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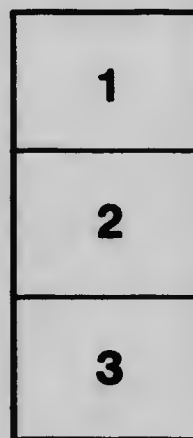
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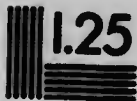
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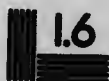
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The
Little Organist
of
St. Jerome

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The Little Organist
of St. Jerome

And Other Stories *of Work and Experience*

By Annie L. Jack



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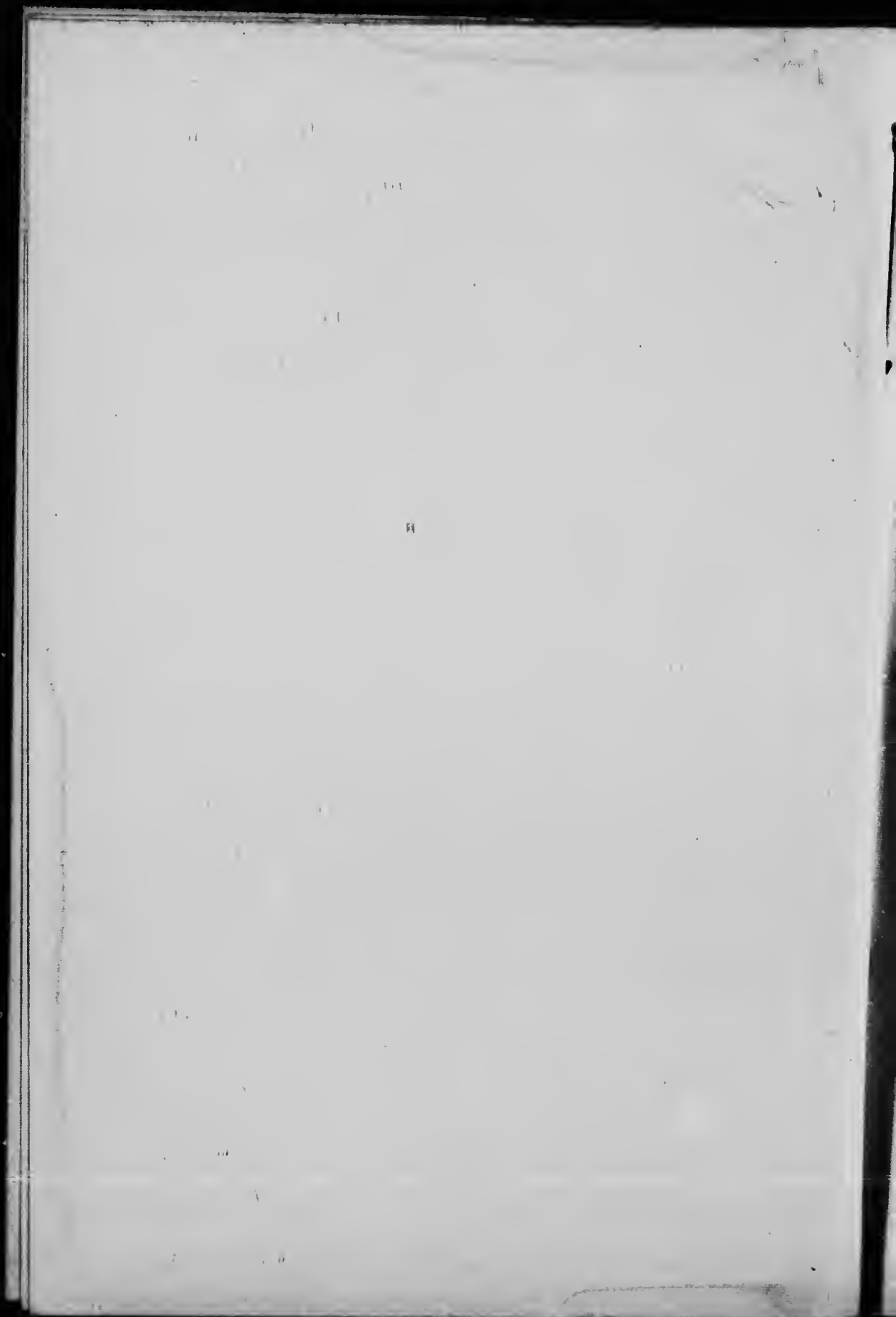
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Deal gently with us, ye who read,
Our largest hope is unfulfilled,
The promise still outruns the deed,
The tower, but not the spire, we build.

Our whitest pearl we never find,
Our ripest fruit we never reach,
The flowering moments of the mind
Drop half their petals in our speech.
—*O. W. Holmes.*

THE
Little Organist of St. Jerome

CHAPTER I.

PÈRE LOISELLE sat late at breakfast, leisurely sipping his coffee, and talking earnestly with his young friend and guest, Leonard Channing, who had come up from Boston to enjoy a fortnight's fishing during bass season. Finer bass were nowhere to be found than in a little river which ran through Père Loiseau's parish, in the village of St. Jerome. Just below the village occurred the junction of its unpretending stream with the mighty St. Lawrence, and, in addition to the sporting attractions of the place, the scenery in the vicinity was no small consideration. At least, thus thought young Channing, who, while the good curé was busy with his prayers and ministrations, had roamed at will through the fragrant valley and had thought it the most beautiful spot he had ever beheld.

The good priest had been at college when Leonard's father, then a mere boy, had been sent

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to learn French in the Province of Quebec. They had studied together and grown fondly attached to each other, in spite of their religious and political differences, often good-humoredly argued between them, and the friendship begun in the old College of St. Eustace had remained unchanged for more than a quarter of a century. Now that his friend's son had come, bearing a letter of introduction from his father, the boy seemed so like the companion of his youth that the good curé had warmed to him at once, and was living over his own boyish days in thought as the young fellow wandered, whistling softly, through the solemn house, and bringing something to the isolated curé of the great, wonderful world beyond his narrow boundaries.

"And so your people never marry Protestants?" the young man was asking, his clear, well-cut features taking on a covert look of anxiety.

"No, my son," answered the good father, "we do not have any trouble of that sort. Our people are educated to implicit obedience to the rules of the Church, and they feel that religious differences are enough to keep them apart."

The young man folded his napkin and put it into the silver ring beside his plate. He was thinking most intently of something else, yet he noticed now for the first time, that the cross was engraved upon the ring, and the word "Ami."

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"I should think," he said very slowly; "I should think that forbidden fruit would offer the greater temptations."

"The jolly curé laughed heartily. "A true son of Mother Eve," he rejoined; "but you are not a good Catholic, my Leonard. It is fortunate that you are not going to stay long with us, or this 'forbidden fruit' might tempt you, and you might be running off with one of my fair parishioners. And yet I cannot bear to have you go, and a longer stay might convince you of the truth of our holy religion and be of everlasting benefit to your soul." The good man had said these last words very solemnly. Then he smiled again. "In that case, my Leonard," he added, "you might choose my very choicest flower and pluck it for yourself, and I would only bless the banns."

"Thank you—thank you," the young man laughed, with an attempt at ease and indifference which seemed to escape the observation of his host, and at that moment the attention of both was diverted by the sound of the church bell. It was tolling for a funeral, and the good priest snatched up his missal with a hurried look at the clock, caught up his flowing black skirts dexterously on his hand and passed out of the doorway, murmuring in a low chant the mass for the dead.

The bell struck heavily, and the notes vibrated mournfully through the room. The young man

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went to the window and looked out, just as the curé appeared on the threshold of the church. A coffin, evidently that of a child, was carried rather jauntily along by eight young boys wearing white muslin around their low-crowned felt hats. A motley procession followed the little band of mourners. He could hear the service plainly through the open window.

"How stoical these people look," thought the young onlooker in a little fit of disgust with himself and the small world around him. "They appear to take this whole ceremony as a part of their day's work."

He glanced up, noted the fact that the pleasant morning sky was softly veiled with clouds, thought with a sportsman's quick sense of its advantages, and turned away to look for his fishing-tackle. As he moved about, he hummed softly to himself snatches from "Faust." At times these broke into the song :

"What is it that charms me,
And, with passion true and tender, warms me?"

He put on a linen coat and a large coarse straw hat, and walking down to the river-bank, loosed the boat from its moorings and rowed out into the stream with even strokes, which told of long practice with the Harvards, but at the bend of the river he paused a moment to lift his hat to a young

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girl, dressed as if for church, who was just hurrying out of the doorway of a cottage.

"She is late for the funeral," he thought, as he absently allowed his boat to drift a moment. "I wonder—I wonder,—if she waited a little so as to see me come down the river.

He smiled softly to himself, turned to look again after the light and graceful figure of the girl, and then rowed on. After a few moments he stopped again, and again looked back. The girl had disappeared now, but he could still see the quaint little cottage out of which she had come, and, towering beside it—indeed planted close to its garden fence, a heavy wooden cross—the emblem of the first voyagers up the river, who faithfully set the token of their faith wherever they could, as they passed along, in lieu of churches. Young Channing had often observed them in his drives through the pleasant country roads, and had wondered, as he lazily passed on, if this quiet, primitive people, of whom so little was known in the outside world, were any better or happier for their supreme devotion to their faith. Yes, they were, he reasoned; for, like Cowper's cottager, who

"Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,"

they rested in their settled belief—free from all doubts and agnosticism—they felt that everything was straight and plain, and lived their fearless,

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trustful lives, confident of the future, whether in this world or in the next. Yes, they were happy. He thought of them as they had looked at a fête the week before—uncouth, awkward, ill-dressed, but very placid and happy. How different from the rest of them seemed Felicite, the pretty young girl to whom he had just lifted his hat. None of her companions had such clear blue eyes and fluffy flaxen hair as she. Perhaps it was her love for music, and the training she had in playing, that had made her so unlike the others. "The little organist of St. Jerome," they called her, for, for more than a year now, she had told him, she had played the organ in the curé's church "as," the curé had himself told Channing, "it had never been played before."

"Yes, of course," the young man argued, "such a life and such a grand passion would affect her a great deal. It is that which makes her so refined and delicate, and so unlike her people. She is like Marguerite among the peasants."

Then he stopped and laughed, for he thought of what Emerson says—and what Bostonian but cherishes the axioms of that wise philosopher?—"The lover sees no personal resemblance in his mistress to her kindred or to others."

"Pshaw!" he thought, "can it be that in these few days I have come to love her, till a saying that is meant to be applied to the wildest and deepest

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passion, can be applied to me? How absurd!" But his reflections instigated a commotion within his breast, which was not caused by rowing, and the persistency with which he lingered near the dwelling of Felicite showed that his feelings were deeper than he chose to measure them.

How would she look—this Canadian rose—he wondered, transplanted to the cultured society in which he moved at home? Ah, she would surely grace it with her youth, her beauty, her charming little French air, the bewitching accent with which she spoke, and her low, tender voice. He was his own master, and, despite the opinion of the good-natured curé, he believed that a marriage between himself and Felicite would be right and happy. He certainly would not interfere with her religion. It was a good thing for women to be pious. They were constituted with a large development of veneration and ideality, and he did not care to object to this constitution. The more he thought, the more feasible and desirable his plan seemed to him. He felt sure the girl loved him, and to-night he would go and see her, and say more significant words to her than he had dared as yet to say.

