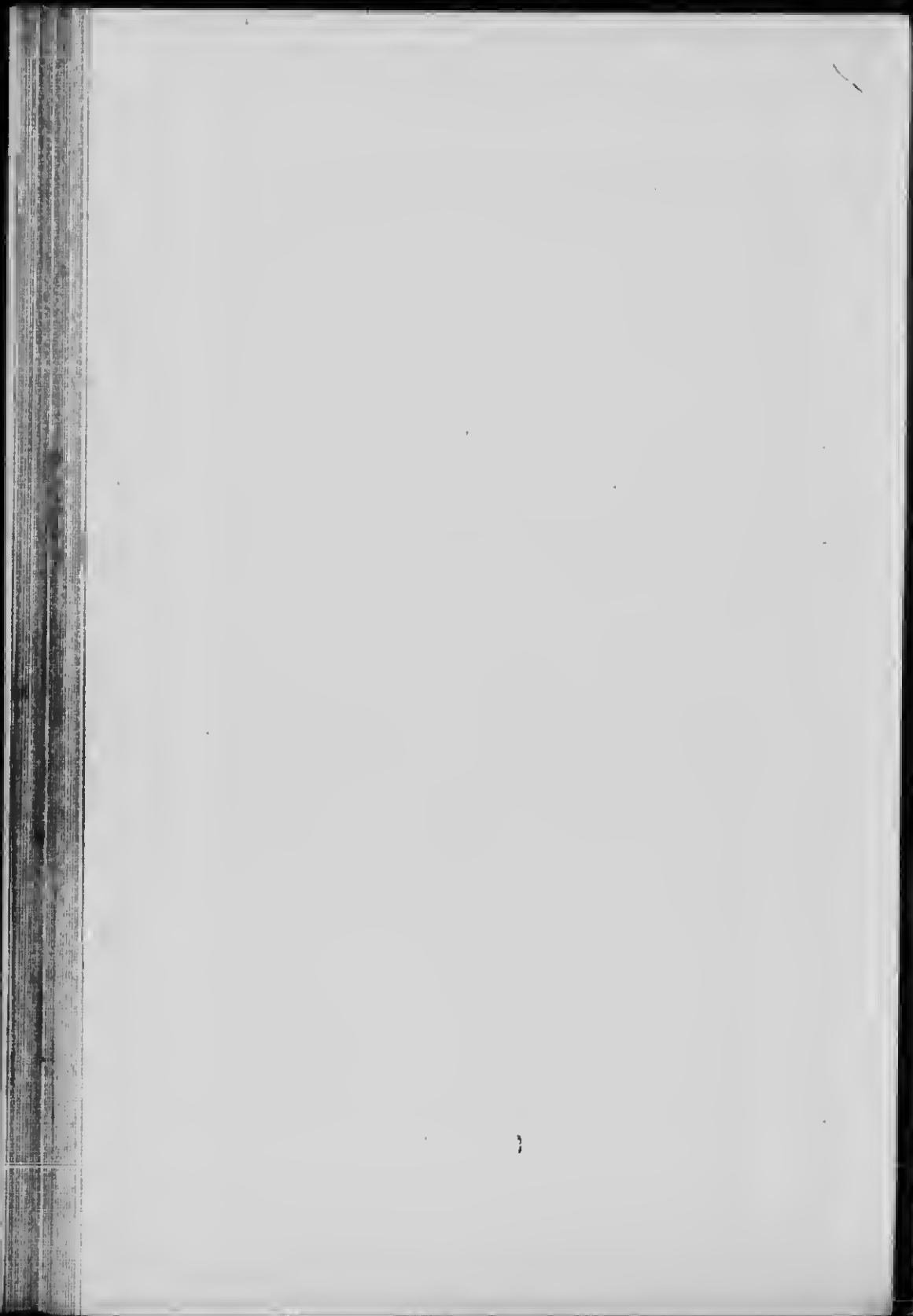
It is especially important that the wife of a public man should efface herself—not to the public, but to him. He needs all the room there is in matrimony, which is always more

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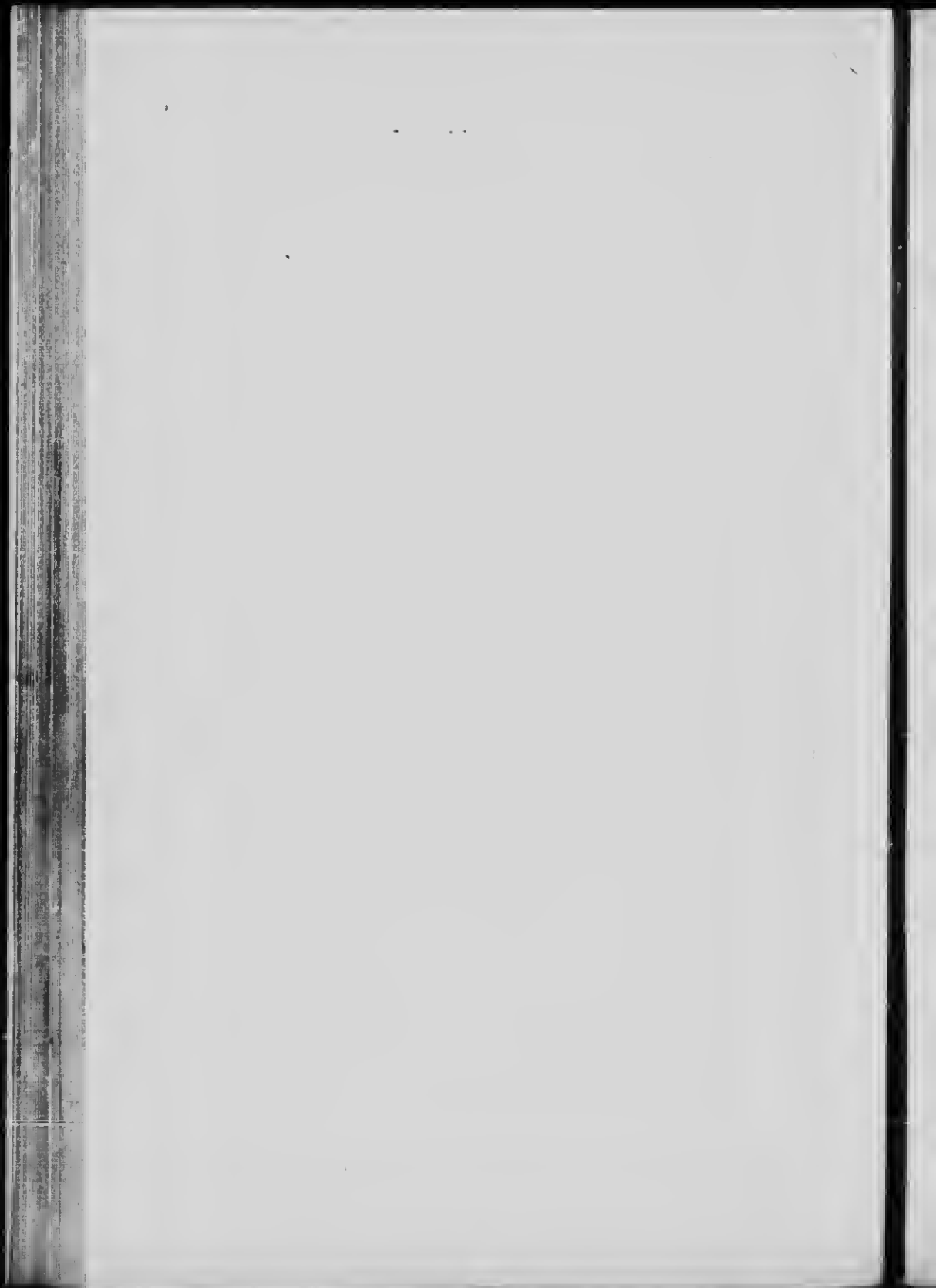
or less cramping, to expand his personality, that aura of the mountebank, preacher and politician. And, although the citizens of Booneville did not suspect it, Adam was already on his way to becoming a successful politician—that is, a local statesman. He had all the natural qualifications necessary for such a success, although I was longer in discovering them than you might infer from the ease with which I am cataloguing them. In the first place, he had a fine moral sense which had nothing in the world to do with his character. It gave an old-fashioned granite stamina to his public utterances which inspired confidence. Adam's moral sense was like some religious rituals. It was for the people, not for him. Again, he was short-flighted spiritually. He did not belong yet to God, but to this world, as the oak belongs to the earth. He was and is still interestingly unscrupulous when it comes to weeding his own row. He is not the man to be trusted in the Master's vineyard. He is a magnifi-

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cent tare among tares, and not an easy one to reap. He has worked out his salvation in this present world without much fear and trembling. I do not know what will become of him in the next. There have been so many more immediate anxieties. I have been worn to a frazzle worrying over his honor and his fortunes and his impudence with Destiny, but never for a moment have I ceased to admire him even more than I love him. He is made of some kind of profane hero dust which is not subject to the same tests that saints are. Some men are to be judged by their morals or their petty pieties; and some demand to be judged by their deeds, by their excellent faults. Adam belongs to this class, and what follows consists of the apocryphal scriptures of his life, touched constantly from the sweet innerside by Eve, his wife; for from the day of our wedding I became not so much his better half as his nether millstone, the weight that balanced him and often obstructed him.



**EVE SEES ADAM'S AURORA
BOREALIS**



CHAPTER III

EVE SEES ADAM'S AURORA BOREALIS.

THE summer after we were married was an eventful one in Adam's career.

He was somewhat in the position of the original Adam when, the morning after his creation, he was called out to name the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air and the fishes under the sea. I have never thought much of this first man as a husband and father, but the way he met this emergency seems to indicate that he was a person of brains, and that he had a gift for language that has never been equaled by any of his descendants. My own Adam was hardly less

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resourceful in meeting the situation that confronted him. This was not the Edenic problem of naming jackasses so much as it was the more difficult one of managing them for his own ends. The first Adam was not expecting to be elected to the legislature any time soon, or he might have been more embarrassed than he was as registrar.

Adam's methods were simple. In that lay their strength. For example, until the very day he appeared in the political arena he continued to publish editorials upon noble themes, mostly patriotic. They were like some preachers' sermons, so heavenly minded, so remote from the real scarlet of the human heart, that they eased the conscience of sinners. In spite of the futile rumblings of Colonel Middlebrook, the people of Boone County forgot that a certain railroad rate question must be settled at the next meeting of the legislature, and that the railroad interests lacked only one vote at the last session to carry their point in the law. They

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were much more interested in that column in the "Banner" that the editor devoted to "A History of the Heroes of Boone County," in which some member of every family in it figured—usually in battle array, shooting Yankees at every jump.

And it was the first time since Booneville boasted a newspaper that the comings and goings of the "mud-sock gang," barefooted farmers and distillers living back in the hills, were recorded along with those of the "leading citizens." The truth is, Colonel Middlebrook's departure to Nashville to attend some committee connected with his duties as a member of the legislature might be overlooked in the "Banner." (No matter how much the colonel strained himself upon the top rung of the ladder in Booneville, Adam was apt to miss the performance, which appeared for some reason to be far more galling to him than Mr. Bailey's vituperations had ever been.) But if Bud Williams entered the town riding his little mouse-colored mule that

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went "Te-haw! te-haw! te-e-e-haw-ah-honk!" as it trotted across the square, the name of Williams shone in the next issue of the paper along with other "Prominent Citizens in Town." And the fact that Bud wore a blue "hickory" shirt, that he had no saddle on his mule, that his long legs hung so low he could almost pat the ground with his bare feet, and that he seemed to be in an ambushade composed by his own fiery red whiskers, made no difference in the adorning adjectives employed in this announcement.

Being a genial Democrat was as near as Adam ever came to being a Christian. The outward appearance is much the same, like the features of two brothers who differ astoundingly in character. It was on his inside that he fell as far short as though he had been gorged with forbidden fruit and was in a state of perpetual hiding from God. It is, I believe, one of the conditions of political success still in this country. You cannot run for sheriff, or for the legislature, or even for

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the governorship, on the principles with which you make the race for a harp and crown in another world, no matter how much you may quote Scripture in your political speeches. Adam never tried it. He had no inner modesty, no deference to other worlds. His mind was pointed toward the place he wished to reach in this one, and that was the only point in it. His conscience was an arrow, not a conscience.

Immediately after our marriage he made his first political campaign, a miniature one confined to Boone County. And this was really our wedding tour. He had been entered by his friends, apparently much against his wishes, in the race against Colonel Middlebrook for representative, and he was coming up in it with a leaping, thin-flanked speed that made him the hero of the county. No one could have recognized in this political roadster, with his coat-tails flying back over the dashboard of the temporary platform of his party, the simple-minded idealist who

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had adorned the columns of the "Banner" with sentimental editorials about the "Lost Cause." The "Banner" itself was changed, like a lady who has lost her virtue and is not ashamed. It was bedizened, scandalously decorated with campaign eloquence and "lost to the principles of true democracy," as Colonel Middlebrook pointed out. Also he referred to Adam as the "serpent he had nursed in his bosom." He was thinking of the enthusiasm with which the courthouse gang had received him when he first became editor of the "Banner."

Chicken fighting ceased to be the side show and diversion at barbecues that year. Colonel Middlebrook and Adam West were invited to hold a joint debate instead. There was usually a rude platform upon which the speakers sat facing the crowd. The crowd was composed of farmers and their wives, young beaux and their sweethearts, with a thick sprinkling of "town people" toward the front—"political heelers" they are called

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now—and a rim of the “mnd-sock gang” in the rear. There is not a stranger sight or a more significant one than a city courtroom full of the kind of men usually summoned in a famous murder case, from among whom the jury must be selected, and the crowd that assembles in any country place to listen to a political speaking or to watch a chicken fight. They are identical—made up of the gentle earthworms of civilization who enjoy a futile kind of fierceness by proxy—so primitive they cannot dramatize their own sensations, so dull they never read newspapers, and therefore competent by reason of their unprejudiced ignorance to sit on juries in trials for murder. In the country they represent the corn-and-meat strength of the nation. In the city they are the incompetent poor, the scavengers; the rotting burden of the times.

The first of these debates occurred at the Mill Creek barbecue. The crowd was unusually large. There was a ring of horses and mules hitched with dangling harness to the

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limbs of trees in the background. These kept up a continual stamping at flies and whinnied salutations every time another horse or mule arrived. There were an equal number of babies struggling in the arms of the farmers' wives in the audience, homely earth women who married clods and bore vigorous children. These babies clawed at the calico-clad bosoms of their mothers and vied with the mules in the noise they made. The din was increased whenever some one kicked a hound that prowled between the seats in search of sweet cakes discarded by the yelling infants.

Colonel Middlebrook was the first speaker. Adam sat behind him on the farther end of the platform, with folded arms. He was wearing his wedding suit and looked like a cross between a young stripling god of love and an adolescent politician. The colonel wore a thin black alpaca coat and two inches of his shirt showed between his white vest and his trousers. He was very fat, very warm, furiously angry and he had no more

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imagination than grease has. He stood with his short legs far apart; in one hand he held a red bandanna handkerchief with which he continually mopped the sweat from his bald head and face, in the other he held a palmetto fan that he could not use on account of some sudden sense of awkwardness. He confined himself to facts, stating what he had done for his constituents and what he would do. From time to time he flirtd the fan over his shoulder to indicate Adam, without condescending to look at him, calling attention to the grave interests involved and the danger of choosing a light, untried and foolish young person for such a serious duty as representing the people of Boone County in the legislature. It was in the course of this speech that he spoke of Adam as the "serpent he had nursed in his bosom." Finally he resumed his seat, his wattles fiery red, his under lip hanging, and showing a wet perspiration spot between his shoulders behind. He was really outraged at the indignity of

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being obliged to meet Adam at all in debate, and the more indignant because of the dull indifference with which the crowd had listened to what he had to say, if indeed they had listened at all.

Adam arose, folded one arm behind him, placed one hand in the breast of his coat so that the other was folded in front, and advanced with the gentle, modest air of a young man who is about to meet a thousand of his celebrated superiors. The effect was exquisitely complimentary and winning. He had the softened tone, the diffident manner of young integrity under trial. He was like a boy lark taking his first spring notes in the rhetoric of song. Suddenly, however, he seemed to get his bearings, to achieve courage out of his own inner consciousness of untarnished virtue, and immediately he soared into the empyrean of language. He glistened, he plucked the very stars from the heaven with an ease that indicated the loftiness of his ideals. The crowd shouted, the women

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wept, the babies paused with the tears upon their cheeks, rolled their eyes at him and were fascinated. I felt as though I had climbed a high hill in my heart to look at the aurora borealis of my husband's soul, and I was happily breathless with the effort. Later I discovered that this was the only kind of evidence Adam ever showed of having a soul.

Never once did he refer to an issue of the campaign. The implication was that these could not possibly suffer in his hands, that he would attend to them later when he was elected. Toward the close of his speech he assumed an expression of sadness, dropped slowly, reluctantly back to earth, turned with the air of injured innocence and cast a look of reproach upon Colonel Middlebrook, who sat in a kind of apoplectic silence throughout the performance.

He desired to take up the charge of being a "serpent in Colonel Middlebrook's bosom," he resumed, after an accusative pause. He did not mind so much being called a serpent

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—serpent was the Lord's own emblem of wisdom—but he wished to deny that he had ever had anything to do with Colonel Middlebrook's bosom and he challenged anybody to prove that he had. He declared that he had come to Booneville a simple-hearted stranger, he had endeavored to do his duty as editor of the "Banner" and leader of public sentiment. In consequence he had been, or was about to be, chosen by the people as representative from Boone County—hence this outrageous scandal connecting him with Middlebrook's political bosom. Middlebrook was jealous, defeated, venomous, and so forth. The so forth was taken up pointing out real or imaginary delinquencies of the Colonel as representative.

Adam would have made a wonderful revivalist. Once he reached his legs and stood up in the debate he was irresistible. He had that magic of the features which we call a spiritual expression. His face glowed, his brilliant black eyes widened and swept the

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crowd like scythes. If he laughed the crowd laughed with him. (Over and above his party platform, which has changed from time to time, he has always had what may be called a personal platform, compassed by two planks—tears and laughter—and this has had more to do with his getting into an office he wanted than the regular firmer one of his party.) If he had occasion to lift his hand to high heaven upon some proposition, as he frequently did, they were inclined to be lifted up accordingly. Also he had the advantage of Middlebrook in that he had no political record, and in that he had an imaginary use of virtuous language that might have excited the envy of an Old Testament prophet.

I shall never have such moments again as I experienced during this honeymoon campaign, sitting from day to day in the shade of some grove upon a front seat at the "speaking," admired as a bride, enjoying the reflected glory of being the wife of the most eloquent man that "ever charmed an audience

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in Boone County." (See county correspondents in "Banner" of these dates.)

One incident will serve to illustrate the coming character of Adam, a character brilliant rather than profound, and one so light that for more than twenty years it has floated gracefully upon the surface of Tennessee politics, without ever being "dry docked" by his party.

The thing I am about to tell occurred at a political rally near Molly's-borough, in one of the most aristocratic and belligerent sections of Tennessee. By the term aristocrat in Tennessee one is supposed to indicate a descendant of a Mississippi planter. To be descended from a Virginia cavalier here means no more than if you had claimed to have evolved from a Himalayan monkey. And by the term belligerent, one means that infusion of the spirit of John Sevier and of Andrew Jackson that makes even the ministers of God natural-born feudists and that has added an extra shotgun faculty to the brains of the best

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manhood in the state. Above all, this section was the hawk-nest neighborhood of a large number of old veterans who had served in Colonel Middlebrook's regiment. The "speaking" itself was to be in a grove upon the Molly's-borough battleground, where it was said the colonel had executed a "novel movement" with his regiment and had thus been in time to save the whole of Bragg's army from being routed. On this account his military record was not only glorious, it was unique. But heretofore he had never been obliged to refer to it. He left it to plead for itself. Now, however, he was in his last ditch, politically speaking. So far the debate had seemed to go against him. He was exhausted. His antagonist was still resplendent, still pawing the ground from under his feet with rhetorical stampings that delighted the audiences.

The Colonel arose when the hour for debate had arrived, advanced to the front of the platform, with the dragging dullness of a tired old

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man. He stood for a moment silent, looking out over the familiar faces of the crowd, some of which he had seen many a time before wreathed in the musket smoke of battle. That silence was the one eloquent sentence he uttered during the campaign. It was apparent from the first word that he had abandoned his arrogant position of self-assurance and had assumed the humbler one of pleading for the continued support of his constituents. He was an old soldier, he said. He had no mean record as commander of the Boone County Wildcats, as some of the men before him knew. He could not make an eloquent speech, he was not made out of words, but there had been a time when he could have matched any man's words with bullets. He paused again. There was something in his bulk and helplessness that pleaded for him. It was a glorious memory, made ugly in the fat of an old man's form. He could not help it. He could not even voice the memory. He resumed. What he was about to say was this, he explained.

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It was not the office of representative he craved, but the honor of their confidence that his election to the office would prove. He did not think, he said in conclusion, that John Middlebrook would ever have to remind the men of Boone County of his services in protecting their homes twenty odd years ago from the Federal army. But——. Here he began to fumble awkwardly at his collar. Deliberately he unbuttoned it, pulled his shirt open, showed a breast covered with long gray hair and a livid scar that glistened across it whiter than the hair.

“I got that from a Yankee officer’s saber not a hundred yards from where I am standing now, out there in that open field.”

He refastened his collar with the same deliberation, and walked back to his seat. He had not been on his feet ten minutes. Suddenly the air was rent by a “rebel yell”; the very sunlight seemed to tremble. The colonel sat imperturbable, with eyes apparently fixed on the past out there in the “open field.”

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The yelling continued longer than the speech that had evoked it. And I wondered how Adam would meet the situation—Adam, who was as naked of battle scars as a new-born babe, who, I believe, if he had been wounded, could not have kept even in his flesh so lasting a thing as a scar.

The noise subsided, but when he arose and started to the front of the stand it bellowed forth again. He drew back, gracefully resumed his seat. His manner implied that he did not wish to shorten or to share the cheering that belonged to his esteemed antagonist.

At last he was permitted to begin. He looked like a neatly dressed two-legged comma in the middle of a situation much too large for him. But the genius of Adam consisted in the fact that he could even make a rhetorical use of his own insignificance to further his ends. This is what he did now. Never in history, on Decoration Days, or in songs or poetry did any hero of battle receive a more comprehensive eulogy upon his courage than

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Adam West pronounced that day upon Colonel John Middlebrook. He explained the honor he felt in being reckoned worthy to run in the same race with such a man. This was an audacious parody upon the challenge of John Sullivan by Bill Nye, who explained that he only wanted to be "mixed up with him before the public." The tears streamed down Adam's face as he proceeded in a sort of martial rapture to recount the miraculous musket record of this noblest of the Boone County heroes. The audience responded by weeping also. The veterans were completely captivated by the admiration and reverence of this young man. Middlebrook alone remained aloof, like a large, unsightly boulder that has been rolled into place to commemorate a battle that was fought there. He comprehended the use Adam was making of his glory to fashion his own halo, and he resented it without being able to prevent the sacrilege.

Having made him more resplendent than Cæsar or Napoleon, Adam went on gently to

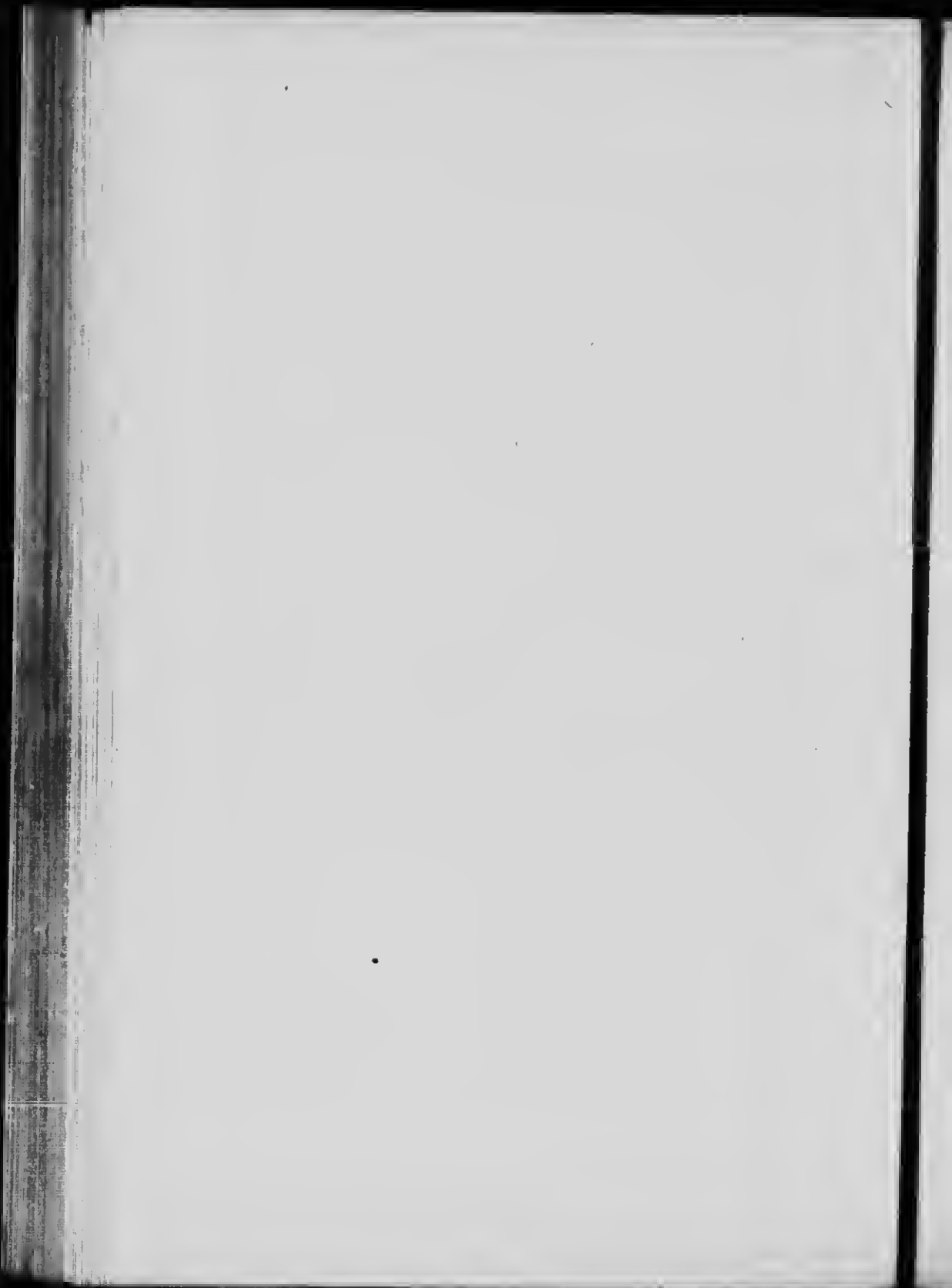
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explain why the gray hairs of such veterans should not be dragged in the mud of political affairs. He showed how already the reputation of the colonel had suffered, not because he was culpable—God forbid!—but because his noble confidence had been abused by designing politicians at the capital. What Boone County needed to protect her in war were men like Colonel Middlebrook; what she needed in times of great commercial greed, like the present, to protect her interests were the alertness and the brains of a young man who had grown up in such times and was better acquainted with them than he was with the glories of war. His reasoning was as clear as his spirit was generous, and had its effects. If he had not saved the day to himself entirely, at least he had not lost it to his rival.

