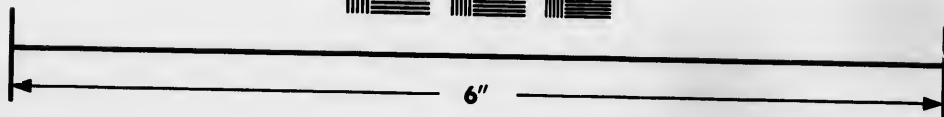
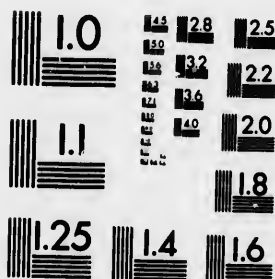


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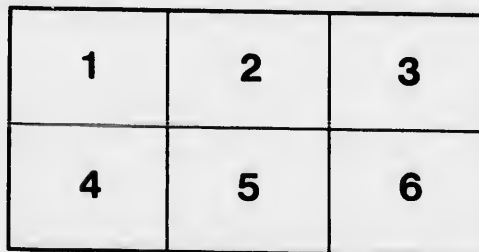
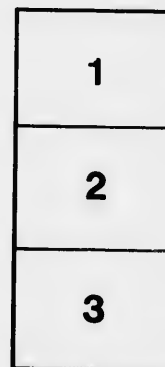
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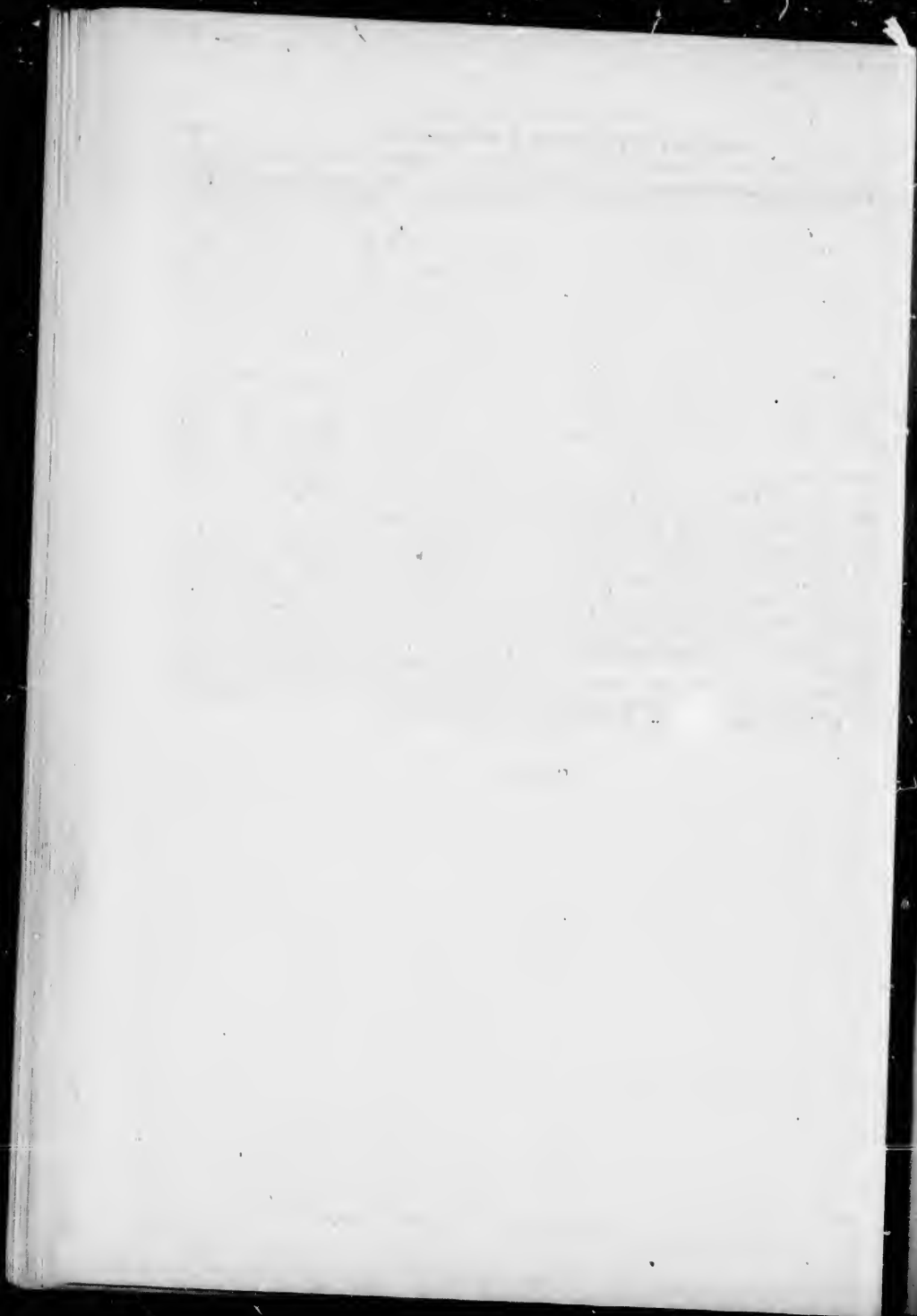
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## SURLY TIM.

"Sorry to hear my fellow-workmen speak of disparagin' o' me? Well, Mester, that's it may be, yo' know. Happen my fellow-workmen ha' made a bit o' a mistake—happen what seems loike crustiness to them want so much crustiness as summat else—happen I mought do my bit o' complainin' to yo'. Yo' munnot trust aw yo' hear, Mester; that's aw I can say."

I looked at the man's bent face quite curiously, and, judging from its rather heavy but still not unprepossessing outline, could not really call it a bad face, or even sulky one. And yet both managers and hands had given me a bad account of Tim Hibblethwaite. "Surlly Tim," they called him, and each had something to say about his sullen disposition to silence, and his short answers. Not that he was accused of anything like misdemeanour, but he was "glum loike," the factory people said, and "a surlly fellow well deserving his name," as the master of the room had told me.

I had come to Lancashire to take the control of my father's spinning-factory a short time before, being anxious to do my best toward the hands, and I often talked to one and another in a friendly way, so that I could the better understand their grievances and remedy them with justice to all parties concerned. So in conversing with men, women, and children, I gradually found out that Tim Hibblethwaite was in bad odour, and that he held himself doggedly aloof from all; and this was how, in the course of time, I came to speak to him about the matter, and the opening words of my story are the words of his answer. But they did not satisfy me by any means. I wanted to do the man justice myself, and see that justice was done to him by others; and then again when, after my curious look at him, he lifted his head from his work and drew the back of his hand across his warm face, I noticed that he gave his eyes a brush, and, glancing at him once more, I recognized the presence of a moisture in them.

In my anxiety to conceal that I had noticed anything unusual, I am afraid I spoke to

him quite hurriedly. I was a young man then, and by no means as self-possessed as I ought to have been.

"I hope you won't misunderstand me, Hibblethwaite," I said; "I don't mean to complain—indeed, I have nothing to complain of, for Foxley tells me you are the steadiest and most orderly hand he has under him; but the fact is, I should like to make friends with you all, and see that no one is treated badly. And somehow or other I found out that you were not disposed to feel friendly towards the rest, and I was sorry for it. But I suppose you have some reason of your own."

The man bent down over his work again, silent for a minute, to my discomfiture, but at last he spoke, almost huskily.

"Thank yo', Mester," he said; "yo're a kindly chap or yo' wouldn't ha' noticed. An' yo're not fur wrong either. I ha reasons o my own, tho I m loike to keep 'em to mysen most o toimes. Th' fellows as throws their slur on me would na understand 'em if I were loike to gab, which I never were. But happen th' toime 'll come when Surlly Tim 'll tell his own tale, though I often think its loike it wunnot come till th' Day o' Judgment."

"I hope it will come before then," I said, cheerfully. "I hope the time is not far away when we shall all understand you, Hibblethwaite. I think it has been misunderstanding so far which has separated you from the rest, and it cannot last always, you know."

He shook his head—not after a surlly fashion—but, as I thought, a trifle sadly or heavily—so I did not ask any more questions, or try to force the subject upon him.

But I noticed him pretty closely as time went on, and the more I saw of him the more fully I was convinced that he was not so surlly as people imagined. He never interfered with the most active of his enemies, nor made any reply when they taunted him, and more than once I saw him perform a silent, half-secret act of kindness. Once I caught him throwing half his dinner to a



wretched little lad who had just come to the factory, and worked near him; and once again, as I was leaving the building on a rainy night, I came upon him on the stone steps at the door bending down with an almost pathetic clumsiness to pin the woollen shawl of a poor little mite, who, like so many others, worked with her shiftless father and mother to add to their weekly earnings. It was always the poorest and least cared for of the children whom he seemed to befriend, and very often I noticed that even when he was kindest, in his awkward man fashion, the little waifs were afraid of him, and showed their fear plainly.

The factory was situated on the outskirts of a thriving country town near Manchester, and at the end of the lane that led from it to the more thickly populated part there was a path crossing a field to the pretty church and church yard, and this path was a short cut homeward for me. Being so pretty and quiet, the place had a sort of attraction for me, and I was in the habit of frequently passing through it on my way, partly because it was pretty and quiet, perhaps, and partly, I have no doubt, because I was inclined to be weak and melancholy at the time, my health being broken down under hard study.

It so happened that in passing here one night, and glancing in among the graves and marble monuments as usual, I caught sight of a dark figure sitting upon a little mound under a tree and resting its head upon its hands, and in this sad-looking figure I recognized the muscular outline of Surly Tim.

He did not see me at first, and I was almost inclined to think it best to leave him alone; but as I half turned away he stirred with something like a faint moan, and then lifting his head and saw me standing in the bright clear moonlight.

"Who's ther?" he said. "Dost ta want owt?"

"It is only Doncaster, Hibblethwaite," I returned, as I sprang over the low stone wall to join him. "What is the matter old fellow? I thought I heard you groan just now."

"Yo' mought ha' done, Mester," he answered heavily. "Happen tha did. I dunnot know mysen. Nowts th' matter though, as I knows on, on'y I'm a bit out o' soarts."

He turned his head aside alightly and began to pull at the blades of grass on the mound, and all at once I saw that his hand was trembling nervously.

It was almost three minutes before he spoke again.

"That un belongs to me," he said suddenly at last, pointing to a longer mound at his feet. "An' this little un," signifying with an indescribable gesture the small one upon which he sat.

"Poor fellow," I said, "I see now." "A little lad o' mine," he said, slowly and tremulously. "A little lad o' mine an'—his mother."

"What?" I exclaimed, "I never knew that you were a married man, Tim."

He dropped his head upon his hand again, still pulling nervously at the grass with the other.

"Th' law says I beant, Mester," he answered in a painful, strained fashion. "I conna tell nysen what God-a'-moighty 'ud say about it."

"I don't understand," I faltered; "you don't mean to say the poor girl never was your wife, Hibblethwaite."

"That's what th' law says," slowly: "I thowt different mysen, an' so did the poor lass. That's what's the matter, Mester; that's th' trouble."

The other nervous hand went up to his bent face for a minute and hid it, but I did not speak. There was so much of strange grief in his simple movement that I felt words would be out of place. It was not my dogged, inexplicable "hand" who was sitting before me in the bright moonlight on the baby's grave; it was a man with a hidden history of some tragic sorrow long kept secret in his homely breast—perhaps a history very few of us could read aright. I would not question him, though I fancied he meant to explain himself. I knew that if he was willing to tell me the truth it was best that he should choose his own time for it, and so I let him alone.

And before I had waited very long he broke the silence himself, as I had thought he would.

"It wur welly about six years ago I com here," he said, "more or less, welly about six year. I wur a quiet chap then, Mester, an' had na many friends, but I had more than I ha' now. Happen I wur better nater'd, but just as loike I wur loighter-hearted—but that's nowt to do wi' it."

"I had na been here more than a week when ther comes a young woman to moind a loom i' th' next room to me, an' this young woman bein' pretty an' modest takes my fancy. She wur na loike th' rest o' the wenches—loud talkin' an' slattern i' her ways; she wur just quiet loike and nowt else. First time I seed her I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble;' an' come now every toime I seed her afterward I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble.' It wur i' her eye—she had a soft loike brown eye, Mester—an' it wur i' her voice—her voice wur soft loike, too—I sometimes thowt it wur plain to be seed even i' her dress. If

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tory-lass she wur one o' th' foine soart still.  
So I took to watchin' her an' tryin' to mak'  
friends wi' her, but I never had much luck  
wi' her till one neet I was goin' home through  
th' snow, and I seed her afore fighten' th'  
drift wi' nowt but a thin shawl over her  
head; so I goes up behind her an' I says to  
her, steady and respectful, so as she wouldna  
be feart, I says—

"Lass, let me see thee home. It's bad  
weather fur thee to be out in by thyself.  
Tak' my coat an' wrop thee up in it, an' tak'  
hold o' my arm an' let me help thee along."

"She looks up right straightforrad i' my  
face wi' her brown eyes, an' I tell yo', Mester,  
I wur glad I wur a houcat man 'stead o' a  
rascal, fur them quiet eyes 'ud ha' fun my  
out afore I'd ha done sayin' my say  
meant harm.

"Thank yo' kindly Mester Hibblethwaite,  
she says, 'but dunnot tak' off th' coat fur  
me; I'm doin' pretty nicely. It is Mester  
Hibblethwaite, beant it?"

"Aye, lass, I answers, 'it's him. Mought  
I ax yo're name."

"Aye, to be sure," said she. "My  
name's Rosanna—'Sanna Brent th' folk at th'  
mill allus ca's me. I work at th' loom i' th'  
next room to thine. I've seed thee often an'  
often."

"So we walks home to her lodgings,  
an' on th' way we talks together friendly  
an' quiet loike, an' th' more we talks  
th' more I sees she's had trouble,  
an' by an' by—bein' on'y common workin'  
folk, we're straightforrad to each other in our  
plain way—it comes out what her trouble  
has been.

"Yo' p'raps wouldn't think I've been a  
married woman, Mester," she says; "but I  
ha', an' I wedded and rued. I married a  
sojer when I wur a giddy young wench, four  
years ago, an' it wur th' worst thing as ever  
I did i' aw my days. He wur one o' yo're  
handsome, fastish chaps, an' he tired o' me  
as men o' his stripe allus do tire o' poor  
lasses, an' then he ill-treated me. He wen-  
to th' Crimea after we'n been wed a year, an'  
left me to shift fur mysen. An' I heard six  
month after he wur dead. He'd never writ  
back to me nor sent me no help, but I could-  
na think he wur dead till th' letter come.  
He wur killed th' first month he wur out  
fightin' th' Rooshians. Poor fellow!  
Poor Phil! Th' Lord ha mercy on  
him!"

"That wur how I found out about her  
trouble, an' somehow it seemed to draw me  
to her, an' make me feel kindly to'ards her;  
'twur so pitiful to hear her talk about th'  
rascal, so sorrowful an' gentle, and not gi'

him a real hard word for a' he'd done. But  
that's allus th' way wi' women folk—th'  
more yo' harrys them, th' more they'll pity  
yo' an' pray for yo'. Why she wurna more  
than twenty-two then, an' she must  
ha' been nowt but a slip o' a lass when they  
wur weel.

"How's ever, Rosanna Brent an' me got to  
be good friends, an' we walked home  
together o' nights, an' talked about our  
bits o' wage and our bits o' debt,  
an' th' way that wench 'ud keep me  
up i' spirits when I wur a bit down-hearted  
about owt, wur just a wonder. She wur so  
quiet an' steady, an' when she said owt she  
meant it, an' she never said too much or too  
little. Her brown eyes allus minded me o'  
my mother, though th' old woman deed  
when I were nobbut a little chap, but I  
never seed 'Sanna Brent smile th'out thinkin'  
o' how my mother looked when I wur kneel-  
in' down sayin' my prayers after her. An'  
bein' as th' lass wur so dear to me, I made up  
my mind to ax her to be summat dearer. So  
once goin' home wi' her, I takes hold o' her  
hand an' lifts it up an' kisses it gentle—as  
gentle an' wi' summat th' same feelin' as I'd  
kiss the Good Book.

"'Sanna,' I says, 'bein' as yo've had so  
much trouble wi' yo're first chance, would  
yo' be afraid to try a second? Could  
yo' trust a mon again? Such a mon as me,  
'Sanna?"

"I wouldna be feart to trust thee, Tim,"  
she answers back soft an' gentle after a man-  
ner. "I wouldna be feart to trust thee any  
time."

"I kisses her hand again, gentler still.

"God bless thee, lass," I says. "Does  
that mean yes?"

"She crept up closer to me i' her sweet,  
quiet way.

"Aye, lad," she answers. "It means yes,  
an' I'll bide by it."

"An' tha shalt never rue it lass," said I,  
'Tha's given thy life to me, and I'll gie  
mine to thee, sure and true."

"So we wur axed i' the church the next  
Sunday, an' a month for then we wur wed,  
and if ever God's sun shone on a happy mon,  
it shone on one that day, when we come out  
o' church together—me and Rosanna—and  
went to our bit of a home to begin life again.  
I couldna tell thee, Mester—their beaunt no  
words to tell how happy and peaceful we  
lived fur two year after that. My lass never  
altered her sweet ways, and I just loved her  
to make up fur what had gone by. I thanked  
God-a'-moighty fur his blessing every day  
and every day I prayed to be made worthy of  
it. And here's just where I'd like to ask a  
question, Mester, about summat that's wor-  
retted me a good deal. I dunnot want to

question the Maker but I'd loike to know how it is that sometime it seems that we're clean forgot—as if he couldna fash hissen about our troubles, and most loike left 'em to work out theirsens. Yo' see, Mester and we aw see sometime He thinks on us and gies us a lift, but hasna thysen seen times when tha stoit short and axed thysen, 'Wheers a God-a-moighty that he iana straightenin' things out a bit? The world's in a power o' a snarl. The righteous is forsaken and his seed beggin bread. And the devil's topmost agen. I've talked to my lass about it sometimes, and I dunnot think I meant harm, Mester, for I felt humble enough—and when I talked, my lass she'd listen and smile, soft and sorrowful, but she never gie but one answer.

"Tim, she'd say, 'this is only the skoo and we're the scholars, and He's teachin us His way. We munnot be loike the children of Israel i' the Wilderness, and turn away fro' the Cross 'cause o' the Sargeant. We munnot say, 'Theer's a snake?' we mun say, 'Theer's the Cross and the Lord gie it to us.' The teacher wouldna be o' much use, Tim, if the scholars knew as much as he did, and I allus think its the best to comfort mysen wi' sayin, 'The Lord-a-moighty He knows.'"

"And she allus comforted me too when I wur worried. Life looked smooth, somehow, them three year. Happen the Lord sent 'em to me to mako up fur what wur coming.

"At the eend o' the first year the child wur born, the little lad here," touching the turf with his hand, "'Wee Wattie,' his mother ca'd him, and he wur a fine, light-some little chap. He filled the whole house wi' music day in and day out, crowin' and crowin'—and cryin' too sometime. But if ever yo're a feyther, Mester, yo'll find out 'at a baby's cry's music often enough, and yo'll find too, if yo' ever lose one, that yo'd give all yo'd getten to hear even th' worst of crying. Rosanna she couldna find i' her heart to set the little un out o' her arms a minnit, and she'd go about the room wi' her eyes awleeted up, an' her face bloomin' like a slip o' gill's, an' if she laid him i' th' cradle her head 'ud be turnt o'er her shoulder aw th' time lookin' at him an' singin' bits o' sweet-soundin' foolish woman-folks' songs. I thowt then 'at them old nursery songs wur th' happiest music I ever heard, an' when 'Sanna sung 'em they minded me o' hymn-tunes.

"Well, Mester, before th' spring wur out Wee Wat was toddlin' round holdin' to his mother's gown, an' by the middle o' th' next he was coo'n' like a dove, an' prattlin' words i' a voice like hers. His eyes were big an' brown an' straightforrard like hers, an' his

mouth was like hers, an' his curls wur th' colour o' brown hee's back. Happen we set to much store by him, or happen it wur on'y th' Teacher again teachin' us his way, but howe'er that wur, I came home one sunn' mornin' fro' th' factory, an' my dear lass me at th' door, all white an' cold, but tryin' hard to be brave an' help me to bear what she had to tell.

"Tim," said she, 'the Lord ha' sent us trouble; but we can bear it together, conne we, dear lad?'

"That wur aw, but I knew what it meant though the poor little lamb had been well enough when I kissed him last.

"I went in an' saw him lyin' theer on his pillows strugglin' an' gaspin' in hard convulsions, an' I seed aw was over. An' in half an hour, just as th' sun crept across th' room an' touched his curls, th' pretty little chap opens his eyes aw at once.

"'Daddy!' he crows out. 'Sithee Dad—' an' he lifts hissen up, catches at th' floatin' sunshine, laughs at it, and fa's back—dead, Mester.

"I've allus thowt 'at th' Lord-a-moighty knew what he wur doin' when he gi' th' woman t' Adam i' th' Garden o' Eden. He knowed he wur nowt but a poor chap as couldna do fur hissen; an' I suppose that's th' reason he gi' th' woman th' strength to bear trouble when it comm. I'd ha' gi'en clean in if it hadna been fur my lass when th' little chap deed. I never tackleit owt i' aw my days 'at hurt me as heavy as losin' him did. I couldna abear th' sight o' his bits o' playthings, I'd fa' to cryin' an' shakin' like a babby. I kept out o' th' way o' th' neebors' children even. I wasna like Rosanna. I couldna see quite clear what th' Lord meant, an' I couldna help murmurin' sad and heavy. That's just loike us men, Mester; just as if th' dear wench as had give him her life fur fool day an' neet, hadna fur th' best reet o' th' two to be weak an' heavy-hearted.

"But I gotten welly over it at last, an' we was beginnin' to come round a bit an' look forrard to th' toime we'd see him agen 'stead o' lookin' back to th' toime we shut th' round bit o' a face under th' coffin-lid. Th' day comm when we could bear to talk about him an' moind things he'd said an' tried to say i' his broken babby way. An' so we wur ereepin' back again to th' old happy quiet, an' we had been for welly six month, when summat fresh come. I'll never forget it, Mester, th' neet it happened. I'd kissed Rosanna at the door an' left her standin' theer when I went up to th' village to buy summat she wanted. It wur a bright moon-light neet, just such a neet as this, an' th' lass had followed me out to see th' moon-shine, it wur so bright an' clear; an' just be-

ers, an' his curls wur th' back. Happen we set to, or happen it wur on'y th' thin' us his way, but howe came home one sunn' story, an' my dear lass me white an' cold, but tryin' an' help me to hear wha

the Lord ha' sent in a bear it together, coun

ut I knew what it meant, the lamb had been well and him last.

him lyin' theer on his gaspin' in hard convulsions was over. An' in half an' snu crept across th' curls, th' pretty little aw at once.

va out. 'Sithee Dad—' catches at th' floatin' t, and fa's back—dead,

'at th' Lord-a-mighty doin' when he gi'th' Garden o' Eden. He t but a poor chap as

an' I suppose that's woman th' strength to

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ne wesht th' round coffin-lid. Th' day r to talk about him

an' tried to say 'An' so we wur

old happy quiet, an' six month, when I never forget it, bened. I'd kissed

re I starts she folds both her hands on my oulder an' says, soft an' thoughtful:—

"'Tim, I wonder if th' little chap sees us? 'I'd loike to know, dear lass,' I answers

ack. An' then she speaks again:— "'Tim, I wonder if he'd know he was

ars if he could see, or if he'd forget? He ur such a little fellow.'

"Them wur th' last peaceful words I ever erd her speak. I went up to th' village

' gotten what she sent me fur, an' then I omn back. Th' moon wur shinin' as bright

ever, an' th' flowers i' her slip o' a garden ur aw sparklin' wi' dew. I seed 'em as I

en up th' walk, an' I thowt again of what e said about th' little lad.

"She wasna outside, an' I couldna see a eet about th' house, but I heerd voices, so I

alked straight in—into th' entry an' into or kitchen, an' theer she wur, Mester—my

oor wench, crouchin' down by th' table, idin' her face i' her hands, an' close beside er wur a mon—a mon i' red sojer clothes.

"My heart leaped into my throat, an' fur a ninit I had na a word, fur I saw summat

wur up, though I couldna tell what it wur. But at last my voice came back.

"Good evenin', Mester, I says to him; 'I

hope yo' ha' na brougthen ill-news? What

ils thes dear lass? "She stirs a little, an' gives a moan like a

lyin' child; and then she lifts up her wan, broken-hearted face, an' stretches out both

her hands to me. "'Tim,' she says, 'dunnot hate me, lad,

dunnot. I thowt he wur dead long sin'. I thowt 'at th' Rooshans killed him an' I wur

ree, but I amna. I never wur. He never deed, Tim, an' theer he is—the mon as I

wed to an' left by. God forgi' him, an' oh, God forgi' me!

she axed him to let her go away by hersen. "'Tha conna want me now, Phil,' she said.

"'Tha conna care for me. Tha must know I'm more this mon's wife than thine. But I

dunnot ax thee to gi' me to him because that wouldna be reet; I on y ax thee to let me

aloan. I'll go fur enough off an never see him more.'

"But the villain held to her. If she didna come wi' him, he said, he' ha' her up before

th court for bigamy. I could ha' done murder then, Mester, an' I would ha' done it

if hadna been for th' poor lass runnin' in betwixt us an' pleadin' wi' aw her might. If

we'n been rich foak theer might ha' been some help fur her, at least; th' law might

ha' been browt to mak' him leave her be, but hein' poor workin' foak theer wur on'y one

thing: th' wife mun go wi' th' husband, an' theer th' husband stood—a scoundrel, cursin',

wi' his black heart on his tongue. "'Well,' says th' lass at last, fair wearied

out wi' grief, 'I'll go wi' thee, Phil, an' I'll do my best to please thee, but I wunnot

promise to forget th' mon as has been true to me, an' ha's stood betwixt me an' th' world.'

"Then she turned round to me. "'Tim,' she says to me, as if she wur haaf

feart—aye, feart o' him, an' me standin' by. Three hours afore th' law ud ha' let me

mill any mon 'at feart her. 'Tim,' she says, 'surely he wunnot refuse to let us go

together to th' little lad's grave—fur th' last time.' She didna speak to him but to me,

an' she spoke still an' a strained as if she wur too heart-broke to be wild. Her face was

as white as th' dead, but she didna cry, as any other women would ha' done. 'Come, Tim,'

she said, 'he conna say no to that.'

"An' so but we went 'thout another word, an' left th' black-hearted rascal behind,

sitin' i' th' very room th' little un deed in. His cradle stood theer, i' th' corner. We went out into th' moonlight 'thout speakin', an' we didna say a word until we come to this very place, Mester.

We stood here for a minute silent, an' then I sees her begin to shake, an' she throws herself down on th' grass wi' her arms flung o'er th' grave, an' she cries out as if her death-wound had been give to her.

"'Little lad,' she says, 'little lad, dost thou see thy mother? Canst na tha hear her callin' thee? Little lad, get nigh to th' Throne an' plead!'

"I fell down beside o' th' poor crushed wench an' sobbed wi' her. I couldna comfort her, fur where theer any comfort for us? Theer wur none left—theer wur no hope. We was shamed an' broke down—our lives was lost. Th' past wur nowt—th' future wur worse. Oh, my poor lass, how hard she tried to pray—fur me, Mester—yes,

fur me, as she lay theer wi' her arms round her dead babby's grave, an' her cheek on th' grass as grew o'er his breast. 'Lord God a-moighty, she says, 'help us, dunnot gi' us up—dunnot, dunnot. We conna do 'thowt thee now, if th' time ever wur when we could. Th' little chap mun be wi' thee, I moind th' bit o' comfort about getherin' th' lambs i' his bosom. An', Lord, if tha could spare him a minnit, send him down to us wi' a bit o' leet. Oh, Feyther! help th' poor lad here—help him. Let th' weight fa' on me, not on him. Just help th' poor lad to bear it. If ever I did owt as wur worthy i' thy sight, let that be my reward. Dear Lord a-moighty, I'd be willin' to gi' up a bit o' my own heavenly glory fur th' dear lad's sake.

"Well, Mester, she lay theer upon th' grass prayin' an' cryin', wild but gentle, fur nigh haaf an hour, an' then it seemed 'at she got quite loike, an' she got up. Happen th' Lord had hearkened an' sent th' child—He had, fur when she gotten up her face looked to me aw white an' shinin', i' th' clear moonlight.

"Sit down by me, dear lad," she said, 'an' hold my hand a minnit.' I set down an' took hold of her hand, as she bid me.

"Tim," she said, 'this wur why th' little chap deed. Dost na tha see now 'at th' Lord knew best?'

"Yes, lass," I answers humble, an' lays my face on her hand, breakin' down again.

"Hush, dear lad," she whispers, 'we hannot time for that. I want to talk to thee. Wilt listen?'

"Yes, wife," I says, an' I heerd her sob when I said it, but she catches hersen up again.

"I want thee to make me a promise," said she. 'I want thee to promise never to forget what peace we ha' had. I want thee to remember it allus, an' to moind him 'at's dead, an' let his little hond howd thee neet an' day, Tim, an' tha shall pray for me, an' happen theer'll come a leet. But if thee dunnot, an' dear lad—an' I dunnot see how thee could—if thee dunnot, an' we never see each other agen, I want thee to mak' me a promise that if tha sees th' little chap first tha'll moind him o' me, and watch out wi' him nigh th' gate, and I'll promise thee that if I see him first, I'll moind him o' thee an' watch out true an' constant.'

"I promised her, Mester, as yo' can guess, an' we kneeled down an' kissed th' grass, an' she took a bit o' th' sod to put i' her bosom. An' then we stood up an' looked at each other, an' at last she put her dear face on my breast an' kissed me, as she had done every neet sin' we wur mon an' wife.

"Good-bye, dear lad," she whispers—her

voice aw broken. 'Doant come back to th' house till I'm gone. Good-bye, dear, dear lad, an' God bless thee.' An' she slipped out o' my arms an' wur gone in a moment awmost before I could cry out.

"Theer isna much more to tell, Mester—th' eend's comin' now, an' happen it'll shorten off th' story, so 'at it seems sudden to thee. But it were na sudden to me. I lived alone here, an' worked, an' moinded my own business, an' answered no questions fur nigh about a year, hearin' nowt, an' seein' nowt, an' hopin' nowt, till one toime when th' daisies were blowin' on th' little grave here, theer come to me a letter fro' Manchester fro' one o' th' medical chaps i' th' hospital. It wur a short letter wi' print on it, and the moment I seed it I know'd summat were up, an' I opened it tremblin'. Mester, theer wur a woman lyin' i' one o' th' wards dyin' o' some long-named heart-disease, an' she'd prayed 'em to send fur me, an' one o' th' young soft-hearted ones had writ me a line to let me know.

"I started aw'most afore I'd finished readin' th' letter, an' when I gotten to th' place I fun just what I knowed I should, I fun her—my wife—th' blessed lass, an' if I'd been an hour later I wouldna ha' seen her alive, fur she were nigh past knowin' me then.

"But I knelt down by th' bedside and I plead wi' her as she lay theer, until I browt her back to th' world again fur one moment. Her eyes flew wide open aw at onet, an' she seed me an' smiled, aw her dear face quiverin' i' death.

"Dear lad," she whispered, 'th' path was na so long after aw. Th' Lord knew—He trod it hissen'onet yo' know. I knowed tha'd come—I prayed so. I've reached th' very eend now, Tim, an' I shall see th' little lad first. But I wunnot forget my promise—no. I'll look out—fur thee—fur thee—at th' gate.'

"An' her eyes shut slow an' quiet, an' I knowed she was dead.

