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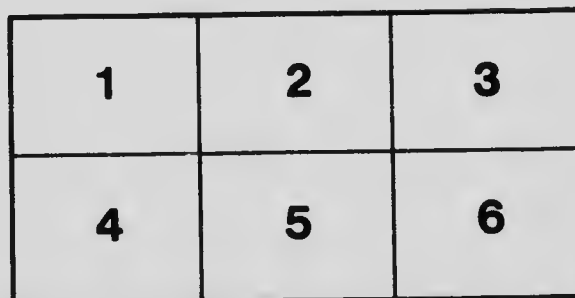
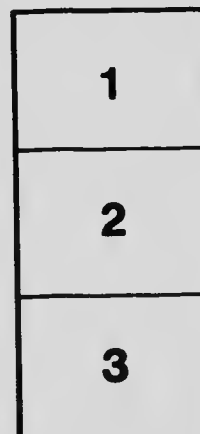
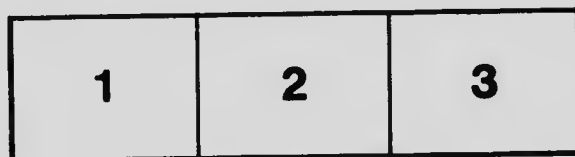
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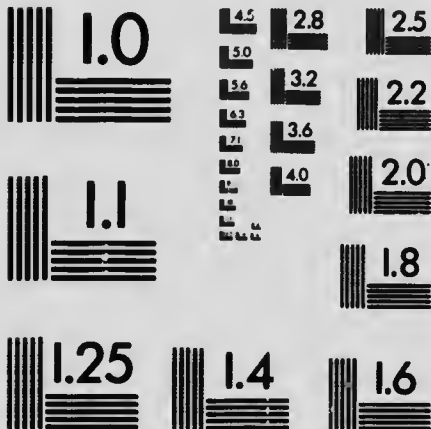
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"If this is to live in the woman's world, may it continue forever!"

♥♥♥♥♥
The
ROSE-COLORED WORLD
and
OTHER FANTASIES

by **ETHEL MARY BRODIE**



ILLUSTRATIONS
by **H. RICHARD BOEHM**

TORONTO
McLEOD & ALLEN
1910

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IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR FATHER—

John Lowe Brodie



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THE ROSE-COLORED WORLD

DON WARING stretched his long limbs, yawned generously and opened his eyes, opened his eyes indeed, and stared amazedly at the sky through the trees. Stared, stared as he had never done before in his life, for Don's eyes were usually only half open. He stared without blinking till his eyes felt sore; stared with an astonishment which rarely disturbs such easy-going, indolent mortals as Mr. Don Waring. Something surely most unusual had happened.

And well he might stare! For above him, among the leaves and branches, glared the rosiest sky he had ever seen. Rose! rose like the crushed leaves of the reddest roses. Rose to the north, rose to the east, rose to the south, rose to the west—a flaming, radiant, brilliant rose spread everywhere to the horizon. Intoxicating rose!

Not alone at the sky did Don stare, but at the trees, the grass, the meadows beyond the woods. The trees shimmered all colors of the rose as the sunlight fell upon them, flashing in the breeze like rubies from the palest to the darkest pinks. The tall grasses bent in a wave of pink like a coral sea. The roseate meadows beyond died away in the violet mist of the hills. Alone the flowers

had kept their natural hues—the snowy white marguerite, the wise golden buttercup, the passionate poppy, the gentle violet, the lily with its grave, pure heart of white, every flower maiden so natural and as beautiful beneath the roseate sky as it had been when its leaves opened wide under heaven's blue. The woodland, the fields, the hedges, all nature was shaded in a thousand hues of rose. And this was varied by an occasional white willow, perfect white, weeping into a rivulet which bubbled along its lazy way.

Don Waring rubbed his eyes vigorously. Then he pinched himself soundly. Well, he was certainly alive and awake!

“By Jove!” he muttered solemnly, “if this is the end of the world, I’m for the goats! My sins are many, and here’s one C. O. D.” And Don glanced at his watch. “Four o’clock and I promised Therese I would meet her at Oakwood Corner on High Street at half-past two! Jove! What a time I’ve been asleep. This must be eternity. Rose, rose, rose everywhere! Very odd.” And he rubbed his eyes again and repinched himself. Then he got slowly to his feet and shook himself like a big St. Bernard.

“Don’t understand this new aspect of things,” he murmured, again looking around at the pink trees and grass. “Something is wrong with my point of view, I suppose. I see this world pink; perchance somebody else sees it green. Now I wonder which of us sees it right. It is enough for me to have Therese flare up and scold without

this flaming world. I suppose there has been a volcanic eruption while I slept. The sky still reflects it."

And he walked off through the roseate woodland, stepping across the rivulet whose waters rippled in ribbons of pink, and so on to the High Street and Therese.

As he walked on he observed that the houses had all changed since noonday, when he fell asleep. More fantastic houses he had never seen. Quaint indeed, pretty, odd! Everything that was dainty, and—well, essentially feminine—in design and decoration greeted his eyes along the streets. But with all their daintiness the windows were bare of curtains, of anything suggestive of a woman's touch. The gardens were orderly and joyously luxuriant with flowers. The verandas were spacious and clean, but lacking in the feminine coziness of cushion, rocker and hammock. Something of homeness was lacking about every mansion and cottage. Don stared much, but as staring did not alter facts he simply sighed and walked on, thinking fondly of Therese.

His thoughts were not allowed to run on peacefully. To his utter amazement as he entered the High Street a bevy of pretty girls was standing around the door of the Horseshoe Inn. Not only standing, but smoking—smoking cigarettes, cigars, and, oh! cruel fact, pipes! They laughed aloud as they joked with one another. So unseemly!

Don had ever been a devotee to the eternal feminine. But for the first time in his life his nerve all but forsook him. Every one of those pretty girls turned and stared nonchalantly at him, as if he were something very

superior, or was it inferior? He was afraid to decide. He felt conscious of his tie being awry. Then he wondered if his boots had their usual shine, and he glanced stealthily down to see. He blessed his last tailor lest his coat sagged ungracefully. Indeed, he felt thoroughly and uncomfortably conscious that something was amiss with himself or his clothes. And his sensations were not pleasant with a couple of dozen eyes scrutinizing him boldly as he approached.

Not only that, but the unwontedness of girls standing around the inn door was disturbing, not to say annoying. As for their smoking—well, he was no moralist, so it mattered little. At least as Therese was not among the girls, he did not care. If Therese had been there smok— But there, 'twas sacrilegious to even permit the thought.

Therese was the belle of the town. She was a brown-eyed girl, with cheeks like twin cherries, a mass of chestnut curls which defied all conventional combing and a spirit like an angel—alas! and not unlike a devil at times thought Don. But Therese smoking—never! Therese was a womanly woman and had her own ideals—fine ones, even if they were provincial. Perchance all the finer for being born and developed in the purer air of the town, so near the field flowers, the still softness of the woodlands, the peaceful, eternal hills.

Therese would never smoke, no matter what other girls did.

Don raised his hat nervously as he passed the inn. The bevy nodded carelessly, some of its members not even

removing their pipes. After he had passed, dead silence fell on the girls, and that added to Don's discomfiture. What had happened to this strange world, or rather what had happened to Don? Usually he stopped and joked with his girl friends, but something extraordinary had befallen his nerves; he was tongue tied. As Don was naturally a sociable, talkative man, this was most extraordinary.

Don observed a number of strange things as he wandered on. Every cart, wagon and other vehicle which clattered past on the cobblestone road was driven by a woman. In every shop only girls served. And, horror of horrors, even the barber shop was run by a woman. Indeed, the affairs of the world seemed to be in the hands of the women, and to Don they appeared to be upside down. However, Therese was all right. Whatever the world might do, Therese would always be the same sweet, lovable girl, unspoiled by any volcanic metamorphosis in social customs, or in nature, or the sky. Dear Therese!

Don strode along the High Street, dreaming and confident. At Oakwood Corner was a grove of trees, surrounded by a high fence. The townspeople were pleased to call it a park. There at Oakwood Corner Don stopped—stopped with a violent palpitation of astonishment. Boldly sitting on the fence with her arms crossed, nonchalantly smoking a huge cigar was Therese!

Don decided to retire unobtrusively. He shrank from embarrassing her. But on further consideration he changed his mind. He would find out the meaning of

all these queer phenomena. Therese would know of course. Apparently she felt no shame at being seen in public smoking. Very improper!

Therese had not observed him. Her attitude was one of careless ease and she was half whistling a popular air from a recent comic opera between luxurious puffs of smoke. Certainly she appeared to be enjoying her folly, for she threw back her head and blew spirals of smoke into the air and then laughed as the wind carried them away.

As Don approached her he again felt that odd embarrassment, that cruel consciousness of his tie, his boots, his coat. Where had his nerve fled?

"Good afternoon, Therese," he ventured nervously.

Therese swung around on the fence easily and faced him, calmly removing her cigar. "Hello, Don!" she exclaimed cheerfully.

"How d'ye do," he returned, flushing slightly and inwardly annoyed.

"I suppose I shall have to throw this away," she observed coolly even reluctantly, laying her huge cigar on a post.

Don laughed somewhat hysterically. "Suppose! Well, I should think so!" said he.

"Why?" asked Therese, daintily wiping some ashes off her muslin sleeve with a tiny handkerchief and not paying much attention seriously to his remark.

"Oh, of course it's all right. In fact it's no matter. Certainly." Don's meaning was somewhat involved. He

felt he was on the edge of deep water and scrambled out. "Sorry I am late," he added hurriedly.

"That's nothing," remarked the little woman carelessly. "Just your usual. Putting on a new tie, I presume. It looks very nice."

"I fell asleep under the trees—" he began apologetically.

"Never mind, dear," came her quick and rather surprising rejoinder. "We women always have to wait for you men. You are a vain lot, forever prinking."

"Well, that's better than smoking," rejoined Don with spirit.

Therese opened her eyes in amazement. "Smoking! Why, what's wrong with that?"

"Wrong! Why, everything is wrong with it." Don's courage forsook him with Therese's big brown eyes so sternly fixed upon him, and he stopped abruptly.

"You never objected before," she said slowly. "And that is a poor explanation. How is a woman to spend her time when she has nothing to do if she does not smoke?"

Don was shocked. Was Therese mad?

"You never smoked before," he said quietly.

"Never smoked before! Why, I have been smoking straight along ever since you knew me. You're dreaming!" And she laughed. "Wake up, Don. Come out from under the trees."

"Therese, that's not true, or if you have smoked you never let me know."

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The girl climbed down off the fence in a very boyish fashion and faced him boldly.

"Don Waring, you accuse me of telling a falsehood. If you don't choose to remember or believe, our friendship had better end."

Don's heart began to beat uncomfortably. "I simply tell the truth as I know it," said he. "You never smoked before to my knowledge."

"Then your memory is still asleep under the trees," remarked Therese.

"I guess it is," smiled Don equivocally.

"Anyway, why shouldn't I smoke?" demanded Therese. "Every woman smokes. Women have been smoking ever since this age began. Why shouldn't they?"

Don wondered what age as he answered firmly, "It is a man's privilege and pleasure."

"A man's!" cried Therese, astonished. "Why, there isn't a man in town who smokes, or if he does, he smokes in secret, where women cannot pry. No gentleman ever smokes."

Don burst out laughing and then stopped in the midst thereof as he remembered the Horseshoe Inn and the bevy of girls. What did all these things mean?

"I expect we had better change the subject," broke in Therese. "Tea may be a pleasanter topic than smoking. It is late now. Come along to the Brass Tea Kettle and have afternoon tea."

And herewith Don received another shock. Therese had never suggested afternoon tea before or any other paid-for pleasure for that matter. It struck Don as

rather original, bold in fact. Not that he objected, but it was not what a man looked for in the woman he adored. However, as Therese wished it so it must be. And they started down the High Street, Therese in the gayest of spirits and Don—involved.

Don's distress did not decrease with this change of events. For every girl who met them smiled knowingly at the little woman by his side and nodded in like fashion. This was growing un- arable.

"How rude these girls are!" he exclaimed sententiously.

"Not at all," replied Therese. "I feel flattered."

"Flattered at what?" inquired her companion.

"Walking with so handsome a man. You look your best to-day, Don."

The man gave up being surprised at Therese. She had never made a remark like that before. However, possibly the rose-pink sky had something to do with it. Certainly the sky had not changed since he had wakened under the roseate trees. As for Therese, Don's thoughts became wrapped in gloom and mystery.

As they entered the Brass Tea Kettle Don observed that there were present a greater number of men than girls, the reverse of the usual. In every corner of the room men sipped tea at the little round tables, men exquisitely groomed, with the flashiest of ties and the daintiest of boutonnieres, men strangely effeminate. And the few girls who were present ogled the men in a very forward fashion, while the latter seemed to be rather shy and inclined to the nervous snigger. Therese met with

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pleasant nods on every side. As for Don, the female world expressed open admiration. And Don, with the courage of a Daniel among lions, nerved himself to the occasion.

Therese ordered the tea; Therese jollied the men waiting, for men served in the Brass Tea Kettle for the first time; Therese tipped the waiter; Therese paid the bill. And Don——

Don secretly, solemnly pinched himself under the table to see if he were alive.

Don was overwhelmed.

"Therese, this is too much of a good thing," he protested, holding out his hand for the bill.

"This is my affair," came the quick rejoinder.

"Nonsense!" snapped Don with annoyance.

Therese laughed softly. "So long as the world, good taste and chivalry rule, women must play their part in womanly fashion. We serve you men. Whoever heard of a gentleman paying for a woman! Fancy, Don, what my friends would think of me if you bought seats for me at the theater and paid for the supper afterward!"

"Well, that is the way it ought to be!" exclaimed her companion indignantly.

"Rubbish! We women do the work, we are paid for it. Why shouldn't we treat you men to what pleasures we can afford? Our life is so free and you are so hampered with social duties, calling, etc. It is the least we can do to brighten your lives," and Therese picked up her dainty cane as they left the tea room.

"What next!" cried Don, half angry, half amused.

"Woman's rights! woman's suffrage! woman's——"
And then he exploded with laughter.

"You are utterly incomprehensible to-day," and Therese snapped the head off a dandelion with her cane. "Why do you laugh? No manly man would hesitate to let a woman pay his way in the world. 'Tis a woman's right. 'Tis only chivalrous to take a woman's money and spend it as he pleases. I don't understand you."

"Small wonder!" laughed Don. "I am just thinking of how funny it would be if women clothed and fed their husbands and children. Fancy the woman buying everything, while her husband spent his money as he liked! Imagine her paying doctors' bills, gas bills, and water rates, and generally being the drudge and banker of the family!"

"Well, you laugh at what actually exists. Every woman in this town, with few exceptions, is doing that. Why shouldn't she? 'Tis the way of the world."

"Then the world has changed for the worse," returned Don firmly.

"Simply your point of view, Don. It may have been otherwise at one time. But who knows which is the right way?"

"Don't, please!" pleaded Don. "I can't stand any more woman's rights."

Therese just gave him a mystifying smile.

They walked on in silence for some time. It was a sweet, sunny day, just a day for a long automobile ride. The wind rustled the tree-tops and skipped over the lawns, then ran away and hid among the flowers. Out

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it came again and puffed into the faces of the wayfarers, tempting them to laughter and to talk. With the exhilaration of the day Don was on the verge of suggesting a drive when suddenly a remarkable airship of very handsome appearance swung around the corner of the street and it settled down beside them.

"Here's our car!" cried Therese gaily.

"Ours!" gasped Don, gazing at the fine, comfortable airship in astonishment, with its gay brass fittings and luxurious cushions.

"Yes, I ordered it. Jump in, dear, and let us away to the pink fields and wild flowers. I am longing for a whirl through the country air."

Don stepped in without more ado. He had never been in an airship before. In fact he had never seen one except in pictures. So far only experts and inventors sailed in them. Don felt very nervous on Therese's account, but the latter jumped in as if she had never traveled in anything else, and an airship was as easy to run as a baby carriage. And, to Don's horror, she dismissed the aviator—a woman!

"My treat!" begged Don feebly.

"Nonsense!" smiled Therese as she waved her hand to the aviator and started the ship sailing upward over the roofs of the houses and out into the roseate country.

"You are only a man," she said presently.

"Well and why not?" asked Don, holding his breath as they flew over a lake.

"Oh, I'm satisfied," remarked Therese, just steering past the boughs of a huge oak tree.

"Thank you," said Don mildly.

"Aren't these airships a great improvement on the old auto cars? Every one is trying to sell the old things now and purchase an airship," remarked Therese. "Some awful accidents happen."

"Oh, it's wonderful, great!" exclaimed Don enthusiastically. And then as they suddenly whirled across an inlet of the sea, where the surf was pounding among the rocks in a wild, hungry roar, and he beheld another airship rapidly sailing from an opposite direction, he added with an inward quake, "Yes, I should imagine some accidents might happen."

"I am glad you like it," rejoined Therese, calmly waving her handkerchief as they shot close past the other airship. "There go the Spencer-Leightons. Haven't they got a swell airship? It goes sixty miles an hour, sometimes eighty."

"Gee!" exclaimed Don, aghast. He knew better now than to remark at any strange thing or happening and hid his secret shudders as the airship darted over tree-tops and windmills.

"Regulation speed is forty miles an hour, but people haven't changed since the old days of the auto car, and lots of them rush through the air at a terrific speed. It is not fair to the grocer ships and the butcher ships, and thus the accidents. It keeps the airship policemen busy. You see, there is so much commerce and traffic in the air now. They are starting an airship express company, as the trains do not go fast enough. You know the airship street car system in London is paying enormous divi-

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dends, and in New York people won't travel in anything else." And Therese increased their speed till the air whistled and sang around them.

"We shall have a cozy time together, dear," said she after a while.

Don smothered an exclamation at this audacity and simply said, "Oh, of course!"

Away into the country flew the airship. And what a wonderful world of pinks and reds it was! Woodlands, meadows, streams, lakes, all blending in rare and beautiful shades of sunset hues.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Don as he gazed over the roseate landscape.

"One would think you had never seen the country before," said Therese as they darted across an island dotted lakelet and struck over the tops of a dense wood.

"Neither I have in these shades," he answered carefully.

"What shades?" demanded Therese.

"Pinks, and reds, and crimsons."

Therese laughed. "It has always been pink, and red, and crimson."

"Love and a woman make it so," murmured Don, after which, to his surprise, Therese pressed his hand, which Don reciprocated with fervor. And the woods grew redder than ever.

The fields were massed with daisies and buttercups, a sea of coral set with topaz and pearl. Streams of water twinkled in the sunshine, bubbling over pebbles in a thousand shades of ruby. Branches of trees met in a

maze of rosy leafage, glancing in light or shade as the sun fell upon them. Crimson hedges railed the fields into a velvet checker board. Hills rolled away to the horizon in a roseate glow, dying in an opalescent wave of light, gold and garnet. Groves of trees, robed as if in autumnal dress, wreathed their varied shades like jeweled coronals or splashed the hillside like heart's blood. Here and there a wayside pond or creek reflected the glory of coral, ruby and garnet, weaving endless lace-work of leaf, and reed, and bough. 'Twas a wondrous rosy world!

Out in the fields girls worked in the warm sunlight. Some were ploughing, some cutting the long grasses with a scythe, some piling new-mown hay, rusty, pink hay. Some tended the orchard trees. Girls, girls, girls! Don almost forgot his cherry-cheeked Therese in his admiration of the numerous pretty girls in the fields.

"We shall descend here," said Therese presently, as the airship began to settle down gracefully into a flowered meadow beside a tiny lake. As they touched ground she leaped out with boyish agility. "And now for a run in the meadows, but first my pipe! You don't mind my smoking?"

Don frowned aggressively. "Not that, Therese."

"And why?" came her cool query.

"For the same reason I gave before; women should not smoke. It is masculine, unwomanly, ungraceful," returned Don sententiously.

"You are not the first man who protested. But so long as you do not smoke I don't care," and Therese lit

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her pipe and puffed easily and contentedly to Don's horror.

"I won't budge if you don't stop that." And he leaned against a tree and looked sternly at the little woman. "Everywhere I see girls working, smoking, and not a man to be seen. Nevertheless, I object to your smoking on every ground. If you continue blowing at that horrible pipe I'll blow too."

Therese laughed gaily. "No, sir; you won't do that. What would the people say?"

"Oh, hang the people!"

"Don!" reprovingly.

"Well?"

Then Therese settled herself on the stump of an oak tree as if to read him a lecture and said gravely: "Men should look handsome, and dress well, and please the eye of woman. That's enough. Don't spoil it by smoking. We women admire your handsome figures, your fine faces, the set of your tie, the tilt of your hat, the hang of your coat. Come, dear boy, don't spoil what nature meant to be so attractive to women by smoking. It is not manly."

Don removed his hat, ran his fingers through his hair and sighed desperately, "Therese, what does all this mean?" and he waved his hands toward the roseate fields.

"The reign of woman," answered she calmly.

"Not the golden age?" suggested Don mischievously.

"No. The Roseate Age, woman's age!" exclaimed Therese joyously. "The world runs on oiled wheels.

The sky is full of hope, the woods are rich in hope; the sea overflows with hope—warm, glowing hope, wonderful hope!"

"And for what?" meekly asked Don, half smiling.

"For the reason that it exists," returned Therese in a patronizing tone, glancing with pity at her companion for his lack of knowledge. "Men got worn out mentally and physically piling fortunes, working all day and all night to pay milliners, modistes, masseuses—and nerve sanitariums. They degenerated to pigmies in will, intellect, physique. There are only a few men—*real* men—left. That is why all the girls are after you."

"Me!" exclaimed Don, losing his breath.

"Why, yes. Proposal, don't you know? Only you are engaged," said Therese lightly.

"To whom, pray?" begged Don, with a Moses-like calm.

"To me," came her *savoir faire* reply. "Hope you don't object to this line of tobacco. Best I could get."

"Oh, no," murmured Don, bewildered, comprehending at last why so few men were about the world and also Therese's cool possession of himself.

"You know that I proposed to you, Don."

"Did you?" laughed he hysterically.

"Of course!" from Therese somewhat indignantly.

"And when?" he continued in ecstasy.

"Now don't be saucy, boy!" And Therese shook her finger at him.

"Saucy! By Jove! I was longing to tell you how I loved you ages ago and to propose, but feared——"

"You are not a modest man," interrupted Therese. "It is a woman's place to make love, to propose and other such things."

Whereupon Don tried to slip his arm around her waist.

"Don't forget yourself," reproved Therese sternly.

Don glanced lovingly at the trim little woman tripping along beside him in her sweet white muslin gown and hat of marguerites.

"So men are done for—city men, too?" he inquired to change the subject, which had grown somewhat complicated.

"Oh, they are awful! So affected, so luxurious, all nerves, culture and emotions. You are such a dear, simple country fellow, so true, so natural. That is why I love you. City men are unnatural, like forced fruit—hot-house creatures! None for me, please!" And Therese flicked some ashes off her muslin dress and tossed her head knowingly.

"And the women?" ventured Don, bent on gaining what knowledge he could of this new world.

"Oh, the women are piling up the money, and making the laws, and playing toss and catch with the stock market. Women are steering the airships, hunting the gold mines, inventing——"

"Same as the men did!" interrupted he, half sarcastically.

"Yes," enthusiastically.

"And the end?" inquired Don quizzically.

"Roseate glory! Eternal happiness!" exclaimed the enthusiast, her brown eyes sparkling with delight.

"And if the women and the men continue thus?" And Don could have kissed the little face upturned so hopefully to him.

"We are living in eternity now," smiled Therese confidently.

"And the women will not degenerate as the men?" asked Don humbly.

"How could they?" demanded she haughtily.

"A woman's reason," sighed Don. "And why shouldn't they, I would like to know?"

Because——" and Therese stopped short.

And then Therese threw her arms around his neck and the man responded with great heartiness, forgetting the cigar, remembering only the woman's lips—her lips so red and sweet, red as the rose-colored world.

"If this is to live in the woman's world, may it continue forever!" he cried ardently, holding her tenderly in his arms.

* * * * *

And then Don awoke.

"How dare you!" broke suddenly on his ears. "You horrid man! And we are not even engaged!" And some one struggled out of his arms.

"Dear me!" laughed Don, opening his eyes wide. "I thought we were engaged."

And then as he glanced amazedly at the green leaves overhead and at Therese's blushing face of discomfiture

20 THE ROSE-COLORED WORLD

he added: "I was going to hint about the day, but as you proposed——"

"I didn't do anything of the kind!" indignantly protested Therese. "You are half asleep."

"Asleep!" Don stretched out his arms toward her.

Therese retired. "Yes, you have been sleeping here under the trees."

"And you came to find me?" said he, advancing toward her.

"No, I didn't!" Therese turned her head away, very dignified.

"Then I have been asleep in a rose-colored world. But small wonder, with you so near! It was love that colored my dream."

"What dream?" from inquisitive Therese.

"My dream of the reign of woman in the rose-colored world," Don returned, adding deliberately: "And about the day, Therese?"

But Therese fled away among the trees.

MARIE; OR, THE GIRL IN THE GINGHAM GOWN

WHO would have thought it of Marie! Plain, common Marie! A queer girl Marie. Queer had she been all her life long. Queer in her childhood, queer in her girlhood, queer in her womanhood. Was she a woman? Half child, half woman, Marie. Not like other girls was she. And Marie knew. Marie laughed; lightly laughed she and went on her way. But there were tears in her laughter.

In the city of the Lotus-eaters Marie was born, a child among other children. A child of Nature was she, wild and free as the winds, pure as the new-blown sea foam, happy as the humming bird as it bills from flower to flower. She romped with the boys and she sat among the apple blossoms, dreaming dreams. How she longed to be free, free as the air! And no one understood. But a great fire burned in Marie's soul, a fire lit by God.

Times there were when Marie's merriment vanished like April sunshine, times when melancholy sat heavy on the sensitive, imaginative child. Her thoughts wept with the rain, her emotions brooded with the clouds, and in her soul a direful dirge chanted to the tempest. Er-

atic Marie, said the Lotus-eaters, a helpless girl, guiding her bark by every wandering star. Steeped in the sadness and the dreariness of life, what weird and woe-ful visions gathered in her baby brain! A sheltered spot would Marie seek and there retire to ramble in a world of reflection, to mourn over the sorrowful things, the imagined and the real. There would she cry and break her baby heart. And no one saw but God.

Marie's soul echoed with music, pathetic, passionate music. She loved the music of Norway, the music of Scotland, the melodies of Grieg and Tschaikowsky, the simple folk song of the Highlands, the heart harmonies of human souls bound by granite mountains, by fields of ice and stormy seas. How intensely she loved this region of reverberation! The unutterable longing, the restlessness, the tragedy, the tempest-tossed spirit yearning for freedom; it chanted there in the wailing melodies of the Northlands. And through it all the still, small voice of love, dreaming in the lull of the hurricane, despairing in its fury, flaming in the lightning and dying, dying in the rays of the sun so rare in the northlands. Like the music was Marie, a wandering minor chord in the symphony of life. Lonely, timid, loving Marie!

And there were hours of sun for Marie, buoyant hours. Hours that leaped with the dancing breeze. Hours flitting with fantasies, when the birds whistled of love and the butterflies winged from flower to flower; when the sky was softer for love; when the zephyrs kissed the leafy world and sighed among the grasses; when blos-

soms burst and breathed of love. And love sang on the waves of the sea, and love bathed in the dawn, and love nestled in the bosom of the whitest clouds, and all day long love roamed whither it would and fell asleep in the arms of the sunset. For Marie loved and God knew.

And the fantasy faded as snowflakes melt in a stream, as snowflakes melt in the stream of life to refresh some thirsty flower, as snowflakes melt into nothingness, to serve.

Solitary among spellbound rocks wandered the lonely spirit of Marie. Hid was the sunlight, vanished were the golden fields, the wooded hills, the sparkling sea. Desolate and lost, poor Marie! The iron rocks crushed in upon her; no cleft for love to flow through. The bleak and barren mountains closed her vision. The drear and dismal solitudes spread before her eyes. In gloomy deserts, where never foot of man trod, fled the spirit of Marie. Ever gray was the sky and sunbeams rare. There were times when cruel, black clouds surged in fury across the desolation, frowning angry clouds. Wild, hopeless melodies moaned in Marie's heaven. Fierce lightning pierced the gloom; it darted hither and thither, rending the rocks, roaring among the mountains, whirling across the wastes. And a cry of despair shrieked from the heart of the wind. 'Twas the soul of the northlands; 'twas music, but music run wild; 'twas love, but love repelled; 'twas a heart silently hoarding love, but love that found no outlet. 'Twas just Marie!

In the city of the Lotus-eaters was a turmoil of restlessness, hunger and thirst, rage and loneliness, jealousy

and dissatisfaction and despair, dark, indolent despair. For no God ruled the city. The little weed of self grew to a forest, a tangled, dense forest. No clear paths cut this unhappy region, no Shekinah pointed a way through its blackness, and deep in the forest was hidden so simple a thing—a cross.

In the city of the Lotus-eaters was a great ball given. In a splendid palace where luxury and loneliness, like hollow-eyed specters, mingled in the maze of a strange dance. The ceilings flared with a thousand lights; the sickening sweetness of roses drowsed like the sultry heat of noonday and hung on the atmosphere like a pall; the walls were banked with roses, roses slowly wilting in the vitiated air. Cushions and divans luxuriated in corners and in stray places. Softened lights burned with a red gleam in odd nooks. Flowing, melting melodies vibrated from a hidden orchestra, hidden in a bower of lilies, pure and white—lilies and roses perishing to adorn the ballroom and withering in the heat of indolence. And the wine of life rippled with the music and the dance. For the little weed of self was making merry.

And Marie was there in a gingham gown!

Soon the ballroom glowed with life. Men and women lightly skipped the hours away. Wine danced with the moments. Age rested wearily on the easy divans. Youth nestled into the soft cushions; youth dozed in corners and dreamed in nooks; youth loved in the mystery of the red lights; youth thrilled to the melting music; youth sipped the wine and tossed its ruby drops, so like blood. And the little weed of self grew.

And Marie served alone; Marie in her gingham gown; Marie, the page of grand ladies; Marie, the footstool of men; Marie, the target of youth, of the barbed arrows of envy and spite, of the poisoned arrows of jealousy and revenge; plain, common Marie, the helpless, rudderless woman-child! Just Marie!

Marie! Marie in a gingham gown!

Hither, Marie; mend this old dame's train, 'tis torn. And here a dark maiden has soiled her skirt, a maiden with chestnut hair and eyes of blue. Come hither, Marie! Here are maidens with auburn hair; flatter them, praise them; it is their life. And here are black-eyed damsels, with eyes like scornful darts; they have stumbled over your heart, Marie. But it matters not. And who are these that curl their lips with pretty, poisoned sarcasms? The fair-haired maidens of stoic mold. Put on their shoes, Marie. Wipe the dust from beneath their feet. And here are gray-haired dames, who mistake heart's blood for wine, who spill it out of golden cups and care not. Have they spilled your heart's blood, Marie? Ah! that is nothing.

Marie, Marie! Come hither, Marie! Here is a girl painting, painting in a corner. She will paint your heart, Marie. She will paint it in black, and gray, and blood. Let her paint. What is a heart? Nothing, nothing—more or less.

Come hither, Marie! Here are men who will crush you, rest their cloven feet upon you. Joy in it, child! 'Tis service for them, noble service. Here is a man who has fallen. Lift him; let him lean on your shoulder.

Ah! it may pain you. But what is pain? Nothing, nothing—more or less.

Throw your heart to the herd, Marie. They will but trample upon it. Lay your service at their feet. They will but scorn you. But lift your head, and they would kill you. Beware, Marie! Marie in the gingham gown!

Come hither, Marie! There is lowly service for you, half woman, half child. Here is a lonely woman. Give her a lily, fresh and pure. Here is a heart-sore man. Give him sweet wine and a smile, a smile of hope, such as the angels give.

Reckon not with the silken gowns, Marie. Forget the glaring lights. Notice not the dance, the wine, for there are roses fading on the walls and lilies perishing for want of water.

Marie, Marie! who do you see? What is there? Why do you tremble so? Why haste you to a lonely room and weep, weep in silence and sorrow? Who would hurt you, Marie, half child, half woman? Who would tear the wings from a bird or nip the flower from the humming bee?

Come hither, Marie!

But Marie comes not. Who will mend the torn skirts and dust the soiled feet? Who will think of the lonely, the sad, the fallen?

Come, Marie. One maiden will coax with a pair of red slippers, but the buckles are broken off. Another will lend a soiled gown of blue. A man will press your hand, but it will burn your hand in the pressing. Will you have nothing? Come, Marie, you need not weep.

One by one the lights die out. The crowd disperses. Far away echo the voices of the departing merry makers. The music lingers a moment and is silenced. And Marie weeps alone. But God sees.

The crowd paused. Marie is weeping, weeping. Why, Marie has a heart! Who would have thought it of Marie? Marie with a broken heart! Plain, common Marie! Marie in the gingham gown. Marie and love. Think of it!

Deep in the forest was hidden so simple a thing—a cross.

Marie! Marie in the gingham gown!

ANDY'S VISION

'Twas many years ago!

Andy MacKerrie was an only son, an unspoiled son. And no one would have thought it possible that religious Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie's wee, pale-faced boy would have had such an experience. But religious parents sometimes bring unique children into the world. Certainly Andy was an anomaly. That Mrs. MacKerrie should be so unfortunate as to have a child out of the ordinary was something to be pitied indeed and a fact to be hid from the neighbors. So when the revelation of the vision came Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie pondered much, but wisely kept the matter to herself.

Else what would the neighbors have said?

Great chums were Andy and his father, the heart-in-heart sort. They hung together like burrs. Andy's mother was severely religious, streaked a wee bit too much with the steel-gray paint of the Covenanters, highly proper in all things and something hard. "Don't, don't, don't!" was the wearisome song of Andy's daily life. Consequently his jolly father, with his braw, hale and hearty ways, became Andy's hero, his all.

Andy and his father seemed to know each other's

thoughts without much explanation. They understood each other, which occasionally happens between mortals, though not often enough to disturb the natural processes of character culture. Their sympathies were keen and sensitive, especially when Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie started a religious storm in the house.

When his father set out for India Andy was fourteen years old. To Andy it seemed a long journey from Edinburgh to India. And journeys were not made so quickly nor so easily in those days as now. Andy felt that his father was going to the ends of the earth.

Letters were rare long ago, few and far between, according with the smooth or stormy passage of the ships. News traveled slowly. So the year wore past wearily for Andy.

December had spread its bleak mantle over Edinburgh. The streets were sloppy. Damp exhumed from the gray stone houses. Dour mists enveloped the castle and Arthur's Seat and belated vapors smothered the beauty of Princes Street. A leaden sky hung gloomily overhead and a bitter east wind blew down from Calton Hall, and everywhere the atmosphere sniffed of coke, and soot, and sea water. 'Twas hopeless weather, but one ray of sun split upon Andy's sky. His mother had received an epistle from India.

Within a month Mr. MacKerrie would be home, perhaps by New Year's Day. Andy walked on air. Poor laddie! He was longing for his father. How endless the year had seemed without him! And now it was nearly over. Andy's heart grew light. Every day he

thought of his father and planned of the wonderful things he and his father would do. How he hungered for a sight of him!

Christmas Day arrived, and slow and stupid was the day for Andy. Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie ever accepted it as a religious duty she had to perform, and perform well. The plum pudding was sanctimonious, even to the lack of currants and raisins. The turkey had lived the life of a recluse; its abstemious faring was plainly visible in the lack of fat, on its scrawny frame. Poor Andy!

'Twas a dour lonesome day. Forlorn indeed, for it poured all day, soft, permeating, melancholy rain. It rained as Scotch weather knows how to rain. And the doleful patter, patter measured each hour.

Andy was not allowed to yell, so could make no noise to drown the sound of the rain. Such vulgar conduct merited a severe discipline of bread, water and bed. His mother never considered his age. He was ever a fractious laddie, at least she thought so, and it mattered little what any one else thought.

Christmas evening at last dragged wearily into existence. Andy had made brave efforts to enjoy himself all day. He had done everything that he was allowed to do. Every hour he had courageously determined not to be lonely, not to think of his father, not to hear the monotonous dirge of the raindrops. Nothing succeeded. Finally he picked out a favorite book from his father's small library and curled into an easy chair by a skimpy fire of his mother's mending. 'Twas no use!

Andy left his book and went to a window. A dismal

prospect met his eyes. Rain dropped into the lifeless areas. It rolled wearily off the cobblestones and into streams that ran anywhere and everywhere downhill. It soaked into the little park square and polished the leaves of the holly and laurel trees. And it ran off the iron railings. The foot passengers looked as miserable as the weather, collars up and a general air of wilting and despair. An occasional dray scraped past or a hansom scurried along. The lamps were lighted and glimmered dimly through the thick mist and the patter of the rain was maddening. Andy could think of nothing but the awful tortures of the Middle Ages. The drop, drop, drop slowly descending on the prisoner's head and the madness that closed the cruel scene in the last act of human misery.

To the stingy fire Andy dolefully returned, but his restlessness and loneliness increased. He seized the book and began again. This time he succeeded fairly well. Indeed he was at an exciting crisis, when he felt impelled to look up. He felt that he must look up, but boylike he resisted the force. With dour Scotch determination he read on. It was the first incident of the day that had interested him. He grew rather excited over it. In his awakened interest he forgot his loneliness, the pattering drops, even his father.

'Twas overwhelming. And Andy's curiosity got the better of his will. He stared a moment at the floor and then peered shyly up. There in the doorway his eyes fastened tight. Andy shivered. His heart stopped with

a jerk and then thumped so loudly it deafened him even to the rain.

There in the doorway stood his father!

"Mercy, laddie! what are ye gapin' at?"

A sound box on the ear broke the spell.

"If ye hae naethin' to do but gape, say yer prayers and gae to bed. Ye hae muckle need o' yer mither's sperrit, sittin' there as if ye'd seen a ghaist."

Andy paled, but said nothing. With Mrs. MacKerrie's voice the vision had faded, and Andy was marched to bed, with a slither of plum cake woefully lacking in plums, as a special Christmas beneficence.

New Year's Day came and dismally passed. No sign of Mr. MacKerrie's return.

Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie expressed stern displeasure on New Year's Day when her husband made no appearance, and she vented her righteous indignation in good covenanting style. So New Year's Day was as glum as Christmas for Andy.

January slipped away slowly. Still no word on the dark and raw days. At the end of January Mrs. MacKerrie hoped in religious zeal that nothing had happened the "foolish mon."

February dragged its ruthless days along and ended. But no news of Andy's father lightened the sadness in the little lad's heart, and as February neared its close his mother arrayed solemnly in black and believed all was for the best.

But as March advanced her spirit broke when still no news came.

Mrs. Amanda MacKerrie loved her husband in an odd way. She would scold vigorously, mend his coat neatly and give him a square meal in the same breath, so to speak. She possessed the happy faculty of making him comfortable and wretched in the same moment. There are some folk built that way.

News came at the end of March.

Andy had suffered keenly through these past clouded days. Silently he had mourned his father for dead, and his vision came back and troubled him. He longed to tell his mother, but she was unapproachable about such things. He knew she would condemn it as "wicked imaginings." And she would say that he was flying in the face of Providence and daring the devil to do his worst; that such talk was enough to bring some awful doom upon himself—poor, little, innocent laddie!—and upon his home. But at last the news had come.