This occasion closed the series of joint debates. Adam and I returned to Booneville. A few months later he was elected as representative by a handsome majority over Middlebrook.

EVE SETS A LIGHT IN
HER WINDOW

6—*Eve's Second Husband.*



CHAPTER IV.

EVE SETS A LIGHT IN HER WINDOW

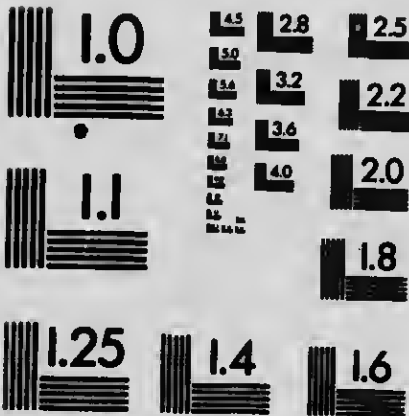
A MAN is a queer creature, although not quite so queer, of course, as a woman. He has a dual nature. He is his own twin, whereas a woman can be her own mother in a sad emergency where there is no one else to comfort her.

During the next six months I learned something about Adam's other nature, the bacchanalian twin of him, whose existence I might have suspected, but did not, because to be a suspicious bride is an incredible sacrilege against love. Besides, I am of a disposition that renders it easier for me to believe rather



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than to disbelieve, to hope rather than to despair. It is more refreshing to the heart, more uplifting to the eyes. Even to this day I cannot resist the temptation to believe Adam when he swears that he will never take another drop of anything intoxicating so long as he lives, so help him God and the spirit of his sainted mother! (He will swear by anything that is sacred enough!) And if he records his vow upon one of the memorial pages dedicated to "Births" and "Deaths" in our family Bible, which mother gave us when we were married, I feel as hopeful and happy as though I had been redeemed to everlasting peace in this world. I believe as firmly in the vow as though it were an addition to the Scriptures rather than an addition to Adam's eloquent apocrypha. Nothing, no anguish of disappointments, has ever cured me of this illusion of a faith in him, which is based only upon the substance of things hoped for in him, the evidence of what I have never really seen in him. I reckon it is the way

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women are made on purpose. We cannot really bear the truth, therefore we must bear and give birth to our illusions as well as our children, and nourish them both with equal care.

About a week after we returned home Adam came in very late one night. I was sitting up for him. I do not know why, but it is an instinct in all simple-hearted wives to sit up for their husbands if they are out late at night. I have known old women to do it whose husbands were as impeccable as saints. This is the answer one of these gave me years later. We were living in Nashville at the time, and although her house was lighted with electricity she used to put a little lamp in the front window of her bedroom and sit up beside it whenever her husband was detained at his office in the evenings by the details of a very large business.

"You see, my dear," she explained, "no man ever gets too old to fly the track in some way. I know that James is true to me; and

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he never drinks anything stronger than water, but I cannot tell what he might do if I should allow him to forget me for a moment. So when he is out this way he has to bear it constantly in mind that I am sitting up waiting for him and that I like to retire early. This makes him hurry home. Of course there are a thousand lights in this street, but this one shines just for him. It helps a man's conscience, little things like a lamp in the window. They are poor creatures, very sentimental morally, and have to be managed this way."

It was as though she were speaking of a child, and not of one of the most distinguished financiers of the country.

As for me, I believe the original woman set a light in her window for her husband. There is no reason in the performance. It is simply a conjugal instinct. I remember how I felt this first night that I did it, as if something in me, unknown before, had been suddenly gratified. It may have been a vanity. As deep as you can ever fathom in a woman you

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will find that. It is one of the prayer pillars even of her faithfulness.

So, I say, I sat by the window of our house and waited for Adam. My thoughts went one by one out in the dark like wise virgins swinging love's light, looking for him. They signaled to one another up and down every street of the old town. A hundred times they seemed to come back to me, "We have found him! He is in Clancy Drew's office talking about the campaign," or "He is over at the Middlebrooks' making friends with the colonel." Each time my heart leaped with relief, only to sink down saddened as the little telepathic tapers seemed to say after a pause: "No, we are mistaken, he is not there. If he had been so detained he would have sent you word."

All women who put a light in the window and sit beside it seek their husbands after this fashion.

At last I heard the click of the latch on the front gate, then a queer spongy step upon the gravel walk. Before I had time to wonder

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who was coming at that hour—it was past midnight—Adam stood before me. He had a teetotaling expression of remorse in each eye so heavy that he could hardly support it. The lids seemed to lag over it. There was a lost-boy look about the mouth. His hat merely clung like a drowning man to the back of his head. His clothes were disheveled, his shoes covered with dust; and he appeared to have become suddenly bowlegged. As I sat regarding him standing in the hall at the open door of our room, this leg ellipsis increased as if he were slowly sinking down.

“Adam!” I cried, “what is the matter with you?”

“D’no, Eve, darlin’—hic—I’m subject to these spells. Don’t worry; be all right in th’ morning!”

He continued to regard me for a moment as a child does who is not sure whether its mother will spank it or weep over it. Then he softly withdrew into the parlor, where I heard him fall heavily upon the sofa.

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As I have already intimated, I have always been a dull woman. My body is too large and my mind too small. I feel more than I can think. And I think more than it is proper to say, being a woman.

So now I turned down the lamp and continued to sit in silence, although it was my privilege to follow Adam into the next room and say the things he was expecting me to say. I understood with the clearness of having had a vision what had happened to me. It seemed to reach as far as I could see into the future, this sad mirage of myself sitting with folded hands at night beside a lighted window waiting for Adam. I had come to one of those experiences in actual life that desolate wives describe in their "confessions," looking over tear-stained handkerchiefs at their readers. It is a publication method they have of winning consolation for their woes. The tears they shed are often only the watermarks of a good-selling tale. But I was too near to being Adam's Eve-rib

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to be guilty of this fault. It would not have comforted me to betray his weakness. However, some time near daybreak I had the impulse to cast myself upon the floor and weep aloud, I was so appalled. This is the truth: Many women in their nerves, and nearly all men in their appetites, remain childish to the last. If the woman about to have hysterics would take a highball she would avoid the hysterics and be drunk instead. If the man about to take his accustomed highball resisted the temptation he'd have hysterics instead and remain sober. We are only male and female in gender. Otherwise we are very much alike.

But to return to my own experiences that night. I finally compromised upon prayer. If there is a good God He has a very poor way of showing it sometimes, and this was one of those times for me. Still, I was anxious to give Him the benefit of the doubt, so I knelt and prayed. There was nothing else to do. Men, I have observed, can help them-

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selves more than women can, and therefore they are not so much inclined to take refuge upon the spiritual plateaux of prayer when in trouble. But for good women life is simply untenable without faith in a paternal Providence.

It is so long ago I cannot remember what I said in this petition. All I recall is the pathetic peace I had as I arose from my knees. It was founded upon nothing but resignation with a rose in its hair. Really, there is no doubt about it, God is good, or He could not create such a tender, forgiving clearing-house of sorrows as a woman's heart is.

When the sun arose that morning I was already shriven and bathed and dressed and about my tasks. I had not gone near the parlor. It contained the skeleton in my closet and I was in no hurry to look at the thing. Instead I had milked the cow. Every respectable person in Booneville kept a cow. She was milked morning and evening, then turned into the street, where she grazed un-

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til next milking time. Then she reappeared at the back gate far more intelligently than the master sometimes did at the front. The men in Booneville were nearly all skeletons in their wives' closets. I never knew a Booneville cow to make a mistake. The Middlebrooks' cow would have died before she would have paused at evening at our back gate. And with equal distinction our own cow never failed to chew her cud under the shade of her own tree which grew behind our lot fence. If I were consulted, by the way, I should advise every "unhappy wife" whose published "confessions" are made up so entirely of her husband's sins to keep a cow. This animal is of a sedative temperament, and she furnishes a primitive employment for nerve-racked women. My advice, too, is to milk your own cow, rain or shine. Men not only are poor milkers, but they are also stupid in their relations to the gentlest of all beasts, and receive very little benefit from her beyond the milk she gives them.

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Well, then, as I have said, on this morning of desolation I had got Spot's milk and some of her innocuous peace of mind. I had opened the gate to her and watched her past the next street corner. I had returned to the back porch, put the milk in a yellow crock, set it upon a white shelf in a cupboard at the end of the porch, and was bending over the churn, settling the top firmly around the dasher, when I heard a step behind me. I dreaded to look up lest it should be mother, who sometimes made very early calls. I did not want her to know what had happened. Looking under the crook of my arm, however, I beheld, not the stout form of mother, but Adam's legs.

"Eve!"

It was his Eden voice.

I stood up and looked at him. When one does not make it up on purpose one does not always know her own expression. I was too much astonished now to dramatize my own countenance, and could not tell how I ap-

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peared to Adam. I had pictured the end of my happiness during the night, and a husband that would be to me forever the body of death to which I was bound. Instead, I beheld Adam looking as cheerful and immaculate as though his guardian angel had shaved him and dressed him. It was really my Adam, not the revolting idiot I had seen the night before.

“Eve! Do you know what would have happened if you had not been here this morning?”

Speech had not yet returned to me. I felt Adam beating upon my silence as a man knocks upon a closed door.

“If you had not been here, Eve, I should have gone out at once and got some more. I should have gone on drinking. But when I awakened I remembered that my house was not empty. I thought of you in the garden. I knew that the flowers were not orphans and that I was not alone.”

He began to laugh happily, like a child who

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has escaped from a bad dream. But he did not approach. The churn and about two yards were between us.

"Eve," he went on, "if you can forgive me I swear it shall never happen again!"

I had to pass the churn, walk those two yards that were as long as a mile in my pride, but I did it. I kissed him.

I said nothing about forgiveness. According to my experience a wife never forgives her husband anything. In the first place, it is neither moral nor decent to do so. In the second, it is not worth while. He will surely commit the same fault again. Besides, love has nothing to do with forgiveness. That day I loved Adam as I never had before. And to the disgust of all those women who tattle nobly in fiction of their outraged sensibilities living with brutal husbands I'll confess here that this was a radiantly happy day for Adam and a pitifully happy one for me. Every hour of it I felt a woman somewhere in my heart crying hopelessly, but not a word of

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her lament escaped my lips. Adam was already well of his sin. He really believed it was as far from him as the east is from the west. I was slower recovering from the wound of my sorrow, but I was recovering after the manner of women.

He spent the day with me, sharing in delightfully awkward man fashion all the household duties. He made a great fuss shaking up the corner of a feather bed in the company room. His efforts to smooth it were so inadequate, so ridiculous, that I began to laugh. This afforded him so much encouragement that he set himself the task of amusing me and causing me to forget. I understood and was grateful, but not for one moment did I forget. Not even when he elevated me to the pedestal of being his guardian angel as well as his wife, although I accepted the pedestal with that feminine vanity women always show about being willing to be lifted up on account of their superior goodness. Later I discovered that it is not wise to per-

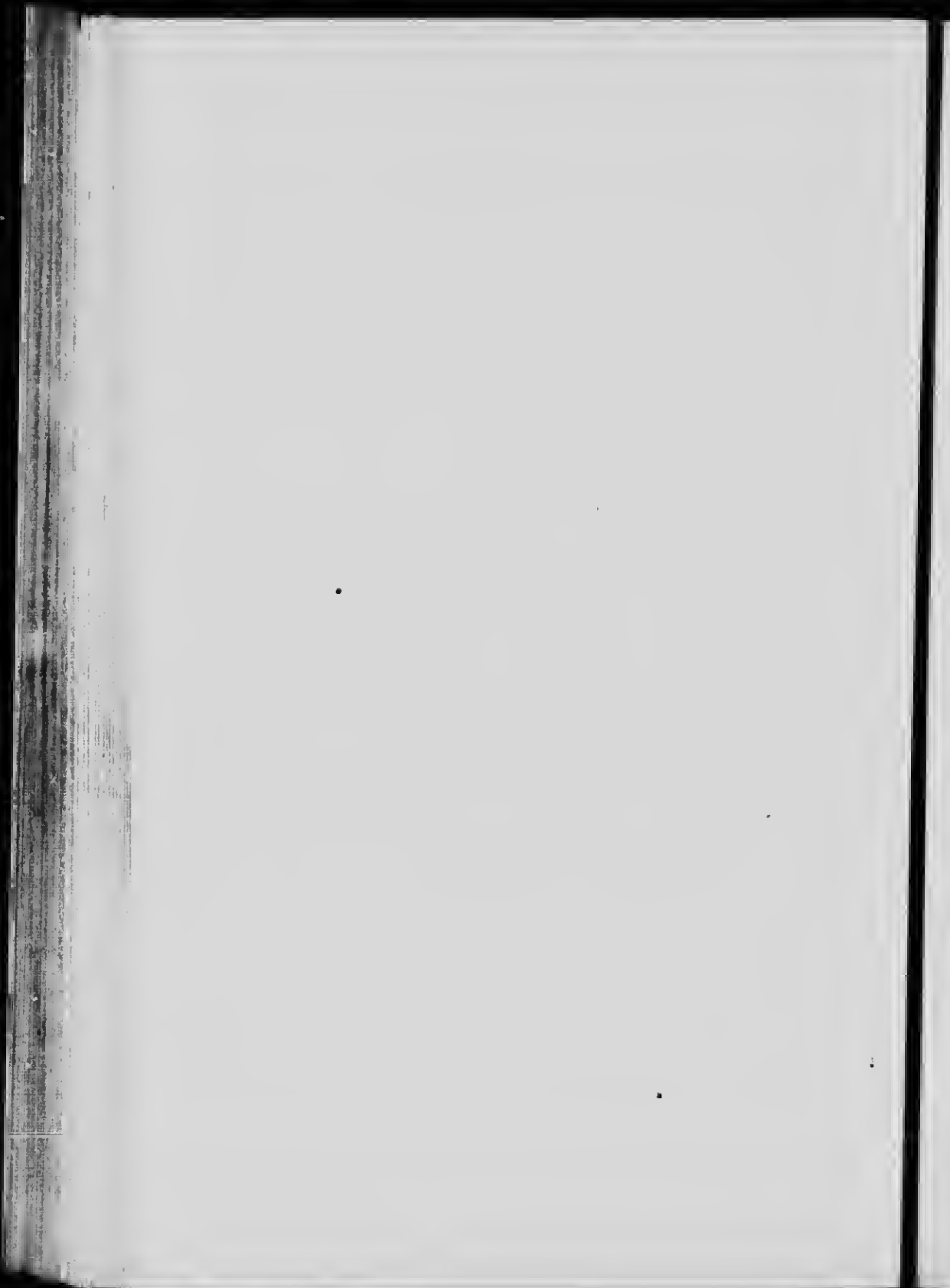
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mit one's husband to place one on a pedestal. He does not suspect such a thing, of course, but this is one way he has of confining his wife. She is a lonesome little stool divinity fastened there by her virtues, while he goes his way with fewer and has a better time. He is so comfortable about her being at home on her pedestal practicing the best Scriptures that his mind is at ease. And it gets so easy he is capable of queer digressions even in worship. The only pay she receives is the solemnly repeated catalogue of her virtues he makes to her now and then by way of keeping her satisfied in confinement. One of the things I have learned is that it is best for a woman to stay down in the dust of the road with her husband, no matter how perfect she is, and to hike along with him, no matter how imperfect he is. Women were not made for pedestal praise. And men were not made for us to be divorced from them, either by our superior characters or by the courts. It is our duty to keep wedded to

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them. The longer I have lived with Adam the more I am convinced that they are created for this particular purpose, and not nearly so much as they think for the purpose of becoming great statesmen, or (little) philosophers, or financiers, or nation builders. The way to build the right kind of nation, including statesmen, philosophers, and so forth, is to marry, remain married, to beget healthy children and bring them up properly, whether you are elected to the legislature or not. Woman cannot do this alone, neither can man. They must accomplish it together even if they get tired of one another.

**EVE FARMS ADAM'S
SOUL**



CHAPTER V.

EVE FARMS ADAM'S SOUL

A WIFE is at this disadvantage as a Boswell to her husband: she cannot record all of his life, but only so much of it as relates to her and comes under her observation. This is her serious limitation as his biographer when you consider that a man is like a tomcat in some ways. He may be the most virtuous, the gentlest of domestic creatures at home, and quite the reverse abroad. In this connection I recall the disillusionment of Mrs. Sears. She was a dim-headed woman, with an artificially cultivated soul and an imagination instead of a mind,

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who lived near us in Booneville. Her imagination was spider-legged, with all manner of thin, little old-fashioned axioms relating to virtue, honor and courage. And she had married Mr. Sears because she said that she felt "he needed her." He was a very large man, with pink cheeks, a long, drooping brown mustach. that gave him the appearance of a walrus, and a shifty eye in the presence of women. I doubt if he ever had voluntarily looked Mrs. Sears in the face longer than a second at a time. She attributed this to timidity. I did not.

They had no children, and without suspecting her maternity at all Mrs. Sears adopted her husband in the place of more literal infants. She pottered over his health in the same fashion that mothers do over getting their children in and out of their winter flannels, although he was as healthy as a rhinoceros. And in the same way she was always telling him what was right and what was wrong. Meanwhile, Sears purred so softly

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upon the window-sill of his wife's affections that she had all the satisfaction of a mother bringing up a good, fat-faced little boy, or of an old maid attending to her cat.

Now, it happened that Martin's livery stables were located just around the corner, back of the "Banner" office. One day Mrs. Sears had gone to purchase some dried fruit and a darning egg at Morgan's store on the square, and in returning home she had to pass the livery stables. Just as she came opposite the wide, dark doorway the air about her sacred ears was slit in every direction by a series of oaths from within. Unfortunately she recognized the voice of the blasphemer. She started violently, turned her head and looked in. She beheld Mr. Sears and Adam West, both stripped to the waist, engaged in the most brutish of all pastimes, a boxing match. And Sears was cheering himself on according to the language of his nature, the same as a tomcat screams when he is fighting. For one instant she regarded her cherub

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husband, flushed apple-red to his waist beneath her gaze; then she fled.

Adam, returning home half an hour after, related the circumstance to me as a joke. He said that he did not think the man would ever pluck up courage enough to go home. He had left him, still half naked, sitting in one of the stalls at the stable too horrified of the future to resume his shirt.

I went over at once to see the outraged wife, divining that she would be in need of proper sympathy. I found her stretched upon the bed, with her hat still pinned on, almost in a state of catalepsy. I had unpinned the hat, dampened a piece of dark brown paper in vinegar and laid it on her head—a favorite remedy for almost anything in Booneville—before she experienced the blessed relief of tears. Never have I witnessed such impotent and concentrated fury of grief. The trouble was this. For the first time she faced the fact that Sears was not a child or a cat; he was a man, her husband, and too large to spank. If

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she could have spanked him the matter would have been a simple one. As it was, she wept.

"Consider this, dear," I submitted at last: "Profanity is a language like any other. It is a masculine language, just as German is to us the foreign tongue of the Germans."

"Do you think so?"

She opened her eyes and regarded me like a drowning man searching for a straw.

"I am sure of it," I consoled.

"Still, I can never feel the same to him again! He has crushed my ideal!" she wailed.

A woman cares more for an ideal of a person, even if he is her husband, than she ever cares for him. And a thing she rarely learns is that a man is exactly like her in this respect. My opinion is that many a wife has shattered her husband's ideal of her forever by doing her hair up in curl-papers at night. And in his stupid way he suffers from the loss; but bears it philosophically, even to seeking occasionally a consolation who never outrages his fancy by appearing in curl-papers.

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This disillusionment of Mrs. Sears, which occurred soon after my marriage, warned me in time. I avoided knowing anything more than was thrust upon my attention about Adam's tomcat character abroad. This is legitimate cowardice in women. You can save your husband now and then from the consequences of his folly, but you cannot reform him or recreate him in your own moral likeness—not if he is worthy of the name of man. He can be just as moral as any woman, but he has three or four virtues not common to us, just as we have five or six not common to him. However, when you add up, the totals are about the same.

I am coming to the time presently when Adam went on a spree, and to the astounding consequences thereof, but for more than three years after that first fall he recovered himself so hastily from a state of inebriation that one scarcely missed him. I spent a good deal of time at night by the lighted window, but not in the rôle of a martyred wife. I was think-

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ing like a house afire. The Eve in me was becoming stringent—this is the nature of Eves: first sweet patience; then comes the equinox, when her storm sets in. I was trying to make up my mind how to farm Adam to the best advantage. Evidently he was proving a difficult section of the universal human ground. But I knew he had eloquent soil in him that ought to yield some kind of glory, even if righteousness was not indigenous to it. This is better than submitting to the inevitable. The inevitable in marriage is a form of wifely enmity and general damnation. When a woman begins to get the use of words like “anguish” and “resignation” she has really got her own little sniveling divorce, and if she is living with her husband at all it is in a relation as ugly as though it were illicit. She has ceased to be his better half, and is working on her crown of thorns and practicing her rôle of martyrdom. She does not know it, but she has really turned against him. This is the most common form of marital infidelity.

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But, coming back to Adam, he was drunk rarely and was "drinking" frequently. However, he used every art known to man in his efforts to conceal both facts from me. These little breath-pill hypocrisies of husbands are lies, of course, but they are really told out of consideration for the nervous feelings of their wives, who are apt to fall back and weep if they smell liquor when the salutation kiss is given at evening. Also, the weeping is not only mortifying; it is too harrowing to be endured by the male conscience. This, in my opinion, is the true explanation of the breath-pill and clove-chewing habit among men. If they never went into the sensitive, conscientious presence of women they would not care how much they smelt to mere Heaven of their vices.

I could always tell when Adam had been "drinking," not by any bibulous odor about him, or even by his coloring, which remained unimpeachable ivory under all circumstances; but by his beautiful manner of entering his

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home at evening. If he had done nothing wrong that day he came in like a commonplace specimen of his sex, a trifle irritable till he was fed. But if his conscience pained him he put on a brave front and tried to hide beneath the fig-leaves of a sweet, false gayety.

Different men have different methods of concealing themselves from the sad, virtuous eyes of their womankind, but if they have any bowels of compassion at all they do it. Mother and I, during my girlhood, invariably knew, for example, when father had been drinking too much of his own "bitters." He would come in the front gate without clicking it, enter the house without a sound, creep upstairs to the "company room," undress and get in bed, and lie as still as if he were trying to be his own corpse. It was not because he dreaded what mother might say to him. It was because he had the same feeling the first man had when God walked in the garden at evening. There is nothing in life so grotesque and persistent and ineffective as this Adam-

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habit all decent men have of hiding from good women when they have done wrong, or even what they think the woman will think wrong.

Some good people will condemn me for not taking more stringent measures with Adam the very moment that I discovered that he was at least dallying with his besetting sin. But I have my own ideas about this, and that is why I am writing these chronicles of a real married life. I am setting them down for women who begin to contemplate getting a divorce before they have learned enough about not getting a divorce. After a young wife passes out of the wedding-ring glamour of the first year of her marriage she is more than apt to be in the state of a chicken with the head off. Her wings keep on moving, but her mind does not.

It is during this crucial period that she makes the mistake of hardening her heart against a husband who has developed scandalous imperfections that the lover never showed, or of clinging to his stubborn neck and weep-

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ing and pleading with him to "Stop!" It is best not to do either. In the first place, you cannot exasperate a man toward righteousness unless he is a poor creature whom you could not respect even after he got there. But he has much the nature of a mule, and once he learns the use of the kicking hind legs of his disposition in the matrimonial traces you have simply ruined him for the race. He balks and he is forever damaging the dashboard of your affections. In the second place, a man's moral nature is very nearly a fiction anyhow; and it is one of the most important duties of a wife never to let her husband discover this fact, but to instil into him a noble, false impression of his character. If you are shrewd enough and honest enough about it he will do his best every now and then to live up to it.

The nearest I ever came to lecturing Adam in those days about his tippling habit was not to lecture him, but to withdraw from his society gently, apparently without intention.

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When he returned home in the evening from the office I did not meet him at the door. I appeared very innocently to have forgotten him. I was in the garden with the flowers. He would find me there in the mood no man understands when a woman looks dimly through him and wants to kiss her hand to her dear guardian angel instead of thinking to kiss him as usual. He is not piqued; he is alarmed, like the woman in the Scriptures who lost a piece of her wedding money and tore up everything looking for it. The searches I have seen Adam make for me when we were sitting side by side somewhere were among the most delightful experiences of my early married life.

Writing this recalls one such incident to my mind. It was two years after our marriage. Adam had been elected to the legislature with a good majority over Colonel Middlebrook. He had attended the sessions in Nashville, but between times he was at home in Booneville, editing the "Banner" and developing almost a

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pastoral relation to every voter in the county and even in the surrounding counties. He was very busy, often very tired, and naturally stimulated himself from some hidden source upon trying occasions. I have neglected to set down the important detail that Booneville was in a "local option" county, where it was illegal to sell liquor, but where it was increasingly natural to want it and to get it. Men are so funny and illogical in matters of government. They do not govern themselves. They quiet their consciences by making a law that covers the situation, but not them!

Adam had been making speeches here and there, and had returned home once or twice dangerously near intoxication. Late one afternoon he found me in the garden. That, itself, had come to be a bad sign; but I never rubbed it in. I could hail Adam sweetly and cheerfully, and still give the impression of not having him in my thoughts.

We were sitting upon a bench near a flowering pink crape tree. I held a trowel in one

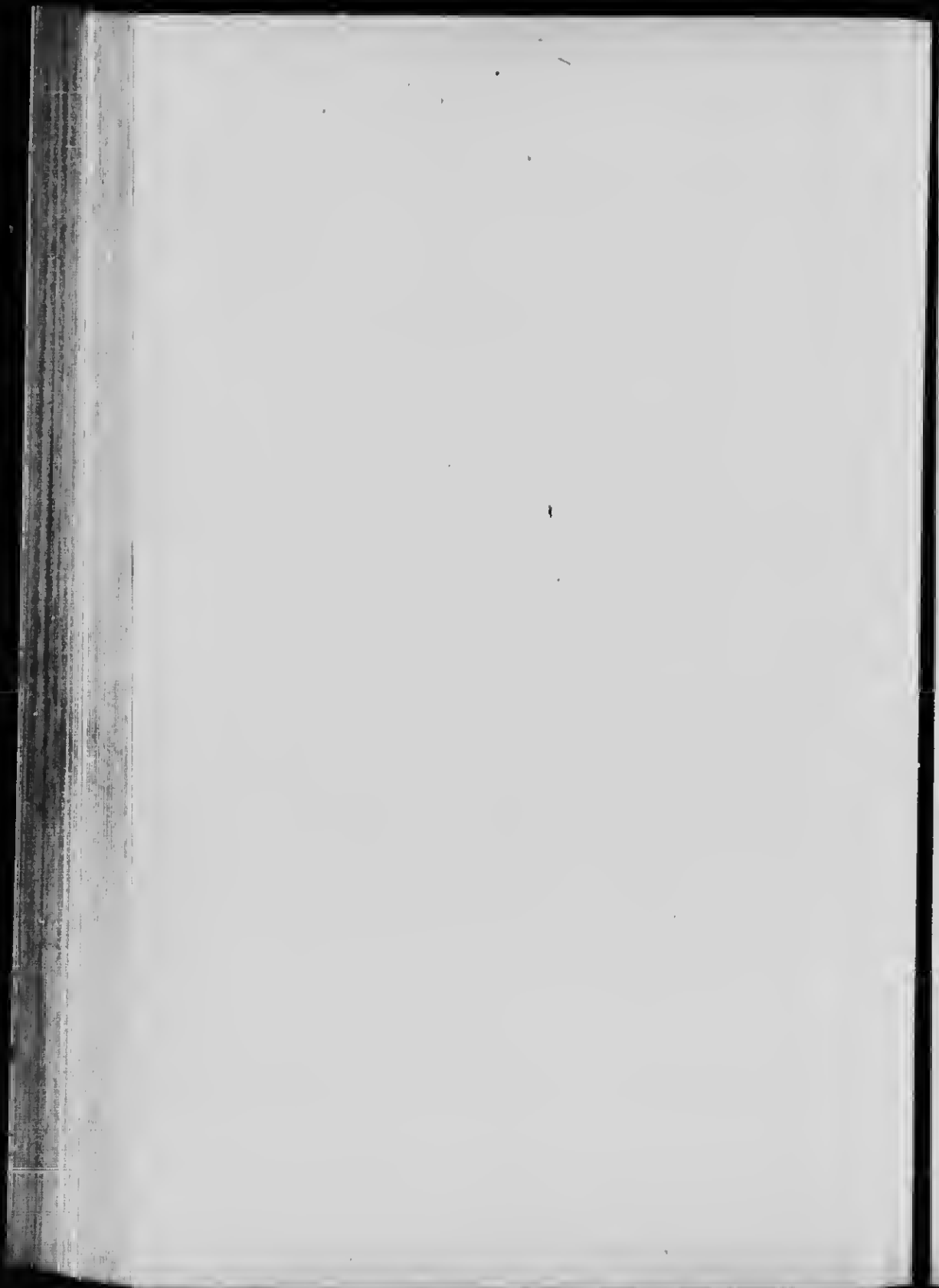
EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

hand and the folds of my white muslin skirt in the other. This left no hand for Adam. He felt it. I knew that, for an Eve, I was looking particularly well—in place, among my flowers. Adam felt that also, and his own inappropriateness. But there was always something ineffably winning about him as a penitent, which could in a moment wipe the very memory of his transgression out of my mind and restore him to the Holy Grail order of things in my imagination. I know this is not logically self-respecting. Logically one should maintain the flaming-sword-of-judgment attitude in such a circumstance till the husband has proved his worthiness. But a wife can be self-respecting without being logical, thank God! which is the advantage of having a loose faculty and a wise heart.