"Theer, Mester Doncaster, theer it aw is, fur theer she lies under th' daisies cloost by her child, fur I browt her an' buried her. Th' fellow as come betwixt us had tortured her fur a while an' then left her again, I fun out—an' she wur so afeard of doin' me some harm that she wouldna come nigh me. It wur heart disease as killed her, th' medical chaps said, but I knowed better—it wur heart break. That's aw. Sometimes I think o'er it till I conna stand it any longer, an' I'm fain to come here an' lay my hand on th' grass—an' sometimes I ha' queer dreams about her. I had one last



Doant come back to the  
Good-bye, dear, dear  
hee.' An' she slipped  
wur gone in a moment  
I cry out.

more to tell, Mester—  
now, an' happen it'll  
so 'at it seems sudden  
na sudden to me. I  
worked, an' inoinded  
answered no questions  
ar, hearin' nowt, an'  
nowt, till one toime  
e blowin' on th' little  
e to me a letter fro'  
th' medical chaps i'  
shortloiter wi' print on  
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Doncaster, theer it aw  
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ner. I had one last

et. I thowt 'at she comu to me awat  
st just as she used to look, on'y, wi' her  
ite face shinin' loike a star, an' she says,  
Tim, th' path is da so long after aw--tha's  
me nigh to th' eend, an' me an' th' little  
ap is waitin'. He knows ther, dear lad,  
I've tow'd him.'

"That's why I coonn here to-neet, Mester,  
'I believe that's why I've talked so free  
thee. If I'm near th' eend I'd loike some  
e to know. I ha' meant no hurt when I  
omed grum an' surly. It wurna ill-will,  
at a heavy heart."

He stopped here, and his head drooped  
pon his hands again, and for a minute or so  
ere was another dead silence. Such a  
ory as this needed no comment. I could  
ake none. It seemed to me that the poor  
llow's sore heart could bear none. At  
ngth he rose from the turf and stood up,  
oking out over the graves into the soft  
ght beyond with a strange, wistful sad-  
ness.

"Well, I mun go now," he said slowly.  
"Good-neet, Mester, good-neet, an' thank  
o' fur listenin'."

"Good night," I returned, adding, in an  
impulse of pity that was almost a passion,  
'and God help you!"

"Thank yo' again, Mester!" he said, and  
then turned away; and as I sat pondering I  
watched his heavy drooping figure threading  
its way among the dark mounds and white  
marble, and under the shadowy trees, and  
out into the path beyond. I did not sleep  
well that night. The strained, heavy tones  
of the man's voice were in my ears, and the  
homely yet tragic story seemed to weave  
itself into all my thoughts, and keep me  
from rest. I could not get it out of my  
mind.

In consequence of this sleeplessness I was  
later than usual in going down to the fac-  
tory, and when I arrived at the gates I  
found an unusual bustle there. Something  
out of the ordinary routine had plainly oc-

curred, for the whole place was in confusion.  
There was a crowd of hands grouped about  
one corner of the yard, and as I came in a  
man ran against me, and showed me a terri-  
bly pale face.

"I ax pardon, Mester Doncaster," he said  
in a wild hurry, "but theer's an accident  
happened. One o' th' weavers is hurt bad,  
an' I'm goin' fur th' doctor. Th' loom  
caught an' crushed him afore we could stop  
it."

For some reason or other my heart misgave  
me that very moment. I pushed forward to  
the group in the yard corner, and made my  
way through it.

A man was lying on a pile of coats in the  
middle of the bystanders—a poor fellow  
crushed and torn and bruised, but lying  
quite quiet now, only for an occasional little  
moan, that was scarcely more than a quick  
gasp for breath. It was Surly Tim!

"He's nigh th' eend o' it now!" said one  
of the hands pityingly. "He's nigh th'  
last now, poor chap! What's that he's say-  
in', lads?"

For all' at once some flickering sense  
seemed to have caught at one of the speaker's  
words, and the wounded man stirred, mur-  
muring faintly—but not to the watchers.  
Ah, no, to something far, far beyond their  
feeble human sight—to something in the  
broad Without.

"Th' eend!" he said, "aye, this is th'  
eend, dear lass, an' th' path's aw shinin' or  
summat an'—Why, lass, I can see thee plain  
and th' little chap, too!"

Another flutter of the breath, one slight  
movement of the mangled hand, and I bent  
down closer to the poor fellow—closer, be-  
cause my eyes were so dimmed that I could  
not see.

"Lads," I said aloud a few seconds later,  
"you can do no more for him. His pain is  
over!"

For, with a sudden glow of light which  
shone upon the shortened path and the wait-  
ing figures of his child and its mother, Surly  
Tim's earthly trouble had ended.

## LE MONSIEUR DE LA PETITE DAME.

It was Madame who first entered the box, and Madame was bright with youthful bloom, bright with jewels, and, moreover, a beauty. She was a little creature, with childish large eyes, a low, white forehead, reddish-brown hair, and Greek nose and mouth.

"Clearly," remarked the old lady in the box opposite, "not a Frenchwoman. Her youth is too girlish, and she has too petulant an air of indifference."

This old lady in the box opposite was that venerable and somewhat severe aristocrat, Madame de Castro, and, having gazed for a moment or so a little disapprovingly at the new arrival, she turned her glasses to the young beauty's companion and uttered an exclamation.

It was at Monsieur she was looking at now. Monsieur had followed his wife closely, bearing her fan and bouquet and wrap, and had silently seated himself a little behind her and in the shadow.

"*Ciel!*" cried Madame de Castro, "what an ugly little man!"

It was not an unnatural exclamation. Fate had not been so kind to the individual referred to as she might have been—in fact she had been definitely cruel. He was small of figure, insignificant, dark, and wore a patient sphynx-like air of gravity. He did not seem to speak or move, simply sat in the shadow holding his wife's belongings, apparently almost entirely unnoticed by her.

"I don't know him at all," said Madame de Castro; "though that is not to be wondered at, since I have exiled myself long enough to forget and be forgotten by half Paris. What is his name?"

The gentleman at her side—a distinguished-looking old young man, with a sarcastic smile—began with the smile, and ended with a half laugh.

"They call him," he replied, "Le Monsieur de la petite Dame. His name is Villefort."

"Le Monsieur de la petite Dame," repeated Madame, testily. "That is a title of new Paris—the Paris of your Americans and English. It is villainously ill-bred."

M. Renard's laugh receded into the smile again, and the smile became of double significance.

"True," he acquiesced, "but it is also villainously apropos. Look for yourself."

Madame did so, and her next query, after she had dropped her glass again, was a sharp one.

"Who is she—the wife?"

"She is what you are pleased to call one of our Americans! You know the class,"

with a little wave of the hand,—"*rich, unconventional, comfortable people, who live well and dress well, and have an incomprehensibly naïve way of going to impossible places and doing impossible things by way of enjoyment.* Our fair friend there, for instance, has probably been round the world upon several occasions, and is familiar with a number of places and objects of note fearful to contemplate. They came here as tourists, and became fascinated with European life. The most overwhelming punishment which could be inflicted upon that excellent woman the mother, would be that she should be compelled to return to her New York, or Philadelphia, or Boston, whichever it may be."

"Humph!" commented Madame. "But you have not told me the name."

"Madame Villefort's? No, not yet. It was Trent—Mademoiselle Bertha Trent."

"She is not twenty yet," said Madame, in a queer, grumbling tone. "What did she marry that man for?"

"God knows," replied M. Renard, not too devoutly, "Paris does not."

For some reason best known to herself, Madame de Castro looked angry. She was a shrewd old person, with strong whims of her own, even at seventy. She quite glared at the pretty American from under her bushy eyebrows.

"Le Monsieur de la petite Dame!" she fumed. "I tell you it is low—low to give a man such names."

"Oh!" returned Renard, shrugging his shoulders, "we did not give it to him. It was an awkward servant who dubbed him so at first. She was new to her position, and

## E DAME.

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ceased, "but it is also  
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"You know the class,"  
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ard, shrugging his  
give it to him. It  
who dubbed him so  
to her position, and

got his name, and being asked who had  
lived, stumbled upon this *hon mot*: "*Un  
monieur, Madame—le monsieur de la petite  
dame*"—and, being repeated and tossed lightly  
on hand to hand, it has become at last an  
established witticism, albeit bandied under  
death."

It was characteristic of the august De  
Castro that during the remainder of the  
evening's entertainment she should occupy  
herself more with her neighbours than with  
the opera. She aroused M. Renard to a  
secret ecstasy of mirth by the sharp steady-  
ness of her observation of the inmates of the  
box opposite to them. She talked about  
them, too, in a tone not too well modulated,  
criticising the beautifully dressed little  
woman, her hair, her eyes, her Greek nose  
and mouth, and, more than all, her indiffer-  
ent expression and her manner of leaning  
upon the edge of her box and staring at the  
stage as if she did not care for, and indeed  
scarcely saw, what was going on upon it.

"That is the way with your American  
beauties," she said. "They have no respect  
for things. Their people spoil them—their  
men especially. They consider themselves  
privileged to act as their whims direct.  
They have not the gentle timidity of French-  
women. What French girl would have the  
courage *froid* to sit in one of the best boxes of  
the Nouvelle Opera and regard, with an  
actual air of *ennui*, such a performance as  
this? She does not hear a word that is  
sung."

"And we—do we hear?" bantered M.  
Renard.

"*Pouff!*" cried Madame. "We! We are  
world-worn and weather-beaten. We have  
not a worm-eaten emotion between us. I am  
seventy, and you, who are thirty-five, are  
the elder of the two. Bah! At that girl's  
age I had the heart of a dove."

"But that is long ago," murmured M.  
Renard, as if to himself. "It was quite human  
that he should slightly resent being classed  
with an unamiable grenadier of seventy."

"Yes!" with considerable asperity.  
"Fifty years!" Then, with harsh voice and  
withered face melted suddenly into softness  
quite *naïve*, "*Mon Dieu!*" she said, "Fifty  
years since Arsène whispered into my ear at  
my first opera, that he saw tears in my  
eyes!"

It was at this instant that there appeared  
in the Villefort box a new figure—that of a  
dark, slight young man of graceful move-  
ments—in fact, a young man of intense-  
ly striking appearance. M. Villefort rose to  
receive him with serious courtesy, but the  
pretty American was not so gracious. Not until  
he had seated himself at her side and spoken  
to her did she turn her head and permit

her eyes simply to rest upon his  
face.

M. Renard smiled again.

"Enter," he remarked in a low tone—  
"enter M. Ralph Edmondstone, the cousin  
of Madame."

His companion asked no questions, but he  
proceeded, returning to his light and airy  
tone:—

"M. Ralph Edmondstone is a genius," he  
said. "He is an artist, he is a poet, he is  
also a writer of subtle prose. His sonnets  
to Euphrasie—in the day of Euphrasie—  
awakened the admiration of the sternest  
critics; they were so tender so full of pur-  
est fire! Some of these critics also could  
scarcely choose between these and his songs  
to Alga in her day or Camille in hers. He  
is a young man of fine fancies, and possesses  
the quality of being invariably passion-  
ately in earnest. As he was serious in  
his sentiments yesterday, so he will be to-  
morrow, so he is to day."

"To day!" echoed Madame de Castro.  
"Nonsense!"

Madame Villefort did not seem to talk  
much. It was M. Ralph Edmondstone who  
conversed, and that, too, with so much of  
the charm of animation that it was pleasur-  
able even to be a mere looker-on. One in-  
voluntarily strained one's ears to catch a sen-  
tence—he was so eagerly absorbed, so full of  
rapid, gracefully unconscious and un con-  
ventional gesture.

"I wonder what he is saying?" Madame  
de Castro was once betrayed into exclaim-  
ing.

"Something metaphysical, about a poem,  
or a passage of music, or a picture—or per-  
haps his soul," returned M. Renard. "His  
soul is his strong point—he pets it and won-  
ders at it. He puts it through its paces. And  
yet, singularly enough, he is never ridicu-  
lous—only fanciful and *naïve*. It is his soul  
which so fascinates women."

Whether this last was true of other wo-  
men or not, Madame Villefort scarcely ap-  
peared fascinated. As she listened, her eyes  
still rested upon his eager mobile face, but  
with a peculiar expression—an expression of  
critical attention, and yet one which some-  
how detracted from her look of youth, as if  
she weighed his words as they fell from his  
lips and classified them, without any touch  
of the enthusiasm which stirred within him-  
self.

Suddenly she arose from her seat and ad-  
dressed her husband, who immediately rose  
also. Then she spoke to M. Edmondstone,  
and, without more ado, the three left the  
box—the young beauty, a little oddly, rather  
followed than accompanied by her compan-  
ions—at the recognition of which circum-



stance Madame de Castro uttered a series of sharp ejaculations of disapproval.

"Bah! Bah!" she cried. "She is too young for such airs!—as if she was Madame l'Imperatrice herself! Take me to my carriage. I am tired also."

Crossing the pavement with M. Renard, they passed the carriage of the Villeforts. Before its open door stood M. Villefort and Edmondstone, and the younger man, with bared head, bent forward speaking to his cousin.

"If I come here to-morrow," he was saying, "you will be at home Bertha?"

"Yes."

"Then, good-night"—holding out his hand—"only I wish so that you would go to the Aylmers instead of home. That *protege* of Mrs. Aylmer's—the little singing girl—would touch your heart with her voice. On hearing her, one thinks at once of some shy wild bird high in a clear sky—far enough above earth to have forgotten to be timid."

"Yes," came quietly from the darkness within the carriage; "but I am too tired to care about voices just now. Good-night, Ralph."

M. Renard's reply of "God knows, Paris does not," to Madame de Castro's query as to why Madame Villefort had married her husband, contained an element of truth, and yet there were numbers of Parisian-Americans, more especially the young, well-looking, and masculine, who, at the time the marriage had taken place, had been ready enough with sardonic explanations.

"There are women who are avaricious enough to sell their souls," they cried; "and the maternal Trent is one of them. The girl is only to blame for allowing herself to be bullied into the match."

"But the weak place in this argument," said M. Renard, "is that the people are too rich to be greatly influenced by money. If there had been a title—but there was no title."

Neither did Bertha Trent comport herself like a cowed creature. She took her place in society as Madame Villefort in such a manner as could give rise to no comment whatever; only one or two of the restless inquisitive wondered if they had not been mistaken in her. She was, as I have said already, a childishly small and slight creature—the kind of woman to touch one with suggestions of helplessness and lack of will; and yet, notwithstanding this, a celebrated artist—a shrewd, worldly-wise old fellow—who had painted her portrait, had complained that he was not satisfied with it because he had not done justice to "the obstinate endurance in her eye."

It was to her cousin, Ralph Edmondstone,

he had said this with some degree of tenderness, and Edmondstone had smiled and answered—

"What! have you found that out? For people do."

At the time of the marriage Edmondstone had been in Rome singing his wings in the light of the eyes of a certain Marchesa who was his latest poetic passion. She was not his first fancy, nor would she be his last, but she had power enough for the time being to have satisfied the most exacting of women.

He was at his banker's when he heard the news spoken of in the latest item from American Paris, and his start and exclamation of disgust drew forth some cynical after-comment from men who envied him.

"Who?" he said, with indiscreet impatience. "That undersized sphynx of a Villefort? Faugh!"

But insignificant thought he might be, it was M. Villefort who had won, and if he was nothing more, he was at least a faithful attendant. Henceforth, those who saw his wife invariably saw him also—driving with her in her carriage, riding with her courageously if ungracefully, standing or seated near her in the shadow of her box at the Nonville Opera, silent, impassive, grave, noticeable only through the contrast he afforded to her girlish beauty and bloom.

"Always there!" commented a sharp American belle of mature years, like an ugly little con-science.

Edmondstone's first meeting with his cousin after his return from Paris was accidental. He had rather put off visiting her, and one night entering a crowded room, he found himself standing behind a girl's light figure and staring at an abundance of reddish-brown hair. When, almost immediately the pretty head to which the head belonged turned with a slow, yet involuntary-looking movement toward him, he felt that he became excited without knowing why.

"Ah, Bertha! he exclaimed.

She smiled a little, and held out her hand, and he immediately became conscious of M. Villefort being quite near and regarding him seriously.

It was the perverseness of fate that he should find in Bertha Villefort even more than he had once seen in Bertha Trent, and there had been a time when he had seen a great deal in Bertha Trent. In the Trent household he had been a great favourite. No social evening or family festivity had seemed complete without his presence. The very children had felt they had a claim upon his good-humour, and his tendency to break forth into whimsical frolic. Good Mrs. Trent had been wont to scold him and gossip with

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He had read his sonnets and meta-  
physical articles to Bertha, and occasionally  
the rest; in fact, his footing in the family  
was familiar and firmly established. But  
since her marriage Bertha had become a little  
comprehensible, and on that account a  
little more interesting. He was sure she had  
developed, but could not make out in what  
direction. He found occasion to reproach  
her sometimes with the changes he found in

"There are times when I hardly know  
you," he would say, "you are so finely or-  
dered and well controlled. It was not so  
with you once, Bertha. Don't—don't become  
that terrible thing, a fine lady, and worse  
all, a fine lady who is *desillusionnée*."

It baffled him that she never appeared  
much moved by his charges. Certainly she  
led the life of a "fine lady,"—a brilliant  
one, a luxurious one, a life full of polite dis-  
tinction. Once, when in a tenderly fraternal  
mood, he reproached her with this also,  
she laughed at him frankly.

"It is *absinthe*," she said. "It is my ab-  
solute at least, and who does not drink a  
little *absinthe*—of one kind or another?"  
He was sincerely convinced that from this  
moment he understood and had the right to  
stay and watch over her. He went oftener  
to see her. In her presence he studied her  
closely, absent he brooded over her. He  
became impatiently intolerant of M. Ville-  
fort, and prone to condemn him, he scarcely  
knew for what.

"He has no dignity—no perception," was  
his mental decision. He has not even the  
delicacy to love her, or he would have the  
tenderness to sacrifice his own feelings and  
leave her to herself. I could do it for a  
woman I loved."

But M. Villefort was always there—grave-  
ly carrying the shawls, picking up handker-  
chiefs, and making himself useful.

"*Imbecile*!" muttered M. Renard under  
cover of his smile and his mustache, as he  
stood near his venerable patroness the first  
time she met the Villeforts.

"Blockhead!" stealthily ejaculated that  
amiable aristocrat. But though she looked  
grimly at M. Villefort, M. Renaud was un-  
comfortably uncertain that it was he to  
whom she referred.

"Go and bring them to me," she com-  
manded. "Go and bring them to me before  
some one else gets them. I want to talk to  
that girl."

It was astonishing how agreeable she  
made herself to her victims when she had  
fairly entrapped them. Bertha hesitated a  
little before accepting her offer of a seat at her  
side, but once seated she found herself oddly  
amused. When Madame de Castro chose to

take the embers of her seventy years, many  
a lively coal discovered itself among the  
ashes.

Seeing the two women together, Edmond-  
stone shuddered in fastidious protest.

"How could you laugh at that detestable  
old woman?" he exclaimed on encountering  
Bertha later in the evening. "I wonder  
that M. Villefort would permit her to talk  
to you. She is a wicked, cynical creature,  
who has the hardihood to laugh at her sins  
instead of repenting them.

"Perhaps that is the reason she is so  
amusing," said Bertha.

Edmondstone answered her with gentle  
mournfulness.

"What?" he said. "Have you begun to  
say such things? You too, Bertha!"

The laugh with which she stopped him  
was both light and hard.

"Where is M. Villefort?" she asked. "I  
have actually not seen him for fifteen min-  
utes. Is it possible that Madame de Castro  
has fascinated him into forgetting me?"

Edmondstone went to his hotel that night  
in a melancholy mood. He even lay awake  
to think what a dreary mistake his cousin's  
marriage was. She had been such a tender  
and easily swayed little soul as a girl, and  
now it really seemed as if she was hardening  
into a woman of the world. In the old  
times he had been wont to try his sonnets  
upon Bertha as a musician tries his chords  
upon his most delicate instrument. Even  
now he remembered certain fine, sensitive  
expressions of hers which had thrilled him  
beyond measure.

"How could she marry such a fellow as  
that—how could she?" he groaned. "What  
does it mean? It must mean some-  
thing."

He was pale and heavy-eyed when he  
wandered round to the Villeforts' the follow-  
ing morning. M. Villefort was sitting with  
Bertha and reading aloud. He stopped to  
receive their visitor punctiliously and inquire  
after his health.

"M. Edmondstone cannot have slept well,"  
he remarked.

"I did not sleep at all," Edmondstone  
answered, "and naturally have a head-  
ache."

Bertha pointed to a wide lounge of the  
*pouf* order.

"Then go to sleep now," she said; M.  
Villefort will read. When I have a headache  
he often reads me to sleep, and I am always  
better on awaking."

Involuntarily Edmondstone half frowned.  
Absurdly enough, he resented in secret this  
amiability on the part of M. Villefort toward  
his own wife. He was quite prepared to be  
severe upon the reading, but was surprised

to be compelled to acknowledge that M. Villefort read wondrously well, and positively with hints of delicate perception. His voice was full and yet subtly flexible. Edmondstone tried to protest against this also, but uselessly. Finally he was soothed, and from being fretfully wide awake suddenly passed into sleep as Bertha had commanded. How long his slumber lasted he could not have told. All at once he found himself aroused and wide-awake as ever. His headache had departed; his every sense seemed to have gained keenness. M. Villefort's voice had ceased, and for a few seconds utter, dead silence reigned. Then he heard the firecracking, and shortly afterward a strange, startling sound—a sharp, gasping sob!

The pang which seized upon him was strong indeed. In one moment he seemed to learn a thousand things by intuition—to comprehend her, himself, the past. Before he moved he knew that Villefort was not in the room, and he had caught a side glimpse of the pretty blue of Bertha's dress.

But he had not imagined the face he saw when he turned his head to look at her. She sat in a rigid attitude, leaning against the high cushioned back of her chair, her hands clasped above her head. She stared at the fire with eyes wide and strained with the agony of tears unshed, and amid the rush of all other emotions he was peculiarly conscious of being touched by the minor one of his recognition of her look of extreme youth—the look which had been wont to touch people in the girl, Bertha Trent. He had meant to speak clearly, but his voice was only a loud whisper when he sprang up, uttering her name.

"Bertha! Bertha! Bertha!" as he flung himself upon his knees at her side.

Her answer was an actual cry, and yet it reached no higher pitch than his own intense whisper.

"I thought you were asleep?"

Her hands fell and he caught them. His sad impassioned face bowed itself upon her palms.

"I am awake, Bertha," he groaned. "I am awake at last."

She regarded him with a piteous, pitying glance. She knew him with a keener, sadder knowledge than he would ever comprehend; but she did not under-estimate the depth of his misery at this one overwhelming moment. He was awake indeed and saw what he had lost.

"If you could but have borne with me a little longer," he said. "If I had only not been so shallow and so blind. If you could but have borne with me a little longer!"

"If I could but have borne with myself a little longer," she answered. "If I could

but have borne a little longer with my poor base pride! Because I suffered myself have made another suffer too."

He knew she spoke of M. Villefort, and the thought jarred upon him.

"He does not suffer," he said. "He is not of the fibre to feel pain."

And he wondered why she shrank from him a little, and answered with a sad bitterness:—

"Are you sure? You did not know that?"

"Forgive me," he said brokenly, the face he lifted, haggard with his unhappiness. "Forgive me, for I have lost so much."

She wasted few words and no tears. The force and suddenness of his emotion and her own had overborne her into this strange unmeant confession; but her mood was unlike his—it was merely receptive. She listened to his unavailing regrets, but told him little of her own past.

"It does not matter," she said drearily. "It is all over. Let it rest. The pain of to-day and to-morrow is enough for us. We have borne yesterday; why should we want it back again?"

And when we parted she said only one thing of the future—

"There is no need that we should talk. There is nothing for us beyond this point. We can only go back. We must try to forget—and be satisfied with our absintho."

Instead of returning to his hotel, Edmondstone found his way to the Champs Elysees, and finally to the Bois. He was too, wretched to have any purpose in his wanderings. He walked rapidly, looking straight before him and seeing nobody. He scarcely understood his own fierce emotions. Hitherto his fancies had brought him a vague rapture; now he experienced absolute anguish. Every past experience had become trivial. What happiness is so keen as one's briefest pain? As he walked he lived again the days he had thrown away. He remembered a thousand old, yet new, phases of Bertha's girlhood. He thought of times when she had touched or irritated or pleased him. When he had left Paris for Rome she had not bidden him good-bye. Jenny, her younger sister, had told him that she was not well.

"If I had seen her then," he cried inwardly, "I might have read her heart—and my own."

M. Renard, riding a very tall horse in the Bois, passed him and raised his eyebrows at the sight of his pallor and his fagged yet excited look.

"There will be a new sonnet," he said to himself. "A sonnet to Despair, or Melancholy, or Loss."

Afterward, when society became a little

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...suffer too."  
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...ive and eager, M. Renard looked on with  
...lonic interest.

"That happy man, M. Villefort," he said  
...Madame de Castro, "is a good soul—a  
...d soul. He has no small jealous follies,"  
...his smile was scarcely a pleasant thing to

"There is nothing for us beyond this  
...t," Bertha had said, and Edmondstone  
...agreed with her hopelessly.

But he could not quite break away. Some-  
...es for a week the Villeforts missed him,  
...then again they saw him every day. He  
...nt his mornings with them, joined them  
...their drives, at their opera-box, or at the  
...ertainments of their friends. He also fell  
...to his old place in the Trent household,  
...d listened with a vague effort at interest  
...Mrs. Trent's maternal gossip about the  
...ys' college expenses, Bertha's household,  
...d Jenny's approaching social debut. He  
...as continually full of a feverish longing to  
...ar of Bertha—to hear her name spoken,  
...her ringings and outcomings discussed, her  
...oke, her belongings.

"The fact is," said Mrs. Trent, as the  
...inter advanced, "I am anxious about  
...ertha. She does not look strong. I don't  
...ow why I have not seen it before, but all  
...once I found out yesterday that she is  
...ally thin. She was always slight and even  
...little fragile, but now she is actually thin.  
...ne can see the little bones in her wrists and  
...ngers. Her rings and her bracelets slip  
...out quite loosely."

"And talking of being thin, mother,"  
...ied Jenny, who was a frank, bright sixteen-  
...ear-old, "look at cousin Ralph himself. He  
...as little hollows in his cheeks, and his  
...yes are as much too big as Bertha's  
...the sword wearing out the scabbard.  
...lph? That is what they always say about  
...enuses, you know."

"Ralph has not looked well for some time,"  
...aid Mrs. Trent. "As for Bertha, I think  
...shall scold her a little, and and M. Ville-  
...fort too. She has been living too exciting a  
...fe. She is out continually. She must stay  
...t home more and rest. It is rest she needs."

"If you tell Arthur that Bertha looks  
...l," began Jenny.

Edmondstone turned toward her sharply.  
..."Arthur?" he repeated. Who is Arthur?"

Mrs. Trent answered with a comfortable

laugh. "It is M. Villefort's name, she said,  
...though none of us call him Arthur but  
...enny. Jenny and he are great friends."

"I like him better than any one else,"  
...aid Jenny stoutly. "And I wish to set a  
...ood example to Bertha, who never calls him  
...anything but M. Villefort, which is absurd."

Just as if they had been introduced to each  
...other about a week ago."

"I always hear him address her as Madame  
...Villefort," reflected Edmondstone, somewhat  
...gloomily.

"Oh yes!" answered Jenny, "that is his  
...French way of studying her fancies. He  
...would consider it taking an unpardonable  
...liberty to call her 'Bertha,' since she only  
...favours him with 'M. Villefort.' I said to  
...him only the other day, 'Arthur, you are  
...the oddest couple! You're so grand and well-  
...behaved, I cannot imagine you scolding  
...Bertha a little, and I have never seen you  
...kiss her since you were married.' I was half  
...frightened after I had said it. He started as  
...if he had been shot, and turned as pale as  
...death. I really felt as if I had done some-  
...thing frightfully improper."

"The French are so different from the  
...American," said Mrs. Trent, "particularly  
...those of M. Villefort's class. They are beauti-  
...fully punctilious, but I don't call it comfort-  
...able, you know."

Her mother was not the only person who  
...noticed a change in Bertha Villefort. Before  
...long it was a change so marked that all who  
...saw her observed it. She had become pain-  
...fully frail and slight. Her face looked too  
...finely cut, her eyes had shadowy hollows  
...under them, and were always bright with a  
...feverish excitement.

"What is the matter with your wife?"  
...demanded Madame de Castro of M. Villefort.  
...Since her first meeting she never loosened her  
...hold upon the husband and wife, and had  
...particularly cultivated Bertha.

There was no change in the expression of  
...M. Villefort, but he was strangely pallid as  
...he made his reply.

"It is impossible for me to explain,  
...Madame."

"She is absolutely attenuated," cried  
...Madame. "She is like a spirit. Take her  
...to the country—to Normandy—to the sea—  
...somewhere! She will die if there is not a  
...change. At twenty, one should be as plump  
...as a young capon."

A few days, after, Jenny Trent ran in  
...upon Bertha as she lay upon a lounge, hold-  
...ing an open book, but with closed eyes. She  
...had come to spend the morning, she an-  
...nounced. She wanted to talk—about peo-  
...ple, about her dress, about her first ball  
...which was to come off shortly.

"And Arthur says"—she began.

Bertha turned her head almost as Ed-  
...mondstone had done.

"Arthur!" she repeated.

For the second time Jenny felt a little  
...embarrassed. "I mean M. Villefort," she  
...said, hesitantly.

She quite forgot what she had been go-

ing to say, and for a moment or so regarded the fire quite gravely. But naturally this could not last long. She soon began to talk again, and it was not many minutes before she found M. Villefort in her path once more.

"I never thought I could like a Frenchman so much," she said in all enthusiastic good faith. "At first, you know," with an apologetic half laugh, "I wondered why you had not taken an American instead, when there so many to choose from, but now I understand it. What beautiful tender things he can say, Bertha, and yet not seem in the least sentimental. Everything comes so simply right from the bottom of his heart. Just think what he said to me yesterday when he brought me those flowers. He helps me with mine, and it is old how things will cheer up and grow for him. I said to him, 'Arthur, how is it that no flower ever fails you?' and he answered in the gentlest quiet way, 'Perhaps because I never fail them. Flowers are like people—one must love and be true to them, not only to-day and to-morrow, but every day—every hour—always.' And he says such things so often. That is why I am so fond of him."

As she received no reply, she turned toward the lounge. Bertha lay upon it motionless and silent—only a large tear trembled on her cheek. Jenny sprang up, shocked and checked, and went to her.

"Oh, Bertha," she cried, how thoughtless I am to tire you so, you poor little soul! Is it true that you are so weak as all that? I heard mamma and Arthur talking about it, but I scarcely believed it. They said you must go to Normandy and be nursed."

"I don't want to go to Normandy," said Bertha. "I—I am too tired. I only want to lie still and rest. I have been out too much."

Her voice, however, was so softly weak that in the most natural manner Jenny was subdued into shedding a few tears also, and kissed her fervently.

"Oh, Bertha!" she said, "you must do anything—anything that will make you well—if it is only for Arthur's sake. He loves you so—so terribly."

Whereupon Bertha laughed a little hysterically.

"Does he," she said, "love me so 'terribly'?" Poor M. Villefort!"

She did not go to Normandy, however, and still went into society, though not as much as had been her habit. When she spent her evenings at home, some of her own family generally spent them with her, and M. Villefort or Edmonstone read aloud or talked.

In fact, Edmonstone came oftener than

ever. His anxiety and unhappiness grew upon him, and made him moody, irritable and morbid.