Perchance there is more Providence in the things unseen than in the things seen. Perchance there is a good spirit moving in these wandering premonitions, these strange inward visions, these weird, haunting presentiments. Perchance there is meaning even in our dreams. Pray, who can explain these mysterious, silent influences? And yet how frequently they come true! But in these materialistic days we believe nothing, unless it strikes home to our reason, the way a loose board in the sidewalk hits us in the face.

But the news had come at last. Andy's father had been seriously ill on his return journey and had been

left at an out-of-the-way port. He was now convalescent. In a few days he would be home.

What a load fell off Andy's heart! And how his thoughts broke loose and flew to the old pleasures, and haunts, and games he and his father had enjoyed together! The dour, gray cloud had broken, and Andy's heart beat high with the sunshine of anticipation. His father was coming home.

From the day that the news came a great change took place in Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie. She rushed to the shops on Princes Street. She purchased a plum silk gown and a pink feather for a new velvet bonnet. Indeed she was to be a study in plum for Mr. MacKerrie's arrival.

Mrs. MacKerrie laid in a stock of mince pies, sufficient to lay waste the digestive organs of half the population of Auld Reekie. She made plum puddings, so full of currants and raisins, there was no room left for the pudding. As for turkeys, the story went among the neighbors that she had bought a dozen and fed them so well that they grew too fat, and elastic bands were necessary, as Providence had set a limit even to the capacity and extension of turkeys. And the whole house reeked of Scotch bun, short-bread and raspberry vinegar.

As for Andy, he was rigged in a bonnie suit of MacKerrie tartan, with a black velvet Glengarry atop; sporan, plaidie, buckles and all. "Just like the soldiers in the castle," as he explained to his father later on, regretting that he had not a bagpipe, with long Mac-

Kerrie streamers flying from the pipes and "muckle of a graund noise inside 'em."

Of course the neighbors decided that Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie was going to marry again. Neighbors always know.

The MacKerrie home was turned topsy-turvy. Everything that Mr. MacKerrie had disliked of the stern and proper in furniture and pictures of Mrs. Amantha's cov- nting choice mysteriously disappeared or reappeared in such strangely gay and weirdly tinselled attire that Andy's religious ideas sustained a nervous shock. New things replaced the old to a perilous extent. And the sober, covenanting home, with its scriptural furniture and catechism details, was metamorphosed into a gala display of cheap vases, alive with cupids (nude and shocking!), flimsy gilt chairs with limited supporting powers and many striped draperies and cushions not at all religious. The neighbors marveled at the expense and signaled danger to each other.

But when Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie actually stayed away from church several Sundays in succession the deacon concluded that her morals were toppling. The neighbors held up their hands in holy horror.

Regarding Mrs. MacKerrie, she dashed at Andy a hundred times a day. So often did she kiss him that Andy, in fear that no cheek would be left for his father, kept blowing them out to make sure.

'Twas amazing how much she accomplished in those few days!

As the hour of arrival neared Mrs. MacKerrie grew

excited. She rushed Andy to the Waverley Station in a cab—Andy's first drive. To fill up the waiting time, she fed Andy on currant buns and mince pies. Such lavish prodigality she had never been guilty of before. Andy's brain whirled in giddy confusion, and it is to be feared that his stomach was affected too.

When Mr. MacKerrie appeared Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie flew into his arms, burst into tears and squeezed hard what was left of him. Such a frantic display of love was so unwonted that the station master looked on in mild surprise and concluded that his neighbor, Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie, was very excitable and in a highly nervous condition. So warm and sincere feelings sometimes appear to the onlooker, who is not at all interested in the parties and not in the least concerned with events, and who, in fact, should mind his own business.

"Thank God!" she cried. "My puir mon! I'm muckle glad to see ye. Never was I sae happy!"

"Puire lassie!" murmured the astonished man. "Are ye no' feelin' weel the day?"

"Weel! Weel, indeed, I should say! Ye'll see that soon enough," concluded Mrs. MacKerrie exuberantly. "Come hame noo."

Gallantly and merrily the happy trio drove home in the cab.

"Surely this is no' my solemn, releegious lassie, Amantha!" thought Mr. MacKerrie as he stared at his wife.

And gradually Mr. MacKerrie awakened from a sustained stupor.

A grand celebration followed this bewildering reception. Mr. MacKerrie was sailing without a compass now and recklessly permitted himself to drift with the winds, wild though they were. Probably the church had lost its rudder since he had left Auld Reekie. There was nothing for him to do but climb into the boat and wobble along in the helmless barque with the wavering multitudes. Why, they had even raffled a barrel of rum in one kirk, and no one seemed to mind! It did not matter apparently. So he gave himself up completely to the full enjoyment of his belated Christmas festival as Mrs. MacKerrie had planned it.

And a really jolly Christmas it was! Inclusive of plum puddings, turkey, mince pies, short-bread, currant bun, and, best of all, a sparkling glass of whisky toddy! (Oh, Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie!) It warmed the cockles of Mr. MacKerrie's heart.

In the evening, as they sat beside a blazing fire such as Andy had never seen mended there before, Mrs. MacKerrie turned to her husband affectionately and asked:

"Weel, dearie, wha' dae ye think o' our Christmas?"

"Jolliest I ever kenned!" exclaimed the happy man, slapping his hands together enthusiastically. "We'll hae anither nex' year."

"We wull, indeed!" said Mrs. MacKerrie, with all her heart in the words.

At the mention of Christmas Andy started nervously.

"Wha's the matter, bairnie?" kindly inquired his mother.

"Naethin'!" gasped the boy fearsomely.

ANDY'S VISION

Mr. MacKerrie bent his eyes gravely on the boy, remarking slowly: "Why, laddie, ye're as pale as a ghaist!"

That made matters worse. Andy glanced timidly toward the door the while.

"Dinna mind me, dad. It's—it's naethin'."

And the boy shivered slightly.

But Mr. MacKerrie studied the boy's face and then also gazed at the open door.

"Hae ye seen a sperrit, lad?" he asked deliberately.

Poor Andy nodded, too afraid to speak.

"Just noo?" pursued his father carefully.

"No," whispered the frightened child.

And now Mrs. MacKerrie became interested.

"When did ye see a sperrit, laddie?"

"Last Christmas, maw."

They were all silent for a while.

And then Mrs. MacKerrie gently inquired:

"And where did ye see the ghaist?"

Andy pointed nervously to the door.

"And wha' did ye no' tell us, Andy?"

"I coudna, pa."

"Puir laddie! Ye look awfu' scared noo!"

"I am muckle scared of the door, pa."

And tears trickled down the lad's pale face.

"The door, laddie!" suddenly exclaimed his mother.

A nod from Andy.

"Weel, weel, laddie!" cried his mother, remembering the night. "Wad ye hae me believe it war the time I found ye gapin', gapin' sae fearsomely at the door?"

With the door so near, Andy was now too scared to speak.

"The de'il!" exclaimed his father. 'An' wha' did ye see that sae frightened ye?"

"'Twas yersel', dad!" came the boy's timorous response.

Mr. MacKerrie rubbed his eyes, then rubbed his spectacles and put them on, staring the while at Andy in blank amazement, and the light dawned in upon him. Slowly it leaked into his brain.

"Ye saw me, lad? The de'il! 'Twas Christmas night I war e'en gi'en up for deid."

And Mrs. Amantha MacKerrie believed, but she did not tell it to the neighbors. For it was Andy's vision.

THE HERMIT OF SAGUENAY

ONCE upon a time in a little village of Quebec, on the edge of the Saguenay River, where the rocks frown forever, grew up a little garçon, François by name. In spirit François was a lonely, isolated boy. He played and fought with the boys of the village, yet remained separate from them; separate with the refined nature of a poetic soul; separate with a glowing spark of the Saint Esprit. A strange, dreamy garçon François, who buried his spare hours from play among his flowers.

As the years went on a little girl grew up in the cottage next to François' home. A petite, hazel-eyed girl; Isolde they called her. Fair as the narcissus among François' flowers and as sweet, straight and pure. She, too, was an isolated child, but the isolation was that of frailty. She never romped with the other children. A delicate flower was Isolde, light as a breath of wind and as easily bent as the grass in the field, wind swept.

The years floated on. Isolde and François drew together from opposite poles of life. François was big, and strong, and hearty, a robust, blue-eyed garçon. But the poetry of the flowers rhymed the natures of the two children. They dreamed together the seasons through,

from the chill time of the crocus and the awakening of the hyacinth and the violet till the roses shed their leaves and the golden rod faded with the reddening of the autumnal foliage.

Wonderful visions had François and Isolde! Some were sweet with fairies, others dark and tragic like the Saguenay.

One day they sat under the trees in François' garden, reading a weird tale from a book of fairy stories. And the sunshine streamed through the branches, flecking the brown curls of the boy as he read and falling on Isolde's pale face as she lay on the grass beside him.

The wind skipped down the Saguenay and tossed the waves with white foam. The sun poured over the bare rocks, the scrubby trees and the black waters, throwing long, fantastic shadows across the gray wilds of peak and cove. Bluish vapors floated above the rocky ramparts. Here and there a trickling streamlet tumbled down the proud precipices. And the occasional note of a bird trilled from the stern solitudes, a tender sound in the midst of granite silence, remote and sweet.

It was a strange story they read together and wonderfully illustrated, and the boy and girl thrilled with its horrors. It told of the adventures of a boy who had wandered, by some mischance, into a giant's palace, hidden underground. Great stony sphinxes glared at him out of the cliff-like walls. Petrified grins mocked the frightened wanderer as he entered deeper into the cavernous passages and halls. Amid the glowering eyes and gaping mouths the boy lost himself. Yawning

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crevices opened to swallow him into an abyss of gloom. Black hands of rock were stretched out to grasp him as he hurried on. Great precipices of rock hung overhead, as if ready to fall upon the terror-stricken child. The boy felt that the walls would crush in upon him and kill him. Everywhere a maze of rocky windings, everywhere a mist of impenetrable darkness. Rare gleams of light shone across the passages, only to throw into terrifying relief the grinning faces and outstretched arms of stone. The lonely wanderer pursued his trembling way, fearful and despairing. For the fear of being crushed to death haunted and tormented him.

They were in the midst of the tale when Isolde jumped up suddenly and caught the book out of François' hands.

"Stop, François!" she cried in a half terror. "I can't stand it any more. It is awful!"

François looked up coolly. "What's the matter with it? I think it is fine," said he.

"I don't care if you do! I won't hear another word of it. Never again!" And Isolde threw the book into the hedge.

François got up quietly, went over to the hedge and picked it up. Whereupon Isolde stamped her little foot and demanded defiantly:

"François, what would you do if you were caught in a great, awful palace like that and could not get out?"

François sat in silence awhile, staring at his flowers. "I wouldn't mind at all if there were flowers in the palace," and then glancing at Isolde, "and, most of all, if you were there."

"But what if there were no flowers?" persisted Isolde, half angry, half inquisitive.

"I'd have you. And I'd rather have you than the flowers a million times!" answered François composedly.

"But what if I wasn't there, what would you do?" pursued the fair inquirer.

François' face grew dark and he frowned. "I'd fight my way out," he said determinedly.

"Why?" worried Isolde, now bent on teasing.

"Because I couldn't live without you, and I'd fight my way back to you and the flowers somehow." And a cloud crossed François' face as he glanced at the slim, pale-faced girl standing in the sunlight.

"And if you couldn't do that?" queried Isolde, beginning to be appeased.

"I'd die bravely, thinking of you, Isolde, and the flowers." And François set his lips firmly.

Then Isolde ran up to him and threw her arms around his neck. François caught her passionately and kissed her sweet lips. And the fairy tale ended, for Isolde would never listen to it again.

François and Isolde played together, sang together and sometimes quarreled. The quarrels were always mended by flowers. And François, knowing how big and strong he was compared to pale, petite Isolde, always made the first advances. Over the hedge that separated the two homes François flung some flowers, and the flowers were violets so long as the violets bloomed. François and Isolde loved them, and the beloved garden patch ever kept a space for these modest maids of flowerland. The

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violets duly received by Isolde as a peace offering, she offered her sweet, red lips over the hedge and the breach was mended.

'Twas a wonderfully happy life they lived!

Their school days were full of adventures. When Isolde was in trouble François helped her out. When her lessons plodded in the slough of despond he leant a hand and a good brain and pulled his little sweetheart on to solid ground. And so Isolde and François grew up like twin flowers in spirit. François was like the deep, dark Saguenay; Isolde the stream that bubbled over the rocks and fell into the silent soul of the Saguenay.

As Isolde blossomed into womanhood her delicacy increased. The fair features became transparent and the long, white hands thin like rose leaves, veined with violet. The hazel eyes grew larger, brighter and a slight tinge of pink flushed her gentle cheeks. François smiled gaily, but in his heart he began to wonder and to worry. It seemed as if his fair flower was blossoming into its fullness of beauty only to fade.

Days flew past as the two loved and wandered together. Isolde was too frail to work, so her days were spent among the flowers or by the river. And when his day's work was done François joined his fair Isolde and the flowers or in the twilight they rambled by the Saguenay.

One moonlight night they wandered to the cliffs. The sky was clear and the moon shone in full glory, twinkling in ribbons of stars on the waves and shooting lights and shadows among the dark precipices and somber bays. A

palace steamer was slowly gliding up the river. In the infinite twinings of the Saguenay the moonlight struck athwart the bows or drifted in streams of silver sheen at the stern, broken by the receding swells of the steamer, like the starry tale of a comet. 'Twas a beautiful and solemn scene, weird and poetic! An endless shoreline of gloomy cliffs, frigid in the cold moonlight and threatening in their dull massiveness, followed the windings of the Saguenay. Isolde wondered, as the vessel glided on, which way it would turn next, and almost doubted at times whether it would find a way out at all as the barricade of rocks spread before it. The defiant cliffs were but sparsely clad with trees, which hid their rugged, bare surfaces, their jutting, menacing boulders and overhanging rocks. Music floated from the salon of the vessel, but its gayety died among the silent precipices. And the somber spirit of the Saguenay settled down again as the gay lights of the steamer vanished up the river.

Indeed, the Saguenay was rather a realization of the fantastic fairy tale which Isolde and François had begun to read years ago when they were children. Its eeriness was something to be felt but not to be explained. It was something inherent in the scenery, especially by moonlight, which defined the wild, desolate cliffs in one part and blurred them in another. It was something suggestive and unfulfilled, like a cry of agony from the human heart or a beautiful picture that has been marred forever.

The river flowed on unmindful of the whirl of waters

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ruffled by the steamer's screw. It flowed on between mountain peaks and amid unseen valleys; breathing no word of the buried lands beneath; breathing nothing of the lives lost in its black waves, waves which laved few resting places for man, but beat continuously at the base of impregnable cliffs in the weird River Saguenay.

For some time Isolde and François had stood looking out on the gloomy, moonlit river and beyond to the stern, frowning precipices, and then Isolde broke the silence.

"Do you remember that horrid tale of the lost boy in the giant's palace which we read years ago?"

"You mean began to read," suggested François with mock solemnity.

Isolde laughed. "I never let you finish it, did I?" she said.

"No, but I remember it yet. Some day we shall read it through, *chérie*," he answered.

"No, indeed! I won't listen to it," she exclaimed, half defiantly.

François glanced down at the frail little girl beside him before he spoke and then said in a tender, teasing tone: "Despite all my training, despite everything, you are the same self-willed Isolde of those long-ago days, so we shall not read the harrowing tale if you don't like it."

Isolde smiled and then she said quietly: "I hope I shall be self-willed in heaven, if shutting my ears to tragedy is being self-willed. And that tale was a horrid tragedy. The Saguenay always makes me think of it.

Those great, cruel cliffs! Fancy tipping over in a row-boat out there on the river! One might swim but could never scale those steep rocks."

And Isolde shuddered.

"What gloomy thoughts on a night like this, Isolde!" exclaimed the young man.

"I was not thinking of myself. I was thinking of you," she returned, as if thinking aloud.

"Well, I am not going to drown in the Saguenay!" cried François, laughing.

Isolde was silent and a wistful look came into her face as she glanced up at François. A stern expression had come into his fearless blue eyes, as if he were having a struggle with some dark foreboding or cruel, unwelcome thought.

"Suppose you had to live alone on one of those distant islands away over there in the river?" inquired Isolde softly.

"I am not thinking of such things, Isolde. While I have you I will live and love." But François bit his lip hard.

"Wouldn't you like to be a hermit?" asked Isolde again dreamily.

"Never!" burst out François passionately.

Isolde looked at him in surprise. It was not like François to be otherwise than cool. This sudden, passionate outburst amazed her.

"Why?" demanded she.

And François caught her to his breast for answer and covered her face with his kisses.

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But François never slept that night. Isolde's thoughts had disturbed the depths of his soul's river, the silence of pain to which he had been shutting his eyes. Isolde was growing more frail every day.

Many days of soft, glowing joy, which had risen with the dawn of love, glided swiftly away. And then came great sorrow for François. Isolde, frail always, declined daily. Too weak for their rambles now, she sat in a chair all day on the veranda and François spent every spare moment by her side. François and Isolde knew now that the end was not far off.

And bravely the man endured his sorrow, patiently resigned while Isolde lived. And sweet were their last talks at sunset time, when the day's work was done and the sleepy twittering of the birds announced the coming of night. Isolde was peacefully gliding into eternity. Some sweet day she and François would be together in a world where flowers never faded. And there would be flowers! Such beautiful flowers! And always, always violets!

And one sunny summer day the sweet spirit of Isolde faded away and the first great agony of loneliness fell upon François. He gathered all his violets and laid them on his little sweetheart—a violet among the violets, modest, gentle, sweet. Quietly was the frail little body of Isolde laid in its last resting place. And the flowers of each season came and went, and the dews, and the snows fell softly upon Isolde's grave.

Day by day François' loneliness increased. Day by day he battled with the fevered spirit that bade him rush

into the world and lose himself in its mad whirl. Long, somber days were these of temptation. And the fairy tale came back, the tale of the boy shut among the cruel, grinning rocks, with no light and no refuge. The stern solitude of the Saguenay pressed in upon him, its reticence unrelaxed, its majesty unsoftened, its solitude unbroken, its eeriness impenetrable and its cold dignity uncontrolled by the gentleness of the sunshine or the mingling of light, shadow and distance. Here by the Saguenay, near Isolde's grave, he must live and endure in solitary agony. François was being crushed, but crushed for a purpose he could not see.

But the memory of his loved Isolde conquered. And then came the gift of le Saint Esprit—peace.

François decided to join the priesthood and consecrate his life to good deeds and kindness. On an isle of the Saguenay, a lone isle, he built his log cabin. He laid out a small vegetable garden. He collected the herbs of the woods and extracted from them medicines and potions to use in sickness, and the poor habitants soon learned to love and trust him. He ministered to every one who sought his isle. The Isle of Peace it was called. And François the Hermit dwelt there to the end.

The wild storm of passion was over. François, gentle and loving like Isolde, was living her life over again, unconscious of its beauty.

The years rolled quietly by the Isle of Peace, years of usefulness. Rowboats shot out from the shore and soon found their way to the little landing of François' isle. He had spent his early days in prayer, and solitude, and

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vigils. But now pilgrims and visitors sought him from everywhere, for innate in François the Hermit was a wonderful power of healing and inspiring. Rich and poor alike sought François the Hermit, and his fame spread abroad.

When lonely passengers sailed past his isle he waved a welcome. If barques were wrecked within reach of his rowboat his muscular arms swiftly brought him to the rescue, and safety and warmth were found by his kindly hearth. His hospitable roof awaited all lonely strangers and generously he gave of his few comforts.

Alone among the scrubby trees stood the hermit's cottage, alone on an isle of the Saguenay, surrounded by the solitary peaks and somber cliffs. Its little garden, sweet with violets and bright with the stray shrubs and flowers of his rocky realm.

But François was growing old, and every day the longing for Isolde, ever alive, became more painful. He faltered in his steps. His broad shoulders and big frame bent with the years and his hair turned snow white. He grew frail and weak like Isolde. The vegetable garden was neglected, the herbs ungathered, the potions ceased.

Lost in his own sorrow, the visitors and pilgrims soon ceased to come. And the lone Isle of Peace was deserted by all. None whom he had helped succored him now; none whom he had blessed aided him. He aged alone, sorrowing.

But the spirit of Isolde never left him. Day by day he shrunk into feebleness. Day by day he neglected his bodily wants and prayed, prayed longingly, hungrily.

And one sweet summer day, the day on which Isolde died, François the Hermit sat on his porch. The wind glided whisperingly through the trees; the waves laved peacefully among the rocks; the smell of the violets breathed tenderly on the air. François sat alone, a tiny bunch of violets in his hands. Silently he was dreaming over the wonderful long ago, the dear days of Isolde. How his heart cried out for her! Isolde! Isolde!

And then a great light fell round about him. And in its midst the fair face and sweet hazel eyes of Isolde smiled upon him.

"Isolde! Isolde!" he cried in ecstasy.

"What would you have?" she asked.

"Take me! take me!" he answered pitifully.

"Thou hast been faithful to me indeed!" she said.

"That is nothing," he murmured. "I loved you!"

"Thou hast done all things for my sake and God loves you as you have loved me," she returned gently.

François the Hermit held out his arms and cried:

"I love you! I love you! Isolde! Isolde!"

"Come!" answered she, smiling as only angels smile.

And François' spirit fled with hers to the land of eternal flowers.

And the world wondered and went on its way. For François the Hermit was found dead, alone, with a bunch of violets in his hands! And the world marveled at his choice of a lonely life, with the whirl of mad joys blazing around him. Why waste precious days on a lone isle? The man was mad!

So the fairy tale of François and Isolde ended—too

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beautiful for worldly minds to understand, too unselfish for earth-born beings to comprehend—just a dream of love between a man and a woman, but a love that is as rare as rubies!

THE PRINCESS AND THE CUP-BEARER

IN the days of the fairies there was once a great princess, a beautiful princess. Dark eyes like the deep sea glowed proud! upon the world, the pride of innocence; dark chestnut hair waved freely on every breeze, the freedom of ignorance. Grace and goodness moulded her heart and frame, the grace of unconscious womanhood, the goodness of the fairy godmother. And loved by all in her kingdom was this Princess Beautiful.

In the court was it known that a great betrothal was sealed in the childhood of the loved princess—a betrothal to a great prince. When the princess neared the age of twenty-one the glorious marriage was to be consummated and queendom was to sit on her fair brow. For the Princess Beautiful was still a child and the king and queen were long dead.

Only once had the princess seen the prince. Years ago, as little children, they had caught a sunny glimpse of one another—only a glimpse. But years had passed, years of sunlight and shadow, and no prince came. Years had passed and the princess grew in pride. Why should she choose whom the realm preferred? Why this one prince?

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Were there no others? By what right had her king father sealed her life away? Years added to the anger of the princess; she thought just anger. And none of this prince would she have unless love, too, came with him, and that was scarce likely. Indeed, she had no need of his love!

When the ancient cup-bearer died it was summertime around the palace. The scent of roses streamed from the garden. But the princess mourned her faithful servant. Pages were dispatched with the news to the surrounding villages; the princess needed a new cup-bearer. And the sun bathed her fair face as she stood weeping on the palace terrace. No thought had she for the butterflies or the birds who fluttered near and loved in the sunshine. No sweet note of the summer wind as it harped among the trees touched her ear. It was the birth of sorrow to the princess, but a gentle beginning, and the heart of the girl softened in the faint gray light.

In a day of sunniest splendor came the new cup-bearer, a day of violet clouds and stillness, a day of orchard bloom. The melody of birdland shrilled everywhere. Roses breathed and whispered on the terrace. Sunlight and shadow danced together in the woodlands. And the princess smiled sadly as she watched the play of the fountains and listened to the merry splash of the water. Accustom herself she must to this new cup-bearer. But ah me! how the princess mourned the ancient one, the faithful one of her palace home!

Many days had the new cup-bearer been at the palace. Humble was he, very humble, very thoughtful. But the

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old reserve of the princess came back; he was not the ancient cup-bearer. So the servant spent hard days, days of lowly service, days of gentle attention, days when the princess haughtily ignored him, days when she proudly commanded. The least fault brought a flash to her eyes, and if he so much as lifted his eyes to hers she flushed and was angry. And if, by accident, he touched her hand in serving she ordered him away. The softness of the princess hid in a citadel. The old cup-bearer was dead. An intruder was this new one, this youthful cup-bearer.

Nothing asked the princess about this new cup-bearer. She did not care. He did his duties. Was not that enough? But all in the palace soon learned to love the new cup-bearer. He was kind and he was true and as brave as he was handsome. But the princess passed on her way, mourning over the ashes of the dead, with the sunlight splashing over the palace, the terrace, the fountains and the roses, the red, red roses.

In the garden of the princess grew one lovely rosebush; roses they were as red as the dawn and sweet as the breathing dews of eventide. Every day the cup-bearer gathered a rose from the bush and laid it by the cup of the princess; and there it faded, unnoticed. And rose by rose laid he fresh and tender as the months glided into autumn, and the princess observed nothing. So they all faded and the cup-bearer sadly tore their leaves and threw them to the winds. For the princess heeded nothing but the ashes of the ancient.

And winter came apace. One sulky day the lonely

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princess wandered away on the snows, far away. Up a mountainside she clambered into the rarefied air. But a storm burst on the mountain peak. Great clouds of snow hurled their arms around the princess. Wild winds roared through gully and vale, white walls of snow clung to the cliffs. And soon the princess was lost in the mad whirl of wind and snow.

Night closed in and all the palace was anxious. No princess came home. Lights flickered over the countryside and through the woods as watchers searched for the lost woman. No one thought of the mountain, no one but the cup-bearer. Silently, alone, he sped across the snows. Rapidly beat his heart as anxiety winged his heels. Reckless of his life, on and on he rushed through the wild storm, guided by an inward light brighter than the sun. Upward he struggled on the mountainside, careless of cliff and boulder; upward he braved the hurricane of wind and hail, for the heart of the cup-bearer shone like a guiding star.

Weary, and frightened, and weak, the lost princess lay beneath a fallen rock, timid of the storm's power, lonely in the wail of the gale. Only a woman, after all!

Gently the cup-bearer raised the lifeless princess. Warmly he nestled her against his breast and firmly he trod down the mountainside. A cup-bearer, indeed, but the man of the palace!

And days passed for the sick princess, sore, weary days. They were days of gray light for the cup-bearer.

But again the sun darted among the roses and the ice of the fountains melted into bubbles, and once more the

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cup-bearer served his princess, but his hands trembled as he served. When duties were done he slipped away to his lonely room, and the princess wondered.

No more were the red roses gathered from the garden. They faded, neglected on the bush. No more tender rose leaves sped upon the winds, messages, broken messages from the cup-bearer's heart. Day by day the princess looked and longed for the roses. She dared not ask the cup-bearer. Dawn was breaking through the gray light of her mind. The roses smelled sweeter than they ever had. How warmly gleamed the sun! How merrily danced the fountain! What enchantment lingered in the notes of the birds! How happily loved the butterflies! And what lyre was this that sang and thrilled in the woodland! The wind? Ah me! How beautiful the world! So beautiful! And thus came love to the princess.

But the child of sorrow grows to womanhood. One dark day the cup-bearer appeared no more. No gentle service, no quiet attentions greeted the princess. And violets mingled their fragrance with the red roses. And long nights the lone princess gazed dry eyed up to the stars. Would this inward pain never cease, this hunger never be satisfied? How cruelly the red roses breathed upon the night! They sickened her. How silent the great, dark sky! Would it never, never speak and answer what she dared not ask?

The day drew near for the marriage of the princess to be celebrated. Great and splendid preparations filled the palace with busy pages, grand dames and gay cour-

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tiers. The rustle of silk and velvet, the clink of spurred heels, laughter and minstrelsy echoed in the tapestried halls and out in the courtyard. Wreathes of flowers festooned the palace walls and silken pennons flaunted with sprightly grace from every window. Red roses trailed from the ancient tapestries; red roses drooped from the old portraits of kings and queens; red roses filled the great palace with their fragrance.

The terrace hummed with converse and sang with music. The avenues thudded beneath horses' hoofs, and the glint of satin and steel flashed in the park woods and in the rose gardens. But no one dared touch the lone bush of the red roses, so the princess had commanded. And no one guessed the truth.

Far away rang out a bugle call. The prince was coming.

To her tower hastened the princess. How beautiful she looked on her wedding day! Anxiously her eyes scanned the many avenues and cruelly she dug her pink nails into the palms of her hands. How bravely she lifted her proud head! Alack! how the blue eyes filled with unshed tears! But her nostrils quivered proudly and the fire of battle burned in her eyes. It must be done.

Splendidly rode the glittering array of soldiers, winding along the avenues. What a clatter of spears! What a flame of steel gleaming in the sunshine! How merrily they rode, as if to a festival indeed! The horses shook their manes and lifted their hoofs in the proud consciousness of being. Ah me! How glorious and how sad!



"Not to this man give I my hand."

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And the breath of the red roses distilled in the air. The heart cry of the princess broke amid its sweetness. But no one knew and no one saw.

On came the glittering, the dauntless array. Where rode this wonderful prince? Ah, there was he, in the lead! But a visor hid his face. 'Twas well. What pretty work lay before him on this, the wedding day of the princess! Let him hide his face. 'Twere soon enough seen before many hours crossed the red roses.

Down from the tower came the princess and into the great throne room she glided like a swan on the surface of a serene sea. Darkly gloomed the wainscoting of the old oak walls, and darkly frowned the ancestral portraits of king and queen, and dully hung the ancient tapestries. But, joy of joys! How sweet the red roses on her throne! How thickly the pages had embowered the gilded tyranny! What cared she! A red rose, large, full and beautiful, nestled in her bosom.

Slowly the great hall doors were opened. Quickly the hall filled with knights and ladies. Softly quivered the music from unseen galleries, and there in the entrance stood the prince, visored, clad in silver armor, long white plumes flowing from his crest. And still the fragrance from the red roses weighed upon the atmosphere.

Steadily stood the princess on her golden throne among the roses. Pale as new blown snow was she; eyes afire with a wild light. In the silence of the assembled courtiers and dames she spoke:

"Not to this man give I my hand. Not to any prince,

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however fair his realm, however great his treasure, however powerful his armies. No! My heart is given already. My life goes with it, and humble indeed is my choice! Even would I give my throne for my love, even my golden crown! And my choice is the cup-bearer."

There was silence for the space of a few moments in the grand assembly.

And then the princess clutched the red rose at her breast and stood aghast, trembling. For the prince had raised his visor as he stood amid his knights.

Smiling to his beloved princess, he said softly yet so clearly that it could be heard to the uttermost corners of the great throne room like a silver chime breaking across a silent sea:

"The cup-bearer! I am he and prince as well. And I shall serve you, my princess, so long as red roses last!"

NAOMI'S WEDDING BELLS

THE sun dawned gaily on Naomi's wedding day. Springtime had filled the garden with flowers and the trees with songsters. Fleecy clouds drifted across the sky and vanished in the purple haze of the distant mountains. Over the fields and meadows paused the heavy odor of the new-mown hay, which lay piled in golden brown heaps. The orchards hid beneath a mist of pink and white blossoms, their fragrance distilling with the warmth of the sunshine. From the meadows clanged the cow-bells and sounded the stuttering wail of the sheep, and from the tall grasses and the leafy hedges chirruped the cricket. The soft southern note of the wind chanted through the woodland behind Miss Hetty Durand's cottage and the little village drowsed in balmy ease.

Naomi Durand was an orphan. Years ago her parents had passed from this life and had left her to the care of an only sister of Mr. Durand's. So Naomi journeyed from her home in the Southern States to dwell in the little cottage, at the village of Mertonville, with her maiden aunt.

Naomi was only nineteen years old and a pretty,

golden-haired, blue-eyed girl. A merry-hearted girl was she, fond of dress, and admiration, and a good time. She was beloved by all the swains of the village. Naomi Durand was not given to brooding, or reading, or to thinking much about anything except fun. Indeed, her life had rippled through the village, bubbling and happy, like the stream beneath the village bridge. And no one ever associated tragedy with the cheery blue eyes and gaysome laugh of Naomi Durand.

Mertonville was a picturesque village of the Western States. It was set in the cup of the foothills. On Naomi's wedding day soft summer mists clung to the hilltops surrounding it, fading into the purple-gray of the far-away Rocky Mountains. A violet haze lingered in the meadows beyond its straggling, vine-clad cottages. The stream beneath the village bridge gurgled indolently on its way, winding through a ravine, and so losing itself among the hills and dales. Passing through the village was a main road, on which was situated Miss Hetty Durand's cottage. The road passed among the cottages and out again, as if Mertonville were too unimportant for even a pause at the humble village inn. On this sweet day the foliage of tree and bush gleamed at its greenest and the air breathed fresh and fragrant. The hum of tiny insects and the clucking of fowls blended their monotonous sounds with the hypnotic spell of a warm summer day in an American village.

The villagers were quiet folk. As Miss Durand was not well off, from a money standpoint, the service would be a simple one in the cottage. Only a few friends had

been invited to witness the ceremony. There was no bustle nor excitement about the preparations. Miss Durand arranged everything in a gentle way all her own. Except for the unusual floral display in the cottage, no stranger would have guessed how important a day it was for her.

Miss Hetty Durand was a tender-hearted woman. Flowers betrayed more of her sentiment and feeling than any number of fine phrases or golden coins. In the midst of her old-fashioned garden, among the ferns, vines and blossoms, this quaint matron lady was as sweet as any flower in her old lace cap and purple silk gown on Naomi's wedding day.

Everything was in readiness at three o'clock. The guests were beginning to arrive and the youngsters of the village had collected outside the fence to watch proceedings.

Aleck McDonald had a long road to travel to wed his bride. He lived in a village among the mountains, and a ride of many miles lay between the cottage of Miss Hetty Durand and his dwelling. 'Twas a dangerous road he had to ride. The trails had cut rough and rutty with recent rains and great torrents had burst from the mountains. Many villages and low-lying lands were flooded in the spring freshets. Avalanches had started from the mountainsides, loosened by the rains, and wildly rushed down the slopes. There were tragic tales of riders who had crossed the mountains in early spring, for sudden storms had swept the peaks. Lives had been

broken beneath landslips or borne to eternity on the turbid, swirling waters of the mountain streams.

The sun fell softly into the little parlor of the cottage. A light wind fluttered the muslin curtains, like a spirit from a happier world, and stirred the vines which draped the walls. Almost overpowering was the distilled sweetness of the flowers, suggestive of sadness as well as of gladness.

Miss Hetty Durand, with a smile half sorrowful, was arranging a bouquet of pinks and violets in a dainty vase when the maid of honor, Isabel Veyne, entered the room.

"Well, dear, how is Naomi now?" softly inquired Miss Hetty Durand.

"Naomi is all right," answered Isabel quietly, "but she cannot stand the ringing of the doorbell. She suggests leaving the door open, as it is such a warm day. The guests can enter without formality, as they know us all so well."

Miss Durand scrutinized Isabel's face in surprise and then inquired, "What bell?"

"The doorbell, I suppose. I haven't noticed any bells ringing, but Naomi seems to hear them," remarked Isabel.

"Poor child! I expect she is a bit nervous naturally."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Isabel quickly, "she looks as cool and calm as your violets."

"Well, dear, you can tell Naomi that the door has been open for at least an hour and the bell has not rung once to-day."

"I thought it hadn't," returned Isabel. "But Naomi seemed disturbed about it, so I came to tell you."

Miss Hetty looked up mildly from her flowers.

"'Tis very odd," said she.

"Very. However, I guess I might feel the same way on my wedding day," returned Isabel, laughing.

"Perchance you might," smiled Miss Hetty.

"Are you coming up to see her before the ceremony?" asked Isabel, changing the subject.

"Yes, dear. When my friend, Mrs. Paule, comes, I shall leave her to look after my guests while I pay a visit upstairs to Naomi."

So Isabel returned to the little bride.

But after Isabel had left the room Miss Hetty added to herself: "Strange! There are no bells in this neighborhood that she could possibly hear. Unless the village youngsters are playing tricks. I shall just watch. I don't approve of practical jokes, least of all on a wedding day. Children should be dealt with severely for making an occasion ridiculous that should at least be dignified as well as happy."

Miss Hetty Durand stood behind the parlor curtains to watch the youngsters. The children were running about and laughing, but nothing unwonted occurred.

It was some time after three o'clock when Miss Hetty left her friend, Mrs. Paule, in charge of her guests and went upstairs to pay a visit to the bride.

Naomi, in her simple bridal dress, was lovelier on her wedding day than she had ever been. Her large blue eyes were happy and yet wistful, her fair skin tinged

with a warm pink from suppressed excitement, her mouth trembling between a laugh and tears. As the sunshine fell into the little room it broke into a halo of glory around Naomi's golden hair.

Naomi was seated near the window overlooking the garden and Isabel was standing by it, watching the gate, for the bridegroom was expected at any moment.

"Aleck has not come yet, auntie," said Naomi, glancing up from her reverie as Miss Durand entered the room.

"No, dearie, but he may come any minute now."

Miss Hetty drew up a chair beside Naomi and seated herself.

"Isabel gave me your message, auntie."

"Well, dear, have the bells stopped ringing?" asked Miss Hetty, smiling.

Naomi shuddered a little before she answered hesitatingly, "Not altogether. I think you must be mistaken or perhaps you are growing deaf."

And Naomi wound her arms around Miss Durand's neck.

"I guess Naomi is dreaming," laughed Isabel. "Love seems to affect most people in that way. Lovers would dream their lives away if envious mortals did not interfere. Here am I, for instance, very envious."

Naomi forced a smile. "I guess Isabel is growing deaf, too. I might set up an institution for deaf people and take you two as free patients. When I cure you I shall send in a big bill, like the quacks. Please pay it."

"Indeed!" cried Isabel saucily. "I think Miss Durand

and I shall organize a circus and exhibit you as a marvel of hearing, having ears to hear things unheard by the common, everyday ear-drum."

Miss Hetty glanced from one girl to the other, half doubting their seriousness about the bells.

"I suppose you are playing a joke on me. You want to frighten me with something weird. This is your last fling at your old auntie, I suppose, to cheer her up at parting with her girlie." And Miss Durand kissed the bride affectionately.

"It is Naomi's joke then, not mine," said Isabel gravely.

Naomi glanced out of the window before she replied, for her lips were trembling a little.

"Well, friends, whether you accept it as a joke or not, the fact remains the same. Since before three o'clock I have heard bells ringing; such *strange*, strange bells!"

Miss Hetty took the little bride's face in her hands and looked tenderly into the big blue eyes, which gazed back at her with a pathetic sort of happiness.

"I never thought you a queer girl, Naomi. Indeed, you have always been a very practical little woman in most things, dress and fun excepted. You look as sensible and as pretty as ever, perhaps more so to-day, this being your wedding day. But your talk is uncanny, as Aleck McDonald would say."

"Aleck may not have a chance to say at all, if he does not hurry up." Naomi still stared out of the window, but she tilted her head saucily. "Look at the time! Nearly half-past three, and not here yet! A woman may

be permitted to be rather vain on her wedding day and rather late. Aleck must be fixing up fine, and a man should never be vain at any time. 'Tis his place to admire woman for her prettiness; to love her for her vanities; to seek her for her own sweet self, whether others agree or disagree, and then to marry her on time. Five minutes more and Aleck's chance is gone forever and ever!"

"Then I fear Aleck is doomed!" sighed Miss Hetty with a smile.

"Do give him five minutes' grace!" Isabel pleaded mischievously.

"Five minutes' grace, you ask?" murmured Naomi softly. "I shall give him eternity!"

"And if he comes late and wastes your time in this way after you are married?" inquired Isabel, bent on teasing.