“Eve,” said Adam, as he sat beside me looking at the early spring garden in full bloom about us, “flowers are the dust of all the women that have died and been resurrected. The roses over there come from the



“FLOWERS ARE THE DUST OF ALL THE WOMEN THAT HAVE DIED
AND BEEN RESURRECTED.”



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ashes of the red hearts of beautiful ladies who rode long ago in the king's pageants. And those yellow jasmines, they spring from the bitter poisoned dust of women that sinned and died damned. And these little white ones that stand so low to the ground, with bowed blossoms like novitiates at prayer, they come up out of the dust of sad, good women who died counting their beads ages and ages ago."

I felt Adam's knighthood eye bent reverentially on me and a sensation as if my face were being made into a rose, and my fingers were about to bloom into white prayer-blossoms.

There was a sweet decimal of silence between us—not like the silence between lovers, but a sweeter silence: then Adam went on:

"Eve, if you could come back from wherever you are, if you could come back into my foreground, where mankind's pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night ought to move, so that he can see which way to go—I say, if you will, I'll undertake to make a better showing in your direction!"

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This was his way of reforming and of making peace with me and the flowers. If the worst came to the worst, he went into the house and vowed it before the center table in the parlor, then recorded the vow in the Bible, which always rested there for this purpose. After that we invariably had supper and a happy, shriven, conscience-cleared evening together, during which he told me of his ambitions and of the growing strength of his political hopes. And of course you may say that the whole occasion was founded upon sentimental folly, that the facts remained the same—Adam had been drunk; he would be a drunkard in the future. But that was not the only fact. The most important one to consider was that he still loved me dearly in spite of my virtuousness—I had not discovered my own faultiness yet. Wives rarely do in the early years of their marriage, owing to their having accepted the pedestal-angel attitude to their husbands. And some of them never do get down or find out their irritating limi-

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tations as wives. You can always distinguish them by their idiotic aloofness from their husbands. They practice matrimonial illiteracy from their bridehood even down to old age. And in Heaven I have no doubt that they will be recognized as static, old fat saints, whose stupidities tickle the very angels.

But I am not coming on fast enough chronologically with this record. It is so pleasant writing just about Adam, instead of the things Adam did, which were largely mysterious to me. I never understood the methods he employed so successfully in his political career. A "caucus" seemed a fearful thing to me, where Adam wrote out his favorite destiny on a "slate" and got the most influential men in the county to sign it. I used to be so dreadfully afraid they would refuse. But they never did. Not only that, these same influential citizens followed him blindly as though he were the Pandora box of their great expectations. Occasionally one of them received a clerkship at the Capitol, or got his

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little boy appointed as a "page" in the hall of Representatives. And Adam was growing in the grace that is peculiar to public men. He was accomplished in his personal appearance. He did not age at all, being as impervious to the wrinkles of regret and remorse as a young child. And he had a gift for inspiring the most extravagant confidence in his political followers. What he did not really accomplish he hoped so high to accomplish that he was invariably elected upon the strength of his anticipations rather than his actual achievements.

He was a candidate for reelection to the legislature the second time when the issue of the campaign suddenly came down out of the region of his promised land and settled between him and his antagonist at home. It was the "Cause of Temperance." The question of local option was up again. Clancy Drew appeared as the young Elijah candidate who would introduce a bill at the next session of the legislature that would remove the ob-

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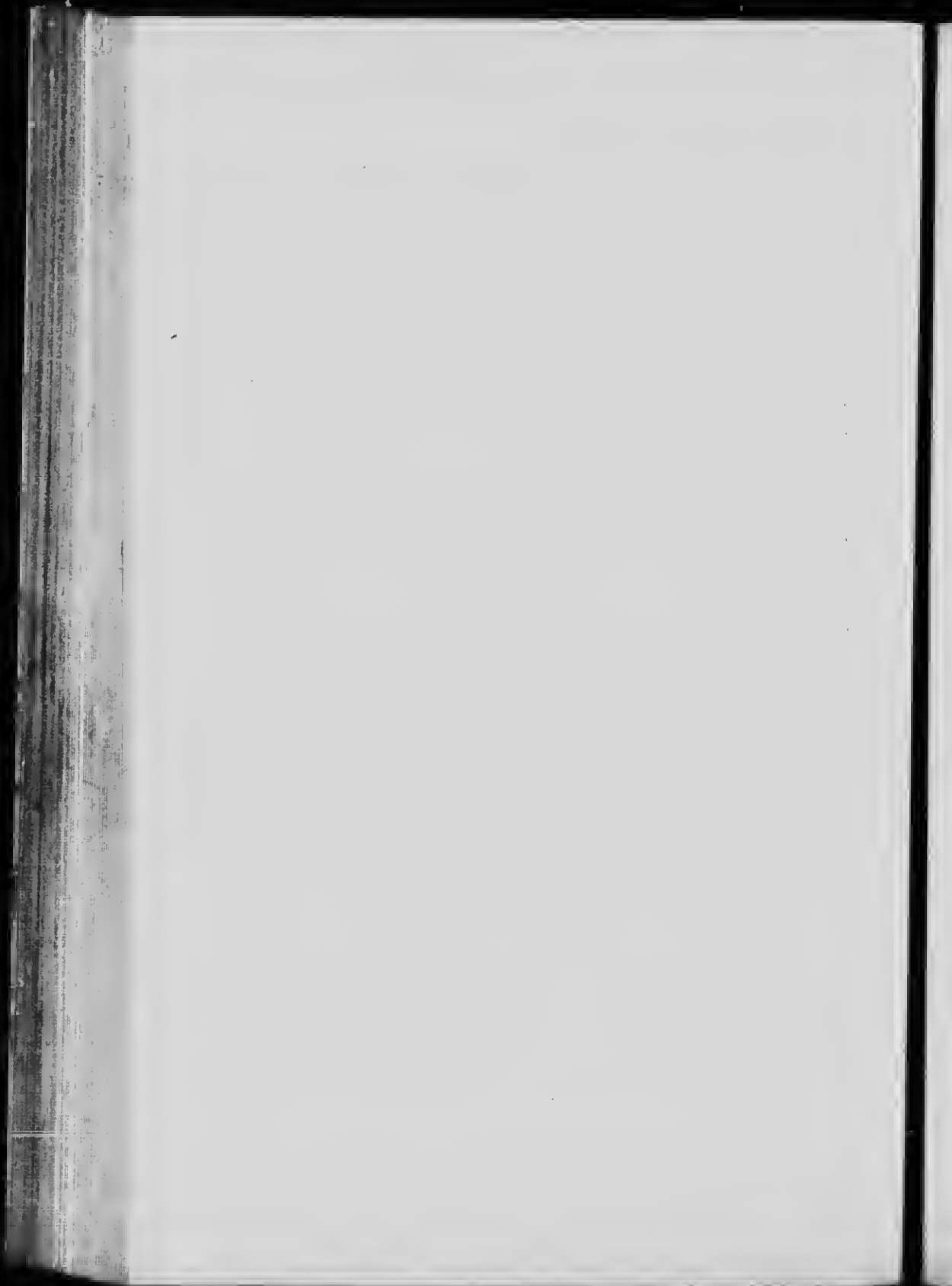
noxious local option law which has restricted the liberty of freeborn Democrats in Boone County for a number of years. This was very embarrassing to Adam, for he had meant to promise this very reward himself if he were reëlected. This situation was the more critical because Clancy was related to half the population of the county and could depend upon his kinsmen to vote for him, and Adam was related—and that only by marriage—to two old men, father and my uncle, Sam Langston, both of whom were influential, but not almighty. There was a large minority of temperance voters in the county, but since they were distinctly the minority neither candidate pledged himself to their interests.

I was far from understanding all this at the time. What I did understand was that Adam was at his wits' end, politically speaking. There was nothing to do in the face of such odds but to get drunk, and he did. It was not a transitory intoxication of an evening, but a "spree" that lasted exactly seven

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days. At first he came home late at night looking like an ash-cat-Sam, who comes home to crawl through a hole and under the house. Adam ignored me and slept upon the parlor sofa. The third night he did not return at all, nor the fourth, nor the fifth. I was like a speculator whose margins are about to fail him. I had given up the idea of Adam's being good, but I cherished with a Spartan passion the expectation of his becoming great. To me that has always seemed an unexpurgated form of goodness. Besides, when you think of it, married women are curious things morally. Love warps them. They think what is right, and do as nearly as they can what their husbands want hem to do, whether it is right or not. And this was one of the times when I prayed, as usual, "Thy will be done!" and also that Adam might be enabled to accomplish his will, leaving the Lord to take His choice of which He would grant, for the two were apparently far from being synonymous.

**EVE LAUGHS AND ADAM
"HAS IT IN HIM"**



CHAPTER VI

EVE LAUGHS AND ADAM "HAS IT IN HIM"

DURING this week, for the first time since my marriage to Adam, I thought often of Mr. Bailey; not regretfully, you understand, but I thought of him as you recall a shade in which you once slept. The cemetery was on a hill outside the town and visible from my garden. The arbor-vitæ above Mr. Bailey's grave was so green, so clearly defined against the horizon, that it became personal. I had not been up there since the day I met Adam in the road. Nearly three years had passed. It was early summer. I thought of the flowers I had

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planted and wondered how they fared. The old evergreen tree seemed to signal: "Come and see! We are very quiet up here." It was queer. I concluded to wait as long as I could, and if Adam did not come home I would go up there and see how the flowers did. I went in, set some yeast to rise for the morning bread, stuck my finger under the cream in the crocks on the cupboard shelf to see whether the milk had turned, swept up the beard that the oak had shed upon the back porch, and did a thousand little things mechanically, the way women do when they are thinking strictly to themselves. Then I put on my hat and went out through the garden. I was in a tremor all along the road to the cemetery lest I should be seen and recognized. When I reached the gate I was disagreeably excited, and paused as a stranger does before he goes in for audience with a difficult person. It was at this moment that I caught sight of the grave under the arbor-vitæ and started as though I had

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seen a miracle. It was a mass of flowers, as though Mr. Bailey had shed his harp and crown there in white and golden blossoms.

I do not know how long I stood there astounded, but at last I found myself walking back rapidly along the road. I had not entered the cemetery. One does not go too near a haunted grave, even if it is haunted only by flowers.

It was dark when I reached home. I found Enos Todd waiting. He was a youth of eighteen whom Adam employed as printer and devil at the "Banner" office. He had a look of deep concern upon his freckled face as he stood, hat in hand, before me under the hall lamp.

"Mrs. West, do you know where Colonel West is?"

"He is away on business. What do you want, Enos?"

The boy looked at me queerly. The fact is, I did not know where Adam was, and it is just possible that he did know.

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“The ‘Banner’ comes out day after to-morrow, and there is not a line of editorial copy in the office,” Enos blurted out.

“You’ll be sure to hear from Mr. West in the morning mail,” I replied.

He stood a moment considering me, with the troubled air of a young gosling, then made for the door, still turning his hat like a top upon one of his fingers.

“Good night, Enos.”

“Good night, Mrs. West.” He hesitated upon the doorstep. “If the colonel don’t send that copy in the morning I could put in ‘Furl That Banner.’ He’s fond of them dog-howling songs of the Confederacy.” He was a good critic and did not know it.

“Leave that banner furled, Enos. You’ll find all the copy you need in the morning mail.”

I was frightened. If the “Banner” did not appear everybody would know why. If it did appear without editorials they would still know. So long as a man attends to his busi-

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ness the public does not count his drinks. When he fails they notice if he takes even a glass of root beer. The "Banner" had to come out and there must be the usual editorial.

But what was to be done about it? I had never written a line for publication in my life. It was difficult for me to write even a short letter.

I ransacked my incompetency from A to izzard. Then I arose, went into the kitchen, climbed the ladder that led to the loft, lighted a candle and stumbled over broken chairs and rolls of wornout carpet till I came to an old horsehair trunk. It had been Mr. Bailey's. After his death I crammed it full of his writings and forgot them. Now I lifted the lid and began to look for something—I scarcely knew what. It was like rustling the yellow leaves of a dead man's morality. However, I was in the mood to rattle his very bones if by doing so I might save Adam. Presently I came upon a neatly folded manuscript. It

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was labeled "Temperance," and I recollected that the temperance people were contemplating a law-enforcement campaign at the time of Mr. Bailey's death. I opened and read the thing. It was written in Mr. Bailey's God-have-mercy-upon-us! style, something between a sob and a steam whistle, and was a fairly accurate statement of the intemperate conditions that still existed in Boone County; and it contained a loud imprecation at the increasing blind-tigerishness of Booneville in particular. It closed with a plea for the youths who must grow up hardened and dissipated in such an atmosphere.

Nothing could be more to the point. I closed the trunk, made my way down the ladder, copied the posthumous editorial as nearly as I could in Adam's scrawling hand, sealed it, and hurried out to mail it to Enos Todd, with a short note purporting to come from Adam.

On my way back from the postoffice I saw father and mother sitting in the moonlight

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on the veranda at home, and I went in. I was still thinking of what I had seen at the cemetery.

They never talked, those two. When they sat down together in the evening it was as though they sat far apart in a common grave, the silence was so natural between them. This was what I interrupted when I came up the steps. Immediately after the commonplace salutations father knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the banisters, arose from his chair and went in.

"Mother," I said, "do you know who is taking care of Mr. Bailey's grave?"

"Yes; it is Adam."

"Adam!" I exclaimed.

"He employed the sexton to attend to it soon after your marriage, and every spring he looks after the planting of the seeds himself. I have seen him there."

An overwhelming curiosity seized me.

"How did he look when you saw him planting things on Mr. Bailey's grave?"

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"Interested; very much in earnest."

Mother had no sense of humor, and, as is often the case with such persons, she could say the most diverting things without suspecting it.

"Your husband is a remarkable man," she said after a pause.

"I know it," I replied; "but sometimes I wish he were less remarkable and better."

"In the beginning God created Eve to satisfy Adam. He never has made a man that could satisfy a woman. But this is the truth: a good man does not often make a good husband. He is apt to be more in love with his piety, or his church, or even a tract, than he is with his wife. Adam adores you because he thinks you are good and because he knows he is not. This is not a bad arrangement. There never was a wife happy forever. Make up your mind to that and do the best you can."

It was as though I heard the ancient mother of life lamenting.

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Adam did not return the next day, nor the next after that. But the "Banner" appeared as usual on Saturday morning. It created a furore in town. At last the lines were drawn. The issue of the coming campaign was clearly defined. The minority read Adam's editorial on temperance with amazement and delight. The distinctly good people had been, so far, the only political enemies he had made. They distrusted him and voted against him as they would have voted against having a dancing pavilion. Now they were the one class ready to support him, on the strength of that editorial. They had not supposed him capable of such high-mindedness. They would not have believed it if they had not seen it in the "Banner," and so forth.

Sunday morning, as the church bells were ringing, Adam made of himself an apparition at the door of his own house. He looked like a man who has had a terrible illness, or who has passed through a long season of prayer and fasting. He was thin, haggard and very

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mournful. Even his clothes drooped as though they had suffered.

"I say, Eve," he exclaimed as he caught sight of me in the hall, "what is the matter with me?"

"I wish I knew, Adam. What is?"

He entered the door, brushed past me and stepped briskly into the parlor, where he sat down. I perceived that he was perfectly sober and that he was laboring under some strong excitement.

"What has happened?" I asked, standing before him.

"That's what I want to know. Am I myself or not?"

He rolled his eyes up at me beseechingly and went on: "Just now, as I was coming home, I met all the church people, and every one of them spoke to me—fellows that never do. Old Dodson wrung my hand, and said: 'God bless you, West; I knew it was in you!' Then that worm-saint, Falkner, stopped me and said he was glad I had come out on the

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right side; that he 'knew it was in me.' After that every one of those dovetailed saints who sit in the amen corner at church, and that have hated me like poison for years, spoke to me as if they were the ninety-and-nine and I the lost sheep that made up the proper hundred."

Adam looked down a moment, regarding himself with the same kind of amazement that a man would who heard the voice of a ventriloquist in his nearest clothes. He leaped to his feet.

"Hell!" he exclaimed. "What is it that so many people knew was 'in' me that I didn't?"

He caught his breath in a kind of sob. I thought he must be delirious.

"Adam," I said gently, "hadn't we better call the doctor?"

"No!" he screamed; "he might talk about it, too, and if anybody else mentions it till I find out what it is I'll not answer for the consequences!"

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He remained seated like a man wrapped in a brown study for more than two hours. Occasionally he dozed, only to awake with a start to stare about him excitedly. After dinner, which was a midday meal in Booneville, he put on his hat and started for the "Banner" office. This was his custom on Sunday afternoons.

I had forgotten, in the anxieties of the morning, the temperance editorial, and in my ignorance I had never suspected what effect it might have upon Adam's political fortunes.

I was seated upon the milking-stool beside old Spot's hind legs, with my head resting upon her sleek flank, stripping the last drops of milk from her, when I saw Adam coming toward me through the garden. Something in his manner alarmed me. He was pale to the lips, and stepped along as though he might break into a run at any moment. He held a copy of the "Banner" in his hand.

I arose, caught the bucket of milk by the handle and hurried to meet him.

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"Adam! Adam!" I cried. "What is the matter?"

"My God, Eve, I'm haunted! The 'Banner' is haunted! Bailey edited it last week. Bailey, I tell you, who has been dead these four years! Sent Todd an editorial on temperance in my handwriting. Todd says you could have knocked him down with a feather when he saw such sentiments from me—says there was a note inside telling him to get the paper out on time—says my name was signed to it!"

All this came from him in a fury of excitement and so rapidly that at first I was confused; then the situation slowly cleared before me and I began to laugh. I was never a laughing woman by nature. A smile is usually as far as I ever go toward mirth, but now I was swept away into a gale of laughter. And the more I thought this way and that, the more I laughed. I saw concentrated wrath and black suspicion gathering between Adam's brows, but I could not stop. I set

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down the bucket of milk in the path and dropped down beside it on the grass. I plucked feebly at Adam's trousers leg to indicate that I sympathized and would explain presently, but I continued in a state of inarticulate mirth.

"Eve!" he shouted in a terrible voice, "do you think I am drunk? Don't you suppose I know the dead-cat style of Bailey's writings?" He turned his head away and murmured: "And to think I've been cultivating rare plants on that demon's grave for three years!"

"Adam," I cried feebly, "stop! It was not poor Mr. Bailey!"

"Who, then?" he demanded.

"I did it!"

"You! Do you think I'll believe you wrote that thing?"

"I didn't write it, Adam. I sent it to Enos."

The veins began to swell in his temples. That sobered me. I began to explain, and as

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I went on I realized how much I had suffered during the dreadful days of suspense. I recalled how frightened I was of the dark at nights. I remembered how through it all I had but one thought, to save Adam from the consequences of his fault; and suddenly I began to cry. I have never been any more of a crying woman than a laughing one; but, once I started, it seemed I could not stop crying either. I laid my head upon the grass, covered my face with my hands and sobbed aloud. I declined to consider the ministrations of Adam, who was all contrition and very fervent in his efforts to draw my hands away from my face. It is one of the queer features of a man's stupidity that he never can see a woman cry without being guilty of the sacrilege of trying to drag down her hands and uncover her face.

Adam could not sing a note, but he had a queer thing that he thought was a tune which he often droned through his nose. This was a sign that he was in a happy mood; that he was

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either thinking out an editorial or a campaigning policy. The following morning I heard him whanging at a great rate as he cleared off his mail. He was seated at an old "secretary" in the parlor, with his hat on the back of his head, a cigar tilted up between his lips, his hands busy sorting letters.

"Eve, darling!" he called. I was always endeared thus immediately after he recovered from a transgression and before he committed another. "Eve, adorable first woman, you have saved my life, politically speaking. I have determined to run on the anti-liquor ticket against Clancy Drew."

"But I thought you were opposed to local option, Adam." It was before the days of "state-wide" temperance talk.

"I am, was, and have been, beloved of my soul; but these people need me on the other side. My countrymen call. I sacrifice my own personal opinions, and I answer. I place myself at their disposal. Henceforth you have a model husband, a cauliflower-saint with the

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dew of heaven upon his brow and nothing stronger upon his lips. I have the minority and the two strongest sentiments of the South at my disposal already. First, there is the 'Lost Cause,' that is our ideal in the past. You have heard me touch that, Eve, with the spray of eloquence. Second, there is 'Temperance,' our ideal in the future. You shall see me draw it to my bosom and embrace it publicly upon every stump in Boone County. These two—they have made tearful women of men and brave men of women in our section. You have seen veterans weep beneath the spell of my eloquence. You shall see women threaten the ballot box in the cause of temperance, inspired by my passion and—repentance. Also, you will see your husband reëlected to the House of Representatives."

He arose, thrust one hand in his bosom, felt of his coattails with the other, bent a glistening black eye upon me and bowed with an oratorical flourish.

"But, Adam, I hope you are serious!"

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“Never more so in my life. This lightness that you observe disapprovingly covers a great anxiety and great hopes.”

There is a good deal of unavoidable rascality in the profession of politics as there is in any other profession—that is, if you want to call it rascality. To my mind it looks more like versatile sincerity. The man who expects to become a statesman must often be several other things first—an actor of fortune, ready to take any rôle the times or the people thrust upon him on his way up in the profession. Once up he can afford to risk developing a character and maintaining it with an integrity that excites admiration. But if you go all the way back to the very beginning of the political life of many a self-made statesman—by self-made I mean those not created by corporations or by their Presidential friends—you are apt to find he passed gently or gallantly—sometimes even piously, but always easily and naturally—through nearly as many phases as a human fetus. Adam and I knew

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a congressman well who began his political career as a speaker at a Sunday-school picnic. He was a charlatan at piety, but he has made an honest man in Congress, where it is said to be more difficult to be honest than to be great. And we have known a prominent Circuit Court judge, who had been an insignificant lawyer with a little threadbare mustache, but who was ready to speak at any time, everywhere, upon public vices. At present he is one of the popular political heroes of his state. No one recalls the little back office attorney in this formidable judge. He has arrived at a noble eminence through a speaking knowledge of public scandals rather than through any distinction he had at the bar. The point is this: he is making a good record on the bench.

The beauty about Adam was the celerity with which he arrived at and passed from these different phases. If the emergencies of a situation cast upon him what would have been the part of a rascal in another, he performed

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the part with the utmost sincerity and remained in it not a moment longer than was necessary. He could return to the elder, everlasting virtues immediately, like a child who has been visiting. Thus he remained innocent after performances that would have cast a less versatile man in the permanent rôle of a scamp. This campaign against Clancy Drew as the temperance candidate is an illustration to the point. He really belonged to that element in his party that Alexander Hamilton Stephens inadvertently described one day. Waving a small flask of whisky, from which he had been obliged to strengthen himself during a speech on account of great physical weakness, he exclaimed: "This, fellow citizens, is the true spirit of the Democratic party!"

Whatever virtues and principles Adam acquired—and this record will show that he had a good many—they had nothing to do with the austerities of "temperance."

THE FEUD

CHAPTER VII

THE FEUD

WHEN Adam announced himself a candidate for reëlection on the anti-liquor ticket he precipitated one of the most astonishing political campaigns ever conducted in Boone County. He not only involved the whole population, including the women; he confused the moral sense wherever moral sense existed. Clancy Drew, for example, was as sober as a judge, a dull young man with a good reputation and a lumbering ambition "to be somebody." Adam, on the other hand, was only temporarily sober; but no one could prove it, and his reputation was

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enigmatical, like the uncertain character of youth. Meanwhile he knew how to excite sympathy and admiration by the accounts of his temptations and even by his "falls," which he acknowledged as though he had been in an experience meeting pleading for the "prayers of all Christian people" instead of their votes. In vain did young Drew's friends name him "Adam the Good." He instantly accepted the sarcasm with the noble air of a handsome youthful saint assuming his crown of thorns, which he was willing to wear publicly by way of personal mortification.

On a certain Saturday afternoon in the year 1890 he might have been seen standing on a bale of paper under the awning in front of the "Banner" office, surrounded by the usual crowd of Saturday politicians—that is, farmers from the country, loafers, and his own "leading-citizens" element—making an impromptu announcement of his candidacy and change of heart. He was sad, honest and irresistible.

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"My enemies," he exclaimed at the end of a manly peroration, "have called me 'Adam the Good' in derision. Very well; I deserve it. But henceforth"—he had the snorting look a thoroughbred has when he is about to take the top rail—"I shall try to deserve the title." He was down on the other side the next moment in the level road, but still making good rhetorical speed. "My friends, it's wrong to do wrong. And being elected to the legislature will not make wrong right. What I want to feel the next time I enter the hall of your representatives in this state is that I have been sent there by the best men and the good women in this county—for I feel that I have the prayers of every good woman in Boone County. And it's a grand feeling, gentlemen!" He paused during the applause to stretch himself by some miracle of eloquence until he seemed actually taller, as though the "good women" had thus added a cubit already to his stature. "I wouldn't exchange this feeling that I have about their

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prayers for four times the hope my opponent entertains for his election!" He waved his hand toward the conrthonse veranda, upon which were seated Clancy Drew and as many of his followers as could resist the temptation to cross the square and listen to Adam's penitential political address.