One night, when M. Villefort had left them alone together for a short time, he sprang from his chair and came to her couch shaken with suppressed emotion.

"That man is killing you!" he exclaimed. "You are dying by inches! I cannot bear it!"

"It is not he who is killing me," she answered; and then M. Villefort returned to the room with the book he had been in search of.

In this case Edmonstone's passion took new phases. He wrote no sonnets, painted no pictures. He neglected his work, and spent his idle hours in rambling here and there in a gloomy, unsociable fashion.

"He looks," said M. Renard, "as if his soul had been playing him some evil trick."

He had at first complained that Bertha had taken a capricious fancy to Madame de Castro, but in course of time he found his way to the old woman's *salon* too, though it must be confessed that Madame herself never showed him any great favour. But this he did not care for. He only cared to sit in the same room with Bertha, and watch her every movement with a miserable tenderness.

One night, after regarding him cynically for some time, Madame broke out to Bertha with small ceremony:—

"What a fool that young man is!" she exclaimed. "He sits and fairly devours you with his eyes. It is bad taste to show such an insane passion for a married woman."

It seemed as if Bertha lost at once her breath and every drop of blood in her body for she had neither breath nor colour when she turned and looked Madame de Castro in the face.

"Madam," she said, "if you repeat that to me, you will never see me again—never!"

Upon which Madame snapped her up with some anger at being rebuked for her frankness.

"Then it is worse than I thought," she said.

It was weeks before she saw her young friend again. Indeed, it required some clever diplomacy to heal the breach made, and even in her most amusing and affectionate moods, she often felt afterward that she was treated with a reserve which held her at arm's length.

By the time the horse-chestnuts bloomed pink and white on the Avenue des Champs Elysees, there were few people in the Villefort circles who had not their opinions on the subject of Madame Villefort and her

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y and unhappiness gave him moody, irritable. M. Villefort had been for a short time, and came to her couch, and emotion. "Killing you!" he exclaimed, "I cannot be."

who is killing me," said M. Villefort returned. The book he had been

monstone's passion to wrote no sonnets, painted neglected his work, and was in rambling here and there in an unsociable fashion.

M. Renard, "as if he had some evil trick," complained that Bertha's fancy to Madame de Castro of time he found her man's *salon* too, though that Madame herself any great favour. But for. He only cared to with Bertha, and water with a miserable tender

regarding him cynically broke out to Bertha:—

"That young man is!" she said, and fairly devoutly it is bad taste to show for a married woman. Bertha lost at once her breath nor colour when Madame de Castro

"If you repeat that, I will see you again—never!" she snapped her up with a rebuked for her frankness than I thought," she

she saw her young man, it required some deal the breach made, amusing and affectionate. It afterward that she reserve which held her

se-chestnuts bloomed Avenue des Champs-Élysées people in the Villefort's opinions on the Villefort and her

There was a mixture of French and American gossip and comment, frank satire, or set remark. But, to her credit be it spoken, Madame de Castro held grim silence, and checked a rumour occasionally with such admirable ferocity as was not without its good effect.

The pink and white blossoms were already beginning to strew themselves at the feet of the pedestrians, when one morning M. Villefort presented himself to Madame, and discovered her sitting alone in the strangest of moods.

"I thought I might have the pleasure of driving home with Madame Villefort. My servant informed that I should find her here."

Madame de Castro pointed to a chair. "Sit down," she commanded.

M. Villefort obeyed her in some secret but well-concealed amazement. He saw that she was under the influence of some unusual excitement. Her false front was pushed fantastically away, her rouge and powder were rubbed off in patches, her face looked set and hard. Her first words were abominably blunt.

"M. Villefort," she said, "Do you know what your acquaintances call you?"

A deep red rose slowly to his face, but he did not answer.

"Do you know that you are designated by an absurd title—that they call you in ridicule 'Le Monsieur de la petite Dame'? Do you know that?"

His look was incomprehensible, but he bowed gravely.

"Madame," he answered, "since others have heard the title so often, it is but natural that I myself should have heard it more than once."

She regarded him in angry amazement. She was even roused to rapping upon the floor with her gold-headed cane.

"Does it not affect you?" she cried.

"Does it not move you to indignation?"

"That, Madame," he replied, "can only be my affair. My friends will allow me my emotions at least."

Then she left her chair and began to walk up and down, striking the carpet hard with her cane at every step.

"You are a strange man," she remarked.

Suddenly, however, when just on the point of starting upon a fresh tour, she wheeled about and addressed him sharply.

"I respect you," she said; "and, because I respect you, I will do you a good turn."

She made no pretence at endeavouring to soften the blow she was about to bestow. She drew forth from her dress a letter, the mere sight of which seemed to goad her to a mysterious excitement.

"See," she cried; "it was M. Ralph Edmondstone who wrote this—it was to Madame Villefort it was written. It means ruin and dishonour. I offer it to you to read."

M. Villefort rose and laid his hand upon his chair to steady himself.

"Madame," he answered, "I will not touch it."

She struck herself upon her withered breast.

"Behold me!" she said. "Me! I am seventy years old! Good God! seventy! I am a bald old woman, and it is said I do not repent of my sins. I, too, have been a beautiful young girl. I, too, had my first lover. I, too, married a man who had not won my heart. It does not matter that the husband was worthy and the lover was not—one learns that too late. My fate was what your wife's will be if you will not sacrifice your pride and save her."

"Pride!" he echoed in a bitter, hollow voice. "My pride, Madame!"

She went on without noticing him:—

"They have been here this morning—both of them. He followed her, as he always does. He had a desperate look which warned me. Afterward I found the note upon the floor. Now will you read it?"

"Good God!" he cried, as he fell into his chair again, his brow sinking into his hands.

"I have read it," said Madame, with a tragic gesture, "and I choose to place one stumbling block in the path that would lead her to an old age like mine. I do not like your Americans; but I have sometimes seen in her girl's face a proud, heroic endurance of the misery she has brought upon herself, and it has moved me. And this letter—you should read it, to see how such a man can plead. It is a passionate cry of despair—it is a poem in itself. I, myself, read it with sobs in my throat and tears in my eyes. 'If you love me!—if you have ever loved me!' he cries, 'for God's sake!—for love's sake!—if there is love on earth—if there is a God in heaven, you will not let me implore you in vain!' And his prayer is that she will leave Paris with him to-night—to-night! There! Monsieur, I have done. Behold the letter! Take it or leave it, as you please." And she flung it upon the floor at his feet.

She paused a moment, wondering what he would do.

He bent down and picked the letter up.

"I will take it," he said.

All at once he had become calm, and when he rose and uttered his last words to her, there was upon his face a faint smile.

"I, too," he said—"I, too, Madame, suffer from a mad and hopeless passion, and

thus can comprehend the bitterness of M. Edmondstone's pangs. I, too, would implore in the name of love and God—if I might, but I may not." And so he took his departure.

Until evening Bertha did not see him. The afternoon she spent alone and in writing letters, and having completed and sealed the last, she went to her couch and tried to sleep. One entering the room, as she lay upon the violet cushions, her hands at her sides, her eyes closed, might well have been shocked. Her spotless pallor, the fine sharpness of her face, the shadows under her eyes, her motionlessness, would have excused the momentary feeling. But she was up and dressed for dinner when M. Villefort presented himself. Spring though it was, she was attired in a high, close dress of black velvet, and he found her almost covering over the open fire-place. Strangely enough, too, she fancied that when she looked up at him she saw him shiver, as if he were struck with a slight chill also.

"You should not wear that," he said, with a half smile at her gown.

"Why?" she asked.

"It makes you so white—so much like a too early lily. But—but perhaps you thought of going out?"

"No," she answered; "not to-night."

He came quite close to her.

"If you are not too greatly fatigued," he said, "it would give me happiness to take you with me on my errand to my mother's house. I must carry there my little birthday gift to your sister," smiling again.

An expression of embarrassment showed itself upon her face.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "to think that I had forgotten it! She will feel as if I did not care for her at all."

She seemed for the moment quite unhappy.

"Let me see what you have chosen."

He drew from his pocket a case and opened it.

"Oh," she cried, "how pretty and how suitable for a girl!"

They were the prettiest, most airy set of pearls imaginable.

She sat and looked at them for a few seconds thoughtfully, and then handed them back.

"You are very good, and Jenny will be in ecstasies," she said.

"It is a happiness to me to give her pleasure," he returned. "I feel great tenderness for her. She is not like the young girls I have known. Her innocence is of a frank and noble quality, which is better than ignorance. One could not bear that the slightest shadow of sin or pain should fall upon her. The atmosphere surrounding her is so bright

with pure happiness and the courage of youth."

Involuntarily he held out his hand.

"Will you?"—he began. His voice faltered and broke. "Will you go with me?" he ended.

He saw that she was troubled.

"Now?" she faltered.

"Yes—now."

There was a peculiar pause—a moment as it seemed to him, of breathless silence. This silence she broke by her rising slowly from her seat.

"Yes," she responded, "I will go. Why should I not?"

It was midnight when they left the Trente and Jenny stood upon the threshold, a bright figure in a setting of brightness, and kissed her hand to them as they went down the steps.

"I hope you will be better to-morrow," Arthur, she said.

He turned quickly to look up at her.

"I?"

"Yes. You look so tired. I might say haggard, if it was polite."

"It would not be polite," said Bertha, "I don't say it. Good-night, Jenny!"

But when they were seated in the carriage she glanced at her husband's face.

"Are you unwell?" she asked.

He passed his hand quickly across his forehead.

"A little fatigued," he replied. "It is nothing. To-morrow—to-morrow it will be all over."

And so silence fell upon them.

As he entered the drawing-room a clock chimed the half hour.

"So late as that!" exclaimed Bertha, and sank into a chair with a faint laugh. "Why to-day is over," she said. "It is to-morrow."

M. Villefort had approached a side-table. Upon it lay a peculiar-looking oblong box.

"Ah," he said, softly, "they have arrived."

"What are they?" Bertha asked.

He was bending over the box to open it, and did not turn toward her, as he replied—

"It is a gift for a young friend of mine—a brace of pistols. He has before him a long journey in the East, and he is young enough to have a fancy for firearms."

He was still examining the weapons when Bertha crossed the room on her way upstairs, and she paused an instant to look at them.

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"But they would have too threatening a  
look," he answered, lightly.

As he raised his eyes they met hers. She  
started backward, moved by a  
sense of the haggardness of his

"You are ill!" she exclaimed. "You are  
colourless as marble."

"And you, too," he returned, still with  
the same tender lightness. "Let us hope  
that our 'to-morrow' will find us both better,  
and you say it is to-morrow now. Good-  
night!"

She went away without saying more.  
Heavy as she was, she knew there was no  
sleep for her, and after dismissing her maid,  
she threw herself upon the lounge before the  
drawing-room fire and lay there. To-night she  
felt as if her life had reached its climax. She  
durst into a passion of tears.

"Jenny! Jenny!" she cried, "how I envy  
you! how I envy you!"

The recollection of Jenny shining in her  
pretty gala dress, and delighting in her birth-  
day presents, and everybody else's pride and  
affection, filled her with a morbid misery  
and terror. She covered her face with her  
hands as she thought of it.

"Once," she panted, "as I looked at her  
to-night, for a moment, I almost hated her.  
Am I so bad as that?—am I?"

Scarcely two seconds afterward she had  
sprung to her feet and was standing by the  
side of her couch, her heart beating with a  
rapid throb of fright, her limbs trembling. A  
strange sound had fallen suddenly upon the  
perfect silence of the night—a sound loud,  
hard, and sharp—the report of a pistol!  
What dread seized her she knew not. She  
was across the room and had wrenched the  
door open in an instant, then with flying feet  
down the corridor and the staircase. But  
half way down the stairs she began to cry out  
loud, "Arthur! Arthur!" not conscious of  
her own voice—"Arthur, what is it?" The  
door of the drawing-room flew open before  
the fierce stroke of her palm.

M. Villefort stood where she had left him;  
but while his left hand supported his weight  
against the table, his right was thrust into  
his breast. One of the pistols lay at his  
feet.

She thought it was Death's self that con-  
fronted her in his face, but he spoke to her,  
saying faintly to smile.

"Do not come in," he said, "I have met  
with—an accident. It is nothing. Do not  
come in. A servant!"

His last recollection was of her white face  
and white draperies as he fell, and somehow,

dizzy, sick, and faint as he was, he seemed  
to hear her calling out, in a voice strangely  
like Jenny's, "Arthur! Arthur!"

In less than half an hour the whole house  
was astir. Up-stairs physicians were with  
the wounded man, down-stairs Mrs. Trent  
talked and wept over her daughter, after the  
manner of all good women. She was fairly  
terrified by Bertha's strange shudderings,  
quick, strained breath, and dilated eyes. She  
felt as if she could not reach her—as if she  
hardly made herself heard.

"You must calm yourself, Bertha," she  
would say. "Try to calm yourself. We  
must hope for the best. Oh, how could it  
have happened!"

It was in the midst of this that a servant  
entered with a letter, which he handed to his  
mistress. The envelope bore upon it nothing  
but her own name.

She looked at it with a bewildered expres-  
sion.

"For me?" she said.

"It fell from Monsieur's pocket as he  
carried him up-stairs," replied the man.

"Don't mind it now, Bertha," said her  
mother. "Ah, poor M. Villefort!"

But Bertha had opened it mechanically and  
was reading it.

At first it seemed as if it must have been  
written in a language she did not understand;  
but after the first few sentences a change ap-  
peared. Her breath came and went more  
quickly than before—a kind of horror grew  
in her eyes. At the last she uttered a low,  
struggling cry. The paper was crushed in  
her hand, she cast one glance around the  
room as if in bewildering search for refuge,  
and flung herself upon her mother's breast.

"Save me, mother!" she said. "Help  
me! If he dies now, I shall go mad!"

Afterward, in telling her story at home,  
good Mrs. Trent almost broke down.

"Oh, Jenny!" she said. "Just to think  
of the poor fellow's having had it in his  
pocket then! Of course I did not see it, but  
one can fancy that it was something kind  
and tender—perhaps some little surprise he  
had planned for her. It seemed as if she  
could not bear it."

M. Villefort's accident was the subject of  
discussion for many days. He had purchased  
a wonderful pair of pistols as a gift for a  
young friend. How it happened that one  
had been loaded none knew; it was just pos-  
sible that he had been seized with the whim

ad it himself—at all events, it had gone  
out in his hands. An inch—nay, half an  
inch—to the right, and Madame Villefort,  
who flew down-stairs at the sound of the re-  
port, would only have found a dead man at  
her feet.

"Ma foi!" said M. Renard, repressing his



amile; "this is difficult for Monsieur, but it may leave *'la petite Dame'* at liberty."

Madame de Castro flew at him with flashing eyes.

"Silence!" she said, "if you would not have me strike you with my cane." And she looked as if she were capable of doing it.

Upon his sick-bed M. Villefort was continually haunted by an apparition—an apparition of a white face and white draperies, such as he had seen as he fell. Sometimes it was here, sometimes there, sometimes near him, and sometimes indistinct and far away. Sometimes he called out to it and tried to extend his arms; again he lay and watched it, murmuring gentle words, and smiling mournfully.

Mrs. Trent and the doctor were in despair. Madame Villefort obstinately refused to be forced from her husband's room. There were times when they thought she might sink and die there herself. She would not even leave it when they obliged her to sleep. Having been slight and frail from ill health before, she became absolutely attenuated. Soon all her beauty would be gone.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Trent to her husband, "I have found out that she always carries that letter in her breast? I see her put her hand to it in the strangest way a dozen times a day."

One night, awakening from a long sleep to a clearer mental consciousness than usual, M. Villefort found his apparition standing over him.

She stood with one hand clinched upon her breast, and she spoke to him.

"Arthur!" she said—"Arthur, do you know me?"

He answered her, "Yes."

She slipped down upon her knees, and held up in her hand a letter crushed and broken.

"Try to keep your mind clear while you listen to me," she implored. "Try—try! I must tell you, or I shall die. I am not the bad woman you think me. I never had read it—I had not seen it. I think he must have been mad. Once I loved him, but he killed my love himself. I could not have been bad like that. Jenny—mother—Arthur! believe me! believe me!"

In this supreme moment of her anguish and shame she forgot all else. She stretched forth her hands, panting.

"Believe me! It is true! Try to understand! Some one is coming! Say one word before it is too late!"

"I understand," he whispered, "and I believe." He made a weak effort to touch her hand, but failed. He thought that perhaps it was the chill and numbness of death which stole over him and held him bound.

When the nurse, whose footsteps they heard, entered, she found him lying with glazed eyes, and Madame Villefort fallen a swoon at the bedside.

And yet, from this time forward the side world began to hear that his case was not so hopeless after all.

"Villefort will possibly recover," it was said at first; then, "Villefort improves; seems;" and, at last, "Villefort is out of danger. Who would have thought it?"

Nobody, however, could say that Madame had kept pace with her husband. Monsieur was sufficiently strong to travel and was advised to do so, there were great doubts as to the propriety of his wife's accompanying him.

But she would not listen to those doubts.

"I will not stay in Paris," she said to her mother. "I want to be free from it, and Jenny has promised to go with us."

They were to go into Normandy, and a day before their departure Ralph Edmondstone came to bid them good-bye.

Of the three he was by far the most haggard figure, and when Bertha came down to meet him in the empty drawing-room, he became a wretched figure with a broken, helpless air. For a few seconds Bertha did not speak, but stood a pace or two away looking at him. It seemed, in truth, as she waited there in her dark, nun-like dress, that nearly all her beauty had left her. There remained only her large sad eyes and pretty hair, and the touching look of extreme youth. In her hand she held the crushed letter.

"See!" she said, at last, holding this out to him, "I am not so bad—so bad as that."

He caught it from her hand and tore it into fragments. He was stabbed through and through with shame and remorse. After all, his love had been strong enough to have made him repent in the dust of the earth, and his first calm hour, the insult he had put upon her.

"Forgive me!" he cried; "oh, forgive me!"

The few steps between them might have been a myriad of miles.

"I did love you—long ago," she said, "but you never thought of me. You do not understand me then—nor afterwards. All this winter my love has been dying a hard death. You tried to keep it alive, but you did not understand. You only humiliated and tortured me. And I knew that if I loved you more, you would have loved me less. See!" holding up her thin hand. "I have been worn out in the struggle between my unhappiness and remorse and you."

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"You do not know what love is?" he  
forth, stung into swift resentment.  
quick sob broke from her.

"Yes I do," she answered. "I—I have  
it."

"You mean M. Villefort!" he cried in  
erate jealous misery. "You think that

he pointed to the scattered fragments of  
letter.

"He had that in his pocket when he fell,"  
said. "He thought I had read it. If I

been your wife, and you had thought  
would you have thought that I was worth  
ing to save—as he tried to save me?"

"What!" he exclaimed, shamefacedly.  
as he seen it?"

"Yes," she answered, with another sob,  
ch might have been an echo of the fir  
d that is the worst of all."

There was a pause, during which he look  
en at the floor, and even trembled a little.  
have done you more wrong than I

ght," he said.  
Yes," she replied, "a thousand-fold

seemed as if there might have been  
re to say, but it was not said.

in a little while he roused himself with an  
ort.

"I am not a villain," he said. "I can do  
thing. I can go to Villefort—if you

he did not speak. So he moved slowly  
ay until he reached the door. With his  
d upon the handle he turned and looked  
k at her.

"Oh, it is good-bye—good-bye!" he almost  
aned.

"Yes."

He could not help it—few men could have  
ne so. His expression was almost fierce  
he spoke his next words.

"And you will love him—yes, you will  
e him."

"No," she answered, with bitter pain,  
am not worthy."

It was a year or more before the Villeforts  
re seen in Paris again, and Jenny enjoyed  
wanderings with them wondrously. In

st, she was the leading member of the  
arty. She took them where she chose—to  
eer places, to ngly places, to impossible

places, but never from first to last to any  
place where there were not, or at least had  
not been, Americans as absurdly erratic as  
themselves.

The winter before their return they were  
at Genoa, among other places; and it was at  
Genoa that one morning, on opening a  
drawer, Bertha came upon an oblong box,  
the sight of which made her start backward  
and put her hand to her beating side. M.  
Villefort approached her hurriedly. An  
instant later, however, he started also and  
shut the drawer.

"Come away," he said, taking her hand  
gently. "Do not remain here."

But he was pale, too, and his hand was  
unsteady. He led her to the window and  
made her sit down.

"Parlon me," he said. "I should not  
have left them there."

"You did not send them to your friend?"  
she faltered.

"No."

He stood for a moment or so, and looked  
out of the window at the blue sea which  
melted into the blue sky, at the blue sky  
which bent itself into the blue sea, at the  
white sails flecking the deep azure, at the  
waves hurrying in to break upon the sand.

"That"—he said at length, tremulously,  
and with pale lips—"that was false."

"Was false!" she echoed.

"Yes," hoarsely, "it was false. There  
was no such friend. It was a lie—they were  
meant only for myself."

She uttered a low cry of anguish and  
dread.

"Ah mon Dieu!" he said. "You could  
not know. I understood all, and had been  
silent. I was nothing—a jest—'le monsieur  
de la petite dame,' as they said—only that.

I swore that I would save you. When I  
bade you adieu that night, I thought it was  
my last farewell. There was no accident.

Yes—there was one. I did not die, as I had  
intended. My hand was not steady enough  
And since then"—

He came closer to her.

"Is it true," he said—"is it true that my  
prayers have not been in vain? Is it true  
that at last—at last, you have learned—have  
learned?"

She stretched forth her arms to him.

"It is true!" she cried. "Yes, it is true  
—it is true!"

## SMETHURSTSES.

Smethurstses, mum—yes mum, on accounts of me bein' Smethurst an' the wax-works mine. Fifteen year I've been in the business, an' if I live fifteen year more I shall have been in it thirty; for wax-works is the kind of a business that a man gets used to and friendly with, after a manner. Lor' bless you! there's no tellin' how much company them there wax-works is. I've picked a companion or so out of the collection. Why, there's Lady Jane Grey as is readin' her Greek Testament; when her works is in order an' she's set a goin', liftin' her eyes gentle-like from the book, I could fancy as she knew every trouble I'd had an' was glad as they was over. And there's the Royal Family on the dais all a-settin' together as free an' home-like, and smilin' as if they wasn't nothin' more than flesh an' blood like you an' mean' not a crown among 'em. Why, they've actually been a comfort to me. I've set an' took my tea on my knee on the step there many a time, because it seemed cheerfuller than in my own little place at the back. If I was a talkin' man I might object to the stillness an' a general fixedness in the gaze, as perhaps is a objection as wax-works is open to as a rule, though I can't say as it ever impressed me as a very affable gentleman once said it impressed him.

"Smethurst," says he, "you must have a blamed clear conscience (thugh, bein' rather free-spoken, 'blamed' was not the precise word employed)—you must have a blamed clear conscience or I'm blamed if you could star' so many blamed pair of staring eyes givin' away you year in an' year out. An' as to them 'wax-works' says he, "they're worse than the others, for even if they turn away a minute they always turn back again, as if they couldn't trust you out of their sight."

But somehow, I never thought of it in that way, an' as to not liking the quiet, why shouldn't I? In a general way I haven't got no more to say than they have, and so it suits me well enough. I will own though, as I've never felt particular comfortable in the Chamber of Horrors, an' never wouldn't have had one, but even in a small collection

like mine the public demands it, an' we hear of bein' satisfied without one; "it says they, "what's the use of a wax-works without Manning an' them, an' the prison in the dock, an' the knife as the young woman was cut up in pieces with?" I was obliged to have the little back run hung with black, like Madame Tussaud's a small way, and fitted up with murders, a model of the guillotine, and two or three heads of parties as come to an untimely end in the French Revolution. But it aint taste for all that, and there's always heaviness in the air as makes me low-like, I'm glad to turn the key on 'em at night leave 'em to have a rest from the stares talk an' stirrin' up of their sin, an' the shame an' agony of their dreadful deaths. God Lord! it turns me sick to think of 'em havin' been reallivin' creatures, with mother an' wives an' friends, some of 'em perhap livin' to-day, all crushed an' blasted with horror they've went through.

But that aint the story as I've half-promised to tell you. If you really want to hear it, mum, I don't mind tellin' it, though I don't know as it would be interestin'—I often wondered if it would be as interestin' to outsiders as it was to me, bein' as it was the story of a friend of mine as was somethin' like me an' likewise had a wax-works. Would you mind settin' there, mum, next to the Japanese party? His lady's works broke, an' her bein' absent at the clean leaves the chair vacant most convenient.

His name it was Joe—this acquaintance of mine, an', as I said, he was somethin' of my build an' temper. He was a queer chap an' a lonely chap, an' London was his native place—leastways, I don't see it could have been no natter than that, bein' as he was laid at the door of London foundlin' when he wasn't no more than a few days old, and London fed him, clothed him until he was big enough to take care of hisself. He hadn't a easy life of it you may be sure. He wasn't handsome, yet sharp, he couldn't answer back nor give cheek; he could only take it, which had to do frequent.

There was plenty of folks as give him the character of a nat'ral born fool, an' they may have been right. They said as no chap as slow as his right senses could be so good-natured as ready to forgive an injury, an' above all slow to suspect a one was bein' done him. They think they thought this bein' slow to suspect a one was the best proof of his bein' a fool—an' he wasn't ready enough with his tongue to argy the point. He wasn't ever good at argyment—Joe wasn't.

Well, he growed up, an' he did first one thing an' then another, until at last he was backed up by a travellin' wax-works showman as had just such a collection as this here mine—havin' in it just such a Lardy Jane Grey, and likewise a sim'lar Royal Family.

"Well," says the wax-works man, when Joe first goes to ask for work, "what can you do?"

"Not much, perhaps," says Joe; "leastways, I've not been in the business before; but if you'll give me a job, Mister, I can do what I'm told."

The showman gives him a look from head to foot.

"Well," says he, "at all events, you're not one of them blasted sharp uns as knows everythin' and can't dust a figger without knocking it's head off. I've had enough of them sort"—savage like—"a-runnin' my Richard Cure the Lion and a-setting Mary Queen o' Scottas inside all wrong" (which was what his last young man had been a-doing.)

"No," answers Joe, slow and serious, "I don't think as I'd do that."

The showman gives him another look, and seems sort of satisfied.

"Go inside and get your dinner," he says, "I'll try you just because you haven't got so much cheek."

And he did try him, and pretty well they got on together, after a while. Slowness is not an objection in a wax works as much as in a business as is less delicate. I've thought myself as praps wax-works has feelin's, and knows who means respect'ful by 'em an' who doesn't, and this Joe meant respect'ful and never took no liberties as he could help. He dusted 'em regular and wound 'em up an' set 'em goin' accordin' to rules; but he never tried no larks on 'em an' that was why he gets along so well with his master.

"That other chap was too fond of his larks," says the showman, kind of gloomy whenever he mentions the first young man. He never forgave him to the day of his death for openin' the collection one day with Charles the Secondes helmet on Mrs. Hannah Moorees head, an' Daniel in the Lion's den in William Pennses spectacles,

with some other party's umbrella under his arm.

But Joe weren't of a witty turn, an' not given to jokes, which is not suited to wax-works as rule, collections bein' mostly serious. An', as I say, him an' his master got along so well that one day, after they had been together a year or so, the showman, he says to him, "Joe," says he, "I'm blessed if I'd mind takin' you in as a partner." An' that very mornin' he has the reg'lar papers made out, an' the thing was done without no more said about it. An' partners they was till he died, which happened very unexpected—him a sayin' sudden one night when they was a-shuttin' up together, "Joe, old chap, I'm blessed if my works aint a runnin' down," an' gives one look round at the figgers, an' then drops—which the medical man said it was dropsy of the heart. When his things was looked over, it was so and he'd left everythin' to Joe except one partic'lar ugly figger, as turned his eyes with a squint an' couldn't be done nothin' with, an' him he'd left to a old maid relation as had a spite agin him; "for," says the will, "she'd ought to have him, for he's the only chap I ever see yet as could match her—let alone stand her, an' it's time she was takin' a partner if she's goin' to." They did say it was nearly the party's death, for, though they'd quarrelled reg'lar for twenty-five years an' hated each other deadly, she'd always believed as she'd come into his belongin's if she outlived him, thinkin' as he would make no will.

Well, havin' had company for so long, it was nat'ral as Joe should feel lonely like after this, an' now an' then get a trifle down-hearted. He didn't find travellin' all alone as pleasant as it had been, so when he was makin' anythin' at all in a place, he'd stay in it as long as he could, an' kind of try to persuade hisself as it was kind of home to him, an' he had things to hold him to it. He had a good many feelin's in secret as might have been laughed at if people had knowed 'em. He knowed well as he wasn't the kind of chap to have a home of his own—men as has homes has wives, an' who'd have wanted to marry him, bless you—he wasn't the build as young women take to. He weren't nothin' to look at, an' he couldn't chaff, nor yet lark, nor yet be ready with his tongue. In general, young women was apt to make game of him when their sweethearts brought 'em into the collection, an' there was times when a pretty, light-hearted one would put him out so as he scarcely knowed the Royal Family by name, an' mixed up the Empress of the French an' Lucrecher Borgiar in the description.

So he lived on, lonesome enough, for two or three years, an' then somethin' happen-

ed. He went up to London to stay while the races was goin' on, an' one day, when the collection was pretty full, there comes in a swell party with a girl on his arm. The swell, as was a tall, fine-lookin' chap, was in high spirits, an' had just come in for the lark of the thing, Joe sees plain, for he were makin' his jokes free an' easy about everythin', an' laughin' fit to kill hisself every now an' then. But the girl were different; she were a little rosy thing, with round, shinin' eyes, an' a soft, little timid way with her. She laughed too, but only shy an' low, an' more because she was happy because the swell laughed. She wasn't the kind of young woman as the swell ought to have been a-goin' with. She was dressed in her best, an' was as pretty as a pictur'; but her clothes was all cheap, an' Joe could see as she belonged to the workin' class an' was out for a holiday. She held close to the gentleman's arm, an' seemed half frightened, an' yet so glad an' excited that she would have minded you of a six-year-old child. It were the first time she'd ever been into a wax-works, an' things looked wonderful to her. When they came to Lady Jane Grey she was quite took with her, an' begun to ask questions in the innocentest way.

"She's one of the nobility, sir, isn't she?" she says to her companion. "Did you ever see her? Isn't she beautiful, sir?"

He laughs delighted, an' squeezes her hand a bit with his arm.

"No, Polly," he says. "I never saw her until to-day. She didn't keep her head on her shoulders long enough. It was cut off some time ago, my dear." An' then he whispers: "An' it wasn't nearly as pretty a head as yours, Polly, either."

The little girl blushes like a rose, an' tries to laugh too; but Joe knew as she'd took the words more to her innocent heart than was good for her.

"Lor' me!" she says. "What a shame it was to cut her head off—an' her so sweet an' quiet!"

"Yes, Polly," says the young gentleman, a-laughin' more. "Very quiet. Wax-works are, as a rule. A nice time a proprietor would have, if they were not, with such a lot of queer customers—Bloody Mary, for instance, and Henry the Eighth, and Nana Sahib; and John Knox, and Lucretia Borgia—though you don't know much of their amiable characteristics, my dear."

They went on in that way through the whole room—him a-jokin' an' makin' light, an' her enjoyin' herself an' admirin' everythin' she set eyes on, an' Joe a-watchin' her. He couldn't help it. Somethin' queer seemed to have took hold of him the minute he first sees her. He kep' a-wishin' as the collection

was ten times as big, so as it would tak longer for her to go through. He couldn't bear the thought of seein' the last of her, an' when they comes to the Russian party, an' stands near the door, dressed for the winter season—his nose bein' protected with fur after the fashion of the country—his hair were in his mouth, an' when she passed on into the crowd, he seemed to swallow it with a gulp, as took it into the heels of his boots.