Naomi was silent a moment.

"I shall not always be so extravagant with my time as I am to-day," she said slowly. "Perchance I may never have to wait for Aleck again."

"Aleck, beware! Take heed to your ways and walk with care. Amen!" laughed Isabel.

"Do you see any one coming?" asked Naomi, changing the subject rather nervously.

Isabel lifted the window higher and gazed up the road.

"No one yet!"

Miss Durand arose.

"Well, dears, I must go down to my guests."

"My darling!" she whispered as she kissed the bride. "Once upon a time my mischievous, merry baby, then a romantic, romping girl and now my little woman, altogether lovely and lovable."

Drawing an old lace handkerchief from a capacious pocket, Miss Hetty Durand wiped her eyes and went downstairs, sighing to herself:

"What will I do without my little Naomi?"

But fate was to be kinder to Miss Durand in her loneliness than to the poor little Naomi, the bride.

"And what about the bells, Naomi?" inquired Isabel, the merriment leaving her face as Miss Durand left the room.

"They are ringing still. Such strange, strange bells!"

"Ringing still!" gasped Isabel with a shiver.

"Yes, dear."

"And why didn't you tell your auntie just now about them?"

"I kept up for Aunt Hetty's sake. I did not wish to worry her."

"Brave girl!" murmured Isabel, taking the bride's cold hand in hers.

"Say nothing more to her, Isabel."

"Not a word, dear."

"I don't understand why they ring and ring. It makes me think of the bell in the church tower when it tolls for the——"

"Hush!" interrupted her companion. "Don't speak of such things, dearie."

"But it is true. They are ringing, ringing! Such strange, strange bells!"

Isabel did not answer, but slipped her arm around the bride tenderly, and so they sat in silence for some time. They listened to the happy hum of voices downstairs and watched the leaves and the flowers as the wind gently tossed them with a soft, whispering sound, as if breathing to them the message of the strange, strange bells.

"No one yet!" sighed Naomi.

Isabel leaned out of the window.

"There is some one coming, riding down the road."

"Aleck!" gasped Naomi, trembling.

"Riding so fast!" continued Isabel, not noticing Naomi's cry.

"Aleck!" again broke from Naomi's white lips.

"Yes! yes!" exclaimed Isabel excitedly. "Aleck at last!"

"Aleck!" cried Naomi, trembling violently. "And where is his friend, Bob Nelles?"

"Why, the rider is alone!" burst from Isabel in amazement.

"Alone!" Naomi clasped her hands tightly.

"He looks as if he were riding for his life! He rides so fast!" continued Isabel excitedly.

"So fast!" murmured Naomi mechanically.

"Dear me! what has happened? He has no hat on! His clothes hang like lead, as if soaked with water! Gracious! It is Bob Nelles! I wonder where Aleck——"

Isabel stopped short, horror struck, and glanced quickly at Naomi.

Naomi had seen. Naomi knew.

Like a lily drooping for want of water, so Naomi leaned against the wall near the window, her lips parted, her eyes staring with fear, for life seemed to be slipping, slipping from her grasp.

A specter had risen before her with the bells—the strange, strange bells—and it was Aleck!

“Aleck! Aleck!” she moaned. “You are dead—dead! Sh! I hear the bells ringing, ringing, ringing!”

“Come, Naomi!” whispered Isabel, leading the bride to the bed, gently seating her on it and holding her cold hands in her own.

“I hear the bells ringing, ringing—louder, louder than ever! Oh, Aleck! Aleck!” moaned the bride, shivering. “I understand now. All afternoon I felt the tragedy. I kept up for Aunt Hetty’s sake, Aleck. I joked to chase the feeling away. You are dead, Aleck! You died when the strange, strange bells first began to ring. Oh, Aleck, dearest! You are gone—gone! Never shall we meet again in this world! Never, Aleck—never!”

Naomi pressed her hands together and wrung them cruelly.

“Listen! Listen, Isabel! Do you hear? Ringing—ringing—ringing!”

Naomi, in her bridal array, remained seated on the bed. The orange blossoms lay in her laps and she fingered the leaves tenderly. She had removed the

wreath from her hair. She sat there staring, staring at nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing. If she heard, it was only the ringing, ringing of the bells! If she knew anything, it was that Aleck had passed for all time out of her existence. If she saw, it was the face of the specter, of Aleck, cold and lifeless—dead!

Presentiment had become fear and fear was soon to be reality, for Aleck was dead!

Miss Hetty Durand opened the door softly, her face white as Naomi's.

"My poor darling! God help you!" she whispered tenderly, lovingly.

But Naomi heard not. Naomi had fainted.

The strange, strange bells!

The toll of death!

THE ENCHANTER

THE enchanter stood by the sea, a great sapphire sea, a sea of glowing, vital movement. The sun beat upon it, but could not absorb nor penetrate its depths. The rains poured into it, but the sea rippled no deeper. Tempests pitched its waters shivering upon the beach. But the sea heaved the same, as full, as deep, as impenetrable and as omnipotent. No one fell into this sapphire sea and came back the same. 'Twas a marvelous sea!

The enchanter stood by the sea at dawn. He stretched out his golden rod over its foam-flecked waters, and as the zephyrs played upon its glistening surface a low murmur of music drifted from the far horizon. Wave and wave of melody vibrated over the sapphire sea, increasing in volume and sound till the air was full of music and all the sapphire sea thrilled in harmony.

The enchanter murmured the words of the wonderful spell. And then from out of the sapphire sea arose a brave and lusty youth like the famed Excalibur, "the sword that rose from out the bosom of the lake." Clad was he in a shining red armor, with a flowing white plume in his helmet. Across his shoulders and fastened beneath his chin with a golden clasp drooped a robe of

ermine, and in his hand he held a golden sword, and set in its haft was a blood-red ruby.

Lightly he trod upon the sapphire sea. Joyously he sang as he nipped the sea foam with his golden sword, and merrily the zephyrs tossed his flaxen curls and kissed his innocent cheeks, and laughingly he looked upon the sky, the land and the sea. For life, pure and sweet, danced in his veins.

The enchanter inurmured the words of the wonderful spell, words that breathed of the dawn and the dew, softly coming and softly going; words afresh with every day; white words that leave the world the sweeter for their music; sounds that come in dreams and visions; melodies that die away with the sunset. For the enchanter's mystic words bestowed the gift of love, love that makes the winter flower-sweet and sunny as the summertime; love that breaks through every cloud and unrolls a space of blue on the darkest of tempest-tossed days. 'Twas a wondrous enchantment that fell upon the brave and lusty youth!

And then the enchanter vanished—vanished as the parent bird leaves its young when wings grow strong and instinct guides their flight.

But on the beach appeared a maiden, a maiden dark as night, with eyes like the azure of heaven and a brow like snowflakes. Dressed in snowiest robes was she, "white samite, mystic, wonderful." In her hand, glinting in the sunlight, she clasped a golden sword, rich with pearls and rubies. And

"All the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewelry."

Laying her sword upon the youth's shoulder, she knighted him Sir Love.

Sir Love set out on a journey, long and difficult. But his heart was held in the hand of Hope and Faith gazed out upon the world from his clear and innocent eyes.

Far, far had Sir Love traveled, traveled in lands where the sun shines forever. But he grew accustomed to the sunlight and wearied of its warmth, its peace. He slept by the sapphire sea and its waves laved love songs to his slumbering ears. But he tired of the music and of the sea. He roved in many a moss-spattered wold and dreamed by sparkling brooks. In a bed of violets he nested his head and listened to the lyre of the wind. He dallied in meadows, and chanted to the feathered throng, and again he returned to the sapphire sea. 'Twas all too beautiful, all too sweet! Sir Love got used to its peace and wearied, and instinct guided his flight.

Sir Love arose at dawn each day and turned his footsteps from the sapphire sea. One darkly clouded day he came to a wide, smoothly flowing river. On the other shore gleamed a wonderful palace. Its windows flamed into the gray of the day. Thick forests surrounded it, forests somber even in the sunshine, and the low, hungry roar of wild beasts echoed among the trees and the rocks of the riverside. The knight looked long and hungrily.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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Nothing daunted, Sir Love threw himself into the river. 'Twas icy cold! But Sir Love had dared, and he would do.

And soon he had reached the other shore. Courageously he cut his way through the thickets, cut it with his golden sword. Sturdily did he defend himself from the wild beasts, but their blood spattered the blood-red ruby, and cheerfully did he gain the palace. But no one welcomed him, no one prevented him.

Through long corridors Sir Love betook his way. Gorgeous tapestries, unwritten poems in color and design, covered the walls and rare rugs of wondrous weave and myriad hues softened his tread. Everywhere was luxury, gold, and silver, and bronze. The stairs were of varied marbles, quarried from all the world, each step a solid block. The tables were of jasper, and malachite, and lapislazuli, supported on golden legs. The chairs were carved in fine old woods and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and cabinets of teak wood and ebony, mosaiced and crested with tortoise-shell and precious stones, held the wondrous treasures of the palace. The odor of incense, mystic breath of the Orient, hung in sleepy vapors on the atmosphere. It permeated everywhere, fragrant of spices and sandal wood. Sir Love felt stupefied. Through suite after suite of magnificent rooms, glaring in their richness, enervating in their comforts, passed the straying knight.

The palace contained no chapel.

In the banqueting hall was spread a festive board—viands set for gods. There sparkled gold things, and

silver things, and fine glass, and in their midst a wealth of red poppies. Like a burning fire they flamed in the center of the table. There breathed spices from the garden of the dark-eyed Peri, fruit from the clime of the peach and orange blossom, wines from the vineyards of the world of secret distilling, a sumptuous feast of Ambrosia and Nectar. And a throne of ivory, of satin and velvet stood empty.

The knight hesitated—his eyes on the banquet, the incense heavy upon him. 'Twas a wondrous rich palace!

But withal a lonesome palace. No friend called from the corridors; no sweet-eyed houri beckoned to the feast; no fair nymph invited to the throne. Yea, Sir Love hesitated, troubled by a dim, distant thought of the sapphire sea. And then he fled!

Cast down by this vain experience, Sir Love set out again. Bravely he wrestled with the subtle poison that had exhaled in the Palace of Luxury. It darkened his hope and his faith. The wild beasts had torn his tender flesh and the briars of the thicket had brought blood.

For many days Sir Love wandered on, restlessly, heedlessly, and then a shining castle glittered from a mountain peak. Steep precipices arose before him, somber cliffs split into dangerous ravines. The path upward was rugged and perilous. Cruelly the sun beat upon the bare, treeless mountain.

Spurred by a fresh hope, a freshened faith, the knight struggled through the twilight and the peril of the ravines. He breasted the cliffs and stumbled fearlessly up the precipitous path, and carelessly he suffered the

searing of the sun. The castle gained, once more he entered, unwelcomed, unprevented.

Everywhere the knight turned was a revelation of thought in art. There were wonderful, beautiful statues. Some were just begun, roughly hewn blocks of marble—the birth of fine thought, the embryo of exalted emotion. They were ideas nobly conceived, but unfinished, unexpressed. And there were some perfected, statues of fine feeling and splendid action, of repose and uplifting thought, silently expressing the highest and the best; statues breathing of realized dreams. Wonderful statues, indeed!

Marvelous paintings hung upon the walls and frescoed the ceilings. Like the statues, some were just in outline and others completed, fully developed ideas. Landscapes there were, soft and sunny, of mead and wold, or dark with storm and peril; landscapes of all light and shadow, of all celestial beauty and all terrestrial fervency. There were scenes from all life and all dreamland. Frescoes and paintings were alike beautiful and inspiring.

Heavenly symphonies drifted in ecstasies of sound from unseen galleries. Voices of divine sweetness thrilled through the castle, and lyre and harp, viol and flute each vibrated a part of a dream—a dream of melody and bird notes. Myriad harmonies winged on the strings of music. As snowflakes floating through the air, as bubbles bursting in a brook, as stars beaming one by one, so every note wafted from the unseen worlds

and swelled the chorus of music and sound. 'Twas a wondrous, melodious castle!

The mystery of the spirit world dwelt in the castle of art—the mystery of dreams.

Sir Love gazed around him as if spellbound. It was a strange castle. The walls were bare, except for the paintings; the floors were uncovered but for the pedestals on which the statues stood. The atmosphere was fresh, but only the sweetness of the music permeated it. Mystic meanings lay hidden in all he saw—the mystery of work and design, of patience and perseverance—and the meaning was effort and pain.

No smiling sylph made him stay. 'Twas lonely—lonely as the Palace of Luxury!

The knight wavered. He wavered long and uncertainly. But night drew on and weariness came with the darkness. With a lingering, backward gaze, the knight slowly descended the mountain.

A dream had entered the blood of the knight—a dream of noble ambition. The dream and the poison battled together, the indolent, sluggish poison of the Palace of Luxury, and Sir Love lagged in his journeyings. And in a fantasy he saw the sparkling waters of the sapphire sea.

Crestfallen with the results of his travels, the knight proceeded through a cycle of chilly, misty days, days of gloom and uncertainty.

And on a crimson morning arose a fair mosque, a mosque all ivory, flushing in the sunrise. Rare crystals gleamed from the cupola like sparks of fire; rare crystals

glistened on the walls like tongues of flame. Fountains chanted ceaselessly in arbors of evergreen. Laurels waved forever by singing streams. A pure, sweet air abounded.

Olive branches met over the path that led to the mystic mosque, but the path was paved with jagged rocks and bespattered with heart's blood. Daringly Sir Love traversed the rough way; his feet bled and ached. But the mosque was magnificent. It burned in the sun, an eternal blaze of light.

No hand beckoned to the knight, no voice bade him enter. No one awaited him.

Inside the mosque the smell of ancient vellum pervaded every corner. Rolls of old parchment lay in piles upon the floor, covered with weird signs and symbols. Aged papyrus from far lands, scratched with hieroglyphics and stained with various colors, moulded in rusty heaps. There were shelves on the walls which marshalled rows and rows of books, hundreds, thousands of books; books of all ages and no two volumes alike.

A soft violet glow streamed through stained windows, quiet and peaceful. Weird and wonderful presences, not seen but felt, moved in this world of study and struggle, of failure, of glory and despair.

Nothing adorned the walls of the Mosque of Literature, nothing but books, marvelous books. Their contents had been melted in the crucible of the mind and transmuted into rare, and beautiful, and powerful thoughts. There were thoughts which streamed in melodious language—the grand music of the epic, the flute-

like note of the sonnet, the love harmony of the lyric, the glorious symphony of all poetry. It was the mystic Mosque of Literature, of Poetry. It was a burning fire of eternal thought.

Sir Love sat for long, enchanted hours. The spell of the mosque was upon him, but he was battling with the poison and the dream. The poison conquered. Palace, castle, mosque, they stood alone. No kind eyes looked sympathy into his. And there was struggle, and pain, and failure in all three. And the knight sorely retraced his steps from the ivory mosque.

Heroically Sir Love started on a pilgrimage. Faith and Hope were growing weary. A doubt lingered indolently in the knight's thoughts. The thing called self had haunted him on his travels. In the Palace of Luxury it had absorbed the poisoned, sweet-distilling incense. And yet withal the dream floated in serene air. Dimly glowed the vision of the sapphire sea. And the knight stumbled on. Footsore, he endured his desolate way.

One evening, as the sun drifted downward to sunset, Sir Love beheld a temple. It was a temple of precious stones and lilies, all roseate in the setting sun. Columns of sapphires, so blue as the sapphire sea, supported the jasper roof, columns carved with cupids and twining with blossoms and leaves. The walls were of lustrous pink topaz and set in their niches reposed statues of snowiest marble, statues of the muses. In front of this transparent temple, on a pedestal of emerald, the goddess Venus, with arms outheld, gazed a wondrous, unfathomable welcome to all wayfarers. Lilies resplendent sur-

rounded the temple, lilies so pure as starlight. Sir Love was lost in awe of its splendor.

The path to the Temple of Love was an easy one, but difficult to find. The knight caught a glimpse of it as the rays of the setting sun christened its well-worn way. A cross of pearls stood on a mound, amid thistles and briars, pointing out the path. In the center of the pearls gleamed the fire of a blood-red ruby.

The Temple of Love was set in a boundless park. Lawns of velvety green spread away beneath grand old trees of oak and pine. In mossy hollows glanced patches of purple pansies and azure forget-me-nots. Marble terraces overlooked purling brooks—brooks bubbling on to the sapphire sea and the sea of eternity. Roses and violets wove garlands around their balustrades like hues of dawn among the purple clouds. Arbors of wistaria and eglantine wistfully invited the pilgrim to rest. All flowers blossomed forever in the gardens of the Temple of Love.

The woodlands were brilliant with the golden mimosa, the pink azalea, the purple lilac and all their sisters of the blossoming world. Fountains flashed in the sunshine, scattering their opalescent drops into crystal basins or tossing them into the cups of flowers and among the tall grasses, where they laughed back to the sun. Narcissus, iris and daffodils nodded by foaming falls. Lakelets shadowed the trees and the sky, a mosaic of blue and green, weaving a variable lacework of fluttering leaves as the wind swept the water into ripples.

The songs of birds and the music of the winds stole

among the sylvan shades. They wafted melodies in at the temple doors. In the groves were heard the lucid notes of harp, and lyre, and lute. Symphonies strayed through the woodlands like nymphs of sound. And all this sacred spot was music, beauty and happiness.

Sir Love lay long and indolently in the groves, lazily breathing the fragrance of the flowers. Everywhere thrilled a wonderful life. Surely this dream would end in peace. Disappointment had dogged his footsteps. Faith had dozed and Hope had fallen asleep in the Palace of Luxury and the poison had sapped his strength. For many days he had almost forgotten the sapphire sea, the dark maiden and the enchanter who had given him life. But slowly memory revived it all in these sylvan scenes. He would visit the temple and then return to the sapphire sea.

When rest had restored the wearied knight, the indolent Sir Love, he arose and sadly sought the Temple of Love.

In the temple stood a shrine. It was a shrine of pure white marble, with a name, a sweet name, a mystic name, inlaid in gold. On it rested a perfect heart of pearls, in the midst of which faintly glowed a blood-red ruby. Ivy twined around the altar. The air was fragrant with lilies, and narcissus, and hyacinths. Sunlight forever shone through the stained windows. It shed the varied hues of the colored glass on pillar, fresco and mosaic, for the walls were frescoed with dreams and floor mosaiced in strange symbols and visions. And the Temple of

Love became sweeter and fresher with the flowers as the years wended on to eternity.

There by the shrine stood the maiden, dark as night, with eyes like the azure of heaven and a brow like snowflakes. There was she in snowiest robes with her golden sword.

And there she demanded of Sir Love:

"What hast thou done with thy knighthood—thy gift—and what dost thou here?"

"I am weary," sighed the knight. "I sought luxury and fame, but suffering, and despair, and loneliness greeted me in great palaces, and in wonderful castles, and in splendid mosques. I am weary now. I would love."

The maiden bent her eyes, blue and mystic, upon the shrine, upon the heart of pearls, upon the blood-red ruby.

"Too late! too late!" she sighed.

"Too late!" wildly cried the knight. "Where is my enchanter? Why called he to me—and out of the sapphire sea?"

The enchanter appeared and he made answer:

"I called thee from the sapphire sea to live. Thou didst choose death."

"But love—love! What of love?" demanded the knight, trembling, angered.

And the enchanter made answer again:

"Too late! I would I had left thee nothing—a soulless bubble! Thou hast learned too late—too late!"

THE THISTLE: A PARABLE

IN Scotland, by the wayside, far over the mountains and in the ravines, thrives the thistle. 'Tis an odd plant! 'Tis wondrous prickly! It draws the blood to one's finger tips. It has a mode of spiking that is not always cheering, but it is sincere. Maybe it is inspiring, indeed very inspiring at times. One says things one should not say when one happens nonchalantly on a thistle.

But the thistle has a beautiful, even noble head. It is proud in a garden of roses, bold on the moorlands, lonely on the mountain peak. In a picture it is harmless, among the bracken it is dignified, on the defensive, picturesque. In the fields one would rather not shoonless step upon it. At all times the heart of the thistle colors warmly and the sap of life runs in its veins.

But the odd thing or character of the thistle is this: It so often shelters a bluebell beneath its great, prickly, green leaves. Who would suspect a thistle of hiding so fine a poetic soul as a bluebell, gentle star of the earth? And yet underneath the thistle leaves gather rosy clumps of heath, the friendly, dark-eyed pansy-violet and tiny hedgerows of heather. Even the rare white heather will

nestle beneath the thistle. 'Tis well to possess the microscopic eye, especially in Scotland!

Perchance a day comes when the thistle must defend itself out in the great world, even tear its heart to prove its truth to the world. Who knows? God made the rose with its thorn, the violet to lift its shy head unseen, but none the less beautiful. Gently He fashioned the lovely head of the carnation and then fastened it tenderly to its ugly stalk. Nobly did He lift the water-lily from its bed of mud and the hyacinth from its dark couch. Even by the wayside, neglected, trampled on, the narcissus breathes its sweetness 'neath southern skies. Wild in the fields grows the passionate, warm-hearted poppy, its head crushed to feed opium to mankind. Wilder still the marguerites, a white sea to be shortly cut down by the man with the scythe; and, despised of all, the simple buttercup. Yea, God made them all, and God made the thistle!

Touch me if you dare!

The thistle will die, yes, but die nobly as it has lived. Touch me if you dare, for I have a heart! God is witness. And not a thistle is broken from its stalk, ruthlessly, heedlessly, heartlessly, but God knows.

"Vengeance is mine!" A little while and the world will see the thistle breaking. A little while and the world will say:

"How strange! That thistle hid a beautiful bluebell. Not an ordinary one—no! How cheerfully it endured through frosts and hurricanes! How bravely it held its head even as the stalk bent and broke! As storm after

storm blew around it and crushed its leaves, how courageously it lifted them and spread them to the sun!

But the sun smiles little in Scotland and the clouds are sodden and sulky. And the thistle grew alone, tenderly guarding the simple things, the pure things. And God saw.

And then a day came when the heart of the thistle broke. And God gathered the honeyed sweetness of the thistle back to Himself, for He loved the thistle. Despite its thorns, God knew its life. Then he blended its honey with the beauty of His own spirit and scattered it to the four winds, a seed human but divine. Some of the seeds died, but a few, very few, which supped of the sun and the dew, grew up, straight but thorny, ragged and sweet, sturdily sheltering any timid flower within their shade. And God saw it was good.

Silently He blessed the life of the lonely thistle. For if the world knew not and doubted, God knew the thistle of the broken heart.

“Oui! c'est un rêve!
Oui! c'est un rêve doux d'amour!
La nuit lui prête son mystère;
Il doit finir—
Il doit finir avec le jour.”

THE KNIGHT AND THE DREAM

ONCE upon a time there was a bold knight, an infidel knight. His parents were dead, his friends were dead, and no home had he anywhere, and no one cared.

Far afield traveled he, seeking the joy of living, the fulness of the earth. Great mountains rose before him, and this sturdy knight bent his back, and laughed as he nipped their pinnacles with his sword. Great plains stretched hungrily to the horizon, and bravely the knight plodded across their thirsty loneliness. Dull forests opened their jaws and the knight shouted his songs into their dusk and danger. Silent rivers rolled their soundless deeps to tempt the knight to the siren's grave, but he scorned, and swam their waves, and stretched his arms on the farther shore. For the knight was young, care free and indifferent.

Then a day came in a still, sweet vale, a day of sunshine and dew. The breath of flowers fled through the sylvan glades, the shadows fluttered on moss and mere. The grace of swaying mead and the musical thrill of darting streams soothed the heart of the bold knight. Birds chirruped in the groves and hedges. Rushing zephyrs, like nymphs at play, tossed the trees and shook

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their leaves merrily. And the knight ceased his course in a fern-clad dell and the dream came.

On a rock of the dell stood the maid of the knight—God's maid for him. Sweet as the breath of twilight, pure as the dawn, steadfast as the moss-strewn rock on which she stood there thrilled into being the knight's dream, the dream of his world life, the sleeping thought of each day, the silver star of his slumbers. It was the knight's dream of love.

And then for many days the maid and the knight dreamed together—dreamed on the hillside, dreamed by the wayside, dreamed by the music of waters, dreamed among flowers, dreamed in sunlight and shadow. Fancies and fairies frisked in the still, sweet vale. Angels whispered across the meadows and their wings caressed the grasses and the leaves and reeds trembled in the ripples of running brooks. And the knight and the maid dreamed their dreams together in pure and perfect happiness.

Then came another day, and the knight awoke. A cloud had darkened between the dream and himself and the dream had vanished. The day was dark with storms, sullen with angry flashes, shouting with the voice of thunder. Moaning winds screamed through the vale. Hurricanes bent the trees and laid low every flower. The waves of the mere frothed in fury. Fearsomely the birds flew away with the fairies and the fancies. The reeds fell weeping into the streams and the angels hid their faces, for doubt, and distrust, and selfishness had marred the dream.

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Wild-eyed the knight fled. Whither, whither had gone the dream—his dream of love and happiness? So late, and he had drunk of its sweetness; so late, and he had whispered its name a thousand times to his heart; so late, and its eternity had held his soul! Maddened, the knight sped away to the cities and the great world.

Deeply he drank of the golden cup of pleasure. Wisely he studied the world's jewels; smilingly he played with the golden things and tossed the jewels for his moment, and bitterly and sadly he gazed at the stars when night led him to his lone tower, and the world saw not. For the dream was not here.

Still another day, and the knight came again to the mountain, the forest, the plains and the rivers. But they had all changed. The pinnacles reached higher into heaven, almost insurmountable, and the knight laughed no more. The forests, tangled and dark, barred the knight's progress and the song died on his lips. The rivers chilled him and he gazed at the farther shore, his arms listless by his side, and turned away. He crossed the plains, but the knight's heart was faint with hunger and thirst, and the plain offered none but bitter waters and herbs. And a burden of sorrow weighed him down hopelessly, wearily, for the dream seemed no more.

And one more day! Hopelessly the knight turned his steps to the dell of his dream, the moss-strewn rock of his romance. Doubting deeply, he sought the still, sweet vale. Again its flowers breathed a welcome; again its shade offered rest to his wearied limbs; again sounded

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the music of stream and fall; again his tired eyes drooped softly, tearfully as they beheld the moss, the mere, the meadows, all joyous and peaceful. Tremblingly and slowly he approached the dream dell.

The knight stood a silent, lone man, lost in his dream memories, hesitating, fearing, returning a step and then onward again as the steadfastness of faith and the smile of hope beckoned him on. On and on stepped the tired, lonely knight, each step a thought, each breath a hope or fear. For the heart of the knight longed for his dream of love again, the dream God gave to him alone, the sweet, innocent dream of long ago—his lost world of happiness!

And there the dell, and there the rock with its moss-strewn surface, and the silence!

Had he come too late?

Suddenly, with his heart full of angry defiance and unbelief, the knight gripped his sword and cried aloud:

"I will not believe! There is no dream for me, no God for me! Oh, God, if there be a God, I defy Thee here and now. Show me Thy might; prove me Thy truth; reveal Thyself, Thou whom the world doubts; Thou whom the priests boast; Thou who hast stolen my dream away! I defy Thee here and now to mortal combat! Come, let us end it all, for you and me!"

Tenderly a glow of light fell on the mossy rock. Its radiance spread like the sunshine on the sea. Purely a form arose above the rock, set in the midst of the glory. Sweetly a smile met the knight's eager eyes and a gentle hand stretched out to aid the trembling hope, the shrink-

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ing faith. As her hand touched the hand of the knight his whole being thrilled with the reality of his dream—God's dream for him.

And then a voice, not of the dream, but a voice drifting from the sun and the dew, the flowers and the stars, breathed across the dream dell:

“God is love!”

THE RENUNCIATION OF FRA SIMONETTA

FRA SIMONETTA! The very name suggested sanctity, holiness, a wonderful life of self-renunciation. And self-renunciation it was, had the world but known. But the world never suspected the pathos of human nature which lay hidden behind the act. So often a fine piece of statuary is lightly passed without thought of the pain or care it cost the sculptor. So the tragedies of life are acted out, secreting the truth beneath smiles and silence, surroundings and change.

Fra Simonetta possessed Celtic and Italian blood in his veins, and this colored his olive cheeks, his soft chestnut hair and his large, dark, expressive eyes. And this, too, accounted for his sudden bursts of passion and strange silences. In him flowed all the artistic instincts and the love of beauty of the Italian, combined with a dour determination and stern self-control altogether Scotch. From his mother he inherited an hauteur which proclaimed his Florentine ancestor of noble birth and high position. His father came of a race born to win and conquer.

Perched on a mountainside, overlooking Loch Tay,

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stood the Castle Mohr. Far beneath it lay the lake like a moonstone in its bower of emerald and amethyst mountains, shimmering beneath skies grim and clouded, with occasional glimpses of blue sky. Sometimes wild storms swept over the loch, leaving it a seething mass of white caps and flying foam. And it lay a mirror, lightly quivering with every breath which descended from the mountain heights.

On every side the pinnacles looked proudly down into the bosom of the lake, giants miraging their eternal pride in its ripples. Ben Lawers, stern and grand, rose high above the others and still loftier Ben Mohr lifted its haughty peak into the clouds. Sometimes when the flower season luxuriated on the levels below, the mountain giants still retained their snowy helmets, sparkling in the sunshine like the mail of long dead chieftains. Myriad mists trailed around the peaks and drifted far into the vales, blending their softness with the massed patches of purple heather, and the purple heather was varied by the thick copsewood creeping down to the water's edge, and the spaces of pastureland, and the sylvan grades. Stealing up the mountainside, the ravines crowded their thickets among the boulders and cliffs and then vanished in the hundred windings and breaks of the mountains, and great gray precipices and jutting rocks and barren marshland contrasted in their dull desolation with the bright, luxuriant green of the woods and the rich amethyst heather of the mountains.

Here on the mountainsides the highland cattle roamed and strayed through the pastures for food, the wild

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grouse sought safety amid the heath and bracken, and in the glens were heard the free melodies of bird and burn, harmonizing the music of tumbling waters and trilling songsters with the lash of the waves below and the sigh of the wind in the trees.

Far down the loch toward the village of Kenmore a green islet nestled on the bosom of the water. Among its trees still crumbled away the ruins of an ancient priory of the twelfth century, lending a touch of romance to the scene.

Of a dreamy nature, Simon Mohr developed in natural surroundings which only intensified his passionate, poetic nature. His father, the elder Simon Mohr, was the wealthy laird of Castle Mohr, a fulsome, high-colored man, given to sudden outbursts of temper, so surly as Scotch skies, outbursts that vanished in months of silent reserve, a nature not unknown in Scotland. Lady Mohr, who had grown up under softer summer skies, was emotional, self-willed and fastidious and devoted to the Roman Catholic faith. So the little Simon Mohr grew up in a varied mental atmosphere, sometimes whirled off his feet by his mother's religious emotionalism, sometimes terrified by his father's fierce outbreaks of temper.

One rare, bright day the sun danced over the ivied turrets and battlements of Castle Mohr, casting freakish shadows into the courtyard below. It stole into the avenue of limes, falling in rays through the branches as it glanced through the stained windows of cathedrals. On the mausoleum, where lay generations of the lairds

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of Castle Mohr, it melted away in softened beams and it poured over the half-dozing Simon as he rested his long limbs on a bank of heather up on the mountainside, drinking in the beauties of the scenery and quoting to himself the fine descriptive lines which Burns wrote over the chimney in the parlor of the inn of Kenmore:

“Here Poesy might wake her heaven-taught lyre,
And look through nature with creative fire;
Here to the wrongs of fate half reconciled——”

How ardently he hoped that he might some day write lines as fine!

But his happy meditations came to an abrupt end as a shower of rowan berries flew about his ears and a voice imitated after him in mocking tones:

“Here to the wrongs of fate half reconciled,
Misfortune’s steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter, rankling wounds;
Here heart-struck Grief——”

And then the sweet, but mock solemn voice broke into a loud, silvery laugh and the voice exclaimed saucily:

“How lugubrious!”

Simon Mohr did not look around, but he knew that a pair of nut-brown eyes, crowned by a mass of shining auburn hair, were peeping at him from behind a cairn, which was not far away, and which also was sheltered by

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a rowan tree only too familiar to himself and to the nut-brown eyes. Simon did not answer, so the voice proceeded:

“Here heart-struck Grief might heavenward stretch her
scan,
And injured Worth——”

“Please don’t, Birksie!” Simon interrupted, a sensitive, half-pained expression coming into his eyes, which quickly passed into one of sternness. Then he did glance around and met the pair of eyes looking merrily and quizzically at him from over the cairn.

“‘And injured Worth forget and pardon!’ That is yourself, Simon, I suppose, quoting poetry on the top of a mountain with no one to appreciate you or it!” And Birksie laughed again.

Simon was silent.

“You lazy, indolent creature!” exclaimed she, coming out from behind the cairn and sitting down on the stump of a larch tree. “What are you doing, wasting these precious hours, snoring on a mountain top?”

“I’m not snoring,” replied Simon, keeping strictly to facts and looking serious.

“Perchance not, lazybones! But you are certainly wasting time quoting poetry to the clouds or to the grouse, or perhaps you were quoting to those great lions over there,” and Birksie pointed mischievously to the long-maned Highland cows which were browsing in a pasture below.

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"I'm not wasting time!" indignantly protested Simon, not overpleased with Birksie's mode of teasing.

"Yes, you are!" insisted the girl.

"No, I'm not!" answered he, very determined.

"You are!"

"I'm not!"

Dead silence. Simon pouted and looked resentful, while Birksie brimmed over with fun and innocence.

"Well, what were you doing, anyway?" she persisted, teasingly.

"Thinking!" abruptly.

"About what?" inquired Birksie.

"You, of course!" sarcastically from Simon.

"Why me 'of course'?" from Birksie, imitating him.

"Because that's what you wanted me to say." And Simon dug his heel into the heather.

"No, I didn't!" protested Birksie.

"Yes, you did."

Silence again.

"You are not very sweet-tempered, Simon."

Silence again.

Simon Mohr hated that kind of teasing.

"Oh, well, I don't care!" exclaimed the offended girl, tossing her head. "I guess Ormelie McAlpin will be more pleasant than you are to-day."

And she made as if she were going to trip away down the mountainside.

Simon assumed a smile, but a thunder cloud gathered inwardly.

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"All right! Give Ormelie my love," said he with affected indifference.

"I won't!" snapped Birksie haughtily.

"Then don't!" laughed Simon.

Silence again.

"Now, who's in a temper?" quizzed Simon.

"It is your fault," said Birksie, feeling much hurt.

Simon shook his head and said nothing.

"I was only teasing you," continued Birksie in an injured tone.

"Queer kind of teasing, I should think," suggested Simon a trifle sarcastically.

"Oh, you don't understand it!" declared the offended girl.

"No!" from Simon with a laugh.

Simon did understand it to a certain degree, but he was not going to give in now.

"Nor do you understand me!" indignantly from Birksie.

"Injured innocence!" put in Simon.

"Well, that is less conceited than 'injured Worth'!" returned she quickly.

Simon's eyes flashed, but they softened a little as they fell on the cairn underneath the rowan tree, which he and Birksie had piled together in declaration of eternal friendship, a sort of Biblical Mizpah.

"You are not very complimentary, Birksie," he said gently.

"I don't care!" from the girl.

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"Think before you speak, little girl!" Simon suggested quietly.

"Thank you!" said Birksie haughtily. "But I'm not asking for advice."

"All right," returned Simon, thinking clouded thoughts of Ormelie McAlpin.

"I am going now," declared Birksie firmly.

"To Ormelie?" inquired Simon, unable to resist a covert effort at scorn.

But Birksie was hurt this time in a woman's unreasonable way, and she walked away, bristling with pride like an offended princess. And Simon gazed after her, his heart in his eyes; if Birksie could only have seen. But it was too late!

How he loved that little auburn-haired girl!

It was partly her fault and partly his, like all youthful lovers' quarrels. They were passionate, proud children these two.

And that was how Ormelie McAlpin first began to play a part in Birksie's life.

Love is a sensitive thing and in its early expression is easily offended. Simon still lay on the bank of heather, stern and self-contained, but albeit with a heavy heart. He watched the little figure disappear in the glens below as Birksie hurried away in the direction of the village of Killin. And as the trees closed behind her and hid the girl from his view he murmured to himself with an odd feeling of presentiment:

“Here to the wrongs of fate half reconciled,
 Misfortune’s lightened steps might wander wild;
 And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
 Find balm to soothe her bitter, rankling wounds;
 Here heart-struck Grief might heavenward stretch her
 scan,
 And injured Worth forget and pardon——”

Simon Mohr hesitated and then he added slowly but firmly: “Woman!”

But this time no Birksie heard him.

Birksie loved Simon with all her heart and soul. But Simon was an odd boy. There were days when he was the essence of silence and so cold. Birksie’s naturally exuberant, loving nature shrank from these tragic silences. They wounded her, she knew not why, and try as she would to pull Simon out of these deep, fathomless seas of silence, it was well nigh impossible at times.

Birksie had not yet learned that Simon Mohr was a poet and needed a poet’s license of silence and quiet, and Simon had yet to learn that Birksie was a great actress in embryo and needed emotional excitement. So practical Ormelie McAlpin, with his mediocre mind and his inability to comprehend anything finely sensitive or poetic beyond his father’s huge wine business, acted as go-between with these two undeveloped, gifted children.

As she wandered through the glens homeward toward Killin, Birksie’s thoughts were sad and lonely ones, sad indeed, but so proud as they were sad. Birksie inherited all the sensitive pride of a noble Scotch family, and

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when her pride was hurt she was almost as unyielding as Simon Mohr himself, unyielding to the point of sacrificing her happiness. Even the dual music of the rivers Lochay and Dochart, as they merrily rushed through the glens and over the mossy rocks on their various ways to the Loch Tay, could not make her forget the melancholy dirge in her own heart. Even the inspiring beauty of lofty peak and wooded crag, and the vast green slopes, and the peace of the far-off crofter's cottage with its lichen-clad walls and its blue-gray smoke curling among sycamore trees, even this sweet peace of all nature could not lessen the war with love in Birksie's soul.

So the afternoon closed on the mountainside and over the glens in a heavily clouded sky, the precursor of a stormy, dark night, and the sun hid away from Birksie and Simon among the mists and the crags.

Seven years later, when Simon had begun to win his laurels in the great world of London, Birksie met him at the salon of a great lady.

Simon Mohr's poetry had created a deep impression in literary circles and he was the lion of the hour, the same curiously silent Simon, with his sudden flashes of humor. The world's gracious reception of himself and his poems had carried Simon off his feet for a while and he was suffering from a painful tendency to conceit as a consequence.

It was a magnificent room where they met. The walls were empaneled with cherry satin and mirrors. The ceiling gleamed a mass of gilt stucco work, surrounding wonderful frescoes of Cupids and Psyche. The air

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drowsed with the fragrance of carnations and lilies. Gay throngs kept passing in and out, and in the distance above the merry hum of human voices could be heard the strains of music and the sounding measures of the dance.

To-night Simon was in one of his proud, silent, unresponsive moods. Of course, Birksie was as radiantly gay, bubbling over with fun and mischief and the joy of life, a happy, innocent girl.

When Simon Mohr entered the room Birksie was standing near the door in a filmy gown of palest yellow, a bunch of rowan berries nestling at her bosom and a few peeping among the restless curls of her dark auburn hair. Birksie was watching for the poet, had he but known! And she gave him a glowing smile, bright enough to have encouraged any ordinary man. But Simon was made of a different mold from the average and acted accordingly. He returned Birksie's smile with a cold bow. After a little chat with his hostess, he drifted across the room to an alcove filled with palms and softened lights, where he stood silently gazing out over Hyde Park.