This was a sample of his campaigning, and nothing is more certain than that he was in earnest. Adam was a man who could believe any statement he could evolve out of his ambitions imagination easier than he could believe the literal facts of his life. And in this consisted the convincing power of his eloquence. As the weeks passed it came to be almost against Clancy Drew that he was a sober, model yonng man. There was less excuse for his running on the liquor ticket. The women in particular idolized Adam as they are apt to cherish a spectacnlar brand snatched from the burning. I have never seen a woman who did not admire a reformed man more than she respected just a good man.

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As for me, I felt as though my millennium had begun. At last I was in a position to serve both God and Adam with a clear conscience. I mean that I could now pray for Adam's will to be done without feeling embarrassed on my knees, as though the very angels were frowning and shaking their heads at me. Adam himself appeared to have been hypnotized by the angels; he was so consistently right in every direction, although he was never a professing Christian. Apparently he divined that the rôle of an honest heart-to-heart sinner was less cramping in its limitations, and in this his instinct was correct.

The Saturday afternoon that witnessed his public christening, as the candidate who was to be supported by the temperance element of his party, was memorable for another reason. It also witnessed the culmination of the feud mentioned in the first chapter of this story between father and Doctor Marks.

Marks was the leading physician in his sec-

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tion. He was old, fat, round-paunched, and set upon a pair of short legs. He had a large head and permitted his iron-gray whiskers to grow as far up and down and around as they pleased. They took advantage of this to leave only his immense forehead and that small, round, rosy eminence called the cheekbone, beneath each eye, visible. His eyes were exceedingly prominent, and carried in them the shade of silence that belongs to the unbiased intelligence of a strong man. He had the blood-letting courage of a surgeon in a day when few doctors out of the great cities dared to undertake surgery, and an old-fashioned allopathic integrity in his dealings with disease that was drastic and effective. He measured calomel upon the blade of a blunt lancet and he weighed righteousness by the pound. He was always to be seen in an old open buggy with rattling wheels, drawn by a large white horse that had acquired the perpetual motion of a sheep-trot in his service.

Marks practiced medicine with only three

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prescriptions and one piece of advice: Two tablespoonfuls of castor oil for everybody; one teaspoonful of paregoric for children during green-apple season when they needed it; and for chronic invalids a fearful punishment composed of six ounces of charcoal, fourteen drams of sulphur, and eight scruples of Epsom salts, to be taken three times a day. The piece of advice, which all of his patients shared in common, was:

“Get up, stay up, drink plenty of water, work with your hands every day until you sweat copiously, and keep the Ten Commandments. This insures proper secretions of the body and a clean conscience, without which there is no such thing as good health.”

When he was called to see a sick person he always entered the afflicted one's chamber like a father in a bad humor. He sat down beside the bed, put on a pair of spectacles that magnified the pupils of his already protruding eyes until he was fearful to behold, felt the victim's pulse, called for his tongue, at the

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sight of which he invariably wrinkled his nose. Then he leaned back in his chair, buckled the fingers of his two fat hands together over his immense paunch and demanded to know which and how many of the Ten Commandments the patient had broken. After one such experience no man or woman who was not really ill ever sent for him. The ordeal was too awful to be risked lightly for a mere stomach-ache.

This recalls to my mind a story of the old doctor which is one of the traditions of Booneville. Everyone has observed that preachers as a rule do not enjoy good health. The unfortunate creatures are tempted everywhere they go with the most inviting food the host can provide. They acquire abnormal appetites often through the polite desire to please hospitality. This results in inertia. You see a good many ministers who are physically lazy and often spiritually splenetic. This is an exact description of a certain young pastor we had at Booneville. He was an amiable,

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Heaven-bound man, theologically speaking, but he suffered from attacks of acute indigestion, to which he yielded like a man stricken in battle. At any hour of the day or night Doctor Marks was liable to get a hurry call to the bedside of the suffering man. At last, one Monday, when he was sent for about four o'clock in the morning, his patience was exhausted. He entered the bedchamber in a rage, minus medicine or saddlebags, and stared down at the form of his pastor, his very beard bristling with indignation.

"Where did you dine yesterday?" he demanded in a furious tone.

"At Brother Middlebrook's," answered the sufferer feebly.

"And what did you eat?"—still more furiously.

Brother Clark—his name was Amos Clark—was silent, either from the nausea with which one recalls viands under such circumstances or because he was trying to recollect what he did eat. But Marks was impatient.

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“There’s no need to tell me; I know,” he exclaimed, holding up the fingers of first one hand, then the other, and numbering them off.

“You ate ham and chicken, and a little bit of spring lamb, some beans and a spoonful of onions and squash. You had pepper with the ham, jelly with the chicken, and green apple-sauce with the lamb. Then you ate lemon pie, pound-cake and boiled custard—I know that diabolical engine of destruction, Mrs. Middlebrook’s table; and now you send for me, at four o’clock Monday morning, to absolve you from the sin you committed on the holy Sabbath. Hell and damnation, man! Do you take me for the chimney-sweep of your stomach or a common scamp who physics you to keep you from suffering the consequences of your own sins? Well, in either case, you are mistaken. You have colic, and colic you shall have as long as it chooses to last. It’s Nature’s honester way of ridding you of the stuff you have eaten. I’ll not give you a drop of medicine. It will improve your conscience to

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suffer. And it ought to improve your ministry. I have observed your sermons, young man. You preach against adultery, fornication, drunkenness, murder and every other sin except your own—gluttony, which is the most common of all. Now I have this to say: It is not my custom to charge ministers for my services, but the next time you send for me to relieve you of indigestion I will charge you as much as the law allows! And now I bid you good morning!”

With that he turned and waddled out of the house, leaving Clark's knees under his chin.

This was Doctor Marks. And he was the one man in Booneville who entertained an invincible contempt for father. When he had occasion to enter the drug store for medicine it was his custom to ignore the proprietor and to order what he wanted directly from the prescription clerk. Father reciprocated Marks' feelings for him with open hostility. It was characteristic of him that he should not be on good terms with his best customer.

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The circumstance that led to this state of affairs was as follows: One day, several years previous to the Saturday scene of which I shall presently write, when the question of local option was being agitated for the first time, Marks entered the drug store to purchase some bismuth and prepared chalk. Father, who was an enthusiastic contradicter of his own character in the principles he advocated, was an ardent advocate of the local option law. He attempted to engage Marks in conversation concerning the chances of the temperance people.

“I tell you, doctor,” he exclaimed, “it will be a disgrace to the manhood of this county if we fail to vote liquor out of it!”

Marks went on shaking the bismuth and chalk into a bottle that had a little creosote in it and a good deal of water. His head was down, his shabby broad-brimmed black hat on the back of it, and his eyes were fixed upon what he was doing. Father resented his silence. He considered it suspicious.

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"The fact is," he persisted, "some of us want to know how you stand on this question, anyhow. Your silence is unbecoming the guardian of health in this community, sir!"

Marks finished mixing his concoction in the bottle, corked it and put it in his pocket. Then he slowly lifted his immense old head, squared his hat upon it, focused his spectacles upon the top shelf above the showcase and counter, where was displayed a long row of tall brown bottles labeled: Langston's Arsenic and Rhubarb Bitters; the Best Spring, Summer and Winter Tonic on the Market.

"I think," said he, with cool distinctness in his deep voice, "that we shall carry local option in Boone County. But, so long as you carry so much Langston's bitters in this drug store, we shall not get rid of whisky nor the drunkenness that results."

He lifted his hand and swept it so as to indicate the whole display of "bitters," and went on deliberately:

"Ninety-nine per cent of that stuff is pure

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corn whisky, and there is just enough arsenic in it to make it dangerous."

During this speech father was standing behind the counter looking like an old pouter pigeon who has suddenly had his tail-fathers jerked. The doctor never once glanced at him. Having finished, he turned and walked toward the door.

For a moment father was livid. Then, with a fine display of rage that could not wait to walk around, he leaped over the counter.

"What!" he screamed, rushing after the retreating form of the doctor. "What! You insult me!—you reflect upon my honor and the character of the 'Langston bitters'!"

Marks did not answer. He went on leisurely toward the open door. Father skipped along, balancing himself every now and then on one foot and lifting the other with a little spasmodic jerk toward the broad seat of Marks's trousers. But he did not touch him and Marks did not look back or quicken his pace. As they passed through the door, on

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to the doctor's bnggy, which was drawn up in front, father was a spectacle to behold. His nose had become a promontory, his mustache bristled, his npper lip snarled, but his chin was in a state of secession, his nnder lip was loose. This slackness indicated what he lacked—resolntion. He continued to hop with one foot raised behind the thick form of the doctor.

“Do yon see him?” he exclaimed to half a dozen persons who stood about the door watching the singular performance. “Do you see this quack, this—this pill-person! He has insnlted me, Colonel John Spotteswood Langston, of the Third Cavalry, Second Division, under Bragg! And, my God!—think of it!—I find I can't kick him—he's too much, too soft! I have the feeling that my foot would mire np, that I should not get it back!”

Here he panned and shook his fist at the man in the bnggy.

“Very well, sir; yon shall hear from me again!”

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"Get up!" retorted Marks, slapping the rump of his horse with the reins. The horse started off at a ridiculous trot. The spokes in the wheels set up a rhythmic clatter. The buggy sagged fearfully on the side that the doctor occupied. The next moment it disappeared around the nearest street corner. Never once did the occupant of it look back.

That afternoon Uncle Sam Langston bore a challenge to Dr. David Marks from father. Uncle Sam had the appearance of having been hatched out of a Shanghai egg instead of being born of a woman. He was tall like father and had a rooster cast of countenance. But his temper was less choleric than father's. He was really timid, like the rooster who has been whipped in the fight. He was very much under the thumb of his elder brother or he would never have carried such a message. The doctor was an old bachelor, living with his widowed sister. He received my uncle in a brusque, tooth-pulling mood.

"Take a seat, Sam," he said, frowning.

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He was rolling some little black pills in a platter stained with many other pills. He paused long enough to read father's invitation to "mortal combat." Then he went on with his medical masonry in the platter. As he kneaded the stuff this way and that he addressed Uncle Sam:

"I see that I have the choice of weapons and of the time and place."

"That's accordin' to the code," admitted Uncle Sam tremblingly. He had hoped the doctor would decline to fight.

The platter was now filled with well-rounded pellets. Marks arose and searched among a row of bottles and odds and ends upon a little shelf in the corner until he found a small, round box. He dropped two of the pills into it and handed it to father's second.

"There's my choice of weapons," he explained, seeing the look of astonishment on uncle's face; "the only kind of bullets a sensible man ever uses. Tell him to take 'em

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both before retiring. That's the time. Tell him he can choose the place himself. They'll act anywhere. Good evening! I've got a call to make."

He put on his hat and went out, followed by Uncle Sam, who carried the little box between his thumb and forefinger. The doctor was not a humorist; he was a sort of atheist of human nature, and man was the Old Testament that he read and despised.

The next day he appeared as usual in the drug store, and every day after through the years, ordering his prescriptions and buying his medicines as though nothing had happened. He never observed father's existence. Father was equally oblivious of his unless he had been taking some of the Langston bitters. Then he was belligerent, and invariably swore that if Marks came into the store he would kill him. This was the feud that I have mentioned. It was carried on entirely by father.

On the afternoon when Adam made his maiden temperance speech in front of the

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"Banner" office Doctor Marks drove up in his old buggy and sat in it on the outskirts of the crowd, observing and listening with the twinkle of a smile showing above his whiskers and crinkling the corners of his eyes. He had never been friendly or unfriendly to Colonel West. Adam was to him what a bug is to a scientist. He simply sat and watched him as he would have a zoon from time to time. Upon this occasion, just as Adam was reaching the last wing-stretch of his peroration—which, of course, was devoted to the "heroes in gray"—father, who was representing more bitters than he could carry, caught sight of the top of the doctor's smile. It offended him. He considered it a reflection upon Adam, therefore upon the distinguished Langston family. He charged the buggy blindly with his clenched fists. The doctor saw him coming, drew to the other side. Then, as father landed, half standing, half reclining, upon the fore wheel, he spat over his head, neatly, intentionally and with frightful de-

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liberation. A hundred people had seen it, this variation of the most offensive of all insults that one man can offer another. There was a moment's silence. Every man who had witnessed what had taken place was stunned. This spitting over a man's face was new and incredible. Nothing like it had ever happened before in Booneville. It sobered father. In an instant he became one of those old steel-pronged gentlemen of the South, of whom so much is written and so little is seen. It is a metamorphosis that does not happen more than once or twice in the lifetime of any one of them unless the times are outlined by the battle-line of war; and when it happens it does not last over five minutes. In less time than it takes to say it father darted back to the drug store, reappearing almost at once with an old horse-pistol in his hand. Doctor Marks was seen by the petrified witnesses to bend over, reach under the seat of his buggy and draw forth another old horse-pistol, which might have been the childhood mate of the one

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father held in his hand. For years these two old men had carried these ludicrously antiquated "firearms" for each other, in anticipation of the moment that had now arrived.

There was a commotion, a swift flurry in the silent crowd, and Adam shot through it, placed himself in exact line between father, standing in the doorway of his drug store, and Doctor Marks, seated in his high, old-fashioned buggy. He flung his coat open, bared his shirt-bosom first to Marks, then to father.

"Shoot, gentlemen, shoot!" he exclaimed, bowing with an insufferably dancing-master grace, first to one, then to the other. "Damn it, I can't run a decent temperance campaign in this county so long as the two most influential supporters of the cause show such flagrant intemperance!"

I have neglected to say that both father and the doctor were so near-sighted that each disappeared from the other's vision at the distance of five yards; but both of them could

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see Adam revolving like an insolent shuttlecock between them. And undoubtedly it afforded them immense relief. Father's great moment had passed. He stood loose-lipped, staring terrified at Adam. The doctor gathered up his reins. As he moved off he raised his hat to Adam.

“Don't imagine, young man, that you have saved anybody's life. Nobody's was in danger. But you have gained a vote. G'lang!” This last word to the horse. There was a roar of laughter from the crowd, which was the real circumstance that ended this feud. You cannot conduct so serious a tragedy as a feud after the light of comedy has fallen upon it.

**ADAM THE HERO AND
THE DEMAGOGUE**

CHAPTER VIII

ADAM THE HERO AND THE DEMAGOGUE

THIS affair settled a point in mind about which I had never been in doubt, but about which every woman likes to be absolutely sure. Adam was a man who could be brave. Not only that, his courage was not stilted. It had the grace, the modesty of humor.

The rumor of what had occurred reached me before he did that day. When he returned in the late afternoon he did not mention it. I really believe he had forgotten it. The danger and glory of Adam's character was the lightness with which he could do well or ill.

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I drew him into the garden, I remember, that evening, where all of our prettiest scenes were enacted, and there I kissed him and was inclined to weep over him, which did not please him.

“It was nothing. Neither one of them could have hit a barn door unless he had aimed at the pump instead,” he laughed.

Then some deeper thought occurred to him as I continued to purr over him. He frowned and looked at me queerly.

“I say, Eve, you don't by any chance think I am a coward?”

“Oh! no, Adam. But you see, dear——”
I hesitated.

“But what?” he urged seriously.

“Well, you know you have faults.”

He nodded as though I had said, “You know you have legs, Adam.”

“And so I like to have glaring proof of those virtues that are absolutely essential to manhood.”

“Name them,” he demanded gravely. It

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was as though for a moment I held an eagle in my hands.

"Well, a man must not be a coward or a liar or a thief in his relations to men, and he must have the wings of an honorable ambition."

"That all?" He was beginning to smile a little.

"No, not all; but I could not bear—I should feel a sort of degradation in living with a husband who did not have these cardinal virtues."

"Still, if he didn't have them you'd go on living with him, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes," I sighed. "But it would be like going on being damned!"

"I am glad you put in that he, your husband, is to be all these things in his relation to men. You see, darling, I have been a coward to you. I am really afraid of what you think. It makes me anxious sometimes to run against those grave, simple, white things you think. And I've been the thief of

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your love; and I do not—well, you know I'm not always quite frank with you."

"Yes, I know."

"How do you excuse it?"

"I don't."

"What, then?"

"I am that part of you, Adam, that bears it. It would be different if I were another man separate from you."

He stared at me like one who had found a mystery and seen it sweetly solved.

"Eve, you are so wise, I am afraid to look you in the face, and you are so strong that I feel you in my right arm."

He kissed me reverently and we both had tears in our eyes. Then he began to laugh as usual; and he spent the rest of the evening gossiping gayly about the events of the day.

Adam, like most men, was a great gossip. He knew every joke and every bit of scandal current from Booneville to Nashville. He was an encyclopedia of everybody's secrets

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and private affairs. Women have the reputation of being gossips for the same reason that Eve got the chief blame in that apple transaction in Eden. Men will never bear the blame of anything that they can lay upon women. Thus, I have never heard a married woman repeat really serious scandal, tell a risqué story or divulge a confidence that her husband had not first repeated or divulged to her. She becomes in time simply the quotation marks of his different knowledges. I do not know why, but it seems that we prefer to tell what a man tells us to that which some other woman has confided, unless she had it from a man herself. Apparently we feel that in this case we have a superior authority for what we are saying.

One thing Adam told me this evening of which I had never had an intimation before. This was that Doctor Marks had once been mother's accepted lover, and that she had thrown him over for the dashing cavalry officer, Colonel John Spotteswood Langston. So

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it appeared that the Langston bitters was not the only thing at the bottom of this feud.

I was not going out at this time, so the most I knew of what transpired came from Adam's cheerful hearsay. It seemed that he wished the campaign could have been longer. He needed more time to impress himself upon the people in the new and beautiful rôle of temperance champion. There was something quizzical in the faces of every audience he met.

"They do not yet know that I am really in earnest!" he explained to me.

But he had all of the women and most of the church people for him. And this was nearly the majority. You will observe this in places where there is much drinking: respectable women—one makes a distinction between these and merely fashionable women—are always more or less frantic in their advocacy of stringent prohibition laws. But they think of it, pray for it too late—after their sons are grown and beyond control. The women of Booneville turned their boy-children into the

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streets every morning after breakfast. In the afternoon they held special prayer services for the purpose of prevailing upon the Lord to vote enough for Adam to elect him. And there was not a single one of them who did not believe afterward that his election was in answer to these prayers, notwithstanding the scandalous circumstances connected with the closing day of the campaign.

It is of this circumstance I have now to write.

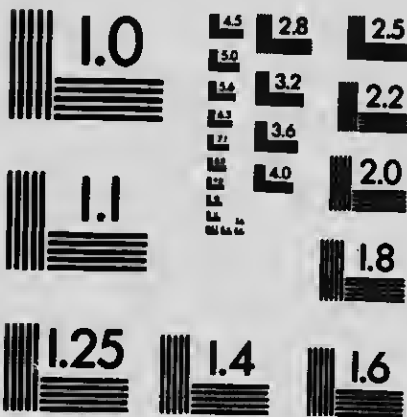
There was a certain neighborhood, very near Booneville and composed largely of negroes, which was doubtful. Each candidate claimed the majority of these votes and it was certain that they would decide the election one way or the other. The night before the election some friends of Clancy Drew's pitched what they called a "camp" two miles from town and invited every colored voter in the doubtful district, which lay immediately behind the camp, to come and have a good time before going to the polls next morning.





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The only refreshment served was liquor.

Adam was in despair when early in the afternoon he heard of this device. But there was an extraordinary quality about his despair. It was always the yeast from which his inspirations arose. About four o'clock he rushed into the house in a state of fierce excitement.

"Eve, oldest, youngest, dearest woman in the world, can the women—the old girls that have been praying so hard for me—can they furnish me with a fancy breakfast for a hundred niggers by daybreak in the morning?"

"I don't know, Adam. It's a strange request. I never heard of anything like it. But they are all gathered now over there at Mrs. Sears's to pray for your election to-morrow. You might go across the street and ask them," I replied astonished.

"I'll do it!" he almost shouted as he leaped through the door and dashed down the walk into the street. I saw him begin to mince and preen and sweeten himself just before he

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reached the Sears gate. He had the chastened look of a redeemed sinner about to go into the presence of angels.

Mother told me afterward what happened. She says that they were all down upon their knees, more than a dozen of them. Old Mrs. Allen, the most devout woman in Booneville, was leading the prayer. So, of course, none of them saw Adam enter. However, just as Mrs. Allen's quavering voice ascended in the closing sentences of her petition, there was a screech from Mrs. Sears, who happened to open her eyes and saw Adam standing in the doorway with his head bowed. Somehow he seemed so much a part of the prayers they were offering that his sudden apparition startled her. In a moment a dozen old bonneted heads were turned in his direction, a dozen frightened faces stared at him; then all stumbled up from their knees to meet the emergency.

Mrs. Sears, who always had a little round tear ready to start in her eye and a high,

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hysterical voice, advanced to meet him and exclaimed :

“Come right in, Colonel West. You see we were praying for you!”

She ended with a sob and led Adam in. Mother says she never saw him looking better or more the man.

“Ladies,” he said in a voice ringing with reverence and gratitude, “your prayers have strengthened me. They have held up my hands, given me courage against great odds. I could not have made this race without them.”

He paused, swept every face with his brilliant black eyes, inflated himself and went on quickly:

“But now it remains for you to finish what you have begun. I am absolutely in your hands. If you can furnish me enough cakes, biscuit and fried chicken to feed a hundred negroes to-morrow morning at daybreak I think I can promise to win this election for you and for your children!”

Mother says old Mrs. Allen was so excited

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she began to shout, and they had to quiet her the first thing. Then they all promised that he should have what he asked for.

That night there was light in more than a dozen of the best kitchens in Booneville till the dawn. Never before had the midnight air of the old town been streaked with such savory odors. The greatest secrecy was observed, of course, since some of the devoted cooks' husbands were Clancy Drew's most ardent supporters. It is told of old Colonel Middlebrook that he got up and walked in his sleep, he smelled fried chicken so strong. Mrs. Middlebrook met him in the back entry snuffing the air like a setter pup. She led him gently back to bed and told him to stay there, that it was a disgrace for a man of his age to walk in his sleep just because he dreamed he smelt something to eat. The colonel, completely crestfallen, pulled the covers up and did not dare even to wonder what Mrs. Middlebrook was doing fully dressed at that hour in the back entry.

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At three o'clock in the morning a wagon loaded with seventy-eight fried chickens, six hundred biscuit and forty-two enormous pound-cakes rolled out of the town along the road toward the "camp" of the enemy.

Adam had chosen two giant poplars a mile nearer town and a mile nearer the polls for his rendezvous. He had said nothing to the good women of Booneville about it, but he was amply prepared to fight the devil with fire. Two great demijohns adorned each end of the long rough table. There was a keg of beer in the middle. Between lay the heaps of golden-brown chicken legs, piled-up biscuits and cakes, and on a bed of coals a dozen huge coffee pots steamed.

At daybreak all was in readiness. By this time the men in the rival's camp had slept off their debauch of the night before and were ravenously hungry. When they received the message that "the friends of Colonel West were invited to a free breakfast," the simple creatures were not slow to respond to the in-

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vation. They deserted in a body—breakfasted a mile farther up the road and a mile nearer the polls.

At ten o'clock that morning Booneville witnessed a strange sight. Colonel Adam West appeared riding down the principal street upon a mud-bespattered horse, whanging that strange thing that he thought was a tune. Behind him for a quarter of a mile there was a strand of shouting negroes, all bound by the solemn ties of roasted beef and beer to vote for "the finest gemman that ever busted loose in Boone County!" And they did it. He was elected, having brought his own majority to the polls.

I remember this day very well for another reason. It was in the evening of it that I fathomed the mystery of Adam's bedside petitions—the difference between him and them. Every night he was as particular as a woman to kneel for a moment by the bed before getting into it. And if he forgot to kneel I have known him to slip out and satisfy his curious

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conscience, or whatever it was that made him perform this childish reverence.

I could not be blind to the lack of remorse he enjoyed after the most astounding lapses from the moral order which obtained in my own catechism life, and for years I had been curious to discover the nature of his orisons. On the night following the day when he outwitted Clancy Drew in the election, at the moment of retiring, suddenly the world-look left his face, a certain childlike sweetness adorned it, an expression so young and innocent that it must have stirred and mystified the angels in waiting as he knelt beside the bed.

“Adam,” I said when he had risen, “what do you say when you pray?”

“Nothing,” he answered, as though he had just discovered the fact.

“Then, why do you kneel?”

“I don't know,” he answered gravely, like an infant whose mysteries are being searched for.

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"It's wrong, Adam. You ought to say something. You ought to confess your sins."

"Confess my sins! Good Lord, Eve! Does a green-leafed tree confess its bugs? I'm growing, woman. I'm growing so fast, maybe I'll outgrow my sins. Anyhow, confessing them don't amount to anything. God knows them anyhow."

I sighed. It was a pedestal-angel sigh. Adam looked at me in alarm.

"I say, Eve, you are not bearing with me and being so patient trying to save my soul, are you? You are not praying for me in secret and all that sort of thing, are you?"

"No! no! Adam." I laughed in spite of myself. "I just bear with you and pray for you! Your soul is the Europe, Asia and Africa of your being, that you have never discovered; so you cannot be in danger of losing it."

Adam stretched himself out and drew the sheet over him with a sigh as serene and peaceful as any saint could have drawn.



**ADAM AND EVE BEGIN
THEIR FAMILY**



CHAPTER IX

ADAM AND EVE BEGIN THEIR FAMILY

IF I followed Adam's public career, what I should write would be more interesting. It would, in fact, be a sensational romance of the present times in Tennessee, where the scenes are always laid for tragedy or comedy by some unfortunate class of the people or by the state legislature. Besides, Adam, like most public men of his type, belongs to romance more than he does to everlasting reality. He is a person who garnishes life with imagination. He is not so much a man as he is a popular exaggeration of manhood, one of those figures of speech

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created and maintained by the ballot. The Government is full of them, and they have furnished more material for the historical novelist than for the historian. The men who are making history now in this country are the capitalists and engineers. The politicians, preachers, editors and social reformers are only those who are following them or fighting them.

As for Adam, the details of his success would always elude a mere woman. You must have observed how quickly a man blows out his candle, so to speak, when his wife approaches certain places in his life or his career. This was Adam's way. He talked to me often of his hopes, but rarely of his plans. If I asked him exactly what course he would pursue in such and such a campaign—for he was a man who advanced in the order of things from one campaign to another; just as, say, a Christian would from one moral victory to another—he would laugh, kiss me, and advise me not to bother

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my dear head about such dull affairs; or he would invite me to come and hear him speak somewhere. He declared the sight of my face in the audience always inspired him, and I have no doubt it did. I beheld him raised to the sixteenth power of oratory, and that invariably affected me deeply and happily. But, really, Adam's speeches no more represented what he was and did than a curtain informs of what is on the stage behind it. The last time I was ever behind the scenes in his political life was during the temperance campaign recorded in the preceding chapter.

Also, you must remember that this is not Adam's annals as a politician. It is a woman's testament of married life. And married life for woman, like all Gaul in ancient times, is "divided into three parts." The first is the pedestal period, before she has any children and when she is engaged with naïve simplicity in trying to be what her husband wants her to be, which, of course, is being what is easiest for him to live with, being

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himself unmodified as much as possible. Almost any young wife would rather be praised by her husband than to be right. Her little tinkling beatitudes all go to the fulfilling of his "ideal." As a matter of fact, I don't think there is yet a man in creation who knows what an ideal wife ought to be. Often she has to be a drastic, difficult person, reaping where she has not sowed and carrying things with a high hand generally.

The second period begins when she becomes the mother of his children, feels a new set of responsibilities, gets nervous over them and shows her real nature and temper by kicking her young angel-wife pedestal out of the way; and by getting down to those duties of life for which she was more particularly created—that is, the nursing and bringing up of her children, even if she neglects both her hair and her husband to accomplish this.