The day wore on. He rowed to a shady place and cast out a line, but he entered with no zest into the sport, and caught nothing. The generous lunch which the curé's housekeeper had provided for him remained almost untasted, and he rowed

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gladly back toward home in the early twilight, just as the vesper bell was calling the children from their play.

As he approached the cottage in which Felicite lived, he saw her, just landed from her white painted boat, while her scarlet oars flashed in the rays of the setting sun. Once more his voice broke into a low song :

"All hail, thou dwelling pure and lowly,
Home of angel, fair and holy."

How very charming she looked, in her white dress, with her flaxen hair and tranquil face. Yes, she was, indeed, like Marguerite. And to continue the likeness, was he, like Mephistopheles, tampering with a young girl's soul ?

Now he was just opposite to her, and she saw him. Should he bow and pass by ? Perhaps he had better. But, ah ! when was love ever discreet or wise ? A moment more, and the two boats were moored side by side, and the two lovers were wandering up the little lane that skirted the quaint old garden of Felicite's mother.

CHAPTER II.

THROUGH a gap in the fence they strolled to the foot of an old apple-tree, laden with pink-and-white blossoms. Close beside them rose the wooden cross.

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They spoke of it, Leonard with curiosity, and the girl with pride and devotion.

"It was placed there by my ancestors," she said, "and the circlet of great nails on the top represents the crown of thorns upon the head of the dear Jesus. They are placed there to remind us of our daily duties, which are our daily thorns."

They sat themselves beneath the drooping blossoms, talking of the far-off city, of music, of life, happy with an unspeakable ecstasy in the half unconsciousness of their unacknowledged love. As the sun goes down, the air becomes very quiet. A party of raftsmen pass by in a large flat boat, three pairs of oars beating time as one stroke, while they sing with an air of subdued gallantry:

*"Vive la Canadienne,
Vole, mon cœur, vole,
Vive la Canadienne,
Et ses jolis yeux doux ;
Et ses jolis yeux doux,
Tout doux,
Et ses jolis yeux doux."*

The repetition of the measure had a jaunty air and a sound of force and freedom. The echoes kept up the refrain long after the rowers had passed out of sight. It was all very beautiful,—the scene, the distant music, the girl beside him. Young Channing wished that he might stay there forever. "I must go," he said at last. "It is the curé's

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dinner hour and he will not like to have me late. Good-night, Felicite,"—he took her hand. "Good-night," he repeated. "I—I am going home next week, Felicite," he continued, "unless—unless—you will promise to go with me if I wait a while. Have you not seen that I love you, dear? Will you not go with me?"

His voice was full of fervor. The girl looked up at him with her eyes flooded with tears.

"Oh, monsieur," she almost sobbed, "you do me an honor,—but—but you are a—Protestant—and—"

Her voice faltered, and he felt a great disappointment stealing over him.

"Let it go now, Felicite," he said, hurriedly. "I have been too sudden. I loved you too much. I will wait. Say no more now, but to-morrow, after vespers, I will come for your answer. Oh, Felicite,—you cannot, you will not say words which will break my heart."

He kissed her almost fiercely,—their first kiss,—whispered through his shut teeth, "Ah, speed thou, night, away!" and walked rapidly toward his skiff. Felicite remained standing in the shadow of the cross long after she ceased to hear the dip of the oars. Her heart was beating almost to suffocation, and she was looking with overflowing eyes upon the circlet of nails that crowned the wooden cross. The thorns of duty! Yes, that was it. But because

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the thorns pricked sharply, should duty not be done?

"Ah!" moaned the simple-hearted girl bitterly "because it pricks, the sacrifice may please the more. Yes, that is why our fathers put the nails there,—to remind us, when our resolutions falter, that duty must be done, no matter how hard!"

She threw herself down upon the bench and wept bitterly.

The next day was the Sabbath. The Protestant meeting-house of St. Jerome stood open, and the followers of John Knox were trooping into it. Over the river Chateauguay, the glittering spires and massive towers of the Catholic church of St. Jerome showed in striking contrast to the stiff, red-brick building, all angles and severity, without any relief. Softened by the distance, came floating the sound of the mass intoning and the peal of the organ. Felicite was playing the "Kyrie Eleison," but Leonard Channing sat among the Scotch worshippers in the little Presbyterian meeting-house. They came in by twos and threes and took their places upon the hard, high-backed benches with an air of comfortless resignation.

Nicholas, the drover, seated himself with a thud, which caused the bench to crack ominously, and said in audible tones, "I lost three lambs last week, after I got to town. It's a bad year for weak critters, Mr. Todd."

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The farmer thus addressed nodded lugubriously as he rejoined, "Neighbor Tompkins haint got one left."

The drover quickly turned to meet the next arrival, who entered with a quiet step and subdued air and took a seat on the opposite side of the aisle.

"Old man Rutherford any better?" he asked of the drover.

"A little," replied that serious personage, "but the doctors don't think he's going to get over it."

"Well," said a handsome young woman with a severe cast of features, who had heard the enquiry and reply, "if his time's come, he'll go. You can't fight against God's laws. It's no use talking. When your time's come, you've got to go. Its foreordained."

"Foreordained!" thought young Channing. "Yes, that's it—something is foreordained for me. I believe that. I seem to feel that I am in the grip of Fate now. It is the first time I have ever felt it so. To think that possibly I, who have always had my own way, and felt like a veritable king of my own destiny, should be balked at last, perhaps in the thing I want most! Yet I cannot believe that it is going to be so!" He tried to feel as buoyant as usual, but he could not quite shake off a sort of foreboding which the woman's stern words had roused within him, and his thoughts were still gloomy as the Rev. Timothy Browne, the pastor,

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walked up to the pulpit. The men and boys who had lingered till the last moment to talk in the porch, scuffled clumsily in, doffing their hats and depositing them under their seats. The Psalms of David set in metre were the only poetry allowed to this severe assembly, and the one hundred and twenty-first was given out for the congregation to sing.

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come my aid ;
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made."

The tune was started by a tall thin man, whose voice was a sort of ill-trained soprano, with a nasal twang. The tenor joined in with some remarkable notes, and there was a drumming sort of a bass accompaniment from a crowd of boys, whose timeless and tuneless droning not even the shrill chorus of women could drown.

In the midst of the dreary sermon, Leonard, looking through a side window, saw Felicite in her creamy-white dress, prayer-book in hand, crossing the bridge that spanned the river. Her soft hair, under her broad-brimmed hat, was blown against her cheek by a wandering breeze. A young man who passed her greeted her with an air of respectful homage, and stopped a moment to speak to her. Leonard felt a thrill of involuntary jealousy as he watched the brief interview, and as Felicite walked

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on, lightly and gracefully as a wild thing of the woods, another melody from "Faust" floated through his brain: "Angel from heaven, come down." He must stop thinking of that disagreeable old story. Why was he so persistently haunted by it? It was uncanny, and it was unjust to himself. He was going to make Felicite very happy. As his wife, she could go all over the world. She could revel in the music of the masters,—she would be all in all to him, and he would be everything to her.

In the midst of his disconnected thoughts, the service closed, and he walked out of the church with the rest of the worshippers, many a gruff but kindly farmer wishing him a good day, while the buxom lasses regarded his irreproachable apparel and handsome face with undisguised admiration.

As evening drew on, the young man excused himself to the weary curé and walked towards Felicite's cottage, feigning a leisurely manner which ill accorded with the beating of his heart. The sun was setting with a lurid glow which would soon turn to blackness. The wind had risen, and with it came a sound of distant thunder. How ghostly looked the trees in the gloaming, clad in their white blossoms, in front of every farmhouse and bordering the roadside. By the time he had reached his destination the lightning began to play, and by its glare he could see Felicite standing in

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the doorway, as if to urge him to greater despatch. The front door opened directly into the living-room, as is usually the case in the homes of the Canadian peasants. The floor, painted a bright ochre, was covered here and there with strips of gaily-dyed homespun carpeting. Large beams crossed the ceiling, making it seem even lower than it really was, and a gigantic double-stove formed a part of the partition dividing the living-room from the kitchen. The furniture was very plain, and the small recessed windows had tiny frames, making the dim light dimmer. The white-washed walls were gay with pictures of the Virgin and the saints, while in one corner was a shrine, upon which two wax candles burned faintly before a picture of Christ nailed to the cross. A blue mug filled with flowers formed part of the offering before it, and a large crucifix with some rosaries hung beside it. Near by was a cabinet organ upon which the little girl Felicite had taken her first lessons in playing. Some chairs were upholstered in Turkey-red chintz, and upon a small table in a corner stood a plaster image of the infant Jesus.

The mother and sisters of Felicite, who saluted the young man not altogether cordially, were of the ordinary Canadian type. He was right in thinking that she did not resemble her kindred. Even Emerson must have admitted that, he was sure. The old dame, he felt confident, disapproved of

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him entirely. Was he not an "American," and were not the "Americans" heretics? But the blandishments of a fine-looking and cultured young man were not easy to resist, and in response to his sincere efforts she soon found herself talking volubly with him of Père Loïselle and of Petite, her daughter, who had been sent to Ville Marie to learn music, and had persevered through many difficulties until even the Bishop had complimented her playing during his last pastoral visit. She was such a good girl, too, and had made her première communion so young. "Mon Dieu! how belle she looked that day—just a little bride!"

CHAPTER III.

THEN Felicite sang the "Ave Maria," bringing rare melody from the little organ, and the old dame retreated to the kitchen, followed by the older sisters.

The song stopped, and the young man was bending over her, imploring her to answer his question of the day before. She parried his importunings skilfully, and he soon found himself trying to reconcile to her the teachings of Luther with those of St. Ignatius.

"There is but one heaven, dearest," he said fondly.

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"But my soul dreads purgatory," she whispered breathlessly; "else I should surely love you, mon grand Américain."

"Ah, then—then—" He was about to draw her to him and to kiss her again, but at that moment there came a thunder-crash which stunned and deafened them. The stones from the chimney came rattling down in the wide fire-place, and Felicite's mother rushed in, counting her beads and holding aloft a crucifix. Then Baptiste, the blacksmith, who lived next door, shouted in from the garden, telling them not to fear, though the cross had fallen. Looking out into the darkness, they could see by the frequent flashes of lightning that the old apple tree was prostrate, and over its dripping blooms of pink and white lay the long dark wooden cross, its crown of nails visible among the gay flowers, and a part of it stretching into the beds of young and tender onions and carrots which were planted in square lots just beyond the tree.

The storm soon after ceased, and the young man vainly tried to resume the conversation so rudely interrupted. But Felicite's face had become as marble, and she answered him only in monosyllables.

"I shall see you in the morning," he said, on taking leave of her.

"We are never sure of the morrow, monsieur," answered the old dame for her daughter. Her

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beady black eyes shone as she spoke with a fire which he did not understand. It perplexed and annoyed him.

The village was quiet and deserted as he walked along its unpaved streets, where little pools of water stood, brown and aggressive, at every step. The perfume of trees and flowers was intensified, and the effect of his outer and inner experience was a night of doubt, unhappiness and evil dreams.

Morning broke clear and cool. There was an early marriage, and the merry party laughed and talked under the window of the manor-house for a few minutes after the ceremony. How happy, how innocent, how trustful they looked. He believed that he would be willing to live among such a people all his life if Felicite should prefer it. He would tell her so and plead his cause with all the earnestness of which he was capable.