Pray, what was Birksie to do?

Birksie watched him a moment, and then divining his mood, started to flirt irrepressibly with Ormelie McAlphin, who was also a guest of the evening. The latter, not averse to such excitement with so beautiful a woman, with her soft, nut-brown eyes, responded freely and a trifle carelessly. Birksie, haughty and mischievous, was bent on annoying the poet. As for Ormelie McAlphin, he

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was thoroughly indifferent as to her reason for flirting; but as thoroughly enamored of her beauty.

Simon's eyes wandered among the trees of the park, watching the sleepy flicker of the many lights. Then they sought the thoroughfare below, where busses and hansoms clattered past and motors flashed by. A few pedestrians appeared and vanished into the darkness of night, like rats seeking their holes, some glancing up at the lighted windows of the stone mansion and stopping to listen to the music and the dancing, curious or envious. Simon's thoughts were in the Highlands, up on the mountainside by the cairn he and Birksie had piled together in the sweet days of long ago. Again he saw the rowan tree, massed with blood-red berries, and felt the heather beneath his feet. Again he heard the melody of burn and bird and smelt the distilled fragrance of the heath, the bracken and the firs. Again the wondrous wooded scene lay before him:

"Th' outstretching lake, embosomed 'mong the hills."

And then Birksie's mocking laugh broke upon his ears and the voice of Ormelie McAlpin.

A stern expression came into Simon's gray-blue eyes, and he repeated under his breath in a whispered tone of passionate feeling:

"Here to the wrongs of fate half reconciled,
Misfortune's lightened steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment——"

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He broke off abruptly, angrily, the color mounting hotly to his face, his hands clenched hard, and, turning on his heel, he sought the ballroom and Birksie.

Though his soul was full of passionate rebellion, outwardly he was the same evenly poised, self-contained Simon Mohr.

Birksie had danced several times with Ormelie Mc-Alpin and had promised herself for supper with him when Simon came quietly, silently to her and asked for a dance.

"Certainly! How many?" she asked, thrilling at his very presence.

"Oh, a couple," said Simon Mohr coolly.

Even yet Simon Mohr would have slain himself with his own jeweled dirk before he would have given in to Birksie or let her know how passionately he loved her. He would have hidden his jealousy under his claymore rather than she should ever know the regret her loss might mean to him.

Birksie's eyes flashed with sudden fire at his cold answer. She had kept several for him, but quickly consulting her program, she replied, restraining herself bravely, for she felt inclined to cry with disappointment:

"I am so sorry, Simon, but I only have one left."

"Only one?" he inquired gravely.

"Only one," she responded, biting her lip on the little fib.

"And how many have you given to Ormelie?" with a forced smile asked Simon.

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"As many as he asked for!" came Birksie's quick reply, challenging him with her saucy nut-brown eyes.

"Your program otherwise?" interrupted Simon with an inscrutable Scotch smile.

Birksie maintained a haughty silence.

"You seem very fond of Ormelie McAlpin," Simon suggested, curling his lip a little.

"And what if I am?" exclaimed Birksie, tossing her head saucily.

"All right," Simon answered with assumed indifference.

"Well, and why should you care?" laughed Birksie, a heartache behind the question.

"I don't care!" he returned. And Simon Mohr could use that phrase in a way that would have frozen the heart of a statue, much less such a sensitive one as Birksie's.

"Oh, is that so?" commented Birksie rather painfully.

Silence again, but Simon knew that he had hurt her. He had a deliberate way of doing such things, a contrast to Birksie's sudden, warm, sometimes erratic, impulses.

"What makes you so interested in Ormelie McAlpin?" she asked presently with apparent lightness.

"A brotherly interest, Birksie."

"Really! How kind of you, Simon!" with a sudder lifting of her eyebrows.

Silence again, the poet keeping a sphinx-like poise, balanced and cool, the woman quivering from a fresh wound which she bravely hid.

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"You are an awful little flirt, Birksie!" said he suddenly.

"From your point of view, I suppose I am." And she fanned herself to keep down her rising resentment.

"Every one says that you are," remarked Simon Mohr, glancing at her beauty with cold eyes.

"And, of course, you believe every one! The majority have always been right since the world began," said Birksie with a touch of sarcasm, adding quietly, "If I have ever been a flirt, it has been unconsciously. I don't talk love to men. If they like me, it is because I talk sense to them, and most girls talk nonsense. But, of course, if the world says that I am a flirt, the world must be right. Is that why you call me fascinating?"

"You certainly are fascinating, little girl, but you use your fascination oddly at times."

"Not to your liking?" queried Birksie with a smile.

"And pray what is wrong?"

"Ask Ormelie. He is your best critic," remarked Simon coldly.

"I will!" exclaimed Birksie, her eyes sparkling strangely.

Simon Mohr and Birksie were not exactly betrothed, but it was understood that they were meant for one another and would some day marry. The laird of Castle Mohr treated it as a settled matter, likewise Birksie's relations. But one never knows what a sensitive, emotional girl will do or a silent, passionate man will act on a given occasion.

Birksie and Simon Mohr thoroughly loved one an-

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other and as thoroughly misunderstood each other, which sometimes does happen between different temperaments in this complex life. The silence and coldness of Simon Mohr were just as painful to Birksie as her exuberance and enthusiasm were annoying to Simon. And both were Scotchly proud.

"So you think that Ormelie McAlpin is my best critic?" queried Birksie with a disdainful flash of her nut-brown eyes.

"And why not?" rejoined Simon in his matter-of-fact way.

"Why not, indeed!" laughed Birksie. "He has known me long enough."

Simon shrugged his broad shoulders.

"All's well that ends well," said he.

"Thanks!" curtly from Birksie.

Silence again.

Birksie tapped her fan on her cheek and turned her head away to hide the tears which would come unbidden to her eyes, while Simon stole a glance at the lovely woman beside him and for the first time noticed the rowan berries in her auburn hair and trembling at her bosom.

"I don't think you understand me, little girl," he said gently, his thoughts flying back to the rowan tree by the cairn and the day they quarreled there.

"Nor you me!" flashed Birksie defiantly.

"Well, if you understood me, that——" began Simon.

"That would facilitate matters for you," interrupted Birksie. "Yes, certainly! And how about me?"

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Simon Mohr laughed in spite of himself.

"Men never understand women, and, least of all, their women friends," he answered humorously. "It is not necessary."

"That may be a rule," returned Birksie, biting her lip painfully, "but there are exceptions."

"Meaning yourself?" politely sarcastic from Simon.

Birksie ignored his remark, and spying Ormelie McAlpin across the room, exclaimed with affected exuberance:

"There is Ormelie! Looking for me, I suppose."

"And welcome, too!" flashed Simon Mohr so suddenly that Birksie was astonished.

"Thank you," she returned icily, and turning away to welcome Ormelie with a gay smile, she added, her nut-brown eyes on fire, "You will live to regret your rudeness, Simon!"

To which threat Simon, whose self-control had returned as quickly as his anger had burst out, merely lifted his shoulders and departed. But there was a dark storm in his heart despite his seeming calm.

And that was how Ormelie McAlpin and Birksie eventually became engaged and married, one result of which change in her life was that Simon Mohr left Scotland for some years and no one heard of him or saw him during that time.

Five years passed. Birksie was learning the sad lesson of the rebound of one's actions. She was not married long before the full and bitter truth of life without love broke in upon her roughly, cruelly. It is true, indeed,

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that Ormelie loved her beauty well, but he cared not a whit for her otherwise. He was satiated with his wealth and the luxurious pleasures it gave him. Love had no place in his life.

Poor Birksie!

No little child came into her life to soften the lonely hours of suffering. Even the cold, silent poet had seemed to care more for her than Ormelie. Did Simon care? She often wondered. So Birksie proudly isolated herself from the world around her and no one read the heart of the woman aright.

No, Simon never cared, she was certain of that. He had long since gone away to Italy, and doubtless his life was so full of the pleasures he loved, poetry and scenery, that he had completely forgotten his little Scotch friend of long ago.

And Simon Mohr?

With his mother's strong religious vein, he had joined a brotherhood in Italy and signed the vows of celibacy a year after Birksie's wedding. His passionate, poetic nature had found a certain vent in the ascetic life of the Monastery of Santo Spirito and in the lovely scenery which environed it.

Santo Spirito, with its background of stately, somber pines, was built on the edge of a declivity. Below it sloped away the terraces of olive trees and beyond their soft gray-green spread the grape vines and the flower-sweet meadows. Pilgrims sought the monastery for the sake of the sacred waters, which gushed in refreshing rills from a rock hidden among cypress trees. The water

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tumbled in silvery clearness over the ledge and into a marble basin, where pilgrims drank of it freely.

Simon Mohr had sought a spot which would remind him in some way of his highland home. From the Monastery of Santo Spirito he could see the summits of the Carrara Range, sometimes softened with clouds and ever changing with the skies. No lake spread its mirage of woods and heights in the valley like

“Th’ outstretching lake, embosomed ’mong the hills.”

But the River Arno wound its way into the distance and vanished, a ribbon of silvery light, into the violet mists.

All through the warm months the air was fragrant of flowers; flowers by the wayside among the tangled vines; flowers starring the meadows in reckless luxuriance; flowers clouding the orchards, wreathing them in pink and white.

Here Simon Mohr suffered—that is, suffered at times. Strong, silent natures like his have a fine power of throwing off their sorrows and burying them in forgetfulness for a while. When such natures break out it is a barrier which has held back the sea. For the time being the overthrow of their bulwarks is like the flooding of the land.

Fra Simonetta could lose himself in the beauty of his environment or in the ecstasy of his creative power, but sometimes at eventide would come the old longing for Birksie when the monastery bells rang out, thrilling through the darkening cloisters, and chiming far into the

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Val d'Arno, and over the hillsides, echoing and re-echoing, and dying in a melodious sigh. The voices of the vesper bells! They seemed to be a cry from his soul to Birksie's, the awakening to the dream he had lost. Fra Simonetta sorrowed in the twilight for the dawn which had passed forever from him.

The next news which reached Fra Simonetta was the death of Ormelie McAlpin and then the marvelous success of Birksie as an actress.

Birksie, with resolution akin to Fra Simonetta's, sought respite from her private sorrows by living through the joys and sorrows of others on the stage. And the tragedy of her own lot gave her the splendid emotional power which was amazing the world of London.

Birksie! Birksie, a wonderful actress! Fra Simonetta could scarce believe it.

The little girl, Birksie, whom he had known, with her coronal of auburn hair and her mischievous, nut-brown eyes! Birksie, with her ardent, enthusiastic temperament! Birksie, who chattered so, who teased him so in the sweet long ago!

Why, yes, he might have suspected it years ago. Yes, had he been less in love with himself, he might have known!

Fra Simonetta begged leave of the fathers to go on a private mission to London. To London, what for? To witness Birksie at the zenith of her triumphs.

And what a night of dreams and wonders he stole from his vows to witness his beloved Birksie!

RENUNCIATION OF FRA SIMONETTA 113

Birksie! Oh, God! Never to speak to her again! Never to know her! Never to feel the wondrous thrill of her bright presence as in the long ago sunny days! Never to tell her of his passionate devotion! Never——

Silently Fra Simonetta stole out of the theater. He knew not the play. It was only Birksie, Birksie with her radiant auburn hair and great gazelle eyes appealing to him from the stage, unknowing. Lonely, hungry Fra Simonetta!

The Italian blood, which he had inherited from his religious mother, fought against the Celtic, silent passion. All the religion, false it may be, of his ancestors, battled against the woman, Birksie. And Fra Simonetta slipped away from London to the Monastery of Santo Spirito to fight for months with his passionate love for Birksie and conquer at last!

And Birksie?

Birksie lived on, believing Simon Mohr a cold, selfish man, a man of supreme forgetfulness.

Birksie never knew how bitter were the months Fra Simonetta lived through after his return from London to the Monastery of Santo Spirito. No, she never knew the dull, biting remorse that harrowed his days, remorse that comes too late! Alas! and she never knew of his passionate man-hunger for the woman of his heart! But self—pride! It was the old, old story. Alas!

So Birksie never knew of the renunciation of Fra Simonetta in the Monastery of Santo Spirito in the Val d'Arno, far off in the land of Italy.

* * * * *

114 RENUNCIATION OF FRA SIMONETTA

Years afterward, when the glorious auburn hair was turning to silver and the rowan berries still nestled among its tangled curls, Birksie received a tiny gold cross, delivered to her by a brother of the Monastery of Santo Spirito. On one side of it was the figure of the crucified Christ on the other was chased a word:

“Birksie!”

And an unfinished line of poetry:

“Here to the wrongs of fate half reconciled——”

MIRABELLE

It was to be a great night of grand opera in London. The famous tenor, Henri Dubois, was to sing. By one big jump had this unknown man leaped into fame.

In a small village of France he had been born. Later on his family had emigrated to London and one day a passerby had heard *le petit* Henri singing at the pitch of his lungs from the top of a stone wall. A marvelously sweet voice had *le petit* Henri! A voice of wonderful compass, and of ringing soul-inspiring sound.

Then came the long days of careful study and devoted work. And many sweet days of love and ambition. And Henri was ready to make his debut.

Henri and Mirabelle had grown up in the same alley. Henri with the soul and gift of expression; Mirabelle with the soul alone, but not the expression. Music blended their natures in one. And Mirabelle listened enraptured to Henri's warbling. When the passerby started Henri at his studies, and supplied the necessary funds, Mirabelle daily urged him on with his work; encouraging, cheering, helping him. And the great night had come at last!

With what hopes and fears they had anticipated this

night. Indeed, Mirabelle trembled at the thought of its meaning to her and to Henri. And at times a strange dread came over her. They grew out of a merry childhood into a happy youth. Henri came down from his carolling on the stone wall, to study scales and the art of breathing. And Mirabelle left her skipping rope to learn how to dance. But these years of perseverance and patience had been full of the sunshine of love. A great love that was to fulfill its dearest hopes with the success of this night. It seemed almost too wonderful a realization of human dreams.

Mirabelle had dreaded it; but the great night had come at last!

The theater was crowded. Hundreds of grand ladies in silks and diamonds occupied the boxes and orchestra chairs, with the easy coolness of the blase theatergoer. Hundreds of maidens with fluttering hearts and blushing cheeks, eagerly anticipated the entrance of the handsome and youthful artist. And hundreds of men laughed and talked in the vestibule, awaiting the event of the evening. For the coming debut of Henri Dubois had been bruited by the newspapers. And his wondrous gift and handsome personality had fled on the wings of gossip.

Behind the curtains of a box Mirabelle shyly hid; her dark eyes sparkling with wonder, delight and expectancy. Never before had she been in a theater; it was fairyland to her. Mirabelle had developed into a lovely woman; a woman of alluring witchery. Her beauty lay more in the charm and grace of her manner and

expression, rather than the perfection of feature and of form. She, too, would make a debut soon; but as a dancer in vaudeville. The same loving Mirabelle still; devoted to Henri; lost in Henri; forgetful of her own hopes of success in the midst of Henri's coming fame. Yet Mirabelle trembled on the verge of his triumph.

It was the beautiful opera of Lohengrin that dazzled the eyes and fascinated the ears of the audience. And smoothly it passed on the stage. And gloriously Henri sang, thrilling his hearers with his melodious voice. Fully and richly it resounded in the theater. Its joy and its pathos echoed in Mirabelle's heart. The people were wild with enthusiasm. Again and again Henri was called upon the stage and the uproar of clapping hands was like a roll of thunder.

The last act was reached. Henri had excelled Mirabelle's highest hopes. His blue eyes were ablaze with happiness; his cheeks were flushed with the triumph; his slender frame vibrated as his soul soared in song to other spheres. The last scene was being enacted. Lohengrin was in the midst of his last wondrous song, when suddenly his voice broke, and the fair young singer fell dead. The melodious voice had ceased forever.

One wild cry burst from Mirabelle. She rushed from her box to the stage; something gripping her heart with an iron hand. The curtain came quickly down. And the audience, horror-struck, slowly left the theater.

"Henri! Henri, dearest!" moaned poor Mirabelle,

as she bent over the dead man, and tearlessly kissed his lips.

"Heart failure," murmured a physician, who had hurried from the stalls. "Too slender a frame for so great a voice; too great a triumph for so gentle a heart. I never heard anything like his singing in my life." And he laid the pulseless hand down.

Quietly was the body of Henri Dubois removed. And two days later a great funeral left his humble home. Many famous artists and many of the audience who had witnessed his triumph followed, to pay a last tribute to so great a singer.

Some years passed and Mirabelle danced in vaudeville, danced her sorrow away, danced wildly, recklessly. But Mirabelle kept to herself. Devoted admirers followed her everywhere. Mirabelle, the beauty of London! Mirabelle, the dancer of the age! London was at her feet. She had danced the phantom into the past. Wealth and the world were hers to bid as she pleased, with the witchery of her graces and her manners. And her dainty feet skipped beyond everyone.

And then one night at a great ball Mirabelle met a great earl. He fell in love with her, as every man had who had met her. And days of courtship followed. Mirabelle hid from the memory of Henri Dubois; buried it deep in her soul. And the earl progressed in his love. She fancied him; but did not love him. Of her stage life she was wearied, and longed for rest. It was a lonely existence, and she wearied of her efforts and the world's applause. She was worn out holding off

the many admirers who besieged her. For Mirabelle had kept alone; aloof from all men. She never asked herself the reason why; she had done it instinctively ever since the night of Lohengrin.

Tired and sick of it all, Mirabelle had decided to marry the earl, if he proposed.

One night there was a grand ball in the Hotel Cecil, in the Victoria Hall. A blaze of lights fell over the frescoes and the gilding. A small forest of palms hid the orchestra on the dais. A splash of color filled the ballroom, as the numerous guests arrived. And in a large room, opening at one side, was heard the clink of glasses and china, as the waiters hurriedly made ready the supper tables.

The dancing was at its height of activity when Mirabelle and the earl wandered away to a quiet corner, where they could be alone. They seated themselves among the palms, with the soft lights shining down upon them. Mirabelle was radiant in a gown of cerise satin; her great brown eyes flaming with subdued excitement; her dark hair gleaming in the softened glow; her heart beating high with the ecstatic joy of living. The earl sat beside her on the lounge, bewitched.

"Mirabelle!" he murmured, taking one of her long white hands in his.

"Well!" she smiled back at him.

"I have waited long for this moment, dearest!" he said softly.

"Why?" asked Mirabelle saucily.

"You have kept me off by your own sweet will. And

you know it, too!" he returned, lifting the beautiful hand to his lips.

Mirabelle was silent; crushing a memory of Long Ago.

"I love you, Mirabelle!" The earl leaned toward her, breathed upon her, and Mirabelle turned her head to him. Her eyes were burning, indeed, and her bosom heaving; but Mirabelle was battling with Fate.

"I love you! Mirabelle! Dearest!" he whispered, catching her in his arms, and crushing his lips on hers. "Mirabelle! Mirabelle! I love you, love you!"

And then stealing among the palms, gliding ghostlike among the softened lights, came sweet strains of music; music full of joy and triumph; music full of memory, of love, and pain. The orchestra was playing Lohengrin.

And Mirabelle, flinging off the earl's embrace, fled.

She fled through the ballroom and away. Rapidly throwing on her long, dark cloak, and a scarf, she flew as if winged down the broad marble stairways and out of the Hotel Cecil. Madly she rushed along the streets, on and on, and on; careless of the passerby; reckless of comment; wildly struggling with the love of Long Ago. She recked not of consequences. Determinedly she sought London Bridge. On through the alleyways and dark, lonely streets she hurried. On and on! The broad, black river seemed a heaven in her eyes; a heaven of peace and rest after all these years of pain and battle. And its waters would tell no tale.

And then London Bridge at last! How quiet the Thames looked as it flowed in sleep beneath her! How

invitingly cool to the fever in her heart! One leap into its slumbering arms, and all would be over. And then rest! Rest after all these sore, silent years. A few bubbles would come and go and mark where she had slipped into Eternity forever! And Henri!

"Henri! Henri, dearest! I love you still! Heart of mine, I love you so!" thrilled in a whispered cry from the woman's aching heart.

Mirabelle leaned over the parapet and gazed into the dull ripples. It was so quiet on the bridge. Only a rare passenger crossed at this lone hour. In the darkness lurked a few beings, desolate like herself. Miserable creatures, as wretched and lonely as she! Mirabelle, the famous dancer, but unloved and unloving in the big world! For the Dream of Long Ago denied her all things; all things of joy in life. God! Would it never end!

Mirabelle slowly crossed, and recrossed the bridge. One groveling man, observing her beautiful clothes, begged a pittance, and she recklessly gave him a diamond ring. With a horrible chuckle, the man made off rapidly. A wild-eyed girl, whimpering and threadbare, begged sympathy, and Mirabelle drew the silken scarf from her neck and gave it to her. And the girl, with a burst of gratitude, hurried away into the night.

And then a lonely, hungry cry broke on Mirabelle's ears. And she quickly approached a dark corner of London Bridge. A pair of frightened blue eyes peered up at her; little golden curls appealed timidly to Mira-

belle. And a memory of Long Ago came back; a pair of blue eyes and a shower of flaxen curls, but Henri's.

Mirabelle stooped and gathered the deserted baby to her breast.

"Mine!" she murmured tenderly. "Mine!"

And she kissed the little one softly and wrapped it in her cloak. Quickly she retraced her steps across London Bridge. Softly she called to a hansom. And sadly, but wistfully, she turned homeward to her grand apartments. She stole into her rooms, and laid the baby on her bed. And Mirabelle, the dancer of London, in her splendid cerise gown, undressed the baby, gave it a little supper and tucked it into her luxurious bed!

And there all night she watched by the bedside. And there at dawn her French maid found her sound asleep, and the baby! And the servants marveled.

No more was Mirabelle heard of in vaudeville. No more was she heard of in London. And the earl never saw her again. Mysteriously she disappeared. And the world marveled at Mirabelle's madness.

But the villagers in a little hamlet far away marvelled that so dark a mother had so fair a son. And they wondered at her devotion to "Le Petit Henri"; for so he was named in the village.

THE KNELI, OF NAT PAGAN

ELSPETH was right, and it was a foreboding. But had it not come true, Elspeth would have been declared insane, had the neighbors heard the whole story. The fisherfolk would have thought her possessed of the evil eye, and called her a witch. As it was, nobody knew anything about it. And nobody was to know. For death sealed the only lips that could tell, and thus stopped criticism, and also fulfilled Elspeth's darkest terrors.

It was March. The equinoctial gales were at their worst. For some days off the coast of Scotland the winds had been very rough. The roar of the breakers boomed a roll of thunder as they tumbled and splashed among the rocks and boulders in a long line of writhing surge. They pounded on the sands. They dashed against the cliffs in a white fury, like maddened horses. They rushed back, only to charge again with renewed rage, and the spray showered the cliffs for many feet upward. Angry clouds drove fiercely across the sky. Flaring sunsets lowered over the sea, spattering wild colors on every white cap. And the fisherfolk watched anxiously from their huts upon the beach.

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Near the village stood the Manor, the home of Captain Pagan. It occupied an eminence looking over the fishermen's huts, and out to the sea beyond.

For many miles the coast stretched, fading into the distance; jutting with promontories, steep with precipices, receding with coves and bays; varied by sparse groves of trees, and the rich green of the level lands. Points and peaks and indentations, so far as the eye could reach, ever outlined against heavy gray skies; sometimes reflecting the gold and crimson of sunrise and sunset. But rarely did the coast shine clear below the sunshine and blue skies.

Below the cliffs snuggled the fishing village, straggling up a slope. Beyond it extended the beach. The tide rose high and then fell away a hundred feet or more. With the ebb of the tide the waves rolled in to the foot of the precipices, and very near to the fishermen's cottages. With its flow it left a strand of golden sand, and the scattered stones and boulders sheathed with moss or hanging with seaweed.

Captain Nat Pagan received word from his employers that his vessel, the "Parthenope," would sail in two days. The Captain was a true blue, and a born sailor. A word from his employers was equal to a command. He never hesitated in obeying orders under any circumstances or in any weather. The sea he loved. And he was as fearless on land as on water. Indeed, he feared a pirate less than a highwayman. The sea is open and free. Sooner or later comes the warning of the approach of a pirate.

"But those land lubbers!" the Captain would exclaim. "They will hide behind a bush, or sneak around a hedge, or jump from behind a fence, pop their guns, and away goes your cargo, watch—valuables, and all. You're lucky if you escape with your hulk!"

The Captain told his wife of his coming departure. The order had come sooner than she expected. Indeed, without knowing why, Elspeth had been secretly dreading the Captain's next voyage. Never had she made any remark, and, least of all, any fuss when the orders came. But Elspeth was greatly distressed this time. For the first time she dared to beg him not to go, pleading the equinoctial gales.

The coasts of England and Scotland had been strewn with wrecks within the last week. Along the shore for miles were thrown up from the sea broken spars, torn sails, wreckage, and dead bodies; vestiges of the wild hurricanes which had shaken the seas.

With Captain Nat Pagan pleading was in vain. He was obdurate. His command had come, and he was bound in duty to obey. To obey headquarters was second nature to the Captain. Obedience to his commanders, as he called his employers, held sway over him next to his intense love of the sea. He was as determined to go as Elspeth was fearful of his going. So it ended as most domestic arguments do; in nothing gained or lost. The Captain was going.

The Manor was embowered in trees. The groves guarded it from the blustering attacks of the winds.

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Small matter how terrible a storm raged, the Manor was sheltered and secure.

The night before the Parthenope sailed a strong gale was blowing off the sea. In the Manor all was cosy and warm. A great fire of logs blazed on the library hearth. Elspeth sewed by the evening lamp. The children lay safely tucked into their beds, and the Captain was upstairs finishing his packing preparatory to his departure next morning.

The maids had gone to the village. Elspeth sat alone in the library. While she thus sat, worrying about her husband's anticipated voyage, a loud knock rapped on the hall door. Elspeth arose and answered the summons. No one was there. A puff of wind nearly blew out the light in the hall. She heard the distant roar of the breakers, beating on the sands and rocks. And Elspeth stared into the darkness with surprise, and then returned to the library.

Elspeth had not been seated long before the strange knock sounded again, softer this time. She opened the solid oaken door to be again amazed at seeing no one on the threshold. The lights of the village gleamed among the leaves, as the wind swayed and tossed the trees. In the angry gloom of the storm, she saw the white surf far below, darting among the crags like the wraiths of the many who slept among the waves. Elspeth lingered a moment out of curiosity, and then swung the door to.

Once more Elspeth returned to the library. But the uncanny knock had disturbed her. To distract her

thoughts, she picked up a newspaper. 'Twas full of accounts of the wrecks which had occurred along the coasts, and of the tempests at sea. Her fear increased. How could she overcome this feeling of approaching disaster? And if the future did hold trouble, how was she to prevent it?

Captain Pagan was a prosaic, practical man. He would scorn Elspeth's presentiment as fear; if not actually cowardice. Cowardice! The very reason to keep him stubborn and down in resisting her arguments and forebodings. Dread of a storm at sea! He, a sailor, to be afraid of anything! A hurricane at sea! He would laugh at the idea. Why, the sea was his life, his love, his duty, his work, even his home. Elspeth shrank from broaching the subject. Yet had she not an apprehension of coming evil? Was it not a warning? And should she not listen and do what she could to hinder what she feared?

Again the knock! Rapping loud and clear.

Elspeth started. And then called her husband.

"Well! What do you want, dear?" demanded the Captain.

Elspeth answered:

"I've heard a knock at the hall door three times. I've gone twice, and there isn't a soul outside."

"I suppose the boys of the village are up to their usual pranks. They know I'm good-natured, like all sailors. But I'll fix 'em!"

And down the stairs hurried the Captain.

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"I'll hide in the shrubbery and watch," said he, smiling good-humoredly.

And the Captain bustled into the library, and out of a French window.

For some time he stayed outside. Nothing happened and no one appeared. Thoroughly satisfied that it had been either a practical joke, or his wife's imagination, he returned to the house as Elspeth opened the door.

"Are you there, Nat?" she called softly.

"Aye, aye," replied the Captain, slipping out from the shrubbery.

"Did anything happen?" asked Elspeth, composedly.

"Nothing to interest or frighten me," returned the Captain coolly.

"Why, dear, the knock has sounded thrice since you've been out there among the bushes; noisy knocks, too!" and Elspeth uttered a laugh. "I came to see if you were playing a joke on me."

The Captain looked rather bewildered at this.

"I haven't been near the door. Are you sure you heard the knocks?" he asked.

"So sure that I came in answer to them, suspecting that you were up to a bit of fun, just to cheer me up to-night."

"Nay! Not I!" said he, shrugging his broad shoulders.

The Captain's love of fun was a large part of his character. And as Elspeth laughed, he could hardly accuse her of an excited imagination. Apparently, she

was in a mood for fun. So the Captain wisely or unwisely said nothing.

Poor Elspeth! With no ground on which to stand, she could neither protest nor argue. And, as an argument, fear was out of the question. And love? Well, Nat Pagan would say that he loved her, all right; but that he must do his duty. And with him, duty mostly came before love. It had been trained into him from his boyhood, and so it must be to the end.

Elseph did not sleep that night. The gale had developed into a hurricane. The thunder of the surf and the thud of the billows against the erags beat into her brain. The ghostly foam, in the darkness, rose before her, like wandering spectres, hopeless, despairing. Great breakers seemed to be plunging over their bodies, as the Captain and she lay quietly in bed. The stories of the wrecks she had read about, pictured themselves in her mind so distinctly, so terribly, as if she had beheld them with her own eyes. And white dead faces, ghastly and silent, stared at her out of the obscurity, the horror of the night. Battered spars, like human lives cut short, heaved on the bosom of the tempest-tossed sea. Cries of agony shrieked with the wind. And there in the midst of the sullenness of the sea, and the sorrow of the storm, a huge black hulk, like the God-forsaken Flying Dutchman, towered above the ocean billows, the seething foam, and came diving toward her.

On and on it came! swaying and trembling; plunging as the sea pounded its bulwarks and broke over

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its decks. And out of the night and the terror clanged the bell-buoy like a knell. Tolling! Tolling a warning to the living! Tolling! Tolling the departure of human souls!

Rap! Rap! Rap! The knocks again!

Elspeth suppressed a scream.

The Captain drowsily opened his eyes.

"What's the trouble? Nightmare?" asked he in sleepy tones.

"No! 'Twas nothing!" shuddered Elspeth.

"The storm has made you nervous, dear," remarked Captain Nat.

"No, no! Not nervous!"

And Elspeth slipped out of bed and hurried to the window, watching the tempest of wind that whirled among the trees, and out on the turbid ocean.

"Well! What's the matter now?" demanded the Captain, rather annoyed, and sitting up in bed.

"I'm only anxious," pleaded Elspeth timidly.

"Anxious! Anxious about what?" inquired Captain Pagan, exasperated at being wakened out of a good sleep.

"Oh! How I wish you would postpone your voyage!" begged poor Elspeth.

"Postpone my voyage!" exclaimed Captain Nat Pagan, amazed at the suggestion, and almost angry. "Nonsense!"

"Wait till these hurricanes are past! They will soon be over now. I'm certain your employers would not mind waiting a few days more or less."

And Elspeth's baby-like face was wet with tears.

But the Captain's pride and indignation rose.

"Stuff!" he exclaimed. "You mustn't think of it for a minute. I would not ask them to wait. As for a hurricane! I'm a sailor. My ship has breasted a hundred gales and tempests as bad as this. Surely the wife of a sailor wouldn't be a coward!"

Elspeth was silenced.

The Captain rolled over on his side, and was soon snoring contentedly.

Poor Elspeth! What dark visions flashed before her inward sight! Every moment she was tortured by fear and anxiety, like demons of Hades. And how the wind howled around the Manor!

Rap! Rap! Rap! There they were once more. Would they never cease!

A jagged streak of lightning darted across the clouds and lit the room as brightly as day.

Elspeth gave a cry.

Captain Nat Pagan awoke, irritated at having his sleep again disturbed.

"What on earth is ailing you?" groaned the Captain, provoked. "You start at the least sound. Imagination or nerves, dear?"

"I do feel miserable," said Elspeth timidly. "Do light a candle!"

The Captain arose, somewhat unwillingly, lit a candle and placed it beside her on a table.

"I can't sleep, Nat. I'm so wretched!" cried Elspeth. "You can call me a coward if you will; you may

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say it is imagination if you like; you may laugh at the knocks as a joke, and scorn them as nerves; but I know! I know! Nat, dear, don't go on this voyage! I feel terrible things about it. 'Think of the children! Think of me!'

And, womanlike, Elspeth burst into tears.

Captain Pagan was overwhelmed by the tears; but not by the arguments. He comforted her in his big-hearted way, and dried her tears. For the rest of the night he sat beside her and did his best to cheer her.

But it was in vain!

Elspeth, with her round blue eyes full of tears, and her full, sweet lips trembling, still pleaded her cause. And the Captain still remained like adamant.

Elspeth maintained her ground from feeling, from love, and anxiety, apparently without reason or sense. And the Captain grew more determined. He held by his will, sheer obstinacy. He held by a man's pride, and a sailor's absolute fearlessness. So these two, bound so close together, remained far apart on the subject of to-morrow's sailing.

For the first time the sea was an abyss between them. Courage and duty were on one side of it; love and fear on the other. No bridge crossed to unite them. An event of human life and feeling, which has been enacted a million times since the world began.

Next morning the Captain bade farewell to Elspeth and the children. The storm had lessened. The wind had fallen. The sun arose clear, warm and bright; sparkling out over the sea, and shining on the wet

grass and drooping foliage of the trees. Captain Pagan bade his wife an affectionate good-by, and although neither of them mentioned the subject of last night's discussion, it remained in their hearts and minds. The Captain tried to inspire her with hope and courage by his words and caresses. And Elspeth felt his sympathy and kindness, reciprocating with her love and her faith in him.

But dread of the future did not sleep. After her husband had gone the brood of anxious thoughts and harrowing fears returned in greater force, and with less resistance. Elspeth was alone.

That evening the sun went down in a wild sea of fiery red clouds. The whole sky was ablaze. Banks of flaming clouds piled on one another, as they heavily ploughed across the sky. The sun showered over the ocean a million sparks of light, and licked every billow with a tongue of fire. The ruddy glow flared on every cap of seafoam. As the surf crashed on the beach it flashed with the tumultuous red of the setting sun. And the cliffs and sands reflected the angry hues, as if alive with the same fire. It boded ill for the night.

And that night a terrible tempest burst over land and sea. The hurricane of wind lashed the waves into fury, and flung volleys of foam against the precipices and crags. It crested the rocks and filled the clefts with a maddened froth, like lions at bay. The billows heaped one on another, and plunged and tumbled with a mighty crash over the sands. They flowed back, and

rushed furiously at the breastworks of safety, regiment after regiment of hungry, growling waves. They dashed into the huts of the fisherfolk. And the fishermen sought refuge in places of security.

On the far side of the village from the cliff's head shone out sharp and steady the beacon light. Away on the reef, now hidden beneath the snowy manes of the lions of the sea, the melancholy, monotonous clang of the bell-buoy rang out its note of alarm. Lights moved up and down the village, and along the coast, like restless spirits seeking to aid those in danger and distress. On a night like this the village never slept.

And the tolling of the bell on the reef boomed long and mournfully. Tolling! Tolling a warning to the living! Tolling! Tolling the departure of human souls!

Elsbeth looked from her bedroom window. Elspeth saw it all. All night the light burned in her room. Sleep had deserted her. The power of the elements, the terror of the tempest, had entered her soul. Yet she knew that God was behind it all, and that she had no need to fear what He allowed.

How the clouds raced across the sky! Surly and threatening! How the wind screamed and rushed through the trees! And the foreboding of evil, how it tormented her! Who was warning her? Who, if not God? What was the meaning, the reason of this torture of fear and dread?

"God help me!" she cried in her misery and terror. Poor, struggling human soul! God is still greater

than we. "His ways are not our ways; nor are His thoughts our thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways." And Elspeth was learning Gods' immutable and irrevocable truth.

Next day the storm continued. Every hour news came up to the Manor from the village of the various pieces of wreckage washed up on the beach. The children were kept at home. But Elspeth haunted the streets of the village, the fishermen's huts on the beach, and the coast-guard on the cliff. She questioned no one, spoke to no one. But death stared up at her from the wild ocean, weird and hopelessly.

God is merciful! And God was merciful to her.

Elspeth passed like a ghost among the villagers. When the shadows of evening gathered over the fishermen's huts she slipped away to the Manor on the hill. That night Elspeth became very ill with a fever; brought on, said the doctor, "from exposure to the cold winds and the damp; also from some nervous mental strain." Elspeth was wildly delirious; haunted by phantoms of the sea.

And then the news came. The sad tidings of Captain Nat Pagan's death at sea, for a great wave had swept him from the helm of the Parthenope. No one told Elspeth. She would not have understood it if they had. But she knew, as women sometimes know. Some weeks later Elspeth slipped into the mystery beyond this life, where dread and anxiety have no place. Where love is life and all things.

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The abyss was bridged between Elspeth and her husband.

It was the knock of death on the great hall door. It was a knell that boomed over the reef, away out in the wild sea. The knell of Nat Pagan! Tolling! Tolling a warning to the living! Tolling! Tolling the departure of a human soul!

DR. SCHOLAR CRUTCH, OF ALLSFARNIA

MANY strange stories circulated through the old town of Allsfarnia concerning one Dr. Scholar Crutch, a quaint and eccentric ancient. But of all the weird tales, only one was founded on fact. His medical genius, his passion for horses, his love story, all provoked the gossips and the old women of the town. For his genius was wonderful; his passion extraordinary, his love affair certainly odd.

And the gossips sat over their cups of tea and wove miraculous tales. Each gossip made a suggestion, or offered a suspicion. And each suggestion and suspicion soon became an accepted fact. No one questioned or doubted after that; the gossips made the tale; the tale must, of course, be true.

So the tales grew, and waxed complex, and a mystery enshrouded them. But long after the old doctor's death the truth crept out, as it will when it is left alone. Death had wiped away the falsities. And gradually the real tale remained, simple, strange indeed, but the truth.

The habits of Dr. Scholar Crutch were odd, and his manners unprepossessing. And many indeed were the

persons whom he offended by his radical independence. From these singular habits and manners originated the innumerable queer stories which vibrated through the gossips' quarters of Allsfarnia.

In his latter days his favorite pastime was watering the grass. People scorned when they heard of it, till they witnessed the Doctor at work; then they laughed, with tears in their eyes. For there was something pathetic in seeing this quaint old man completely engrossed in so simple a thing as watering his lawns. The onlooker who knew could scarce help comparing the Doctor's youth, prime and old age.

It might rain for a week, or perchance two, or even longer. The lawns might be radiantly green, and still over-damp. But the first dry day that appeared Scholar Crutch would be out on his lawns saturating the grass. Less a collar, tie and waistcoat, with his trousers turned up and a purple muffler tight around his throat, the Doctor would stand with his hose, or move slowly from one sippy spot to another, or even let it lie comfortably near a garden walk, where it would soak into the ground. And there the hose would flow; not for an hour—that was too little!—but for twelve hours, and sometimes for twenty-four, till Lonelymoor was surrounded by a mild form of moat. This was in the days when Lonelymoor was turned into a boarding-house.