The third and last period comes after it is all over; after the husband and wife have ceased to idealize each other and have ac-

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cepted each other literally, without entertaining any more foolish hopes for the better. It is a time of peace and of easy, lengthy, unstrained silences between them. Love is a habit and no longer needs to be cultivated with quarrels and tears and reconciliations. They get acquainted, this middle-aged husband and wife, and are far more dependent upon each other than they were in their youth.

With me, the pedestal period lasted longer than it does with most women. Adam had served four terms in the legislature and was looking toward Congress when our first baby was born. We were still living in Booneville. I may as well say here that during the fifteen years he was in Congress, and until he was made governor of the state, we continued to reside in Booneville. Our three children were born there and Adam became the great man of that section. After his election to Congress he ceased to edit the "Banner," but he has always owned it and "controlled" its political policy.

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“I am saving the ‘Banner,’ ” he used to say. “It is my insurance against the sour idleness of a public man’s old age. When the political ideals of the next generation grow up and get strong enough to defeat me I shall retire to Booneville and edit the ‘Banner’ as I used to do when I was a young man with a bee in my bonnet. I’ll get over the spleen of this long political indigestion writing good little editorials about the everlasting things like honor and courage, the innocency of children, the faithfulness of women and the ‘Lost Cause.’ When a man is old he likes to feel the ancient foundations of such thoughts more than he does the red-hot splinter of political fame under his fingernail.” Adam was getting far along toward middle life before he had enough sense to say that, but I am setting it down here because this seems to be a good place to bring it in.

I never left home to be with him during the sessions of the legislature in Nashville, nor later in Washington, when he was a con-

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gressman. So far as I knew at the time, I was detained naturally by my household cares. A woman can no more leave her chickens and cow and flowers and furniture than a man can leave his business. After the children came, it was even more imperative to remain at home with them. Adam was reconciled to this arrangement from the first, although he never failed to assure me that it was the greatest privation of his life. He said living without me was not living. It was mere fragmentary existence. Still, he agreed with me, sighing, that it really was imperative that I should remain in Booneville and keep an eye on things. I used to wish sometimes that he would override my convictions and insist that I should accompany him, but he never did.

I worried over him constantly when he was away during those first years. The time never comes when a wife does not think her husband needs her. He may have lived comfortably, happily and in good health thirty years

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before he met her, but the moment he and she are married and she discovers "what a child he is," and how incapable of taking care of himself, she bothers if he is away from her, for fear he will eat something that disagrees with him or take off his thick clothes too soon. He may be laboring in matrimony like a swimmer in a heavy sea with her hanging to his neck. He may be positively desperate for a rest from domesticity and the petticoatness of life, but she will never really believe he ought to go even on a vacation without her, although she may consent to see him go. He may be as sober and chaste as she is, but still, when he is away from her, she has appalling anxieties such as a man would never feel about his wife. Nothing can convince a woman that her husband does not need her every day and almost every hour. It is a form of static hysteria with which nearly all good women are afflicted.

I reckon this had something to do with the anxieties I experienced about Adam when he

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was in Nashville or Washington. Still, if you read far enough in this story, you will see that my anxieties were justified. I do not say they always are for every wife, but if I had it to do over again Adam should never attend so much as the briefest committee meeting in Washington, nor even as near home as the state capital, unless I attended him all the time he was there. A man may be as trustworthy as George Washington in his relations to national affairs, always able and honorable in the discharge of his duties as a citizen and an official of the Government, and still be as untrustworthy as Alcibiades as a husband. It seems to be harder for him to evolute as a husband than as a citizen. I think it is because his ethics are easier to develop than his morals. The two may be as far apart in him as the east is from the west. As a man, you express your high ethical convictions by voting right about laws and issues that control other people, by conducting glorious social reforms in society at

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large, by repeating some Christian church creed every Sunday. Nothing is easier, once you get your self-consciousness lodged out of your own particular personal character and become the noble churn-dasher of the multitude. But to be moral yourself is like being greater than he that taketh a city. Adam could take a city with his eyes shut, but his morals had puppy legs. This is very common in the best citizens, but nobody notices it unless they are foolish enough to show their puppy legs in public. Once, when we were in New York, we went to hear a lecture on ethics by a man who was an authority on that subject. And it was a grand lecture. You could have conducted a millenium according to that man's recipe. I was enthusiastic. I seemed to see the angels running up and down Jacob's ladder into the Heaven of heavens as I listened. I could not help wiping the tears from my eyes. I resolved to be a better woman. I was disappointed at Adam's indifference—I may say, his insolent

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inattention. Afterwards he told me the lecturer had been divorced from his wife, had married his affinity, whom he was said to beat occasionally, and had turned his first wife's children out-of-doors; and that by his second wife he did not have any. From being enthusiastic I became indignant.

"Adam," I exclaimed, "it is a shame! That man should be arrested, prosecuted and made to serve a life sentence in the penitentiary for so blaspheming righteousness! People will be educated to believe that morality is simply a system of imagination and thinking, not to be lived at all!"

He took my face in his hands, looked at me and giggled. Then he kissed me solemnly as if I had been the Bible; then he snickered again and delivered himself of the following:

"Eve, darling, you'd ruin everything; you'd retard civilization and liberty, and break up our churches and the government, if you could enforce your ideas of personal virtue. Why, woman, there is no telling how

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many of the ablest and best senators, congressmen and cabinet ministers you'd have in stripes. You are wrong, my dear; fanatical. Don't you remember how it is written, somewhere in the Bible, that God 'winked at' certain things? Well, He's winking yet. And He will have to go on winking, for I cannot imagine how long, unless He strips man of his mortality down to the very pinfeathers of his soul. A lot of really excellent men and not a few women—only, not you, beloved!—are basing their hopes of salvation upon that shrewd fragment of the Scriptures. Your preacher means the same thing, offers the same consolation, when he quotes: 'for He remembereth that we are dust.' "

I could not help being horrified often at the way Adam chose his spiritual accommodations from the Bible. And I never thought he was right in taking such advantages of the great, innocent Scriptures; but I do believe the Heavenly Father will have difficulty in hardening His heart enough to damn Adam

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forever. He will be the kind of condemned sinner that will stand before the very throne of grace ten thousand years to argue the extenuating circumstances of his mortality, instead of going out and being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone; just as a child clings to his father's hand when he is told to go to bed in the dark. I am a Protestant for myself, but for Adam I can't help believing in a mitigating kind of purgatory, where the probationer will be allowed to enjoy the company of his guardian angel every Saturday afternoon. In my opinion, nobody knows how good and wise and merciful God is. But He undoubtedly is, for it is going to require much goodness and wisdom and mercy to know just what to do with sinners like Adam and saints like the eternal Pharisees.

But my purpose was to devote this chapter to the beginnings of our family. The first baby was a girl. We compromised by naming her Evangeline, because, to me, Eve has always seemed such a short, naked kind of name, and

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Adam was determined that she should be called after her mother. She was born in August. She should have been born in September. On this account Adam was away in Nashville attending a short session of the Senate, but a wire brought him home like a house afire to meet his eldest child.

I shall never forget how he looked nor how I felt that day. The room was darkened. The whole world seemed silent, as if it were walking by upon its tiptoes outside. There was not a sound save a soft whimper now and then from the little white bundle lying under the covers on the other side of the bed. Mother had gone out to see about the rolls she had set to rise on the back part of the kitchen range. I was not thinking. I was arriving again in the order of things. Years before I had been regenerated, converted, during a revival. I had been "born again." Now I experienced a similar but greater change in myself. From being merely a wife I had become a mother. The advance was

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immense, incredible. I could not think it. I could only feel it. Presently I heard the opening and closing of a door in the silent house; then voices in the hall, mother's and Adam's. I comprehended from the low and nervous tone of the latter that he was excited. But I was not in the least so. I seemed removed from all that had been, as though I had accomplished a new and infinitely nearer relation. Innocently and inexorably I was beginning already to repay Adam for all the deflections of his affections in the past and in the future.

The next moment he parted the shadows of the room as he entered noiselessly and advanced to the side of the bed. For a moment he stood confused, as if he were frightened at what he saw. There was something so endearing in his face, so remote, that suddenly I felt a great compassion for him. He was so far from understanding what had happened. He only saw what he saw. As for me—lying flat, with him standing so tall above

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me—I seemed still to look down upon him from an immeasurable height. There is no conceit like the first consciousness of motherhood; no peace so religious.

“Eve, Eve!” whispered Adam in a shocked voice as he fell upon his knees and lifted my hand to his lips. “Forgive me, forgive me! This—— God! I did not know what it was to be. I promise you, my life, it shall never, never happen again!”

I believed him, of course. Still, there was nothing to forgive. I had the baby. It was as if I'd paid a small sum and had cheated the universe out of a young planet. I mean the sense of gain was as great as that.

“You may look at her,” I commented.

“Yes! to be sure,” he exclaimed, rising to his feet with a look of dread upon his features. “Where is it?” he asked, moistening his lips with his tongue.

“Her,” I insisted feebly.

“Of course,” he assented. “Mother told me it is a girl.”

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"She," I persisted, wagging my head upon the pillow to indicate the precious bundle on the opposite side of the bed.

He had been casting his eyes about the room as if he expected to behold the baby on the mantelpiece or leaning out of a vase like a flower. Now his whole being seemed to undergo a change. He rose on his tiptoes, bent his back and began to sneak around the foot of the bed. Every angle of his body expressed dread, repulsion and fear. If any man should be allowed to follow his own feelings in this delicate matter he would never look at his own child until it has faded into a Caucasian shade, and has sense enough to return his gaze. I do believe men have a natural distaste for very young infants. They seem to embarrass male parenthood. I am sure it was only to please me that Adam now consented to look at his first-born.

"I can't see it," he murmured, peering down at the covers.

"Adam!" I exclaimed, with as much indig-

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nation as I had the strength to muster. "Our child has a proper human gender. She is not a neuter 'it.' She is a girl!"

I never saw a man in my life that would concede sex to a baby at the very first.

"That's all right, darling," soothed Adam. "I know it's a girl, and I am proud that it is. I would not have had it take after me for worlds!"

"She—her," I quavered, with a sob.

By this time, with trembling hands, he had laid back the coverlet and squatted transfixed at the sight of the little pink face, with its puffed pink eyelids tightly closed.

"My God!" I heard him murmur. Then, "Are they always as small as this at first—and as red?"

"She is unusually large for a girl," I retorted, "and mother thinks she will be dark; she is not pink enough to be fair."

At this moment she that was to be christened Evangeline moved all of her features in contrary directions and waggled one tiny

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claw in the air. Adam dodged as though he had been struck.

"I say, Eve, it is not like anybody or anything, is it?"

"She is exactly like you," I retorted. "Everybody says so." By "everybody" I meant mother and the doctor.

"I can't see it."

"Look at her nose."

Adam squinted as if he had the greatest difficulty in discovering this member.

"And the way the brows arch."

The silence that ensued lasted fully a minute; so long that I turned my head to see what caused it. Now it so happened that Adam was "marked" with a tiny hole in the top of his right ear. I beheld him gazing with amazement and rapture at the little flat ear of the baby. His head bent nearer and nearer, his eyes were glistening, his lips trying on four or five different kinds of smiles.

"Who would have thought it?" He was talking to himself.

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"O Eve! do you know I am so kin to this little thing that it's got its ear marked like mine!"

His voice trembled with joyful emotion.

"Of course," I replied forbearingly.

"But think, Eve, how cute it was to mark it mine for ever and ever!"

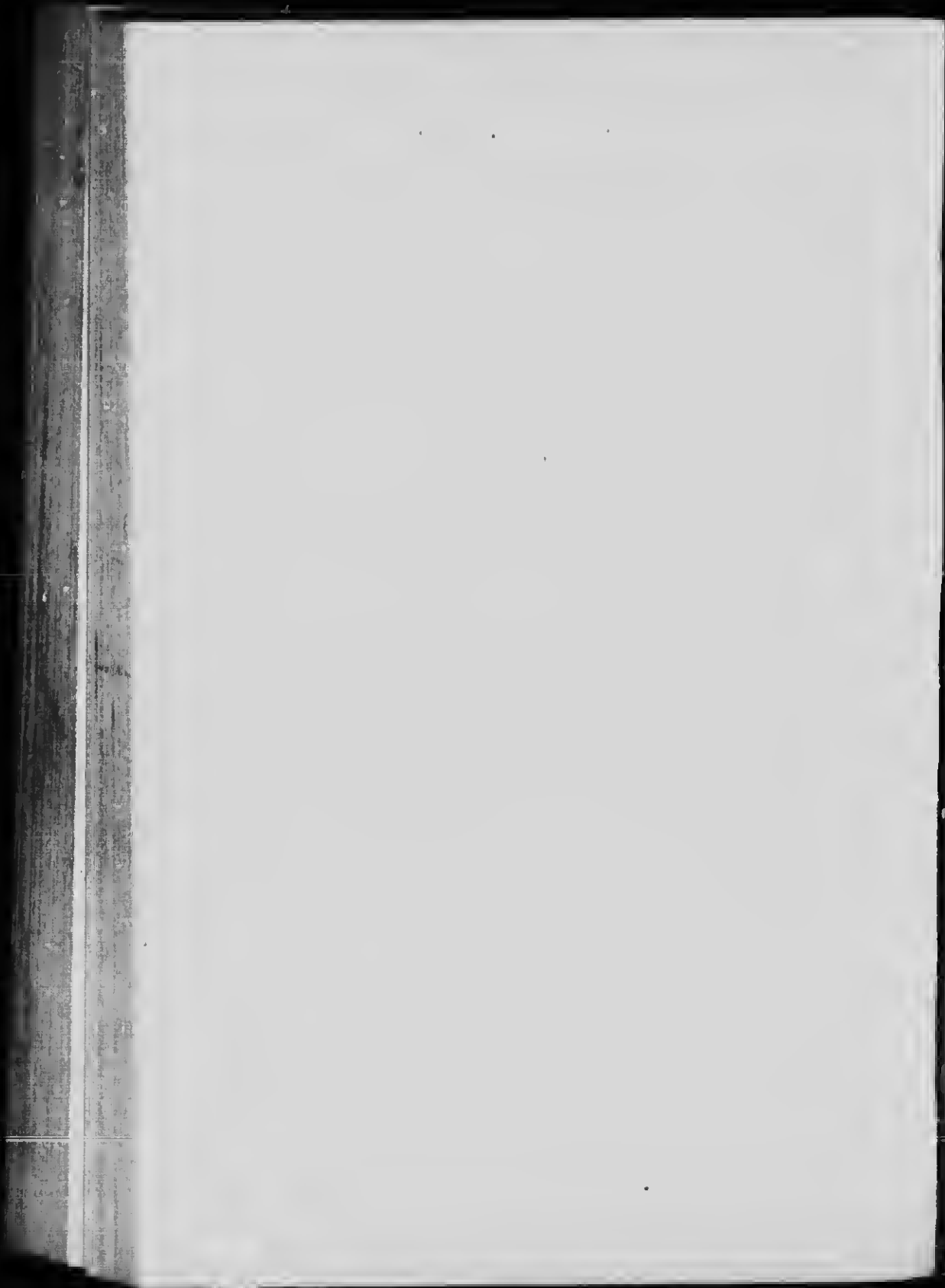
He was running his hands under the baby bundle, trying to take it up.

"Don't wake her, Adam!"

"But, Eve, I want to look at it. You don't know how queer it feels to feel this way. I tell you I am the father of it!" He began to laugh.

"You will be to-morrow also, Adam. Let her get her nap out."

**EVE ENTERS THE
MATERNAL TRANCE**



CHAPTER X

EVE ENTERS THE MATERNAL TRANCE

FROM that day to this he has been the slave of Evangeline. Fortunately the other two children have the same little hole in the ear, but he appears never to have recovered from the delicious surprise of finding it in the first one's ear. On this account I think she is dearer to him. And I am certain the little blemish was the "open sesame" of his paternal faculty.

Notwithstanding Adam's assurance to me that "it never, never should happen again," our second child was born before Evangeline was two years old. This was a boy, and we

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named him Langston, although I wanted to call him Adam, after his father, whom he resembled even more than the girl did.

Langston was still "in dresses" when the third baby came, also a boy. It seemed that once I had started becoming a mother I could not stop. And when Adam was summoned home from Washington to meet this second son he had the humiliated manner of a man who feels that he has become a sort of involuntary criminal in his relations to his wife. He had never kept any of his temperance vows, and he was equally unstable about abstaining from progressive fatherhood. He seemed to think I would notice the fault and treasure it up against him.

This time he came in at night. The other two children were in a little bed in the opposite corner of the room and so near the same size they looked like black-headed twins. Mother was stooping over a stew-kettle in which she was brewing catnip tea on the hearth. She held her hand before her face

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to keep the fire from burning it. I was dreaming something very dim upon the bed, with one hand resting upon the little warm body of my second son. It was snowing outside. Neither of us heard the front door open. Presently Adam appeared in the red glow of the firelight. He was so gravely beautiful, standing there between the children's crib and my bed, that I thought I was seeing him in a dream. Mother arose, greeted him and went back into the kitchen—"to warm some things," she said.

"Eve, dear!" He had ceased to call me "Eve, darling!" as in the old days. He drew near the bed, bent low above me and kissed me. I was not doing very well and could not make out whether he was really there or merely in my dream; but it made no difference. I saw him go over to the children's crib and look at them; then he sat down before the fire and put his face in his hands. That action, so little characteristic of him, aroused me. I lay regarding him with an im-

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measurable peace of mind that comprehended nothing of what was going on in his.

Women who marry think they suffer, but it is a question in my mind whether they suffer nearly so much as their husbands do sometimes. A husband who becomes involved in a selection of secret sins; who has got a left-foot relation to some one whose feet take hold on hell; who is bound in the dark; who can neither get rid of his transgression nor confess it; above all, who desires to hold on to it—such a man suffers frightfully in the soft, sweet presence of his sleeping children and of a wife that is one of those simple, virtuous women who thinketh no evil of him. He has to be his own bar of justice there, and the judge who condemns himself, but who has not the courage to inflict the right penalty. In such a predicament a man becomes thankful for a fractious, scolding, suspicious wife. He tells himself:

“Well, there is some excuse for a fellow who has to stand this at home.”

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But where the "this" lies at the door of death for him, silent, without even the thought of a reproach against him—well, it is just hell, that's all, and a good deal worse than any physical pang she has suffered.

So I regarded Adam. Far within some sunlit space of my spirit I waited to smile at him. I was thinking:

"Having three babies in five years is sobering even Adam."

Really he was acquiring a national air. He had something more than a merely fashionable appearance. He had a fine presence, and he is one of the few men I have seen who could have afforded to pose for the figure on his own monument without doing violence to a single canon of art. Finally it occurred to me that he had not even looked at the new baby. This seemed ungrateful. I puffed up a feeble anger against him.

"Adam!"

"Yes, dear." He arose and came quickly to me.

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"You have slighted the baby. You have not looked at him. You needn't think he has not got the little hole in his ear. He has!"

"O Eve!" he murmured in a tragic voice, "is it all right?"

"Is what all right?"

"These babies—so many of them. How can you forgive me?"

"Why, Adam, there are only three yet. And they are mine. What is there to forgive?"

While he was still gazing at me, holding my hand, I remembered no more. When I awakened the pallid light of the snowclad day was streaming over my bed. Adam still held my hand. He had not moved for hours.

"I feel better. You, dear heart—you have given me of your strength all night." I smiled into his serious eyes.

"I did that for you, anyhow," he whispered gratefully.

"And," I added, since he seemed to need comforting, "you are the father of my babies.

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That is particular, and they are my tokens of you."

He bowed his head and groaned.

"Eve, if you were not so good, just good, I could bear it better."

"If I were less good you would not bear it at all," I laughed, having mercifully no suspicion of what he was really talking about.

"But you have not looked at him yet."

I felt that the new baby was to be a surprise to him. He was like me, altogether like me, having no trace of his father in him except his sex and the little blemish in his ear. As time passed this resemblance became remarkable. He was fair, and he had the same vacuous expression, as soon as he arrived at the human dignity of expression, that I had in my own childhood. His good nature was matched only by his sense of humor, which was the most wonderful I have ever seen in a child. He always knew when to laugh. While he was still in "long clothes," if a fly alighted on his nose, lifted its hind legs in the air and

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rubbed them together, he would cross his eyes to look at it and know that he had seen something funny; then he would go off into convulsions of crowing laughter, which invariably gave him hiccoughs.

He manifested, as soon as he could walk, so profound an interest in doodleholes and bumblebee abrasions in the wall that a new-fangled mother might have concluded that she had a scientist on her hands. But I did not know enough about infant psychology to keep me from fearing he might become a well-digger. He put his whole mind, such as it was, upon every hole he could find. And he learned to talk very early, apparently in order that he might enjoy the privilege of silence. Sometimes he would go for a month without committing the indignity of uttering a word. Then, when he did speak, he was apt to draw blood. Adam the elder—we had named this baby Adam—feared his candor as he did not fear the worst things his political enemies said of him. And the child adored his father.

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One night he stood with one foot planted upon each of his father's thighs. This brought his nose on a level with Adam's nose. He stood thus for a moment, gazing so intently with his large, frank blue eyes that Adam thought he was being extravagantly admired by his offspring.

"Mother," said little Adam, with the slow distinctness of the very young, "father smells."

He was delighted. The combined odor of whisky, cloves and tobacco appealed to his young olfactory nerves.

"Here, Eve; take your tick of a baby off of me!" hissed Adam the elder, furiously red.

But from that day forth his little son made an innocent daily practice of sniffing him over, which embarrassed and constrained him.

"Why don't you stop him!" he exclaimed to me one evening.

"Because you are less odorous when you know you must undergo this infantile sniffing when you get home," I replied.

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“But, Eve, he wants me to smell!”

“And later he'll know what you smell of. Then he won't like you or your smells.”

He groaned. The only way to bring up a man after he is too old to do right is to tattoo him gently and persistently with the far consequences of his deeds done in the body. This does not reform him, but it restrains him. It makes him hold back some in his descent.

I was beginning to change now very rapidly. I saw less of Adam than ever. He was in Washington most of the time. I had entered the maternal trance, so to speak. I was living in the children and for them. Love is a garment, and like any other it must be replaced. And every time the fashion and texture change. When I was Adam's pedestal-angel wife, the quality of it was different—fairer, and less durable. It had graces and charms that were never to be mine again. Now, as the mother of his children, you might have concluded that it was a mere rag. It is owing to the way you compute a woman as a mother.

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She is worn, she has no fashion, she has passed out of the sentimental stage that creates fashions in appearance. Her appeal is not to gallantry, but to reverence. She is no longer attractive. She is only sacred, poor thing! Her paleness, her little wrinkles, so dreadfully fine, are the Great Poet's epitaph upon her beauty, which has given place to a countenance that is more than beautiful, if you understand. She is like a bough that has shed its blossoms. There is nothing so pitiful in this world, when you consider how women desire to be beautiful forever. It is so depressing—to be no longer lovely; to have your husband praise your bread instead of your eyes, your virtues instead of your charms.

There were days when it seemed to me I could not bear what had happened to me, especially since Adam continued to look so youthful and retained to such a remarkable degree the vivacity of his youth. He paid me compliments still and did not know that he had

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ceased to "make love" to me. The awful enemy of all women is time. Nobody but a fool makes love to an old one. Yet I could not forbear now and then, in the evening, after the children were put to bed, to go out in the garden where Adam sat with his cigar and sit down beside him, and wait. He never suspected, of course, for he was the most accommodatingly kind-hearted liar in existence. But his mind was upon some affair of state, an issue of his next campaign. When the silence became intolerable I would lay my hand upon his and demand anxiously:

"Adam, do you love me as much as you ever did?"

Instantly he was at my side in spirit, hurrying with all the beautiful words he knew to cover up the truth.

"Love you as much, Eve, dear! Why, the way I used to love you is just nothing to the way I care for you now. You are the mother of my children, the best woman in the world!"

"But, Adam, I am tired of being cared for

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only because I am the mother of the children, and I am tired of being your 'best woman in the world.' You never can know how tedious it is being 'the best woman.' I want to be just loved the way you loved me at first, before the babies came!"

"Why, Eve, woman, I couldn't live without you; I care so much for you."

"I know, Adam; it is like being a homestead that shelters you and yours, and that you need. What I want is to be loved because I am myself."

"Bnt I do, dear goose! How could I love you if you were not yourself?"

He would langh and put his arm affectionately around my waist, bnt I missed certain adjectives as I would have missed jewels out of my casket. When a man ceases to call his wife "adorable" and "darling" she does not need to consult her mirror. She may know that she has "lost her complexion." It is dreadful, but it must be borne. He cannot help it. Even a divorce will not grant her

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liberty from wrinkles and from that inviolate chastity of motherhood which is almost as absolute as that of a child, and which men only revere.

I can never forget the shock it was when I realized that Adam kissed me now from habit, just as he bobbed for his foolish dumb prayers. And never once did I consider that, if he had changed towards me, I had changed infinitely more toward him. I thought I was famished for what I could no longer give myself. As a matter of fact, it would have been a sacrilege against the blessed dignity of Nature if we had not both changed the fashion of our love. The queer thing about women is that they are made so much younger in their heads than in their bodies that nothing will induce them to accept the inevitableness of just Nature. A wife of fifty will cry for the lover her husband was to her at twenty. And it is no laughing matter. Life becomes to her the mask that tragedy wears. With a man it is different. He can forget love completely in a financial

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transaction or some other business. Business is his element, just as love is the only orbit in which a woman really moves forever graceful.