With this determination he went down to breakfast, to find Father Loiselle as suave and inscrutable as usual, and in the act of perusing a little note, which he placed beneath his plate. "Let me serve thee to a fine bass, my dear boy," he said; "Pierre caught some before daylight this morning. I have some news," he went on, seriously, but with no glance at Leonard, "which gives me both pain and pleasure. We have lost our little organist. She has decided to join the Grey Nuns. Perhaps, God knows, she has saved herself much trouble by this unexpected course."

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Leonard was conscious of a sudden faintness and pallor, but the curé paid no attention to him as he proceeded: "The old cross fell last night in the storm. It is a landmark gone, and we shall miss it, but I fear that it was rotten with age, and liable to drop at any time. You did not tell me if you liked the service you attended yesterday. You Protestants are strange people with your many dividing lines,—mere quibbles. But you have many, many fine men among you,—glorious minds, beyond dispute."

The good man lapsed into silence, the meal was concluded with unusual haste, and then Père Loisélle started off to care for his poultry, his orchard, and the flock under his spiritual ministrations, while Leonard walked rapidly away towards Felicite's cottage. He passed through the opening in the fence into the garden and to where the old cross lay prostrate. In his impotent agony he kicked it violently, and felt a wicked delight in the ruin it had wrought among the flowers and onion-beds, over which the old dame was stooping, trying to restore order with a "pioche."

"Where is Felicite?" he asked imperiously.

"My daughter," exclaimed the old woman with much gesticulation. "My daughter has left her home forever. She has gone, under Père Loisélle's directions, to a distant city."

"Then she has already gone!"

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He stopped her volubility impatiently, and turned to go. She bowed him out of the garden with an air of a duchess,—past the sweet herbs and the opening roses, and her parting “Pardon, monsieur,” rankled in his heart for many a day, as did also the gleam of ugly satisfaction in her beady eyes.

He parted, too, somewhat constrainedly, with the good father later in the day, thanking him encouragingly for his courteous invitation to repeat his visit at no distant day. But he knew well in his heart that nothing on earth could ever induce him to return again to St. Jerome.

Leonard Channing is not what the world would call a fickle man, but there is a young girl now in his native city who wears his engagement ring, and they are very fond of each other. One evening he took her to the opera, to see “Faust.”

“Why, Leonard,” she said at its close, “I never saw you so absorbed in anything. Your face has had a really rapt look. I believe that you have fallen in love with Margaretta.”

“But she has gone to heaven, dear,” he answered, “so that you cannot be jealous of her. The wretch who won her soul,—he has the debt to pay now. I wonder how he feels.”

“You are making a real thing of it,” she cried, lightly.

“It is one of those mysteries,” he rejoined, “which haunts one. The world is full of them.”

THE LITTLE ORGANIST OF ST. JEROME

She saw that he was falling into a reverie, out of which she was too kind to call him. He was living over again the dreamy days of his life in St. Jerome, resurrected by the pealing music and the vision of the fair-haired Marguerite. But it was as if he were thinking of one who was dead, and not in any spirit of disloyalty to the gentle maiden who rode beside him.

He did not know, nor ever will, that late on the night when he parted from Felicite forever she had thrown herself upon the wet and fallen cross, in the wild night, and had wept bitter tears of love and self-renunciation; that at daybreak she had sought the good curé, had confessed and been absolved from all her sins, even that one passionate kiss, and that before the morning had fairly dawned she had left her home and her kindred for her love's sake.

"It needed that the very cross of Christ should fall," she had murmured piteously, "to remind me of my duty to heaven and of my sins in loving an 'Américain.'"

On their wedding tour, young Channing and his bride visited the British provinces, and wandered happily through the sight of their old historic cities. By chance they strayed into the Grey Nunnery, and were standing in the chapel before the young man suspected where they were. One of the Sisters sat before the organ, playing, in a masterly style, the music for the day. The throbs of the almost

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inspired music stirred with inexplicable power young Channing's breast.

"Who is it?" he said, breathlessly, catching an attendant by her grey cape, as she passed him, and pointing to the player.

"It is Sister Cecilia," she answered, wondering at his vehemence.

The music stopped, and the nun on the organ-bench turned to descend from the loft. He saw her face plainly,—her serene, beautiful face.

"Come," he said hurriedly to his bride, and they hastened out of the building.

"How beautifully she played," said the unconscious girl beside him, a little obtusely it seemed to Leonard Channing. "But how you started when you saw her, Leonard! Had you ever seen her before?"

"I—I think I had," he stammered, under the influence of an embarrassment she could not understand. "I think she used to be the little organist of St. Jerome."

But Felicite had not seen him, and the calm current of her holy life had known no ripple.

A Brown Study.

A LITTLE low brown house, painted in blocks of light and dark brown, with blinds of the same tint, and a wooden fence that matched it all. Even the door-step shared the same hue, and the bare trunks of the elms that swayed to and fro, with branches that clutched the passing crowd, were only a shade or two darker than the rest. And in the neutral-tinted rooms sat three girls whose rich brunette complexions harmonized with their surroundings. They were sitting, too, in a "brown study," till the eldest, Marta, spoke at last, with a profound sigh in her tones :

"It's no use, girls ; the garden is closed up for the season. Mother is no better, and still no word of father." She spoke the last word in a husky whisper, adding, "What are we to do for the money?"

The youngest of the three, who could not have been more than fourteen, tossed back her golden brown curls, and running her fingers through them, suggested, "Take me to the barber's, Marta."

"It will come to that some day, Louise," returned

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the eldest, bitterly, and then turning to the silent sister, who had been sitting in quiet meditation, she asked, "Hast thou no solution for this problem, most thoughtful Christie?"

The girl started, hesitated, and said: "I was thinking, girls, what slaves we are to fashion and to the conventionalities. Here I have been following the beaten track of music-teaching, walking miles of sidewalk for a pupil at two dollars a month, and not able to earn enough to keep myself in respectable clothing. Louise, with her deft fingers, has loaded down a table with pretty but unsold goods at the Woman's Exchange, and Marta's sales of Christmas cards and other art work do not remunerate her for the outlay of paint, the time spent, and then the worry, the strained eyes that are already beginning to suffer with such close application. My poor Marta!"

Silence fell on the group. It was early evening, and, to save expense, no lamps were lighted as they talked.

"It seems strange," began Marta, at length, "that we got no word of father's ship. Mother says that it has often been as long, but she never before felt the lack of money. The failure of the Exchange Bank has swept away all the savings that were kept there for rainy days. I have no orders, Christie has only eight dollars a month coming in, and Louise has had to leave school. We must look

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it squarely in the face and see if there is no other way of earning money than those we have tried so far. We cannot go out and leave mother, and we must earn money to give her more nourishing food, for that is what she needs most."

Then Christie spoke: "Signor Bellino gets two dollars a lesson from one of the young ladies in one of the houses where I teach the younger children. I listened one day when waiting in the hall, and was surprised to learn how easily his money was earned. Girls, I am going to give it up and turn washerwoman."

"Are you crazy?" asked the astonished Marta.

"I should soon be if I kept up music-teaching in such a spiritless, half-paid way. No; I will tell you my idea."

"Please do, if you have one," said saucy Lou.

"I don't mind your sarcasm if you will only agree to what I suggest," said Christie, a little timidly.

"And to begin, I was in Mrs. Muldoon's the other day—you know she keeps a boarding-house on James Street—and I thought some of her boarders might buy woollen ties or cuffs, or those warm mitts Lou knits; so I took a sample in, and while I waited two young men were talking in the parlor. One remarked that his shirts had been sent home without a single button on them, and as yellow as gold. The other laughingly answered it was enough to make a fellow get married, without waiting for a

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competence, to have to sew on his buttons before he could start for church, and added, 'Why don't some of these girls that talk about woman's sphere, and the avenues of employment open for them, start a first-class laundry, where washing, ironing and mending can be carried on to such perfection as to be classed among the fine arts?' 'But, my dear fellow,' drawled the other, 'it lowers them in the social scale, don't you see? A man can dance with those girls who dabble in paint or literature or any of the arts and sciences, but he could not come down to dancing attendance on his washer-woman.' 'Elevate the business,' said the other one hotly; and just then Mrs. Muldoon came in, and, Lou, she ordered three pairs of mitts for her boys. Something useful sells best, you see.

"Now, let us start a laundry. We can't go out into society, anyway, and we must have money. We have good stationary tubs, thanks to father, and an out-kitchen that is comfortable at all seasons. I have money enough to buy a box of soap and a steam washer. We will not tell mother till she is stronger, but Marta shall write and cause to be printed a few cards, stating that we wash, iron and mend gentlemen's underwear at reasonable terms. Marta is a splendid clear starcher, and likes ironing best. You know you always pleased father, dear, and he was very particular. I will undertake the washing. Our garden gives plenty of space for drying clothes, and Louise can put her fancy

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stitches into mending socks and darning whatever is needed. The buttons must be all in order before the garment is sent home. I will get a box of pearl buttons to begin with."

When Christie had done speaking there was almost an enthusiasm in her tone, and, after a little more debating as to ways and means, the lamp was lighted, the girls put on an air of cheerfulness and freedom from care as they gathered up the different work they had been employed with when twilight befell, and went upstairs to spend the evening in their mother's room, after carefully closing the dampers to save fuel and making such preparations as frugal housekeepers only know of for the morning meal.

When Hugh Brown married and took his wife to the little home he called Brown Cottage, he was only mate on a coasting vessel; but for many years before our story opens he had been captain of a merchant ship, and of late years had made long voyages to Mediterranean ports. It was now six months since he had sailed away, intending to return before that length of time to his home and dear ones there. But time passed on, and no word came from him; and then the bank's failure and mother's malarial fever brought finances to a low ebb, and as she lay in an upper chamber, worn with illness and anxiety, the young girls planned and saved and worked down stairs, hiding their fears from her and from each other. But a week from

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the time the story opens the cards were printed and sent to the principal boarding-houses in the city by post. And when Christie called at Mrs. Muldoon's with Lou's well-knitted mitts, she was rewarded by an order for all the washing of the boarders, while some of the young men promised to speak of the new venture to their friends. It was so neat and unique in its way, this little piece of pasteboard, that one was forced to read and remember it.

GENTLEMEN'S UNDERWEAR
WASHED, IRONED AND MENDED,
AT BROWN COTTAGE, BLANK STREET.
FINE LINEN A SPECIALTY.
WOOLLENS WASHED WITHOUT SHRINKAGE.

Kitty O'Keene, whose boy was hired to fetch and carry the clothes, called at the cottage and asked for work. "Sure and it's meself can wash for yez half or a whole day, ma'am, and Ted can hang out the clothes"; and as the girls knew her to be honest and poor, they engaged her services for half a day during the first three days of the week.

The work progressed without any confusion, and when sent home was promptly paid for, each article being specified in the printed bill, which was enclosed in an envelope and neatly addressed. And so the weeks passed in prosperous labor, till Kitty O'Keene had to work every day and all day of the first five in the week to get the washing done. A patent clothes drying machine was put up in the yard,

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and by keeping up with the work they were able to be punctual in returning the parcels, and the nourishing food and superior medical advice obtained for the mother was sufficient reward for many a weary hour.

But little did Christie think, as she made out the weekly bills with mechanical and mercenary precision, that the little god of love was sharpening an arrow to pierce a good and manly heart, using as his emissary a washer-woman's bill. For it happened that Fred Van Coit, who was boarding at Mrs. Muldoon's while finishing his legal studies, had become fascinated by the clear, concise penmanship and unwonted refined neatness of both bill and bundle sent home ; and one evening when his sister Margery, who was visiting the city, sat in his room enjoying his little confidences as only sisters can, he suddenly handed her his last week's washing bill without comment. But Margery did not wonder at anything that brother Fred did, and read without suspicion :

Mr. VAN COIT,

To M. C. & BROWN, DR.