His neighbors said he was crazy. Neighbors are always minute students of human nature. So, from their standpoint, he probably was. They wondered if the

paying guests of Lonclymoor brought top-boots when they came to board. They thought that Mrs. Perkins ought to request that of her boarders or else keep a pair for general use, whereby the guests could reach the sidewalk without sinking knee-deep in marsh, to the annihilation and desolation of their clothes. For the hose went on forever!

Dr. Scholar Crutch only spoke to people when he felt so disposed. This was a rare and useful habit of his; a habit some of us would like to acquire.

When a fine morning came, sometimes a guest would descend with a cheery, optimistic smile, feeling exuberant with the fresh joy of the day, and seeking to be friendly with the old man

"Good-morning, Dr. Crutch!" he would exclaim, hopefully. "Isn't the weather glorious? And how are you to-day?"

But Dr. Crutch was oblivious—purposely so. Just as likely as not he gave the broadside of his shoulders to the chirpy guest, and continued watering the grass without comment. Indeed, without the faintest, glimmering sign that he heard any voice, except the robin's chirrup in the tree-top, or the cricket's monotonous plaint in the grass. Every new guest suffered excessive spells of embarrassment as a result, and finally gave up all efforts at friendliness in despair.

If Dr. Crutch did speak it was so sudden and disconcerting that the boarders who chose to keep their equilibrium usually gave him a wide berth.

The Doctor had dug up and planted a precious bed

on the front lawn, wherein turnips and radishes throve to a portly extent. Next door lived a mischievous boy and a mischievous penknife, and when Dr. Crutch was out of sight the boy darted to the bed, freely helping himself to the coveted treat of raw turnip or radish. But there were times when the old Doctor was behind the parlor curtains of Lonelymoor, and then the thunderous voice, which yelled so suddenly and so harshly, "Get out of that!" thoroughly unnerved the young turnip-thief for a week afterward. Dr. Crutch had powerful lungs.

The main peculiarity of his habit of not speaking to persons except when he felt so disposed was on occasions of introduction. Accidentally Mrs. Perkins several times committed the offense of introducing strangers to the worthy old Doctor. Alack! How deeply were they offended when cordially offering him a hand and a kindly "How d'ye do!" he turned his back and calmly walked away. Eccentric! cried his neighbors. Yes, from their standpoint he was. But if he did not wish to know the persons he was at least sincere. And how many have courage for such sincerity?

And thus it came about that so many strange stories were whispered through the gossips' quarters of Allsfarnia. But the Doctor's oddities were largely responsible. And if we add this story, it is for the reason that it is mostly founded on truth. A story more or less about this quaint old man will not affect the fact of his well-known kindness to the poor, and for those far inferior to him in intellect.

Allsfarnia is a town with an aged history; a history which links itself with centuries. It spreads itself carelessly on two banks of a restless, whirling river. Its streets and avenues run anywhere, in devious ways, and if you walk far enough without ending where you began, eventually you find yourself in the midst of flat meadows and fields. The River Farnia throws its long, nervous arm half way round the town, and then sweeps away through steep, wooded banks to a vast blue lake. Ceaselessly the Allsfarnia mill grinds its wheels at the west end of the town.

Day and night whirl the wheels of the mill; on and on in a dull wearisome roar. 'Tis soothing to the miller, but sometimes sadly tiring to all others. Week-day and Sunday the mill is never at rest. It is grind, grind, grind forever in the little town of Allsfarnia.

Many years ago a black-haired, hopeful youth entered the restless town. No one knew where he came from or why he had come there. He came, and that was all the townfolk knew or cared about knowing of his past.

The young man's eyes sparkled with the fire of enthusiasm. He looked as if he were bent on conquering the world; conquering it in his own way, and with his own special weapon. And his weapon was to heal and cure.

Dr. Scholar Crutch had great faith in his potions and mixtures; a tried faith. He knew them as only the most persistent student and anxious scholar knows who has given brain, heart and nerve to his own special work,

and never considered his time at the bedside of a sick patient.

From town to town, and village to village, this brilliant and vagabond youth had wandered; soothing tired nerves, healing sicknesses, renewing youth and health to all whom he treated. He had learned the deepest and darkest secrets of his art, and it was whispered that he used daring remedies which only men of medical genius had courage to employ. Indeed, some of the old wives of Allsfarnia declared that he had met witches, who had endowed him with miraculous knowledge—his cures seemed to them so wonderful. And yet, with all his brilliant intellect and his splendid knowledge, Dr. Scholar Crutch succumbed to love, like any other human being; indeed, he was more helpless in its power than a man of average intelligence.

His wanderings ended for a while with Allsfarnia. There he settled down after a year's hard work. With almost fanatical zeal he pursued his road; thoughtfully, eagerly, wholly engrossed. No one ever regretted a visit to Dr. Scholar Crutch, and Allsfarnia soon learned to love and trust the black-eyed, nervous physician.

It was a sunny, flower-sweet day in the summer time, as the Doctor sat in his office, his shaggy black curls tumbling lawlessly over his forehead as he bent over some deep treatise on medical science. On every hand were books. Shelves of books mounted to the ceiling, mostly medical. Books lay carelessly scattered on his reading table, and some had fallen on the floor.

It was a small room, overlooking the seething, fear-

less river. The windows were open and the insistent roar of the mill could be heard. Nothing brightened the room but the sunlight, and it stole in and out softly, Dr. Crutch being scarce aware that it came and went, so lost to all else but his work was he, at the age of thirty-four years.

On this sunny day a slender hand pushed open the door, and a fair lily-like face peered in. It was a delicate lily face, surrounded by an aureole of golden hair, and deep set with two large blue eyes, fluid as sapphires. Celeste was a maiden of eighteen years, and had grown up in the town of Allsfarnia.

Timidly the girl opened the door and slowly entered. As the Doctor lifted his head in surprise she smiled radiantly.

How beautiful Celeste had suddenly grown! So thought Scholar Crutch.

"Well, Celeste! What can I do for you to-day?" he asked, wondering why he had never noticed her beauty before.

"Mother is poorly," returned the girl, in a low, shy voice.

"What is the matter?" pursued the Doctor absently, drinking in the loveliness of the sapphire eyes and sunlit hair.

"Oh! I don't know. Could you come and see her to-day? Perhaps this afternoon?" with a little intonation of pleading, wonderfully fresh and sweet to the Doctor's ears.

"I think I could," he answered, smiling encouragement to the rather timid Celeste. "Will now do?"

"Yes! I would be so glad if you would come?" she responded eagerly. "Mother looks so white and so tired."

"Poor soul!" murmured the Doctor, kindly.

"I have been doing all the work this last week to save her," continued Celeste. "But I am not a giant in strength, and I'm afraid I don't get it all done quite well."

And she looked troubled.

"I am certain it is all right," readily encouraged the Doctor, thinking to himself that anything done by Celeste would be near perfection. And then he added, irrelevantly, "How gaily the sun shines to-day!"

"It always does," murmured the girl softly.

"Somehow I don't seem to have noticed it shining so brightly before," rejoined he, glancing at Celeste's beautiful head as he gazed out of the window.

"I love the sunlight, don't you?" she asked, dreamily, watching it dancing on the foaming crests of the turbid river.

"I do, indeed!" came his almost ardent answer, as he leaned back in his chair, thoroughly lost in the golden ringlets of Celeste's pretty head.

"Some folks get up every day and never seem to think of it," went on Celeste. "Isn't that odd?"

"Very!" replied Dr. Crutch, still lost. "Perhaps they needed someone to point it out to them."

Celeste laughed.

"How funny that would be!" she cried.

"I don't know that it would be so funny. You see, I never seem to have noticed it till——" he stopped, a trifle embarrassed as the girl turned her great innocent eyes on him.

"Till what?" came her child-like question.

"Till you showed it to me to-day," he finished.

"I?" laughed the girl.

He nodded.

"I think that is funnier than ever," she laughed.

"You know you have lived so much longer than I have," looking at him solemnly.

"Yes, I have and I haven't," he remarked, standing beside her near the window.

"Oh, but you have!" she declared earnestly.

"Yes! Yesterday I was older than you. To-day——" he hesitated.

"To-day what?" she asked gravely.

"To-day I am no older than you!" And as Celeste laughed outright he laughed too, such a happy laugh.

"Then let us play at children!" she cried merrily.

"When I was little I used to like playing at 'grown-ups'; now that I am grown up I would like to play at being a child again; wouldn't you?"

"Indeed I would!" he exclaimed gaily.

"But we must go to mother, now," she said, suddenly remembering why she had come.

"All right!" returned the Doctor, with an odd, but delightful sense of obeying a little princess.

"Wonderful!" whispered Dr. Crutch to himself, closing his book and his desk.

And then he and Celeste set out for her home; their first walk together. And to the Doctor it was a revelation.

Celeste's home was a trim little cottage nestling amid rose bushes. For years she and her widowed mother had lived here alone, on the poor little fortune her father had left. He had worked at the mill, and had lost his life beneath the mill wheels years ago. So the sound of the mill had a pathetic appeal for the mother. And she had chosen a cottage at the east end of the town, to be away from its mournful roar.

Celeste's mother, never overstrong, had failed much of late. It was a frail little woman whom Dr. Crutch came to see. She was sitting in the porch, her hands idly toying with her darning needles, the roses and wistaria drooping above her. The day was warm, and the wind just lightly caressed the silvery hair of the little old lady. Many years ago she had left her native land, and the old French courtesies and graces still lingered in her manners.

She tried to rise as the Doctor approached; but he gently touched her arm saying kindly:

"Never mind getting up for me. It is the privilege of age to rest."

"And you are so young and active," she said, smiling half wistfully, and glancing up at the stalwart, sinewy man, with his broad, strong shoulders.

"And so is Celeste!" he returned cheerfully, observing the mother's anxious glance at her daughter.

"Ah! But Celeste is a woman, and she will have to work hard some day, for I shall not be long here to look after——"

"Don't talk like that, *chérie!*" interrupted Celeste tenderly.

"But it is true, nevertheless, *mignonne!* And the little we have will not always support you." She sighed wearily.

"Never mind about Celeste," broke in the Doctor quickly. "She has youth and health."

"And I would they could last!" rejoined the mother sadly. "What a pity that we have to grow old!"

"But some of us grow old gracefully and sweetly," remarked the Doctor. "And you are one of these."

"Thank you," she smiled. "As a girl I always hoped I would. To grow hard and critical as age creeps on is dreadful; even if it is hidden by charm of manner or intellect. I always had a horror of that. Such persons end their lives in a lonely, loveless way, and I always wished to end mine in love and peace."

"And you will have your way, *chérie!*" said Celeste, caressing the silvery hair of the little old lady.

"I think so," the mother said gently, as she drew the girl's face down to her own and kissed it. "*Mignonne!*"

Again the Doctor observed the strange look she gave Celeste.

"As for Celeste," said he lightly, "I shall take care of her, and be a good guardian, too."

How he wished in his heart that it might be so!

"Do you mean that?" asked the mother earnestly.

The Doctor made a rapid mental decision.

"Yes, certainly!" he answered.

"And you will take care of her after I am gone?" she queried.

"You can rely upon me for that," he returned.

Celeste blushed, but said nothing.

Then the Doctor addressed her: "How would you like to look after my office, Celeste?"

The girl's eyes danced with pleasure; but she ventured shyly, "I'll do my best."

"Indeed she will!" added her mother.

"I am satisfied of that," said he, dreams flitting through his head of this sweet girl's presence so near him in the days to come.

"And I shall bring some of my roses and wistaria," said Celeste, with a gay smile, "to brighten your room and the books."

"And you will bring the sunshine, too!" finished the Doctor, thinking of her recent visit to his office.

"Here's a rose for you now!" she exclaimed happily, picking one off the vine which clambered over the porch. "And some wistaria, too!"

With deft fingers Celeste tied the boutonniere and handed it to him.

"You will pin it on?" he begged, looking down into her child-like blue eyes.



RICHARD BOE

"You will pin it on!" he begged, looking down into her child-like blue eyes.

Celeste pinned it on.

"That seals the bargain, mother!" she cried mischievously.

And they all laughed.

"And now what can I do for you to-day?" asked the Doctor, turning seriously to the mother.

And then proceeded a consultation about the patient. Her heart was very weak. Dr. Crutch said little, but he quickly realized that she had not long to live, and at any moment might be found dead.

Then the days and weeks rapidly rolled away. Rapidly for Dr. Crutch, for he had awakened to love; love such as he had never known; love of Celeste's blue eyes and sunny hair. Here in Allsfarnia had this lovely flower been budding and blossoming, and he only now opened his eyes to its beauty. Why had he never wakened before? Ah! He had been so lost in his work. How little a thing it seemed now! Dr. Scholar Crutch was changing, and Celeste knew it was love.

Among the roses and wistaria in the porch some months later, Celeste's mother was found dead. After the lonely period of mourning Celeste began her daily trips to the Doctor's office, and she did what she could to help him in his work.

What a strange new joy it all was!

How peacefully and happily the days passed for the lovers! When the day's work was done, what quietly joyous walks they had out in the meadows, under the stars, with the air flower-sweet around them! And how tenderly Celeste felt his sympathy when they vis-

ited the churchyard where the mother lay sleeping beneath a cedar tree, and they laid a wreath of roses and wistaria at her feet. They were blissful days indeed.

At eventide they would wander by the River Allsfarnia. Or seated on its wooded banks, listen to the mill wheels, grinding, grinding, or the river's song, as it eddied in gushes of foam to the lake. Sweetly sounded the notes of tired birds as they hurried to their cosy nests. And the lovers watched the lights of the town, like a hundred eyes, opening one by one.

Happy indeed were they!

And then late one autumn, when the leaves were dying, the tragedy came. Celeste was standing by the river's edge, listening to the mournful, monotonous music of the mill wheels, when the little constant heart ceased its beating forever. Dr. Crutch had never suspected the heart's weakness. And the blue eyes closed beneath the mill wheels. And the golden hair floated on the foam of the restless river and was borne away to the vast blue lake.

Dr. Scholar Crutch silently left Allsfarnia.

For thirty years or more the Doctor roved no one knew where, and came again to Allsfarnia, no one knew whence. Scholar Crutch had aged. The black eyes sunk deep beneath shaggy black brows. The snows of age had whitened his unruly curls, and deep were the furrows of silent suffering which lined his face. His broad shoulders seemed to have shrunk and hunched up, and he walked as if forever in an unreal world.

He was a rich man now. Money had flowed gener-

ously into his careless coffers since the death of Celeste. Success had followed him everywhere, though he cared little for it. Scholar Crutch was a saddened man. And no amount of money or success could wipe out the memory of Celeste.

In the town of Allsfarnia he built a grand mansion with great rooms and halls. Lonelymoor he called it. He filled it with all that could inspire and satisfy an artist and a scholar. Rare books and curios from all over the world filled his shelves and decorated his tables. And beneath its Ionic pillars Dr. Scholar Crutch opened its doors wide in hospitality and gayety.

But the gayety did not last. He wearied of it all. Neither the maze of the dance nor the mystery of the theater could make him forget Celeste. As for love again, that was impossible. Women had no power over him. Neither brilliance of intellectual attainments nor beauty of face and form attracted him. And no sparkling glass, however cheering, however stupefying, tossed away the sweet memories of the Long Ago. For a little while he might forget; but that was all.

As time went on, his chiefest pleasure was his stable of horses. He had horses of rare beauty and grace, and with rare and long pedigrees. This soon became his one interest in life.

Indeed, his love of his horses developed into a kind of passion. And he would spend hours and hours till midnight, and longer, poring over his books on horses.

Soon his friends began to notice this strange absorption. Then his patients began to feel its effects. Day

by day his office had been filled with weary and eager patients, earnest for his sympathy and services; but the famous physician was absorbed in horseflesh. And hour by hour his patients waited in vain, while he sat in his study poring over a volume on horses. Serious cases arose, and still Scholar Crutch was lost in his beloved books, oblivious of everyone and everything.

He had been known to calmly walk out to his stables and spend a whole afternoon among his horses while a crowd of patients waited in his rooms, only partly unaware of his extraordinary passion.

At first the neglected patients excused him on the ground of forgetfulness and eccentricity. But gradually resentment awakened and though his friends interceded for him their rancor remained unappeased. These townfolk had their sense of justice and their measure of pride, and slowly they ceased to visit the great doctor.

Morning, noon, and night, it was horses, horses. His meals were late; his patients, what few were left, were absurdly neglected. And his friends gave up in despair.

And no one guessed the truth back of it all. The effort and the absorption of this strange passion buried Celeste in the past. Dr. Scholar Crutch forgot.

One wintry day when the snow lay deep and the frost bit into the trees a loud knock sounded on his study door. Scholar Crutch was, as usual, lost in his favorite books, unconscious of all comers. But the knock was followed by the determined knocker opening the

door and sturdily walking over to the doctor's desk. He was one of Dr. Scholar Crutch's late resentful patients.

It was a splendid room. The walls were lined with fine old mahogany book-cases, bulging with volumes. Five great windows opened on to a wide lawn, shadowed by ancient oaks, and elms, and pines, now encased in snow. Long green velvet curtains were drawn aside to let in the sunlight, and it fell on rare paintings, and on marble busts of famous medical men, and on brightly-polished brasses from the Orient. On a carved ebony table inlaid with pearl, stood a vase filled with roses and wistaria; the only sweet human touch in the solemn room. The flowers blended their fragrance with the odors of ancient vellum and modern leather.

Atmospherically, the stranger felt the room cold, unapproachable. Had he not come with a very grave purpose, willingly he would have retired. Deep in his volume on horses Dr. Scholar Crutch was quite indifferent to the fact that several patients were awaiting him.

"How d'ye do!" called the man loudly and sharply.

The Doctor did not lift his head, but answered coolly, "Well?"

"That mine of yours, sir; I have come to speak about it," the man said.

Oh!" barely articulated the Doctor, turning a page and proceeding deliberately with his perusal.

The man watched him a moment and then said in a hard voice:

"The mine has been burned out; men killed; the machinery wrecked."

The Doctor did not move a muscle and continued reading to the end of the page.

"You have lost about five hundred thousand, I guess," continued the man icily.

The Doctor calmly slipped the paper-cutter between the leaves and turning his head glanced at the man.

"Cheerful news," he remarked.

"Very!" sarcastically from the man.

"Anything more?" inquired the Doctor, indifferently.

"Guess you'll have to sell all this!" said the man, rather insolently, waving his hand around the room.

The Doctor looked carelessly at his book-shelves and responded coldly, "Well! What of that?"

The man stared in amazement at the reply.

"And your horses!" added he slowly.

Dr. Crutch gave an almost imperceptible start.

"My horses! My horses!" he said painfully, as if speaking to himself.

"Yes, your horses," concluded the man.

"They have been good friends to me; friends in my loneliness," went on the Doctor softly, as if he had not heard the man. "No one knows how good! They have helped forgetfulness. And must I give them up?"

The man stood half cynically studying the great doctor.

"And why not?" he asked, almost rudely.

"Ah! That's it! And why not? Why not?" And the Doctor gently fingered the pages of his volume.

"What are your orders?" inquired the man, scrupulously hard.

"Sell everything," murmured the Doctor absently.

"And the horses?" pursued the man, persistently cruel.

"And the horses." With a sigh the Doctor bent again over his reading and became oblivious.

And so the man left him.

Some years later old Dr. Crutch, bereft of everything in life, wandered listlessly the streets of Allsarnia, giving the poor his services, freely and kindly.

Lonelymoor was sold; its stables, its books; its pictures; all he had possessed. Lonelymoor was now a boarding-house, and Dr. Crutch occupied the garret. A little bed, the ebony table, and, dearest to him of all, a picture of Celeste, were all that he had left of his once rich and artistic home. And the little ebony table still held its vase of flowers, fresh whenever the old man could get them.

And here the great Doctor faded; faded with his wealth and his success. In an ancient black suit, shiny and rusty with wear, and a black tie as aged, Dr. Scholar Crutch lived and dreamed among his roses, gathering them while the flower-sweet season lasted. Forever watering the lawns, forever tending his rose bushes, he had ceased to hunt forgetfulness, and the memory of Celeste lay peacefully upon him.

So the old man drifted into eternity; vanished with the roses; and the watering ceased. And the sun came and went, as in the days of Celeste. And the mill

wheel whirled on, unmindful; the monotonous lament ceaselessly vibrating through Allsfarnia.

And as the light of another, kinder world filled the eyes of the dying man, the sunshine streamed over the ebony table and over the roses and wistaria. And he murmured softly, tenderly, as if to some dear presence:

"I lived and I died for you years ago. My dream! Celeste! I tried forgetfulness; but I love you still. Celeste! Celeste!"

THE BEND OF THE HILL

WE had often watched the trains passing to and fro over the Tuthmay Railroad. But the suggestive blank, after their disappearing around the bend of the hill, ever fascinated us, because of the mystery of the river and the bridge beyond. We never could know that the train crossed the Tuthmay bridge, and reached the other shore in safety. Watching the train was like going on an unknown voyage—we never knew what was its end.

In my early married life I lived a couple of miles from the Tuthmay railroad station. My house was on the bank of the Tuthmay River. It was a wide river, which swept out to sea in a wider mouth, spreading between muddy flats and level lands. From the dining-room window we could see the railroad and could follow it from the station. But as it neared the river we lost sight of it around the bend of the hill. Then we knew that the train, if we were following it with our eyes, had reached the Tuthmay bridge, and probably was crossing it.

My wife and I had come there in the early spring. We soon learned to love the railroad line. The enigma of the hill and bridge never ceased to interest us. All

through the summer time we daily saw the trains running over the road with such faith and surety, and we would watch their twinkling lights as they spun along in the moonlight nights. It all seemed so certain then, with the smell of hay and the scent of flowers in the air, the clucking of chickens, the neighing of horses, and the sweet world of summer surrounding us. Nevertheless, a strange fear of the bend of the hill often haunted us.

In the rains and mists and on cloudy days it breathed a spirit forlorn and mysterious. We sometimes shuddered, as we looked out across the fields to the bend, so dark in the dreary light. And we would wonder at the bravery of the engineer in taking his train across the black, surly river.

Then autumn approached. And as the days grew shorter, and the nights so long, the railroad began to have a horror for us. It still held us with a strange fascination; but fear gathered in our hearts, and we dreaded it.

The hill was crowned with a coronal of the brown and gold of autumn. But when the leaves fell and the lack of foliage laid bare the boughs and twigs, the coronal faded into a crown of thorns.

The days grew colder and very dreary; their gray skies banked with heavy clouds. And when the sun set it blazed on the bend and, we supposed, on the bridge, with a fury which might have burned both and laid them in ashes before morning. Would it had been so!

Winter came. Its chill winds, the snow, the ice, and the frost! Such icy blasts blew off the Tuthmay River and over fields of snow. The hill stood like a ghostly thing robed in white, and froze the neighborhood with its chilly aloofness. The river froze till it was a sheet of immovable ice, sphinx-like in its eruelty of cold and silence. The winds howled across it with a menacing fury. They roared up and down the river and around the bend, and we felt they must have frozen the very heart of the steel in the Tuthmay bridge.

Sometimes its horror was too much for us, and we would pull down the blinds to shut it out, and throw more wood on the fire to make it burn up in a warm, comfortable blaze.

Hurricanes of wind and snow drove madly over the Tuthmay River. In a whirlwind of snow they circled the hill. Large drifts they threw over the fences and into the hollows. They shrouded the trees and the hedges in white, and made cowed monks at their prayers of the bushes and haystacks.

Every roof and barn was sheathed in snow. And it drove thick and fast, till the air became opaque. Sometimes we wondered how the trains ever struggled through such blinding storms of snow and ice.

The track was kept clear in winter, as the Tuthmay route was an important one. Day after day in the cyclonic storms of winter, we would hear the whistle of the train as it neared the bend, and we would hurry to the windows and watch it. The long, black thing (it seemed alive to us) would strive and writhe through the

drifts and banks of snow, blowing white steam into the air with its panting. It would squirm its way along slowly, top-heavy (it appeared like a huge tortoise), and ever tending towards the cold and ghostly hill. Then it would vanish from sight, and we were awed by the mystery of the bend.

One stormy, wintry evening about the middle of January, my wife and I were cosily sitting by our fire-side. Our baby boy had not seemed very well that day and I was glad to see my wife resting while the boy slept. Our fireplace was an old-fashioned open grate, and a kettle hung at one side steaming and puffing and singing cheerily. I was sprawling on a rug before the fire smoking a pipe, while my wife was ensconced in a big, cosey chair. We could hear the wind howling around the house and screaming down the chimneys. The veranda creaked, and the twigs of the bushes snapped with the bitter frost.

"What a terrible night!" said my wife, giving the fire a friendly poke.

"Terrible indeed;" I answered lazily.

"How glad I am that you are not an engineer, dear!" she said with a sigh of thankfulness.

"On a night like this it would not be very pleasant; rather more uncomfortable than this," I returned, puffing contentedly at my pipe.

"Fancy what the bridge and the river must look like on a stormy night like this!" And she shuddered.

"Dreadful!" I answered sleepily.

"When I think of all those crowded, lighted cars,

with their freight of trusting humanity, it makes me shiver when I think of the bridge. I don't envy the engineer. What a responsibility!" continued my wife, as if picturing it to herself.

"Don't think about it!" I suggested, snuggling close to the fire, for the engineer's life did not seem an easy one on that night.

"But somehow I can't help thinking about it to-night," she went on quietly. "And thinking of all those people when the train crosses——"

But her remark was cut short.

In the midst of our homely enjoyment a knock sounded on the front door. I went out and opened it. A man stood on the threshold, covered with snow. As I opened the door he handed me a telegram and asked if there was an answer.

I read it. My father was dangerously ill; would I come at once? It was from my mother.

I knew the night train passed our station at ten o'clock. It was nearly half-past nine now, allowing me scarce more than a half hour's grace to pack and get there. And it was a dreadful night.

I hurried into the room where we had been sitting. My wife paled as I told her.

"Such a night, dear!" she exclaimed anxiously. "And that awful bridge! But if your father is so ill you must go!"

So I hastened to pack a few things, and soon I was ready. Indeed, I was saying good-by, when we heard a scream from our boy. I flew upstairs as if my feet

were winged, my wife following. I burst into the room and there was the poor little fellow on the floor, struggling with infantile energy to free himself from the melce of bedclothes. A crying spell followed, and we had our hands full and our brains busy trying to soothe and alleviate the little man's distress. In the midst of this unexpected excitement I forgot the time.

"Any answer, sir?" came the man's voice up the stairs.

"No! I'm coming!" I shouted back, heading for the stairs in haste.

"Coming for what?" inquired the man as with lightning speed I arrived at the foot of the steps.

"Ten o'clock train!" I answered sharply, indignant with the man's apparent stupidity.

"Ten o'clock train!" he cried surprised.

"Of course!" I replied.

The man gasped. "Why, you're too late!"

"Too late, man! It's a matter of life and death. I must go!"

"Just about ten minutes to ten, sir," he said quietly, taking out his watch. "Can't do it a night like this."

"It must be done! We can cross to the track from here and signal the train."

I grew more determined as he more doubtful.

"That is all very well in the summer time," remarked the man, "but the train will have reached the bend by the time we cross the fields. Lord, sir! On a night like this! And at this hour! Your signal will go unseen. It can't be done."

And he slowly shook his head.

"Our chances are slimmer now, with all this waste talk," I returned angrily. "Life and death, fellow! Come, let's try for it!"

The man deliberately pointed to the door and said: "Look outside, sir!"

I did so, and gazed out on the wildest night I had ever seen. I had witnessed many storms in that neighborhood, but such a blizzard as swept the world that night I have never seen since, and never wish to see again.

As I looked toward the railroad a feeling of terror came over me. But the man's voice broke in upon my fear.

"Well, sir, what do you think of it?"

I turned silently. Our eyes met and I felt that the man shared my strange foreboding terror.

However, it passed, and I bade the man warm himself, and my wife made him a cup of tea. It was five minutes to ten by the dining-room clock.

The logs on the fire crackled cheerfully as they spat long tongues of flame and showers of sparks into the chimney. The clock ticked steadily on. My thoughts flew to my sick parent. I was filled with anxiety as I thought of my mother's telegram. And I was blue at having missed the train.

In the midst of these distressing reflections my wife laid her gentle hand on my arm.

"Baby is asleep," she murmured softly.

"May be," answered I, rather irritably; "but I wish he had had his fall after I had gone instead of before!"

"I am so thankful you are not out in that storm," she continued, ignoring my irritation. And then she added, with a strange, far-away expression in her eyes: "God has a wonderful way of accomplishing things, despite everyone and everything. And experiences that look very black to us often hide some deliverance from worse trouble, or cloud the sun, that it may shine all the more brilliantly later on. I am sorry, dear, that you have missed the train. But perhaps God had a reason for it."

I was surprised at her earnestness, for my mind was with my father. Now that baby slept, his fall appeared a light matter compared with the telegram. But as she stood there smiling up at me I felt reassured.

Having missed the train I was interested in seeing it pass. It would only increase my misery to see I had lost it, and for so small a matter as baby's fall. But I stood there, my wife beside me. I suppose it was human nature; so we all continue to think of the things we have dearly lost.

'Twas a terrible night!

The wind rose fiercer as the night advanced. It moaned and shrieked among the rafters; it groaned around the eaves; it shook the house in its mighty grasp. Hither and thither the snow was scurrying, piling up and blowing down, sweeping in grand circles, and whirling in little eddies, darkening the night in clouds of flakes. Here and there appeared a cottage

light, flickering hopelessly in the tempest. Far away near the bend of the hill we could see the green light; it seemed to say, "take care." And we knew that the white light was shining along the tracks, signaling to the approaching express a clear road and safe passage across the Tuthmay bridge.

As we watched we heard the whistle of the train, long and clear. And we knew that it had reached the station. Then the clock on the mantle struck the hour. Ten it chimed.

The man by the fire finished his cup of tea and arose, rubbing his hands vigorously in anticipation of his icy drive. He bade us a hearty "Good-night!" and was gone.

Monotonously the clock ticked on. I glanced at it; the minutes seemed hours. Unless the ten o'clock express was signaled to stop it passed right through the Tuthmay station. In another minute it ought to be at the bend of the hill. And soon it would speed out on the Tuthmay bridge.

My wife pressed my arm. There it was! Winding and crawling through the whirlwind of snow and the high banks; the ruddy glare from its funnel gleaming on the night like the eye of a black devil. The lights of the passenger cars glimmered and twinkled through the eddying snow, and shone luridly in the mist, like so many baby devils, merry and ready for a night's frolic with the blinding flakes. On came the train! Now it seemed a demon, with its lurking, gloomy flame and smoke, smearing the atmosphere; again, a great dark

monster fighting for life, and in its last death throes amidst the snow. Horrible it was! But it held us by the window with a weird, inexplicable power.

Nearer and nearer the express approached the bend. How we wished the hill would vanish and let us see it cross the bridge! Then the train whistled, as it ever did near the bend; whistled a full, ringing sound, as if to reassure us that it had fared well so far on its journey.

It was five minutes past ten. Slowly the glaring fire of the engine disappeared; the baggage cars followed; then the passenger cars, the lights dancing brightly and hopefully as they vanished behind the bend. Finally the last car receded with its red tail light "Danger!" and the hill gloomed darker than ever.

My wife sank into a chair, with almost a groan of relief, as if she had experienced a heavy strain, and was completely exhausted.

"It is on the Tuthmay bridge now," she sighed deeply.

"Yes! And I might have been there, too, and part way on my jour—" I broke off.

"Good God!" I cried. "What was that!"

In a moment we were at the window. With awe-struck faces we gazed out. The train whistled, and whistled again—wild shrieks which fell weirdly on the night. The last mad scream died in a tremendous crash and a strange gurgling sound. We stared at the bend as if our eyes were chained to the spot. A great, dazzling red light shot into the heavens, shone a mo-

ment, faded to a glimmering brightness, and then died. It left the night blacker than before, and the hill more sullen.

The wind wailed and cried over the fields and around the house. It whistled shrilly through the key-holes and rattled loose windows. A harsh sound from the veranda, told that the frost was biting into the soul of the wood. The snow twirled and whipped into eddying gusts over the roofs, the meadows, the orchards, and away on the dark, bleak river, where the ice creaked against the shores. The stillness of death spread over its glassy surface.

For hours we stood at the window. The clock ticked the minutes as they fled away. It chimed the hours as they swiftly passed. We did not speak. We knew how time sped on. The fire sank to ashes. The kettle ceased its song. The lamp burned ever lower.

Days seemed to have slipped away when dawn started in the east. As day drew on the lamp paled and died. Still we stood there, our eyes riveted on the bend with a deadly fascination.

As the light brightened with sunrise, the air grew chill. The storm had passed. In its sea of wintry blue the sky was fresh and clear. Everywhere the snow gleamed dully in the early morning. The wind had fallen and hardly a breath stirred. In the distance the Tuthmay River lay still and quiet; tomb-like in its sheet of icy armor. Gazing on the peaceful landscape we could scarce believe such a blizzard had whirled around us the night before.

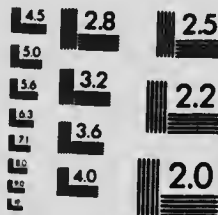
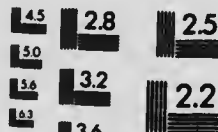
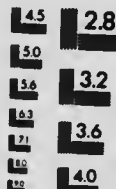
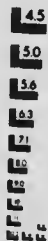


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168 THE BEND OF THE HILL

The hill frowned dark, cold, ghostly, and a mystery enshrouded it. We dreaded it.

No train had passed over the Tuthmay railroad since the ten o'clock express had vanished last night around the bend of the hill—out of our sight, and out of the world!

PRUE'S GARDENER

CHAPTER I

A GARDENER does not seem a very important person in a household; but Prue's gardener was an unusual one. He certainly kept her rose bushes in good order, and probably did much toward making the garden of her life a sweet, sunny spot.

'Twas a glowing summer day. Roses poured their souls into the sunny air, making the world sweet with their goodness. The meadows rippled away in the golden haze to the far blue hills. Knolls of woodland marked here and there a cool oasis of shade. The songs of bird and stream bubbled and trilled by the hedges. And the long chirrup and hum of a thousand insects droned lazily in the tall grasses, where daisies and buttercups, wild roses and violets, offered their sweet lips filled with honey.

“A life full and free!
A sailor for me!
The billows to guard o'er my sleep!
The foam and the spray;
My bridal array;
And my love and my home the blue deep!”

Over the meadows came a ringing voice, singing with a fullness of gayety and life the words of her song to the air of "Drink to me only with thine eyes!" Prue had once told Maria McCutcheon that she loved the air, but that the words were excessively sentimental, and such nonsense did not appeal to her ideas of love.

"Oh, I know the world thinks it beautiful! But because the world thinks so is no reason why Prudence Chesterfield should think so!" wherewith she made a low and graceful courtesy to the chronically astonished Dan and his practical spouse, Maria McCutcheon, and danced away.

As the voice came nearer and nearer there was a great clattering of hoofs and a great scattering of pebbles, and Prue came flying into the kitchen garden on the back of her favorite horse, "Wildfire."

Maria McCutcheon was bending over the washtub, her red arms seethed in soapsuds, and her broad, good-natured face, with its shrewd blue eyes rubicund with the vigorous rubbing of various white articles.

"Ship ahoy! Miss Prue; what a wild thing you be! Come merry, go gay! My heart 'ull be easier if the lad o' yer future proves a man o' sense and soundness." And Maria squeezed and wrung out a towel with a flourish of decision, as if the man's neck would suffer if he were otherwise disposed.

"Pshaw! My old Maria!" gaily answered Prue. "Make your troubles and mend them. Whether he has sense to smile, or sense to scold, 'tis all one to me, so long as I love him. But if I don't love him, he may

have a million cents; no price will buy the heart of Prudence Chesterfield."

And she laughed merrily as she leaped on to the ground.

"Poor Minot Braid!" sighed Maria, deprecatingly.

Prudence heard, but tossed her head defiantly.

"We don't care, do we?" she whispered to Wildfire. "If nobody else loves me, you will. And I'd rather your love, you faithful old soul! than the caprice of a man I've never seen!"

Dan solemnly removed his pipe from his mouth and stared at Maria, who took no notice of him. Then he replaced his pipe, closed one eye and stared at the bowl, as if the smoke rolling up therefrom could solve the problem of Miss Prue's future.

"Mr. Minot Braid's not that bad, I'm sure, Miss Prue," ventured Maria, sousing a pillow-slip with great vigor.

Prue stamped her foot impatiently.

"The idea of my father promising me to any man! And without my consent! To be parceled up some day and sent by express, cash on delivery, with a tag fastened on somewhere, 'Glass—With Care'! 'Twould serve my big Daddy right if this precious Minot Braid just sent me baek to him again—'Returned with Thanks—Not Wanted'!"

Maria looked up hopelessly, and then burst into a peal of noisy laughter. Again Dan winked solemnly, and said nothing.

"Miss Prue! Miss Prue!" exclaimed Maria, on re-

covering ner breath. "You beat all! I 'ad the bringing of ye up, an' I did try to make ye a proper, sensible person; but at times I'm wondering I've been amiss somewhere. Now there's Miss Maida, yer small sister, an' she's sound as a ripe apple, an' just as proper. You see, I could always manage 'er. But as for yerself, Miss Prue, there be no law for ye; neither mine nor yer Daddy's. Ye was ever a law unto yerself," and with a prolonged sigh, Maria again soused her arms in the washtub.

"Never mind, Maria!" said Prue, gently rubbing Wildfire's nose. "You have done your best, and I haven't made the best of your care and wisdom. Perchance it's my fault; or maybe Wildfire's!"

And Prue laughed softly.

"Wildfire!" sniffed Maria McCutcheon to herself with a pang of jealousy.

"Well, Maria, to change the subject, has Dan been able to get a new gardener?"

Marie glanced at her idle spouse.

"I've heard nothing. Ask Dan. Them's as sits loitering about the most part of a day gathers all the news." Maria's glance was a scornful one, as it shot in the direction of her amiable better half, who was sitting outside the door, his chair tipped back against the wall, and contentedly smoking his pipe.

"Eh! What's that, Missy?" inquired Dan, as if only partially awake, turning to Prue. "I did hear the master say as how a Donald Jackson was a-coming day after to-morrow, just to 'elp old Dan keep the gardens

spie an' span. But I wouldn't say as how I'm right. No; I wouldn't say that."

Prue smiled. She knew that Dan's position as gardener meant almost nothing. But owing to her father's kindness old Dan, who had served in the family twenty years or more, was kept on the farm. He dabbled a little in the garden, drew his small pay, and puffed at his pipe a very great deal from one week's end to another.

"Do you know anything about him, Dan?" queried Prue.

"Nothing speshul, Missy; 'cept he's a big fellow, an' nice-spoken sort of. Howsomever, I wouldn't say that, if I hadn't heerd yer father so talking. No; I wouldn't say that unless I had."

"It's a wonder ye ain't given up saying at all! Ye're so took up with yer pipe. Ye never see anything beyon' its bowl, an' yer brains is nigh as clear as the smoke." And Maria vented her wifely wrath in the washtub.

Dan, with great dignity, ignored his spouse's flattering remarks.

"I daresay Donald Jackson 'ull be able to 'elp me, all right, Miss Prue. I daresay."

"If he don't do no better than you, he'll do sure!" interrupted Maria, scornfully, stretching a towel with a jerk as if, Donald failing, he would be subjected to like treatment on his departure. "He can't do no worse. That's one thing sure."

Dan just closed one eye and twisted his pipe to the other side of his mouth and said nothing.

"Well! I hope Donald Jackson will take good care of my rose bushes. To me they are the most important part of the garden. The vegetables are superfluous, and such a bother!" said Prue.