And again the first baby is the entering wedge between husband and wife. The child draws them together in purpose, in plans and hopes, but it separates them as lovers in several ways. A man, for example, is the parent of his child now and then in his leisure hours, by way of recreation. Adam's babies were his zoo, in which he found occasional happy diversions. But a woman who has a child is the mother of it consciously, often almost agonizingly, every moment of its life, from the hour of birth as long as she lives. Maternity is her accent. She loves her husband differently, and is now more capable of jealousy than of romantic passion for him. At bottom she is more of an animal than he is. The difference is that she is a mother-animal and he is a procreating one, which is not so engaging an occupation. It is the nature of a

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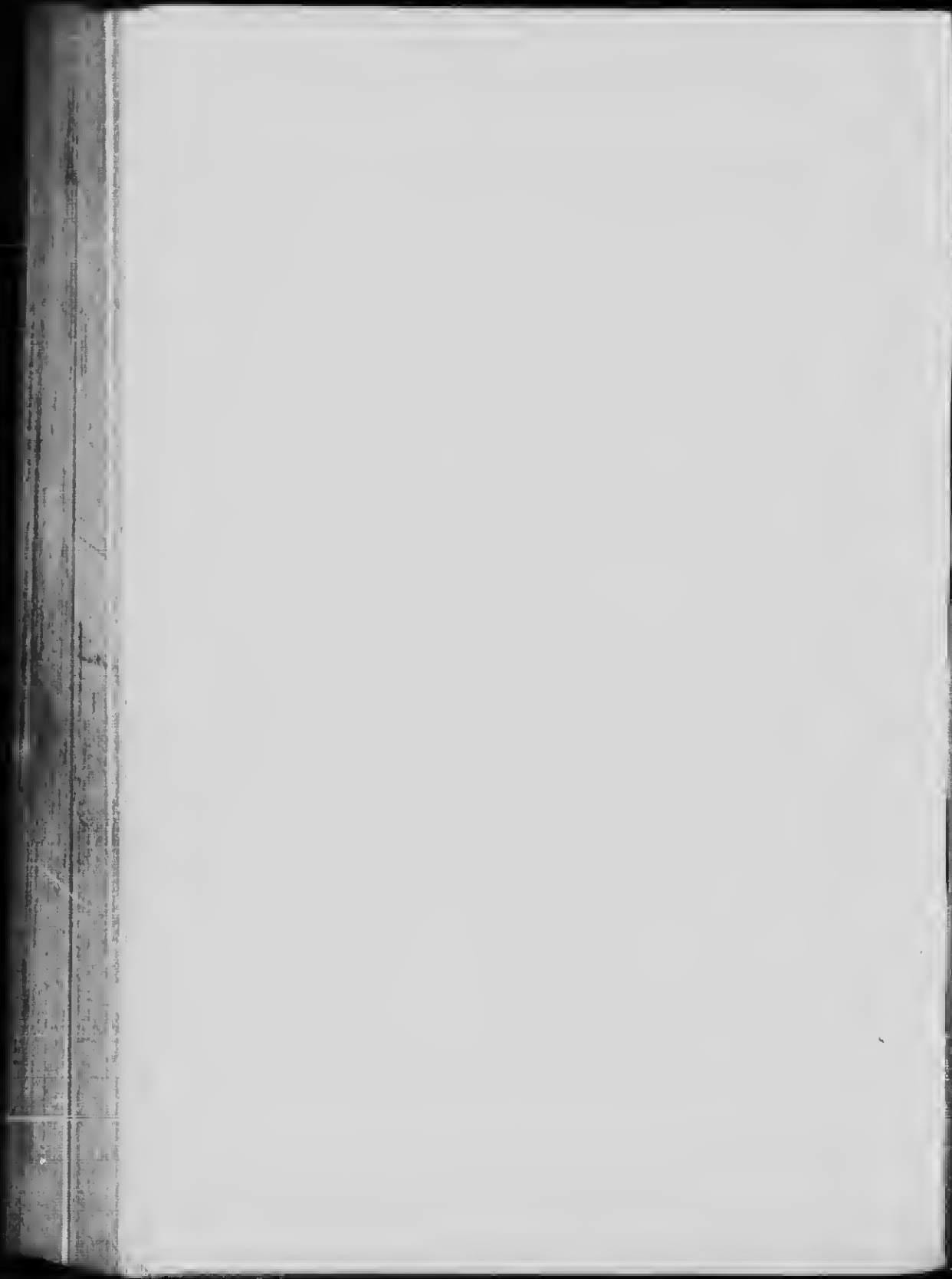
mother-animal to love her young even to the exclusion of every other interest. And the human mother carries this to an extreme known in no other species, for she never really weans her child except from the breast. She has no time even to freshen up as other animals do, and so prepare for another romance. She is maternally occupied forever.

This is why brides so rarely renew the beauties and blandishments of their wardrobe. I am writing, of course, about women who are natural, not those who are unnaturally fashionable. With three babies to sew for, I scarcely thought of myself or of my clothes for years. Adam continued too poor to afford more than one servant. His own expenses were frightful and absolutely necessary. Therefore, I economized in dresses and hats and the sweet foolishness of feminine finery generally. I must have made a sad contrast in his mind with the fashion-plate society in Washington. But he never failed to praise my thrift, so that I cultivated the science of

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thrift until, at thirty-eight, I looked to be fifty. I was just a village woman, faithful to my husband, absorbed in my children and energetic in my house and garden. They are not a bad type; these village women. They are often the solemn seeds of great souls which have fallen in good ground. Those of the upper, streaked, bedizened, frivolous strata of society, who find it so amusing to observe and record the ways and appearance of such women, have lived in such thin soil all their lives that they do not know we are the real bread of society, the ugly old wheatheads that nourish it morally and make it last.

**A SENATORIAL COMET
AND AN ADAMIC LIE**



CHAPTER XI

A SENATORIAL COMET AND AN ALAMIC LIE

I RECKON God produces the most wonderful "serials" in this world. He makes every life so interesting that the man who lives it, and especially the woman who lives it with him, hold on to it far more tenaciously than either of them does to hope or ambition or happiness. Even if they cannot bear each other, they go on living together, like the right hand and the left hand. They love the company of each other's misery. They fit one another's ugliness like homely old garments so long worn that they yield to the figure more comfortably than new ones.

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As for me, I am thankful that, whatever complaint I may make against Adam's ways, living with him has never been dull. It seems to me I have been like a sort of huge lay figure in a swift, comet-tail romance most of the time. He has always been able and willing to afford all the excitement, anxiety, joy and distress the morbid nature of woman craves. There have been days, it is true, when I have looked up at the cemetery hill beyond Booneville, and have contemplated the old arborvitæ above Mr. Bailey's last resting-place with the thought that probably I would rather be buried beside my first husband—I have the feeling that Adam may be restless even in his very grave; but from start to finish I'd infinitely rather live with my second husband. It may be, after you have finished this chapter, you will think it is a scandalous preference. I cannot help what you think. There is a lot that is scandalous in the human, even in good women humans. They may not admit it, or believe it; nevertheless it is there.

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And marriage is a queer state, anyhow; much queerer than those people think who try to get into it—and being in, strive to get out. It is not so everlastingly happy as unmarried lovers suppose it is. That sweet-hawthorn, blue-eyed, romantic look of marriage on the outside is the wise lie Nature tells to get them into the yoke of it. Neither is it a sacrament. Because in that case too many bonded modern marriages would be sacrileges. Neither is it merely a “contract” such as some head-end socialists claim. It is a relation, like any other—only nearer. You may get into it sacredly or sacrilegiously, or with no end of sentimental foolishness about not staying together in it one hour after the glory and glamour of love is past. But when either the one or the other gets out, is divorced, both are maimed for life. They experience a death of some immortal member, like love. I have known good women, utterly blameless, who were divorced from their husbands for the best of decent reasons, but I never knew

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one who could be normal. Something that you cannot see, but which you know and observe, limps forever afterwards. And the same thing is true of men. You would not think it, considering that when they are most married they are so much less married than women are. Still, it happens in them also—a strange, irremediable destruction.

Another curious thing about marriage is that the least unfaithfulness of the wife affects and destroys it a thousand times quicker than any thoroughgoing unfaithfulness of the husband. This is because the racial moral sense is so profoundly different in women from what it is in men. In women it is narrow, personal, absolute, for herself. She bases her self-respect upon her own chastity, not her husband's. In a man it may be naïvely impersonal, a thing he relies on often only in his wife for his children. And, again, he may be as virtuous as the best woman, yet have no respect for himself if his wife is not. All this is worse than unfortunate. It is bar-

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barous. But, things being as they are, it is pathetically fortunate that women tolerate more immorality in men than they do in themselves. If they did not we should not get enough legitimate children to properly dot the male i's and cross the poor little female t's of the next generation.

However, all this is prefatory to something I am not yet ready to tell. I will go on a little more about Adam.

It is not always easy to be elected to Congress, but once you are elected, being a congressman is infinitely easier than clerking in a grocery store or plowing corn for a living—that is, unless you are ill bred and want to show off by making speeches and rising like a green exclamation mark to a “point of order” in the House, when everybody knows that the thing, the bill, or whatever it is, has been mended, amended and settled by the “committee” beforehand, as usual. All a young congressman has to do is to keep quiet, follow the old bellwethers of his party,

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get a secretary, establish an epistolary relation with his constituents, encourage them to ask for little things like sample betty-bugs to eat other bugs, garden seed, and different kinds of minnows for their fishponds. Then he must be prompt, faithful and businesslike, with a touch of personal intimacy, in fulfilling their requests. It is not expensive. The Government furnishes the betty-bugs, seeds and minnows.

When Adam had been in Congress ten years there was not a cabbage above ground in his district or a fish under the water thereof that could not trace its lineage back to Uncle Sam. It came to the pass that a man was ashamed if his snapbeans did not have the Government back of them. And there was not a voter anywhere who could not show a friendly personal letter from Congressman West, in Washington. Of course there was occasionally some old dunderhead who demanded something harder to get. Give a constituent an inch and he will take an ell. Once, I re-

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member, it was made known to Adam that his reelection depended upon getting an appropriation to make locks in the river. Adam was worried. I may say he was distracted. For it is much casier to get perch minnows and lettuce seed out of the Government than an appropriation.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed one day. "I wish this entire district were dry land!"

Then, after a moment's frowning meditation, he concluded:

"But in that case they would have demanded an even greater appropriation to dig a canal through it!"

He spent most of that year in Washington, even between sessions. It seems that there is a great deal of gimlet work connected with getting money from the Government, and for the first time we had to "entertain." This, I have come to understand, was more embarrassing to Adam than it was to me. For I did not know how to entertain fashionably; I knew only how to be hospitable.

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He had added an ell to the house after the children came, which gave us an extra room for company. The only thing I regretted was that the ell took up the space I had always given to poppies in the garden. And it is no use to tell the people of the world who will read this how much I missed my fine red-and-white silk ladies. I do not think the poppy is a moral flower. But it always seemed to sustain the same relation to the other simple-hearted blossoms in my garden that fashionable, alluringly clad women in fast society do to homelier, less attractive women who are far above being in society. Yet I could not help liking them, cherishing them. They came up every spring, and were careful not to do it too soon, like delicate women unwilling to expose themselves to inclement weather. There was an air of exclusiveness about them, as though they had made a fashionable summer resort of the western corner of the garden. And if you plucked one it shed its petals at once, as though it could

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not bear its surroundings—just as those same ladies mentioned above sulk, leave off their finery and loll in ugly kimonos if you take them away from the vainglories of their particular “set.” I exhausted my horticultural skill trying to make those poppies bloom somewhere else in the garden. They merely dropped down, withered, as much as to say:

“We simply cannot do it! Our petticoats and parasols have been ruined in this exposure, in these disgusting surroundings.”

But, I say, we had the company room, somewhat removed from the confusion created by the children in the rest of the house. And occasionally now Adam brought some member of the appropriation committee home with him, who occupied it for a week at a time—a week fraught with mysteries for me and hospitable anxieties for Adam. I always felt as though I were walking in a sort of Coney Island darkness that might terminate in shocking revelations when Adam had a brother politician in the house. Such, for ex-

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ample, as a pretty little wicker basket with an empty bottle lying sideways in it, as though it had been as delicately nurtured as an infant. It had a French label on it, and Adam said it was a "tonic" Senator B. took.

This Senator B. was a remarkable man in many ways besides being an important member of the appropriation committee. He was of small stature, with a shock of black hair, and had the appearance in the face of having been parboiled. He could drink more water than any person I have ever seen, and most of it was expensive mineral water. Really, it was serious. And the more I saw of the strangeness of the senatorial appetite, the less I wondered at Adam's expenses in Washington. A senator or congressman, I found, might eat very little, alarmingly little, but it might take twenty-five dollars a week to furnish him with just digestible water. Adam and Senator B. never sat down that summer on the little side porch in front of the company room without having "something to drink" on the

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table between them and bottles of water in buckets of iced water by their side. It was no trouble for me, for we always hired a negro boy to "wait" on them whenever we had a statesman in the house. And it was from Aaron, the black boy, that I learned how much mineral water our guest consumed. It seems to me that in public life men eat less and less solid food, and depend more and more upon the liquid diet.

Another peculiarity of Senator B. was his mind. He was determined to do such and such a thing with the country. I never understood what, but he spoke of "the country" at large as though it were his golf ball. Washington was simply the tee from which he would send it where he thought best. He believed he was anointed by the Lord for his stroke, and apparently that was the only use he had for a Superior Being—a sort of master of ceremonies to his own greatness. This is the most dangerous kind of statesman there is. He gets a profound "call" to turn the

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country upside down, and he can do it with a clear conscience when he can do it at all. There is no form of paresis so evident and so common among them as this paresis of egotism, especially when we have worn out a couple of old political parties and have to line up some new ones. The popcorn activity of his ideals seems to him heroic inspiration; and maybe it is. But where one such man succeeds, a hundred fail. I have always thought that the great measure of Adam's strength lay in the fact that he was never an egotist, but was always a dramatist, and of no mean ability; especially when he took a notion to dramatize one of his own half dozen characters. Thus he secured the influence of Senator B. on the appropriation committee, and eventually through him the money he needed for the river-locks, because he knew how to play the proper complimentary accompaniment to the senator's egotism. Adam was the simple-minded gentleman in an old-fashioned home, who held down the note

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of the senator's achievement long enough to insure its furnishing the bass notes in every conversation. He effaced himself in the political orbit, leaving his guest to flash around it like a split-tail comet of phenomenal speed and splendor. Above all, he was the earnest but helpless champion of his river's needs. He was nothing. The river was everything, and B. was the anointed of the Lord—anything, everything he called himself.

I have sometimes feared that perhaps I am not as stupid as Adam has always taken such comfort in believing me to be. I say "feared," because he is the kind of man who could never bear the needle-eyed inspection of a shrewd woman. A woman may have a very receptive and even a profound mind without the fact being discovered. Thus, with me, conversation is an involuntary mental disguise. I cannot talk about anything much but the children—what they have said or done. It seems to me I have a passion for telling their little sayings. I can no more

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help it than an old cat can help licking the fur of her kittens. I feel a kind of glow inside, as though my heart were blooming, when I repeat things like this from little Langston.

"Well, little man," said Senator B. to him one day, "do you expect to follow in your father's footsteps?"

"No," replied the child gravely. "I expect to make a few tracks of my own!"

And I am always nervous for fear every new acquaintance will not realize merely from contemplating Evangeline that she "leads" all her classes. It seems to me fathers and mothers—everybody, in fact—ought to make much of this swift, transient brightness in girls. It is so pitiful the way they stop, glaze over and become dull as women after they have frisked sometimes entirely through a coeducational institution at the head of the class. And most of them do. So, I say, I could not help talking about our boys and praising our girl. Neverthe-

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less, over and above this maternal obsession, I have a mind that observes and comprehends vastly more of what goes on about me at large than I could ever reveal in words. For instance, I cannot remember when I have not stood off and watched Adam play stronger, more influential men like Senator B. for what he wanted. Yet I have never mentioned such a thing to Adam, and he is far from supposing me capable of so much observation.

The one object that confuses me is Adam himself. I think more about him and understand him better when he is not present. The moment he approaches me, it is as though I had a strong light flashed in my eyes. I experience ever anew the sweet blindness of love, a sort of automatic devotion to him; and although in the gallery silence of my mind I know exactly how much of his success has been due to mere histrionic ability, I have never hissed him even secretly. It is not his worthiness or his unworthiness that

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renders him dear to me, but it is himself, the amazing combination his body and spirit make of both. I believe the effort to shield him from the rigors of my own righteous condemnation has forced me to become more of a philosopher than a good woman ought to be. I mean that I am capable of looking at both sides of a question where he is involved, and of bearing with his political emergencies in a morally accommodating spirit.

And nothing has ever been so shocking to me as to have some one else recognize in him the same limitations that I have covered with my love by day and my prayers by night. This brings me to relate a certain instance.

So long as Adam was in the state legislature and state senate, he controlled his own press—that is to say, he edited the "Banner," which was the only newspaper in the section he represented. But when he ran for Congress the hawk-eye of more than one newspaper in the state was turned searchingly upon him. Now and then he appeared in the

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moving-picture shows the press made of public men and their adventures, but it was usually in a good-natured way. Besides, I rarely read the papers and did not know that he appeared in them at all until the "Mephistocles Commercial Applause," a very prominent paper in the state, suddenly reported in frightful headlines that Colonel Adam West, congressman from the —nth District, was said to be philandering with certain prominent Republicans at a time when every Democrat should stay by his old lady, or words to that effect. Then followed half-veiled allusions to the "gay and debonair" life that Colonel West led in Washington, and the prediction that it would terminate with the next election if the said colonel did not pay less attention to what he was doing and more to what he ought to do. The thing was illustrated with a big-headed, spider-legged cartoon of Adam in a perfectly killing attitude of grandiloquent eloquence before the symbolic figure of a stout old ele-

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phant. I did not mind the reference to party infidelity. Even a woman knows that too much fidelity to party platforms, party lines, and, above all, to party candidates, has been one of the causes of evil administration in this country. But I experienced a nameless anxiety about Adam, as the first Eve might have felt if her Adam had gotten out of Genesis and strayed as far, say, as the Song of Solomon. My fears were the more depressing because of their vagueness. A wife is usually at a disadvantage when she attempts to think out clearly and exactly what her husband has been doing wrong, because as a rule it is unbearably unthinkable.

I brooded all day over that paragraph in the "Mephistocles Commercial Applause" which referred so leeringly to the gayety and debonairness of Congressman West; then I wrote the following note:

Dear Adam: Come home. I must see you at once. The matter is urgent and affects my happiness. We are all well.

Affectionately yours, EVE.

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I suppose the most sterile and naturally expurgated literature in this world is the correspondence between the middle-aged husband and wife. Two days later I received this telegram:

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Cannot come now. What is the matter? Write particulars.

ADAM.

I clipped the entire article from the "Mephistocles Commercial Applause," marked the sentences exploiting the gay and debonair features of his life in Washington, and sent it to him with the following note:

Dear Adam: It matters little to me whether you follow a donkey or an elephant in your political convictions, and I can bear your being innocently "gay." I know you have a happy disposition. But how do you come by this word "debonair"? That adjective always seemed to me designed exclusively for curly-headed bachelors without family cares. Affectionately, EVE.

This immediate reply came by wire:

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Reporter damned liar. You dearest woman in the world. "Debonair" name of new cravat. Be home on 22d.

ADAM.

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By this time I was only a very large, deep-bosomed, middle-aged wife. I wore plain dresses and my hair to match, and I had a double chin; but in my heart I was as joyful as the youngest Eve when I read this telegram. Looking back over life, I know the happiest hours I have ever spent have been those in which I believed most firmly some lie Adam has told me. This was true even when I had a profound inner conviction that it was a lie. I only set my faith the sturdier task of believing it. And really this is no harder than believing some of the things one is taught to believe literally in the Bible; in fact—I say it to my regret and shame—I have found it easier to exercise this egregious faith in Adam than in some of the things Moses says he did. I am not throwing off on Moses, you understand, but off and on I have been tempted to believe he exaggerated little circumstances connected with his conducting of the Israelitish expedition. This is the great temptation of great men, and is by no means an ignoble

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one. Adam never had it. His fallaciousness was simply the well-embroidered curtain he hung between me and the distressing sight of his shortcoming, his sin, or whatever it was he wanted to hide from me.

So on this day I folded the dear telegram, slipped it into my bosom more slyly than a girl does a love note, and I was reassured, deeply refreshed from my sadness, like a dry field that has had a rain and suddenly feels the ends of a thousand sweet blossoms stirring in its soil. For the hundredth time Adam was my renewed annuity in happiness. All this; yet, far within some chapel place of the spirit, where candles dimly burn before every woman's altar, I beheld myself bowed, weeping, inconsolable; because I knew, in spite of Adam's assurance, that I had been bereaved, that I was in some sense a widow and my children partly fatherless. Many a wife is, and feels it; although she may never know it.

**THE SERPENT CHEATS EVE
OF HER ADAM**

CHAPTER XII

THE SERPENT CHEATS EVE OF HER ADAM

THINGS are not the way they look. Even the naked eye deceives us. Take a good story. You read it with thrills of delight. You itemize the virtues of the hero. You see his life as a whole, not day by day. You think how good and noble such a man must feel. This is the deception. He feels worried and ill-tempered half the time. If you were in his place, doing the very things the author describes with so much heavenly pigment, you would probably be bored to death, or, what is more likely, worked to death, if you chose the part of the hero in the best

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modern story. Apt as not, you would wind up and out with nervous prostration and a violent disgust at the hysterics of greatness.

What I am thinking of in this connection is the way we, the children and I, were living now in Booneville. It looked idyllic. Our husband and father was away in the world, where a man ought to be, doing his part with distinction; while we remained safe, secluded at home, where the wife and the children ought to be. And everything about the place suggested that one idea—home—a house in which prayers were said about the mother's knees at evening; where bread was set to rise; where every rug and chair and table was a little faded, a bit worn or scratched, as things are in a house gifted with children. And the sounds that went out of it were all sweet sounds: their laughter, their quick, happy cries, their joyful babble, their transient quarrels, their unweaned cries for "Mother!" the clatter of their feet, the prints of their fingers everywhere. Outside there were

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the flowers that had lived and bloomed in the family so long they had become a part of it. When you have gathered the same colored roses from the same bush for, say, twenty years, it is no longer just a shrub, it is your sister, the rose, who has shared your confidences upon sad days and happy days as you came and went and sometimes paused beside it through the thickening years. At first you were a bride, a woman rose, beside it. Then you were a mother, whose baby leaped at the sight of the red beauty of it. And then you were middle-aged and wise in all the troubles and illnesses of roses and babies. You have an intimacy with the old thorn-legged lady by this time that is closer than that with your human next-door neighbor, who may also be a trifle thorny herself.

And you must not forget the dog. I have not mentioned him, but we always kept a dog, just as rich people keep a majordomo. He was a liver-spotted, fatherly-looking animal of the mastiff family, who lived upon the door-

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mat on the veranda for many years with the firm intention of seizing a burglar in case one should appear there. None ever did, but this always seemed to me the mark of his great fidelity. Night after night, from his earliest puppyhood down to an old age when his eyes were too dim to see, his legs too stiff to bear him in a chase, he never failed to be on the watch throughout every night for this burglar. If you should ever be going through Booneville, and should pass the side gate of the Adam West place, you will see the grave of this protector of the West family in one corner of the garden. He was buried there with great pomp and ceremony by Langston and little Adam only a few years ago. You will see his epitaph upon the surface of one of the broad boards in the back fence. It reads thus:

Waller
Age of Langston
Died June 5
He was a good dog
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There is an epic simplicity always in the praise children bestow.

You will agree that this which I have written about our home and life in Booneville is attractive, suggestive of virtue, honesty, obedience and archaic peace. It has the Eden look. But if you had lived there year after year you would have understood, better than the preachers ever tell, why Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. They wanted to get out. They were bored. The Scriptures say nothing about it, but from my own experience those two elders of our race would have got out of that place if they had had to eat every apple on the tree of forbidden fruit, tear it up by the roots and fling it over the fence of flaming swords. After a while I had this same discontent in Booneville. I was tired of the same infinitely simple cares that never changed. I had made an Eden for Adam which he appeared to find very restful during his short vacations at home; but for me the duties connected with it were getting

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tedious. In my opinion, if the Almighty is the careful, loving Father we think He is, He does not have so good a time as the creatures He has made—He has so many worlds to look after, so many suns to set, so many stars to shine, so many prayers to consider.

I do not know really what was the matter with me. Some of the disorders of women that give them the most distress have never been discovered. As nearly as I could tell, this was a miasma of the spirit. It seemed to me I was tired of being a good housekeeper, a faithful wife and a devoted mother. And all at once the thing I was most tired of was Adam's staying away from home so much. Everything went down in a groove and the groove seemed to be located in the deepening furrow between my eyes.

To add to my confusion a good many people began to behave with exaggerated kindness toward me, as though they knew what I did not know—that is, what was the matter with me. I noticed this first in mother. She came

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in oftener, tried more and more to relieve me of the care of the children; and she began to do little things for me, like the making of pretty garments, such as I had not worn since I was a girl. Then she praised me a great deal. Although she had always been so silent, she became talkative and cheerful, the way one is with a very sick person who needs encouragement. It was queer. And that was not all. Mrs. Sears was so attentively kind she became offensive. I suppose I was hard to please. But it seemed that all at once I had become a mendicant, and that my friends and neighbors were trying to keep me from starving to death.

One day Mrs. Sears brought over a jar of preserved Japanese plums.

"I thought maybe it would do you good, even if you don't like 'em, just to know folks are thinking about you," she said, looking at me curiously.

Then, after a pause, she added:

"I should think you wouldn't be satisfied

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living here and Colonel West so far away yonder in Washington."

"I am accustomed to it after so many years," I answered.

"Still, it seems to me a wife ought to stay with her husband; seems it would be safest."

"It is too expensive to take the children to Washington; besides, Adam wants to keep the home here. He is fond of it."

"Do you ever hear from him?" was her next question, which offended and astonished me.

"Adam writes to me every day of his life. Why?"

"Well, I wouldn't have thought it," was her enigmatic reply.

The next afternoon, as I sat on the veranda sewing buttons on one of little Adam's jackets, Aunt Rebecca Langston came in. She was my Uncle Sam's wife. She was a very fat old woman, with thin gray hair, large pale-blue eyes, a small mouth with a shadow of a moustache above it, and she had a nose that had

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not aged in a single line since she was thirteen years old. It was short, soft, almost bridgeless, and turned up at the end. Really, one did not know what to think of it until Aunt Rebecca began to talk. Then it was perfectly clear. She was still a mischievous little girl of thirteen in her mind. And her nose was the warning Nature held up to let people know it.

She had a spiteful little theory of self-righteousness, which led her to say and do things with no more reference to consequences than a child has. She was the kind of person who, being a Protestant, would have taken pleasure in poking the altar cloth in a Catholic cathedral with the muddy end of her umbrella. She knew how to make the most of being irresponsible. Everybody humored her because everybody was afraid of her. Whenever you saw her coming you knew there would be a killing before she left. Somebody's reputation would have to give up its ghost. She could talk only in the vernacular of scandal.

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She sat down beside me with the air of being ready to tell me if I asked her. I did not ask her. I had a vague dread that she had the sword of her tongue drawn upon something or somebody near me.

"Have you seen old man Todd since he came back from Washington?" she demanded.

"No."

"Well, he saw Adam. And what he saw of Adam is enough to turn your hair white, Eve."

"What?" I asked faintly.

She drew her chair nearer with a hitch, poked her eye right into my face and exclaimed:

"Do you mean to tell me, Eve, that you have no suspicion of what has been the talk of this town for more than six months?"

"I have no idea, Aunt Rebecca, what you are referring to."

She drew up and leaned back in her chair, placing one fat hand upon each of her fat sides. She was taking aim.

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EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

"Well, I'd like to see Sam Langston make such a fool of me as Adam has made of you. Sitting up here working for a man and nursing and bringing up his children for him while he sashays around Washington with another woman! Old man Todd says they are living together as quiet as two turtledoves—like a respectable man and wife; says the folks at that hotel told him so; says they all think she is his wife. He says it's a little hotel on a side street. I made him give me the street and number for you, and here they are."

She fumbled in her bag and brought out a slip of paper upon which was written the dreadful address. I took it mechanically. The silence of death had fallen upon me. It seemed that the old heart-strangler was disappointed. She had expected a scene. She did not know that what she saw was frightful—a woman sitting up and dying without the relief of being able to change expression.

"Look here, Eve; I hope you're not going to be the coward your mother was before you."

EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

"Mother? What has mother to do with this?"

"I am talking about the way she let your father behave without ever so much as opening her mouth. There's nothing she hasn't taken from that man. It's been like she was on the rack all these years and determined he should not make her cry out. He's wasted her property, he's a drunkard, and he's had another woman nearly ever since him and her were married. And your mother knows it. I've told her myself. But she never lets on. It ain't respectable, and I do hope you'll not follow after her."

"I'll not," I managed to say.

She was so comforted with this assurance that she made haste to end her visit.

Later in the evening mother came in, and I wondered as I looked at her that I had never suspected her sorrow. It was written like an elegy in the wrinkles upon her face.

"Mother," I said, "do you know about it?"

"About what?" she asked.

EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

"About Adam."

"Yes," she answered, regarding me quietly, as though from a great distance.

"Oh, mother!" I cried. "What ought I to do?"