Underwear, washed, iron and repaired	\$1 00
Four pairs of socks, ditto	0 40
Six shirts, ditto	1 20
Eight collars, washed and ironed	0 24
Six handkerchiefs, ditto	0 18
	\$3 02

Received payment,

\$3 02

C. BROWN.

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"I don't know why I should care about those girls, Margery, but I can't help thinking I have had something to do with this business.

"I was talking to Tom Levers one day about washing, and I said a lot of nonsense about the "social scale" and all that sort of thing, while he, like a sensible fellow, wished some of the girls who were wanting a sphere would turn to and mend our socks as well as embroider smoking caps for us. I happened to look up, and a young girl with a wistful look on her pretty but tired face was listening with a strained air to our remarks. I found out afterwards that she was a Miss Brown, and in a week they sent one of their cards to the boarding-house; but I have never seen any of the washer-ladies.'

"Don't be a goose, Fred," laughed the young girl. "Call things by their right name, and what more noble than a 'perfect woman.' I can't get it out of my head somehow that I know one of those girls. Of course there are lots of Browns; but my Christie would grace a wash-tub or a Fifth Avenue drawing-room equally well—and she was considered a musical prodigy at school. Grace Lane can tell me if my suspicions are correct. I must see my sweet Christie while I am in town."

And so it came to pass that two days afterwards two very stylish girls called at Brown Cottage and asked for Christie. Of course the meeting was

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impulsively cordial ; but after a while they noticed a change in the manner of their hostess, and soon rose to leave.

Then with an effort Christie said : " You must not feel that I think any less of you that I cannot accept Miss Lane's invitation to go with you to any of your entertainments. But we are in great trouble, or rather have been. The bank failed where our money was invested ; we lost all ; then our mother fell ill, and we had no word from father till yesterday. He has been shipwrecked, and does not know of our money loss. We struggled along as well as we could till debt stared us in the face. Then we set up a laundry, and since then we have prospered financially, though not socially. We did not tell mother till the good news of father came yesterday, and she has wept over us ever since."

Then Margery took her friend in her arms and talked to her. But Christie shook her head to all proposals of society. However, the ice was broken, the other sisters came in, formality was abandoned, and the visitors stayed to tea, only that naughty Margery stepped out on a " little errand " before taking off her hat, and the result was that Fred Van Coit; sitting in his room at Mrs. Muldoon's, received this telegram :

" Call at Brown Cottage, Blank Street, for me at nine.
Eureka !

MARGERY VAN COIT.'

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And when the pleasant evening was over, to the surprise of the family, Margery's brother called and was introduced to them all, and expressed his pleasure in making the acquaintance of his sister's friend. But through Christie's mind came the conversation she had heard, and this young man had said, with a particular sneer, "He could not come down to dancing attendance on his washer-woman." And so Christie looked at his handsome face, in which admiration of herself was plainly discernible, and felt a gentle disdain for a man who put such value on the "social scale," even while pleasantly affable, for his sister's sake, to his washer-woman.

Meanwhile the laundry flourished. The girls hired an adjacent shed, and Kitty O'Keene brought her sister to help with the ironing. Money flowed in, and, cheered by their father's letters, though he could not speak definitely of his return, they worked on in peace and hopeful confidence, keeping from the shipwrecked breadwinner all money troubles that might add to his anxiety.

By and by around the little Brown house came a change of nature's own devising. The crocus and snowdrop peeped out of the brown earth, and the birds returned from the south to the spicoy buds of balsams and the poplars, and sung their morning song in the budding elms. Not only our friend Fred, but his friend Tom Levers, called often at the cottage to carry some delicacy to the invalid or

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a message from Grace or Margery, and then Captain Brown came home one dull, grey evening, and had to hear the whole story. His only comment was, "Bless your faithful hearts, little girls, father will take care of you now." But Christie, in a conversation soon after, showed him their banker's account, where several hundred dollars were to their credit, and reluctantly, yet with a sense of gratitude, mingled with a sense of justice, the Captain did not interfere with their work. That was two years ago. The laundry has grown to larger proportions now, and there are six needy women employed with Kitty O'Keene, who is forewoman. Marta is to be married to Tom Levers, but retains her interest in the laundry, while Christie is to brighten the home of Fred Van Coit in a distant city. She was not easily won, this proud washer-woman; and when in earnest tones he pleaded his suit, she scornfully answered, "What! dancing attendance on the washer-woman?" I cannot tell all the arts he used to overcome her objections; but, to my mind, she had always liked him from that first day when she heard him speak at Mrs. Muldoon's.

Louise still darns and mends and sews on the buttons, but she intends to take as her partner in her department a young orphan girl who has no "sphere," and is dependent on her needle for her livelihood. The work has always run smoothly, the

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help have no cause for complaint, are well paid, and take an interest in their several departments, and now that Mrs. Brown has fully recovered her health, she is able to assist in the household duties and to appreciate better her daughters' heroic conduct and praiseworthy efforts to keep the wolf from the door. Truly "whatsoever thy hands find to do, do it with thy might."

Kitchen Sunshine.

SHE put down the magazine with a sigh half of sorrow, half of resentment. "It's no use trying to make us believe in farm life," she said. "Writers don't know anything about its prosy part. They think us a lot of contented and discontented animals, and, whether in prose or poetry, they praise the country and patronize the country man or woman."

Her best silk gown rustled as with indignation, and she shook her ample skirts as though to shake off the dust of the city and the injustice of the citizens.

"No, they've never tried it,"—she spoke decidedly,—"it is a life of isolation of soul as well as body. 'Organize a club? Start a musical society?' Would anyone know what it means? Why, Dorothy, I told Miss Sanders you belonged to the Handel and Haydn, and she said, 'Handle of what?' We are not to blame—it is the steady, driving work that leaves no time for culture. I don't believe any woman ever worked harder to prevent becoming a clod than I have done. I was a bright young woman, and ought to have been a bright old

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one, but the environment tells, and George Herbert never tried, for all his preaching, to 'make drudgery divine.'

"I've lived here over thirty years," she continued, looking at the girl who constituted her sole audience in the little back parlor, "and I have yet to see the man or woman willing to come back to farm life after they have left it. They come and build cottages, and arrive and leave with the birds, but never take up the old round of duties. I do not think it is because the work is hard, but the smallness, the isolation, the self-sacrifice it implies."

"Well, Aunt Martha," said the girl, "I intend to marry a farmer, and show what an advanced woman can do."

The elder woman replied with a bitter laugh.

"If you mean Cyril Howe, you have stubborn stuff to deal with. It will take more than your college education to grapple with his iron will—and you are such a visionary, dear!"

"I'd rather be a visionary," said the girl, lifting her soft grey eyes, in which shone a light of truth and courage, "rather be anything than the sordid, grasping men and women who live in one rut, and think no other can hold their cart-wheel. I don't mean you and Uncle Dick, for you are so generous, and everyone knows you always have had your own way in your pretty home. Uncle Dick always says, 'Just as your Aunt Martha wants,' about everything."

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"Yes," said Mrs. Martha Pemberton, serious enough now; "he says that, and then takes his own way. Why, I've wanted my window-blinds painted brown ever since I have lived here, but Dick's mother had them green, and green they must be. I've had a big cistern in the cellar under the living room; I protested, but it was no use, and I am certain it has caused our rheumatism; but it was his idea, and he's like Cyril when he takes a notion—nothing can move him. Then, there are dozens of things that make farm life unattractive to women. Men glory in their roughness, and despise our attempts at refinement. What will you do when the hired men sit around the stove and mend the harness and grease their boots?"

"Why," said Dorothy Smith, "I'll have a room built for such things, and have a stove in it."

"And much use they'll make of it," said Aunt Martha, "except to hold it up as a proof that you feel above your business. Did I ever tell you how much I wanted a glass half-door in my kitchen? I hadn't been married more than a year—yes, it's over thirty years ago—when I was trying to can some plums, one day in late autumn. They were of the damson sort, and grew in the hollow. Dick was very fond of them, and I tried to be quite careful to have them well put up. There were a few flies in the kitchen, but a cold north wind was blowing in, so I had to shut the door. Just as I

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was thinking perhaps a fly would get into the syrup, Dick came through for the milk pails. I didn't mind much, though the floor was just washed, and he could as easily have gone around through the wood shed. He left muddy marks at every step, but I said in a pleasant, appealing way, 'Couldn't half this kitchen door be glass, and then I could see better on the stove?' 'Why, yes,' he said, 'you can have it all glass if you like, my dear,' and never mentioned it afterwards. In the years that have followed we have had a glass plant-room added to the south end of the house, and made many improvements, but I still have to open the door to see on the stove, or grope about as best I can when it is cold. But I have plenty of things I do not need, and so a few years ago, when they were putting up a garden summer-house, I said, 'Take measurements and put in a glass half in the kitchen door.' The boys were of that interesting age when they begin to feel competent to direct their parents, and they made as many objections as though it would spoil the farm, till I was glad to say, 'Never mind, I don't care about it.' But I do not wonder that farmers cannot get farmers' daughters to marry them. Left alone all day, with a tired, sleepy man at night who only wants his newspaper to snooze on the lounge, a woman has a chance to think, and to regret, too, when she is belittled in every mortal way."

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"O, Aunt Martha," said Dorothy, "I am shocked to hear you talk! It is not fair to the boys; they think the world of you, and try to give you everything."

"Yes," said the elder woman, bitterly; "a few days after the talk about the door they went to town and brought me home a silk dress, some fancy fruit, and a brass teakettle—one of the things that stands in the parlor and has to be heated by a spirit lamp, when our kitchen fire is always going handy. It was a nice bit of furniture, to be sure, but all the while my heart was in rebellion about the door, and I found out that men folks want us to like what they like best, and to echo their opinions. If you want to get along, Dorothy, you must be a clinging vine—let him think you can't get along alone—keep him well—he'll never detect it, and if you want anything never suggest it yourself but bring him around to suggest it for you."

"You poor dear," said Dorothy, half in tears; "it's a good thing that the advanced woman has a mind of her own. I should just have bought that door and got a carpenter to put it in."

"Don't try it, little girl," said Aunt Martha; "the harness always breaks when the team pulls both ways."

A year has passed since Dorothy Smith became Mrs. Howe, and set the neighbors talking by her

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advanced ideas. Her first innovation was an afternoon in; for it was soon understood that the young matron did not intend to remain at home every afternoon, subject to callers, in the desultory fashion of the country people, who felt free to "drop in" at any hour of the day, and any day of the week.

But very soon Mrs. Cyril Howe's afternoons were known far and near; neighbors met and talked pleasantly, though she never encouraged gossip. Fruit and flowers were on the table, and a few good books that were Dorothy's own, and these she loaned to her callers, talking over those returned and so encouraging a taste for good literature. Some evenings, too, it was known that they were at liberty, and men dropped in to discuss politics and their method of work.