"We couldn't get on without 'em, Miss Prue!" interjected practical Maria McCutcheon.

"I could," laughed Prue. "But my roses! Oh, they are so beautiful! So sweet! The only weakness I have that is at all sentimental, Maria!"

"But we couldn't think of living on roses, Miss Prue!" protested Maria.

"The world couldn't, Maria. But I could. And I don't care a row of pins what the world thinks about anything, even vegetables. What I think rules my life."

And Prue proudly leaped on to Wildfire's back and pranced around the garden.

"Ye were ever a law unto yerself!" murmured Maria, shaking her head solemnly, as she watched the haughty, independent air of her pet child.

"Daddy can manage the vegetables," said Prue, returning with Wildfire to Maria and Dan. "But Donald Jackson will have to do as I direct about my favorites, and if my roses suffer——"

Prue stopped short and frowned.

Maria looked up from the tub and Dan held his breath and did not wink.

"Beware, Donald Jackson!" finished Prue. "Beware my roses!"

"Poor Donald Jackson! It'll be worse for 'im than

it was for the last gardener, if he disobeys Miss Prue!" said Maria McCutcheon to herself.

The last gardener had a falling out with Mr. Chesterfield. They disagreed over some arrangements in the vegetable garden and the gardener had disobeyed him. Prue alone had the privilege of disobeying Mr. Chesterfield. He never could resist the high spirit of his pretty and wilful daughter. Thus it came about that the farm had no gardener. Despite Dan's cheerful efforts the flower beds and the kitchen garden grew more weedy and untidy every day.

Mr. Chesterfield had advertised for a gardener in the nearest town. Having no satisfactory answer, he had tried a large daily in Chicago. The latter effort had proved successful.

So Prue went off in search of her father to hear the results.

And the new gardener, Donald Jackson, was coming.

Thomas Chesterfield had been a dashing young officer in his early days; chivalrous to ladies, and steadfast to friends. He was a proud-spirited man, and too independent to win success in this world; success as it is recognized in wealth, position and power. He was quick with a blow; but it was an even match when Thomas Chesterfield had a battle to win, for his sense of truth and honor was as straight as his blows, and as strong and alert.

He was born and brought up in Boston; educated for the ministry by his father's wish. But on the death of

the latter he gave up his college career and went into the army, where his spirit had longed to be.

While at college in Boston he had made many friends, chief among whom was one Jonathan Braid. They were opposites in temperament; but their friendship was a firm one. Jonathan Braid was gentle, quiet, and rather retiring; but he had possessed a ready wit, which had won the heart of merry Thomas and had made him a favorite with all their college friends.

Jonathan Braid was never very strong, and only by the constant care of his affectionate and wealthy parents had he grown to manhood. After his career at college he married. His marriage proved a very unhappy one. And a little son was born of it before he and his wife parted.

Shortly after his separation from his wife his father died. And the double grief was too much for his never over-strong constitution. His heart was affected, and after a short illness he passed away from all his trials. The little son, Minot, was left to the care of a maiden aunt, having no nearer relative left with an ample provision for his needs during boyhood, and a very large fortune when he came of age.

On his deathbed Jonathan Braid asked to see his old college companion, Thomas Chesterfield. And the dying man begged him to keep a kindly interest in his little son. He also asked a half promise of his old friend—that if ever Thomas had a daughter, he would make a match between her and Minot. His own married life having been such a failure he felt anxious for

his son's future. Knowing the splendid traits of his friend Thomas, he felt that his daughter might probably inherit the same strong, free, bold spirit of his beloved college chum. Thomas Chesterfield gave his promise, thinking it foolish the while, as the thought of marriage had not yet entered his head.

Thomas Chesterfield returned to his beloved army work. But not till two years after his friend's death did he marry. His married life was exceedingly happy and unclouded. As his two daughters, Prudence and Maida, grew up, he retired from the army, living on a small income, mostly a legacy left by his father. He settled in the Western states, and bought some land, cultivating it carefully and adding to it each year. And he had a fair-sized farm, not a large one, surely, but one that was well tilled and cared for.

The house was a rambling, picturesque building, with peaks and gables on every side, fashioned as it was by various additions as necessity required, and as the years rolled on. A quaint, green-latticed porch opened at the front door, over which a medley of rose vines, the golden jessamine, and the purple-robed clematis, scrambled and interwove their blossoms. At the western side of the house a large piazza overlooked the neatly-kept lawns, and the myriad-colored, old-fashioned flower-beds. And from a knoll across the lawn, where a grove of oaks and firs kept it cool and shady in the summer time, the stream Silverdike could be seen meandering through the orchard. Beyond that, the meadows and fields rolled away to the purple hills.

Prudence Chesterfield was now seventeen. Her mother had passed away two years before, and Prue was sole mistress of the establishment. The consciousness of responsibility had somewhat tamed her wild spirits. And it certainly had developed rare housewifely knowledge and management, and a certain quiet dignity and firmness of will that all obeyed without questioning when Prudence chose to command.

Prue had grown up with the knowledge of her father's promise to Jonathan Braid; but had never thought much about it, nor seriously. When she was a very tiny girl and Minot a boy of ten or twelve years, they had played together. Indeed, they had been very happy. Though sometimes Prue's proud, high spirit had broken loose; then Minot had spent lonely, depressed hours till Prue had returned to her sweetness again. Sometimes it was Minot's fault; sometimes Prue's; but the latter had usually made the first friendly advances. Perhaps, Minot had possessed a proud spirit of his own; but he hid it away. Whereas, Prue, when aroused, was like a conflagration. However, these days seemed so long ago that she had quite forgotten what Minot looked like, and really did not care.

Minot was at college now, or nearly through, she did not know which. They would probably not be married for a few years anyway. And pray, what might not happen in that time? So thought Prudence Chesterfield.

He was studying to be a doctor. She knew that much. But as she had always been strong and well, she

despised the profession, and declared sweepingly that doctors made people ill, and the world would get along much better if there were fewer doctors and more common sense. Prue hit straight from the shoulder, just like her father; but she did it with her tongue.

So little Prue grew in stature, in decision and dignity of character. And she also grew in grace of body and beauty of face. And all the world (her small world surrounding her), loved and obeyed her.

It was a luminous sunny day, the day the new gardener arrived. The gardens were brilliant with flowers, myriad-hued, like a sunburst of opals. A dash of crimson hollyhocks almost hid the parlor windows. Violets and pansies dotted the lawns. And in the orchards was the first bright gleam of the ripening fruit. The foliage of the maples and elms seemed particularly fresh and green. The rhododendron bushes had burst into a late shower of red and pink blossoms. And the blackening berries of the bramble shone like little dark eyes out of the hedges, where the elderberry and milkweed tangled their blossoms with a medley of scrambling vines and prickly raspberry bushes.

The yellowing grain in the distant fields bent and rippled before a brisk breeze. Silverdike pattered and whirled over its pebbly bed, making music beneath the apple-trees; winding in and out of shadow and sunlight. And the air hummed with bees and insects and trilled with the sweet notes of the cheery feathered family.

Summer time indeed! The air was full of it! Rich, strong, sweet and electric! It was good to be alive!

At least so thought Prue and Maida, as they watched expectantly for the new gardener. Every event interested them, however small. It was some excitement in their quiet, monotonous life. And Mr. Chesterfield thought this gardener was a particularly "taking" fellow. Whereupon Prue had made up her mind to be hypercritical on the subject.

Prue looked her sweetest this day, in a simple frock of pale blue muslin. Her chestnut curls escaped in wild profusion from under a blue poke bonnet, and framed a face refined in feature and sweet in expression. Her chief beauty lay in her eyes—large, liquid, dark-blue eyes, with long dark lashes, which lent them a softness quite irresistible. There was a womanly firmness in the chin, and a bewitching dimple at the corner of her mouth, where mischief and a smile readily played. But the little aquiline nose was haughty and aristocratic, and when its small owner was offended, the sensitive nostrils had a way of playing which betrayed an impatient, imperious spirit, fond of dominating, but slow to yield to another's dominion.

Maida and Prue were so engrossed in planting some seeds in Maida's own flower-bed that neither of them noticed a man coming up the winding path from the roadway. And the latter had stood for some minutes in admiring silence before Prue became conscious of some one near.

She turned quickly and blushed over face and neck when her eyes met the man's gaze, and then asked in a half-defiant tone:

"Is there anyone you wish to see?"

The man lifted his hat politely, and asked:

"Does Mr. Chesterfield live here?"

"Yes," answered Prue, evading the man's eyes and tilting her head proudly.

"Then I haven't come to the wrong farm," said the man, much satisfied.

"No! This is Mr. Chesterfield's estate." Prue wanted to laugh at her own proud assertion. She had never called the farm an estate; but she intended putting this man in his place.

"Ah! Pardon me! I should have said 'the wrong estate.'" And the least glimmer of a smile played about the man's inscrutable eyes.

Prue bit her lip. This man was making fun of her, and she would not have it.

"Do you wish to see Mr. Chesterfield?" she inquired, ignoring his remark.

"Yes, Miss—Miss Chesterfield?" with the least lifting of his eyebrows.

"Such impudence!" thought Prue. "It is none of his business who I am!"

But she said aloud, the desire to dominate stirring her little nostrils as battle affects the nostrils of a war-horse:

"Who are you?"

"I am the new gardener, Miss."

"And your name?" impatiently.

"Donald Jackson, at your service, Miss." He said

it in such a way that it sounded like mockery to Prue's proud soul.

"Go around to the back door," returned Prue, haughtily. "Maria McCutcheon will make you a cup of tea."

"Maria McCutcheon?" inquired the young man. "I came to see Mr. Chesterfield."

And there was the least twinkle of amusement in his small hazel eyes.

"Mr. Chesterfield is across the fields at present," said Prue, again ignoring what she considered his impudence.

"Shall I go and find him?" suggested the man.

But Prue was not going to yield an inch of her dominion.

"No!" she snapped imperiously.

"I would like to see him now," said he politely.

"If you really came to see him you will have to wait," replied Prue.

And she turned a very defiant back on the man, equivalent to a dismissal. And Donald Jackson, after lifting his hat to Maida, who stood gazing in wonder, departed to Maria McCutcheon's domains.

"Nice sort of a man for Daddy to engage," quoth Prue; and then petulantly. "I hate him! I know I shall never get on **with** that gardener. Never!"

Maida looked up in astonishment.

"Why, Prue dear, he never said anything to hurt you, did he? I like him already. I shall soon make friends with him."

"Oh, you can do as you please! You are only a little

girl. But I am grown up and mistress here, and I won't have that man about if I don't want him"

Then, seeing that the first part of her remarks had hurt Maida she flung her arms impulsively around her sister's neck.

"I love you, Maida! I didn't mean to hurt you!"

"I'm not hurt, Prue. But I think Donald has such kind eyes!"

"I don't! I think they are horrid!" from Prue.

"Well! He smiles in such a nice, friendly way!"

"Friendly! Nice!" laughed Prue, curling her lip.

"Very!"

"And isn't he a fine, big man, Prue?"

"So are elephants! And sometimes they trample on persons they don't like."

"But he didn't trample on you, Prue?"

"Oh, no! He didn't do anything. He just tried to make fun of——" Prue stopped short, and dug the trowel into the earth with unnecessary vigor.

"Fun of what?" asked Maida.

"Nothing, dear. Don't let us talk any more about him. I don't like him, and there is the end of it."

"Try and like Donald, if father likes him, Prue. And because I know I shall like him."

Prue laughed outright at this fine reasoning. Her sweet temper returned, and with a merry smile she ran away in search of her father.

CHAPTER II

Some weeks had passed. Life at the Chesterfields had gone as usual, quietly and peacefully.

Maida and the new gardener had become fast friends. In a thousand ingenious ways Donald had won Maida's child-like admiration. He made a swing for her among the firs and oak trees on the knoll. He had planted some candytuft and ageratum in her little bed, which spelled out her name. "Maida," greatly to her delight. He had also arranged a tiny hedge row to protect it from the chickens, which sometimes escaped from their inclosure and made depredations in the gardens. In one corner he had even built a tiny rookery, planting it with ferns; with columbine, whose red and purple bells rang for the fairies, and the trailing arbutus, portulacca, and another of four o'clock lilies, whose daily opening at a regular hour was a continuous marvel to Maida. And he had made a tiny rustic house for her dolls. This had taken time. Donald worked all day and only in spare hours could he plan for Maida's pleasure and carry it out.

This was not the only way Donald had won Maida. To her his knowledge was wonderful—of the flowers and birds, the ferns and mosses she found in the woods and brought to him. And he had stories for everything. Fairies and gnomes peopled the woods and dwelt among the flowers. The stream, Silverdike, had its romances of mermaidens and mermen. Sylphs lin-

gered in every shady nook. Nymphs sped on the wings of the wind. Indeed, Maida's world was now alive with tiny, dainty, gossamer beings.

Donald had a wonderful fund of tales; historical incidents, legends and stories of land and sea; a world of romance, which readily appealed to Maida's childish imagination.

All this time Prue had been studiously avoiding the new gardener. And Donald quietly kept out of her way, purposely or not, it mattered little to Prue. She had taken a violent dislike to him.

She did not wonder at his interest in Maida. Her sister was a pretty child, with her sunny hair and bright face. Any laborer might well be pleased to interest himself in such a little fairy. And Prue would smile with great condescension when Maida told her the kind things Donald did, and of the wonders and stories he related.

"You are a grateful little soul!" she said one day to Maida. "It is the goodness of your own heart that you see in Donald, and your own bright imagination which pictures such wonders in the stories he relates!"

"Oh, no! It is not I. Donald is a very wonderful gardener!" exclaimed Maida warmly.

"Wonderful, indeed! Yes, he is to little folks like you, Maida."

"Don't you think he is wonderful, Prue?"

"I don't think anything about him at all," returned her elder sister coldly.

"I don't believe you like him even yet!" said Maida, casting a woeful glance at Prudence.

"Perhaps I don't. But probably it is my own fault," answered Prue, not wishing to hurt Maida's feelings.

"Oh, no! It is not your fault. It is no one's fault, Prue."

"Of course not!" assented the proud girl, curling her lip.

"But if you came and sat beside him on the grass when he is gardening, as I do, and listened to his tales, I know you would like him."

Prue laughed outright at this suggestion, picturing it in reality.

"Possibly I would!" she exclaimed.

"There is one rosebush that has more stories about than about any of the other flowers," continued Maida.

"Which rosebush is that?" asked her sister, listening indifferently.

"That one over there!" And Maida pointed to a solitary rosebush, near a rustic seat on the knoll, in the shade of a clump of fir trees.

This seat was Prue's favorite resort when she wanted to be alone or to rest and dream.

"Oh!" cried Prue. "Is that so?"

"Yes! And I told him that bush was particularly yours. That you had it planted there.

"Did you?" airily from Prue.

"Indeed, I told him that I thought you had planted it yourself, Prue! You did, didn't you?"

"Yes! And what said Sir Gardener?"

"He said it looked lonely." And Maida looked troubled.

"Did he, indeed? How clever of him to make that discovery!" Prue's lip curled again.

"And he said that it would be better for it if it had another rosebush beside it, a bigger and stronger rosebush."

"How smart of the gardener!" interjected Prue, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I didn't see just why," went on the little girl; "but Donald knows everything about flowers, and of course he was right."

"Oh, of course!" Prue bit her lip and turned her face away.

"Poor, lonely rosebush!" murmured Maida, with a puzzled expression. "I think Donald is right. Anyway, he knows best."

"Certainly, Donald's knowledge is admirable!" exclaimed Prue satirically.

"I'm so glad you think so!" joyously cried the little girl, not comprehending the tone of her sister's last remark. "Perhaps you will grow as fond of him as I am some day, and then you won't think it's my goodness that makes Donald so clever and so kind."

Prudence dug her heel impatiently into the graveled walk.

"Come, Maida! There's father! Let us race for it!"

Prudence was glad to change the subject; for it was only adding fuel to the fire of her dislike for the new gardener.

Away flew the girls down the path to meet Mr. Chesterfield. He had just returned from his daily survey of the farm.

"Well, children!" cried Mr. Chesterfield, stooping to kiss them. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, and Prudence was small beside him, to say nothing of Maida.

"Maida won the race!" said Prue, smiling and apparently breathless.

"Yes! Because Prue never will let herself win when running with me," returned the little sister reproachfully.

"That's right, Prue," said her father, "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. By the way, children, there are parcels at the express office. I want them to-day. All the men are busy. You might drive into Asburne and get them for me. Poor old Rosenante stumbled on a stone this morning and injured her leg. So you will have to take Wildfire in the phaeton. I can trust my Prue to manage that mettlesome horse in the phaeton?"

Prue looked playfully indignant.

"Manage him, Daddy! I should think I could! Wildfire is spirited; but answers quickly to a gentle rein. Indeed, she runs steadier than Rosenante, and I would rather have her. Wildfire's only fear is an autocar. But they so rarely pass this way, we can risk her all right. Even if we did meet one, I could control her."

Prudence Chesterfield never lacked in self-confidence.

"Well, children, after lunch ask Donald to harness

Wildfire. If I had any doubt of your being able to manage Wildfire in the phaeton, I would send Donald with you," said Mr. Chesterfield doubtfully.

"Certainly not!" came the quick, decisive answer from Prue.

Mr. Chesterfield knew his daughter too well to contradict or argue when she made a decision.

And they walked on to the house, chatting gaily.

Maida was delighted at the thought of spending an afternoon in Asburne. And Prue promised her an ice-cream at Reineck's, the real big candy shop. Then they would do some shopping and meet some friends. It would be so exciting! Maida's eyes danced with joy.

After lunch Maria McCutcheon went to Prue's room and rapped at the door.

"Come in!" answered Prue's sweet voice.

"It's only me," said Maria.

"Well, Maria! I suppose you want me to do some purchasing in Asburne for you! A red rose for your new bonnet? Or a red ribbon for your neck? Or do you——"

"No, no, Miss!" interrupted Maria. "I want for nothing. Not me! And if I did, I wouldn't have ye go an' buy 'em for me, behind that twice-crossed, bad-tempered Wildfire! No! Not for all the Christians selling red roses or anything in the world!"

With this outburst, Maria's face blazed as red as her arms had ever been in the washtub.

Prue was tempted to laugh. But affection for her old nurse conquered her sense of humor.

"Dear Maria! Your heart rules your head! It ever did. And your fears were always founded on your love for me, and I always swept them over, as a wave washes a sand house away. I am like the leopard, Maria; I cannot change my spots, big or little!"

"Maybe, Miss Prue! But I'll talk about this somehow, as I'm feared for ye. Wildfire 'as never been in the phaeton before."

"I know it!" answered her mistress calmly.

"An' Dan says as how one of the boys as works across the fields says a great green auto business passed early this morning, an' he knows sure it's in Asburne. He says Wildfire won't stand for it."

"Never mind Dan! You never did. Isn't it something new for you to take Dan's word? And to use it for me?" Prue looked solemn.

Maria's face was already the lobster shade, or it might have deepened in color. But her pent-up feelings had exhausted the blushing power and she was reduced to her last shade of vermilion.

"Ye've downed me at that point, Miss Prue! But I still don't think it safe for my two babies to run off alone into Asburne with that spitfire quadruped critter in the harness. Dan 'ud fall asleep over the dashboard if he went. Why not take Donald?"

Prue's brow clouded.

"Maria, Miss Prudence knows her own mind."

"And Miss Prue's mind was always to have her own way," thought Maria, as she went away. "And some

day—— Poor Minot Braid! Alack! Maybe I'm growing as half-witted as Dan!"

It was late in the afternoon when Prudence turned Wildfire's head homeward from Asburne.

Such a day of enjoyment they had spent!

When they left home the sun gleamed cheerily in the splendor of an unclouded sky; a sky of shimmering azure. The air was rich with fragrance of rain field and clover meadow, and melodious with the twittering of birdland. The goldenrod and everlasting nodded by the roadside. And every now and then Prudence must needs stop Wildfire while Maida descended to gather them. Then Maida would run after a squirrel and the little frightened creature would race up a tree and scamper out on a bough to scold the pretty disturber of his peace. Or a butterfly would scintillate into the sunshine, and Maida would laugh with glee as she chased its irregular flutterings down the road.

Even Prudence felt that she must give into the day when they drove past the woods. How tempting they were in their green shade and tangled aisles! So Wildfire was tethered to a stump while they went in search of the fairies who drank from the bluebells; who made platters of the daisies and turned the leaves of buttercups into spoons, as Donald had told Maida so often. And Maida found the big toadstools which the fairies used for tables, and under which the gnomes slept. And what soft beds of moss for the fairies to dream on! Gray and green, spattered with the polished red berries of the wintergreen, and the purple cups of violets! Vio-

lets filled with dew, the nectar of the dainty gossamer people! Wonderful!

It was all so like a story book! And Maida had much to tell Prudence which Donald had told her. Indeed, their stay in the woods seemed all too short. And Prue listened because she loved Maida, so she said to herself.

But fresh delights were in store for the little girl. Everyone in Asburne knew them. Nods and smiles and greetings met them at every turn. Maida came in for a large share of the townfolks' attention, which brought a flush of pleasure into her cheeks.

They gave themselves up to the delights of their small shopping expedition, ending their happy afternoon at the "real big" candy shop, and Maida had the promised ice cream.

The sun was well on its downward path when the girls set out for home. Maida was tired; Prudence also, but she would not acknowledge it. Shadows were falling dark in the woods, and Maida peered sleepily into their density, to find the fairies' ring. The squirrels had ceased their chatter. The birds had gone to bed; only the night-hawk and whip-poor-will broke the silence with their lonely cries. All nature seemed to know that the day was closing. The breeze had died down to a dreamy lull, fluttering among the branches and over the grain fields.

As they were driving along, both tired and sleepy, neither noticed an autocar approaching from a cross-road. It was whirling at a good speed. An observer

would have supposed the chauffeur was aiming to cross the road in front of the phaeton before the latter reached its path. On it came to the utter oblivion of the two tired girls. But they were near home now, and Wildfire was trotting there at her own gait, instinct guiding her more than Prue's listless rein. On trotted Wildfire, oblivious too.

Then the sound of soft whirring heels caused her to cock her ears and listen. Nearer and nearer came the sound! Wildfire tossed her head, sniffed the air and looked about.

On came the sound. And then suddenly the loud blast of a horn broke on the ears of the sleepy girls. And off bolted Wildfire.

Prudence caught the reins. Maida screamed and clung to the phaeton. And away went Wildfire full speed down the road, striking fire with her flying heels and pulling at the bit with all her might.

With all her tired strength Prudence tugged at the reins. But away raced Wildfire. And the chauffeur stopped the autocar as the phaeton, swaying from side to side, rattled past its "bows" and disappeared round a curve of the road.

Prudence kept her presence of mind. It was well, for Maida watched her, and did as she did. On sped Wildfire! Prudence knew that every moment might mean death and yet, knowing that, her tired arms could scarce hold the terrified steed any longer.

Another curve of the road, and they would be in sight of home. Would any one hear the noise of the

clattering hoofs? Could they help her? Would they see them? And would they realize that it was a runaway, and no high rate speed, such as Prue liked when Wildfire obeyed the reins, and with which she enjoyed startling everyone when she drove up the avenue?

Prue's pride and wilfulness rose before her as her thoughts flew with the horse's heels. She felt it would be her fault if Maida was killed. And with that thought her spirit broke. Her arms trembled; her hands weakened. She heard Maida scream. A dark figure rushed through the whirling world, and Prudence knew no more.

CHAPTER III

It was a month after Donald Jackson had stopped Wildfire in her giddy flight. The sudden checking of the horse had tipped the phaeton and thrown out both girls. Maida had fallen on a grassy mound. Except for the fright and a few bruises she was all right. But Prue's head had struck a stone and caused a slight concussion. She had been ill for days afterward. So ill that the home was quieter than ever, and its members went about on tip-toe. For a while they almost despaired of Prue's life.

During that time Donald looked nearly as white as the invalid. He moved among the flowers like a sick man.

Day by day he inquired after Prudence, and picked

out the choicest and sweetest of the flowers to send to her room.

Maida had noticed some American Beauties among them. She was certain that they were not out of Daddy's garden. Donald must have got them in Asburne, although she had never seen American Beauties there. And of course Chicago was too far away. And of course that was ridiculous anyway. Donald was only a poor gardener. Maida laughed at herself. Wouldn't Prue think she was silly! But she wouldn't tell her.

Prudence was too ill to notice flowers. And so the days wore on.

But convalescence did come. Maria McCutcheon's careful nursing, aided not a little by Maida's cheerfulness and her readiness to do all she could, soon had their effect on Prue. And as the invalid grew stronger Maida would sit by her bedside reading or chatting, or relating Donald's wonderful tales. Sometimes she would make some little dainty with her own hands, which Maria had taught her; or she would bring in some fruit. And nothing pleased her better than to bring Prudence one of "Donald's bouquets," the American Beauties mixed with the white roses from the bush on the knoll.

One day Prudence noticed them.

"Where did those American Beauties come from, Maida?"

"I don't know where they came from," said Maida,

fearing to let her sister know, as she remembered Prue's dislike of Donald in the past.

"Who gave them to me?" asked Prudence, turning suddenly on Maida.

"Donald!" breathed the child, ever so softly, her eyes filling with tears.

"Donald!" exclaimed Prudence, coldly. "He has little need to spend his small wages on me. He has more need to spend them on himself."

"Are you offended with him, Prue?"

"No, dear! I am not. But Donald is only a gardener! A very ordinary man!" and a proud look crossed Prue's face.

Maida walked over to the window. And there was silence between them. It lasted for several minutes. And then Prudence heard a low sob, and another. Maida was crying.

"Come here, dearie!" said the elder sister gently.

"I did not mean to be unkind. I am very grateful to Donald for saving our lives, and you may thank him from me for the American Beauties. It was very kind of him to buy them for me, and kind of him to inquire after me. But don't expect too much of Sister Prue."

"I wish you would tell him all that yourself, Prue. He looks so white and tired. He works so hard you know. And I think it would do him good if you were kind to him."

"Would it please you, Maida?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the little girl, brightening. "Very much!"

"Then I shall do so when I am up again," said Prudence. And she lay back on the lounge with a deep sigh and slept.

Some days later Prudence Chesterfield was able to come downstairs.

One sunny afternoon in August she wandered into the flower gardens. It was one of the quiet, dreamy days which come in the month of the harvest moon. Except for a light zephyr, which gently stirred the foliage of the oaks and firs on the knoll, and the nodding heads of the flowers, the air was still. Only the occasional chirrup of a sleepy songster and the soft purling of Silverdike disturbed the drowsy silence. The tall hollyhocks near the porch bent their crimson heads to whisper together. Yellow asters, velvety dahlias, the blue and purple cornflowers, the variegated poppies and nasturtiums, the simple pink, the proud canna lilies, and a host of other flowers fluttered at the zephyr's kiss, in an old-fashioned bed which surrounded the piazza in a rainbow flash of brilliant coloring. Even the leaves of the stiff and stoic geranium, in its conventional borderline encircling a bed of citified propriety, drooped lazily in the August heat.

In the orchard the apples fell with a soft thud. Beyond the orchards, where the ruddy apple and purple plum held sway, the grasses of field and meadow bowed before the breeze in a glowing checkerboard of golden brown. Farther still were the green hills, patches of their woodlands already yellowing with the closing season.

Prudence crossed the lawn to her favorite rustic seat on the knoll. She stood there a moment, plucked one of the white roses off her bush, and pinned it to her dress. Then she wandered to a clump of firs nearby. She wanted to be alone; so she spread a rug and cushions on the grass in the center of a triangle of fir trees, and lay down to doze and dream.

It was a day for dreaming, and Prudence closed her eyes. The figure of Donald rose before her, as he looked the first day they met; a tall, strong man, with hazel eyes that seemed to read her through and through. Prudence opened her eyes to rid herself of the vision, and her eyes lit on the white rose pinned to her dress. She threw it impatiently on the grass, and closed her eyes again. But Donald would come and sleep would not. Donald had been coming ever since that day when his eyes first gazed into hers.

But Prudence Chesterfield was a proud girl. The idea of an ordinary gardener! She had been angry for months. No one knew it. And Donald only saw a freezing exterior, which he might contemplate as he pleased. Why could not her thoughts be free of that gardener? He provoked her.

And then Prudence thought of the way he had saved Maida and herself, and her heart melted. She was a brave girl, and admired courage and strength in others. She had to acknowledge that Donald had done a fine thing when he stopped frightened Wildfire. She could not say that any ordinary man might have done that;

because any ordinary man would not have stopped so mad a creature. And then Prudence sighed.

Since the day he came she had frozen him, patronized him, condescended to him, and avoided him. And now that he had saved her life and Maida's, Prudence felt that she could not continue treating him as she had done. What was she to do? And what about her promise to Maida?

She thought she had been keeping out of his way lately. And yet, when she came to think about it she had not seen him once. Perchance it was he who was so studiously avoiding her! And Prue's cheeks flushed with unreasonable indignation.

The anger was short-lived. For another thought entered her mind. And she bit her lip, as her habit was when anything annoyed and at the same time dominated her. The thought said to Prudence:

"You have been avoiding him because you are afraid of him. Or is it that you are afraid of yourself? You have been seeking him in this garden for days, and he is not here. Why? And because he is not here, you are angry. Why?"

Prudence tossed her head petulantly and said to herself:

"Well, Sir Gardener! This may or may not be; but it matters not a whit for I am the affianced bride of Minot Braid, whom I don't know, and have not seen for years!" And then Prudence laughed outright.

Then she grew serious again.

Donald was a brave, strong man. And his hazel eyes

were really very fine, even if they were small. And if all Maida told her was true, Donald must know a great deal. Her father found him pleasant and useful; Maida found him interesting and kind; and she found him brave. She began to feel that she knew Donald; indeed, had known him a long, long time. What was she to say, and what would she do, when they met again?

Prudence picked up the white rose and studied it a while dreamily. It was a lovely rose. So sweet and fragrant! And such a beautiful pure white! Prudence laid her soft cheek against its dainty petals, and closed her eyes, sighing contentedly.

Then Pride crept in and whispered:

"What would your proud father think of you? Donald is only an ordinary man! A gardener! He has gentle manners, but——! A gardener!"

Prudence opened her eyes quickly, and threw the white rose angrily into the firs, where it caught on the sharp green needles and hung head downward.

"I am to be Minot Braid's wife!" said she proudly.

But Pride, like her late anger and laughter, soon subsided. Prudence buried her face in her hands, and the tears trickled slowly down her cheeks.

So far her life had been smooth, clear and bright. She could not face this new life. She did not want to fight the battle; nor to solve the problem. The present was fight; the future—my story.

Silently weeping Prudence was oblivious to the fact

that Donald and Maida had come to the knoll. Maida was sitting on the rustic bench; Donald on the grass.

"Oh, Donald, how funny!"

It was Maida's voice, and a peal of laughter from Donald followed.

Prudence sat up and peered through the firs. Evidently they had not seen her. The fir trees were thick, and they sat with their backs toward her.

"Tell me your new story of Prue's rosebush, Donald!"

"What story, Miss Maida?"

"Why, Donald, you haven't forgotten it, have you? You said yesterday, when you were trimming it, that you remembered a story about it, which you had intended telling me some weeks ago; but Wildfire's runaway had put it out of your head."

"Did I?"

"Yes, you did, Donald!"

"Oh, of course! I remember."

"Now you'll tell it to me, won't you?" said Maida, pleadingly.

"Certainly, if you would care to hear it. I have some time to spare, so if you are patient I shall tell it."

"I'm patient!" laughed Maida; adding in a child-like tone of command, "Begin!"

"Once upon a time," began Donald, "there was a great princess. She had large blue eyes and curly brown hair. Everyone loved her in her kingdom, for she was as good as she was pretty."

"Lovely!" exclaimed Maida softly. "Just like my Prue."

"When she came of age she was to be married to a prince and made queen over his realm at the same time."

"Splendid!" interjected Maida.

"She had only seen the Prince when she was a little girl," continued Donald.

"Just my age?" interrupted Maida.

"Yes! But her mother had promised her to him years ago."

"Like my Prue and Minot Braid?" inquired Maida.

"Perhaps!" said Donald smiling. "But this princess was proud, and said nothing. Though I think she felt angry at her mother's promise. One day in the autumn her page died, and the princess had to find a new one, for there was no one to take charge of the little ceremonies the page had to perform. It was a lovely afternoon when the new page arrived! Such a glorious summer day!"

"Why, Donald, you said it was autumn!"

"Did I? Well, I meant May."

"Of course you know better than I do, Donald, but I thought May was a part of spring."

"Well," said Donald, apologetically, "May was summer time where this princess lived. Indeed, where she lived it was summer time all the time!"

"How odd!" exclaimed Maida.

"There now, Miss Maida, you must not interrupt again, or I shall forget everything."

"All right! Go on, Donald!"

"The sun was shining so brightly, all the flowers were out, and the birds were singing their sweetest. And the orchards were in blossom——"

"Orchards like ours?" from Maida.

"Exactly!" said Donald. "The page came into the princess' garden and he thought her very pretty when he saw her. But being a poor page he was very humble and the princess ordered him off to his duties."

"Why was he humble?" asked Maida.

"Because—because he couldn't very well help it. He was only a page, and she was a princess."

"But I don't understand it, if he was a good man," protested Maida.

"The princess knew nothing about him, and she was very wise," said Donald. "She sent him to his work. He made a good page. At least, everyone thought so—but the princess."

"How funny of the princess, Donald!"

"The page fell in love with the princess," went on the gardener, ignoring Maida's interruption. "And the princess had a white rosebush just like this one, so he gathered a rose every day for her. He did his work well, because he loved her. And the princess kept the page, although she showed him that she did not like him at all. Everyone else liked him but her. One day the princess went out for a drive, and the horses got frightened at a train and ran away very fast. The page was gathering a rose from the bush that day,

when he heard the horses' hoofs clattering along the road toward the castle."

"Just like Wildfire!" cried Maida excitedly.

"He rushed out and caught the horses and stopped them."

"How brave of him!" exclaimed Maida.

"No, it wasn't very wonderful. The page was very strong, and fond of horses. He knew what to do, and how to manage them. Indeed, he had ridden on horses. The princess did not seem grateful for this, naturally. It was nothing. But the page did hope that she would like him a little bit after that. He fell more in love with her than ever, now that he had saved her. She had always been so cold to him. He could not endure the thought of her being that way again, after the runaway. So he decided to leave her." Donald paused.

"Oh, is that all? How horrid! Why don't they love each other and marry? I'm sure if she had been an American girl she would have. We are all equal here."

"Wait!" said Donald. "I haven't finished. "The page left her. But the day drew near for the princess' marriage, and wonderful preparations were made. The castle was decorated with flowers and flags. The gentlemen and ladies were gorgeously dressed in satins and silks. And the princess watched and watched; but she could not see him coming."

"What kept him so long?" asked Maida.

"He wasn't sure if the princess loved him, any more than the page was," returned Donald.

"Oh, dear! What did she do? How awful!"

Donald sat quiet for a few minutes. And Prudence buried her face in her hands, among the fir trees.

"Finish it, Donald! Do! Make the princess love him! Do!"

Donald paused as if to add something; and then he went on:

"Well, the princess had another rosebush planted beside hers; a bigger, stronger one; but not a prettier or daintier rosebush. The princess' rosebush was the loveliest of all rosebushes. And every day, as long as they lived, they picked a rose from each bush. Their lives, their love, their white roses, lived and died together. And so ends the story."

"That princess makes me think of my Prue. Only I don't think his being a prince would have made her love him when she did not love a page."

"Neither do I," said Donald. "And that's just it! You see I ended it that way to please you. Do you think a princess would marry a page?"

"Yes, if he were a brave man, and a kind man, like you, Donald. That oughtn't to make any difference."

Donald laughed heartily at the child's reasoning.

From her corner among the firs Prudence had heard Donald's story. She had listened willingly. What a musical baritone voice he had!

Her interest had grown with the story. It seemed so real. She wished it had been true; only that the prince had been a gardener. But why didn't the prin-

cess love the page in the first place, and not wait till he was a prince?

Then came the thought of Minot Braid to trouble her mind. She did not know him, and did not love him. Yet she was taking it for granted that they were to be married. How could he love her, whom he had never known? Marry Minot Braid! Such nonsense!

Prudence peeped through the branches at Donald.

"I will not marry Minot Braid! No, indeed! He may be as rich as Croesus and as wise as Solomon; but I will not marry him! I will marry whom I please. That is, if I can; I mean if he loves me; at least——" And Prudence stopped thinking.

Prudence stopped for two reasons. One, because she could not think any longer. The other, her father was standing across the lawn, calling Donald to bring some tools lying near the fir trees.

The girl gasped, then rose slowly to her feet. Donald was coming toward the trees and there was no escape for her. He did not know she was there, and she hoped he would not see her. She watched him coming. She saw him start. He had seen her; but Donald picked up the tools and returned to Mr. Chesterfield.

Behind the firs Prudence flushed, for their eyes had met. Shyly she reached out and lifted the white rose she had flung away. And this proud girl pinned it on again.

"I just can't un'erstan' what's come over Miss Prue

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H. RICHARDSON

Prudence peeped through the branches at Donald.

lately. She's not a bit like 'erself," said Maria McCutcheon, turning over a pancake, as she stood by the fire, some months later.

"Don't see it!" said Dan, taking his pipe out of his mouth, to contemplate his admirable spouse.

"Oh, ye never see anything! No one 'spects ye to!" returned Maria.

"But if she ain't 'erself, she ain't nobody else. However, I won't say as I'm right. I won't say that, Maria."

Dan puffed slowly, after giving forth this wistful remark.

"Stupid! Can't ye see how she blushes every time the gardener goes near her!"

"Meaning myself?" asked Dan with a grin.

"Idiot! Ye know I mean Donald."

"Phew! Donald, eh?" exclaimed Dan in astonishment.

"Yes, Sleephead! Donald! He's a decent fellow; but his airs is too fine for gardening. I like 'im fine. But he's either offended Miss Prue, or he's presumshious."

"Eh! What's 'presumshious' mean, Maria?"

"It means that ye had the impert'ence to ask me to marry ye, when ye arn't good enough for me!"

"Ye needn't 'ave said 'yes,' Maria!"

"But I did!"

"Ye did!" assented Dan with a wink.

"Wisht I hadn't!" remarked Maria stormily.

"Can't say as I see 'ow that affects Miss Prue. Unless," and here Dan laid down his pipe, a thing he

rarely did, and stared in amazement at Maria, "unless ye're jealous."

Maria turned away in disgust.

"Donald's a fine gardener!" continued Dan. "Near as good as myself."

"Humph!" from his cheerful spouse.

"I just like Donald fine!" finished Dan, picking up his pipe again.

"If you do," called Donald, putting his head in at the kitchen door, "you will do him a favor. Please give Mr. Chesterfield this note when he comes in. Good-by, Maria!"

"Ye're not a-going, Donald?" exclaimed Maria in amazement.

"I am, Maria."

"And why are ye going?"

"I have to go." Donald said this in a tone of such dignity and reserve that Maria asked no more questions.

"Good-bye, Dan!" he said, and was gone.

Maria McCutcheon looked at Dan.

"I told ye so!"

But Dan nodded his head sagely and said:

"I knew it was a-coming!"

"'Ow did ye know?" snapped Maria.

"I heerd 'im saying good-by to Miss Maida yesterday, and saying as 'ow the page was a-going away, becos the princess, whoever she be, didn't love 'im; she was colder'n ever, an' o' course a page was only a page, but

he might be a prince. But I won't say as 'ow I'm right. I won't say that!"