"Lor'!" he says, all of a tremble in his insides, "I shan't never see her again—never!"

He hadn't no spirit in him all that day nor the next either. It was as if somethin' altogether out of common had happened, an' he couldn't never be the same man again. He was miserable, an' down, an' nervous, an' there wasn't a figger in the collection an' didn't seem to know it. He took to standin' at the door whenever he could, a-lookin' at the people a-passin' by. An' yet he scarcely knowed what for. If he'd seen the face he wanted to, he wouldn't a' dared to say a word, nor yet to move a step; an' still he was a-hungerin' day an' night for a glimpse of what couldn't be no good to him.

Well, if you'll believe me, mum, instead of gettin' easier as time went on, he got un-easier. He was as lonesome again as he had been, an' he took his tea a-settin' with the Royal Family reg'lar—he couldn't have swallowed it by hisself. After shuttin' up, he'd go out wanderin' in the streets melancholy and wistful like, an' one night he stoped short all at once, a-feelin' hisself turn pale in consequence of it comin' to him sudden what ailed him.

"I've fell in love," says he, fearful an' respect'ful—"that's it—an' there's no help for me. I'm not the man as should have done it, for I can't look for nothin' to come out of it."

He gave hisself up to it, because he didn't see no way out of it. Nobody wasn't troubled but hisself, an' so it didn't matter. He got pale an' thin, an' didn't sleep well o' nights, but there wasn't no one to bother themselves about him—there weren't even a soul as he could a' left the collection to, if he'd a' died.

It went pretty hard with him to leave London, an' when he did leave it, he couldn't stay away; an' I'm blessed if he didn't come back in less than six months; for, says he to hisself:—

"Here's a place as is somethin' more than the others, at least, though it is in a sorrowful way, an' I'd rather as the collection would earn me a bare livin' in a side street in London, than make money away from it. I might see her again; an', Lor' bless me!



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something more than ough it is in a sorrow er as the collection livin' in a side street money away from it. an', Lor' bless me!

at do I want of money a-layin' back?"

Well, the first night after he came back, did see her again. He'd set out the collection in the room he'd hired, an' then he'd ne out in the old wanderin' way, an' he didn't hardly stepped into the street before comes on a crowd gathered around some in' near a lamp-post; so he stops natral, makes inquiries.

"Anybody hurt?" says he.

"No, not exactly," answers the man he'd oke to. "It's a young woman as has inted, I think."

He makes his way a bit nearer, an' as soon as claps his eyes on the deathly face under the mp-light, he sees as it's the face he's en lookin' for an' thinkin' about so ng.

"It's her!" he says, so shook as he didn't now what he was doin'. "It's Polly!"

"Polly!" says the woman as was holdin' er head. "Do you know her, young man? t you do, you'd better speak to her, for she's st comin' to, poor little thing!"

He knewed he couldn't explain, an' he ninks, besides, as the feelin' he had for her ight make his face look friendlier than a stranger's, so he kneels down as the woman ells him, just as she opens her eyes.

The crowd seemed to frighten her, an' she egan to tremble an' cry; an' so Joe speaks o her, low, an' quiet, an' respectful—

"Don't be afraid, miss," he says—"don't. You'll be well directly."

She catches hold of his hand like a fright- ned baby.

"Send them away!" she says. "Please, don't let them stare at me. I can't bear t!"

"Miss," says Joe, "would you mind bein' ook into a collection, if this good lady would go with you?"

"A collection" she says, all bewildered. "I haven't got any money. What is it for? Oh, please make them go away!"

"Not a hat took 'round, miss," says Joe.

"Oh dear, no! I was alludin' to a wax- works which is quite convenient, an' belongs to me, an' a fire an' a cup of tea ready im- mediate, an' a good lady to stay with you until you feel better—an' all quite private."

"Take me anywhere, please," she says. "Thank you, sir. Oh, take me away."

So between them, Joe an' the good woman helps her up an' leads her to the door as was but a few steps off, an' Joe takes them in an' on to the back room, where the fire was a burnin' an' the kettle singin', an' there he has them both to sit down.

The woman makes the girl lie down on the sofa by the fire, an' she bein' weak an' wan-

derin' yet did as she was told without askin' a question.

"A cup of tea'll set her up," says the woman, "an' then she can tell us where she lives an' we can take her home."

Joe went about like a man in a dream. His legs was unsteady under him, an' he was obliged to ask the woman to pour the water on the tea, an' while she was doin' it he takes a candle and slips into the collection secret, to make sure the Royal Family was there an' he wasn't out of his head.

The woman, havin' girls of her own, was very motherly an' handy an' did all she could, but she couldn't stay long, and after she'd give Polly her tea, she says she must go.

"An' I dare say as the young man as is so kind-hearted'll come along with me, an' we'll see you home together, my dear."

They both looks at Polly then a-waitin' to see what she would say, but she only looked frightened, an' the next minute hides her face in her little hands on the sofa-arm an' begins to sob.

"I haven't got no home," she says, "nor nowhere to go. What shall I do—what shall I do?"

Then the woman looks very serious an' a bit hard-like about the mouth—though not as hard as some might have done.

"Where's your mother?" she says, just the least short.

"I haven't none," says Polly. "I lost her a month ago."

"You aint in mournin'," says the wo- man.

"No, ma'am," says Polly, "I couldn't afford it."

"An' your father?"

But this made the poor little thing cry harder than ever. She wrung her hands an' sobbed pitiful.

"Oh, father!" she says. "Good, kind, easy father, if you was alive I wouldn't be like this. You always loved me—always. You never was hard, father."

"What have you been livin' on?" says the woman, lookin' as if she was a-relentin'.

"I was in a shop!"

But Joe couldn't stand no more.

"Ma'am," he says in an undertone, "if a pound or so, which not bein' a fam'ly man an' a good business at times, I have it to spare, would make matters straight, here it is." An' he pulls a handful of silver out of his pocket and holds it out quite eager an' yet fearful of givin' offence.

Well, then the woman looks sharp at him.

"What do you mean?" she asks. "Do you wantme to take her home with me?"

"Ma'am," says Joe, "yes, if a pound or so"—

But she stops him by turning to the girl.

"Are you a respectable young woman?" she asks.

The pretty face was hid on the sofa-arm, an' the little figure looked so droopin' that Joe could stand that less than he could stand the other.

"Ma'am," says he hurried, "if five pound"—

It seemed like the woman's heart was touched, though she answered him rough.

"Young man," she says, "you're a fool, but if you don't want me to speak out before her, take me into the next room an' we'll talk it over."

So Joe took her into the collection, an' the end of it was that they made an agreement, an' sharp as she seemed, the woman showed as she was fair and straight an' would take no advantage. She let Joe persuade her at last to take the girl with her an' ask no questions, an' he was to pay her a trifle to make it straight an' no burden to her.

"Though," says she, "if she had a different face an' one as wasn't so innocent an' young, I wouldn't take her at no price, for I've girls of my own as I tell you, an' p'raps that's what makes me easier on her."

J C K

When they was gone away, Joe goes into the room they'd left an' sets hisself down by the fire an' stares at the sofa.

"She set there," he says, "an' she laid her head on the arm, and likewise drunk out of that there cup. I've seen her again as sure as I'm a man."

An' not a wink of sleep does he get that night, but sits, an' stares, an' thinks until the fire dies out into ashes, an' it's gray early mornin'.

Through a delicateness of feelin' he does not go anywheres near her for a day or so, an' then the woman—whose name is Mrs. Bonny—calls in to see him.

"Well," she says, "it seems all right so far. She's a nice little thing, an' she's got work in a millinery down town, an' I've kept my word an' asked no questions, an' will you come an' have a cup of tea with us this evenin'?"

Of course he went, glad enough, though awkward, an' he saw her again, an' she was prettier an' innocent lookin' than ever, though pale an' timid. When she give her hand at partin' an' says, "Thank you for bein' so kind to me," he couldn't say a single word in answer, 'he were so bashful an' upset.

He was always bashful enough, even after they knowed each other better an' was good friends, which they came to be. She seemed to take a childish likin' to him, an' always to

be a rememberin' as she'd somethin' to be grateful for.

"What made you so kind to me that night, Joe?" she'd say. "You hadn't never seen me before, you know. Oh, how good you was, Joe!" An' he hadn't never the courage to tell her as he had.

Through one thing an' another, it was quite a while before she chanced to see the collection, but, at last, one afternoon, the all comes down—Mrs. Bonny, the girls, an' Polly.

Polly was a-goin' 'round with Joe, an' couldn't help wonderin' anxious if she would remember as she had seen the place an' him before. An' she did. Before she had been in the room three minutes, she begins to look round strange an' puzzled, an' when she comes to Lady Jane Grey, she catches Joe's arm an' gives a tremblin' start.

"I've been here before," she says. "I was here last races—I—oh, Joe, an' she breaks off with a sob.

He sets her in a chair and stands before her, so as the Bonnys can't see.

"Don't cry, Polly," he says, but he says it with a sinkin' feelin', because he sees as she doesn't remember him at all, an' that she hasn't forgot her handsome sweetheart.

She doesn't cry much more for fear of the Bonnys, but she doesn't laugh nor talk any more all the rest of the day, an' her little downcast face was enough to make a man's heart ache. I dare say as you'll think as Joe was a fool to hang on so in the face of all this, but it was his way to hang on to thing quiet an' steady, and you remember what I've said about his simpleness. So he does hang on without a bit of hope until through Polly herself he speaks almost without knowing it, an' it happens in the collection just three months from the day as she recognized Lady Jane Grey.

"What made you so good to me that night, Joe?" she says again to him, mournful an' gentle. "I never shall forget it. No one else would have been so good."

"Polly," he says, a-takin' out his bandanna and wipin' his forehead, for, though a cool day, he had broke out in a frop perspiration—"Polly, it was because I loved you." An' he went straight through an' told her the whole story.

"But," says he at the end, "don't let that come between you an' me, Polly, for why should it? You have nothing to give me, Polly, an', consequently, I don't ask nothin'."

"No," says she, in a half whisper, "I haven't nothin' to give no one."

And yet, it wasn't three weeks before—but, I'll tell you how it happened.

He'd been invited to the Bonnys' to tea,

' as she'd somethin' to

you so kind to me that night  
"You hadn't never seen  
know. Oh, how good you  
he hadn't never the courage  
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three weeks before—  
it happened.

to the Bonnys to tea,

when he went there, he found Polly ailin'.  
he was white an' nervous, an' her eyes  
looked big an' woful.

"She had a fright last night," Mrs. Bonny  
told him. "Some scamp of a fellow fol-  
lowed her all the way home an' it's upst  
her."

She hardly spoke all the evenin', but lay  
back in the big rockin'-chair a lookin' at Joe  
every now an' then as if she was askin' him  
to help her, and when he'd bid em all good-  
night an' was half way down the street, he  
hears the door open again, an' who should  
come runnin' after him but her, all out of  
of breath, an' catches him by the arm,  
cryin' :—

"Joe," she says, "do you—do you love me  
yet, Joe?"

"Polly," he says, "what is it, my dear?"  
an' hearin' her ask her such a question,  
turned him almost sick with joy an' pain  
together.

"Because," she sobs out—"because, if you  
love me yet—take me, Joe, an' keep me  
safe."

An' before he knows how it happens, he  
has her in his arms, with her face against his  
coat.

After they was both a bit quiet, he takes  
her back to Mrs. Bonny, an' says he :—

"Mrs. Bonny, Polly an' me is goin' to be  
married."

An' Mrs. Bonny says :—

"Well, now, Polly, that's sensible; an'  
though I say it as shouldn't, I must own as  
I wouldn't care if it was 'Meliar."

An' she kisses Polly, an' the girls kisses  
her, an' they all shake hands, an' it's a settled  
thing.

They was married almost immediate, an' Joe  
was as happy as a man could be under the cir-  
cumstances; for, mind you, he wasn't a-de-  
ceivin' hisself, an' knowed well enough as  
his wasn't the kind of a marriage where  
there's two hearts beatin' warm together,  
an' both is full of joy an' hope."

"But," she says, "I never expected this  
much, an' I'd be a queer sort of a chap not  
to be grateful as the woman I love could  
turn to me for comfort when she needed it;  
an' if love can bring love, mine'll be like to  
do it some day."

So he waited an' hoped, an' did his best,  
an' he sometimes thought as Polly drew a  
bit nearer to him as time went on. At any  
rate, she was a good, gentle little thing, an'  
always seemed tryin' to please him in a  
wistful, longin' way, as if she had somethin'  
to make up for. Once, when they was set-  
tin' together at night, she come an' knelt  
down before him, and hid her face on his  
knee.

"Joe," she says, "was you never afraid to

marry me—when—when you remember—as  
I'd never told you nothin'?"

"No," he answers. "No Polly—never."  
"But I might have been a wicked girl,"  
she whispers.

"No," says he, stout and tender. "You  
mightn't, Polly;" an' he stoops down an'  
kisses her pretty hair.

She burst out cryin', and creeps closer,  
so as to lay her cheek on his hand.

"I might have been," she says; "but I  
wasn't, Joe—I wasn't, because God an' you  
helped me."

An' yet he knows as there's somethin' be-  
hind as keeps her from bein' happy, though  
she tries so hard an' faithful. He always  
sees the wistfulness in her eyes, an' hears it  
in her voice, an' time an' time again he

knows she's lyin' awake at night a-grievin'  
quiet. One mornin', after she's been lower  
than common, a letter comes to her, an' he  
sees her turn white, an' after she holds it a

minute, she walks up to the fire an' throws  
it in, an' before he goes back to the collec-  
tion, she comes an' catches him 'round the

neck, an' says :—  
"I want to be a good wife, Joe—I want  
to be, an' I will," an' cries a bit again."

That very afternoon there comes a swell  
into the wax-works, an' as soon as Joe sets

eyes on him, he knows its the chap he first  
see Polly with in the race-week; there he is  
a-sauterin' 'round an' pretendin' to be un-

concerned, an' yet keepin' a sharp look-out  
around him. So Joe goes up to him, and

speaks to him quite firm and low :—  
"Was you lookin' for any one, sir?" he

asks.

The swell looks at him cool enough.

"What's that you say, my good fellow?"  
he answered.

"Well," says Joe, "nothing in a general  
way, perhaps; only, sir, I was a-thinkin' as

p'raps you might be lookin' for some one as  
was unprotected an' helpless, an' there aint

no such party a praty here; an' if you'd like  
your money returned at the door—me bein'  
the proprietor of the collection—I shouldn't

have no objection."  
"D—your collection," says the swell;  
but he turns round and goes out half a-

laughin'.

At tea that evenin' Polly was dreadful  
restless an' timid an' seemed to be a listenin'

to somethin', an' after a bit Joe finds out  
what it is—its footsteps a-passin' back'ard

and for'ard reg'lar; an' they goes on that  
way for a good hour, an' then stops; an' all

the time Polly sits close to Joe, as if she was  
afraid to leave him, her eyes shinin' and her

voice shakin' when she speaks. Only that  
somethin' tells him as she doesn't want him  
to go he would have went out; an' in the



middle of the night he was almost sorry he didn't, for she started out of her sleep callin' out frightened—

"Oh, the footsteps!—the footsteps! Make them go away!—save me from them, Joe, or I must go!"

She was quite ill an' weak for a month an' then, queer enough, a change came over her. She got her colour back gradual an' went out oftener, an' was brighter when she was in the house. She went to see the Bonnys frequent, a-helpin' them to get ready to take their trip to the seaside, which they did regular; for, though workin' people, they was comfortable off. There was such a alteration in her that Joe began to feel hopeful, an' was as cheerful as the day is long; an' well he might be, for she actually lays her pretty head on his breast once an' whispers

"Joe, I believe I'm goin' to be 'happy an' its all through your bein' so lovin' an' patient. You bore with me a long time—didn't you, Joe?"

They had been married near twelve months then, an' the week the Bonnys goes away; Joe has to go too, bein' called away by business, an' sorry enough he was to go. But he says to Polly when he kisses her good-bys at the door—

"If you get lonesome pack up an' go to the Bonnys, my dear, an' let them take care of you; but I won't be no longer than I can help."

An' she gives his neck a little wistful squeeze, half laughin', with the tears in her eyes, an' says—

"No, you mustn't, because no one can take such care of me as you; an' I want you, Joe."

Well, it happened as his business was got over quicker than he'd looked for, an' he gets home within two weeks. But when he gets back he doesn't find Polly. Things are a bit upset as if she'd gone off in a hurry, an' he finds a little letter on the table as says, "I've gone to the Bonnys, dear Joe—it was so lonesome without you."

An' when he reads it he sees tear-marks on it, an' he says to himself, "Why, here a tear fell, Polly. You must have been a bit low, my dear." He had that there letter in his hand, an' was still a-lookin' at it, when there comes a knock at the door, an' he answers it, an' in walks Mrs. Bonny herself.

"Well," she says, "you've come back have you? How are you, an' how's Polly?"

"Polly!" says he. "Polly!"

"Yes, to be sure," she answers him back, "Polly; for, to tell the truth, I've been a bit anxious about her, an' that's why I come here the minute I got back to town."

Well, they both stood still an' looked at

each other—her a bit impatient, an' him col an' dazed.

"Mrs. Bonny, ma'am," says he at last "Polly went to you a week ago, for here's the letter as tell's me so."

"Joe," says Mrs. Bonny, a-fallin' back an' turnin' pale too, "Polly aint never been nigh us!"

"Then," says Joe, "she's dead."

He never thought of nothin' else but that some cruel thing had happened as had cut her off in her innocence an' youth. Think harm of Polly, as had laid her cheek against his breast an' begged him to come back to her? Lor' bless you, ma'am, he loved her far too tender!

It was Mrs. Bonny as first said the word, for even good women is sometimes hard on women, you know. She followed him into the room an' looked about her, an' she broke out a-cryin', angry an' yet sorrowful:—

"Oh, Joe! Joe!" she says. "How could she have the heart to do it?"

But Joe only answered her, bewildered—

"The heart, ma'am!" he says. "Polly?"

"The heart to leave you," she says. "The heart to go to ruin when there was so much to hold her back—the heart to shame a honest man as loved her, an' her knowin' what she did!"

"Ruin, ma'am?" says Joe. "Shame, ma'am? Polly?"

He rouses himself to understand what she meant, an' he sees it's what the other people will say, too, an' he cannot help it or save Polly from it.

"It isn't true," he cries, wild-like. "It isn't nat'ral as it should be. She's trusted me all along, an' we was beguinin' to be happy, an'—"

"You've trusted her," says Mrs. Bonny. "An' so have I; but she's kept her own secrets, an' we knowed she had 'em. An' there's my 'Meliar as heard of some fine gentleman a-follerin' her on the street an' talkin' to her."

But Joe stops her.

"If she doesn't come back," he says, "she's dead, an' she died innocent," an' wouldn't hear another word.

As soon as he could get his strength together, he gets up and begins to set the place in order, a makin' it look just as much as if she was there as he could. He folds away the two or three things as she's left about, an' puts 'em in the drawers an' shunts 'em up, an' Mrs. Bonny sets a-watchin' him. She couldn't understand the slow quiet way as he does everything.

"Joe," she says, when he's done, "what do you mean?"

"Mrs. Bonny, ma'am," he says, "I mean to trust her, an' I mean to be ready for her

it impatient, an' him cold

ma'am," says he at last  
a week ago, for here's  
he so."

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sets a-watchin' him.  
the slow quiet way

a he's done, "what

"he says, "I mean  
to be ready for he

a-waitin', whenever she comes back, an'  
never."

"However?" says Mrs. Bonny.

"Yes, mum" he says, "howsumever, for  
e isn't a thing as is easy killed; but,  
ind you, I'm not afraid as her soul has  
ome to hurt an' I've no thought of givin' her  
p."

Mrs. Bonny, she sees he's in earnest, an'  
he shakes her head. She meant kind  
ough, but it wasn't her as had been in love  
ith Polly, an' had worked so hard to win  
er. When she went Joe followed her to  
he door.

"Ma'am," he says, "have you any objec-  
ions as this here should be a secret betwixt  
ou an' me?"

Well, I've no doubt as it was a bit hard  
n her as she shouldn't have the tellin' of  
t and the talkin' of it over, an' she couldn't  
elp showin' it in her looks; but she's a  
ood soul, as I've said, an' she promises, an'  
oe he answers her, "Thank you, ma'am;  
an' would you mind givin' me your hand on  
t?" An' she does, an' so they part.

You may think what the next week or so  
was to Joe, when I tell you as, though he  
ried night an' day, he couldn't hear a word  
from Polly, or find no sign. An' still be-  
lievin' in her, he wouldn't make no open  
stir an' talk. He had a fancy as perhaps  
somethin' of her old trouble had took her  
off, an' he stuck to it in his mind as she'd  
come back an' tell him all. An' I dare say  
you'll say, "Why should he, in the name of  
all that's simple?" Well, ma'am, he had a  
reason, an' that there reason held him up  
when nothin' else would. But it seemed as  
if all hope was to be tore from him. A  
cleanin' up the room one afternoon, he comes  
across a piece of half-burnt paper as had  
lodged in a corner, an' in pickin' it up some-  
thin' catches his eye as strikes him blind an'  
weak an' sick—a few words writ in a fine,  
flourishin' hand, an' these was them:—

"—wasting your life, my sweet Polly,  
on a stupid fellow who has not even sense  
enough to see that you are making a sacri-  
fice and breaking your innocent, foolish  
heart. Don't break mine, too—don't turn  
away from me as you did on that dreadful  
night. If you love me, trust me. Come  
to!"

That was all, for the rest was burnt; but  
when he'd read it, Joe's hope was swept away  
complete. "She'd been gettin' love-letters  
from another man, an' readin' them, an'  
keepin' them secret, an' now she was gone!

He set down, an' let the paper drop on the  
floor.

"I—didn't know," he says, "as them—  
was women's—ways. Lord help you, Polly,  
—an' me,—an' Lord be pitiful to it!"

There's no use of makin' the story longer  
than can be helped, an' besides, words  
wouldn't tell what sufferin' that there little  
back room saw in the three next weeks.  
There's no knowin' what kept the poor chap  
from staggerin' in from his work some night  
an' fallin' heart-broke in death on his lonely  
hearth. He suffered an' strove an' bore, an'  
yet kept his secret close. He neither eat nor  
slept, his face growed white an' haggard, an'  
his eyes holler. He kept away from the  
Bonny's, an' kept away from all as knowed  
him. Even the sight of the collection was  
too much for him. He'd set there by the  
ashes of the fire hour after hour at night,  
a-lookin' at the grayness, an' not carin' to  
stir.

"I didn't know," he'd say again an' again  
over slow to himself an' the emptiness an'  
quiet—"I didn't know—as them—was  
women's ways."

Just five weeks from the time as he'd  
come home and found his wife gone, he was  
a-settin' this very way over the grate one  
evenin' at dusk, when he hears a key a-turnin'  
in the door gentle-like an' he lifts his head  
to listen. "Who's that?" he says, "as is  
tryin' to come in?"

But the next minute he starts up, a-knock-  
in' the chair over back'ard, his heart a-beatin'  
loud enough to be heard, for the one as  
turned the key *was* in, an' had light feet, an'  
come an' pushed the room door open an'  
stood there a second. An' it was Polly, with  
a bundle in her arms. She didn't look  
guilty, bless you, though she were a little  
pale an' excited. She was even a-laughin',  
in a shy, happy, timid way, an' her eyes  
was wide an' shinin'.

But Joe, he weren't strong enough to bear  
it. He breaks out into a cry.

"Polly," says he, "is it because you're  
dead that you've come back to me?" An' he  
makes a step, propin' an' staggerin', and  
would have fell if she hadn't run an' caught  
him, an' pushed him into a chair.

"Joe," she cries out, kneeling down be-  
fore him—"Joe, dear Joe, what's the mat-  
ter? It's Polly, an'"—an' she puts her face  
against his vest in the old way—"an' you  
mustn't frighten me."

That, an' the touch of her hand brings  
him back, an' he knows in a second as he  
has her safe, an' then he catches her an' be-  
gins to hug her tight, too shook to say a  
word.

But she pulls back a bit, half frightened  
an' half joyful.

"Joe," she says, "didn't you think I was  
at the Bonny's? Have you been anxious?"  
An' then, a-laughin' nervous-like "You  
mustn't squeeze so, Joe—don't you see?"

An' she lays the bundle on his knee an' opens the shawl an' shows him what's in it.

"He's he's only a little one," she says, a-laughin' an' cryin' true woman fashion, "but he grows every day, an' he's noticin' already."

Joe makes an effort an' just saves hisself from bustin' out in a sob as might have told all—an' this time he folas 'em both up an' hold 'em, a-tryin' to stumble at a prayer in his mind.

"Polly," says after a bit, "tell me all about it, for I don't understand how it is as it's come about."

But girl as she is, she sees as there's somethin' behind, and she gives him a long look.

"Joe," she says, "I've more to tell than just how this happened, an' when I lay quiet with little Joe on my arm, I made up my mind as the day I brought him home to you was the day as had come for you to hear it, an' so you shall; but first I must lay him down an' make the room warm."

Which she gets up an' does, an' won't let Joe do nothin' but watch her, an' while she's at it he sees her sweet young face a-workin', an' when everythin's done, an' the fire burnin' bright, an' the kettle on, an' the little fellow comfortable on her arm, she draws a little wooden stool up to his knees an' sits down on it, an' her face is a-workin' still.

"Not as I'm afraid to tell you now, Joe, though I've held it back so long; but sometimes I've thought as the day would never come when I could, an' now I'm so glad—so glad," she whispers.

An' then a-holdin' his hand an' the child's too, she tells him the whole story of what her secret was an' why she kept it one, an' as you may guess it was all about the man as Joe had seen her with.

The night she'd fainted in the street she'd found out his cruel heart for the first time, an' it had well nigh broke her own. The people as she worked for had turned her off through hearin' of him, an' her own mother, as was a hard, strict woman, had believed the scandal and turned against her too. An' then when she had gone to him in her fear an' trouble he had struck her down with words as was worse than blows.

"But bein' so young, Joe, an' so weak," she says, "I couldn't forget him, an' it seemed as if I couldn't bear my life; an' I knowed that if he come back again it would be harder to turn away from him than ever. An' it was—an' when he folered me an' tried me so I knowed as I'd give up if there wasn't something to hold me strong. An' I asked you to save me that night, Joe, an' you said you would. Joe," she whispers, "don't hate me for bein' so near to sin and shame."

After a little while she tells him the rest.

"But even when he knowed I was a good man's wife he wouldn't let me rest. He tried to see me again an' again, an' wrote me letters an' besot me in every way, knowin' as I wasn't worthy of you, an' didn't love you as I ought. But the time come when he grew weaker an' you grew stronger, Joe. How could I live with you day after day an' see the contrast between you, an' not learn to love the man as was so patient an' true to me, an' despise him as only loved hisself an' was too selfish an' cruel to have either mercy or pity? So the day come when I knowed I needn't fear him nor myself no more, an' I told him so. It was then I told you I was goin' to be happy; an' Joe, dear, I was happy—particular lately. Do you believe me, Joe?—say as you do."

"Yes, Polly," says Joe. "Thank God!"

"Kiss me, then," she says, "an' kiss little Joe, an' then I'll tell you how the other come about."

He did it prompt, an' with a heavin' heart an' then the other was soon told.

"I hadn't seen him for a long time when you went away," she tells him, "an' I thought I'd seen the last of him; but you hadn't been gone a week before I met him face to face in the street; an' that same night a letter come an' through me bein' lonesome an' nervous like, an' seein' him so determined, it frightened me, an' I made up my mind I'd go to the Bonny's an' get heartened up a little before you come back. So I started all in a hurry as soon as I could get ready. But before I'd got half way to my journey's end, we had an accident—not much of a one, for the train as met each other wasn't goin' so fast but that they could be stopped in time to save much real harm bein' done, an' people was mostly badly shook an' frightened. But I fainted away, an' when I come to myself I was lyin' on a bed in a farmhouse near the line, an' the farmer's wife, as was a good soul, she was a-takin' care of me, an' says she, 'Where's your husband, my girl?' an' I says, 'I'm not sure I know, ma'am,' an' fainted away again."

"Well, the next mornin' I was lyin' there still, but little Joe was on my arm, an' I had the strength to tell where I lived, an' how I was I didn't know where to send for you. An' the farmer's wife was like a mother to me, an' she cheers me up, an' says, 'Well, never mind. Bless us! what a joyful surprise it'll be to the man! Think of that!' An' I did think of it until I made up my mind as I wouldn't send no word at all until I could come home myself; for, says I, 'He'll think I'm at the Bonny's, an' it'll save him bein' worried.' An' that was how it was. Joe,"

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of you, an' didn't love  
at the time come when he  
you grew stronger, Joe  
with you day after day an'  
ween you, an' not leavin'  
was so patient an' true to  
as only loved hisself an'  
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he looks at him timid an' gentle, and he  
ks down at the fire.

"Not if you'd rather not, Joe," she says;  
but I thought"—

Joe, he thinks a bit, an' then answers her  
ave an' slow:—

"Polly," says he, "I found a piece of  
at there letter. Will you forgive me, an'  
it pass at that for little Joe's sake?"

She stoops down and kisses his hand, with  
ars in her eyes.

"Yes," she answers, "an' for yours too.  
ou've more to forgive than me, Joe—an' it  
s quite nat'ral."

An' she never asks him another question,  
at sets there sweet an' content, an' they  
th sets there almost too happy to speak;  
ed there's such a look in her face as goes to  
oe's heart, an' he breaks the quiet, at last,  
sayin':—

"Polly, I hope it aint no wrong in me a-

thinkin' it—for this aint no time for me to  
have none but the reverentest and gratefulst  
humble heart—but as you set there with the  
little fellow so peaceful on your breast, I can't  
help bein' minded of the Mother as we see in  
the churches, an' as some prays to."

Well, mum, that's the whole story, an'  
somehow it's run longer than I thought for;  
but there's nothin' more left to say, but that  
if you could see that there little Joe to-day  
le'd astonish you; for though but five year  
old, I'm blessed if he don't know every tigger  
in the collection by name, an' is as familiar  
with Henry the Eighth's fam'ly as I am  
myself; an' says he to me only the other day,  
"Father"—at least— Well, mum, I sup-  
pose I may as well own up to it, now I've  
done—though a nat'ral back'ardness made it  
easier for me to tell it the other way. But  
you're right in supposin' so; an' not to put  
too fine a point too it, the story is mine—  
that there Joe bein' me, an' Polly my wife,  
an' that there collection Smethurstses.

## ONE DAY AT ARLE.

One day at Arle—a tiny scattered fishing  
hamlet on the north western English coast—  
here stood at the door of one of the cottages  
near the shore a woman leaning against the  
intel-post and looking out: a woman who  
would have been apt to attract a stranger's  
eye, too—a woman young and handsome.  
This was what a first glance would have taken  
in; a second would have been apt to teach  
more and leave a less pleasant impression.  
She was young enough to have been girlish,  
but she was not girlish in the least. Her  
tall, lithe, well-knit figure was braced  
against the door-post with a tense sort of  
strength; her handsome face was just at this  
time as dark and hard in expression as if she  
had been a woman with years of bitter life  
behind her; her handsome brows were knit,  
her lips were set; from head to foot she  
looked unyielding and stern of purpose.