So time passed on till one day in early spring, that Dorothy never forgot. She was looking at an old shed, at the side of her kitchen, in which was stored useless lumber. She had often asked to have it removed, and Cyril had said, "Well, take it down yourself," but nothing further was done. She knew that it shut from her kitchen all the afternoon glow of the setting sun, the daylight that she coveted while cooking dainty things for supper. She kept no help, and this dull kitchen was a drawback to her comfort. So Carpenter Somers came along that morning, when the air was full

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of the fragrance of the opening buds ; the posts and boards were removed, and piled neatly beside other lumber in the yard. He had just left when Cyril Howe came home from the mill and his tones were stern and cold as he asked :

"Whose orders are those? What have you done with the shed?"

"Why, Cyril," said Dorothy, "you told me to take it down myself, and I only got Somers to do it instead. We really needed more light in the kitchen, and the ground will make a bit of a garden."

Nothing more was said, but in the morning Somers returned and replaced the building under the direction of the "master of the house."

"Rather than go to law," he said, to his friends. "But all that comes of having anything to do with wimmen—takin' any stock in their orders."

It was soon learned in the village that Mrs. Howe had a hired girl in the kitchen, but Dorothy would not discuss the subject, even with Aunt Martha. She went out more, became interested in church work, kept up the appearance of conjugal content, and tried to forget that hurt to her self-respect. But there were no more choice ragouts or dainty dishes prepared in that kitchen by her own hands.

Pork and cabbage, and plenty of good soup, were her orders to the "help," and the village baker's

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bread took the place of her delicious loaves, of which Cyril was so fond.

But no word of discord passed between the husband and wife. Dorothy was one of the natures that could smile even when wounded, and one of her mottos was, "It is better to sacrifice than to regret." So she endeavoured to shut out the selfish feeling and make excuses in her mind for her husband, whom she dearly loved.

A little later came the elections, and Cyril Howe was quite proud of his nomination for the office of Mayor. He set his heart on being elected, and his friends had no doubts on the subject. But when the day came, and the vote was taken, his defeat was overwhelming. Late at night, before returning home, he chanced to pass along a side street of the village, and his own name, spoken in the well-known tones of Carpenter Somers, arrested his attention.

"He's the dourest man I ever did a job of work for, and the wimmen fixed him off good. I tell you it was fine. Mrs. Howe don't know nothing at all about it, but Aunt Martha and twenty-eight other wimmin, they just qualified to vote, an' marched right up to the polls. They was quiet as mice, but they meant business, and didn't want no mayor as could treat me an' his wife as if we were dirt under his feet. She never said anything to a livin' soul, but he can't muzzle me, an' it's just prime how the wimmen ousted him. He'll learn."

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Mr. Howe had learned all he wanted to know of the cause of his defeat—it was the neighboring women—and as he walked slowly homeward the part he had played against his wife took on a new aspect. He opened the door; Dorothy was alone. She came silently towards him, and met his white face, but was still more startled to see his smiling eyes. He stopped to shut out the cool evening breeze. She knew he had failed, yet he seemed filled with some new thought or purpose.

"The money d' n't all go in the lost campaign, Dolly," he said— "and if you haven't any objections we'll build a glass house on the south and west side of our house for the neighbors to throw stones at. I've seen you struggling with plants in these windows long enough. We'll make a place big enough to move at t' in." Discreet Dorothy accepted the situation without question, and Aunt Martha was never certain whether the idea of the new glass plant house, that would set off the mayor's residence if he had been elected, originated before or after his defeat. Jim Somers did not get the job for frame work. The carpenter and plumber came from the city, and the old shed once more disappeared, this time never to be rebuilt.

All the same, "Jim" was a common-place angel in disguise, for Uncle Dick heard of the affair and put on his thinking cap. The result was that one day he drove Aunt Martha over to see Mrs. Howe's

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new conservatory, telling her he would call for her in the evening. It was late when he managed to get around, and later still when they reached home. But in the morning when Aunt Martha went out to get the breakfast there was a strange new light over the stove, and following the rays of the sunshine she saw the evidence of new carpentering. The upper half of the door was glass! A sheet of paper pinned to the sash bore the motto, "Better late than never," and Aunt Martha sank into the nearest chair just as Uncle Dick and the boys came in. There were tears of pleasure in her eyes as she remarked, "Now I shall see if any flies get in the jam."

A Silver Wedding.

I WOULD not tell anyone it was my silver wedding day, for I was too downhearted to care, but the birds seemed to sing a louder tone as I went into the garden to tie up the honeysuckle vine, and I remembered that I grimly wondered if they really felt glad, or were so many feathered machines that whistled and trilled as a part of their mechanism and not in giving praise to God, as the poets say. I didn't see anything for them to be thankful for, anyway, for if God put them there to help to beautify the earth, so He put the hawk there to eat them up. "Ugh!" I said, shivering, "don't sing, little birds, as if you were happy, unless we can be sure you are," and then I went into the house and sent Mildred to call her father to breakfast, for Dorothy, our oldest girl, had it all ready when I went in, and Prudence, the youngest daughter, had set the table with deft fingers, and was just bringing in the toast. I did not look at Stephen as he came in, for I did not want to appear to notice that it was any day in particular. For I must tell you that for the last fifteen years of our married life we had

A SILVER WEDDING

not spoken to each other, not since little Paul was a baby, and he was now a tall boy in the fourth reader at school. It isn't a long story, and it all went through my head that morning as I cut the pie plant ready for the canning and stood over the stove in the heat, putting it up and setting it away in the dark closet ready for the winter. There was never a kinder man than Stephen; he was gentle and mindful of everything, and a good provider. He had the finest farm on the country side, and he and I had worked hard till it was our own, and out of debt. That was when Prudence was a baby—we had three girls first, and then it seemed as if our happiness was complete when Paul was born. I said he was to be "an apostle" when I gave him that name, but Stephen laughed and said it was more likely he would be a good farmer, and that would be best for him, for my guid man had a way of speaking lightly of the professions, and saying that there were too many now-a-days, like that fellow in the Bible, who owned to his laziness when he said he could not dig. Then I thought of all these things as I cut up the pie plant, and counted how old he was when the blight came over my life. Married at eighteen, and twenty-five years married—it is easily counted—and I went out into the orchard where the trees had but lately been blossoming, and as I walked there lay on the ground thousands of dead blossoms that had just turned

A SILVER WEDDING

into the shape of apples and then fallen off. Everything made me think of my own life, and of the hateful day that cost me so much of love and happiness. It was a Sunday in summer that brought the first note of change into my life, when the Rev. Silas Nairn came to preach in the Methodist church in our village. I had always been a Methodist, and, though Stephen was a Presbyterian elder, he never tried to change my place of worship, but the girls often went with him and left me to go alone, or with any of the neighbors, for we were too near the village to mind anything about the distance. So I went alone that Sunday, and there stepped into the pulpit the handsomest man I had ever laid eyes on. He was very tall, and with a serene and noble countenance, and, somehow, when he gave out the hymn—

“Arise, my soul, arise,
Shake off thy guilty fears.”

I felt quite inspired, and sang out loud and clear, taking the soprano part in the dear old tune, and enjoying it very much, as I always did, and I heard the preacher's voice plainly joining in. That was in the morning, and at dinner time somehow I did not say very much about the minister. I was thinking of his sermon and his fine voice, and what a grand husband some woman would get, for it was soon found out he was a bachelor, and all the girls

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were peeking and jumping as he passed out. In the evening I went out as usual, after putting little Paul to bed, leaving Stephen with the other children. They had no service in his church at night, and he did not care to go to mine. It was Mr. Nairn again, and as I went in he was reading the hymn—

“Give me the wings of faith, to rise
Within the veil and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How bright their glories be.”

It was beautiful to hear his rich, deep voice, and I enjoyed it as I would a beautiful picture, or grand music, or the sunrise over the hills, and as he preached I seemed to feel rested and better for his words, till suddenly I heard the rain pattering on the windows, and I remembered that I had on my best bonnet, with a green feather and a red rose in it, and no umbrella. But I tried to shake off my anxiety and attend to the sermon, and when we came out I stood in the porch a moment, and then my class-leader came up and introduced the preacher to me, adding, “he goes your way, for he stays at the very next house by the roadside, at Mr. Nelson’s, and—,” but before he could say any more the rich voice of Mr. Nairn added: “Allow me to offer half of this large umbrella at your service, as I see you have none.” I didn’t like to go with him, for Jane Nelson is such a talker, and I

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knew she was expecting to walk with him ; but I thought of my bonnet, and took his arm and walked with him along the board sidewalk to our gate, when he escorted me to the door, and said "good night" in pleasant musical tones. I thought Stephen did not look extra pleased when I told him about it, for I never had any secrets from him, and when I added, "he is such a noble handsome man," I saw a look in his eyes that might have warned me if I had had the least suspicion, or been guilty. After that it was a regular custom for the preacher to walk with me from church, sometimes alone, and often with others. He was newly appointed and a stranger among us, but he soon became a friend, and was beloved by young and old. Of course we were thrown into each other's society, for he was fond of good singing, and practised often with the choir, and I had been leader of that before he came. So the winter wore away and the spring came again, but my home happiness was gone, and insensibly I became aware of a great change in Stephen. He was gloomy, morose, and scarcely spoke, except when questioned ; but I could not assign any reason for his conduct, and only remembered that as a boy his disposition was sullen, though he never before displayed it to me. I began to enjoy the visits of Mr. Nairn very much, and it pleased me to see the interest he took in the little girls, giving them books and telling them little

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bits of knowledge that they loved to listen to. One day in summer he called with a bunch of honeysuckle in his hand, and a root of the plant that he received from a friend. "Plant it up beside your porch," he said, "I have often thought what an improvement a vine would be." He was fond of flowers, and had given quite a number of people plants that he procured from a distant city, whither, rumor said, he went to see his lady-love, and I took it and thanked him without a thought of coming evil. When Stephen came home for tea I told him all about it, with great glee, but the laugh died on my lips as I saw his face.

"Mary," he said, "if you plant that man's gift at my door I'll never speak to you again until you root it up."

I thought he was joking, and said so, till the harsh reality of his feelings were forced upon me. "Yes," he sneered, "the handsome, noble man takes all your thought from your husband, and walks and talks with you, leaving me out altogether." I argued and begged and told him how foolish he was to doubt me, who had felt so secure in his love as to be safe with any other man. I even went over a line of my old song, Douglass—

"Now all men beside are to me like shadows."

for I cared for no other. But he jeered and said, yes, he knew he was a shadow compared with the

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handsome divine. And then the devil took possession of me, and I went out and planted the honeysuckle beside the porch, and took a spray and fastened in my dress, putting the rest in a pitcher on the sitting-room table. But when I spoke to Stephen there was no response. I held up Paul to him, and he took the child on his knee, but uttered no word. And then it came over me that he would keep his threat, and I went into the bed-room and sobbed and cried in bitter grief, though I determined to wait until he did speak. Time passed on. The minister brought home a wife very soon after, and I visited his house and adored his wife. He was a man whose character as a Christian and a gentleman was second to none, and my regard for him was the reverence one pays to the pure and the good. He seemed to know intuitively that I had some great grief, though he never knew what it was, and there was no one but the children to tell it. For when anyone was in the house Stephen talked freely, though never to me, and I was just as careful not to betray our difference. Then the neighbors understood his temper, and would not have been surprised to find him sullen and sour.

So time passed on, and baby Paul grew to be a strong, hearty boy, always busy and with an inquiring mind that could not always be satisfied.