"I'm afeared he's a bit too fine for gardening, with 'em stories, Dan."

Dan winked and said nothing.

Then a wonderful illumination took place in Maria's mind, and she burst out:

"For all 'at we knows, Dan, he's a Somebody! A rich Somebody, Dan!"

And Dan McCutcheon did a thing he never did before in his life. He turned his back on his astonished spouse and marched out of the kitchen, chuckling till his body shook; chuckling till he had to remove his pipe and stop smoking!

Maria McCutcheon folded her arms, and looked stormily after him.

"I won't ask no questions, Mr. Dan. Not I! But ye've downed me this time, some'ow or 'uther!"

CHAPTER IV

Donald had been gone for some months. Long, lonely months for Prudence. His aunt was ill, so he had said. He had to leave suddenly, and had no time to say good-by, even to Miss Prudence.

And all these past months Prudence had looked poorly. Indeed, Maria McCutcheon anxiously watched her "baby," and shook her head doubtfully when she

and Dan were alone. But Dan sat like a sphinx smoking his pipe, and occasionally winking in an odd way at his spouse. He had grown silent since his chuckling spell. And Maria declared to a friendly gossip that she was sure Dan knew why Miss Prue was so pale, and where Donald the gardener was to be found. Dan's absolute silence was uncanny. He had not gossiped for days, and that was extraordinary. She was that positive he knew more than could be got out of him of this "gardener business." Poor Miss Prue!

And then Mr. Chesterfeld observed how thin and white Prudence was growing. He sent for a doctor. And the doctor, wiser than the father, ordered a trip away for a change of scene. So it was planned to send Prue to New York on a visit to her relatives there.

Ever since the day on the knoll that she had overheard the story of the princess and the page, Donald's manner had changed toward her. He saw her among the firs that day in August, and he knew that she had understood him. Yes! His manner had changed! He had grown even colder than she was, and avoided her so completely that sometimes she never saw him for days. He never gave her a chance to show him that she did care, and was sorry for the past. Donald simply developed into an iceberg. And then suddenly, one day in December, he went away; went away without a word of hope to Prudence! And left her to dream over the sad What-Might-Have-Been.

She had visited in New York some weeks. Weeks filled with a round of pleasures; shopping, theaters,

supper parties, concerts, automobiling in Central Park and along Riverside Drive, and the usual gayeties which people of fair means and time to spare can enjoy in New York during the winter time. The change had brightened her up a little; but she still looked pale.

Prudence Chesterfield had seen much that was gay and beautiful, interesting and exciting in New York. But it failed to bring back her old self. She had changed; changed in a different way from Donald, seemingly.

Everywhere she looked for one pair of eyes, one face in the world. She studied the crowds of faces, as her uncle's autocar sped down Fifth Avenue, or hurried over the frozen roads of Central Park. Hungrily she watched the thousands of busy beings in the shops and on the sidewalks. It was in vain. No Donald was to be seen anywhere. Hundreds, thousands of hazel eyes there were in New York. But the pair Prue most longed to see were not.

There were days when the world seemed to whirl so giddily around her that she even wondered if ever a Donald had been in her life, and dreams of love and happiness. The past seemed so unreal, in the midst of all this clatter, and excitement and gayety; the knoll and the fir trees so far away from the brownstone mansions of Fifth Avenue; the princess and the page almost ridiculous among these scurrying throngs of people. Fact and fancy incompatible. But Prue's gardener was very much alive. The past existed, and no present would ever wipe it out.

Prudence knew that she could not expect to see Donald in New York; indeed, never to see him again. For he had said nothing of returning to the Chesterfields' home.

Nevertheless, Donald Jackson was very much alive. Dan did know more about the "gardener business" than he intended relating to Maria. And some day Maria McCutcheon was to be "downed" in a way she never expected.

One day an invitation came for Prudence and her cousins to a private dance in the Hotel Belmont. It was nearing the end of her visit in New York. Indeed, this was to be her last dance before she returned home. Prudence had made up her mind to bury the remembrance of Donald Jackson forever. And this was to be the last night of the existence of that sweet love memory. To-morrow, and all the to-morrows to come, she would try and live as if Donald had never been. She would marry Minot Braid, and make the best of it. She would never see Donald again. Why think of him? One must live on!

Prudence looked sweet in her dainty white silk gown. Her blue eyes, larger for the thinness of her face, shone with a lustrous beauty to-night. The ready flash seemed to have died out of them. A half-resigned expression played about the pretty mouth that was wont to be so mischievous and proud.

Partners were not wanting, for Prue's admirers were many. But she only half enjoyed the evening, and that in a listless fashion.

Half way through the program Prudence was sitting in a small Turkish room, where Oriental cushions and divans were plentiful and coffee was served on teak-wood tables. Her cousin had left her for another partner and she had begged him to leave her where it was quiet and she would be undisturbed. Oblivious of the music, which bade her dance and forget; oblivious of the lights and laughter, which told her to live in the present alone; oblivious of the fragrance and the fascination of the scented ballroom, the shimmering costumes, the admiring eyes of the men—forgetful of all this wild, strange gayety, she was sitting alone, dreaming of her sweet love memory, dreaming of Donald.

On her lap lay a sheaf of white roses, strangely like those of her bush on the knoll. Her cousin had given them to her in the autocar on their way to the dance. And when she asked where they had come from he said he did not know. And there was no card, nor note attached. Even these had not lightened her heart. For to-night "the story" ended!

To-morrow she must think of Donald no more. She would go back to her home and to Minot Braid.

She leaned back among the silken cushions, laid one arm across them, and buried her face on it. She did not weep; but more than one long, weary sigh broke from her proud lips.

Thus Prudence was sighing and oblivious when a man entered the room. He hesitated, apparently.

"Pardon me! Do I interrupt you, Madam?"

The girl sprang to her feet.

"Donald!" she cried, in amazement, her proud self-command forsaking her. .

"Miss Chesterfield!" he exclaimed, starting backward in apparent surprise. "A thousand pardons! I did not know you were in New York, and least of all at this dance! How came you here?"

Prudence leaned against the wall to steady herself. She felt giddy.

"I am staying with an uncle of mine. And you?" she asked, suddenly aware of his fine evening dress and a small diamond ring which flashed on his finger.

"I am visiting also," answered Donald, with an odd smile in his inscrutable hazel eyes. "What will you have the page do? 'Obedience is the courtesy due to kings' and princesses!"

The girl blushed. Of his free will he was reverting to the past.

"You have always been 'the prince' to me," she said simply, a world of love looking out of her lustrous blue eyes. "A princess asks no obedience of her prince!"

Donald laughed gaily.

"Then you will have another rosebush planted by your white rose on the knoll?" he questioned, looking down into her eyes for the truth.

Prue's eyes fell on the sheaf of white roses.

"Was it you who sent me these flowers to-night?"

The odd smile came back to his eyes again.

"Who did you think sent them?"

"Well, I never thought you would! I did not think you——" she hesitated.

"Cared?" he suggested.

Prue nodded.

"And you thought I had forgotten?" he asked, with a shade of reproach in his tone.

"I did!" replied Prudence.

"Well, they are yours. And you have accepted them, or you wouldn't have them here now, Miss Prudence."

"You didn't give me a chance to refuse them!" laughed Prue. "Did you?"

"I didn't intend that you should refuse," he said, with his look of dominion, which had thrilled Prue the first day their eyes had met. He was conquering her.

"Have your way!" laughed Prue.

"I resolved that I would with you, months ago," said Donald coolly.

"Are you satisfied?" asked Prudence saucily.

"Nearly!" from Donald.

"You gorgon!" laughed the happy girl. "What more do you want?"

"You haven't answered my question yet," from Donald resolutely.

"What question, Sir Gardener?"

"Are you going to have another rosebush planted by your white rose on the knoll?"

"Yes, Donald!" she assented softly. "'And their lives, their love, and their white roses, lived and died together!'"

They both laughed happily.

"'And so ends the story,'" finished Donald, impulsively holding out his arms to her.

"Not the end yet, Donald!" And Prudence retreated.

"Pray, what is the end, little princess?"

Prudence Chesterfield stood irresolute a moment and then asked humbly:

"Who are you, Mr. Jackson?"

Donald caught her impulsively in his arms and kissed her many times. And with a wonderfully sweet smile in his hazel eyes, he whispered softly:

"I am Minot Braid!"

FAITH

CHAPTER I

"GIRLS," said Betty, in tones of decision, "you may say what you like about Faith, but one thing is certain, she is very different from the rest of us. In fact, Faith is distinct from us; rather above us, I think. How it is I can't explain. But she is unlike us, and the difference is a big one."

"I don't see your point," remarked a vulgar-looking, fair-haired girl, whose cheeks were well rouged, and whose fingers were covered with a showy supply of imitation rings. "She never dresses up as we do."

"No!" answered Betty sharply. "She certainly does not, if dressing consists in a supply of boxes and bottles on a dressing-table, or their contents displayed on a show-case!"

The vulgar girl, Sue by name, snapped a glance at the speaker, sniffed, and flung off through the swing door into the restaurant.

It was just between meals, or rather just before luncheon was to be served. The waitresses had collected in a room back of the restaurant, which led into

the kitchen, and were awaiting the arrival of their usual, and sometimes unusual, customers. They had been discussing one of their members, who had lately joined their ranks in waiting on the numerous hungry visitors.

"That's rather hard on Sue, Betty!" said a dark-haired girl. "All the swells powder, and paint, and dye."

"I daresay, Della. They do powder, paint—yes, and they die! Die as girls like Sue are not permitted to die. Sue's is a living death."

"Well! What choice has a girl who has been brought up as Sue was? A sort of 'just growed'!" asked a mild-eyed girl. "Don't be hard on her. Your life has been easier than hers."

"Har it?" demanded Betty, turning on the speaker quickly. "What do you know of my life?"

"Oh, nothing. But I see you every day, and you seem happy. And you are good."

"That's just it, Bud! It is the way we all do. We judge others by a moment of seeing and hearing, when a whole life time has passed before that moment. A whole life time of which we are unaware; perchance as cold, and cruel, and bitter as we think it is sunny and warm."

Bud shrugged her shoulders and subsided.

"Don't let us be the horrors about it, Betty! If Sue has chosen the life we all know she has, so be it! Amen!" And Della laughed as she held up a hand-glass and smoothed her curls.

Betty shuddered. "Sue knows what is right and what is wrong, as well as you or I, or anyone else knows. And as far as I can see her life has been no harder than that of the rest of us; for instance yours."

Della turned away. She busied herself folding some table napkins that had been piled on a table nearby, for she had nothing bright to say of her life.

"Customer!" shouted some one through the swing doors. And Betty lifted a tray of forks, knives and spoons and vanished through the swing doors into the restaurant.

"Betty always gets the last word," said a red-haired girl, good-naturedly.

"And Betty is nearly always right!" remarked Della with a sigh.

"Always!" came in chorus from several other girls in the room; each with her own emphasis on the word, and each in her own tone, for Betty had entered each life and left it better for her presence.

Then the girls hurried into the restaurant, for customers were beginning to arrive in shoals, and minutes cost money in the Boniface.

CHAPTER II

The waitress whom the girls had been discussing went by the name of Faith Winston. For some time she had been a waitress in the Boniface restaurant; yet

no one except, perhaps, Betty, knew her any better than the day she came. And not even Betty knew anything of her life history in the past. She came alone; no one knew where from; and she returned as she came—no one cared; for no one has time enough to care, and no one has care enough to be interested in the life of a mere waitress in New York. Like so many candles they burn for so many moments. And when the wick flares out the last bit of life, their place knows them no more. And so ends the candle.

Faith Winston was a tall, slender girl. Not a trace of color tinged her pale olive cheeks. And she possessed a pair of long, narrow gray eyes; strange eyes, that may have warmed in their time; but which turned a cold gaze on the world around her. A pretty girl was Faith; but wherein particularly lay her prettiness one could not say. Unless it was that subtle something in expression which betrayed a glow of intense feeling beneath the coldness; a warmth that would have made her beautiful had her life found expression. It was like a river—deep and full, flowing silently to the sea beneath a shield of ice. Faith always dressed in black, which, although unobtrusive in color, enhanced her grace and intensified the pale olive of cheek and brow. The waves of her silky brown hair were parted in the center and gathered in a soft knot at the nape of her neck; a striking contrast to the ambitious pompadours of marcel waving and soaring height which stiffly encircled the heads, or flopped in towzled elegance into the eyes of the other waitresses, a la mode. Faith

moved about the restaurant with an air of being oblivious to her surroundings and unconscious of their meaning in her life.

Faith may have studied the warfare of life and decided that her best course would be to stand alone, her natural self and fight or die alone. Or she may have thought to win her battles by the force of opposition and contrast. However it may have been, her general appearance, had she been a plain girl, would have been unnoticeable, but with her fine face and noble carriage Faith was the most striking figure in the Restaurant Boniface. And, although she was utterly unconscious of the fact, the customers of the male sex had considerably increased since she had appeared. A thing of beauty is a joy forever, and a pretty woman is the goal of every man's admiration. Yet Faith had no man friend; not even an acquaintance among them; and not from any unwillingness on their part. Faith's manner toward everyone was a study in dignity and reserve. If she unbent in the least it was only in a slight degree to Betty.

All the waitresses admired her; not willingly. Faith's prettiness was rare, like the golden-hued diamonds. Her personality was almost quixotic in its charm of separation and aloofness. And both were marked among the mediocre faces and characters of those around her. Jealousy is the choice tit-bit of ignorance. And Faith's unknown life and silent beauty met with a full share of this delectable dainty.

Betty alone of them all kept her thoughts of Faith

to herself. Though she was shy in Faith's presence, she betrayed a loyalty and zeal almost fierce among her companions when Faith was the subject discussed and criticized. But Betty was too much a favorite with the girls to be condemned for this. She was their best friend, and each girl had a story in her remembrance of Betty's kindness and help in a time of need and distress. Thus Betty became the peacemaker between Faith and the waitresses. Not one of them had courage to criticize or comment on Faith when she was present. They seemed to fear her. But Betty had to expend all her energies in making peace when Faith was not there. They felt that she was made of finer and better material than themselves, so they disliked her heartily. Envy was the cross, and resentment the consolation of their mediocrity.

Each girl in the Boniface restaurant had her own little history. It may have been a quiet, insignificant one, fraught with its own sorrows, and lit with its small pleasures. Or it may have been an exciting one out in the world in the glare of noonday. But it was a history of life; every-day life. And it interested Betty. Betty had a great heart, although she was unaware of it. Some of the girls had lives of duty to live—duty at home; duty at the Restaurant Boniface. Many of their evenings were held in the reins of duty. The ties of sick ones, parents, or children, bound them in the chains of immutable duty, hand and foot, every day, year in and year out. Others lived for pleasure, having a good time and lots of fun. They spent their

little all on dress and theaters. They gadded here and there, wherever the gay pennons of pleasure fluttered before their eyes. Others still (and these were the girls whose lives cruelly pained Betty) died in living. They destroyed the womanly rights of their existence, sacrificed their names, their characters, their lives, to the passions of dress, money, admiration, and to the fury of a life of excitement—"fast" the world calls them. Betty loved them all. But she loved Faith above them all, and kept her love sacred.

There was a fineness in Betty's heart; the fineness of real and deep sympathy. Betty penetrated Faith's character and her thoughts to a certain extent by means of this rare and fine sympathy. And though Faith seldom spoke to any of the girls, what she said to Betty was worth listening to. So thought Betty. And she never forgot any of her occasional short conversations with her beloved Faith.

With the arrival of Faith Winston at the Restaurant Boniface a trial had come to Betty. She was fond of Sue, and Sue's life was all wrong. And the coming of Faith had made matters worse. The greatest opposition in the restaurant was between these two; an opposition that was physical as well as mental. Sue was a fair-haired, vulgar, selfish girl; jealous, hard-hearted and ignorant; a contrast in every way to the refined and gentle Faith. Like all ignorant people, she was just as free with her opinions and criticisms of other persons as Faith was wise, merciful and silent.

During meal hours, none of the waitresses had time

to notice each other, or the manners of male customers. Nevertheless they were all aware that Faith was the center of admiration, and courtesies were paid her which were never rendered to themselves. Faith was oblivious. Or if she did notice it she did not care, and did not encourage it. Unasked she was receiving the very things—admiration and attention—that Sue longed for, and the later hated her for it. Faith avoided Sue more than any of the waitresses in the Restaurant Boniface because she felt the hatred and pitied it sincerely.

Indeed, Faith shrank from contact with the vulgar girl as one dreads a snake. No one noticed it but Betty. As she watched she became convinced that it was not Sue herself that made Faith Winston turn away; but some stronger motive in Faith's life. Probably some feeling which had its foundation in the past; a memory which influenced her manners, her words and her actions in the Restaurant Boniface.

One day Sue was more than ordinarily rude to Faith. An admirer of hers had been particularly polite and pleasant to the unconscious girl. Sue, with the weakness of her nature, grew angry, then revengeful. She blustered into Faith and brushed against her, with every chance in waiting that brought them near each other. Betty had been quietly observing how things were going. As Sue never once looked in her direction she had no way of signaling a warning to her or trying to prevent her marked and offensive rudeness.

Presently Faith came in with a tray of soup plates,

well filled. Sue was crossing the room from a side table, where she had gathered up some spoons and table napkins. As she saw Faith Winston coming, she deliberately crossed behind her and knocked her elbow. Down fell the tray with a crash. The soup splashed over a table near by as the plates struck it in their fall, and it spilled over the front of Faith's skirt.

Betty hurried to the rescue. Before she reached the spot, Sue's admirer was down on his knees wiping off the soiled dress with his table napkin. And Sue looked at him with rage and dismay.

"Thank you," said Faith, quietly, looking as calm and self-possessed as usual.

"No thanks, please!" returned the young man, glancing up with a smile. "It's a pleasure to serve a lady like you."

Faith smiled graciously in return, but said nothing.

When she had finished Betty slipped her arm through Faith's, a familiarity she had never used before, and they retired to the cloak-room together. A pan of warm water was soon made ready and Betty silently set to work to clean the dress as best she could.

"I'm afraid it's going to stain," she remarked, gently.

"Never mind! It does not matter," answered Faith. Something in the tone of her voice made Betty glance up. Faith's eyes were filled with tears. Betty bent her head lower over the skirt and rubbed it till it had some appearance of dryness.

"I don't want to be rude; but is it the only one you

have?" inquired Betty softly, hesitatingly, not wishing to offend her friend.

"No; I have other clothes, but I cannot—I mean to say, I do not wear them. That is all right—thanks. It does not need any more rubbing." And she stooped and ran her hand over the front of her dress.

Sue passed the door at that moment. And Betty called to her, turning gravely around to face her.

"Well! What do you want?" she snapped sulkily.

"You have been very rude to Miss Winston. Her dress is spoiled. You owe her an apology, and you have not even said you were sorry!" Betty did not look at her as she spoke. She was giving the skirt a final rub.

"And neither I am!" Sue stopped short, for Faith glanced up from her dress, and fixed her long gray eyes full upon her with a look of pity, and perhaps a tiny touch of contempt. "I mean to say," stuttered the girl, abashed, "I s'pose I am sorry."

"Only suppose!" exclaimed Betty, with a little flash of anger. "Don't you mean what you say?"

"No!" cried Sue doggedly.

For a moment no one spoke in the cloak-room. Neither Faith nor Betty moved their eyes from her face, and she dropped her eyes shamefacedly before them; but the stubborn expression only hardened.

"Say no more! It is nothing." And Faith turned to Betty. "I feel sorry for her. Indeed, I pity her! She is a child yet; not in innocence, but in ignorance. And ignorance is the more helpless of the two; its

helplessness is the more pitiful. The harvest of such sowing is bitter; but it may open her eyes and bring her knowledge, as it has done for others since the world began."

"I don't want to know!" said Sue obstinately.

"Perhaps you already know. In any case you know the way of right; and the end of wrong. The present is yours, and you live it as you please. But knowledge, such as I mean, will come with the future, and its fruit will be bitter to taste. God help you when it does come! For the consequences of lives such as yours are terrible—terrible!" And an expression of intense pain and horror crossed Faith's face.

Hearts like Sue's are not so hardened in wrong-doing at her age as they usually are in later years. And Faith's words and the suffering which flashed into her face made their impression on the weak girl. She stood irresolutely in the doorway and murmured: "I'm sorry I did what I did; but I couldn't help it. That is, I couldn't help my feelings."

Sue made an attempt at a smile, and then awkwardly left the room, and went back into the restaurant.

"How hopeless it is to help girls like that!" sighed Betty. "Their feelings guide them in everything. It seems impossible to appeal to their reason or sense; if they have any! I've tried so often to reason with that poor, wayward girl!"

"Yes, it does seem hopeless. The impulse of a moment will carry them wheresoever it leads. Their better feelings come and go impulsively, less and less fre-

quently as the years roll onward; and as they continue in the way they have chosen. Sue was touched just now, and it was her better self. But will it last?" And Faith sighed.

Betty shook her head sadly. "God knows! With some of us it takes more than human aid to help us out of a tight corner, or out of the mire. Human beings may help us some; but if you haven't got a bit of God in your heart you're nowhere. That's what I've experienced, and I guess I'm right."

"Poor Sue! She has done her worst to me to-day, and also her best. Perchance she may improve after all. Who knows? Little seeds of self-forgetfulness have a wonderful way of budding out into good trees." And Faith smiled hopefully, as they returned to the restaurant.

CHAPTER III

Restaurant life in a big city is a busy one. The only monotony lies in the regular customers, who appear every day in the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, and an extra day in leap year. But there are ever new faces coming; strangers from foreign lands, native tourists, and the miscellaneous drop-ins, who drop in and out of any good restaurant they happen to be near at meal time.

There are restaurants and restaurants in New York. Some are for entertainment and amusement, aglow

with lights and palms, where music and song soothe the wearied senses of the sipper of straws, as he leans over his tall glass, or wreathes his head in the pale smoke of a cigar. There are restaurants for shoppers, redolent of beefsteak, sour vinegar and the frying pan; noisy with the ceaseless clatter of dishes and the chatter of many tongues, and twanging with the scrapings and discords of a would-be orchestra. There are restaurants for cheapness, where bread and beef are served in layers, as bricks are laid on a wall; simple and wholesome, but rather hard of digestion. And there is the restaurant where afternoon tea is daintily enjoyed; where quiet is possible from the thronged and shouting streets, and where the talk is refined and the tea choice. Then there are many other restaurants; some for specialties; some for meeting places; some for high prices, and others for the man with the spare dime. And best of all there is the restaurant where a solid, round meal can be got for a square price, and such was the Boniface Restaurant.

The Boniface was neither expensive nor cheap, but the meals were excellent and reasonable. It was not an elaborately decorated restaurant; but it was not plain; and best of all, it was clean and well kept, and good for a half hour's rest. The walls were papered in dark green. Mirrors paneled here and there above a leather dado reflected the groups of electric lights, and brightened the general effect. A weathered oak buffet in one corner glittered with an array of variously colored liquor glasses. On a balcony opposite and sur-

rounded with palms and ferns an orchestra of mediocre ability discoursed the whims of the hour, whether classical or otherwise, three times a day. A row of pillars in the center of the room added a touch of dignity to the restaurant, despite the fact that they were painted to represent white marble, and imposed politely on country customers.

It was Easter-time. New York was filled with visitors and violets. The flowing feathers and gay flowers of the hopeful Easter hat darted along with every carriage. The world of woman was abroad in its gayest Easter attire. The shops were like hen-roosts, with eggs of all sizes and colors. On all the favorite promenades, crowds of people were passing to and fro. And the sidewalks were aglow with all the hues of the rainbow, revealed in spring suits. At the corners of the streets boys and men sold roses of every shade, lilies-of the valley, daffodils, narcissus, tulips, fresias, and violets. And the vivid, fresh green grass of Central Park seemed all the more vivid for the lack of foliage on the trees and bushes.

The Boniface restaurant was doing an excellent business. Crowds of customers were pouring in. The waitresses were as busy as bees in a hive. The orchestra was excelling itself in variations on old airs, and in the chances of an up-to-date Deux-temps. It had just dipped into the latest comic opera when a gentleman entered the restaurant. No one noticed him. All the tables were filled, and everyone in a hurry, rushing orders and trays.

Several persons arose from Faith Winston's table. The manager, noticing them, touched the gentleman on the arm and led him to her table.

Faith was busying herself changing the cloth, laying down spoons, forks and knives, folding a table napkin and setting a glass of iccd water on the table. She had just laid the decanter down when she observed the gentleman start as he hung his coat and hat on some brass pegs by a mirror. She lifted her head. His back was toward her, but he was staring amazedly into the mirror at her reflection just behind his. Faith saw, and laid the decanter down with a crash that would have drawn a shoal of eyes in her direction had not the orchestra reached the last chorus in the comic opera it was playing. And the chatter of a hundred customers or more dulled the sound of the glass.

The man turned around and faced her, a look of passionate admiration burning in his brown eyes. Faith Winston steadied herself by the table and answered his expression with one of icy coldness. He bent his brows and then smiled in recognition.

"So this is where Madam has hidden herself!" he exclaimed, politely.

"Hidden herself! Do you call this hiding?" And she glanced around the crowded room carelessly as she nervously fingered the pencil and pad.

"Oh, but you are wise, Madam! 'Tis well to hide where people least expect to find you!" he remarked, seating himself at the table.

"I am not hiding. Haven't you found me here, and

now, Mr. Gaspard?" she asked indifferently, handing him the bill of fare.

"That is to-day. What of yesterday?" he queried, with a half-sneer.

"Your questions are not courtesies," said Faith, icily.

"Nor are the answers kind!" And Pierre Gaspard cast a glance over the bill of fare.

"Could you not sit down with me?" he continued.

"And let someone else serve and wait upon me?"

He did not lift his eyes from the card; but Faith felt the satire and dug her nails into her palms, answering quietly the while:

"It is against the rules."

"The rules of etiquette?" came his sarcastic query.

"What will you have?" demanded Faith in a low tone, ignoring his question. "Give me your order, please. The manager is watching us."

"And does the manager of this restaurant rule your life?"

Faith made no answer.

"Ah, well! Here's my order!" And he took the pad from her and wrote it down himself. "I shall drink to your happiness if you will bring me some wine." And he pointed to an expensive wine on the list.

Faith hurried away. Her nerves had received a severe shock. Her cheeks were flushed, as they rarely were, and her eyes sparkled with resentment and defiance. She ran into the cloak-room and sat down in a chair, swaying herself to and fro and clinching and

unclenching her hands to gain control over herself. When she had quieted she got up and returned with the first part of Pierre's order.

She set it down before him, arranged the dishes, and left him. Betty was standing near the table; so Pierre Gaspard dared not address her again as he had done. When she brought in his last course, Betty was serving at another table. And as Faith filled his glass with more iced water he took hold of her wrist, when no one was observing.

"Listen, Faith!—Is that your name here?—I want to see you. I must see you. Meet me to-night at Raymond's restaurant, seven o'clock sharp!"

"I cannot!" gasped she.

"You must! Or the manager will know the reason why!" And he darted a cruel glance at her.

"Pity me!" she whispered. "Mr. Gaspard——"

"I am Pierre!" he interrupted, with a smile half-pleading, half-satirical.

"Pierre, pity me! Leave me in peace in this place. This peace, the only peace I have known for years! Go your way, Pierre, and let me go mine!"

"Never! Now that I have found you, I will keep you. Losers seekers, finders keepers! You shall not escape me!" And he arose and slipped on his coat and hat—easily, carelessly, and smilingly.

Poor Faith! Her lids dropped till her eyes closed, for the room seemed to be rocking under her feet and whirling in the maddest maze.

"Are you ill, Miss Winston?" Betty was at her elbow, and Pierre was gone.

"Yes! I feel very ill. I must go home. Home!" And at the word she shuddered.

"May I go with you? I might be able to help you. I would so like to help you," said Betty gently.

"No! No, thanks, Betty! I shall be all right tomorrow. It is very kind of you; but I am better alone." And Faith made an excuse to the manager and left, looking more pale than usual, and very tired.

Betty looked after her in wonderment and pity as the door of the Restaurant Boniface closed behind her slender figure and sad face.

"What a strange, weird world we live in!" she thought. "People and things are all kind of dreams and mysteries. One never knows just how things are going to happen; or what will happen next; or anything. It's a good thing we don't live in this world forever!"

CHAPTER IV

At seven o'clock sharp Faith met Pierre Gaspard at Raymor's restaurant. Raymor's was a restaurant of the elite. But the patronage of the elite is no standard by which to judge the mental or moral tone of any restaurant in New York, or anywhere else. The great and the gay frequented Raymor's. Diamonds and sham

brilliantly shone side by side in the general brilliance. And the world rolled on easily and smiled at Raymor's.

The decorations of Raymor's were as elaborate as their prices. The walls of the main room were covered with mirrors, and between the mirrors were frescoes of beautiful figures, representing the seasons, flowers and music. Frescoes decorated the ceiling with rosy Cupids and downy clouds. And gilded stucco work in rose reliefs outlined mirror and fresco. A thick, soft rose carpet covered the floor in harmony with the tone color of the room. Gilt tables inlaid with marble and gilt chairs, cushioned with pink plush, were placed here and there among the palms and ferns. Huge vases of pink and white roses were scattered through the room, giving the effect of a garden of flowers and greenery. Pink shades sheltered the quaint electric lamps on each table. And the clusters suspended from the ceiling were encased in globes of so dark a pink that the light fell with a soft sunset glow over the room. White and pink carnations and lilies-of-the-valley, entwined with smilax, stood in pretty cut-glass vases on every table. And in the center of the room a fountain played, the water trickling over a mass of Nile-green crystals, representing icicles. And around the edge of its marble basin was a fringe of mosses, thick with violets, and floating on the water's surface were white and pink water lilies. The fountain was lit up with hidden electric lights. It was very gay and gaudy and gorgeous, and very New York.

Had the waitresses of the Boniface seen Faith Win-

ston at the moment she entered this room with Pierre Gaspard they would not have recognized her for the same person they had known. She was in an evening costume of palest violet; a chain of amethysts, dark and lustrous, encircled her neck, and a large brooch of pearls and diamonds fastened a bertha of old lace at her breast. She hardly seemed Faith Winston as she glided across the room in a long lace cloak and feather boa. How surprised Betty would have been!

She looked like a queen and walked like one. Pierre thought her more beautiful than ever. Every line of her graceful form and refined features, every pose of her head, every light that flashed in her eyes was ravishing to him, more so now than ever it had been in the past. The circumstances of their present meeting cast a glamor of mystery and romance around them. To be alone with Faith under such conditions was exciting and rapturous in the extreme. Pierre loved her beauty. But he did not know Faith, for he had no depths in himself to sound the deeps of another heart.

They crossed the room to a corner table where a sheltering palm partly hid them from the rest of the room. A huge bouquet of American Beauty roses occupied the center of the table, and were tied with streamers of palest pink ribbon. A little card lay near the vase, and on it was written

“To the one woman of my life!

Whom I hope some dear day to make my wife!”

The room was very warm. But Faith shivered as Pierre slipped her cloak off her fair shoulders with a lingering touch.

"Are you cold, dear?" he asked, laying his hand softly on her shoulder.

"No! It is very warm here!" And she removed his hand from her shoulder and sat down near the window that faced Broadway.

"You are very quiet to-night, and very cold in spite of the summer warmth here," remarked Pierre carelessly, eyeing her admiringly.

"To you have I not been usually so?" she inquired, icily.

"May be! But you have wit and wisdom, and can become enthusiastic and warm when you please," returned Pierre.

"And I please to treat you as I have always done. And I suppose my wit is to be cold and my wisdom to be quiet." And Faith twisted the streamers of ribbon into a knot.

Pierre smiled. "You are almost perfect! But one thing, one quality, one virtue if you like, is wanting, or rather, lacking."

"And that is?" she queried indifferently, picking up a menu card, written for the occasion.

"Love!" And Pierre's eyes burned into hers. But she turned her head away and gazed out of the window, saying coolly:

"I don't understand you, Mr. Gaspard. I loved my husband."

"You mean you thought you loved him! And you may well say loved, for it is past and gone."

Faith said nothing. But the pink flesh of her palms turned red from the force with which her nails sank into them. Pierre continued insistently and cruelly.

"It was a dream, Faith! The dream of a day! Sweet with sunshine and beauty; but it faded, faded ere the day closed! As the vapors of morning vanish before the sun, so the mystery died. And the fire that destroyed the mystery was a violent spirit, and it burned the ethereal, the ideal love, and left you the ashes—death!"

She was silent a moment and then said quietly, "My husband is not dead."

"No! But he were better so!" exclaimed Pierre.

Faith's eyes flashed fire as she answered: "This is not a fitting subject for discussion between you and I."

"And yet it is the one nearest your heart, and most in your thoughts!" said Pierre, leaning across the table, and searching her eyes.

"When did you find that you were clairvoyant?" she asked coolly.

"And when did you cease to love freedom?" he parried.

This counter thrust told on her, for she closed her eyes a moment and then leaned her head on the palm of her hand.

Pierre continued speaking: "Your husband has not divorced you because you have left him; nor can you get a separation. Do you know that he has offered a

large reward for information of your whereabouts? Your beauty is dear to him. He is willing to pay any price for its return!"

Faith arose quickly. "You insult me! How dare you! I do not believe it! It cannot be true! I will leave you this instant!"

"Read this!" And Pierre handed her a newspaper cutting. Faith held out an unsteady hand and clutched it. Slowly she read it, and slowly, but surely a cloud of indignation, resentment, and defiance gathered in her face. The color rose in her cheeks, while her eyelids dropped till the eyes seemed to contract. For Faith was being tempted in her weakest moments; when anger filled her heart at her husband's indignity and cruelty to herself. She laid the cutting on the table with an almost nerveless hand, and Pierre slipped it into his pocket.

"Will you leave me now?" he inquired with a half-smile.

Faith sat down slowly and dropped her head in her hands wretchedly.

"Then you believe it?" asked Pierre.

"As it is written," answered she wearily.

Pierre reached across the table and clasped one of her hands. Faith withdrew it and laid it on the windowsill, lifting her head haughtily.

"You are unhappy!" continued her tormentor.

"Am I?" was the listless response.

"You know you are!" persisted Pierre.

"That's a question!" returned she, tearing a rose to pieces.

"You were once very happy," continued the man, taking a cruel sort of pleasure out of worrying his lovely victim, as a street cur would revel in the killing of a rare Persian cat.

"And that is problematical," said Faith slowly.

Pierre lit a cigar.

"You are not just like other girls I have known," he meditated, as if to be unlike the others of her sex was akin to insanity or to something essentially criminal.

Faith piled the torn rose leaves together before she answered with the least curl of her lip: "That is very unfortunate!"

"Why?" he queried.

"Familiarity breeds contempt," she said, ignoring his remark. "You and I have not yet arrived at that stage in our duel. I draw a fine line between my present feelings and that. But if, with your weapon, that slip of paper, you drive me into a corner, I will cross the line, your rubicon, and the end will be a tragedy."

Pierre continued his smoking in silence and his companion listlessly watched the passers-by and the ever-hurrying traffic of Broadway.

Among the palms at one end of the room an orchestra was playing a symphony on love, its war, and its weariness.

Presently Pierre laid down his cigar, remarking quietly:

"It is the fashion just now to serve coffee in the Turkish rooms upstairs. Let us go there. We can talk in peace, and it is cooler."

Faith arose mechanically, while Pierre gathered up her cloak and the roses, and followed her out of the room.

"You have never thanked me for these," he said, holding the roses toward her.

But Faith Winston's hand was busy with her amethyst bracelet.

"Why should I?" she asked carelessly.

"Common courtesy," he returned.

"My courtesy is uncommon," remarked she, still busy with her bracelet, and not offering to take the flowers, "it comes from the heart and is natural. You compelled me here; how can I thank you for a present of roses? It is a part of the force which brought me here, and makes you my enemy."

Pierre shook his head. "Not your enemy; but something you need—a lover."

"The worst enemy of a married woman!" exclaimed Faith defiantly, as they entered one of the Oriental rooms.

The rooms opened into one another; but were curtained off with Oriental draperies; each room in a different color.

Pierre chose a green room.

"It makes a lovely background for your beauty, Faith," he said admiringly. "You are like a violet in a bed of moss here."

She laughed carelessly. "A pale violet! If I am a violet, what are you?"

"A toad-stool! I spoil the pretty effect of the picture." And he stood in the doorway, thoroughly enjoying the beauty of the woman near him.

Colored lamps in red and green of eastern workmanship softened the light, leaving strange shadows to lurk in the corners. The walls were hung in Oriental draperies of green and gold. A silken Persian rug covered the floor, a maze of colors, weaving an intricate pattern full of the mysticism of the Orient. A teak-wood table, a lounge with a wilderness of soft cushions, an easy chair of Oriental make, and some stools finished the apartment. The odors of incense and pot-pourri pervaded the air, like invisible Eastern magicians, and intoxicated the occupants with a sense of luxury and indolence. The sensuous nature of Pierre succumbed to its influence, intensified as it was by the rare loveliness of his companion.

A waiter entered, laying down a brass tray on the table with coffee and cigarettes.

Faith lay back among the cushions on the lounge, She was very tired. It had been a long, trying day for her, and she closed her eyes with a sigh of relief.

It was only for a moment, but the moment was too strong a temptation for Pierre Gaspard. Faith felt his warm breath near her lips, and she opened her eyes and looked steadily into his.

"Pierre! How dare you! Is this a part of your common courtesy? Or is it my enemy?"

"It is neither. Oh, Faith, I love you! I love you madly, wildly! You are so beautiful that I cannot resist you. You kill me with love." And he caught her in his arms.

Faith pushed him gently away.

"Kill you!" she exclaimed in icy tones. "It may be unfortunate that you speak in figurative language, Mr. Gaspard. Otherwise perchance it were better so for you."

"But I would live, Faith!" he cried, passionately. "To possess you would be life indeed to me. I have loved you for years. Never since your marriage have I spoken of it; but it has lived on just as it did before. I have longed to tell you of my love these last, cruel years! But I restrained myself."

"You mean you never had the opportunity," came her cold, satirical rejoinder. "You have me at a disadvantage now."

"How cruel you are!" broke hotly from Pierre.

"And if I were kind?" she queried, with a curl of her lip.

"I would make you my wife when he dies. We would leave this country now and live elsewhere, in any clime, in any land that pleased you till then. We have not long to wait, for he is a physical wreck, and death is ever creeping on him. I love you! I have money—millions! I have everything but you, dearest Faith. Be mine!" And he tried to take her hands in his, but she recoiled.

"Mr. Gaspard, this is not a subject for me to listen

to. I may respect your love for me; but I can never, never love you. Your money is nothing to me. When I had millions it burned my fingers, and the blisters are scarce healed. Come, Pierre, don't destroy what respect I have left for you. I did trust you; but we are not even friends now. You swept that away at the Boniface to-day."

"If you will not have me when I ask you in this way, I will compel you to be mine in another way," he cried, moving closer to her on the lounge, and slipping his arm around her.

Quickly Faith jumped up and hurried to the door.

"If you touch me I shall scream," she said coolly, determinedly.

"My kisses will seal your lips," returned Pierre, eyeing her cynically.

"Not before I have made the attempt," said she, resolutely.

"You know what will be the consequences if you scream," sneered Pierre Gaspard. "Your reputation will suffer. The public will hear, and it is no gentle critic of subjects such as you will offer. A scandal is the meeting-place of busy-bodies and carrion for the vultures of society."