And neither form nor face belied her. The ear-  
liest remembrance of the coast people concern-  
ing Meg Louas had not been over pleasant ones.  
She had never been a favourite among them.  
The truth was they had half feared her, even  
as the silent, dogged, neglected child who  
used to wander up and down among the  
rocks and on the beach, working harder for  
her scant living than the oldest of them.  
She had never a word for them, and never  
satisfied their curiosity upon the subject of  
the treatment she received from the ill-  
conditioned old grandfather who was her only  
living relative, and this last peculiarity had  
rendered her more unpopular than anything  
else would have done. If she had answered  
their questions they might have pitied her;  
but as she chose to meet them with stubborn  
silence, they managed to show their dislike  
in many ways, until at last it became a

settled point among them that the girl was an outcast in their midst. But even in those days she gave them back wrong for wrong and scorn for scorn; and as she grew older she grew stronger of will, less prone to forgive her many injuries and slights, and more prone to revenge them in an obstinate, bitter fashion. But as she grew older she grew handsomer too, and the fisher boys who had jeered at her in her childhood were anxious enough to gain her good-will.

The women flouted her still, and she defied them openly; the men found it wisest to be humble in their rough style, and her defiance of them was more scornful than her defiance of their mothers and sisters. She would revenge herself upon them, and did, until at last she met a wooer who was tender enough, it seemed, to move her. At least so people said at first; but suddenly the lover disappeared, and two or three months later the whole community was electrified by her sudden marriage with a suitor whom she had been wont to treat worse than all the rest. How she treated him after the marriage nobody knew. She was more defiant and silent than ever, and gossippers gained nothing by asking questions. So at last she was left alone.

It was not the face of a tender wife waiting for a loving husband, the face that was turned toward the sea. If she had hated the man for whom she watched she could not have seemed more unbending. Ever since her visitor had left her (she had had a visitor during the morning) she had stood in the same place, even in the same position, without moving, and when at last the figure of her husband came slouching across the sands homeward she remained motionless still.

And surely his was not the face of a happy husband. Not a handsome face at its dull best, it was doubly unprepossessing then, as, pale and breathless, he passed the stern form in the door-way, his nervous, reluctant eyes avoiding hers.

"Yo'll find yo're dinner aw ready on th' table," she said to him as he passed in.

Everything was neat enough inside. The fireplace was clean and bright, the table was set tidily, and the meal upon it was good enough in its way; but when the man entered he cast an unsteady, uncomprehending glance around, and when he had flung himself into a chair he did not attempt to touch the food, but dropped his face upon his arm on the table with a sound like a little groan.

She must have heard it, but she did not notice it even by a turn of her head, but stood erect and steadfast until he spoke to her. She might have been waiting for his words—perhaps she was.

"Tha canst come in an' say what tha has to say an' be done wi' it," he said at last, a sullen, worn-out fashion.

She turned round then and faced him, harder to be met in her rigid mood than if she had been a tempest.

"Tha knows what I ha gotten to say," she answered, her tone strained and husky with repressed fierceness. "Aye! tha knows well enough. I ha' not much need to tell thee owt. He comn here this morning at he towd me aw I want to know about the Seth Lonas—an' more too."

"He comn to me," put in the man. She advanced toward the table and struck it once with her hand.

"Tha'st towd me a power o' lies," she said. "Tha's lied to me from first to last to serve thy own ends, and tha'st gained 'em—tha'st lied me away fro' the man as wur aw the world to me, but the time's comn now when thy day's o'er, an' his is comn agen. Althou bitter villain! Does ta mind how the comn an' towd me Dan Morgan had gone to the fair at Lake wi' that lass o' Barnegata. That wur a lie an' that wur the beginning. Does ta mind how tha towd me as he mad light o' me when the lads and lasses plagued him, an' threeped him down as he didn mean to marry no such like lass as me—him as wur ready to dee fur me? That wur a lie and that wur th' eendin', as tha knew it would be, for I spurned him fro' me the very next day, and wouldna listen when he tried to straighten 'out. But he got at th' truth at last when he wur fur fro' here, and he browt th' truth back to me to-day, an' there's the eend for thee—husband or no."

The man lay with his head upon his arm until she had finished, and then he looked up all white and shaken and blind.

"Wilt tha listen if I speak to thee?" he asked.

"Aye," she answered, "listen to me, lies!"

And she slipped down into a sitting posture on the stone door-step, and sat there, her great eyes staring out seaward, her hands lying loose upon her knee, and trembling.

There was something more in her mood than resentment. In this simple gesture she had broken down as she had never broken down in her life before. There was passionate grief in her face, a wild sort of despair, such as one might see in a suddenly-wounded, untamed creature. Here was not a fair nature. I am not telling the story of a gentle, true-souled woman—I am simply relating the incidents of one bitter day whose tragic close was the ending of a rough romance.

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world's scorn; she had been either on the  
ensive or the defensive from childhood to  
manhood, and then she had caught one  
impe of light and warmth, clung to it  
earningly for one brief hour, and lost it.

Only to-day she had learned that she had  
lost it through treachery. She had not dared  
believe in her bliss, even during its fairest  
distence; and so, when light-hearted, hand-  
some Dan Morgan's rival had worked against  
me with false stories and false proofs, her  
pride had been caught at them, and her  
venge had been swift and sharp. But it  
had fallen back upon her own head now.

This very morning handsome Dan had come  
back again to Arle, and earned his revenge,  
so, though he had only meant to clear him-  
self when he told her what chance had  
brought to light. He had come back—her  
lover, the man who had conquered and  
sweetened her bitter nature as nothing else  
on earth had power to do—he had come back  
and found her what she was—the wife of a  
man for whom she had never cared, the wife

of the man who had played them both false,  
and robbed her of the one poor gleam of joy  
he had known. She had been hard and  
wild enough at first, but just now, when she  
slipped down upon the door-step with her  
back turned to the wretched man within—  
when it came upon her that, traitor as he  
was, she had herself given him the right to  
take her bright-faced lover's place, and usurp  
his tender power—when the fresh sea-breeze  
blew upon her face and stirred her hair, and  
the warm, rare sunshine touched her, even  
breeze and sunshine helped her to the end,  
so that she broke down into a sharp sob, as  
any other woman might have done, only that  
the repressed strength of her poor warped  
heart made it a sob sharper and deeper than  
another woman's would have been.

"Yo' mought ha' left me that!" she said.

"Yo' mought ha' left it to me! There wur  
other women as would ha' done yo', there  
wur no other man on ear-th as would do me.  
Yo' knowed what my life had been, an' how  
it wur hard to hand betwixt other folk an'  
me. Yo' knowed how much I cared fur him  
an' what he wur to me. Yo' mought ha' let  
us be. I niver harmed yo'. I wouldna harm  
yo' so sinful cruel now."

"Wilt t. listen?" he asked, labouring as if  
for breath.

"Aye," she answered him, "I'll listen,  
fur tha conna hurt me worsen. Th' day fur  
tha't's past an' gone."

"Well," said he, "listen an' I'll  
try to tell yo'. I know it's no  
use, but I mun say a word or two.  
Happen yo' didna know I loved yo' aw yo're  
life—happen yo' didna, but it's true. When  
yo' wur a little lass gatherin' sea-weed on

th' sands I watched yo' when I wur afeared  
to speak—afeared least yo'd gi' me a sharp  
answer, fur yo' wur ready snow wi' 'em,  
wench. I've watched yo' fur hours when I  
wur a great lubberly lad, an' when yo' get-  
tin' to be a woman it wur th' same thinz,  
I watched yo' an' did yo' many a turn as yo'  
knowed nowt about. When yo' wur search-  
in' fur drift to keep up th' fire after th' owd  
mon deed an' left yo' alone, happen yo' nev-  
er guessed as it wur me as heaped little piles  
i' th' nooks o' th' rocks so as yo'd think 'at  
th' tide had left it theer—happen yo' didn't,  
but it wur true. I've stayed round th' old  
house many a neet, feared summat mought  
harm yo', an' yo' know yo' niver gave me  
a good word, Meg. An' then Dan comn an'  
he made way wi' yo' as he made way wi' aw  
th' rest—men an' women an' children. He  
niver worked an' waited as I did—he niver  
thowt an' prayed as I did; everything  
come easy' wi' him—everything allus did  
come easy wi' him, an' when I seed him so  
light-hearted an' careless about what I wur  
cravin' it run me daft an' blind. Seemt like  
he couldna cling to it like I did, an' I begun  
to fight agen it, an' when I heerd about that  
lass o' Barnegate I towld yo', an' when I seed  
yo' believed what I didna believe mysen, it  
run me dafter yet, an' I put more to what  
held back some, an' theer it wur an' theer it  
stands, an' if I've earnt a curse, lass, I've  
getten it, fur—fur I thowt yo'd been learn-  
in' to care fur me a bit sin' he-wur wed, an'  
God knows I've tried to treat yo' fair an'  
kind i' my poor way. It warna Dan Mor-  
gan's way, I know—his wur a better way  
than mine, th' sun shone on him somehow—  
but I've done my best an' truest sin'."

"Yo've done yo're worst," she said. "Th'  
worst yo' could do to part us, an' yo' did it.  
If yo'd been half a mon yo' wouldna ha'  
been content wi' a woman yo'd trapped into  
sayin' 'Aye,' an' who cared less for yo' than  
she did fur th' sand on th' sea shore. What's  
what yo've done sin' to what yo' did afore?  
Yo' conna wipe that out and yo' conna mak'  
me forget. I hate yo', an' th' worse because  
I wur beginnin' to be content a bit. I hate  
mysen. I ought to ha' knowed"—wildly—  
"he would ha' knowed whether I wur true  
or false, poor chap—he would ha' knowed."

She rocked herself to and fro for a minute,  
wringing her hands in a passion of anguish  
worsen than any words, but a minute later  
she turned upon him all at once.

"All's o'er betwixt yo' an' me," she said  
with fierce heat: "do yo' know that? If yo'  
wur half a man yo' would."

He sat up and stared at her humbly and  
stupidly.

"Eh?" he said at last.

"Theer's not a mon i' Arle as isna more

to me now than tha art," she said. "Some on 'em be honest, an' I conna say that o' thee. Tha canst get thee gone or I'll go mysen. Tha knowst me well enow to know I'll ne'er forgie thee for what tha's done. Aye"—with the passionate hand-wringing again—"but that wunnot undo it."

He rose and came to her, trembling like a man with the ague.

"Yo' dunnot mean that theer, Mag," he said slowly. "You dunnot mean it word fur word. Think a bit."

"Aye, but I do," she answered him, setting her white teeth, "word fur word."

"Think again, wench." And this time he staggered and caught hold of the door-post. "Is theer nowt as'll go agen th' wrong? I've lived wi' thee nigh a year, an' I've loved thee twenty—is theer nowt fur me? Aye, lass, dunnot be too hard. Tha was allus harder than most womankind; try an' be a bit softer like to'rds th' mon as risked his soul because he wur a mon an' darena lose thee. Tha laid thy head on my shoulder last neet. Aye, lass—lass, think o' that fur one minnit."

Perhaps she did think of it, for surely she faltered a little—what woman would not have faltered at such a moment?—but the next, the memory of the sunny, half-boyish face she had clung to with so strong a love rushed back upon her and struck her to her heart. She remembered the days when her life had seemed so full that she had feared her own bliss; she remembered the gallant speeches and light-hearted wiles, and all at once she cried out in a fierce, impassioned voice: "I'll ne'er forgie thee," she said—"I'll ne'er forgie thee to th' last day o' my life. What fur should I? Tha's broke my heart, thou villain—tha's broke my heart." And the next minute she had pushed past him and rushed into the house.

For a minute or so after she was gone the man stood leaning against the door with a dazed look on his pale face. She meant what she said: he had known her long enough to understand that she never forgave—never forgot. Her unbroken will and stubborn strength had held her to enmities all her life, and he knew she was not to be won by such things as won other women. He knew she was harder than most women, but his dull nature could not teach him how bitter must have been the life that rendered her so. He had never thought of it—he did not think of it now. He was not blaming her, and he was scarcely blaming himself. He had tried to make her happy and had failed. There were two causes for the heavy passion of misery that was ruling him, but neither of them was remorse.

His treachery had betrayed him, and he

had lost the woman he had loved and worked for. Soul and body were sluggish alike, but each had its dull pang of weight and wretchedness.

"I've come to th' end now surely," he said, and, dropping into her seat, he hid his face.

As he sat there a choking lump arose in his throat with a sudden click, and in a minute or so more he was wiping away hot rolling tears with the back of his rough hand.

"I'm forsook somehow," he said—"aye, I'm forsook. I'm not th' sort o' chap to take up wi' th' world. She war all th' world feared fur, an' she'll ne'er forgie me, for she's a hard un—she is. Aye! but I wur fond o' her! I wonder what she'll do—I do wonder i' my soul what she's gettin' her mind on!"

It did not occur to him to call to her or go and see what she was doing. He had always stood in some dull awe of her, even when she had been kindest, and now it seemed that they were too far apart for any possibility of reconciliation. So he sat and pondered heavily, the sea air blowing upon him fresh and sweet, the sun shining soft and warm upon the house, and the few common flowers in the strip of garden whose narrow shelves walks and borders he had laid out for himself with much clumsy planning and slow labour.

Then he got up and took his rough working-jacket over his arm.

"I mun go down to th' Mary Anne," he said, "an' work a bit or we'll ne'er get her o'er afore th' tide comes in. That boat's a moit o' trouble." And he sighed heavily.

Half-way to the gate he stopped before a cluster of honeysuckle, and perhaps for the first time in his life was conscious of a sudden curious admiration for them.

"She's powerful fond o' such loike bits o' things—posies an' such loike," he said. "Thems some as I planted to please her on th' very day as we were wed. I'll tak' one or two. She's main fond on 'em—fur such a hard un."

And when he went out he held in his hand two or three slender stems hung with the tiny pretty humble bells.

He had these very bits of simpie blossoms in his hand when he went down to where the Mary Anne lay on the beach for repairs. So his fellow-workmen said when they told the story afterwards, remembering even this trivial incident.

He was in a strange frame of mind, too, they noticed, silent and heavy and absent. He did not work well, but lagged over his

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choking lump arose in his throat, and in a minute he was wiping away hot rolling tears with his rough hand.

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its of simple blossoms went down to where the beach for repairs. So did when they told the remembering even this

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hour, stopping every now and then to pass the back of his hand over his brow as if to ease himself.

"Yo' look as if yo' an' th' missus had had ballin' out an' yo'u gotten th' worst o' th' again," one of his comrades said by way of rough jest.

They were fond of joking with him about his love for his handsome, taciturn wife, but he did not laugh this time as he usually did.

"Mind thy own tackle, lad," he said dully, "an' I'll mind mine."

From that time he worked steadily among them until it was nearly time for the tide to ebb. The boat they were repairing had been a difficult job to manage, as they could only work between tides, and now being hurried they lingered longer than usual. At the last minute they found it must be moved, and so were detained.

"Better leave her until the tide ebbs," said one, but the rest were not of the same mind.

"Nay," they argued, "it'll be all to do for aye if we do that. There's plenty o' time if we look sharp enow. Heave again, lads."

Then it was that with the help of straining and tugging there came a little lurch, and then it was that as the Mary Anne slipped over on her side one of the workmen slipped with her, slipped half underneath her with a cry, and lay on the sand, held down by the weight that rested on him.

With his cry there broke out half a dozen others, and the men rushed up to him with frightened faces.

"Are yo' hurt, Seth, lad?" they cried. "Are yo' crushed or owt?"

The poor fellow stirred a little and then looked at them pale enough.

"Bruised a bit," he answered them, "an' sick a bit, but I dunnot think there's any bones broke. Look sharp, chaps an' heave her up. She's a moit o' weight on me."

They went to work again one and all, so relieved by his words that they were doubly strong, but after toiling like giants for a while they were compelled to pause for breath. In falling the boat had so buried herself in the sand that she was harder to move than ever. It had seemed simple enough at first, but it was not so simple, after all. With all their efforts they had scarcely stirred her an inch, and their comrade's position interfered with almost every plan suggested. Then they tried again, but with less effect than before, through their fatigue. When they were obliged to pause they looked at each other questioningly, and more than one of them turned a trifle paler, and at last the wisest of them spoke out:—

"Lads," he said, "we conna do this ourselves. Run for help, Jem Coulter, an' run wi' thy might, fur it wunnot be so long afore th' tide'll flow."

Up to this time the man on the sand had lain with closed eyes and set teeth, but when he heard this his eyes opened and he looked up.

"Eh?" he said, in that blind, stupid fashion. "Wha't's that theer tha's sayin', Mester?"

"Th' tide," blundered the speaker. I wur tellin' him to look sharp, that's aw."

The poor fellow moved restlessly.

"Aye! aye!" he said. "Look sharp—he mun do that. I didna think o' th' tide." And he shut his eyes again with a faint groan.

They strove while the messenger was gone; and they strove when he returned with assistance; they strove with might and main, until not a man among them had the strength of a child, and the boldest of them were blanching with a fearful, fugitive excitement none dared to show. A crowd had gathered round by this time—men willing and anxious to help, women suggesting new ideas and comforting the wounded man in rough, earnest style; children clinging to their mother's gowns and looking on terror-stricken. Suddenly, in the midst of one of their mightiest efforts, a sharp childish voice piped out from the edge of an anxious group a brief warning that struck terror to every heart that beat among them.

"Eh! Mesters!" it said, "th' tide's creepin' up a bit."

The men looked round with throbbing pulses, the women looked also, and one of the younger ones broke into a low cry.

"Lord ha' mercy?" she said; "it'll sweep around th' Bend afore long, an'—"—and she ended with a terror in her voice which told its own tale without other words.

The truth forced itself upon them all then. Women began to shriek and men to pray, but, strange to say, the man whose life was at stake lay silent, with ashen lips, about which the muscles were tensely drawn.

His dull eyes searched every group in a dead despair that was yet a passion, in all its stillness.

"How long will it be," he asked slowly at last—"th' tide? Twenty minutes?"

"Happen so," was the answer. "An', lad, lad! we conna help thee. We'n tried our best, lad"—with sobs even from the uncouth fellow who spoke. "There is na one on us but 'ud leave a limb behind to save thee, but there is ne time—theer is na"—

One deep groan and he lay still again—quite still. God knows what weight of mor-



tal agony and desperate terror crushed him in that dead helpless pause.

Then his eyes opened as before.

"I've thowt o' deen'," he said, with a catch of his breath. "I've thowt o' deen," an' I've wondered how it wur an' what it felt like. I never thowt o' deen like this here." Another pause and then—

"Which o' yo' lads 'll tell my missus?"

"Ay! poor chap, poor chap!" wailed the women. "Who on 'em will?"

"Howd tha noise, wenches," he said hoarsely. "Yo' daze me. Theer is na time to bring her here. I'd ha' liked to ha' said a word to her. I'd ha' liked to ha' said one word; Jem Coulter"—raising his voice—"canst tha say it fur me?"

"Aye," cried the man, choking as he spoke, "surely, surely." And he knelt down.

"Tell her 'at if it wur bad enow—this here—it wur not so bad as it mought ha' been—fur me. I mought ha' fun it worsar. Tell her I'd like to ha' said a word if I could—but I couldna. I'd like to ha' heard her say one word, as happen she would ha' said if she'd been here, an' tell her 'at if she had ha' said it th' tide mought ha' comn an' welcome—but she didna, an' theer it stands." And the sob that burst from his breast was like the sob of a death-stricken child. "Happen"—he said next—"happen one o' yo' women-foak can say a bit o' a prayer—yo're not so fur fro' safe sand but yo' can reach it—happen one o' yo' ha' a word or two as yo' could say—such like as yo' teach yo're babbies."

Among these was one who had—thank God, thank God! and so, amid wails and weeping, rough men and little children alike knelt with uncovered heads and hidden eyes while this one woman faltered the prayer that was a prayer for a dying man; and when it was ended, and all rose glancing fearfully at the white line of creeping foam, this dying man for whom they had prayed lay upon his death bed of sand the quietest of them all—quiet with a strange calm.

"Bring me my jacket," he said, "an' lay it o'er my face. Theer's a bit o' a posie in th' button-hole. I gotten it out o' th' mis-

sus's garden when I comn away. I'd like howld it i' my hand if it's theer yet."

And as the long line of white came creeping onward they hurriedly did as he told them—laid the rough garment over his face and gave him the humble diving flowers to hold, and having done this and lingered at the last moment, one after the other dropped away with awe-stricken souls until the last was gone. And under the arch of sunny sky the little shining waves ran up the beach chasing each other over the glittering sand, catching at shells and sea-weed, toying with them for a moment, and then leaving them rippling and curling and whispering, but creeping—creeping—creeping.

They gave his message to the woman who had loved with all the desperate strength of his dull, yet unchanging nature; and when the man who gave it to her saw her with white face and hard-set lips, he blundered upon some dim guess as to what that single word might have been, but the sharpest of them never knew the stubborn anguish that following and growing day by day, crushing her fierce will and shook her heart. She was as hard as ever, they thought, but they were none of them the men or women to guess at the long dormant instinct of womanhood and remorse that the tragedy of this one day of her life had awakened. She had said she would never forgive him, and perhaps her very strength made it long before she did, but surely some subtle chord was touched by those heavy last words, for when, months later, her first love came back, faithful and tender, with his old tale to tell, she would not listen.

"Nay, lad," she said, "I amna a feather to blow wi' th' wind. I've had my share o' trouble wi' me, an' I ha' no mind to try again. Him as lies i' th' churchyard loved me i' his way—men foak's way is apt to be a poor un—and I'm wore out wi' life. Dunnot come here courtin'—tak a better woman."

But yet, there are those who say that the time will come when he will not plead in vain.

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To begin, I am a Frenchman, a teacher of languages, and a poor man—necessarily a poor man, as the great world would say, or I should not be a teacher of languages, and my wife a copyist of great pictures, selling her copies at small prices. In our own eyes, it is true, we are not so poor—my Clelie and I. Looking back upon our past we congratulate ourselves upon our prosperous condition. There was a time when we were poorer than we are now, and were not together, and were, moreover, in London instead of in Paris. These were indeed calamities: to be poor, to teach, to live apart, not even knowing each other—and in England! In England we spent years; we instructed imbeciles of all grades; we were chilled by east winds, and tortured by influenza; we vainly strove to conciliate the appalling English; we were discouraged and desolate. But this, thank *le bon Dieu!* is past. We are united; we have our little apartment—upon the fifth floor, it is true, but still not hopelessly far from the Champs Elysees. Clelie paints her little pictures, or copies those of some greater artist, and finds sale for them. She is not a great artist herself, and is charmingly conscious of the fact.

"At fifteen," she says, "I regretted that I was not a genius; at five and twenty, I rejoice that I made the discovery so early, and so gave myself time to become grateful for the small gifts bestowed upon me. Why should I eat out my heart with envy? Is it not possible that I might be a less clever woman than I am, and a less lucky one?"

On my part I have my pupils—French pupils who take lessons in English, German, or Italian; English or American pupils who generally learn French, and upon the whole, I do not suffer from lack of patrons.

It is my habit when Clelie is at work upon a copy in one of the great galleries to accompany her to the scene of her labour in the morning and call for her at noon, and, in accordance with this habit, I made my way to the Louvre at midday upon one occasion three years ago.

I found my wife busy at her easel in the *Grande Galerie*, and when I approached her

laid my hand upon her shoulder, as was my wont, she looked up with a smile and spoke to me in a cautious undertone.

"I am glad," she said, "that you are not ten minutes later. Look at those extraordinary people."

She still leaned back in her chair and looked up at me, but made, at the same time, one of those indescribable movements of the head which a clever woman can render so significant.

This slight gesture directed me at once to the extraordinary people to whom she referred.

"Are they not truly wonderful?" she asked.

There were two of them, evidently father and daughter, and they sat side by side upon a seat placed in an archway, and regarded hopelessly one of the finest works in the gallery. The father was a person unlearned and elderly. His face was tanned and seamed, as if with years of rough out-door labour; the effect produced upon him by his clothes was plainly one of actual suffering, both physical and mental. His stiff hands refused to meet the efforts of his gloves to fit them; his body shrank from his garments; if he had not been pathetic, he would have been ridiculous. It was evident he was not so tired of his own free will; that only a patient nature, inured by long custom to discomfort, sustained him: that he was in the gallery under protest; that he did not understand the paintings, and that they perplexed—overwhelmed him.

The daughter it is almost impossible to describe, and yet I must attempt to describe her. She had a slender and pretty figure; there were slight marks of the sun on her face also, and, as in her father's case, the richness of her dress was set at defiance by a strong element of incongruousness. She had black hair and gray eyes, and she sat with folded hands staring at the picture before her in dumb uninterestedness.

Clelie had taken up her brush again, and was touching up her work here and there.

"They have been here two hours," she said. They are waiting for some one. At first they tried to look about them as others did. They wandered from seat to seat, and sat down, and looked as you see them doing now. What do you think of them? To what nation should you ascribe them?"

"They are not French," I answered. "And they are not English."

"If she were English," said Clelie, "the girl would be more conscious of herself, and of what we might possibly be saying. She is only conscious that she is out of place and miserable. She does not care for us at all. I have never seen Americans like them before, but I am convinced that they are Americans."

She laid aside her working materials and proceeded to draw on her gloves.

"We will go and look at that 'Tentation de St. Antoine' of Teniers," she said, "and we may hear them speak. I confess I am devoured by an anxiety to hear them speak."

Accordingly, a few moments later an amiable young couple stood before "La Tentation," regarding it with absorbed and critical glances.

But the father and daughter did not seem to see us. They looked disconsolately about them, or at the picture before which they sat. Finally, however, we were rewarded by hearing them speak to each other. The father addressed the young lady slowly and deliberately, and with an accent which, but for my long residence in England and familiarity with some forms of its *patois*, I should find it impossible to transcribe.

"Esmeraldy," he said, "your ma's a long time acomin'."

"Yes," answered the girl, with the same accent, and in a voice wholly listless and melencholy, "she's a long time."

Clelie favoured me with one of her rapid side glances. The study of character is her grand passion, and her special weakness is a fancy for the singular and uncongruous. I have seen her stand in silence, and regard with positive interest one of her former patronesses who was overwhelming her with contumelious violence, seeming entirely unconscious of all else but that the woman was of a species novel to her, and therefore worthy of delicate observation.

"It is as I said," she whispered. "They are Americans, but of an order entirely new."

Almost the next instant she touched my arm.

"Here is the mother!" she exclaimed. "She is coming this way. See!"

A woman advanced rapidly toward our part of the gallery—a small, angry woman, with

an ungraceful figure, and a keen brown eye. She began to speak aloud while still several feet from the waiting couple.

"Come along," she said. I've found a place at last, though I've been all the morning at it—and the woman who keeps the door speaks English."

"They call 'em," remarked the husband meekly rising, "*con-ser-gees*. I wonder why."

The girl rose also, still with her hopeless abstracted air, and followed the mother who led the way to the door. Seeing her move forward, my wife uttered an admiring exclamation.

"She is more beautiful than I thought," she said. "She holds herself marvellously. She moves with the freedom of some fine wild creature."

And, as the party disappeared from view, her regret at losing them drew from her a sigh. She discussed them with characteristic enthusiasm all the way home. She even concocted a very probable little romance. One would always imagine so many things concerning Americans. They were so extraordinary a people, they acquired wealth by such peculiar means; their country was so immense; their resources were so remarkable. These persons, for instance, were evidently persons of wealth, and as plainly had risen from the people. The mother was not quite so wholly untaught as the other two, but she was more objectionable.

"One can bear with the large simplicity of utter ignorance," said my fair philosopher.

"One frequently finds it gentle and unworldly, but the other was odious because it is always aggressive and narrow."

She had taken a strong feminine dislike to Madame la Mere.

"She makes her family miserable," she said. "She drags them from place to place, possibly there is a lover—more possibly than not. The girl's eyes wore a peculiar look—as if they searched for something far away."

She had scarcely concluded her charming little harangue when we reached our destination; but, as we passed through the entrance, she paused to speak to the curly headed child of the *conciierge* whose mother held him by the hand.

"We shall have new arrivals to-morrow," said the good woman, who was always ready for friendly gossip. "The apartment on the first floor," and she nodded to me significantly, and with good-natured encouragement. "Perhaps you may get pupils," she added. "They are Americans, and speak only English, and there is a young lady, Madame says."

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"Americans!" exclaimed Clelie, with sudden interest.

"Americans," answered the *conciierge*. "It was Madame who came. *Mon Dieu!* it was wonderful! So rich and so—so"—filling up the blank by a shrug of deep meaning.

"It cannot have been long since they were—*peasants*," her voice dropping into a cautious whisper.

"Why not our friends of the Louvre?" said Clelie as we went on up-stairs.

"Why not?" I replied. "It is very possible."

The next day there arrived at the house numberless trunks of large dimensions, superintended by the small angry woman and a maid. An hour later came a carriage, from whose door emerged the young lady and her father. Both looked pale and fagged; both were led up-stairs in the midst of voluble comments and commands by the mother and both, entering the apartment, seemed swallowed up by it, as we saw and heard nothing further of them. Clelie was indignant.

"It is plain that the mother overwhelms them," she said. "A girl of that age should speak and be interested in any novelty. This one would be if she were not wretched. And the poor little husband!"

"My dear," I remarked, "you are a feminine Bayard. You engage yourself with such ardour in everybody's wrongs."

When I returned from my afternoon's work a few days later, I found Clelie again excited. She had been summoned to the first floor by Madame.

"I went into the room," said Clelie, "and found the mother and daughter together. Mademoiselle, who stood by the fire, had evidently been weeping. Madame was in an abrupt and angry mood. She wasted no words. 'I want you to give her lessons,' she said, making an ungraceful gesture in the direction of her daughter. 'What do you charge a lesson?' And on my telling her, she engaged me at once. 'It's a great deal, but I guess I can pay as well as other people,' she remarked."

A few of the lessons were given downstairs, and then Clelie preferred a request to Madame.

"If you will permit Mademoiselle to come to my room, you will confer a favour upon me," she said.

Fortunately, her request was granted, and so I used afterward to come home and find Mademoiselle Esmeralda in our little *salon* at work disconsolately and tremulously. She found it difficult to hold her pencil in the correct manner, and one morning she let it drop, and burst into tears.

"Don't you see I'll never do it?" she

answered, miserably. "Don't you see I couldn't, even if my heart was in it, and it aint at all!"

She held out her little hands piteously for Clelie to look at. They were well enough shaped, and would have been pretty if they had not been robbed of their youthful suppleness by labour.

"I've been used to work," she said, "rough work all my life, and my hands aint like yours."

"But you must not be discouraged, Mademoiselle," said Clelie gently. "Time—"

"Time," interposed the girl, with a frightened look in her pretty gray eyes. "That's what I can't bear to think of—the time that's to come."

This was the first of many outbursts of confidence. Afterward she related to Clelie, with the greatest naivete, the whole history of the family affairs.

They had been the possessors of some barren mountain lands in North Carolina, and her description of their former life was wonderful indeed to the ears of the Parisian. She herself had been brought up with marvellous simplicity and hardihood, barely learning to read and write, and in absolute ignorance of society. A year ago iron had been discovered upon their property, and the result had been wealth and misery for father and daughter. The mother, who had some vague fancies of the attractions of the great outside world, was ambitious and restless. Monsieur, who was a mild and accommodating person, could only give way before her stronger will.

"She always had her way with us," said Mademoiselle Esmeralda, scratching nervously upon the paper before her with her pencil, at this part of the relation. "We did not want to leave home, neither me nor father, and father said more than I ever heard him say before at one time. 'Mother,' says he, 'let me an' Esmerald stay at home, an' you go an' enjoy your tower. You've had more schoolin' an' you'll be more at home than we should. You're userd to city ways, havin' lived in 'Lizabthville.' But it only vexed her. People in town had been talking to her about traveling and letting me learn things, and she'd set her mind on it."