I made a point of taking him with me always to evening meetings or singing practice as he grew

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older, and he became my comfort and confidant in many things. And as I thought these things out this anniversary day, the wild regret of my wilfulness came over me, and I wished so much that the vine and my pride were uprooted together. It must be noon, I thought, looking up as Paul came in the garden gate. He walked with a sort of stagger, and I went to meet him. "Father was in the mill, and—" I waited no longer, but turned from him and, seizing a spade, uprooted the vine at my feet. Its flowers and branches clung to the porch, but I wrenched them off and trailed it after me as I ran toward the river. The mill was close by, and into the rushing water I hurled the vine. I loosed my hold of the honeysuckle as I ran to the open door; and all the while Paul was following me and crying, while he asked, "What is the matter with mother?" There was a man on the floor who had been caught in the mill and injured, but it was not Stephen, and I looked among the faces around but did not see him. Just then the door opened, and he came in with the doctor. I must have looked terrible, for I had lived through agony in those brief moments; and then I spoke, whispering as I fell reeling into his arms, "It's in the river. Oh, if you had died!" And I knew no more till I was in my bed, and Stephen standing over me and asking me to forgive him and speak to him once more. And then and there we learned the

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lesson that we ought to have learned twenty-five years earlier, that doubt and pride should never enter the heart, and that if married people expect to be happy they must trust each other. I had pondered over it hundreds of times in the still hours of the night, and I could not reconcile the thought of that needless distrust. I had not doubted him, I said, and I felt that if "to the pure all things are pure," it did not speak well for a distrustful husband; and so I had nursed my grievance. But I really forgave him, and when the children came in at tea time with a new silver tea pot and the cutest little cream jug and sugar bowl, and said that father had given them the money to buy it, and that he had remembered the date, I felt ashamed of myself, and tears of happiness came to my eyes. I was too weak to get up, and took my tea in bed, with Stephen beside me; and then he slipped out to do the chores, he said. And when I got up in the morning I hardly dared to look at the porch, but when I did I started with surprise; for, as I was told afterward by my Mildred, there was a tree peddler passing early in the evening, and her father went out and bought two beautiful rose bushes from him. They were in pots and were called climbers, and he had planted them and tied them up to the porch in place of the vine. It was so thoughtful of him to try to repair the wreck I had made, and to turn my thoughts from it. "We declared you

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must be crazy, ma," said Dorothy, "when you ran off with the vine, and Paul came in to tell us that Peter Crandall was hurt and that pa had saved him from being killed." And then I told the girls all. I thought it best for them to know about our long quarrel, and I said it was all my fault.

"You dear, blessed old ma," said Mildred, "how you have been abused!"

But I would not let her say that, and while we were talking some of the neighbors came in and began to praise Stephen's courage, and said I had a man to be proud of. And as we sat hand-in-hand that evening, I told my lover-husband that he must never, never doubt me again; and he vowed he never would, and that he trusted me for time and for eternity. "I'm old enough now," I said, and he answered, "You would still be young to me if you lived to be a hundred." And so the silver wedding brought me happiness; but I never can smell the perfume of the fragrant honeysuckle but it recalls that time, and a sense of faintness comes over me; for to me it was a snare that cost me dear, and will ever be associated with distrust and doubt.

Edwor's Wolf.

"YOU tink dat mans mak' good king, madame?" I assured her that I did think so, and she continued, "Dat newspapers tell him have big, big crown—tout l'argent, all gold—he put that on him haid, and sit on trone—all rish—rish, poor peoples pay for dat, too much monies for keep one mans to be king." Then, as if in apology and contrition for her lack of loyalty, she continued, "Me sorry la queen is daid last winter. She's good womans. Edwor he come to me after he go to the village an' he hear dat, an' says when he come in de house, 'La Reine est mort.' Mon dieu, me sorry, she like good mudder to all peoples. Edwor, he cry, cry, just like little babie. Me husbin' have one tender heart, he just cry for notin'." In spite of the last sentence she looked as sad as if she had suffered a personal loss, this trusty French Canadian washer-woman, who worked by the day for her neighbors, and went home in the glooming with "me husband," who brought his boat for her every evening, and seemed to look upon her as the superior, if not the new, woman.

EDWOR'S WOLF

She set down the basket of unlaundried clothes fresh from the line, and hanging up her hat as she talked, proceeded to put on her travelling dress, which consisted of a print skirt covered with gay magenta rosebuds on a purple ground. A faded homespun shawl and brown quilted hood completed her costume, and with her sabot covering her broad feet, she was ready for the road. Every evening during the long spring twilight she had given me her lamentations on the death of the good Queen; we had indeed been a memorial service of two until the subject was threadbare, and she always finished with the radical ideas concerning the coming coronation. "I suppose Edwor is waiting," I said, "so you need not fold the clothes, he does not like to be in the dark alone." "En bein," she answered, "he good man, Edwor; me no like you speke like dat, same him 'fraid; mebbe me tell what for he come like that, me think you unstan' better."

She took off her hood and sat down, drew the basket to her feet, and began to fold the clothes, flacking them in the air with unnecessary vigor to emphasize her sentences, and beating the towel fringes on the edge of the table to straighten them out.

"Well, madame, four, five years ago me work for Mister Cherette—pick apples in hees orchard, me an' Pierre; you remember Pierre? dat's my boy,

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him daid werry bad long time—has consumshon tree years ago. He well dat time, strong work an' carry big baskets; laugh all de time—mak' good fun. You know Paul Dore? No? He come home from shanty one time an' tell everybodies one big lie. He say him see tree big wolfs com' down from Adirondax tru Jerome's bush. Everybodie's 'fraid but me an' Pierre—we laff—laff—an' mak' fun—me no 'fraid, but dat bush close beside my house, an' Edwor, him one big babie for tink all bodies tell truf jus' like he do.

“See—sa verry curiuse dat man, he good man— but he 'fraid to go out doors at night after the Angelus at six o'clock. Him work in the garden when me away—an' catch big bass an' odder fish in hees net—and every week him goes to Mo'real down the rapids in hees shallop—for sell, make plenty l'argent, too. When me work for pick apples, him stop at home an' fish, an' one day me an' Pierre very tired, big apples for winter more heavy d'an le Fameuse, me arms very tired, an' us boof sit down under one tree for rest. Me sit very quiet, an' den me say just for fun—'You tink big wolfs come out an' eat your fader?'

“Pierre, he laff, and laff, and after dat he say, 'Mebbe better go an' see,' an' wees go along, but by-'n'-by see de house, an' no light in window, no smoke in chimney—all dark; me tink dat very curious. 'Never min', says Pierre, 'fader gone

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asleep an' forgot make light,' but me no tink dat, and me call 'Edwor—Edwor!' and by-an'-by he open de door just one little bit, an' he say, 'Vite quick;' just de same he no breff left; my but me cross, cross; me take off le sabots an' go in, Edwor he scare—scare—never see man like dat—just same him daid. He tell me one big wolf run past an' get in woodshed, an' he run quick an' shut door, an' fasten latch wif one little piece of wood, an' me hear him bang, bang, on beside de house.

"Edwor, he took grandpa's big ole gun, it all full russ—russ, you call dat? An' Pierre run for big axe outside woodshed door for kill him—poor boy, he not 'fraid, but him no very strong for fight dat wolf.

"Me go to the cupbord for one big knife, an' den me see one ole tin full of sul—sul—sulfure, you call dat? Edwor fix dat long time ago for kill some bees wif smoke till the daid, an' me tink mebbe the sulfure kill bees, it choke wolf. Him growl an' make big noise like break de bords, an' me put tin in de ole pan an' put water in pan, an' me go out to side of dat woodshed, to one place where white hen she goes to lay she's aig. Me no wait for notin, put one match to sulfure and set le tin in de 'ole, wif pan of water outside for safe, an' me call Edwor, 'Quick, quick! bring bord an' put over dat place, an' one big stone after.'

"By-'n'-by wolf get quiet, give one big coff—

EDWOR'S WOLF

coff, you call dat? an' make little noise like him fall down—an' dat place full, full of dat sulfure. Me look me husbin, an' him catch me an hold me tight one minute, an' him say—'You're smart woman, Philomene, most smart com le Yankee womans,' an' me verry glad. But le woolf no kill yet, an' me take big iron stick for stir ashes in bread oven—oven, you call dat? an' Pierre take axe, an' Edwor have ole gun—an' me go quiet—quiet, an' open dat door—but can't see notin' for one minutes. By-'n'-by Pierre begins to laff, an' he fall down he laff so hard, an' then he go in, an' pull out le woolf, an' it look like ole man Caron's black calf—it am dat calf, yes mam, nothin' else!

"He tries make him stand, but hees haid was fall over all de time, an' him no move hees legs for two—three hours; after that heem come all right, an' Edwor' just put heem back in the pasture tru de fence, an' no spoke to any boddies about it.

"Ma paure wite hen have one big smoke an' she's daid on she's nest, but me husbin' never com' de same after dat scare—he 'fraid for good. So when me work far away he lonesome, an' before le Angelus he fastens all doors, an go for me in the shalop.

"Pierre, him daid now—him laff no more, an' me husbin' fish all de time by himself—an' sometimes he tink woolf come.

EDWOR'S WOLF

"Bon soir, madam—enough! me hope et no come to-night." And she disappears in the darkness tying the hood and calling in musical tones of mutual reassurance, "Edwor! Edwor!"

The Florist's Wife's Story.

YES, ma'am, I've got roses, just arrived from Boston, and dirt cheap, too. I'll tell you a secret; they came last night froze. O, they're all right now; we put them on cotton wadding and laid them on snow in the dark—that fetched 'em to. They looked for all the world like dead babies all laid out. Now, McLane (that's my man) he calls that sentiment, but then he's all for money-making, and well up in his business. It's McLane here and McLane there, all over the city, from the rich man's daughter's wedding to the poor woman's dead child's funeral; his taste is always consulted.