"If women knew the answer to your question we could transform the world."

I was lying upon the bed. She sat beside it with folded hands, too poor to console, too upright to offer a lie. Presently she went on, not to me, but like one accustomed to reasoning with the shadow of herself.

"There is something in every man to which no good woman appeals. Apparently it is his antecedent nature, the one he had before he acquired the capacity for morals. And being a good woman does not pay, except in goodness. Men are profoundly dependent upon such. They trust them with their honor, to bear their children, and there is no one in the world who reveres good women as men do, no one who abominates bad ones as men do. Nevertheless, the bad ones attract them,

EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

not more nor as long, but oftener, than the good ones do. And they squander upon the former what would crown and reward the latter." She sighed. "So, I say, most of us—at least many of us—lose our reward, that medal for excellence in the virtues, which renders us indispensable to the nation and a trifle tiresome to our husbands. We do not seem to have all they need. I think we lose it. We amount to just so much life; we divide that between our duties of goodness, part to the house, part to the children and what is left of us is not enough for our husbands. Meanwhile, the bad women do not have any duties of goodness. They keep all their vitality for one thing. Men go, they just naturally go, to where they can get the most for what they are."

"But, mother, what are we to do? What am I to do? If I had not found out it would not degrade me to go on living with him. But now, how can I?"

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EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

times thought that we do not exercise the natural privilege of killing our husbands as often as we ought to!"

"Mother!" I gasped.

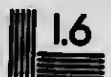
It was like looking into a volcano at the bottom of a quiet sea. Her face had the same elegy look, yet she was talking of murdering father in the same tone she would have discussed putting a mustard plaster on his back. As for me, I'd as soon have thought of killing one of the children as Adam.

**EVE DISCOVERS A
NEGLECTED DIGIT IN HER
DOMESTIC EQUATION**



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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CHAPTER XIII

EVE DISCOVERS A NEGLECTED DIGIT IN HER DOMESTIC EQUATION

IT never occurred to me to doubt Aunt Rebecca's story. I had some sorrowful witness of the spirit which confirmed it. A middle-aged wife is apt to have, whether the tale she hears is true or not. The name of love in her is often jealousy. It is the quick involuntary confession she makes of the fading of her own loveliness.

I spent the whole night considering the situation. Twenty years earlier I should have spent the whole of it weeping and praying for guidance. By this time I understood

EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

that we are endowed with an intelligence which works backward and forward to guide ourselves properly, while God gives His more immediate attention to larger affairs, like fixing new stars. It is what a good many highly conceited praying people never find out. And this accounts for the emotional piety which sometimes takes them sanctified in the wrong direction. Thus it happens that the more deeply religious a woman is the more apt she is to forsake her husband at this point and pave the rest of his way to hell with sighs and a bereaved expression; and it is certain that there is nothing more degrading than the pusillanimous faithfulness of such a wife to her unfaithful husband. She becomes a little, drab-souled, popcorn saint, who knowingly shares him and makes a virtue of hopping up and blossoming too white upon the griddle of her sorrow. A good many men tend too much to the Abraham type—matrimonially, anyhow. When Sarah humored Abraham with a Hagar she set a worse ex-

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ample and did infinitely more harm morally than when the poor little sweetheart Eve shared that wormy apple with Adam. I was in too much pain at the time to think all this as clearly as I am writing it now, but it comforts me to know that even then I had the right moral feeling about the whole matter and that I wasted no time praying for myself.

The queer thing about it all was this: how sorrow sometimes delivers a woman from the tyranny of many cares. In the course of that night I forgot the pull and drain of a hundred daily duties. The children asleep in their beds passed out of my mind. I did not know it, but I was experiencing a release and getting a rare sense of freedom. I had a change of thought, a new companion in my new trouble.

When the dawn came I arose and dressed myself. There was the image of a sad woman's face in the mirror which I refused to consider—when you have been reduced to combing your hair straight back and wind-

EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

ing it conveniently, but not becomingly, at the back of your head; when your features have lined up with just your virtues, and there remains in your expression nothing but the witness of your maternal integrity, you lose interest in looking-glasses. It would be two hours before life stirred in the town. I went out softly; and found myself alone with the world and the stars just taking leave of it. Suddenly, unaccountably, I experienced an intimacy ancient and strong with the living things of the soil. If there was only one woman in the world I believe the roses would speak to her. It seemed that the grass knew me. The flowers in the garden looked at me like little hallelujah virgins who had been sitting up all night with the dead. In the valley below the town the prayer of the night still lay upon the earth like the peace we sometimes have after a long, refreshing sleep. There was not a sign in Nature anywhere that recognized or accorded with my grief. The lilies glistening by the garden fence, the dew

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EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

plants and balsam along the path and the "pretty by nights" under the windows refused to consider the tragedy of Adar unfaithfulness. The difference between the fever of being human and the health of being just the rose and the dust, neither of which have ever felt the stir and anguish of mortal mind, is so beneficent one might be tempted to wonder if man is not a disease developed by a sick clod. The meaning of the vigorous heartlessness of every green stalk and bough slowly dawned upon me, sitting there in the garden, and brought me back to something like the right sense of things. The way to live is not to suffer. Misery is a kind of degradation of the spirit brought on by the mind, not by any circumstance of life.

It is too long ago now; I cannot follow the trail of my thoughts word for word through that strangely healing hour, but for the sake of many I am setting this down here as a scripture of life worth following. For a few moments, a very few, in the dawn of each

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day, it is easy for any man or any woman to return and be closer kin to the things they were before they suffered the frightful scandal of becoming mortal. And the experience is singularly corrective in its effects upon that impiety of human nature which we praise as "emotion."

Since Aunt Rebecca's revelations of the day before, Adam had been dead to me. All women have a pallbearing passion for hurrying and mourning over love now and then; and it would horrify a good many husbands if they knew how often their wives hurry them. The point is, we cannot permit them to remain buried. We cannot long endure the self-imposed hereavement. We are like little girls at heart, who go back and rob their doll graves after they have enjoyed the thrills of the funeral. It was impossible for me to live without Adam. So, refreshed and revived by the spirit of the morning, I began to plan what to do—not with tears, but a better understanding.

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EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

Old Mr. Todd had reported that the woman in Washington who engaged his attention was young and very "gay," to use Aunt Rebecca's own little frivolous word. Evidently she was the counterpart of something winged and transient in Adam. In short, he had found his "affinity." I reckon many a thoughtful person has observed that a man rarely marries his affinity, although women often make this mistake. To do it is like a solid body's disregarding the law of gravity. Adam had forgotten me, his honest earth, for a little operatic strophe of femininity; but if he had married her instead of me she would have forsaken him at the end of the strophe. I say men do not make this mistake as often as women do in marriage; this is why they have less trouble with their wives than wives have with their husbands, which is really unavoidable since there are so many more transient affinities among men than there are good husbands. Meanwhile it appeared that I had been so busy doing right that I had

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gone wrong. I had taken all the responsibility of the family, economized, nursed the children and neglected the most important digit in my equation—namely, myself. I had lost that quality of personal feminine assurance which is called attractiveness in women. There is not in this world a more durable or homely person than a middle-aged woman who has given her whole mind to her other duties. She is good and dependable, but she is not—what a man must have in a woman—adorable. She is simply the fertile soil in which her family grows and flourishes. From being poetry I had become prose; and Adam was a man with a lyrical nature, who could not bear too much prose, no matter how good it was. This was why he had been attracted to the little doggerel of femininity in Washington so graphically described by old Mr. Todd and Aunt Rebecca. The doggerel woman makes a crime of her clothes and of her complexion, I knew. Still, this was an indication of the nature of man to which I had not given enough at-

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tion. With me, clothes had been a necessity, not a decoration. Poor Adam had lived for years with a wife who wore rick-rack braid on her petticoats because it was durable, and who would "freshen" up an old hat with a Methusaleh crown to save expense. Economy began to look like a wifely defalcation in love. My thrift had cheated Adam, the lover.

So at last I came upon my courage as the sun arose upon the garden. For me, this was a discovery in the arithmetic of existence. Women are rarely brave except to bear physical pain, to endure privation and to sacrifice morbidly what they ought to keep for themselves. They lack the cool stamina, the initiative of positive courage, with which to meet an emergency that yields neither to dumb endurance nor to ecstatic religious endurance. To get the right courage not to endure is the great thing. Up to this time I had been brave, like mother, as a lamb before the shearers is dumb. Now, all at once, I began to feel the blood of my father. Father

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was not much of a man, but he was a good hero, once you got him started. He had acquired a sort of steel-spring courage in the Confederate army, which only lasted long enough at a time to lead a forlorn hope; but while it lasted it ticked out splendid history. I say, I felt for the first time the stimulation of this kind of desperation. And when a woman of forty, with an immense rather than a beautiful figure, who has acquired an expression which reminds you of Longfellow's Psalm of Life rather than of feminine prettiness, resolves to change her views of life, her character and her appearance, she is braver than any veteran. At once I had a new interest in life which was not a new baby. This was to reclaim Adam, not from sin and destruction so much—but from another woman. If one could peel off the angelic expression of the most saintly woman in existence one might be astonished to discover how simple, direct and like the most primitive woman she is in this particular.

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EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

The opening of Mrs. Sears's kitchen door on the opposite side of the street roused me from the reverie into which I had passed with the coming of the light. Mrs. Sears was a woman whose very nature had bereaved her of a bust. She was blamelessly flat from her chin downward. She always did her colorless hair up in long black hairpins at night, which gave her wide sallow face with its prominent blue eyes the peeled look of an idiotic spirit. She never voluntarily appeared anywhere but at her kitchen door until after the hairpins had been removed and her thin locks had been arranged in a row of little pale scallops on each side of her face. She had the mouse-gnawing curiosity of her class, however; and now she stood, regardless of her appearance, like a funny paper figure in the darkened doorway with a pan of bread scraps for a flock of noisy fowls on the steps, staring at me idling in my garden at such an hour. The women in Booneville never sat down after they arose in the morning until late afternoon. I construed her

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hairpin-sharpened expression and added another resolution to my list. I would cultivate idleness more in the future. I would never be busy again oftener than I could help. The women men admire may be industrious, but the women they love most are usually idle ones. I made a footnote in my mind of how much Mr. Sears respected his wife and of how little he loved her, as everybody knew.

I do not know whether I shall be able to set down here with proper regard for the canons of literary art the details with which I began to carry out my new plans. When you are living—not writing about it—you do what comes next without considering whether or not it will make an interesting chapter in your biography. What I did on this particular day was dramatized later when Adam received the bills in Washington and is set down here, so far as I am concerned, as the first exaggerated items of expense in the household ledger.

I began with the children. After they were off to school and the house was quiet enough

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for great deeds, I gathered up two or three catalogues of different wholesale firms, retired to the parlor, closed the door and deliberately planned to involve Adam so deeply financially that he would have something more pressing to think about than pleasure parties with a questionable companion. From a music house in Nashville I ordered a baby grand piano for Evangeline. She had a talent for music which had never been cultivated because I dreaded the expense of buying a piano. For Langston I chose at random the most expensive bicycle I could find advertised by another firm. From Martin's livery stable I ordered a certain diminutive pony, calico spotted, for which little Adam had expressed a desire vaguely, as he would have wished for the moon. Then I went through the house considering the furniture and how much of it I could bear to store in the attic. It was all inexpensive, old, ugly and very dear to me by a thousand associations. There were two old rawboned rockers in which Adam and I used

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to sit before the living-room fire long ago when we talked over his first campaigns, and a little, duck-legged, split-bottomed child's chair which each of the children had claimed in turn. I resolved to replace them with half a dozen leather-cushioned library chairs. I chose new furnishings entirely for the parlor and a bird's-eye maple bedroom suit for Evangeline's room. There were other purchases, like a mahogany sideboard, table and chairs for the dining room; rugs and a new-fashioned hatrack for the hall. In all, I managed to have charged to Adam a trifle over four thousand dollars at the different stores in Nashville, where fortunately his credit was good. For the next week I rested on my laurels and awaited the arrival of my purchases.

When the express wagons and furniture vans began to arrive and unload at our door all Booneville was shocked to the point of outrage. There is nothing so insulting to the village mind as a happy denouement to what seemed a tragedy. Booneville was full of sad-

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EVE'S SECOND HUSBAND

eyed, plumage-picked wives who had submitted silently to the sorrow of having unfaithful husbands. Not one of them, it seemed, had ever thought of profiting by such a situation; in fact, it was a trying time for me. The children were awed by so much formidable elegance in a home that had been as comfortably unelegant as an old bird's nest. I did not like the new things myself, but I kept a quiet face and an alert mind with which to answer the prowling questions of my neighbors.

"Eve," exclaimed Aunt Rebecca after waddling through the house and punching the new chairs to determine the quality of the cushions, "anybody would think you'd want to avoid notice and talk while Adam is carrying on the way he is in Washington, instead of showing off like this."

She had a mind that had been preserved in vinegar and her only animate faculties were critical.

"Mrs. Middlebrook is telling it everywhere," she went on, "that something is

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wrong; that Adam must have added gambling to his other sins or you couldn't afford such stuff and so much of it all at once. She says the colonel says the way these statesmen in Washington speculate in legislation is something awful. He allows now he is glad he never supported Adam for office."

"Still," I retorted, "Adam has always been elected."

Mrs. Sears came in to say that since we seemed to be in such good circumstances she had decided to charge ten cents more apiece for making the boys' jackets.

"Very well; I have been thinking of offering you twice as much," was my disconcerting reply.

She went away almost in tears because she had demanded less and because of the confirmation she had of so much opulence.

The one thing that has a worse effect upon women's characters than extravagance is penuriousness which has been reduced in them to a sort of thimble thrift. The rarest thing

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among them is a woman who can spend without spending too much and who can save without saving too much.

Evangeline employed all of her spare time out of school now thumping on the piano with agonizingly long intervals of suspense between thumps. Langston had become a bicycle centaur and little Adam had worn his calico pony down to skin and bones. The dog retired to the back-door mat. He had a proper sense of doghood which rendered him uncomfortable in sight of the glistening front-hall furniture. The first of September was at hand, when the bills I had made would be sent to Adam. I awaited his next letter as a stubborn, well-provisioned city awaits the investment of a hostile army. I was gifted for the first time in my married life with a separate will, which acted independent of his.

On the third I received this dispatch:

Furniture concerns in Nashville send me enormous bills. Don't be alarmed and don't pay if presented to you. Mistake.

ADAM.

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Women are naturally loquacious. We have more words than strength. But the sight of that telegram reduced language in me to a masculine brevity. I wired back:

No mistake. Not alarmed. Will not pay if presented to me. Better pay yourself. EVE.

The silence which existed between Washington and Booneville for the next two days was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. The doggerel woman faded into insignificance. The garish house was a horror. I feared Adam. The fact that he had wronged me and the children did not in the least mitigate the sensation I had of overwhelming disaster. It is one which few good women can brave; and this, I believe, accounts for their pathetic submission to ignoble conditions.

On the fourth day following I received a bulky legal-looking envelope containing the sheaf of bills for the piano, rugs and furniture—and a brief note from Adam lost among them. He wrote:

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Dear Eve: I infer from your dispatch that you know something about these bills—please explain.

Affectionately, ADAM.

Love is a queer thing. It keeps no ledger. It forgives not the debts, but the debtor. I could never forgive the thing he had done; but Adam—the dear familiar way he slashed his t's and dotted his i's, and put in a dash where there should have been a period, brought his image before me. I saw the hat on the back of his head, the everlasting oratorical animation of his face, the winged smile upon his lips. I remembered the treasured sweetness of a thousand words he had spoken—little love phrases of long ago. I went out in the garden and wept like an exile far from home. If by some magic I could have suddenly returned to the stores all that I had bought, could have restored from the attic the old things to their accustomed places in the house, I would have done it as ruthlessly as Joshna made the sun stand still and as regardless of consequences. Since this was im-

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possible I dried my tears and nerved myself to go on with the dreadful ordeal of reforming the too versatile romanticism of Adam's nature. No matter how pusillanimously tender I felt toward him, the respect I had for myself demanded his reclamation. I replaced the hateful bills in a fresh envelope addressed it to him and inclosed the following note:

Dear Adam: The explanation of this expense for refurnishing the house is that it is better for a wife to bankrupt her husband than for her to economize so much he can afford extravagances for another woman.

Affectionately, EVE.

You will observe that this record is full of contradictions. It is only in fiction that men and women act logically according to the theme of the romance. In life you act pathologically or illogically according to the exigencies not of the situation, but of your heart, that whimsical palpitation of life which the dust does not have, or the dust would change the seasons and cast up bloom.

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ing stalks in December or wither them in May, according to a momentary pulse agitation. You have only to look back at the beginning of this chapter to see how cured and serene I had been by an early morning intimacy of an hour with just Nature, less than a week before. But now I had lost the pale-dawn trail of thought that had led me to such cool, impersonal peace. Nature is not contradictory, but human nature is. Unless you are a tree or a blade of grass or a thornbush you cannot follow the logic of just the seasons and you cannot maintain the same relation to things about you. It is the effort to do this which makes so many helpless, unhappy women take refuge in various nautilus forms of what they call "new thought." They seek peace in a kind of mental solution of personality. It appeared that I did not belong to this class, that I had revived from a trance and had again become painfully, lovingly human. Having burned the bridges behind me by sending the above letter to Adam, I was no longer

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on speaking terms with the rose. I had lost the serenity of the unspeaking earth. I was once more kin to the terrors and joys of life which we have been at such pains to develop. All Nature could not supply enough peace to comfort me if Adam, after reading my letter should cleave to the doggerel woman and abandon me.

There were times in the evenings after the children were settled to their lessons when I even contemplated visiting Mr. Pailey's grave. A woman never quite recovers from being her first husband's wife. For one thing she knows where he is; and that was exactly what I did not know about Adam. However, this is not a record of the feminine catalepsy of agonized emotions, and I pass over those days of anxiety. One thing I have learned is that most of the emotional thinking woman do is unhappy and unhealthy, and must be forgotten as soon as possible if they retain normal strength, physically and mentally.

On the day when I had barely had time to

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hear from Adam again, no letter came. In the afternoon I went over to see mother. She had observed with a sort of cryptic silence my extravagances of the past few weeks, being the one person who made no comment. It was much as if she had been watching a June bug tied by the leg zone round and round, making a circle the width of the length of the string that bound it. When I came in she was peeling and quartering quinces for preserves on the back porch, a sweet, ample figure in a little old split-bottomed chair, her knees wide apart supporting a yellow crock into which she was dropping the fruit. On one side of her was a feed basket full of the quinces, on the other a pan into which she cast the cores and peelings. Whenever I am tired to this day it rests me to think of her in that chair on her back porch, behind the world, silent, secure from it. She was, I believe, only the holy ghost of a woman. She had been expurgated. Her heart had been broken. She no longer suffered. All that remained of her

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was goodness and a deep wisdom. The kind of goodness in a woman of which men take so many advantages and the kind of wisdom which is entombed in a spirit and does not affect the currents of life about it. She had never improved an inch of father's character with all her loveliness. He had slipped through her fingers like water seeking its own level.

"Mother," I said, drawing up a chair and beginning to help her, "what do you think Adam will do?"

"I do not know, daughter. Whatever is easiest."

"How do you mean?"

"Men do what they think is fair or best for them in their dealings with men, but with women they do what is easiest at the moment."

"Even if it is not right?"

"Even if it is wrong. Men have less courage than the most timid woman in their dealings with women where the issue is one of feeling rather than of business. A man who

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"MEN HAVE LESS COURAGE THAN THE MOST TIMID WOMAN IN
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would cheat a woman out of the last cent she had would not be able to resist the woman herself if she tempted him. I reckon it is the way they are made; and for the best."

"Why?"

"Well, if they were not made so they would all escape us; and we cannot live without them. We can exist without money, without fame, without homes or children, but there is nothing so impossible for us as to live without the wear and tear of men in our lives."

This might be good philosophy, but it was not comforting applied to my own case of the wearing and tearing of Adam. I arose presently and started home the back way. I wore a muslin with faded lavender-colored cosmos blossoms in it. The little tatting collar of it was pinned low with a brooch which had Adam's picture in it. My hair was parted evenly in the middle and dropped half over my ears, because it was wavy and could never be made to remain tightly bound for a whole day. It was still a very light brown, but was

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distinctly gray about the temples. All women are more or less self-conscious at heart, at first for the sake of practicing their charms, afterward according to their joys and sorrows; but I was long past any consciousness about my appearance and I should never have remembered what I wore that day had it not been for what happened afterward.

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**A FAT PHILOSOPHER
STARCHES EVE'S
UPPER LIP**

CHAPTER XIV.

A FAT PHILOSOPHER STARCHES EVE'S UPPER LIP

AS I entered the gate and passed up the path between clumps of sweet jimson and borders of balsam and pinks, I saw a woman ease herself carefully down the two steps from the back porch, balance herself when she reached the ground and advance to meet me. She could not have been more than five feet in height and she had the exact appearance of a large feather pillow in a thin shirtwaist and skirt. A very high-crowned yellow straw hat did what it could to add a fictitious cubit to her stature. Nothing re-

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mained of an expression upon the broad expanse of her face but a little apostrophe nose which turned up with a tilt of unconquerable animation. I have never seen any feature do so much to redeem a human countenance from the vacuity of fatness. The cheeks were jowls released at the bottom into an immense double chin. The mouth was a mere dropping line. The eyes were bright blue sparks half smothered beneath thick lids. The arched brows above were only the caricature wings of the merry little nose. Crowded in the doorway behind her stood Evangeline, Langston and little Adam, staring in silent amazement. I stood before her equally transfixed. She came waddling duck fashion and holding out her hands.

“O Eve!” she cried in a lively young voice that exactly matched her nose. “Don’t you know me?”

I did not and showed it.

“It’s Lavinia—don’t you remember?”—pant, pant. “But of course I have changed”

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—pant, pant. “Still, I’d have known you, Eve, anywhere.”

She had reached me by this time and stood with her hands on my hips, looking up at me and apparently absorbed in what she saw.

“Lavinia Scarrott!” I murmured, recalling the figure of a slim girl with a whisking, elfin carriage, who used often to make the pilgrimage of the Booneville square with me in our girlhood days.

“The same. Clancy Drew and the oldest Todd boy always made eyes at us, you remember, when we passed the courthouse steps.”

She demanded to be kissed.

“It is so long ago!” I said dully.

“A good while; longer for you than for me. I’ve never married, you see.”

I nodded assent. It is always a thing so clear to see when a woman is not married at forty. I longed to embrace her, but I had never learned to be demonstrative to anyone except Adam.

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"One cannot be a wife and an artist at the same time. They are two separate vocations that lead in opposite directions," she explained in tones of defense.

I nodded, and wondered if it was art or avoirdupois that had come between Lavinia and the marriage altar, while we continued to stare at each other.

"But, good heavens! Eve, don't keep me standing here. Can't you understand that I've come to see you and I'm tired to death?"

She flopped down upon the borders. I refused to sit upon my own pinks, but knelt solicitously in the path before her. Aunt Rebecca, who was the fattest woman in Booneville, was never so breathless as this.

"Have you walked far?" I commned sympathetically.

"Yes, I have. I walked from your front gate to the honse. I have been all through it, guided by your hospitable children; and I have arranged with them to bring back the things stored in the attic. They are homesick,

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Eve, for their little chairs that they are too big to sit in—the darlings! Then we saw you coming and I came this way to meet you. It's more walking than I've done before in many a day. I'll have to be helped or I shall never get back to the house. When I sit down as low as this I never can get up. It's three years since I've had the natural womanly comfort of sitting on the floor to put on my shoes and stockings!"

She ran her hand somewhere into the folds of her skirt, drew forth a little case, took from it a cigarette, curled up one of her feet and with a strained stretching of her arm reached it with a match, which she scratched on the sole of her slipper.

The scandal of what she was about to do shocked me into a proper consciousness.

"Lavinia," I said firmly, "if you are going to smoke that thing you must turn around. I cannot allow the children to see you do it."

Fortunately the children had disappeared, for it seemed that she could not turn

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around. She sat like a round muslin-covered foundation among the flowers.

She continued to regard me, her nose only giving intimation of some emotion within. It seemed to squirm with a kind of tender excitement.

"You are just the same, Eve. I'd never have believed a woman could have preserved what God made her so long. The world smacks most of us out of shape so soon. For example, you were always so nobly silent—and you are still. You are glad to see me now, but you cannot say it."

She laughed and I smiled thankfully at her.

Two tears, grotesquely small and thin considering the broad expanse of her face, suddenly made their appearance and trickled slowly down and startled me.

"Don't cry, darling!" she sobbed, although nothing was further from my mind. "Don't weep. I know all about everything. I have been in Washington two years painting portraits and you do not have to tell me a thing.

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I have seen Adam once or twice a week somewhere ever since soon after this mischief began. You can take my word for it, the thing will not last much longer. He looks like a fiery devil now. They always take on that desperate moral hue in the last stage of an affinity romance. The damnation shade of it breaks out on 'em like measles. The reaction to mother, home and family comes next. It's as simple as puking. You always do it when you have had too much."

I settled down upon the ground, stunned and fascinated by the audacity of what she was saying. She drew her immense bosom full of smoke, held it, exhaled it in a horizontal whirlwind of blue vapor from the nostrils and went on.

"Meanwhile, I've come to help you hold a stiff upper lip. You are a great woman—Adam has told me about you—but I've always had my doubts about your upper lip. A married woman doesn't get much chance to starch it. Her instinct to please her husband is a

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kind of matrimonial limberness of the soul. Besides, married women do not understand marriage as well as those who have kept out of it. You are too much involved in it now to get the right eye-for-an-eye and tooth-for-a-tooth view of your predicament. All you have to do is to leave Adam alone for a while. Let him feel your outer darkness and he'll come home seeking the light of your countenance. The way to hold a husband sometimes is to let him go for a while and then grip him in a new place. All men are tomcats at bottom and men like Adam can't help showing it when they are away from home; but he'll come back like Bo-peep's other lost bobtail sheep if you can wait and behave properly. He told me about the furniture bills. It took his breath away—didn't understand it. I did. That's why I came. There is some hope for a woman who is willing to spend money to save her husband. The furniture is horrid, of course. It's a crime in such a house. You are no judge of anything—least of all, rugs; but we can

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ram the stuff in the attic and get the old things down again. The point is, you spent the money—bravest thing I ever knew just a good woman to do. Good women, my dear, are poor inanimate creatures for the most part.”

She rambled on telling me of Adam's life in Washington as ruthlessly as if she were gossiping to a stranger. A fat woman, I believe, lacks some sensibility; not the same one every time, but the one the other person needs the most that she should have.

Booneville had produced one genius and was so scandalized at the mistake that the town had spurned her the moment it was known she painted from the nude in Paris, of all places. The nude was bad enough anywhere, but the nude in Paris had associations in the imagination of Booneville that were unspeakable. For years Lavinia Scarrott's name had been only a horrified whisper in the place on this account. It only added to her extinction that she had had one of those indecent pictures hung in the Salon.

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In the first place, there was no accounting for the gift in her that led to this shame. She was what the scientists call a "sport"; not like anything else that had been born in the family. These were simple, honest people, who belonged to the Presbyterian Church and kept a grocery store. Looking back, the neighbors declared that Lavinia had never been "right." Around the Booneville square she gave a smile for a smile and was not above mimicking a wink. She flashed through her girlhood like a butterfly with ragged wings, as indifferent to the comment she excited as if she belonged to another element—as, indeed, she did. And she capped the climax after the death of her parents by taking her little inheritance and leaving for Paris, with a feather in her hat and a box of disgraceful colors under her arm. For two or three years we had kept up an intermittent correspondence, but after my marriage to Mr. Bailey this had stopped. He said he did not like the influence of such a person upon his

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wife. For Mr. Bailey to call anyone a "person" was worse in his language than if he had prefixed it with the conventional masculine "damned."