She was very simple and unsophisticated. To the memory of her former truly singular life she clung with unshaken fidelity. She recurred to it constantly. The novelty and luxury of her new existence seemed to have no attractions for her. One thing even my Clelie found incomprehensible, while she fancied she understood the rest—she did not appear to be moved to pleasure even by our beloved Paris.

"It is a true *maladie du pays*," Clelie remarked to me. "*And that is not all.*"

Nor was it all. One day the whole truth was told amid a flood of tears.

"I—I was going to be married," cried the poor child. "I was to have been married the week the ore was found. I was—all ready, and mother—mother shut right down on us."

Clelie glanced at me in amazed questioning.

"It is a kind of *argot* which belongs only to Americans," I answered in an undertone. "The alliance was broken off."

"*Ciel !*" exclaimed my Clelie between her small shut teeth. "The woman is a fiend !"

She was wholly absorbed in her study of this unworldly and untaught nature. She was full of sympathy for its trials and tenderness, and for its pain. Even the girl's peculiarities of speech were full of interest to her. She made serious and intelligent efforts to understand them, as if she studied a new language.

"It is not common *argot*," she said. "It has its subtleties. One continually finds somewhere an original idea—sometimes even a *bon mot*, which startles one by its pointedness. As you say, however, it belongs only to the Americans and their remarkable country. A French mind can only arrive at its climaxes through a grave and occasionally tedious research, which would weary most persons, but which, however, does not weary me."

The confidence of Mademoiselle Esmeralda was easily won. She became attached to us both, and particularly to Clelie. When her mother was absent or occupied, she stole upstairs to our apartment and spent with us the moments of leisure chance afforded her. She liked our rooms, she told my wife, because they were small, and our society, because we were "clever," which we discovered afterward meant "amiable." But she was always pale and out of spirits. She would sit before our fire silent and abstracted.

"You must not mind if I don't talk," she would say. "I can't; and it seems to help me to get to sit and think about things. Mother won't let me do it down-stairs."

We became also familiar with the father. One day I met him upon the staircase, and to my amazement he stopped as if he wished to address me. I raised my hat and bade him good-morning. On his part he drew forth a large handkerchief and began to rub the palms of his hands with awkward timidity.

"How-dy?" he said.

I confess that at the moment I was covered with confusion. I who was a teacher of English, and flattered myself that I wrote

and spoke it fluently did not understand. Immediately, however, it flashed across my mind that the word was a species of salutation. (Which I finally discovered to be the case.) I bowed again and thanked him, hazarding the reply that my health was excellent, and an inquiry as to the state of Madame's. He rubbed his hands still more nervously, and answered me in the slow and deliberate manner I had observed at the Louvre.

"Thank ye," he said, "she's doing tolerable well, is mother—as well as common. And she's a-enjoying herself, too. I wish we was all"—

But there he checked himself and glanced hastily about him.

Then he began again:—

"Esmeraldy," he said—"Esmeraldy thinks a heap on you. She takes a sight of comfort out of Mis' Des—I can't cal your name, but I mean your wife."

"Madame Desmarres," I replied, "is replied, 'is rejoiced indeed to have won the friendship of Mademoiselle.'"

"Yes," he proceeded, "she takes a sight of comfort in you ans all. An' she needs comfort, does Esmeraldy."

There ensued a slight pause which somewhat embarrassed me, for at every pause he regarded me with an air of meek and hesitant appeal.

"She's a little down-sperritted, is Esmeraldy," he said. "An'," adding this suddenly and in a subdued and fearful tone, "so am I."

Having said this he seemed to feel that he had overstepped a barrier. He seized the lapel of my coat and held me prisoner, pouring forth his confessions with a faith in my interest by which I was at once amazed and touched.

"You see its this way," he said—"its this way, Mister. We're home folks, me an' Esmeraldy, an' we're a long way from home, an' it-sorter seems like we d'dn't get no user to it than we was at first. We're not like mother. Mother she was raised in town—she was raised in 'Lizabethville—an' she allers took to town ways; but me an' Esmeraldy, we was raised in the mountains, right under the shadder of old Bald, an' town goes hard with us. Seems like we're a-thinkin' of North Callina. An' mother she gets outed, which is likely. She says we'd ought to fit ourselves for our higher spear, an' I desay we'd ought—but you see it goes kinder hard with us. An' Esmeraldy she has her trouble an' I can't help a-sympathizin' with her, fur young folks will be young folks; an' I was young folks once myself. Once—once I sot a heap o' store by mother. So you see how it is."

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"It is very sad, Monsieur," I answered with gravity. Singular as it may appear, this was not so laughable to me as it might seem. It was so apparent that he did not anticipate ridicule. And my Clélie's interest in these people also rendered them sacred in my eyes.

"Yes," he returned, "that's so; an' sometimes its wuss than you'd think when mother's outed. An' that's why I'm glad as Mis' Dimar an' Esmeralda is such friends."

It struck me at this moment that he had some request to make of me. He grasped the lapel of my coat somewhat more tightly, as if requiring additional support, and finally bent forward and addressed me with caution, "Do you think as Mis' Dimar would mind it ef now an' then I was step in for Esmeralda an' set a little—just in a kinder neighborin' way. Esmeralda, she says your so sosherville. And I ha'n't been sosherville with no one fur

—fur a right smart spell. And it seems like I kinder hanker arter it. You've no idea, Mister, how lonesome a man can git when he hankers to be sosherville an' haint no one to be sosherville with. Mother, she says, 'Go out on the Champs Elizy and promenard,' and I've done it; but some ways it don't

reach the spot. I don't seem to get sosherville with no one I've spoke to—may be through us speakin' different languages, an' not comin' to a understandin'.

I've tried it loud an' I've tried it low an' encouragen', but some ways we never seemed to get on. An' ef Mis' Demar wouldn't take no excep-tions at me a-droppin' in, I feel as ef I should

be sorter uplifted—if she'd only allow it once a week or even fewer."

"Monsieur," I replied with warmth, "I beg you will consider our *salon* at your disposal, not once a week but at all times, and Madame Desmarres would certainly join me in the invitation if she were upon the spot."

He released the lapel of my coat and grasped my hand, shaking it with fervor.

"Now, that's clever, that is," he said. "An' it's friendly, an' I'm obligated to ye."

Since he appeared to have nothing further to say we went down-stairs together. At the door we parted.

"I'm a-join'," he remarked, "to the Champs Elizy to promenard. Where are you a-join'?"

"To the Boulevard Haussmann, Monsieur, to give a lesson," I returned. "I will wish you good-morning."

"Good-mornin'," he answered. "*Bong*"—reflecting deeply for a moment—"Bong jore. I'm a tryin' to learn it, you see, with a view to bein' more sosherville. Bong jore." And thus took his departure.

After this we saw him frequently. In fact it became his habit to follow Mademoiselle Esmeralda in all her visits to our apartment. A few minutes after her arrival we usually heard a timid knock upon the outer door, which proved to come from Monsieur, who always entered with a laborious "*Bong jore*," and always slipped deprecatingly into the least comfortable chair near the fire, hurriedly concealing his hat beneath it.

In him also my Clélie became much interested. On my part I could not cease to admire the fine feelings and delicate tact she continually exhibited in her manner toward him. In time he even appeared to lose something of his first embarrassment and discomfort, though he was always inclined to a reverent silence in her presence.

"He don't say much, don't father," said Mademoiselle Esmeralda, with tears in her pretty eyes. "He's like me, but you don't know what comfort he's taking when he sits and listens and stirs his chocolate round and round without drinking it. He doesn't drink it because he aint used to it; but he likes to have it when we do, because he says it makes him feel sosherville. He's trying to learn to drink it too—he practices every day a little at a time. He was powerful afraid at first that you'd take exceptions to him doing nothing but stir it round; but I told him I knew you wouldn't for you wasn't that kind."

"I find him," said Clélie to me, "in-expressibly mournful—even though he excites one to smiles upon all occasions. Is it not mournful that his very suffering should be absurd. *Mon Dieu!* he does not *wear* his clothes—he bears them about with him—he simply *carries* them."

It was about this time that Mademoiselle Esmeralda was rendered doubly unhappy. Since their residence in Paris Madame had been industriously occupied in making efforts to enter society. She had struggled violently and indefinitely. She was at once persistent and ambitious. She had used every means that lay in her power, and, most of all, she had used her money. Naturally, she had found people upon the outskirts of good circles who would accept her with her money. Consequently, she had obtained acquaintances of a class, and was bold enough to employ them as stepping stones. At all events, she began to receive invitations, and to discover opportunities to pay visits, and to take her daughter with her. Accordingly, Mademoiselle Esmeralda was placed upon exhibition. She was dressed by experienced *artistes*. She was forced from seclusion, and obliged to drive, and call, and promenade.

Her condition was pitiable. While all this was torture to her inexperience and timidity,



her fear of her mother, rendered her wholly submissive. Each day brought with it some new trial. She was admired for many reasons—by some for her wealth, of which all had heard rumours; by others, for her freshness and beauty. The silence and sensitiveness which arose from shyness, and her ignorance of all social rules, were called naivete and modesty, and people who had abhorred her mother, not unfrequently were charmed with her, and consequently Madame found her also an instrument of some consequence.

In her determination to overcome all obstacles, Madame even condescended to apply to my wife, whose influence over Mademoiselle she was clever enough not to undervalue.

"I want you to talk to Mademoiselle," she said. "She thinks a great deal of you, and I want you to give her some good advice. You know what society is, and you know that she ought to be proud of her advantages, and not make a fool of herself. Many a girl would be glad enough of what she has before her. She's got money, and she's got chances, and I don't begrudge her anything. She can spend all she likes on clothes and things, and I'll take her anywhere if she'll behave herself. They wear me out—her and her father. It's her father that's ruined her, and her living as she's done. Her father never knew anything, and he's made a pet of her, and got her into his way of thinking. It's ridiculous how little ambition they have, and she might marry as well as any girl. There's a marquis that's quite in love with her at this moment, and she's as afraid of him as death, and cries if I even mention him, though he's a nice enough man, if he is a bit elderly. Now, I want you to reason with her."

This Clelie told me afterward.

"And upon going away," she ended, "she turned round toward me, setting her face into an indescribable expression of hardness and obstinacy. 'I want her to understand,' she said, 'that she's cut off forever from anything that's happened before. There's the Atlantic Ocean and many a mile of land between her and North Carolina, and so she may as well give that up.'"

Two or three days after this Mademoiselle came to our apartment in great grief. She had left Madame in a violent ill-temper. They had received invitations to a ball at which they were to meet a marquis. Madame was elated, and the discovery of Mademoiselle's misery and trepidation had roused her indignation. There had been a painful scene, and Mademoiselle had been overwhelmed as usual.

She knelt before the fire and wept despairingly.

"I'd rather die than go," she said. "I can't stand it. I can't get used to it. The light and the noise, and the talk hurts me, and I don't know what I am doing. And people stare at me, and I make mistakes, and I'm not fit for it—and—I'd rather be dead fifty thousand times than let that man come near me. I hate him, and I'm afraid of him, and I wish I was dead."

At this juncture came the timid summons upon the door, and the father entered with a disturbed and subdued air. He did not conceal his hat, but held it in his hand, and turned it round and round in an agitated manner as he seated himself beside his daughter.

"Esmeraldy," he said, don't you take it so hard, honey. Mother, she's kinder outed, and she's not at herself rightly. Don't you never mind. Mother she messes well, but—but she's got a kinder curious way, showin' it. She's got a high sperrit, an' we'd ought to low for it, and not take it to heart. Mis' Dimar here knows how high-spirited people is sometimes, I dessay—an' mother she's got a powerful high sperrit."

But the poor child only wept more hopelessly. It was not only the cruelty of her mother which oppressed her, it was the wound she bore in her heart.

Clelie's eyes filled with tears as she regarded her.

The father was also more broken in spirit than he wished to appear. His weather-beaten face assumed an expression of deep melancholy which at last betrayed itself in an evidently inadvertent speech.

"I wish—I wish," he faltered. "Lord! I'd give a heap to see Wash now. I'd give a heap to see him, Esmeraldy."

It was as if the words were the last straw. The girl turned toward him and flung herself upon his breast with a passionate cry.

"Oh, father!" she sobbed, "we shan't never see him again—never—never! nor the mountains, nor the people that cared for us. We've lost it all and we can't get it back—and we haven't a soul that's near to us—and we're all alone—you and me, father, and Wash—Wash, he thinks we don't care."

I must confess to a momentary spasm of alarm, her grief was so wild and overwhelming. One hand was flung about her father's neck, and the other pressed itself against her side, as if her heart was breaking.

Clelie bent down and lifted her up, consoling her tenderly.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "do not despair. *Le Bon Dieu* will surely have pity." The father drew forth the large linen handkerchief, and unfolding it slowly, applied it to his eyes.

an go," she said. "I  
t get used to it. The  
and the talk hurts me,  
that I am doing. And  
and I make mistakes,  
—and—and—I'd rather  
d times than let that  
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"Yes, Esmeraldy," he said; "don't let  
us give out—at least don't you give out. It  
doesn't matter fur me, Esmeraldy, because,  
you see, I must hold on to mother, as I  
swore not to go back on; but you're young  
an' likely, Esmeraldy, an' don't you give  
out yet, fur the Lord's sake."

But she did not cease weeping until she  
had wholly fatigued herself, and by this  
time there arrived a message from Madame,  
who required her presence down-stairs. Mon-  
sieur was somewhat alarmed, and rose pre-  
cipitately, but Mademoiselle was too full of  
despair to admit of fear.

"It's only the dressmaker," she said.  
"You can stay where you are, father, and  
she won't guess we've been together," and  
it'll be better for us both."

And accordingly she obeyed the summons  
alone.

Great were the preparations made by  
Madame for the entertainment. My wife,  
to whom she displayed the costumes and  
jewels she had purchased, was aroused to an  
admiration truly feminine.

She had the discretion to trust to the  
taste of the *artistes*, and had restrained them  
in nothing. Consequently, all that was to  
be desired in the appearance of Mademoiselle  
Esmeralda upon the eventful evening was  
happiness. With her mother's permission,  
she came to our room to display herself,  
Monsieur following her with an air of awe  
and admiration commingled. Her costume  
was rich and exquisite, and her beauty be-  
yond criticism; but as she stood in the centre  
of our little *salon* to be looked at, she pre-  
sented an appearance to move one's heart.  
The pretty young face which had by this  
time lost its slight traces of the sun had  
also lost some of its bloom; the slight figure  
was not so round nor so erect as it had been,  
and moved with less of spirit and girlish-  
ness.

It appeared that Monsieur observed this  
also, for he stood apart regarding her with  
evident depression, and occasionally used  
this handkerchief with a violence that was  
evidently meant to conceal some secret  
emotion.

"You're not so peart as you was, Esmeraldy,"  
he remarked, tremulously; "not as peart by a  
right smart, and what with that, and what  
with your fixin's, Wash—I mean the home-  
folks," hastily—"they'd hardly know ya."

He followed her down-stairs mournfully  
when she took her departure, and Clelie and  
myself being left alone interested ourselves  
in various speculations concerning them, as  
was our habit.

"This Monsieur Wash," remarked Clelie,  
"is clearly the lover. Poor child! how pas-  
sionately she regrets him—and thousands of

miles lie between them—thousands of  
miles!"

It was not long after this that, on my way  
down-stairs to make a trifling purchase, I  
met with something approaching an adven-  
ture. It so chanced that, as I descended the  
staircase of the second floor, the door of the  
first floor apartment was thrown open, and  
from it issued Mademoiselle Esmeralda and  
her mother on their way to their waiting car-  
riage. My interest in the appearance of Ma-  
demoiselle in her white robes and sparkling  
jewels so absorbed me that I inadvertently  
brushed against a figure which stood in the  
shadow regarding them also. Turning at  
once to apologize, I found myself confronting  
a young man—tall, powerful, but with a sad  
and haggard face, and attired in a strange  
and homely dress which had a foreign look.

"Monsiuer!" I exclaimed, "a thousand  
pardons. I was so unlucky as not to see  
you."

But he did not seem to hear. He remained  
silent, gazing fixedly at the ladies until they  
had disappeared, and then, on my address-  
ing him again, he awakened, as it were, with  
a start.

"It doesn't matter," he answered, in a  
heavy broken voice and in English, and  
turning back made his way slowly up the  
stairs.

But even the utterance of this brief sen-  
tence had betrayed to my practised ear a pe-  
culiar accent—an accent which, strange to  
say, bore a likeness to that of our friends  
down-stairs, and which caused me to stop a  
moment at the lodge of the *conciierge*, and ask  
her a question or so.

"Have we a new occupant upon the fifth  
floor?" I inquired. "A person who speaks  
English?"

"You must mean the strange young man  
upon the sixth," she said. "He is a new  
one and speaks English. Indeed, he does  
not speak anything else, or even understand  
a word. *Mon Dieu!* the trials one encoun-  
ters with such persons—endeavouring to com-  
prehend, poor creatures, and failing always—  
and this one is worse than the rest and looks  
more wretched—as if he had not a friend in  
the world."

"What is his name?" I asked.

"How can one remember their names?—  
it is worse than impossible. This one is  
frightful. But he has no letters, thank Hea-  
ven. If there should arrive one with an  
impossible name upon it, I should take it to  
him and run the risk."

Naturally Clelie, to whom I related the  
incident was much interested. But it was  
some time before either of us saw the hero of  
it again, though both of us confessed to hav-  
ing been upon the watch for him. The con-

*cierge* could only tell us that he lived a secluded life—rarely leaving his room in the daytime, and seeming to be very poor.

"He does not work and eats next to nothing," she said. "Late at night he occasionally carries up a loaf, and once he treated himself to a cup of *bouillon* from the restaurant at the corner—but it was only once, poor young man. He is at least very gentle and well-conducted.

So it was not to be wondered at that we did not see him. Clelie mentioned him to her young friend, but Mademoiselle's interest in him was only faint and ephemeral. She had not the spirit to rouse herself to any strong emotion.

"I dare say he's an American," she said. "There are plenty of Americans in Paris, but none of them seem a bit nearer to me than if they were French. They are all rich and fine, and they all like the life here better than the life at home. This is the first poor one I have heard of."

Each day brought fresh unhappiness to her. Madame was inexorable. She spent a fortune upon *toilette* for her, and insisted upon dragging her from place to place, and wearying her with gayeties from which her sad young heart shrank. Each afternoon their equipage was to be seen upon the Champs Elysees, and each evening it stood before the door waiting to bear them to some place of festivity.

Mademoiselle's *bete noir*, the marquis, who was a debilitated *roue* in search of a fortune, attached himself to them upon all occasions.

"Bah!" said Clelie with contempt, "she amazes one by her imbecility—this woman. Truly, one would imagine that her vulgar sharpness would teach her that his object is to use her as a tool, and that having gained Mademoiselle's fortune, he will treat them with brutality and derision."

But she did not seem to see—possibly she fancied that having obtained him for a son-in-law, she would be bold and clever enough to outwit and control him. Consequently, he was encouraged and fawned upon, and Mademoiselle grew thin and pale and large-eyed, and wore continually an expression of secret terror.

Only in her visits to our fifth floor did she dare to give way to her grief, and truly at such times both my Clelie and I were greatly affected. Upon one occasion indeed she filled us both with alarm.

"Do you know what I shall do?" she said, stopping suddenly in the midst of her weeping. "I'll bear it as long as I can, and then I'll put an end to it. There's—there's always the Seine left, and I've laid awake and thought of it many a night. Father and me saw a man taken out of it one day, and the

people said he was a Tyrolean, and drowned himself because he was so poor and lonely—and so far from home."

Upon the very morning she made this speech I saw again our friend of the sixth floor. In going down-stairs I came upon him, sitting upon one of the steps as if exhausted, and when he turned his face upward, its pallor and haggardness startled me. His tall form was wasted, his eyes were hollow, the peculiarities I had before observed were doubly marked—he was even emaciated.

"Monsieur," I said in English, "you appear indisposed. You have been ill. Allow me to assist you to your room."

"No, thank you," he answered. "It's only weakness. I—I sorter give out. Don't trouble yourself. I shall get over it directly."

Something in his face, which was a very young and well-looking one, forced me to leave him in silence, merely bowing as I did so. I felt instinctively that to remain would be to give him additional pain.

As I passed the room of the *concierge*, however, the excellent woman beckoned to me to approach her.

"Did you see the young man?" she inquired rather anxiously. "He has shown himself this morning for the first time in three days. There is something wrong. It is my impression that he suffers want—that he is starving himself to death!"

Her rosy countenance absolutely paled as she uttered these last words, retreating a pace from me and touching my arm with her fore-finger.

"He has carried up even less bread than usual during the last few weeks," she added, "and there has been no *bouillon* whatever. A young man cannot live only on dry bread, and too little of that. He will perish; and apart from the inhumanity of the thing, it will be unpleasant for the other *locataires*."

I wasted no time in returning to Clelie, having indeed some hope that I might find the poor fellow still occupying his former position upon the stair-case. But in this I met with disappointment: he was gone, and I could only relate to my wife what I had heard, and trust to her discretion. As I had expected, she was deeply moved.

"It is terrible," she said. "And it is also a delicate and difficult matter to manage. But what can one do? There is only one thing—I who am a woman, and have suffered privation myself, may venture."

Accordingly, she took her departure for the floor above. I heard her light summons upon the door of one of the rooms, but heard no reply. At last, however, the door was opened gently, and with a hesitance that led

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me to imagine that it was Clelie herself who  
had pushed it open, and immediately after-  
ward I was sure that she had uttered an  
alarmed exclamation. I stepped out upon  
the landing and called to her in subdued  
tone—

"Clelie," I said, "did I hear you speak?"

"Yes," she returned from within the  
room. "Come at once, and bring with you  
some brandy."

In the shortest possible time I had joined  
her in the room, which was bare, cold, and  
unfurnished—a mere garret, in fact, contain-  
ing nothing but a miserable bedstead. Upon  
the floor, near the window, knelt Clelie, sup-  
porting with her knee and arm the figure of  
the young man she had come to visit.

"Quick with the brandy," she exclaimed.  
"This may be a faint, but it looks like  
death." She had found the door partially  
open, and receiving no answer to her knock,  
had pushed it farther ajar, and caught a  
glimpse of the fallen figure, and hurried to  
its assistance.

To be as brief as possible, we both remained  
at the young man's side during the whole of  
the night. As the *concierge* had said, he was  
perishing from inanition, and the physician  
we called in assured us that only the most  
constant attention would save his life.

"Monsieur," Clelie explained to him upon  
the first occasion upon which he opened his  
eyes, "you are ill and alone, and we wish to  
befriend you." And he was too weak to  
require from her anything more definite.

Physically he was a person to admire. In  
health his muscular power must have been  
immense. He possessed the frame of a young  
giant, and yet there was in his face a look of  
innocence and inexperience amazing even  
when one recollected his youth.

"It is the look," said Clelie, regarding  
him attentively—"the look one sees in the  
faces of Monsieur and his daughter down-  
stair; the look of a person who has lived a  
simple life, and who knows absolutely  
nothing of the world."

It is possible that this may have prepared  
the reader for the *denouement* which followed;  
but singular as it may appear, it did not  
prepare either Clelie or myself—perhaps  
because we had seen the world, and having  
learned to view it in a practical light, were not  
prepared to encounter suddenly a romance  
almost unparalleled.

The next morning I was compelled to go  
out to give my lessons as usual, and left  
Clelie with our patient. On my return, my  
wife, hearing my footsteps, came out and met  
me upon the landing. She was moved by the  
strongest emotion and much excited; her  
cheeks were pale and her eyes shone.

"Do not go in yet," she said, "I have

something to tell you. It is almost incred-  
ible; but—but it is—the lover!"

For a moment we remained silent—stand-  
ing looking at each other. To me it seemed  
incredible indeed.

"He could not give her up," Clelie went  
on, "until he was sure she wished to discard  
him. The mother had employed all her  
ingenuity to force him to believe that such  
was the case, but he could not rest until  
he had seen his betrothed face to face.  
So he followed her—poor, inexperienced,  
and miserable—and when at last he saw her  
at a distance, the luxury with which she  
was surrounded caused his heart to fail him,  
and he gave way to despair."

I accompanied her into the room, and  
heard the rest from her own lips. He gathered  
together all his small savings, and made his  
journey in the first possible way—in the  
steerage of the vessel, and in third-class  
carriages—so that he might have some trifle  
left to subsist upon.

"I've a little farm," he said, "and there's  
a house on it, but I wouldn't sell that. If  
she cared to go, it was all I had to take her  
to, an' I'd worked hard to buy it. I'd  
worked hard, early and late, always think-  
ing that some day we'd begin life there to-  
gether—Esmeraldy and me."

"Since neither sea, nor land, nor cruelty,  
could separate them," said Clelie to me  
during the day, "it is not I who will help  
to hold them apart."

So when Mademoiselle came for her lesson  
that afternoon, it was Clelie's task to break  
the news to her—to tell her that neither  
sea nor land lay between herself and her  
lover, and that he was faithful still.

She received the information as she might  
have received a blow—staggering backward,  
and whitening, and losing her breath; but  
almost immediately afterward she uttered a  
sad cry of disbelief and anguish.

"No, no," she said, "it—it isn't true! I  
won't believe it—I mustn't. There's half  
the world between us. Oh, don't try to  
make me believe it—when it can't be true!"

"Come with me," replied Clelie.

Never—never in my life has it been my  
fate to see, before or since, a sight so touch-  
ing as the meeting of these two young  
hearts. When the door of the cold, bare  
room opened, and Mademoiselle Esmeralda  
entered, the lover held out his weak arms  
with a sob—a sob of rapture, and yet terrible  
to hear.

"I thought you'd gone back on me,  
Esmeraldy," he cried. "I thought you'd  
gone back me."

Clelie and I turned away and left them as  
the girl fell upon his knees at his side.

The effect produced upon the father—who

had followed Mademoiselle as usual, and whom we found patiently seated upon the bottom step of the flight of stairs, awaiting our arrival—was almost indescribable.

He sank back upon his seat with a gasp, clutching at his hat with both hands. He also disbelieved.

"Wash!" he exclaimed weakly. "Lord, no! Lord, no! Not Wash! Wash, he's in North Callina. Lord, no!"

"He is up-stairs," returned Clelie, "and Mademoiselle is with him."

During the recovery of Monsieur Wash, though but little was said upon the subject, it is my opinion that the minds of each of our number pointed only toward one course in the future.

In Mademoiselle's dememeanour there appeared a certain air of new courage and determination, though she was still pallid and anxious. It was as if she had passed a climax and had gained strength. Monsieur, the father, was alternatively and dejected, or in feverishly high spirits. Occasionally he sat for some time without speaking, merely gazing into the fire with a hand upon each knee; and it was one evening, after a more than usually prolonged silence of this description, that he finally took upon himself the burden which lay upon us unitedly.

"Esmeraldy," he remarked, tremulously, and with manifest trepidation—"Esmeraldy, I've been thinkin'—it's time—we broke it to mother."

The girl lost colour, but she lifted her head steadily.

"Yes, father," she answered, "it's time."

"Yes," he echoed, rubbing his knees slowly, "it's time; an', Esmeraldy, it's a thing to—to sorter the man back."

"Yes, father," she answered again.

"Yes," as before, his voice broke somewhat; "an' I dessay you know how it'll be, Esmeraldy—that you'll have to choose betwixt mother and Wash."

She sat by her lover, and for answer she dropped her face upon his hand with a sob.

"An'—an' you've chose Wash, Esmeraldy?"

"Yes, father."

He hesitated a moment, and then took his hat from its place of concealment and rose.

"It's natural," he said, "an' it's right. I wouldn't want it no other way. An' you mustn't mind, Esmeraldy, it's bein' kinder rough on me, as can't go back on mother, havin' swore to cherish her till death do us part. You've allus been a good gal to me, an' we've thought a heap on each other, an' I reckon it can allers be the same way, even though though we're seprated, fur it's natural you should have chose Wash, an'—an' I wouldn't have it any other way,

Esmeraldy. Now I'll go an' have it out with mother."

We were all sufficiently unprepared for the announcement to be startled by it. Mademoiselle Esmeralda, who was weeping bitterly, half sprang to her feet.

"To-night!" she said. "Oh, father!"

"Yes," he replied; "I've been thinking over it, an' I don't see no other way, an' it may as well be to-night as any other time."

After leaving us he was absent for about an hour. When he returned, there were traces in his appearance of the storm through which he had passed. His hands trembled with agitation; he even looked weakened as he sank into his chair. We regarded him with commiseration.

"It's over," he half whispered, "an' it was even rougher than I thought it would be. She was terribly outed, was mother. I reckon I never see her so outed before. She jest raged and tore. It was more than I could stand, Esmeraldy," and he dropped his head upon his hands for support. "Seemed like it was the Markis as laid heaviest upon her," he proceeded. "She was terrible sot on the Markis, an' every time she think of him, she'd just rear—she'd just rear. I never stood up agen mother afore, an' I hope I shan't never have it to do again in my time. I'm kinder wore out."

Little by little we learned much of what had passed, though he evidently withheld the most for the sake of Mademoiselle, and it was some time before he broke the news to her that her mother's doors were closed against her. "I think you'll find it pleasant a-stoppin' here," he said, "if Mis' Dimra'll board ye until—the time fur startin' home. Her speerit was so up that she said she didn't aim to see you no more, an' you know how she is Esmeraldy, when her speerit's up."

The girl went and clung around his neck, kneeling at his side, and shedding tears.

"Oh, father!" she cried, "you've bore a great deal for me; you've bore more than any one knows, and all for me."

He looked rather grave, as he shook his head at the fire.

"That's so Esmeraldy," he replied; but we allers seemed so nigh to each other, somehow, and when it come to the wust, I was bound to kinder make a stand fur you, as I couldn't have made for myself. I couldn't have done it fur myself. Lord, no!"

So Mademoiselle remained with us, and Clelie assisted her to prepare her simple outfit, and in the evening the tall young lover came into our apartment and sat looking on, which aspect of affairs, I will confess, was entirely new to Clelie, and yet did not displease her.

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pelled. It is the love of the lost Arcadia—  
serious and innocent."

Finally, we went with them one morning  
to the American Chapel in the Rue de Berri,  
and they were united in our presence and  
that of Monsieur, who was indescribably  
affected.

"It's papers as I've drawd up fur Esme-  
raldy," he said. It'll start you well out in  
the world, an' after me and mother's gone,  
there's no one but you and her to have the  
rest. The Lord—may the Lord bless ye!"

We accompanied them to Havre, and  
did not leave them until the last mo-  
ment. Monsieur was strangely excited,  
and clung to the hands of his daughter and  
son-in-law, talking fast and nervously,  
and pouring out messages to be delivered to  
his distant friends.

"Tell 'em I'd like powerful well to see  
'em all, an' I'd have come only—only things  
was kinder onconvenient. Sometime, per-  
haps"—

But here he was obliged to clear his throat,  
and his voice had become extremely husky.  
And, having done this, he added in an  
undertone:—

"You see, Esmeraldy, I couldn't, because  
of mother, as I've swore not to go back  
on. Wash, he wouldn't go back on you,  
however high your sperrit was, an' I cau't  
go back on mother."

The figures of the young couple standing  
at the side, Monsieur Wash holding his wife  
to his breast with one strong arm, were  
the last we saw as the ship moved slowly  
away.

"It is obscurity to which they are return-  
ing," I said, half unconsciously.

"It is love," said Clelie.

The father, who had been standing apart,  
came back to us, replacing in his pocket his  
handkerchief.

"They are young an' likely, you see," said  
Monsieur, "an' life before them, an' it's  
nat'ral as she should have chose Wash, as  
was young too, an' sot on her. Lord, it's  
nat'ral, an' I wouldn't have it no other-  
ways."