"Have we Boston competition?" Yes; and they come in and undersell us when there's a big job going on—they're always ready for that—but they've poor taste in decorating, as far as my opinion goes. We don't mix up the blue and purple with the pink and scarlet. "What color is most called for?" White, pure white; we never get enough of them in winter. Yes, we keep the children busy; their pa and me have to work and they help. Jim goes with orders, and Maud is very

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useful helping to serve. We get orders for a single rose, or a hundred dollars' worth, but orders is orders. "What's wiring?" Well, you see we can't afford buds unless folks are willing to pay for 'em, so we take broom corn and fine wire and join 'em around the short stem, and it does just as well, and doesn't make it clumsy—only plenty of gentry want them on long stems now-a-days, and so they have to pay for them, as I said before. It's overpowering work, and tiresome when you're at it all the time. Curious the scent is so strong in white flowers; they get sickening when they're always under your nose. You think it nice light work for women? So it is, and you'd wonder how many grow flowers for us. The gentlemen's gardeners come with spare flowers to sell—tight screws they are, I can tell you—and sometimes young girls from the country come in with baskets of lily of the valley or roses, and in the spring they bring wild flowers to trim our windows, and in the autumn ferns and bitter-sweet. They sell well, too, for everybody likes nature's growth and is drawn towards woodsy flowers. I had such a pretty girl come here one summer. If you have to wait for McLane, I'll tell you the story. Sit down beside that water tank; it's mighty pleasant and cool, for we have to keep ice below. What a sweet, innocent face she had when she came first to ask me to buy her flowers! When she opened her basket

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everything was the choicest. I knew at once McLane would take 'em, for he had such taste; and he did, only he told her next time not to let the roses blow out too much, and to bring them counted in dozens to save time. Her eyes shone when he gave her the money, and the next week she came again and brought her sister, so like her I would have known at once they were twins; she was a pretty, daisy-like creature, with fluffy fair hair and great wondering eyes; they did look so alike, and were named Dora and Cora. The one that came first told us that Cora was to come into town every week to take music lessons from Madam —, and she would bring enough flowers while they lasted to pay for her teaching. I found out after a while that their mother was dead, and their father a man fond of his cups, who had wasted a fortune before he went to live in the little cottage in the suburbs. We made pets of the girls, McLane and me. (He has an eye to beauty in everything, has McLane—I was good looking in my time.) Cora used to come in and sit awhile and stem for me—that's tying flowers to little bits of willow and winding moss around them. She got her dinner with us, and often an extra half dollar, for she had good taste and could make a corsage bouquet better than me. But I always made her take the street-cars before dark. I'm thankful of that. She used to sit in the chair you're in now, and talk about

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Dora and all she had done for her, and how she never spent a cent on herself if she could help it, but was so self-sacrificing. One day, late in the summer, it was very warm and she had her hat off and the little damp curls in rings about her forehead, when a tall, fair young man came in and asked for a rosebud. I was busy and Cora selected it, and when I looked that way she had a pin and was fastening it in his button-hole. I didn't think anything about it at the time, but I began to notice that he came every day that Cora came to us, and one day it was raining and he held his umbrella over her, and they got into the street-car together. I'm not one of the folks that think if young people look at each other they are dead in love. I believe there can be honest friendship between the sexes, leastwise I did believe it till this time, so I never thought till afterwards of these little attentions; but we little think what is going on under our own eyes and noses, if young folks are so inclined, and one cold morning when the trees were a-shedding their leaves Dora came in with a wild questioning look in her beautiful eyes. "Where's my sister?" she asked; and I told her she had left her basket the day before and did not come back to get it, or to help us. We took it down and found a note in it addressed to me. She must have put it in when she hung up the empty basket. She wrote that she was going away with Mr. Gilder. Are you sick, ma'am? Perhaps the air is too cool for you; some

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folks can't stand a chill. The poor girl dropped, and I took her out into the air from the scent of the flowers and sent McLane for the express, and he took her home. He came back feeling dreadfully dull, and said they had a pretty garden and only an old deaf servant about the house, and that Dora lay in a still sort of faint, and he had sent out for the doctor. I was busy all next day, for my boy took croup and needed all my care, and the next morning I made up my mind to go and see the poor girl, when a tall, dark, dissipated man came into the store. "I want a white wreath for a young person," he said, and somehow a shiver went through me when I asked the address. It was Dora! and this was her father. He broke down when he saw me cry, and I was sorry for him after all. McLane went to the funeral, and I made up the loveliest cross, though the roses came from Boston, every one of them, at three dollars a dozen, and I cried over every flower I put in, till the salt tears blinded me as I worked. I put in some of her own ferns, the last of the season, and McLane said it was the loneliest funeral he was ever at. It didn't make the father any better, for he had to sell everything for debt; no doubt the little girl kept him straight.

I often go up to the cemetery on the mountain, for McLane's father and mother and his first wife are buried there, and one Sunday the next spring we went over to where Dora was buried. I had

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some pansies that had been left over to put on her grave, and there was a new white marble monument, with an angel with drooping wings, and, after her name and age, were the words, "Greater love hath no man than this." I knew at once it was her doings, poor flighty thing. I often wonder what became of her, for he had a very taking way with him, fit to wile a bird off a bush, with a pleading sort of way of deferring to the person he was talking to, that means so much or so little. You've a bit of it yourself, ma'am, and maybe that was what opened my heart to tell you this sad story. Oh, here's McLane.

A lady wanting you, William. "Boston rose on long stems, and five dozen plants for rooms on Thursday night."

We'll do it, though it does dry the plants so—the hot rooms and gas. Is that your carriage? There's a tall, fair young man in it like—"Your son?" Just home from a three years' tour? Going to be married? He favors you, ma'am. Good-day.

My God! McLane, it's him; he's not married, and I have been telling that story about Cora to his mother. I was sure she reminded me of somebody. Poor Dora! "I shouldn't talk so much to strange customers?" It's that helps your custom—they like it. Wait till he comes here alone, that's all. He'll get the truth for once. People talk about fate. I wonder what you call a case like that!

In the Convent Garden.

MOTHER SUPERIOR was called away suddenly on very important business, and had driven the night before to Beauharnois, and from there to Montreal to the Sacred Heart. So with the sense of unusual freedom "Babette" could sing. They called her "Bette" at the Convent, where she helped in the kitchen and churned every morning at five o'clock the sweet, nutty-flavored butter that formed part of the frugal repast. It was so fresh that it sold for sixpence a pound more than the butter the farmers' wives made—they didn't churn every morning as "Bette" did—and she took a pride in getting it done before the milking was over. Thug,—thug,—down and up; swish,—swish,—up and down, and she kept time with her song—it was all the accompaniment she had.

"Love, we can love although the shadows darken,
Still we can hope until the clouds depart;
Come to my heart and whisper through the silence,
Hope on, dear heart, our lives shall meet at last."

She trilled on the last two words as she heard a young lady in Boston sing it who had boarded in the

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village through the summer, and "Bette" listened outside of her window till she knew the refrain and could sing it without any regard for or knowledge of "head notes" or method, for with her all was heart experience, for she was seventeen and in love.

The day gave promise of beauty; there was a mist over the valley, and Lachine Rapids were hidden, but the sun was dispersing it. There was a quiet, restful air over the landscape, and the trees scarcely moved as "Bette" churned and sang. Her trim figure in the serge gown was set off by linen cuffs and collar and the luxury of a silver charm and cross at the throat, for Mother Superior was gone, and Joseph was likely to pass that way driving the cows to pasture. He had been asking her to marry him and live with his mother in a tiny cottage at the foot of the hill, but Babette had curled her lip scornfully and said she couldn't, only adding "la mere," and he went away angry. But why not look pretty, she thought, as she coiled her fair hair and brushed it up as she had seen the Boston lady do.

Out from the foliage of the beautiful garden shrubs walked Sister Therza with clasped hands, her rosary and cross hanging at her girdle. Traces of past beauty and of past suffering could be seen on her face, where now was repression and severity. Children loved her and could always make her smile, but she seemed to be lost in thought and

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study most of the time. This morning "Bette's" singing had touched a chord she had thought long dead, and she lingered among the shrubbery as the sweet young voice sang the refrain. With hands still clasped she reached the churn.

Babette smiled. "The butter is coming," she said, with practical assurance, then suddenly added with a laugh, "I never dared tell you, Sister Therza, but Mother Superior is away and I must say it. I alway think you have a chronic toothache, and that some day you'll take off that white scarf and do your hair up like mine."

Babette was a privileged character, and her pretty, pert ways were pleasant to the severe sisterhood, so the nun smiled indulgently. "No," she said softly, "I shall never take it off; it is the emblem of a chronic heartache, my dear."

"Bette" stopped churning.

"Were you ever in love?" she asked, with wide open eyes. "I thought the Sisters never had known all the worry we girls have."

The blood surged to the Sister's face, then she grew pale and still. "I parted with my lover in anger," she said at last. "He was good and true to me, but his parents were old and helpless, and I resented his ideas of duty. Then one day I forgot that a woman cannot ask, but must suffer in silence, and I told him that I was willing to take care of them so as to be with him. I felt it all the

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more keenly when he would not accept the sacrifice, as he called it, but gently refused to marry. Oh, how blind men are ; he might have known I was eating my heart out away from him, and a crust with him would be sweeter than the world without him. I was so angry and ashamed that I turned cold ; then I told him he did not love me at all, or he would want me, for I could not understand such self-sacrifice. My pride was wounded, and although Father Labbie, our parish priest, tried to counsel me to make friends, I set my teeth hard and looked the other way whenever he came near. Poor Antoine—poor me," she shivered and sighed. "That is twenty years ago ; he is alone now and lives in the village. I dreamed of him last night," she added, drearily. "I am quite content ; we have everything to make us happy, but your song was so beautiful and touched my feelings."

Just then the church bell tolled. Babette's butter was finished, and she rested her hands on the churn handle and counted the strokes, forty-one, forty-two—it stopped.

"That is Antoine's age," said Sister Therza, with pale lips.

A gate clicked a little way off, and a lithe, sun-burned youth stepped in, guarding the Jersey cows through the path to the pasture bars.

"Good morning," he said gayly ; "speak a word

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for me to little Babette, Sister, for I want the banns published on Sunday."

"Forgive me, Joseph," said Babette; "it is a comfort that thou do the asking. I will not say no."

He gave one love-lit glance at the bright young face, then turned to the nun with a graver look. "Antoine Quernel was found dead this morning; he has been ailing for a good while, and was alone, poor fellow."

The nun made a deep and solemn bow of reverence as if for the dead, and gently put back "Bette's" hand that was held out in sympathy, as her face paled perceptibly. Then she walked feebly back through the shrubbery, where the birds had waked and the sun shone gloriously, and, catching up the neglected rosary, with bowed head entered the chapel and shut the door.

Lisbeth Grey's Birthday.

"LISBETH GREY, you're thirty to-day." Somehow it was ringing in my ears, and nothing else could take its place. Mother kissed me silently; she knew I was "turning a corner," as younger girls would say. I went through my round of duties, milked the cow, fed the chickens, and made things as comfortable as possible. Then I went up to my little chamber to dress, and opened my Bible, as I am apt to do when troubled, to look for a verse of comfort to a sore heart.

The words I found were, "Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee." It came upon me with a sense of relief. Did God know? What a comfort to feel that He is with us. Mother had fallen asleep over her knitting, and looked contented. I alone was troubled and careworn.

All have scattered from the home. "Some are married, some are dead," and we live together. I ought to have been called Ruth, for I cleave to her, and she has often told me of the night I was born

LISBETH GREY'S BIRTHDAY

—can it be thirty years ago? She has told me how father took me in his arms and said, "Anither lassie, Jean," and added, "She'll stan' by ye, guid wife, in yer auld days," and mother often says that I am more like him than any of the other children. It is the highest praise she can give me, that I am like the dear dead father who was called to long rest before my tongue could utter his name.

I sat down in the porch beside her, and began to trim a hat for a neighbor's child, and all my thoughts were of David. He had left home ten years ago to do better in the west. I knew he had sent money to pay off the mortgage on his mother's farm, and how that mother's hopes of his return had been so often "deferred." I thought how time must have changed us both, and that I had really no claim on him, no right to remember him. His mother was ill now, and after awhile I would go over the fields to see her.

I finished the hat, sent the child off happy in simple vanity, and went into the kitchen to stir up a sponge cake, making a small one for David's mother. I saved the white of an egg for a little frosting, and put David's name in chocolate on the little one I was taking to her.

I had a feeling of a presence as I walked along, and several times turned to see if anyone was near me. "Lisbeth Grey, you're thirty to-day," I said over and over. No more youth; life is practical

LISBETH GREY'S BIRTHDAY

and bitter. We all have such hours when we feel that life is a failure. I thought that I would try to forget the past. I had no right to remember. I was only twenty when David went away, and doubtless I had misunderstood him, and he only meant a neighborly friendliness to me. But all the same I had been true to him. I could get along while mother was spared to me, and then—

The world looked very dark ; twilight had deepened. I passed a bend in the road, and came to the cottage just as a tall fair man came out. He walked toward me as if we had only parted yesterday. "I was coming to you, Lisbeth," he said, taking both hands ; "it is your birthday."