Reports of her success did not reach Booneville until some years after Adam became editor of the "Banner." This was one of the boldly patriotic things he did—write up Lavinia Scarrott, the famous young artist, as a "native of Booneville" who was now one of the centers of artistic activity in New York. While he was congressman she had frequently had commissions in Washington and had finally moved her studio there. Adam occasionally mentioned her in his letters, referred humorously to her figure and acknowledged with the seriousness of respect her work as a portrait painter. But Lavinia had had the delicacy or the diffidence never to return to Booneville. I believe it was her shape more than the scandal of her reputation that kept her away. A woman would rather visit her own grave than the place where she has been

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young and beautiful after she is aged and ugly.

I considered this as with the uttermost effort I dragged her up from the grass when supper was on the table; and I warmed my welcome as we entered the house, Lavinia limping and groaning at every step.

The next day's mail brought no letter from Adam, but I was too much upset by what was going on to indulge my grief. With the help of two men hired for the purpose Lavinia managed to have every piece of the new furniture except the piano carried into the attic and the old things brought down. I was like dough in her hands; the children were lumps of young leaven with which she made the day rise and shine. She occupied one chair in the living room all day; from this she directed what was done with the animation of a bandmaster practicing a Wagnerian symphony. If she had had the agility in her legs that she had in her arms she might have been an acrobat. The walls reverberated with the excited voices

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of the children and the thumps and thuds of heavy burdens being moved up and down stairs. Mrs. Sears appeared like a frightened apparition first at one window of her house, then another. She was consumed with curiosity. At last, no longer able to bear the suspense of not knowing what was going on, she threw her apron over her head, hopped in her thin, birdlike fashion across the street, knocked at the back door and demanded to know of little Adam, who opened it, if anybody was "sick."

"It's Mandy Sears," screamed Lavinia, who appeared before Mrs. Sears in all the amplitude of a pink kimono from her elevation in the living room. "Come here, Mandy. I want to look at you," she called.

But the lady cast one horrified glance at her, recognized her and fled. Lavinia laughed.

"Mandy's soul was always quarantined by devilish righteousness," she commented unabashed.

From the first she had appropriated every

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one of us with the bland assurance of her own helpless condition. Evangeline fastened her clothes, all of which were buttoned behind, where she could not reach them.

“And I’ve never gone a single day with them unfastened,” she chirruped. “Providence always sees to it.”

Little Adam buckled her shoes with the same solemn reverence he would have showed “the fat lady” in a sideshow. Langston, who had arrived at the Newfoundland puppy stage of adolescent awkwardness, fetched and carried for her incessantly. Mother came over in the evening, after order had been restored and the house rested with its old vitals in the right places, from the rawboned rockers to the most ancient rugs. She brushed aside twenty years with her ineffable smile and greeted Lavinia as if only the day before she had tied her ribbons and seen her frisk off with me for the afternoon promenade. Then she sat down opposite her, put on her glasses and took her in, magnified by the same.

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"Lavinia," she said in the thin treble of advancing age, "you are not changed a particle—not a particle! I'd have known you in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Lavinia surprised us both; she burst into tears, passionate weeping.

"Mrs. Langston," she sobbed, "you are the only woman in the world good enough to see that! It's because you see through. I am the same in my heart, in the way I feel; but"—she paused, wiped first one eye and then the other with the corner of her handkerchief—"but how am I to show it, as thick as a bale!"

"That's so," crooned mother; "you have taken on a little more flesh. I hadn't noticed it."

Nothing is more certain than this: where you have made up your mind to be merciful always and forever God inspires you. The wisest man in the world could not have thought of so comforting a thing to say to Lavinia as mother had said without thinking at all.

The following morning the full treason of

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Lavinia's mind was revealed to me. We had breakfast, the children were off to school and we sat together in the living room, she mixing paints before her easel, upon which she had ordered Langston to place a large new canvas which she had brought with her. I was threading a needle with darning silk and listening for the postman, when she said:

"You know what I have really come for, don't you?"

"To see me," I replied; "and I'm so glad you did."

"That, of course; but more particularly I have come to paint your portrait. I want a new picture for my exhibit in Washington week after next and I've decided to make it of you. I'll call it 'The American Eve.'"

I gasped and blushed.

"I could not think of permitting such a thing."

"You dear goose!" exclaimed Lavinia—"not in the altogether."

"But I have nothing suitable in which to sit

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for a portrait," I demurred, remembering my scant wardrobe.

"You have that muslin with the purple cosmos flowers in it and the low tatting collar. That is the very thing. What I want is the soul, not the naked form of Eve."

I could not understand, but at last I submitted. It was arranged that for three days the children were to be exiled to their grandmother and that I should sit for a portrait to be called whatever Lavinia pleased to call it.

For the better part of three days I sat becalmed in the homeliest chair in the house beside an open window that overlooked the blooming garden. She worked prodigiously, beguiling the time with stories of her life at home and abroad; more particularly with what may be called a vocative treatise on marriage. The woman in the Scriptures with seven husbands could not have been nearly so well informed as Lavinia believed herself to be on this subject. She spoke out of the abundance of her ignorance with an im-

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agination unhampered by experience. She regarded it, she said, as a primitive problem that would always remain primitive; upon which the advance of social culture would have little effect.

"It is the one relation in life upon which even the Bible casts no light," she exclaimed one day.

"It says husband and wife are one flesh," I put in.

"But you aren't," was the quick rejoinder, "outside of your children. There are not two people in the world with more different flesh and all that goes with the flesh than you and Adam. Don't talk to me, Eve! Marriage is an affair of the jungle and must be protected, in so far as it is protected at all by the laws of the jungle. Go where I have been—in the oldest, most cultivated centers of civilization—and there you will see a greater laxness of the marital relation, if not agreed on, at least condoned, than you will find among many of the savage tribes."

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It was no use to argue with her. Besides, I was in no position to contend upon this subject. Adam continued silent. I spent most of the time thinking about him while Lavinia talked. This is how I account for the expression upon the face of that portrait. It gives a woman the most spirituelle of all spiritual expressions to sit and think about an unfaithful husband. On the afternoon of the second day I heard an explosive sniff after I had been sitting a long time thinking about Adam.

Lavinia was working rapidly with the tears streaming down her broad cheeks.

"I'm getting it at last," she murmured, brushing the tears from her eyes.

"Getting what?"

"There is a poor little Eve in every good woman who never leaves her garden, who is always seeking sweeter apples for her Adam; a vaguely sweet, lonesome soul who is never at home in the world outside. She is the spirit of devotion that hovers to this day over every ruined Eden—Heaven bless her!"

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This was the puzzling explanation she gave of her tears; and, having shed them, she was extravagantly happy to the end of her task the following day, a happiness that was in no wise dampened by my own disappointment when at last I was permitted to see the finished portrait. The figure was of what seemed a great woman in size, sitting with folded hands in an ugly chair, the back of which rose higher than her head—a sort of ladder behind her upon which the light gleamed.

“But, Lavinia, no cosmos blossoms were ever so large!” I exclaimed, amazed at the lavender glory of the old muslin gown in the purpling evening light of the picture. “And my hair—I am not so gray as that!”

It was the face, bent and turned away into the shadows, that alarmed me. It seemed incredible that she could have known how sad I was—and, knowing, could have betrayed it so pityingly.

Through the window the flowers in the garden looked in one by one, each with an ex-

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pression, a meaning, for the woman. The lilies were mindful of her sorrow and inclined to her; the roses turned their heads away. The light was pale and the whole figure faded into the dimness of the darker shadows, all except the slats of the chair behind her head, which held the pallor of a strange brightness.

I began to weep.

"O Lavinia, I cannot bear that this should be me!"

"It is not just you, dear. It is the poor Eve that is in us all—the woman who cannot change or escape her destiny, ever the same in the old or new lands, doomed to waiting and patience, the sanctuary of her race, with rungs of the ladder for others always to be reached from her shoulders."

"THE AMERICAN EVE"

21—Eve's Second Husband.



CHAPTER XV.

"THE AMERICAN EVE"

I HAVE never known how to account for the sensation Lavinia Scarrott's portrait of me created. The moment the paint was dry she left with it for Washington. Two weeks had passed since I had heard from Adam, the longest time that had ever elapsed since our marriage; and after the going of Lavinia my heart failed me completely. I should not have been able to resist sending him a wailing, contrite letter but for the fact that I had promised her to wait two more weeks before writing, in case I did not hear from him. If you have lived well and bravely you

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do not weep often after you are forty. You know the childish futility of tears; but I seemed to be slipping away into one of those trances of sorrow so peculiar to women. I neglected the children some and spent most of my time in the garden. There were shrubs and plants in it nearer my own age and I found them more companionable. Little Adam made of himself a nuisance. He retained the bland, vacuous expression of his infancy and a power of silence that was either stupid or sympathetic according to the way you interpreted it. He tagged after me with unremitting devotion. This may have been because the calico pony had at last gone lame and was of no use, but I have always treasured the thought that the child was so kin to me he felt that something was wrong and desired to atone for it with his own quaint devotion. He had a knowledge of slugs and crickets and rosebush scales that Langston and Evangeline scorned; and he waxed fierce in his destruction of these by way of engaging my attention and

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winning my commendation. He was the only one who was still young enough to say his prayers at my knee. One night he added this horrifying sentence to his little singsong petition of "Now I lay me down to sleep":

"And please damn all the slugs and beetles and crickets and scales in mother's garden, heal the pony's sore leg and have mercy on father's soul!"

I never was a laughing woman, but I have always believed that I had somewhere a dumb sense of humor. Little Adam was the only child I had who constantly stirred it into a curious starshine of inward mirth. The other children were brilliant, like their father, but he was stupid like his mother. He belonged to life rather than to mind.

One day, about ten days after Lavinia's departure, the evening mail brought a copy of the "Washington Post" sealed around the middle with an envelope bandage. It was addressed to me in Lavinia's staccato chirography. On one of the inside pages was

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a long account of her art exhibit marked with a blue pencil.

“The feature of the exhibit,” wrote the critic, “was Miss Scarrott’s new picture, ‘The American Eve.’ From the opening hour to the close her guests crowded before this canvas, shocked, amazed and delighted. The figure is that of an immense woman seated in an ugly high-backed chair before an open window, which gives an Eden glimpse at twilight of a garden filled with the ragged stalks of American annuals. She is clothed in an old-fashioned gown with low collar, which may be said to be illuminated with lavender-colored cosmos blossoms. The only light in the picture comes from these flowers and those dimly visible through the window. The face of the woman is so turned into the shadows as to be veiled, but the features, great rather than large, have a sort of scriptural strength which is rendered more significant on this account, as if she belonged far back in the order of things—Eve, with six thousand years’ dis-

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tance between her and the garish American day; but Eve still, in a new land, the mother of Eden, with her children looking kisses at her from the darkening world outside. This, in fact, is the distinction of the artistic treatment and her method of verifying the ancient woman, that the lilies beyond the windowsill lean with an expression of kinship toward her.

“‘Never before,’ exclaimed one enthusiastic critic, ‘have I seen the innocent, childish, bedtime look upon the face of any flower!’

“‘But it was only when some one asked, ‘Where is Adam?’ that the full significance of the composition was revealed.

“‘Can’t you see?’ exclaimed the wife of a senator, famous for the sharpness of her wit. ‘He’s left her! The first man deserted the first woman and went off to look for another one! So she waited for him alone with her children, the little Eden lilies; and she coaxed him back next day with the apple. It’s as clear as sinning and sacrifice to me!’

“‘Whether or not this is the true meaning

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of Miss Scarrott's picture, she has achieved a piece of work which is the talk of the city.

"A circumstance which adds interest to the discussion is the rumor that the original of the picture is the wife of a congressman, noted for his gallantries in Washington society."

I had scarcely finished reading this horrifying sentence before a messenger arrived with a special-delivery letter. I was disappointed to see that it was also addressed in Lavinia's handwriting. She wrote:

Dear Eve: I am sending this by special delivery, with the hope that it will reach you before Adam does. He did not know that I had been away from Washington and when he came to the exhibit last night the sight of your portrait was one of the greatest shocks of his life. You would have felt amply repaid for your sufferings on his account if you could have seen him whiten before that accusing canvas. He was the only person present who really understood it. He left the room in five minutes without even speaking to me—ungrateful brute!

Remember to keep a stiff upper lip when he comes. He'll come, you may be sure.

Yours devotedly and in great haste,

LAVINIA.

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“Remember to keep a stiff upper lip when he comes. Well, I’ll make a right smart effort anyway,” I said, carefully refolding the letter and placing it securely within my bosom.

The children were having supper with their grandmother. It was already evening. The night train from the east was nearly due. I hurriedly put on the old cosmos-blossomed muslin, went out and sat down upon the old bench in the garden. This seemed the best way to meet the emergency of Adam’s coming, in case he did come.

Presently I heard carriage wheels that stopped at the front gate, then the familiar tread of Adam’s feet upon the walk; and in the twinkle of a star my whole mood changed. From being a sad and meekly lonely woman, I became the outraged wife and mother. My heart steadied itself in my bosom with a stronger beat. I felt the blood warm my face. Adam appeared on the back porch—paused. The moon shone full upon him. There was not a line of contrition in the graceful figure

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he made. His head was up and his face expressed charming resolution. That was one grand thing about Adam. Nothing that could be done to him and nothing he did to himself ever lowered the flaunting flag of his brilliant countenance. He could repent like a child, but remorse was a disease of the spirit to which he was immune.

“Eve!” he called, coming toward me across the petunia bed rather than around by the path, which was his initial compliment.

I arose. We stood facing one another in the moonlight with the flowers for witnesses. The wall, the dreadful wall about which so many married people know, began to rise between us. We both felt it and he made an attempt to kiss me before it became too high. It was as if he strove to reach me over the top of it. The wall was composed of this: a man may do it for a duty, but he does not enjoy kissing a woman—no matter how good she is—if she knows how bad he is and is in a position to make him feel it. I received the

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kiss somewhere in the arid desert of my face, as far from my lips as possible—not to punish him, but it was the wall again. I had arrived at a certain geological period of the affections when they congeal into just foundations for character.

We sat down side by side upon the bench in silence. I held each hand a prisoner with the other. Adam took a little fold of my gown and smoothed it between his fingers. I was far the sadder, more humiliated of the two of us, for I knew that in spite of all that had transpired I was ready to forgive him. To do so was a kind of shame to me. It is the only shame good women ever know—this overreaching, divine love for undivine husbands.

“Eve,” he began after a time, “I have resigned.”

“What for?”

“For you.”

“What will you do?”

“Stay at home by my own fireside, with you and the children.”

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I knew he could never do it, but it comforted me to think that he could wish to be at home. He was more a citizen man than either a husband or father. The nation was his hearthstone; and, being forever unable to govern himself, he had a gift for governing the people. This is often the case. The best bosses, governors, presidents, kings, emperors—all—are men who lack self-control at some point. So the people obey them better, because it is not prudent to try their patience too far. This is why God made the man the head of the family—not because he is good enough, but because he is so dangerously impatient he commands obedience.

I knew that he expected me to turn my face to him after that last sacrificial avowal, but I kept it resolutely averted.

“Adam, I think I ought to tell you this: I am contemplating a change.”

“A change of what?”

“Of character.”

He laughed a little. Altogether, he was

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much less troubled, less embarrassed than I; only bent with a cheerful mind upon making his peace.

“You could not change, Eve, dear; not even if you were to take a notion to become the stepmother of all the angels in Heaven. You are from everlasting to everlasting the same. That is what I saw in the face of the portrait Lavinia made of you. Eve!”—he interpolated—“that woman ought to be suppressed! She is a female Nathan, a witch! Confound and bless her!”

I ignored the tribute to Lavinia and went on:

“But you will admit that I have changed already.” I was thinking of the housefurnishing bills.

“Oh, no. You have acted a little queerly of late. Far be it from me to meddle with the wisdom of your providences, Eve, however much they cost me—but you are the same. I’ll tell you something, woman!” he added, with great gravity: “I believe you are my

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soul. That is my faith, the only faith I have. So do not talk of changing. You are predestined, foreordained—the soul of Adam West.”

One of the sweetest texts in the Bible is this, “For all men are liars.” If they were not the hearts of all women would break. Now, as we sat together, gray, middle-aged, unmindful of the moonlight that would have charmed us years before, I knew that I should never feel the radiant happiness of being the beloved young wife of Adam, my husband—something had forever broken the spell of that happiness; but I felt comforted, as if I were recovering from a dreadful pain. It was the submission I had at last of being willing to be just Adam’s soul. I could have wept. It was like being made to “take the veil” by Nature, with Adam for the priest; but if I was to be just his soul I was resolved to get a pair of new wings for a change.

“Adam,” I persisted, “it is kind of you to think so highly of me, but I tell you I am

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resolved upon making a change in our life together."

"How?"

"Well, I do not suppose a man knows anything about the weariness of oneness that women experience in marriage, because they are never one for long at the time with anybody but themselves. But women actually believe that they are 'one flesh' with their husbands. Really, you know, there is no such thing. Nature and the minister who performs the ceremony merely deceive us. Now, all these years when you were away in Nashville and Washington I thought of myself as being one with you; I lived in that consciousness."

"Well?" said Adam, staring at me steadily, as a brave man faces his calamity.

It was difficult to explain, although I had a very definite conviction about it, and I stumbled on, trying to tell him.

"What I mean is that it was a mistake to be the wife of just you——"

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"God!" he ejaculated, as if he were listening to blasphemy from the lips of a babe.

"I've got to be from now on the wife of what you are."

"Oh, Lord! Eve!" he cried, taking his head in his hands and wagging it gently to and fro. "Say it plain, so that I can understand it."

"Well, I mean that I should have been the wife of Congressman West in Washington, not merely the relic of Adam, left behind here in the garden. And I mean that in future, whatever you are, I shall be the wife of that."

A man can make a woman feel like a fool when she is not. Adam did it now. He looked at me wonderingly a moment; then he began to snicker and paw at me the way a husband does when he wants to make fun of his wife by taking her in his arms. But I held back.

"I am in earnest, Adam."

"About what?"

"Well, you know that you will never be contented to live here in Booneville. You

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will go back into public life—and I am in earnest about not staying here when you are somewhere else.”

“You are willing, then, that I shall continue in public life?”

I saw that he was immensely relieved and I went on pleasing him. It was the old motive of Eve with the apple.

“You promised when we were married that you would make me the wife of the Governor of Tennessee.” I could not resist smiling at him, I felt so good and kind to him, as a woman feels when she knows she is doing exactly what her husband wants.

“And you shall be,” he exclaimed, delighted.

“But, remember, the children and I are coming with you after this.”

“Of course!”

“We will live in the governor’s mansion. That will save house rent.”

“I wonder I never thought of that before,” he murmured.

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"Of what?"

"Of the fact that being governor would enable us to save house rent," he answered with suspicious simplicity.

So it was settled that he would be a candidate in the next race for governor. As a matter of fact, he entered it at once against Clancy Drew, his old-time antagonist.

Between caucuses and speeches Adam was at home with us. This was good for us as well as for him. He assumed, for example, a stern-father attitude toward Langston, who was growing into a big, unmanageable cub of a boy. Langston, I believe, had more moral stamina than his father; still it did the child good to feel a father's sophisticated eye upon him. For he was not sufficiently informed about Adam's weakness to suspect that he had any. My one persistent maternal lie was to teach the children that their father was one of the best men in the world, one of the greatest in the nation and by all odds the greatest in Tennessee. When they are old enough to

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know better their characters will be formed and it will not injure them so much to learn the other truth about him. This is fortunate, that our children are not in a position to weigh us in the balance and find us wanting until after we have done them all the good we can by assuming the air of being better than we are.

My own relations to Adam were delicate and required much consideration, for I discovered as time passed that the moral shortage of which he was guilty in Washington had really given me the "drop" on him, so to speak. When a woman gets the drop on her husband she is in a much more dangerous position than he is, because it is so easy to kill him as a husband; and, once he breaks bond, he is readier to do it again—he is so really willing to be killed as a husband. This leaves the wife in the anomalous and embarrassing position of being his widow, with him still living in the house with her.

What I mean by having the drop on him is

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this: He was in the breach he had made in our marriage with his hands up and no defense possible. It is a ticklish place for a man to be in before a woman, very threatening to his egotism, upon which so much of the best part of his character depends and which must be wounded as little as possible for this reason. Once you damage a man's egotism, you have injured his personal ideal of himself, to which he will cling otherwise in spite of the most scandalous evidence against it. You have reduced him to his littleness instead of raising him to his possible greatness, which is the most solemn and binding duty of every honorable wife.

For this reason the Washington affair has never been mentioned between us. But I am very certain that he soon forgot the doggerel woman. This is the deserved punishment of all evil women—they are so easily, thankfully dead, buried and forgotten by men, especially the men who swear devotion to them. It was quite different with me. It always is with the

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wife. She never can forget the woman who has robbed her. I reckon I have thought oftener of the one in Adam's life than of the grandest man or woman living. She is buried, not so much upon the green hillside of Adam's cheerful forgetfulness as in the cemetery lot of my heart, where she has the advantage of being a scandalous little ghost, who rises and walks before me. In spite of this apparition I spent a good deal of my time that autumn learning to understand Adam and putting the best face I could upon what had happened, so that I should be less at a loss to account for the fact that I loved him more dearly than ever.

The conclusion I came to was this: We are not the same in the open that we are at home, in the environment where we first learned manners and morals. That is why women behave better than men do. They stay at home in the exact environment where they first learned to pray and behave themselves. But at the most dangerous periods of adolescence

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men get out into the world, which is always "wide open," where manners are different and morals are determined more or less by circumstances. The rules governing both change. A man is respectable if he is truthful and honest, even when he gives license to all his appetites. And women whose lives are sweet parodies of saintliness at home often have no conscience in the business world. It is at home with their husband and children that they show to the best advantage.

While I was fitting up a system of philosophy sufficiently broad and forbearing to account for all his transgressions, he was in and out making political speeches over the state. One thing I have noticed about a public man's vocabulary: it is a kind of vocative currency which continually enhances in value. In time it is composed of all the great and good and patient words in the language. They are chosen to fit the national ideals, not the character of the man who utters them. So Clancy Drew's little, thin, local phrases sounded like

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tinkling cymbals beside the booming sentences which now flowed from Adam's lips so gracefully, and which he had collected in the larger vision of things at Washington. He propped the commonwealth of Tennessee with just his vocabulary and somehow convinced the people that it would go into the hands of a receiver if he were not elected governor. Clancy stood for reform and public righteousness; and, as nearly as I could make out, Adam stood for democracy—Jeffersonian; "Early Bird" and "Cascade" brand—for "the heroes who wore the gray" and a few other less important things. He proclaimed reverently and seriously, with a high look upon his brow, that he wanted every man to remain sober and behave himself.

"But, fellow citizens," he exclaimed to an enthusiastic audience at Molly's-borough, "this is a matter too sacred to be dragged in the political mire and one which every God-fearing man must decide for himself, no matter who is elected Governor of Tennessee!"

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Adam knew well enough that the Democrats in Tennessee dodge God more than they fear Him.

Clancy Drew stood no chance from the first. You have to stand for what is in people's minds, not for what is in their Bibles, if you want to get elected. This is not complimentary to them, but it is the truth, which Clancy's defeat verified once more. Adam was nominated in the spring and elected without opposition the following November.

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A GREAT VANITY SATISFIED

CHAPTER XVI

A GREAT VANITY SATISFIED

I AM coming to the end now. By far the grandest part of our lives has been lived here in Nashville, but we have added nothing to our scriptures. I reckon some will think I ought to write out a riot scene and have Adam assassinated, and that I ought to close this story with his body exposed in the state capitol with two or three thousand dollars' worth of flowers around the bier and everybody walking by in a long procession to view the remains; but if the novelists who end their stories with the hero's funeral had to lay out their own husband as the corpse they

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would not be so free about letting death into the last chapter. We are both living, thank Heaven! Adam is still a better statesman than he is a husband or father, but I do not worry as much as I did over his faults. They are the sadder part of him, which renders him dearer to me. As a woman goes on, everything thrusts her closer to her husband. The children have grown up and are forming other ties. And mother's death, in particular, has made me more dependent on Adam.

One morning, just a year ago, we received a telegram from father saying that mother was ill and that her life was despaired of. Adam and I hurried to Booneville on the next train. We reached mother's bedside that evening. The old house was very cold and still, like a body out of which a warm, good spirit is passing. Father was sitting by the window in mother's room, looking like an old child in the face, frightened and silent. Doctor Marks was seated by the bed, holding mother's hand, with his eyes fixed on her face.

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It was the first time I had ever seen him in father's house; the first time, I believe, in all the years since their youth, that mother had spoken to him. We had always had the other young doctor when any of us were ill. Father told me afterward that she asked for him when she realized her condition. She took no notice of Adam or of me when we came in. She was lying transfigured in her own smile. No one could have believed, to look at her, that she was nearly seventy years old. It was queer—as if she had put on her girlhood for a shroud; as if she had been keeping it all this time, fair and sweet, for this supreme last moment with the lover of her youth.

“Do you remember, David, the day we became engaged, how beautiful everything was, and you said it was our happiness that made so many flowers bloom that day?”

“Yes, I remember, Mary,” he answered.

“I made a mistake after that. I do not know why; but when I understood I set myself to do a long penance. I made a vow to be just

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good and I have tried. I have never had an ambition or hope like other women. I have never protected myself from sorrow. And I have always wanted you to know."

"I did know, Mary, and I have been walking behind you all the way. We have been together."

"I have felt it and there have been times when it troubled me. I was afraid it was not right for us to be together so near all these years, with never a word to part us. O David! I have worried so for fear it was not right. Wouldn't it be terrible if I have been an evil woman?—if my feet have taken hold on hell for you!" Her sweet eyes searched him; her voice rose to a cry.

"Don't, Mary! Don't say such sacrilegious things about yourself. There will not be an angel in heaven fit to kiss your feet!"

He began to weep, but she smiled again.

"That is the dear way you always talked to me, David. I have tried, but I never could forget them—some of the things you said.

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They have been like little golden texts, hanging too high for me to reach or destroy. I did not want them to comfort me, but they did."

She seemed to doze for a time, keeping tight hold of his hands. Presently she opened her eyes and went on:

"Do you think I did the best I could, David?"

"I know it, Mary."

"I have not been like other women. I never could be sure that I was good. It's been terrible to live so long and not to know," she whispered, as if she were telling him the deepest secret of her heart.

Then Doctor Marks gave his greatest prescription and put a soul out of pain that had suffered a lifetime.

"The reason you could not know was this: None of us can bear the sight of perfect goodness. It blinds us. That is why God is invisible. So you could not see yourself. Your eyes have been holden. They will be in Para-

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dise. You will never know, never be able to imagine, how ineffably good you have been. I do not know, either. It is God's secret."

At last she was comforted. Some great vanity in her was satisfied. Never once during the night that followed did she recognize or even see any other person in the room. She passed away in the dawn, shriven by her old lover, with a peace upon her face that was young and fair.

Father survived her only a few months. No one had suspected—least of all himself—that mother was the very wellspring of his existence. He had not loved her and she had not loved him, but for many years she had been his dependence, his sustenance, his habit of life. He had been uprooted by her death. He died of a strange starvation—the famine of a small nature.

THE END

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