## MERE GIRAUD'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.

"Prut!" said Annot, her sabots clattering  
loudly on the brick floor as she moved more  
rapidly in her wrath. "Prut! Madame  
Giraud, indeed! There was a time, and it  
was but two years ago, that she was 'but  
plain Mere Giraud, and no better than the  
rest of us; and it seems to me, neighbours,  
that it is not well to show pride because one  
has the luck to be favoured by fortune.  
Where, forsooth, would our 'Madame' Giraud  
stand if luck had not given her a daughter  
pretty enough to win a rich husband?"

"True, indeed!" echoed two of the gos-  
sips who were her admiring listeners. "True,  
beyond doubt. Where, indeed?"

But the third, a comely, fresh-skinned  
matron, who leaned against the door, and  
knitted a stout grey stocking with fast-  
clashing needles, did not acquiesce so  
readily.

"Well, well, neighbours," she said, "for  
my part I do not see so much to complain of.  
Mere Giraud—she is still Mere Giraud to me  
—is as honest and kindly a soul as ever. It  
is not she who has called herself Madame  
Giraud; it is others who are foolish enough  
to fancy that good luck must change one's  
old ways. If she had had the wish to be a  
grand personage, would she not have left our  
village before this and have joined Madame  
Legrand in Paris. On the contrary, how-  
ever, she remains in her cottage, and is as  
good neighbour as ever, even though she is  
fond of talking of the carriages and jewels  
of Madame Legrand and her establishment  
on the Boulevard Malesherbes. In fact, I  
ask you, who of us would not rejoice also to  
be the mother of a daughter whose fortune  
had been so good?"

"That also is true," commented the ami-



able couple, nodding their white capped heads with a sagacious air. "True, without doubt."

But Annot replied with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders:—

"Wait until Madame Giraud is invited to visit the Boulevard Malesherbes," she said. "We have not heard that this has happened yet."

"She would not go if she were, at least not to remain. Her heart has grown to the old place she bore her children in, and she has herself said to me most sensibly:—'Laure is young, and will learn easily the ways of the great world; I am old, and cannot; I am better at home among my neighbours.' Doubtless, however, in course of time she will pry Madame Legrand a visit at her home in Paris, or at the chateau which Monsieur Legrand of course possesses, as the rich and aristocratic always do."

"Doubtless!" said Annot, grimly; "doubtless."

Honest Jeanne Tallot passed the sneer by, and went on with stout gravity of demeanour:—

"There is only one thing for which I somewhat blamed Mere Giraud, and that is that I think she has scarcely done her duty toward Valentin. He disappointed her by being an ugly lad instead of a pretty girl, and she had not patience with him. Laure was the favourite. Whatever Laure did was right, and it was not so with the other, though I myself know that Valentin was a good lad, and tender-hearted."

"Once," put in a white cap, "I saw her beat him severely because he fell with the little girl in his arms and scratched her cheek, and it was not his fault. His foot slipped upon a stone. He was carrying the child carefully and tenderly enough. You are right in calling him a good lad, neighbour Tallot. He was a good lad—Valentin Giraud—and fond of his mother, notwithstanding that she was not fond of him."

"Yes," added her companion; "but it is truth that he was a great contrast to the girl. *Mon Dieu!* his long limbs and awkward body, his great sad eyes and ugly face! While Laure—was she not tall and slender and white, like a lily in a garden? And her voice was like the ringing of silver, and her eyes so soft and large. As an infant she reminded one of the little Jesus as one sees him in the churches. No wonder that Mere Giraud fretted at the difference between the two. And Valentin was her first, and what mother does not look for great things in her first? We cannot help feeling that something must come of one's own charms if one has any, and Mere Giraud was a handsome bride. An ugly bantling seems

to offer one a sort of insult, particularly at first, when one is young and vain."

"There was no more beautiful young girl than Laure Giraud at sixteen," said Jeanne Tallot.

"And none more useless," said Annot loudly. "Give me a young girl who is industrious and honest. My Margot is better provided for than Laure Giraud was before her marriage; but her hands are not white, nor is her waist but a span around. She has too much work to do. She is not a tall, white, swaying creature, who is too good to churn and tend the creatures who give her food. I have heard it said that Laure would have worked if her mother had permitted it, but I don't believe it. She had not a working look. Mademoiselle Laure was too good for the labour of humble people; she must go to Paris and learn a fine, delicate trade."

"But good came of it," put in Jeanne Tallot. "It proved all the better for her."

"Let her mother thank the Virgin, then," cried Annot, contemptuously. "It might not have proved the better; it might have proved the worse; evil might have come of it instead of good. Who among us has not heard of such things? Did not Marie Gautier go to Paris, too?"

"Ah, poor little one, indeed!" sighed the white caps.

"And in two years," added Annot, "her mother died of a broken heart."

"But," said cheerful Jeanne, somewhat drily, "Laure's mother is not dead yet. so let us congratulate ourselves that to go to Paris has brought luck to one of our number at least, and let us deal charitably with Mere Giraud, who certainly means well, and is only naturally proud of her daughter's grandeur. For my part, I can afford to rejoice with her."

She rolled up her stout stocking into a ball, and stuck her needles through it, nodding at the three women.

"I promised I would drop in and spend a few minutes with her this morning," she said; "so I will bid you good-day," and she stepped across the threshold and trudged off in the sunshine, her wooden shoes sounding bravely on the path.

It was only a little place—St. Croix, as we shall call it for want of a better name—a little village of one street, and of many vines and roses, and orchards, and of much gossip. Simple people, inhabited it—simple, ignorant folk, who knew one another, and discussed one another's faults and grape-crops with equal frankness, worked hard, lived frugally, confessed regularly, and slept well. Devout people, and ignorant, who believed that the little shrines they erected in their vineyards brought bless-

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ings upon their grapes, and who knew nothing of the great world beyond, and spoke of Paris with awe, and even a shade of doubt. Living the same lives generation after generation, tilling the same crops, and praying before the same stone altar in the small, quaint church, it is not to be wondered at that when a change occurred to any one of their number it was regarded as a sort of social era. There were those in St. Croix who had known Mere Girard's grandfather, a slow-spoken, kindly old peasant, who had drunk his *vin ordinaire*, and smoked his pipe with the poorest; and there was not one who did not well know Mere Girard herself, and who had not watched the growth of the little Laure, who had bloomed into a beauty not unlike the beauty of the white Provence roses which combined over and around her mother's cottage door. "Mere Girard's little daughter," she had been called, even after she grew into the wonderfully tall and wonderfully fair creature she became before she left the village, accompanying her brother Valentine to Paris.

"*Ma foi!*" said the men, "but she is truly a beauty, Mere Girard's little daughter!"

"She should be well looked to," said the wisacres--"Mere Girard's little daughter."

"There is one we must always give way before," said the best-natured among the girls, "and that one is Mere Girard's little daughter."

The old cure of the parish took interest in her, and gave her lessons, and, as Mere Girard would have held her strictly to them, even if she had not been tractable and studious by nature, she was better educated and more gently trained than her companions. The fact was, however, that she had not many companions. Some element in her grace and beauty seemed to separate her from the rest of her class. Village sports and festivities had little attraction for her, and, upon the whole, she seemed out of place among them. Her stature, her fair, still face, and her slow, quiet movements, suggested rather embarrassingly to the humble feasters the presence of some young princess far above them.

"*Pouf!*" said a sharp-tongued belle one day, "I have no patience with her. She is so tall, this Laure, that one must be forever looking up at her, and I, for one, do not care to be forever looking up."

The hint of refined pride in her demeanor was Mere Girard's greatest glory.

"She is not like the rest, my Laure," she would say to her son, "One can see it in the way in which she holds her head. She has the quiet, grave air of a great personage."

There were many who wondered

that Valentin showed no jealousy or distaste at hearing his sister's praises sounded so frequently to his own detriment. There was no praise for him. The poor, fond mother's heart was too full of Laure. Her son had been a bitter disappointment to her, and, to her mind, was fitted for nothing but to make himself an adoring slave to his sister's beauty; and this, the gentle, generous fellow certainly was. He was always ready to serve her; always affectionate, always faithful; and Mere Girard, who was blind to, or careless of all his loving, constant labour for her own comfort, deigned to see that he did his duty toward Laure.

"He has at least the sense to appreciate her as far as he is able," she said.

So when Valentin, who had a talent for engraving, was discovered by some one who understood his genius, and could make use of it, and was offered a place in the great, gay city, Mere Girard formed an ambitious plan. He should take Laure and rid her a position also; she had the fingers of a fair magician, and could embroider marvelously. So she trusted Laure to him, and the two bade farewell to St. Croix and departed together. A month passed, and then there came a letter containing good news. Valentin was doing well, and Laure also. She had found a place in a great family where she was to embroider and wait upon a young lady. They were rich people, and were kind, and paid her well, and she was happy.

"When they first saw her, they were astonished," wrote the simple, tender Valentin. "I went with her to present herself. My employer had recommended her. There is a son who is past his youth, and who has evidently seen the world. He is aristocratic and fair, and slightly bald, but extremely handsome still. He sat holding a newspaper in his long, white fingers, and when we entered, he raised his eyes above it and looked at Laure, and I heard him exclaim under his breath, '*Mon Dieu!*' as if her beauty fairly startled him."

When the cure, to whom the proud mother showed the letter, read this part, he did not seem as rejoiced as Mere Girard had expected. On the contrary, he looked a little grave, and rubbed his forehead.

"Ah, ah!" he said; "there lies the danger."

"Danger!" exclaimed Mere Girard, starting.

He turned, and regarded her with a rather hesitant air, as if he were at once puzzled and fearful--puzzled by her simplicity, and fearful of grieving her unnecessarily.

"Valentin is a good lad," he said. "Valentin will be watchful—though perhaps he is too good to suspect evil."

Mere Giraud put her hand to her heart.

"You are not afraid?" she said, quite proudly, beginning at last to comprehend. "You are not afraid of evil to Laure?"

"No, no, no," he answered; "surely not."

Hessid no more then, but he always asked to see the letters, and read them with great care, sometimes over and over again. They came very regularly for six or seven months, and then there was a gap of a few weeks, and then came a strange, almost incomprehensible letter from Valentin, containing news which almost caused Mere Giraud's heart to burst with joy and gratitude. Laure was married, and had made such a marriage as could scarcely have been dreamed of. A rich aristocrat, who had visited her employers, had fallen in love with her, and married her. He had no family to restrain him, and her beauty had won him completely from the first hour. He had carried her away with him to make a prolonged tour. The family with whom she had lived had been lavish in their gifts and kindness, but they had left Paris also and were voyaging. The name of Laure's bridegroom was Legrand, and there came messages from Laure, and inclosed was a handsome present of money.

Mere Giraud was overwhelmed with joy. Before three hours had passed, all St. Croix knew the marvellous news. She went from house to house showing the letter and the money, and it was not until night that she cooled down sufficiently to labour through a long epistle to Valentin.

It was a year before Laure returned to Paris, and during that time he wrote but seldom; but Valentin wrote often, and answered all his mother's questions, though not as fluently, nor with so many words as she often wished. Laure was rich, and beautiful as ever; her husband adored her, and showered gifts and luxuries upon her; she had equipages and jewels; she wore velvet and satin and lace every day; she was a great lady, and had a house like a palace. Laure herself did not say so much. In her secret heart, Mere Giraud often longed for more, but she was a discreet and far-seeing woman.

"What would you?" she said. "She must drive out in her equipage, and she must dress and receive great people, and I am not so blind a mother as not to see that she will have many things to learn. She has not time to write long letters—and see how she cares for me—money, see you, by every

letter, and a silk dress and lace cap she herself has chosen in the Boulevard Capucines. And I must care for myself, and furnish the cottage prettily, and keep a servant. Her wealth and great fortune have not rendered her undutiful—my Laure."

So she talked of Madame Legrand, and so all St. Croix talked of Madame Legrand, and some, of course, were envious and prophesied that the end had not come yet, and Mere Giraud would find herself forgotten some fine day; and others rejoiced with her, and congratulated themselves that they knew so aristocratic a person as Madame Legrand.

Jeanne Tallot was of those who sympathized with her in all warm-heartedness and candour. With her knitting in her hand ready for action, and with friendly unceremoniousness, she presented herself at the cottage door one morning, nodding and speaking before she had crossed the threshold.

"Good-day, neighbour Giraud. Any letters from Laure this morning?"

Mere Giraud, who sat before the window under the swinging cage of her bird, looked up with an air a little more serious than usual.

"Ah!" she said, "I am glad it is you, Jeanne. I have been wishing to see you."

Jeanne seated herself, smiling.

"Then," said she, "it is well I came."

But immediately she noticed the absent look of her friend, and commented upon it.

"You do not look, at your best this morning," she said. "How does it occur?"

"I am thinking," said Mere Giraud with some importance of manner—"I am thinking of going to Paris."

"To Paris!"

"I am anxious," shaking her head seriously. "I had last night a bad dream. I wish to see Laure."

Then she turned and looked at Jeanne almost wistfully.

"It is a long time since I have seen her," she said.

"Yes," answered Jeanne in a little doubt; "but Paris is a long way off."

"Yes," said Mere Giraud; "but it appears that all at once I realize how long it is since I have seen my child. I am getting old, you see. I was not very young when she was born, and, as one grows older, one becomes more uneasy and obstinate in one's fancies. This morning I feel that I must see my Laure. My heart yearns for her, and"—hastily—"she will undoubtedly be rejoiced to see me. She has often said that she wished she might lay her head upon my breast again."

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It seemed that she was resolved upon the journey. She was in a singular, uneasy mood, and restless beyond measure. She who had never been twenty miles from St. Croix had made up her mind to leave it at once and confront all the terrors of a journey to Paris—for there were terrors in such a journey to the mind of a simple peasant who had so far travelled but in one groove. She would not even wait to consult *Monsieur le Cure*, who was unfortunately absent. Jeanne discovered to her astonishment that she had already made her small preparations, had packed her best garments in a little wooden box, laying the silk gown and lace cap at the top that they might be in readiness.

"I will not interfere at all, and I shall not remain long," she said. "Only long enough to see my Laure, and spend a few days with her quietly. It is not Paris I care for, or the great sights; it is that I must see my child."

St. Croix was fairly bewildered at the news it heard the next day. Mere Giraud had gone to Paris to visit Madame Legrand—had actually gone, sending her little servant home, and shutting up her small, trim cottage.

"Let us hope that Madame Legrand will receive her as she expects to be received," said Annot. "For my part I should have preferred to remain in St. Croix. Only yesterday Jeanne Tallot told us that she had no intention of going."

"She will see wonderful things," said the more simple and amiable. "It is possible that she may be invited to the Tuileries, and without doubt she will drive to the Bois de Boulogne in Madame Legrand's carriage, with servants in livery to attend her. My uncle's sister's son, who is a *valet de place* in great family, tells us that the aristocracy give up and down the Champs Elysees every afternoon, and the sight is magnificent."

But Mere Giraud did not look forward to such splendours as these. "I shall see my Laure as a great lady," she said to herself. I shall hold her white hands and kiss her cheeks."

The roar of vehicles, and the rush and crowd and bustle bewildered her; the bright lights and the rolling wheels dazzled her old eyes, but she held herself bravely. People whom she spoke smiled at her *patois* and her innocent questions, but she did not care.

She found a *fiacre* which took her to her destination; and when, after she had paid the driver, he left her, she entered the wide doors with a beating heart, the blood rising to her cheek, and glowing through the tanned skin.

"Madame Legrand," she said a little proudly to the *concierger*, and the woman stared at her as she led her up the staircase. She was so eager that she scarcely saw the beauty around her—the thick, soft carpets, the carved balustrades, the superb lamps. But when they stopped before a door she touched the *concierger* upon the arm.

"Do not say my name," she said. "I am her mother."

The woman stared at her more than ever. "It is not my place to announce you," she said. "I only came up because I thought you would not find the way."

She could not have told why it was or how it happened, but when at last she was ushered into the *salon* a strange sense of oppression fell upon her. The room was long and lofty, and so shadowed by the heavy curtains falling across the windows that it was almost dark.

For a few seconds she saw nobody, and then all at once some one rose from a reclining chair at the farther end of the apartment and advanced a few steps toward her—a tall and stately figure, moving slowly.

"Who?"—she heard a cold, soft voice say, and then came a sharp cry, and Laure's white hands were thrown out in a strange, desperate gesture, and she stopped and stood like a statue of stone. "Mother—mother—mother!" she repeated again and again, as if some indescribable pain shook her.

If she had been beautiful before, now she was more beautiful still. She was even taller—she was like a queen. Her long robe was of delicate gray velvet, and her hair and throat and wrists were bound with pearls and gold. She was so lovely and so stately that for a moment Mere Giraud was half awed, but the next it was as if her strong mother heart broke loose.

"My Laure!" she cried out. "Yes, it is I, my child—it is I, Laure;" and she almost fell upon her knees as she embraced her, trembling for very ecstasy.

But Laure scarcely spoke. She was white and cold, and at last she gasped forth three words.

"Where is Valentin?"

But Mere Giraud did not know. It was not Valentin she cared to see. Valentin could wait, since she had her Laure. She sat down beside her in one of the velvet chairs, and she held the fair hand in her own. It was covered with jewels, but she did not notice them; her affection only told her that it was cold and tremulous.

"You are not well, Laure," she said. "It was well that my dream warned me to come. Something is wrong."

"I am quite well," said Laure. "I do not suffer at all."

She was so silent that if Mere Giraud had not had so much to say she would have been troubled; as it was, however, she was content to pour forth her affectionate speeches one after another without waiting to be answered.

"Where is Monsieur Legrand?" she ventured at last.

"He is," said Laure, in a hesitant voice—"he is in Normandy."

"Shall I not see him?" asked Mere Giraud.

"I am afraid not, unless your visit is a long one. He will be absent for some months."

She did not speak with any warmth. It was as if she did not care to speak of him at all—~~as if the mention of him even embittered her a little.~~

Mere Giraud felt a secret misgiving.

"I shall not stay long," she said; "but I could not remain away. I wished so eagerly to see you, and know that you were happy. You are happy, my Laure?"

Laure turned toward her and gave her a long look—a look which seemed unconscious-ly to ask her a question.

"Happy!" she answered slowly and deliberately, "I suppose so. Yes."

Mere Giraud caressed her again and again.

"Yes," she said, "it must be so. The good are always happy; and you, my Laure, have always been dutiful and virtuous, and consequently you are rewarded. You have never caused me a grief, and now, thank the good God, you are prosperous." She looked at her almost adoringly, and at last touched the soft thick grey velvet of her drapery with reverence. "Do you wear such things as this every day?" she asked.

"Yes," Laure answered, "every day."

"Ah!" sighed the happy mother. "How Monsieur Legrand must adore you!"

At length she found time to ask a few questions concerning Valentin.

"I know that he is well and as prosperous as one could expect him to be; but I hope"—bridling a little with great seriousness—"I hope he conducts himself in such a manner as to cause you no embarrassment, though naturally you do not see him often."

"No," was the answer—they did not see him often.

"Well, well," began Mere Giraud, becoming lenient in her great happiness, "he is not a bad lad—Valentin. He means well."

But here she stopped—Laure checked her with a swift, impassioned movement.

"He is what we cannot understand," she said in a hushed, strained voice. "He is a saint. He has no thought for himself. His whole life is a sacrifice. It is not I you should adore—it is Valentin."

"Valentin!" echoed Mere Giraud.

It quite bewildered her, the mere thought of adoring Valentin.

"My child," she said, when she recovered herself, "it is your good heart which says this."

The same night Valentin came. Laure went out into the ante-chamber to meet him, and each stood and looked at the other with pale face and anguished eyes. Valentin's eyes were hollow and sunken as if with some great sorrow, and his large awkward frame seemed wasted. But there was no reproach mingled with the indescribable sadness of his gaze.

"Your note came to me," he said. "Our mother—"

"She is in there," said Laure in a low, hurried, shaken voice, and she pointed to the *salon*. "She has come to embrace me—to make sure that I am happy. Ah, my God!" and she covered her deathly face with her hands.

Valentin did not approach her. He could only stand still and look on. One thought filled his mind.

"We have no time to weep, Laure," he said gently. "We must go on as we have begun. Give me your hand."

This was all, and then the two went in together, Laure's hand upon her brother's arm.

It was a marvellous life Mere Giraud lived during the next few days. Certainly she could not complain that she was not treated with deference and affection. She wore the silk dress every day; she sat at the wonderful table, and a liveried servant stood behind her chair; she drove here and there in a luxurious carriage; she herself, in fact, lived the life of an aristocrat and a great lady. Better than all the rest, she found her Laure as gracious and dutiful as her fond heart could have wished. She spent every hour with her; she showed her all her grandeur of jewellery and *toilette*; she was not ashamed of her mother, untutored and simple as she might be.

"Only she is very pale and quiet," she remarked to Valentine once; "even paler and more quiet than I should have expected. But then we know that the rich and aristocratic are always somewhat reserved. It is only the peasantry and provincials who are talkative and florid. It is natural that Laure should have gained the manner of the great world."

But her happiness, poor soul, did not last long, and yet the blow God sent was a kindly one.

One morning as they went out to their carriage Laure stopped to speak to a woman who crouched upon the edge of the pave-

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ment with a child in her arms. She bent  
down and touched the little one with her  
hand, and Mere Giraud, looking on, thought  
of pictures she had seen of the Blessed  
Virgin, and of lovely saints healing the  
sick.

"What is the matter?" asked Laure.

The woman looked down at the child and  
shivered.

"I do not know," she answered hoarsely.  
"Only we are ill, and God has forsaken us.  
We have not tasted food for two days."

Laure took something from her purse and  
laid it silently in the child's small, fevered  
hand. The woman burst into tears.

"Madame," she said, "it is a twenty-  
franc piece."

"Yes," said Laure gently. "When it is  
spent come to me again," and she went to  
her carriage.

"My child," said Mere Giraud, "it is you  
who are a saint. The good God did wisely  
in showering blessings upon you."

A few days longer she was happy, and  
then she awakened from her sleep one night,  
and found Laure standing at her bedside  
looking down at her and shuddering. She  
started up with an exclamation of terror.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she said. "What is it?"

She was answered in a voice she had never  
heard before—Laure's, but hoarse and  
shaken. Laure had fallen upon her knees,  
and grasped the bedclothes, hiding her face  
in the folds.

"I am ill," she answered in this strange,  
changed tone. "I am—I am cold and  
burning—I am—dying."

In an instant Mere Giraud stood upon the  
floor holding her already insensible form in  
her arms. She was obliged to lay  
her upon the floor while she rang  
the bell to alarm the servants. She sent  
for Valentin and a doctor. The doctor, ar-  
riving, regarded the beautiful face with man-  
ifest surprise and alarm. It was no longer  
pale, but darkly flushed, and the stamp of  
terrible pain was upon it.

"She has been exposed to infection," he  
said. "This is surely the case. It is a malig-  
nant fever."

The Mere Giraud thought of her poor mother  
and child.

"O my God!" she prayed, "do not let her  
die a martyr."

But the next day there was not a servant  
left in the house; but Valentin was there,  
and there had come a Sister of Mercy.  
When she came, Valentin met her, and led  
her into the *salon*. They remained together  
for half an hour, and then came out and  
went to the sick-room, and there were traces  
of tears upon the Sister's face. She was a  
patient, tender creature, who did her work

well, and she listened with untiring gentle-  
ness to Mere Giraud's passionate plaints.

"So beautiful, so young, so beloved," cried  
the poor mother; "and Monsieur absent at  
Normandy, though it is impossible to say  
where! And if death should come before his  
return, who could confront him with the  
truth? So beautiful, so happy, so adored!"

And Laure lay upon the bed, sometimes  
a dreadful statue of stone—unhearing, un-  
seeing, unmoving—death without death's  
rest—life in death's bonds of iron.

But while Mere Giraud wept, Valentin had  
no tears. He was faithful, untiring, but sil-  
ent even at the worst.

"One would think he had no heart," said  
Mere Giraud; "but men are often so—ready  
to work, but cold and dumb. Ah! it is only  
a mother who bears the deepest grief."

She fought passionately for a hope at first,  
but it was forced from her grasp in the end.  
Death had entered the house and spoken to  
her in the changed voice which had sum-  
moned her from sleep.

"Madame," said the doctor one evening as  
they stood over the bed while the sun went  
down, "I have done all that is possible.  
She will not see the sun set again. She may  
not see it rise."

Mere Giraud fell upon her knees beside  
the bed, crossing herself and weeping.

"She will die," she said, "a blessed mar-  
tyr. She will die the death of a saint."

That very night—only a few hours later—  
there came to them a friend—one they had  
not for one moment hoped to see—a gentle,  
grave old man, in a thin, well-worn black  
robe—the *Cure* of St. Croix.

His Valentin met also, and when the two  
saw each other, there were barriers that fell  
away in their first interchange of looks.

"My son," said the old man, holding out  
his hands, "tell me the truth."

The Valentin fell into a chair and hid his  
face.

"She is dying," he said, "and I cannot  
ask that she should live."

"What was my life?"—he cried passion-  
ately, speaking again—"what was my life to  
me that I should not have given it to save  
her—to save her to her beauty and honour,  
and her mother's love! I would have given  
it cheerfully—a thousand times—a thousand  
times again and again. But it was not to be;  
and, in spite of my prayers, I lost her. O  
my God!" with a sigh of agony. "If to-night  
she were in St. Croix and I could hear the  
neighbours call her again as they used,  
"Mere Giraud's little daughter!"

The eyes of the *cure* had tears in them  
also.

"Yesterday I returned to St. Croix and  
found your mother absent," he said. "I



have had terrible fears for months, and when I found her house closed, they caused me to set out upon my journey at once."

He did not ask any questions. He remembered too well the man of whom Valentin had written; the son who was "past his youth, and had evidently seen the world," the pale aristocrat, who had exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu!*" at the sight of Laure's wondrous beauty.

"When the worst came to the worst," said Valentin, "I vowed myself to the labour of sparing our mother. I have worked early and late to sustain myself in the part I played. It was not for Laure the money came. My God! Do you think I would have permitted my mother's hand to have touched a gift of hers? She wrote the letters, but the money I had earned honestly. Heaven will justify me for my falsehood since I have suffered so much."

"Yes," responded the *Cure*, looking at his bent form with gentle, pitying eyes, "Heaven will justify you, my son."

They watched by Laure until the morning, but she did not see them; she saw nothing; to-night it was the statue of marble which lay before them. But in the early morning, when the sky was dappled with pink and gold, and the air was fresh and cool, and a silence, even more complete than that of the

night, seemed to reign, there came a change. The eyes they had been closed for many so many hours were opened, and the soft voice broke in upon the perfect stillness of the room:—

"The lilies in the garden are in bloom to-day. They were never so tall, and white, and fair before. I will gather them—for the altar—to give to the Virgin—at my confession. *Mea culpa—Mea*"—and all was over, and Mere Giraud fell upon her knees again, crying, as she had cried before, amid a passion of sobs and tears:—

"She died, my child, the death of a blessed martyr."

It was rather strange, the villagers said, that Madame Legrand should have been buried in the little graveyard at St. Croix instead of in some fine tomb at *Pere la Chaise*; but—it was terribly sad!—her husband was away, they knew not where, and it was Valentin's wish, and Mere Giraud's heart yearned so over her beloved one. So she was laid there, and a marble cross was placed at her head—a tall, beautiful cross—by Monsieur Legrand, of course. Only it was singular that he never came, though perhaps that is the way of the great—not to mourn long or deeply even for those who have been most lovely, and whom they have most tenderly loved.

## LODUSKY.

They were rather an incongruous element amid the festivities, but they bore themselves very well, notwithstanding, and seemed to be sufficiently interested. The elder of the two—a tall, slender, middle-aged woman, with a somewhat severe, though delicate face—sat quietly apart, looking on at the rough dances and games with a keen relish of their primitive uncouthness; but the younger, a slight, alert creature, moved here and there, her large, changeable eyes looking laud through their glow of excitement.

"Thet gal thar," drawled a tall mountaineer who supported himself against the chimney and spat with placid regularity into the fire. "They tell me thet gal thar hes writ things as hes been in print. They say she's powerful smart—arns her livin' by it. T'least thet's what Jake Harney says, 'n' they's a-boardin' at Harney's. The old

woman's some of her kin, 'n' goes 'long with her when she travels 'round."

There was one fiddler at work sawing industriously at one tune which did good service throughout the entertainment; there was a little furious and erratic reel-dancing, and much loud laughter, and good-natured, even if somewhat personal, jest. The room was one of two which formed the house; the walls were of log; the lights the cheery yellow flare of great pine-knots flung one after the other upon the embers.

"I am glad I thought of North Carolina," Rebecca Noble said to herself. "There is a strong hint of Rembrandt in this—the bright yellow light, the uncouth figures. Ah! who is that?"

A short time after, she made her way through the crowd to her relative's corner among the shadows. She looked eager and

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excited, and spoke in a quick, breathless fashion.

"I want to show you something, if you have not already seen it," she said. "There is in this room, Aunt Miriam, the most wonderful creature your eyes ever rested on! You must prepare yourself to be startled. Look towards the door—at that tall girl standing with her hands behind her."

She was attired in a calico of flaunting pattern, and leaning against the log wall in an indifferent attitude, regarding the company from under the heavy lashes of her eyes, which had a stillness in them which was yet not repose. There was something even secretive in her expression, as if she watched them furtively for reasons of her own. At her side stood a big, discontented-looking young man, who confronted aggressively two or three other young men equally big, if not equally discontented, who seemed to be arguing some point with him and endeavouring to engage the attention of his companion. The girl, however, simply responded to their appeals with an occasional smile, ambiguous, if not scornful.

"How I wish I could hear them!" exclaimed Miss Noble.

It was her habit to utilize any material she chanced to find, and she had really made her summer jaunt to North Carolina in search of material, but she was not thinking of utilizing this girl, as she managed to keep near her during the remainder of the evening. She had merely found something to be keenly interested in, her interest in any human novelty being, on occasion, intense. In this case her interest increased instead of diminished. She found the girl comporting herself in her natural position as belle, with a calm which was slightly suggestive of "the noble savage." Each admirer seemed to be treated with indifference alike, though there were some who, for reasons best known to themselves, evidently felt that they stood more securely than the rest. She moved through game and dance with a slow yet free grace; she spoke seldom, and in a low, bell-like monotone, containing no hint of any possible emotional development, and for the rest, her shadow of a disdainful smile seemed to stand her in good stead. Clearly as she stood out from among her companions from the first, at the close of the evening she assumed a position actually dramatic.

The big young mountaineer, who, despite his discontent, was a very handsome fellow indeed, had held his own against his rivals stubbornly during the evening, but when, after the final dance, he went in search of his charge, he found that he was not first.

She had fallen into her old attitude against

the wall, her hands behind her, and was listening to the appeal of a brawny youth with a hunting-knife in his belt.

"Dusk," he was saying, "I'm not such a chicken-hearted chap as to let a gal go back on me. Ye sed I mout hev yer comp'ny home, 'n I'm a-gwine to hev it, Dave Humes or no Dave Humes.

Dusk merely smiled tolerantly.

"Are ye?" she said.

Rebecca Noble, who stood within a few feet of them, was sure that the lover who approached was the Dave Humes in question, he advanced with such an angry stride, and laying his hand on his rival's shoulder, turned him aside so cavalierly.

"No he aint," he put in; "not an' me about. I brought ye, an' I'll take ye home, Lodusky, or me and him 'll settle it."

The other advanced a step, looking a trifle pale and dishevelled. He placed himself square in front of Lodusky.

"Dusk Dunbar," he said, "you're the one to settle it. Which on us is a-gwine home with ye—me or him! You haint promised the two of us, hev ye?"

There was certainly a suddenly lit spark of exultation in the girl's coolly dropped eyes.