He looked in my face. Did he see a change? My heart failed me. I knew how much many men think of beauty, and the words were repeated in my brain, "thirty to-day."

"You little grey ghost ;" then seeing my emotion, he asked, "Have you waited for me, dear, as I have for you?"

Then we went into the cottage. The invalid was sitting up. "I couldn't keep him any longer, Lisbeth," she said, smiling ; "he wanted to share his good fortune with you."

I forgot the cake at first. When I took it to her, David looked at it curiously, for he said that he believed that that chocolate frosting spelled his name. He could trace D-a-v-i-d quite plainly,

LISBETH GREY'S BIRTHDAY

and he kissed me right before his mother, and spoke of our future.

"But mother—" I said.

"My dear," said David, "I'll build a house where we can all live, and we will be happy together."

And as we walked home in the moonlight, happy in each other, I told him that my only sorrow was that I had not known he loved me, for such a knowledge would have helped me through all these dreary years of silence. "I did not like to think I had waited for wealth; love is best," I said.

"Then we will make the best of it," he added, softly.

And then we told mother.

Christmas "Further On."

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS EVE in the country. The chores are all done, the cows snugly shut up for the night, the horses munching hay in their stalls, the pigs in their sty giving a contented grunt, with a loving inclination toward the corn in the trough, and the remnant of poultry, left over with a view to next year's eggs, are dreaming perchance of "last year's nests." Silence broods over all, for the boys of the farm have shoveled a path from the gate, pumped all the water requisite for culinary purposes, and are now toasting their toes beside the kitchen fire. "Tom," "Silas" and "Joe" represented the rising generation in Farmer Willough's home; and strong, hardy, dauntless, without a care or fear, they rested and grew vigorous on their plain but wholesome diet. And now Christmas was coming, Mrs. Willough was busy preparing for the next day's dinner, and a smell of singed feathers and boiling plum pudding mingled with the pungent odor of the thyme dressing that was in process of preparation. She was a tall, fair woman, past the prime

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

of life, and had only known one sorrow, and that was when little Susie died. How well she remembered that Christmas time. She had been so rich with her one daughter, though poor in this world's goods, and for weeks before had been busy trying to devise Santa Claus gifts for the children.

How Abram, her husband, had seconded her efforts, and made a sled, and discovered a hammer that could be furnished with a new handle and painted red, and whittled out some funny toys for the youngest boy, while she made a new dress, and braided it at night when they were all in bed, and then on Christmas Eve the little daughter was stricken with sudden illness, and the dress that was to have been her gift was worn for the first and last time when she was put into the grave.

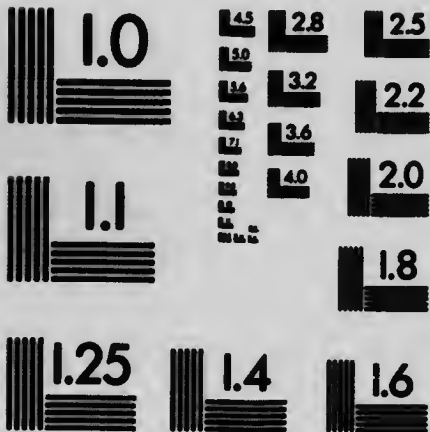
But Christmas came and went, the years rolled on, no other daughter came to cheer her or brighten her life, and when her only sister died, and left an infant but a few weeks old, she took it to her heart, and, with the father's consent, named the little girl Ruth, for she was to cleave to her in her old age.

And this was the quiet little figure that busied herself with the Christmas preparations; a bright light in the soft brown eyes, and a look of happiness in the speaking face. For it is Ruth's birthday, the holy Christmas tide, and she is to be seventeen to-morrow. The oven door is opened; there is a puff and steamy smell, savory to hungry boys, as



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CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

the supper is brought out, and all sit around the table, with grateful hearts, to partake of the well-cooked meal. And then the reason of Ruth's high color can be traced as there is a stamping of feet, a sound of bells, and Hugh McLea steps into the kitchen, shaking the snow from his feet. It was well-known that he had come to take Ruth to a dancing party at a neighbor's half a mile along the cross-roads, and the boys stood quietly beside him, giving some quiet chaffing as the good wife helped the young girl to wrap up well from the bitter cold. No one seemed to notice that Silas was dull and morose, that his infrequent remarks had a bitter tone, and his brows were black and scowling. They were twins, Tom and Silas, and a year older than Ruth, while Joe was only in his fourteenth year, full of fun and frolic. The little muffled figure came out of the bed-room, the bells jingled faintly but merrily, and once more the boys returned to the fire. But Silas was restless, and resisted all attempts at being amused, refusing to play chess, to give them a tune on the organ in the sitting-room that all the boys knew how to sing, and finally arose with a yawn, saying, "It's so dull here I think I'll go down to the dance. Jim Saunders asked me, and I think I may as well have a little of the fun." No objection was offered, and he heavily ascended the staircase to the bed-room overhead.

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

"Aint we swell," said little Joe as he soon stepped down in best go-to-meeting trim. But Silas only scowled back and opened the door, going out into the darkness without a word. The two remaining boys smiled at each other, for Tom was smaller and seemed a more fitting companion for the younger brother, who nudged him slyly and whispered—"He's going to look after Ruth." A game of chess followed. The Christmas preparations were all attended to, and at ten o'clock the farmer's house was quiet for the night, the kitchen door left unbarred, and a light on the table turned low.

CHAPTER II.

DAVY SAUNDERS lived but a little distance down the cross roads, and Silas took the short cut across the fields, tramping over the frozen snow with the air of a martyr. "What business had Hugh McLea to go for Ruth? He could have taken her to the dance, and no one had a better right, for he meant she should be his wife, and now she seemed to fancy this interloper." He walked on angrily, and soon reached the house where the sounds of merry-making could be heard afar off. He looked in at one window, and there in a waltz, with her head almost on his shoulder, his face looking down upon her, were the two who occupied his

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

thoughts. He almost felt their breath as they passed the half frosted pane through which he was looking. He felt sick at heart—this love-lorn boy. It was his first affection, and it needed no telling to see that the couple were wholly absorbed with each other. He would not go in just yet; he could not face them. There were two hay stacks near, and he would sit down and draw breath and subdue his emotion in their friendly shelter; for the night was not cold to his hardy, stalwart frame, wrapped in cap and overcoat. And Silas sat drown half numbed with the cold and pain, drawing his coat closely around his limbs, and only intending to wait a few moments to gain courage.

How the wind blew; he could see the shadows of the dancers outside the window, and it made him mad with jealousy and anger. They all thought him a *boy*, but he would let them see some day that he had a man's heart, and a man's bitter experience was his. How stiff he was getting; it would not do to sit there, so he slowly and painfully rose, and as he did so the figures of two men came into sight, turning away from the window as he had done half an hour before. He crept back into the shadow of the hay stacks as they came nearer, speaking in subdued voices. He knew them well: two suspicious characters that lived down in the low marsh land. The first words he heard startled him: "Let him take the girl

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

home," said the taller man of the two. "We owe no grudge to Farmer Willough's lass." "Are you sure he has the money?" asked the other. "Yes," answered the first speaker, with an oath, "he came right from the notary's getting his payment, and went for the girl with the cutter straight down."

The men passed out of sight, and Silas, without hesitation, entered the house where fun and innocent frolic was the chief thought of the young folks assembled. His brain was on fire, but he shivered with his long exposure to the frosty air, and accepted a seat by the fire, and a cup of tea brought him by the friendly hands of the young daughter of the house. And then the clock struck twelve. It was Christmas morning, and happy was that youth who chanced, or manœvered, to have his best loved lassie under the bits of mistletoe that were entwined with evergreen boughs in the central part of the room.

But Silas saw only the handsome Hugh bending over Ruth, and from his corner meditated how he could be revenged. He knew the money the young man carried was trust money that it would take him years to replace; besides, it would be easy to whisper it about that he lost it when coming from a Christmas party, and so destroy all confidence in him for the future. But then it was a mean part he had decided on, to let these men rob a good neighbor, and afterward steal his good name. But

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

he hardened his heart, though it was a wonder that no good angel whispered to him that Ruth would still believe in her lover. The temptation grew upon him, and when they prepared to leave and sang the Christmas carols joyously together, he sat like Judas among them, not daring to hear the sound of his own voice ; not listening, but thinking his own evil thoughts born of jealousy, and then Ruth's voice broke the momentary silence. She sang in low, soft tones :

" We can never be too careful
What the seeds our hands shall sow,
Love from love is sure to ripen,
Hate from hate is sure to grow.
Seeds of good or ill we scatter
Heedlessly along our way,
But a glad or grievous fruitage
Waits us at the harvest day.
For whatever the sowing be,
Ye must gather and bring to Me."

His eyes were full of tears—and still he was not conquered. Each one of the company sang a verse before they parted. He only remained silent, and then Hugh's voice went forth, deep and strong, joyous and trusting :

" Still further on—still further—
Count the milestones, one by one,
No, no counting, only trusting,
It is better further on."

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

They went out of the door to the music of his voice in this confiding hymn. Silas stumbled out, too. How trustingly he sang "It is better further on?" What would be the result when revenge had been gained? Would it be better for him "further on," when he had blighted his rival's life? It would be a sin on his conscience forever. And then through his brain sounded the gentle voice of Ruth:

"For whatever the sowing be,
Ye must gather and bring to Me."

And he was about to sow all these dreadful seeds this bright Christmas morning. The boy's heart was touched, he knew not how. Perhaps it was the trusting voice of the last singer. But by the time the horse and cutter of Hugh McLea stood at the door he had made up his mind, and, after tucking Ruth in and wishing them a safe journey home, he turned into the house once more, and told what he had heard earlier in the evening to some of the young men who still remained. There was a hurried consultation. Then in twos and threes they struck across lots to the road between Farmer Willough's and the McLea farm; and when the young man, lighthearted and happy with Ruth's promise and her confessed love, trotted his horse smartly along the road for home, he had no fear of evil, and whistled softly "It is better further on."

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

But the tune died on his lips as two figures arose suddenly in his path and he found his hands tied behind him. Then, quick as a flash, a dozen of his neighbors stood around him, and the first two were fighting fiercely. He loosed his hands, or someone cut the cord, he never knew; but there was a flash, one of the ruffians had fired, and he saw among his defenders a slight form fall to the ground. There was a minute's silence, then a dozen men fell on the two and tied them securely, and shook them, using fierce and bitter words. Hugh bent over the wounded lad. "Silas, and you are hurt defending me. I thought to-night you were angry with me about something." The lad's face grew deathly pale as they tore away his clothes. Would he die with his secret unspoken?

In a few rapid words the neighbors spoke to each other of the part he had taken in the rescue, of the bitter sacrifice, the sorrow of friends. For well they knew no doctor could heal the wound now, as his life blood ebbed away while they vainly tried to staunch it.

"Hold my hand fast, Hugh," he murmured like a drowsy child, "and tell Ruth I love her, but I give her to you."

His voice sank lower, there was a hush among that crowd of stalwart men who wept silently, and as the moon rose and shone on the scene, adding

CHRISTMAS "FURTHER ON"

to the pallor of his face, he seemed to turn his weary eyes toward it, and, like the faintest sighing of the wind, he whispered—

"It is better further on."