Pierre lighted a cigarette and then added sardonically: "Anyway, where is a woman in an affair of this kind? The woman always gets the worst of it, by some unwritten, inexorable law, whether she is innocent or not."

Faith remained silent. Then she said slowly, deliberately:

"I would rather go back to my husband, debauchee and wreck though he is, and lose my freedom, even my life, than I would choose the existence you hold out, which is like a cup of salt water to one dying of thirst. My sufferings are great now; my memory sears my life with the past few years; but my conscience is clear. The existence you would force me to would be torture, wholly and soully. A life of greater misery I can scarce imagine. Sudden suicide would be far, far better than a living suicide such as that. A dead heart! Death to conscience! Death to my soul! A living, breathing, pulsing death! Its end would be tragic. Pierre, do you not see its horror?"

Faith had stood before him like a statue, her cheeks white as whitest marble; but she leaned across the table now, and her eyes flamed with a wonderful light as she bent them on Pierre Gaspard.

"What a great love hers would have been had the fire which is burning at the horror of sin burned at the altar of love!" thought Pierre, as he watched her. Yet he shrank a little before the intense truth of her eyes, and his own wavered. "As a tragedy queen her beauty is more enthralling than ever."

With a sudden movement Pierre Gaspard seized her hand firmly in both of his.

"I love you, Faith! Love you! You are more beautiful in your sorrows than in your joys. More than ever I love you! Faith, my idol!" And he would have

clasped her in his arms, but she was too quick for him. She touched the electric bell with her free hand and gasped, in a tone as cold as it was intense:

"Pierre Gaspard, you have crossed the Rubicon! And now you are my enemy!"

And Pierre was vanquished.

He dropped her hand and Faith Winston, completely exhausted, sank into the chair, closing her eyes wearily, miserably.

A waiter came in answer to the bell.

"Take away the coffee, and ask someone to call a cab," she said carelessly.

"Yes, ma'am!" And the waiter vanished with the tray.

Then she turned to Pierre, and continued quietly, but firmly:

"I am going home, to my boarding-house. You can go! Good-night!"

And Pierre Gaspard did as she bade him, for he had paid his price and received nothing in return; the merit of all shallow natures, who hope to force the seeds of love from rocky ground, and never know its soul.

CHAPTER V

For a week Pierre Gaspard left Faith in peace. It was not peace to her. For her mind was agitated with the memory of Raymor's; the duel she had fought with

Pierre. She knew her opponent well, and if his love was strong, his revenge would be cruel. If he did revenge himself, which would be to inform her husband where she was, her freedom would end, and the old slavery of her wretched married life begin again, daily unhappiness and monotonous pain. Oh! the terror for her of such a life! Life? It was not life. Behind her spread the miserable years, only too vivid, when she was tied irrevocably to a man of no fine feeling—a brute in dissipation, who craved her beauty, but had no love for herself. And to commence all over again the hourly drudgery of continuous misery! And after these months of freedom and peace! Her soul rebelled.

There was no escape. Pierre had said so, which meant that he would watch her wherever she went, and whatever she did. And a telegram would bring her husband on her trail, she well knew, the instant he found out where she was. There was no use running away. The alternative was to return to her husband of her own free will. And then would follow his cruel and cutting taunts, and he would laugh and say it was fear that had brought her back. She, a coward! A coward, of all things, she most despised.

Pierre's vengeance would include more. He would tell her husband of her life in the Boniface restaurant. How he would torment her and sneer at her for her waitress life! He would not strike her—no. The only lash he used was his tongue, the bitterest lash that could be applied to Faith Winston, with her sensitive,

gentle nature. And then a day might come, when at last driven to bay, she would turn on him. And then!

The gossip of her life would leak out. And society in the great city where Bernstein Gleney lived would hold its sides in laughter, or whisper doubts of her innocence. Faith recoiled, and all that was refined and good in her shrank from this ruthless, bitter picture. The longer she thought of it and anticipated its wretchedness, the more she shuddered at the idea of braving a return to her husband. What an existence! How should she ever endure it? Her courage failed indeed.

Faith understood Bernstein Gleney. Her husband's brilliance had dazzled her; his happy-go-lucky nature had seemed gentleness and kindness of heart; and she had married him at nineteen years of age. Alas! Her happiness had an early death. She discovered the cloven feet of her ideal. His brilliance and dash in the way of wrong were more terrible than his love and gayety in the path of right seemed fascinating, and, to her girlish eyes, even magnificent. How she had idealized him! Memory is sorrow's sting. For she still saw the beautiful flower which her imagination had created, and which faded, died soon after her marriage. How she had watered it with her fine thoughts, and sunned it with her love! How the tenderness and nobleness of her own character had perfected it! And how her innocence had made it fragrant with a sweetness which pervaded everywhere, and distilled from all things! But the flower lay at her feet; its petals shriv-

eled and lifeless; its sweetness gone forever; its beauty no more.

One child had been born to them. But it only lived to utter its tiny cry and die. No baby hands had ever caressed her; no chubby arms had ever wound around her neck; no baby lips and smiles had ever loved her and warmed her heart. The longing of mother love had never been satisfied, and her home offered nothing to fill and console her life. She saw the world as a wilderness, bleak and cold. Nothing soothed the pain of a lifelong disappointment. And her heart died, as hearts sometimes do, when tried beyond their strength to endure.

She loathed her husband's wealth. She could not see its blessing, despite her many charities; she only saw its curse in Bernstein Gleney's life. It flamed over his existence; it had burned her; it had seared all who had touched it from his hands, and Faith felt it would smoulder even at his end, with a menacing, angry fire like the claw of a demon. Pierre Gaspard's millions! She laughed bitterly, miserably, as she thought of his offer. Millions! They were the only fruit her married life had borne, and its taste was rancid, like the overplus apples which rotted in their orchards.

As the years went by her married life had grown more terrible to her. At first they had fought with words to kill each other with words, and neither would give in. Then the baby came and slipped away, and her spirit broke. She sealed her lips and grew cold, silent and cold to him, silent and cold to everyone.

People judged her harshly, short-sightedly. Because of the hardness of their hearts they turned from her. And Faith Winston Gleney, with a crushed and breaking heart, fled from her home in the south to bury her sorrows below a surface of ice and to live her quiet, monotonous waitress life in a New York restaurant, and in a cheerless New York boarding-house. From day to day she had lived there, with some sense of security and peace, and with a breath of freedom like the air of meadowland after the damp and chill of airless rooms.

But that was all over now. Faith Winston did not weep. It was not her nature to give way to tears. But every day the fire burned more fiercely in her heart; the fire of doubt, uncertainty and distress. And Faith wilted under it, as the sun might scorch a lovely flower.

On one side Pierre Gaspard's offer; on another, the return to her husband willingly or unwillingly; and on the third—Faith closed her eyes to shut out its horror—death, death by her own hand. Her soul rebelled against evil, as represented by Pierre and suicide, and her conscience smote her at the mere thought of these horrible temptations. And yet her human nature, her whole being, sought its right, its God-given right to be happy, to rest, and the bondage of her marriage manacled her hands and feet, bruised her, and daily crucified her. It was no choice between love and duty; Faith loved no one, and Bernstein Gleney demanded no duty of her; he simply desired her beauty. Thus the battle continued between good and evil as Faith had

been taught to think of them, as they had been bred into her life, as conscience, the immutable, invisible monitor of all lives, pleaded and commanded.

Each day Faith Winston grew paler. Hollows formed in rings around her eyes. And her eyes for the first time in her life looked large and brilliant, the only windows out of which the fire in her soul escaped, and found a glimmer of freedom.

Betty was not unmindful of the change in Faith. No one else paid any attention to it. If they did chance to observe that she was whiter than usual, it was set down to ill health. The girls said, indifferently, that they supposed she was going into decline, as so many working girls did in New York. Faith never looked strong at any time, so it was not surprising. And they went on their ways like the priest and the Pharisee of old, and left Faith by the wayside to her wounds and her sufferings.

But not so with Betty. Without being obtrusive she paid her friend every little attention and kindness she could think of in the goodness of her heart, and felt well rewarded when Faith gave her a smile of thanks in recognition of her thoughtfulness and sympathy.

Betty had made the acquaintance of a bright young gentleman this last week or so. Intuitively she felt that he was coming to the Boniface restaurant for a purpose of his own, and Betty guessed it rightly, although the young man had no idea of her having done so. Every day he came, and several times a day, and Betty made a point of serving him every time she

could manage it. His manner was the essence of good-nature and off-hand generosity, and his earnest blue eyes looked straight at her with a sound in their depths that rang of true steel. Of a kingly height, he had broader shoulders than most men, and a swinging gait which betokened a taste for the ocean, and a knowledge of walking decks on a rough sea or pulling halyards in a hurricane. His large, shapely hands and his cheery face were bronzed with the sun, and his fair hair was tinged with gold from long exposure in southern climes, where the sunshine was hotter than in New York. About this man was a fresh, bracing atmosphere and a world of kindness that won Betty's confidence and respect. It seemed to breathe of a staunch and faithful heart, a magnetic personality and a free and easy, honest mind.

As they became better acquainted, Betty hinted to him in a way of her own that she had formed her opinions about his purpose in coming so often to the Boniface restaurant. But the man smiled and appeared unconscious.

It was on Good Friday that Pierre Gaspard strolled into the Boniface. Faith saw him as she was entering the restaurant through the swing doors, and she shuddered. He sat down at a table on the opposite side of the room from Betty's acquaintance; a table where Faith always served. Betty was going out as Faith was coming in with a tray of dishes and cutlery.

"Take this, Betty!" she said quickly. "It goes to

table six. And please serve the gentleman who is alone at table four. I feel so ill that I must go home."

It was all said and done so suddenly that Betty had taken the tray, had laid the various dishes on table six and was standing at table four by the gentleman "alone" before the gentleman had sat down, after removing his hat and coat. And Betty watched carefully at table number four.

"Well, my pretty girl, what do you want here?" asked Pierre Gaspard, with a careless smile, glancing at the girl's bright face with a touch of patronage and admiring indifference, for Betty's face had just missed being pretty, her serious blue eyes being her chief charm.

"Your order, sir," answered Betty gravely.

Pierre glanced slowly all around the restaurant; not finding whom he was seeking, he inquired:

"Where is the waitress who served me the other day? Miss Winslow, Win—something or other, I heard one of the waitresses call her."

"She has gone home ill," returned Betty in a tone of reserve.

"Oh, so sorry! Has she been ill long?" raising his eyebrows with insincere sympathy.

"No!" snapped Betty, so suddenly, that Pierre lifted his monocle and stared at her through it.

"She waits well," he observed, without further comment but with an ironical smile.

"Your order, sir!" demanded Betty again, somewhat peremptorily.

He gave it easily, and she hurried away to fill it, knitting her eyebrows and looking puzzled. Then a light broke over her face.

"I remember," she murmured to herself. "Just a week ago! Faith was looking all right that day; but since——" Betty broke off, and finished with "It is the same man. I know his face; I would know it anywhere, and it is not a good one. But what can he possibly have to do with Faith Winston? Or rather, what can Faith have in common with him? Dear me! It is a queer world!"

When she returned he paid marked attention to Pierre, seeking to please him by every small care. She answered his jokes and impertinences as gaily and freely as he gave them. When he had finished his meal he studied her face a moment and then said quietly:

"Will you give Miss Winston a message from an old friend of hers, who knew her before she came to wait in this restaurant, and who is at present in New York?"

"Certainly!" came Betty's prompt reply. "I would do anything to please you!" And Betty laughed inwardly at her white fib.

"I will hold you to that and demand a kiss the first time we meet alone, or are unobserved by the throng. It will be my payment for your service," and he gave her a sly smile.

"And I will serve you well!" rejoined Betty, meaning what she said in a way that was to startle Pierre

later on. She closed her lips in a smile over set teeth and bit her tongue hard.

"Then tell Miss Winston that her friend, Mr. Pierre—here, give me one of your order slips and I shall write the name so that you will not forget it. Mr. Pierre will await her in Central Park to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock. He will meet her at the bridge across the lake."

"And who shall I say gave the message?" inquired Betty with seeming innocence.

"You have one service to perform for me, is it not enough?" he asked with a queer smile. "If you ask for more the payment will be increased; kisses, you understand; and there is such a thing as getting too much of a good thing. You may get more than you want; not more than I can give. Be wise!"

Betty tipped her chin saucily; but her cheeks had flushed.

"I guess I'm equal to all occasions!" she laughed in a forced way.

As he put on his coat he gave her a keen, bold look.

"You'll do, my girl!" he observed, and walked off.

"Yes. I'll more than do!" muttered Betty to herself. "I'll do for you if ever I get the chance! You rascal!"

Betty's cheeks were very hot; but not more so than her anger. She had played her part well in deceiving Pierre Gaspard, and now that it was over she was afire with indignation. He did not know that she was a friend of Faith Winston's, and would defend her from

any calamity or care that she could prevent. And he was not going to know that if she could help it. Her conscience was clear.

"Had the restaurant been empty and a pistol handy, and a few alterations made in my character, my last glance at you, Mr. Pierre, as you marched out so calmly, would have been a bullet," she thought with fiery indignation. "And it would have been better service than you deserved."

Betty hastened to the cloak-room, tore a sheet off her order pad, and wrote a note. She folded it carefully and tucked it into her sleeve. Then she returned to the restaurant and crossed to where her new acquaintance of the cheerful manners sat at his table, absorbed in a newspaper. She made as if to clear the table and set it afresh with plates, tumblers, and so on. In reaching for a glass, she, with apparent accident, tumbled a spoon on the floor. She stooped to pick it up, and as she did so, the gentleman, with the free courtesy of a seaman, stooped also, and as his head neared hers she lifted an earnest, anxious face to his, and whispered:

"Can I trust you?"

"Absolutely!" And his answering glance was as honest as hers.

"Take this, please!" she said, hurriedly, in a low voice, handing him her rough note. "Read it when you are out of sight of the Boniface."

He nodded kindly and slipped the note into his pocket. Then he left the restaurant.

The young man took the note out when some blocks away from the Boniface and read it carefully. Read it with great surprise and pity; then with an expression of righteous indignation. He frowned and thought hard as he strolled over to Fifth Avenue and hired a 'bus. After he had climbed its steeple-like steps and seated himself as comfortably as he could on the skyscraping elevation, he drew out his newspaper from a capacious pocket and ran his eyes over all the columns. He found what he was seeking, and extracting a pair of scissors from a small leather case, he carefully clipped out a cutting, read it over several times as if to make sure of its contents, then folded it nicely and stowed it in a safe inside pocket. Then he re-read Betty's note, and stowed it with the clipping, and went on his way with a complex smile.

CHAPTER VI

It was the Saturday before Easter Sunday. A clear, sunny day, and very mild, with a lustrous sky of darkest blue overhead.

Pierre Gaspard was awaiting Faith Winston on the bridge in Central Park. The park was overrun with crowds of holiday-makers. Every walk was lined with loungers, visitors, tourists, citizens, nurse-girls and children; every bench and seat was occupied; every roadway in the park was a carriage parade; every rowboat and swanboat on the lake was filled; and even the

riders' row thudded beneath the tread of troops of horses. Everywhere over the hills and dales, on the grass and in the shade of the trees, people were resting and children were shouting and laughing at play.

Spring was just beginning to bud out on the shrubs and the trees, and to tinge the bushes with emerald. The fresh green was like a carpet of velvet in the hollows, and over the undulating meadows of the park. The birds migrating northward trilled in the groves and chirruped from twig and bough. The little gray squirrels, alive with the zest of spring, scampered everywhere or sat up and ate the peanuts which passers-by fed to them, chattering gaily and munching to their hearts' content. And the saucy, bold sparrow, more impudent and aggressive than ever, snatched and demolished every crumb of bread and cake it could find; and then hopped away for more. Glowing and changing with every ripple which struck fire from its smooth surface, the lake reflected the azure depths of the sky and lay like a sapphire in its setting of green banks. And the sun gleamed down with the joyous warmth of spring and cheered everything it touched.

Pierre had not long to wait. He was not a man who liked waiting without being amused, and humanity on a holiday, and nature in her early garb of spring, did not interest or amuse him. So he was relieved when Faith's tall figure appeared on a turn of the road, which wound near the bank of the lake.

To-day Faith looked like the goddess of spring in her dark green suit. Simply dressed and unconscious

of her own strange loveliness, she had no wish to attract attention, and least of all admiration. But her odd prettiness won it under all guises, and many eyes turned to look after the graceful woman as she walked leisurely along the road, oblivious of their stares and comments, and lost in her own thoughts and dreams.

"A lovely day, is it not?" said Pierre Gaspard, after a frosty greeting from Faith.

"A bright day, and a brighter remark," answered she coldly.

Pierre ignored the chill.

"Where would you like to go?" he asked, changing the subject.

"Is it for me to say?" inquired Faith icily. "This is your affair, not mine. You arranged the meeting, and under the circumstances I am compelled to obey. It is you who are ruling just now."

"And a great ruler is only great in so far as he can stoop to his weakest subject," returned Pierre, with a pleasant consciousness of power.

Faith smiled. "And sometimes the weakest subject may overturn a throne. Strength and weakness are mere words. Sometimes might lies behind the one, and sometimes behind the other. But let us change the subject. Where are you going to take me?"

"To the trees yonder," answered Pierre carelessly. "It is quiet there and away from the crowds. I detest crowds. We can see all around us, and yet remain somewhat secluded."

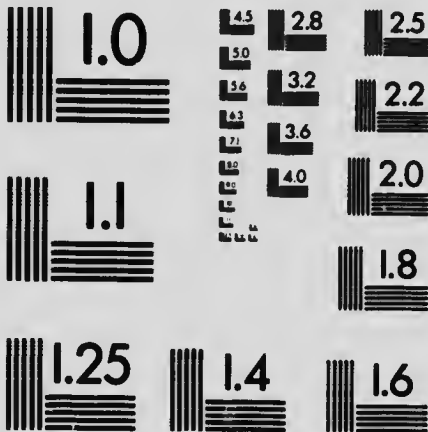


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Faith glanced sideways at him, with a little curl of her lip.

"You mean," she said, "where we can see and yet not be seen."

"Well, if you like it that way. I prefer 'Where from the world sacred to sweet retirement lovers may steal,' as Thomson puts it. There is mystery in being invisible. And love is strongest in silence," and he laughed pleasantly.

They rambled along the hillside to a grove of trees, where a clump of firs and cedars screened them from passers on the roads and paths. It was out of ear-shot of the throngs who were passing by. Through the openings in the branches they could look out over the lake below and yet be unseen in the evergreen grove.

They sat down on the grass in silence. Pierre lighted a cigar, and puffed circle after circle into the air, and among the fir-needles and sprays of cedar.

"That smoke makes me think of your dead love affair. The wreaths look very pretty and they soar upward; but they do not last," said Pierre, glancing at Faith to see the effect of his remark.

But she sat immovable and made no comment.

"Your ideals were too high, too ethereal," he continued, in that wicked spirit of tormenting which some persons have developed to a fine point.

"If that is your topic, you will have to converse with yourself," said Faith, indifferently.

"You know what I say is true, and that is why you

avoid it," went on her tormentor, determined to hurt her in a way that such persons always do.

"Now you speak mere truisms. Let us again change the topic. What did you bring me here for to-day? What more do you want of me?" And she turned on him a listless pair of eyes.

"I brought you here with the same intention, the same design if you like, that I had in dining you at Raymor's; only more determined. I hope it will be final," and a sinister smile crossed his dark features.

Faith pulled some grass up by the roots; but said nothing in reply.

"What more do I want of you?" Pierre continued.

"No more than I asked before——"

"Commanded and demanded before, you mean!" interrupted Faith tersely.

"No more than I asked before," repeated Pierre steadily. "And that is your own dear self."

"You know my answer," returned she icily.

"No! I do not. I will not. Think! Think of the consequences if you refuse me again," he persisted.

"I have thought of them," came her reply, in a low voice.

"But this is the last time; your last chance. I will not wait any longer. I have loved you always, and you have known it for years," and the man knocked the ashes off his cigar impatiently.

"And you had my answer years ago. You have it now. It is the same, Pierre Gaspard."

"And the consequences?" he insisted, biting his lips.

"As for the consequences, perchance I have studied them even more than you have." And Faith's eyes looked fearlessly into his.

"You are a brave girl," he said admiringly; "but you are not super-human."

"Apropos of what?" she queried.

"Of your future, Faith."

"So you think I must needs be super-human to go back to Bernstein Gleney! Then I would need to be ultra super-human to go with you, Pierre Gaspard!"

He laughed. "But I love you; he does not."

"And your love would cease, Pierre. You love me because I am beyond your reach. A man's way!"

"Like the Edelweiss on the Alps?" asked he with amusement.

"Perchance! And it might mean disaster to you if you ever plucked it," said Faith coldly.

"It may grow in places both steep and difficult, even risky, but I will have it, Faith, do or die."

"And your love would die as soon as you possessed it. It would have nothing more to live upon, which means starvation. I know you better than you know yourself, and such love would float out of the stream of your life." And Faith sighed wearily, as if tired of the topic.

"Is your beauty nothing?" he continued. "It is as pure and soft as the velvety whiteness of the Edelweiss and as lovely."

Faith slowly turned her head toward him, her cheeks

were flushed, her eyes burned with indignation; but her voice was cold and steady as she said:

"You forget! The Edelweiss grows on the Alps. But it grows at a height nearer the icebound snowfields and glaciers than the sunny vales below. Life does not end with a woman's beauty. I have nothing to give you. And there is absolutely nothing to make us one; nothing!"

"A woman's beauty means much in a man's life," he went on, knowing how it hurt her. "It has sometimes toppled thrones."

Faith turned on him with a look of utmost contempt.

"You too, Pierre Gaspard! Another Bernstein Gleney! It is my beauty always. I would I had been born plain, and then I might have been happy. At least I would not have inspired love in your heart."

"Come, Faith! My love for you is better than none at all." And he tried to laugh.

But Faith Winston jumped up and turned on him like a lioness at bay.

"You insult me!" she cried angrily.

"I admit it was a poor joke, my dear Faith."

"Poor joke! You do not know what you say! Tell me at once what you brought me here for, and have done with this sham parade of words!" And she clenched her fists, while her bosom heaved with anger.

Pierre got up easily and stood a few moments admiring the angry woman with the wonderful fire in

her eyes. But she never moved; the embodiment of courage and truth.

"Beautiful!" he murmured.

"Your answer?" she demanded like an empress.

"You tell me my love is no love. You say you will go back to Bernstein Gleney. Take the consequences and die in torture!" he cried more angry than she. And then, as if he could hold back no longer, he added passionately, raising his voice with the impetuosity of his feelings. "You say there is might behind weakness. But there is force behind strength. Despite your coldness, your Alpine nature, my lovely Edelweiss! you shall be mine."

And he caught her in his arms and buried her pale face beneath his passionate kisses.

"Mine!" he cried. "Forever mine in heaven or hell! I love you!"

Faith struggled hard to free herself, but he held her closer in his arms. Then she turned her head suddenly to escape his kisses, and uttered a smothered scream. Not too soon, for he had lifted her off her feet, crushing the slight woman, and pressing his lips on hers till Faith was breathless and dizzy, and ready to faint from the suddenness of his brutal attack.

The branches of the cedar trees parted and a gentleman stood silently watching them.

Pierre sat Faith down, releasing her, and stared fiercely at the intruder. Faith also turned and gazed at the newcomer. Her glance of pain and distress met with a pair of honest, sympathetic blue eyes.

Instinctively she held out both hands to him.

"I don't know who you are, or where you come from; but your eyes are honest and kind. For the sake of all you hold dearest in life and best in womanhood, take me from this man. None could be worse than he!"

"You trust me, Madam," he said simply. "I have never injured a woman in my life and," he paused, as he studied her weary, sad face, "I never will."

"Take her and take the consequences!" hissed Pierre Gaspard through his set teeth.

"Thank you, sir! Your offer is more generous than you suspect, and more willingly accepted than you realize," answered Betty's acquaintance of the Boniface restaurant, for it was he who had come to aid Faith Winston.

"Then you had better take care. That is all I have to say about it," and Pierre Gaspard turned on his heel and strode away through the park, biting his lips vengefully.

"Vanquished again!" he muttered hoarsely. "And who the devil is that man? But I'll fix him if he interferes again."

And he lit a cigar and hired a cab, returning in a beaten mood to his hotel.

CHAPTER VII

Easter Sunday passed quietly for Faith Winston. The church bells chimed out musically, vibrating joy and

peace all over the city of New York. The world seemed full of happy people, from the gay throngs which paraded and massed on Fifth Avenue, to the strollers in Central Park. Not so for Faith; her heart was buried in darkness.

She had found out Betty's address, and had sent for her. And Betty came, willing and delighted. In leaving Bernstein Gleney, Faith had taken little money, and only the money which was rightfully her own, a small inheritance left by her father, John Winston. The only clothes she had were too fine for every-day wear, and least of all in a restaurant. Faith lived on the wages that she earned at the Boniface. Her boarding-house room was modest and tidy. Her fine tastes were averse to the vulgarities of boarding-house furnishings and decorations. And a dainty touch here and there in a picture, an ornament, and a few books with interesting titles, betrayed something of the personality of the occupant, and her tastes were simple and direct.

Betty told Faith what she had done. How she had planned with her new acquaintance in the Boniface, Mr. Shelburne, to have him watch Pierre and herself in Central Park, and to interfere, if necessary. She told Faith of the note she had written to Mr. Shelburne in the restaurant, and of how kindly and readily he offered his services in her aid. Where he came from she did not know; but from his accent she was sure that he was an Englishman and a gentleman of rank in the navy.

As for Mr. Pierre, she had distrusted him from the first. She saw that he was annoying her friend. She hoped Faith would forgive her interference, but she had done it out of love for her.

Faith Winston had pressed her hand warmly, and with a gentle smile had said, "Thank you, dear!"

And this had meant more to Betty than words; for Betty's heart understood a great deal more than it appeared to understand.

"God bless her!" murmured Betty to herself.

Easter Sunday was a sad day for Faith Winston. The inevitable had to be faced. She knew a severe ordeal lay before her if she returned to Bernstein Gleney, a future of difficulty; but it seemed the only alternative. And conscience told her it was the only way.

It was Faith Winston's Gethsemane. She shed no tears, but there were lines of pain around her mouth and eyes which betrayed the inward struggle. Reason, feeling, conscience, were doing battle for her future; perchance for eternity. Freedom of thought and the joy of living drew her in one direction. Conscience, the wondrous wise instinct of the soul, pointed another path. What thousands and millions had stood at these crossroads before! One road apparently so smooth, so easy, so bright, overshadowed with the mystery of an unknown and perhaps dreadful end. The other a narrow, up-hill path, where lay a cross where thorns would tear her tender flesh and sharp stones cut the tired feet where a mystery indeed enshrouded it, but a mystery with a hope brighter than the sun. Faith

swayed between the road and the path, wavering at the gateway of the one, and then at the entrance of the other. Would that the many who had suffered, doubted, reasoned, and then decided—would that they could come back to earth again and tell her, guide her which way she should go!

Then the meaning of the day came into her mind. It was Easter Sunday! To-morrow was kept sacred in the churches in remembrance of the Resurrection, hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

All that she had read of the Greatest of all great lives came into her thoughts. It passed before her inward vision in a procession of pictures, scene after scene, one wonderful act after another. The marvelous wisdom, the white truth, the spiritual beauty, the unutterable pathos of the Master's life! The awful agony of standing alone, because no one would believe Him. The terrible, but magnificent tragedy of Gethsemane! The seemingly complete failure of the Cross! The Master's heroic and surpassing love! And then the splendor and glory of the Resurrection! Faith beheld it all. There it lived in her mental vision. The only way!

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life!"

Faith Winston threw herself on her bed and sobbed; cried as she had never done in her life. Her slender body shook with the outburst of feeling and the relief. The struggle was over. Peace had fallen on the battlefield, though the broken and shattered remains of

thoughts, ideals and past feelings lay scattered there, and still bleeding.

Betty bent over her and lifted her head gently, laying it on her lap. She soothed the lonely woman with tender words; she smoothed her hair with a loving touch, and tears of sympathy ran slowly down her cheeks.

"I ask nothing, dear, of your life; but if there is any way in which I can serve you, let me do it," said Betty, earnestly.

Faith raised her tear-stained face.

"Have you any duty that binds you to your home here in New York?"

Betty smiled. "I have an old father to keep; but my sister helps, too. She keeps our rooms nice and makes his life as comfortable as we can afford. I supply the money."

"If I were able to give you more than the Boniface restaurant can pay you, would you come with me where I am going?" asked Faith, gravely, wiping her tears away.

"If you gave me nothing I would go, had I not my old father to think of. As it is, your offer will help us more than what I can do now. It is very kind of you, dear. But I'll go with you because you have grown so dear to me, and I cannot part with you in the midst of your troubles." And Betty caressed her lovingly.

"Thank you, Betty," returned Faith Winston, with a grateful smile.

"And where do you go?" asked the little waitress. "If you don't mind my asking."

"I?" said Faith with a wan smile. "I go to my husband."

And she gently kissed the little waitress, Betty.

CHAPTER VIII

Easter Monday arose with the sun full of cheerfulness and gayety. The streets were thronged with pedestrians. The 'buses on Fifth Avenue were filled to overflowing on their way up to Central Park. The cars were crowded; the underground and the elevated railways streamed with passengers. Everywhere life and activity, bustle and hurry, vibrated in the air. And the restaurants were as busy as bee hives and ant hills, with people flocking in and out in search of food and drink and fun.

The Boniface restaurant was giddy with business. The fat, pudgy little manager was bustling here and there among the shoals of customers, like a ball bobbing on the surface of a rough sea. He had an air of tremendous importance and a dignity quite so large as his paunch. He was a Jewish-looking man, with small, money-making black eyes, an overpowering black mustache, and a greasy personality. For the most part his head was bald. His dress suit seemed to have had its annual bath, for it appeared to have been cleaned and

pressed for the occasion. A portentous and impressive diamond ring flashed on one finger. His expression was not soft, and yet there was a humane upward curl of his lips which betokened an optimistic nature, and some sense of humor. The manager of the Boniface restaurant was a keen, shrewd money-maker, but a jolly, kind-hearted man withal.

The waitresses were all on duty, everyone serving even more customers than she was well able to manage; Faith Winston and Betty among the rest. It was to be Faith Winston's last day at the Boniface; but only Betty and the manager knew of it.

Faith had never been a favorite with the girls, so she would not be missed, except by admiring male customers. Perchance poor Sue might think about it. Since the day of her rudeness in the restaurant she had softened to Faith. Indeed, she had tried to live a better life, to Betty's secret comfort. And perhaps Sue's life was not so wrong as it had been. For the spark of good had not died out in her heart.

All day every waitress was busy. They had scarce a moment to themselves. As the evening drew on, and as the customers lessened, the manager dismissed the girls who seemed most tired.

Then came the after-theater parties, and the restaurant was active again. The waitresses hurried to the different tables with salads and oyster suppers, club sandwiches and welsh rarebit, and other after-theater dainties.

But they, too, gradually dwindled away. And as it

neared twelve o'clock only Faith Winston and Betty remained to wait, and only two customers sat at the Boniface tables.

The manager had slipped into the little stall or box, where the money was gathered in, the change paid out; where orders were carefully read over and checked, and the receipts and the accounts kept. The lady cashier had gone home.

Faith knew one of the customers; it was Pierre Gaspard. But her struggle of yesterday had left her resigned and peaceful, and his power to torment and startle her was gone. She was waiting on him, but kept at a distance after filling his orders.

Betty attended the other customer, and they seemed to be having a very merry time from the subdued laughter that was heard now and then in the quietness of the restaurant.

One large pillar in the center of the room hid the two customers from one another. Pierre had made up his mind to outstay the other man. But the other man sat on and appeared to have an enormous appetite, and as great an oblivion to the fact that it was time the Boniface was closed. His head was enveloped in a newspaper, and he seemed to have no inclination to give it up.

Pierre finished his meal very slowly. He whirled away some moments with a toothpick. Then he lit a cigar and smoked carefully to make it last. He opened his newspaper and read every advertisement in it. And then he peered around the pillar at the other man; he

was still there, though Pierre could only see the back of his head.

So he proceeded to read the houses and lands for sale, which were numberless, extraordinarily cheap, and most satisfactory. He read the situations vacant, which were uninteresting, and the second-hand goods to sell, which were romantic. And finally he reached the heading, "Domestics Wanted." But the overwhelming length of the columns subscribed to this heading floored Pierre's patience. It was appalling! The whole world seemed in need of domestics; but the domestics seemed to have no need of the world, as, indeed, they appeared to be as rare as sunflowers in a snowbank. So he pocketed his monacle and ceased his scrutiny of the hopeless paper.

Still the other man sat on!

Pierre was not to be beaten. He lighted another cigar and smoked particularly and deliberately. He made the cigar last as long as any human cigar could last. And now Pierre Gaspard's patience was well-nigh spent. Even the finger-bowl, which he had dabbled in several times with apparent forgetfulness, ceased to cool his rising anger at the other man, and ceased to amuse the manager, who looked restlessly in one direction and then in the other, at his everlasting customers. Seemingly, they were glued to their chairs, and this was to be an all-night affair!

The manager coughed obtrusively; then offensively. And lastly, as his brows hung down in a heavy, pugnacious frown, Pierre felt he could stand it no longer.

He called Faith over to his table.

"The bill, please! How much?" he demanded, irritated at his late futile maneuvers.

Then the manager, conscience-stricken, disappeared through the swing doors, on pretention of having something to do. Pierre had to wait. The manager would return shortly. That is, behind the scenes, the manager did not wish to give offense in appearing to dismiss a customer by his coughing spell. He was waiting behind the swing doors.

This suited Pierre Gaspard exactly. When Faith began to clear the table, he took hold of her wrist and held it firmly.

"To-night, Faith. It is your last opportunity."

"How very kind of you, Pierre! You surpass yourself in thoughtfulness. I thought you had sealed my doom," and her lip curled with a touch of contempt.

"This is final," he said, doggedly.

"Not to be continued in our next?" inquired Faith with irony. "Your consideration is as kind as your purpose is noble."

"Well! What have you to say?" he asked, ignoring her remark.

Faith said nothing.

"Cruel Faith! My Edelweiss of the cold Alps! Have you no word for me?—" he continued, mockingly.

"Not one, Pierre Gaspard!"

"Then when I say I love you, I will give you my all, lay it at your feet—what will you answer? It is free-

dom and life such as you long for, if you will come with me," and Pierre watched her face closely.

But her face did not change, and she answered simply:

"I have nothing to say. It needs no repeating."

"Then you refuse me?" And a sinister expression came into his brown eyes.

"I do; just as I did long ago, Pierre."

Pierre pushed his chair back and faced her squarely.

"Then I'll tell the manager of the Boniface restaurant," he said deliberately, with a cruel curl of his sensuous lips.

"When?" came Faith's listless query.

"To-night!" said Pierre.

"And where?" she asked mechanically.

"Here and now, Faith, my dear," with a disagreeable laugh.

Faith partly closed her eyes and turned a shade paler, but her manner, voice and face remained the same.

"You threaten," she said lightly, to gain time for thought, and to shake his resolution if possible.

"Not this time. I act now," and he stood before her, dogged and cruel.

"Tell him," returned Faith quietly.

Pierre Gaspard was amazed.

"What nerve!" he muttered under his breath.

He crossed the room to the stall, where the manager was now seemingly occupied with cash, but from which point of vantage his eyes had been wandering, with an expression of puzzled surprise, in their direc-

tion. Faith had never talked so long or so earnestly to a man in the Boniface.

Pierre leaned over the counter and spoke to the manager in a low voice. The latter started in astonishment.

"Mrs. Bernstein Gleney!" he exclaimed, rather loudly. "Is it true? And a price offered for knowledge of her whereabouts!"

Faith Winston Gleney was overwrought with the strain of the last few days. The mental and emotional excitement of the past week, added to Sunday's struggle, and to-night to Pierre's cruel revelation of her identity, were beyond her strength to endure or control. Her icy reserve melted in the blaze of a suppressed life, now on fire. Her resentment, her indignation, her sense of injustice and the indignity to her womanhood broke through the cool restraint of years. Like a river overflowing its banks and carrying all before it on its flooding and rushing torrents, Faith Winston Gleney at last lifted her voice in public in defense of herself and her life.

She turned fiercely on Pierre, as he stood near the manager.

"Brute! Who sent you into this world to destroy the life of another? The one master you serve—the devil! Not content with the blackness of your own heart, you seek to blacken another's. Failing in this, you seek revenge! Revenge, Pierre! Have your revenge!" And then she turned to the manager. "I am Mrs. Bernstein Gleney. I go to my husband to-night.

But before I go I claim the respect due to a lady, and the right due to a woman. This man—brute! if you will, though it were insult to the four-footed kind to so name him—this man has insulted me. He must leave this place at once, or Bernstein Gleney will know the reason why.”

Faith looked at Pierre and lifting her arm, pointed to the door.

The manager stood aghast between Faith and Pierre. Betty and the other man had come forward, and were embarrassed witnesses of the scene. Betty's eyes were full of pity for Faith; the other man's calm but determined.

The latter laid his hand gently on Pierre's arm and said, in a voice quiet and firm, but accustomed to command and to be obeyed:

“You had better go, sir.”

Pierre turned on him in a flash, with the quickness and ferocity of a wild beast. Had the other man not been agile and leaped aside, Pierre would have struck him.

“So!” shouted Pierre Gaspard. “You interfere a second time! It will be your last. Bernstein Gleney will love no mistress for a wife, and he shall know the story from me.”

Betty's eyes filled with horror.

Faith had regained her self-command, and her voice was steady as she said coolly:

“How dare you, Pierre! It is a lying insinuation.”

The manager gasped, and his eyes wavered a mo-

ment. But the other stood calmly studying Faith and Pierre.

"Go, you lully!" cried Pierre, glaring at him.

"I go only with Mrs. Gleney's permission," answered the gentleman, courteously. "And then I take her to her home."

Faith's long gray eyes moved slowly and wearily from Pierre to Mr. Shelburne; but gratitude deep and sincere filled them with tears.

"You may do that," hissed Pierre; "but jealousy is the spice of love. You and she will have enough of it when Bernstein Gleney hears of these queer doings."

"Bernstein Gleney already hears," answered Mr. Shelburne in a low voice. And as they all turned their eyes on him in surprise he added: "That is, if the dead can hear anything."

Faith sank into a chair, faint and worn out.

"Dead? Is my husband dead?" she asked. And then murmured sadly: "And after all these dark years! And after all this last week!"

"Yes, Mrs. Gleney. He died on the afternoon of Good Friday."

"And how did you know?"

"Oh, I happened to have a clipping out of a newspaper. It was sent to me. Some friends of mine knew him. Here it is."

"Thank God!" murmured the wearied woman as she read it.

So Pierre Gaspard was vanquished the third time.

And he strode out of the Boniface restaurant like a cur with its tail down.

"Thank you," said Faith, turning to the other man gratefully.

Mr. Shelburne had kept cool and steady, like any seaman; but when he looked into her pale, sad face, he longed to take her into his arms. Instead, he simply said:

"It was nothing. Any right-minded man would have done the same thing."

Faith and Betty went home together. And the manager of the Boniface closed the restaurant more slowly and thoughtfully than he had ever done before.

This was Easter Monday. The Monday held sacred as the day of the Resurrection in all the churches. Thousands believed it all over the world. And thousands would believe it in the centuries to come.

It was the day of the Resurrection. And it was the beginning of life and freedom for Faith Winston.

THE END