"Settle it betwixt ye," she answered with her exasperating half smile again.

They had attracted attention by this time, and were becoming the centre figures of a group of lookers-on.

The first had evidently lost his temper. She was the one who should settle it, he proclaimed loudly again. She had promised one man her "comp'ny" and had come with another.

There was so much fierce anger in his face that Miss Noble drew a little nearer, and felt her own blood warmed.

"Which on us is it to be?" he cried.

There was a quick, strong movement on the part of the young man Dave, and he was whirled aside for a second time.

"It's to be me," he was answered. "I'm the man to settle that—I don't leave it to no gal to settle."

In two seconds the lookers-on fell back in dismay, and there was a cry of terror from the women. Two lithe, long-limbed figures were struggling fiercely together, and there was a flash of knives in the air.

Rebecca Noble sprang forward.

"They will kill each other, she said.

"Stop them!"

That they would have done each other deadly injury seemed more than probable, but there were cool heads and hands as strong as their own in the room, and in a few minutes they had been dragged apart and stood, each held back by the arms, staring at

each other and panting. The lank peace-maker in blue jeans who held Dave Humes shook him gently and with amiable toleration of his folly.

"Look 'ere, boys," he said, "this yere's all a pack of foolishness, ye know—all a pack of foolishness. There aint no sense in it—its's jest foolishness."

Rebecca cast a quick glance at the girl Lodusky. She leaned against the wall just as she had done before; she was as cool as ever, though the spark which hinted at exultation still shone steadily in her eye.

When the two ladies reached the log-cabin at which they had taken up their abode, they found that the story of the event of the evening was before them. Their hostess, whose habit it was to present herself with erratic talk or information at all hours, met them with hospitable eagerness.

"Waal now," she began, "just to think o' them thar fool boys a-lettin' into one another in that thar way. I never hearn tell o' sich foolishness. Young folks is so foolish. 'N' they drord knives?" This is in the tone of suggestive query.

"Yes," answered Miss Noble, "they drew knives."

"They did!" benignly. "Lord! What fools! Waal now, an' Dusk—what did Dusk do?"

"She stood by and looked on," was the reply.

"Lord!" with the inimitable mountain drawl; "ye don't say so! But it's jest like her—that is. She's so cur'us, Dusk is. Thar aint no gettin' at her. Ye know the gals sees as she's allers doin' first one quare thing 'n' then another to get the boys mad at each other. But Lor', p'raps 'tain't so! Dusk's powerful good-lookin', and gals is jealous, ye know."

"Do you think," questioned Miss Noble, "that they really would have killed each other?"

"Lord! yaas," placidly. "They went to do it. Both Dan'l and Dave's kinder fiery, 'n' they'd nuther on 'em hev give in with Dusk a-lookin' on—they'd hav cut themselves to pieces fust. Young folks is so foolish; gettin' mad about a gal! Lord knows gals is plenty enough."

"Not girls like this one," said Miss Noble, laughing a little.

"Waal now, she is good-lookin', aint she? But she's cur'us, Dusk is—she's a cur'us creature."

"Curious!" echoed Rebecca, finding the term vague even while suggestive.

"Yaas," she said, expansively, "she's cur'us; kinder onsosherble 'n' notionate. Now Dusk is—cur'us. She's so still and sot, 'n' Nath Dunbar and Mandy they think a heap on

her, 'n' they do the best they kin by her, but she don't never seem to keer about 'em no way. Fur all she's so still, she's powerful sot on fine dressin' an' rich folkses ways. Nath he once tuk her to Asheville, 'n' seems like she's kinder never got over it, but keeps a-broodin' 'bout the way they done thar, 'n' how their clothes looked, 'n' all that. She knows she's handsome, 'n' she likes to see other folks knows it, though she never says much. I hed to laugh at my Hamp once; Hamp he aint no fool, an' he'd been tuk with her a spell like the rest o' the boys, but he got chock full of her, 'n' one day we was a-talkin', 'n' the old man he says, 'Waal now, that gal's a hard wad. She's cur'us, 'n' thar's no two ways about it.' An' Hamp he gives a bit of a laugh kinder mad, 'n' he ses, 'Yes, she's cur'us—cur'us as—I' May be he felt kinder roughed up about her yet—but I hed to laugh."

The next morning Miss Noble devoted to letter-writing. In one of her letters, a bright one, of a tone rather warmer than the rest, she gave her correspondent a very forcible description of the entertainment of the evening before and its closing scene.

"I think it will interest him," she said half aloud, as she wrote upon the envelope the first part of the address, 'Mr. Paul Lennox.'

A shadow falling across the sunshine in the door-way checked her and made her look up.

It had rather an arousing effect upon her to find herself confronting the young woman, Lodusky, who stood upon the threshold, regarding her with an air entirely composed, slightly mingled with interest.

"I was in at Mis' Harney's," she remarked, as if the explanation was upon the whole rather superfluous, "'n' I thought I'd come in 'n' see ye."

During her sojourn of three weeks Rebecca had learned enough of the laws of mountain society to understand that the occasion only demanded of her friendliness of demeanor and perfect freedom from ceremony. She rose and placed a chair for her guest.

"I am glad to see you," she said.

Lodusky seated herself.

It was entirely unnecessary to attempt to set her at ease; her composure was perfect. The flaunting-patterned calico must have been a matter of full dress. It had been replaced by a blue-and-white-checked homespun gown—a coarse cotton garment short and scant. Her feet were bare, and their bareness was only a revelation of greater beauty, so perfect was their arched slenderness. Miss Dunbar crossed them with unembarrassed freedom, and looked at the stranger as if she found her worth steady inspection.

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"Thet thar's a purty dress you're a-  
wearin'," she vouchsafed at length.

Rebecca glanced down at her costume.  
Being a sensible young person, she had at-  
tired herself in apparel suitable for moun-  
tain rambling. Her dress was simple pil-  
grim gray, taut made and trim; but she  
never lost an air of distinction which ren-  
dered abundant adornments a secondary  
matter.

"It is very plain," she answered. "I be-  
lieve its chief object is to be as little in the  
way as possible."

"Taint much trimmed," responded the  
girl, "but it looks kinder nice, 'n' it sets  
well. Ye come from the city, Mis' Harney  
says."

"From New York," said Rebecca. She  
felt sure that she saw in the tawny brown  
depths of the girl's eyes a kind of secret ea-  
gerness, and this expressed itself openly in  
her reply.

"I don't blame no one for wantin' to live  
in a city," she said, with a kind of discon-  
tent. "A body might as soon be dead as  
live in this way."

Rebecca gave her a keen glance. "Don't  
you like the quiet?" she asked. "What is  
it you don't like?"

"I don't like nothin' about it," scornfully.  
"There's nothin' here."

Very slowly a lurking, half-hidden smile  
showed itself about her fine mouth.

"I'm not goin' to stay here allers," she  
said.

"You want to go away?" said Rebecca.  
She nodded.

"I am goin'," she answered, "some o'  
these days."

"Where?" asked Rebecca, a little coldly,  
recognizing as she did a repellant element in  
the girl.

The reply was succinct enough:—

"I don't know whar, 'n' I don't keer whar  
—but I'm goin'."

She turned her eyes toward the great wall  
of forest-covered mountain, lifting its height  
before the open door, and the blood showed  
its deep glow upon her cheek.

"Some o' these days," she added; "as  
shore as I'm a woman."

When they talked the matter over after-  
wards, Miss Thorne's remarks were at once  
decided and severe.

"Shall I tell you what my opinion is,  
Rebecca?" she said. "My opinion is that  
there is evil enough in the creature to be the  
ruin of the whole community. She is bad at  
the core."

"I would rather believe," said Rebecca,  
musingly, "that she was only inordinately  
vain." Almost instantaneously her musing  
was broken by a light laugh. "She has

dressed her hair as I dress mine," she said,  
"only it was done better. I could not have  
arranged it so well. She saw it last night  
and was quick enough to take the style at a  
glance."

At the beginning of the next week there  
occurred an event which changed materially  
the ordinary routine of life in the cabin.  
Heretofore the two sojourners among  
the mountain fastnesses had walked  
and climbed under the escort of a small,  
tow-headed Harney. But one evening as  
she sat sketching on her favourite flat seat of  
rock, Miss Noble somewhat alarmed this  
youth by dropping her paper and starting to  
her feet.

"Orlander" Harney sat and stared at her  
with black eyes and opened mouth. The red  
came and went under her fair skin, and she  
breathed quickly.

"Oh," she cried softly, "how could I be  
mistaken!"

That she was not mistaken became evident  
immediately. At the very moment she spoke,  
the advancing horseman, whose appearance  
had so roused her, glanced upward along the  
path and caught sight of her figure. He  
lifted his hat in gay greeting and struck his  
horse lightly with his whip. Rebecca bent  
down and picked up her portfolio.

"You may go home," she said quietly to  
the boy. "I shall be there soon; and you  
may tell Miss Thorne that Mr. Lennox has  
come." She was at the base of the rock  
when the stranger drew rein. "How is this?"  
she asked with bright uplifted eyes. "We  
did not think!"

It occurred to Lennox that he had never  
recognized her peculiar charm so fully as he  
did at this moment. Rebecca Noble, though  
not a beauty, possessed a subtle grace of look  
and air which was not easily resisted—and  
just now, as she held out her hand, the clear  
sweetness of her face shadowed by her  
piquantly plain hat of rough straw, he felt  
the influence of this element more strongly  
than ever before.

"There was no reason why I should  
not come," he said, since you did not forbid  
me."

At sunset they returned to the cabin.  
Lennox led his rather sorry-looking animal  
by the bridle, and trusting to its meekness of  
aspect, devoted his attention to his com-  
panion.

"Thet's Nath Dunbar's critter," com-  
mented "Mis'" Harney, standing at the  
door. "They've powerful poor 'commoda-  
tions fur boardin', but I reckon Nath must a  
tuck him in."

"Then," said Rebecca, learning that this  
was the case, "then you have seen  
Lodusky."



But he had not seen Lodusky, it seemed. She had not been at home when he arrived, and he had only remained in the house long enough to make necessary arrangements before leaving it to go in search of his friends.

The bare, rough-walled room was very cheery that night. Lennox brought with him the gossip of the great world, to which he gave an air of freshness and spice that rendered it very acceptable to the temporary hermits. Outside, the moon shone with a light as clear as day, though softer, and the tender night breezes stirred the pine-tops and nestled among the laurels; inside, by the beautiful barbarous light of the flaring pine-knots on the hearth, two talkers, at least, found the hours fly swiftly.

When these two had each other good-night it was only natural that they should reach the point toward which they had been veering for twelve months.

Miss Thorne remained in the room, drawing nearer the fire with an amiable little shiver, well excused by the mountain coolness, but Rebecca was beguiled into stepping out into the moonlight. The brightness of the moon and the blackness of the shadows cast by trees, and rocks, and undergrowth, seemed somehow to heighten the effect of the intense and utter stillness reigning around them—even the occasional distant cry of some wandering wild creature marked, rather than broke in upon, the silence. Rebecca's glance about her was half nervous.

"It is very beautiful," she said, "and it moves one strongly; but I am not sure that it is not, in some of one's moods, just a little oppressive."

It is possible Lennox did not hear her. He was looking down at her with eager eyes. Suddenly he had caught her hand to his lips and kissed it.

"You know why I am here, Rebecca," he said. "Surely all my hoping is not in vain?"

She looked pale and a little startled; but she lifted her face and did not draw herself away.

"Is it?" he asked again. "Have I come on a hopeless errand?"

"No," she answered. "You have not."

His words came freely enough then and with fire. When Rebecca re-entered the cabin her large eyes shone in her small, sweet face, and her lips wore a charming curve.

Miss Thorne turned in her chair to look at her and was betrayed into a smile.

"Mr. Lennox has gone, of course," she said. "Yes."

Then, after a brief silence, in which Rebecca pushed the pine-knots with her foot, the elder lady spoke again.

"Don't you think you may as well tell me about it, Beck, my child?" she said.

Beck looked down and shook her head with very charming gravity.

"Why should I?" she asked. "When—when you know."

Lennox rode his mildly disposed but violently gaited steed homeward in that reposeful state of bliss known only to accepted lovers. He had plucked his flower at last; he was no longer one of the many; he was ecstasically content. Uncertainty had no charm for him, and he was by no means the first discoverer of the subtle fineness her admirers found so difficult to describe in Miss Noble. Granted that she was not a beauty, judged rigidly, still he had found in her soft, clear eye, in her colour, in her charming voice, even in her little gestures, something which reached him as an artist, and touched him as a man.

"One cannot exactly account for other women's pining before her," he said to himself; but they did lose significance. And then he laughed tenderly. At this moment, it was true, every other thing on earth paled and lost significance.

That the family of his host had retired made itself evident to him when he dismounted at the house. To the silence of the night was added the silence of slumber. No one was to be seen; a small cow, rendered lean by active climbing in search of sustenance, breathed peacefully near the tumble-down fence; the ubiquitous, long-legged, yellow dog, rendered trustful by long seclusion, aroused himself from his nap to greet the arrival with a series of heavy raps upon the rickety porch-floor with a solid but languid tail. Lennox stepped over him in reaching for the gourd hanging upon the post, and he did not consider it incumbent upon himself to rise.

In a little hollow at the road-side was the spring from which the household supplies of water were obtained. Finding none in the wooden bucket, Lennox took the gourd with the intention of going down to the hollow to quench his thirst.

"We've powerful good water," his host had said in the afternoon, "'n' it's nigh the house, too. I built the house yer a-purpose, —on 'count of its bein' nigh."

He was unconsciously dwelling upon this statement as he walked, and trying to recall correctly the mountain drawl and twang.

"She," he said (there was only one "she" for him to-night)—"she will be sure to catch it and reproduce it in all its shades to the life."

He was only a few feet from the spring itself and he stopped with a sharp exclamation of the most uncontrollable amazement.

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stopped and stared straight before him. It was a pretty, dell-like place, darkly shadowed on one side but bathed in the flooding moonlight on the other, and it was something he saw in this flood of moonlight which almost caused him to doubt for the moment the evidence of his senses.

How it was possible for him to believe that there really could stand in such a spot a girl attired in black velvet of stagy cut and trimmings, he could not comprehend; but a few feet from him there certainly stood such a girl, who bent her lithe, round shape over the spring, gazing into its depths with all the eagerness of an insatiable vanity.

"I can't see nothin'," he heard her say impatiently. "I can't see nothin' nohow."

Despite the beauty, his first glance could not help showing him she was a figure so incongruous and inconsistent as to be almost bizarre. When she stood upright revealing fully her tall figure in its shabby finery, he felt something like resentment. He made a restive movement which she heard. The bit of broken looking-glass she held in her hand fell into the water, she uttered a shamefaced, angry cry.

"What d'ye want?" she exclaimed. "What are ye a-doin'? I didn't know as no one was a-lookin'. I"—

Her head was flung backward, her full throat looked like a pillar of marble against the black edge of her dress, her air was fierce. He would not have been an artist if he had not been powerfully struck with a sense of her picturesqueness.

But he did not smile at all as he answered—

"I board at the house there. I returned home late and was thirsty. I came here for water to drink."

Her temper died down as suddenly as it had flamed, and she seemed given up to a miserable, shamed trepidation.

"Oh," she said, "don't ye tell 'em—don't—I—I'm E. ask Dunbar."

Then, as was very natural, he became curious and possibly did smile—a very little.

"What in the name of all that is fantastic are you doing?"

She made an effort at being defiant and succeeded pretty well.

"I wasn't doin' no harm," she said. "I was—dressin' up a bit. It aint nobody's business."

"That's true," he answered coolly. "At all events it is not mine—though it is rather late for a lady to be alone at such a place. However, if you have no objection, I will get what I came for and go back."

She said nothing when he stepped down and filled the gourd, but she regarded him

with a sort of irritable watchfulness as he drank.

"Are ye—are ye a goin' to tell?" she faltered, when he had finished.

"No," he answered as coolly as before. "Why should I?"

Then he gave her a long look from head to foot. The dress was a poor enough velveteen and had a cast-off air, but it clung to her figure finely, and its sleeves were picturesque with puffs at the shoulder and slashings of white—indeed the moonlight made her all black and white; her eyes, which were tawny brown by day, were black as velvet now under the straight lines of her brows, and her face was pure dead fairness itself.

When, his look ended, his eyes met hers, she drew back with an impatient movement.

"Ye looks as if—as if ye thought I didn't got it honest," she exclaimed petulantly, "but I did."

That drew his glance toward her dress again, for of course she referred to that, and he could not help asking her a point-blank question.

"Where did you get it?" he said.

There was a slow flippancy about the manner of her reply which annoyed him by its variance with her beauty—but the beauty! How the moonlight and the black and white brought it out as she leaned against the rock, looking at him from under her lashes!

"Are ye going to tell the folks up at the house?" she demanded. "They don't know nothin' and I don't want 'em to know."

He shrugged his shoulders negatively. She laughed with a hint of cool slyness and triumph.

"I got it at Asheville," she said. "I went with father when they was a show thar, 'n' the women stayed at the same tavern we was at, 'n' one of 'em tuk up with me 'n' I done somethin' for her—carried a letter or two," breaking into a sly, triumphant laugh again, "'n' she giv' me the dress fur pay. What d'ye think of it? Is it becomin'?"

The suddenness of the change of manner with which she said these last words was indescribable. She stood upright, her head up, her hands fallen at her sides, her eyes cool and straight—her whole presence confronting him with the power of which she was conscious.

"Is it?" she repeated.

He was a gentleman from instinct and from training, having ordinarily quite a lofty repugnance for all profanity and brusqueness, and yet somehow—account for it as you will—he had the next instant answered her with positive brutality.

"Yes," he answered, "Damnably!"

When the words were spoken and he heard their sound fall upon the soft night air, he



was as keenly disgusted as he would have been if he had heard them uttered by another man. It was not until afterward when he had had leisure to think the matter over that he comprehended vaguely the force which had moved him.

But his companion received them without discomfiture. Indeed, it really occurred to him at the moment there was a possibility that she would have been less pleased with an expression more choice.

"I come down here to-night," she said, "because I never get no chance to do nothin' up at the house. I'm not a-goin' to let them know. Never mind why, but we mustn't tell 'em."

He felt haughtily anxious to get back to his proper position.

"Why should I?" he said again. "It is no concern of mine."

Then for the first time he noticed the manner in which she striven to dress her hair in the style of her model, Rebecca Noble, and this irritated him unendurably. He waved his hand toward it with a gesture of distaste.

"Don't do that again," he said. "That is not becoming at least"—though he was angrily conscious that it was.

She bent over the spring with a hint of alarm in her expression.

"Aint it?" she said, and the eager rapidity with which she lifted her hands and began to alter it almost drew a smile from him, despite his mood.

"I done it like hern," she began, and stopped suddenly to look at him. "You know her," she added; "they're at Harney's. Father said ye'd went to see her jest as soon as ye got here."

"I know her," was his short reply.

He picked up the drinking-gourd and turned away.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night."

At the top of the rocky incline he looked back at her.

She was kneeling upon the brink of the spring, her sleeve pushed up to her shoulder, her hand and arm in the water, dipping for the fragment of looking-glass.

It was really not wholly inconsistent that he should not directly describe the interview in his next meeting with his betrothed. Indeed, Rebecca was rather struck by the coolness with which he treated the subject when he explained that he had seen the girl and found her beauty all it had been painted.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that she did not quite please you?"

"Are you sure," he returned, "that she quite pleases you?"

Rebecca gave a moment to reflection.

"But ner beauty"—she began, when it was over.

"Oh!" he interposed, "as a matter of colour and curve and proportion she is perfect; one must admit that, however reluctantly."

Rebecca laughed.

"Why 'reluctantly'?" she said.

It was his turn to give a moment to reflection. His face shadowed, and he looked a little disturbed.

"I don't know," he replied at length; "I give it up."

He had expected to see a great deal of the girl, but somehow he saw her oftener than he had anticipated. During the time he spent in the house, chance seemed to throw her continually in his path or under his eye. From his window he saw her carrying water from the spring, driving the small agile cow to and from the mountain pasturage, or idling in the shade. Upon the whole it was oftener this last than any other occupation. With her neglected knitting in her hands she would sit for hours under a certain low-spreading cedar not far from the door, barefooted, coarsely clad, beautiful—every tinge of the sun, every indifferent leisurely movement, a new suggestion of a new grace.

It would have been impossible to resist the temptation to watch her; and this Lennox did at first almost unconsciously. Then he did more. One beautiful still morning she stood under the cedar, her hand thrown lightly above her head to catch at a bough, and as she remained motionless, he made a sketch of her. When it was finished he was seized with the whimsical impulse to go out and show it to her.

She took it with an uncomprehending air, but the moment she saw what it was a flush of triumphant joy lighted up her face.

"It's me," she cried in a low, eager voice.

"Me!" Do I look like that? Do I?

"You look as that would look if it had colour, and was more complete."

She glanced up at him sharply.

"D'ye mean if it was handsomer?"

He was tempted into adding to her excitement with a compliment.

"Yes," he said, "very much handsomer than I could ever hope to make it."

A slow, deep red rose to her face.

"Give it to me!" she demanded.

"If you will stand in the same position until I have drawn another—certainly," he returned.

He was fully convinced that when she repeated the attitude there would be added to it a look of consciousness.

When she settled into position and caught at the bough again, he watched in some dis-

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It is possible that Rebecca Noble had  
never been so happy during her whole life as  
she was during this one summer. Her en-  
joyment of every wild beauty and novelty  
was immeasurably keen. Just at this time  
to be shut out, and to be as it were high above  
the world, added zest to her pleasure.

"Ah," she said once to her lover, "happi-  
ness is better here—one can taste it slowly."

Fatigue seemed impossible to her. With  
Lennox as her companion she performed  
miracles in the way of walking and climbing,  
and exploring the mountain fastnesses for  
miles around. Her step grew firm and elastic,  
her colour richer, her laugh had a buoyant  
ring. She had never been so nearly a beautiful  
woman as she was sometimes when she came  
back to the cottage after a ramble, bright  
and sun-flushed, her hands full of laurel and  
vines.

"Your gown of 'hadden-gray' is wonder-  
fully becoming, Beck," Lennox said again  
and again with a secret exulting pride in her.

Their plans for the future took tone from  
their blissful, unconventional life. They  
could not settle down till they had seen the  
world. They would go here and there, and  
perhaps, if they found it pleasanter so, not  
settle down at all. There were certain clay-  
white, closely built villages, whose tumble-  
down houses jostled each other upon divers  
precipitous cliffs on the way-side between  
Florence and Rome, towards which Lennox's  
compass seemed always to point. He rather  
argued that the fact of their not being dilated  
upon in the guide-books rendered them ad-  
ditionally interesting. Rebecca had her  
fancies too, and together they managed to  
talk a good deal of tender, romantic nonsense,  
which was purely their own business, and  
gave the summer days a delicate yet distinct  
flavour.

The evening after the sketch was made  
they spent upon the mountain side together.  
When they stopped to rest, Lennox flung  
himself upon the ground at Rebecca's feet,  
and lay looking up at the far away blue of  
the sky in which a slow-flying bird circled  
lazily. Rebecca, with a cluster of pink and  
white laurel in her hand, proceeded with a  
metaphysical and poetical harangue she had  
previously begun.

"To my eyes," she said, "it has a pathetic  
air of loneliness—pathetic and yet not  
exactly sorrowful. It knows nothing but its  
own pure, brave, silent life. It is only  
pathetic to a worldling—worldlings like us.  
How fallen we must be to find a life desolate  
because it has only nature for a companion!"

She stopped with an idle laugh, waiting

for an ironical reply from the "worldling"  
at her feet; but he remained silent, still  
looking upward at the clear, deep blue.

As she glanced toward him she saw some-  
thing lying upon the grass between them,  
and bent to pick it up. It was the sketch  
which he had forgotten and which had  
slipped from the portfolio.

"You have dropped something," she said,  
and seeing what it was, uttered an exclaima-  
tion of pleasure.

He came back to earth with a start, and,  
recognizing the sketch, looked more than  
half irritated.

"Oh, it is that, is it?" he said.

"It is perfect!" she exclaimed. "What  
a picture it will make!"

"It is not to be a picture," he answered.

"It was not intended to be anything more  
than a sketch."

"But why not?" she asked. "It is too  
good to lose. You never had such a model  
in your life before."

"No," he answered grudgingly.

The hand with which Rebecca held the  
sketch dropped. She turned her attention  
to her lover, and a speculative interest grew  
in her face.

"That girl"—she said slowly, after a  
mental summing up occupying a few seconds  
—"that girl irritates you—irritates you."

He laughed faintly.

"I believe she does," he replied; "yes,  
'irritates' is the word to use."

And yet if this were true, his first act  
upon returning home was a singular one.

He was rather late, but the girl Lodusky  
was sitting in the moonlight at the door. He  
stopped and spoke to her.

"If I should wish to paint you," he said  
rather coldly, "would you do me the favour  
of sitting to me?"

She did not answer him at once, but  
seemed to weigh his words as she looked  
out across the moonlight.

"Ye mean, will I let ye put me in a  
pictur?" she said at last.

He nodded.

"Yes," she answered.

"I reckon he told you he was a-paintin'  
Dusk's pictur," "Miss" Harney said to her  
boarders a week later.

"Mr. Lennox?" returned Rebecca; "yes,  
he told us."

"I thort so," nodding benignly. "Waal  
now, Dusk'll make a powerful nice pictur if  
she don't git contrairy. She's as like old  
Hance Dunbar as she kin be. I mean in  
some ways. Lord knows 'twouldn't do to  
say she was like him in everythin'."

Naturally, Miss Noble made some inquir-  
ies into the nature of old Hance Dunbar's  
"contrairiness." Secretly, she had a desire

to account for Lodusky according to established theory.

"I wonder ye haint heern of him," said "Mis'" Harney. "He was just awful—old Hance! He was Nath's daddy, an' Lord! the wickedest feller! Folks was afeared of him. No one darsn't to go a-nigh him when he'd git mad—a-riddin' 'n' a-rearin' 'n' a-chargin'. 'N' he never got no religion, mind ye; he died jest that a-way. He was allers a-hankerin' arter seein' the world, 'n' he went off and stayed a right smart while—nine or ten year—an' he lived in all sorts o' ways in them big cities. When he come back he was a sight to see, sick, an' pore, an' holler-eyed but as wicked as ever. Dusk was a little thing ah' he was a old man, but he'd laugh an' tell her to take care of her face an' be a smart gal. He was drefful sick at last an' suffered a heap, an' one day he got up offen his bed an' tuk down Nath's gun an' shot hisself as cool as could be. He hadn't no patience, an' he said, 'When a G—darned man had lived through what he had an' then wouldn't die, it was time to call him.' Seems like it sorter 'counts for Dusk; she don't git her cu'rnness from her own folks; Nath an' Mandy's mighty clever, both on 'em."

"Perhaps it does 'count for Dusk," Rebecca said, after telling the tale to Lennox. "It must be a fearful thing to have such blood in one's veins and feel it on fire. Let us," she continued with a smile, "be as charitable as possible."

When the picture was fairly under way Lennox's visits to the Harney's cabin were somewhat less frequent. The mood in which she found he had gradually begun to regard his work aroused in Rebecca a faint wonder. He seemed hardly to like it, and yet to be fascinated by it. He was averse to speaking freely of it, and yet he thought of it continually. Frequently when they were together he wore an absent, perturbed air.

"You do not look content," she said to him once.

He passed his hand quickly across his forehead and smiled, plainly with an effort, but he made no reply.

The picture progressed rather slowly upon the whole. Rebecca had thought the subject a little fantastic at first, and yet had been attracted by it. A girl in a peculiar dress of black and white bent over a spring with an impatient air, trying in vain to get a glimpse of her beauty in the reflection of the moonlight.

"It's our spring, shore," commenced "Mis'" Dunbar. "N' it's Dusk—but Lord! how fine she's fixed. Ye're as fine as ye want to be in the picter, Dusk, if ye wa'n't never fine afore. Don't ye wish ye had sich dressin' as that thar now?"

The sittings were at the outset peculiarly silent. There was no untimely motion or change of expression, and yet a trying passiveness. The girl gave any position a look of unconsciousness quite wonderful. Privately, Lennox was convinced that she was an actress from habit—that her ease was the result of life-long practice. Sometimes he found his own consciousness of her steady gaze almost unbearable. He always turned to meet her deep eyes fixed upon him with an expression he could not fathom. Frequently he thought it an expression of dislike—of secret resentment—of subtle defiance. There came at last a time when he knew that he turned toward her again and again because he felt that he must—because he had a feverish wish to see if the look had changed.

Once when he did this he saw that it had changed. She had moved a little, her eyes were dilated with a fire which startled him beyond self-control, her colour came and went, she breathed fast. The next moment she sprang from her chair.

"I won't stand it no longer," she cried, panting; "no longer—I won't!"

Her ire was magnificent. She flung her head back, and struck her side with her clenched hand.

"No longer!" she said; "not a minute!"

Lennox advanced one step and stood, palette in hand, gazing at her.

"What have I done?" he asked. "What?"

"What?" she echoed with contemptuous scorn. "Nothin'!" But *d'ye ye think I don't know ye?"*

"Know me!" he repeated after her mechanically, finding it impossible to remove his glance from her.

"What d'ye take me fur?" she demanded.

"A fool?" Yes, I was a fool—a fool to come here, 'n' set 'n' let ye—let ye despise me!" in a final outburst.

Still he could only echo her again, and say "Despise you!"

Her voice lowered itself into an actual fierceness of tone.

"Ye've done it from first to last," she said.

"Would ye look at her as ye look at me? Would ye turn half way 'n' look at her, 'n' then turn back as if—as if—Aint there?"—her eyes ablaze—"aint there no life to me?"

"Stop!" he began hoarsely.

"I'm beneath her, am I?" she persisted.

Me beneath another woman—Dusk Dunbar! It's the first time!"

She walked toward the door as if to leave him, but suddenly she stopped. A passionate tremor shook her; he saw her throat swell. She threw her arm up against the logs of the wall and dropped her face upon it sobbing tumultuously.

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There was a pause of perhaps three seconds. Then Lennox moved slowly toward her. Almost unconsciously he laid his hand upon her heaving shoulder and so stood trembling a little.

When Rebecca paid her next visit to the picture it struck her that it appeared at a standstill. As she looked at it her lover saw a vague trouble growing slowly in her eyes.

"What!" he remarked. "It does not please you?"

"I think," she answered— "I feel as if it had not pleased you."

He fell back a few paces and stood scanning it with an impression at once hard and curious.

"Please me!" he exclaimed in a voice almost strident. "It should. She has beauty enough."

On her return home that day Rebecca drew forth from the recesses of her trunk her neglected writing folio and a store of paper.

Miss Thorne, entering the room, found her kneeling over her trunk, and spoke to her.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

Rebecca smiled faintly.

"What I ought to have begun before," she said. "I am behindhand with my work."

She laid the folio and her inkstand upon the table, and made certain methodical arrangements for her labour. She worked diligently all day, and looked slightly pale and wearied when she rose from her seat in the evening. Until eleven o'clock she sat at the open door, sometimes talking quietly, sometimes silent and listening to the wind among the pines. She did not mention her lover's name, as he did not come. She spent many a day and night in the same manner after this. For the present the long, idle rambles and unconventional moon-lit talks were over. It was tacitly understood between herself and her aunt that Lennox's labour occupied him.

"It seems a strange time to begin a picture—during a summer holiday," said Miss Thorne a little sharply upon one occasion.

Rebecca laughed with an air of cheer.

"No time is a strange time to an artist," he answered. "Art is a mistress who gives no holidays."

She was continually her bright, erect, alert self. The woman who loved her dearly and had known her from her earliest childhood, found her sagacity and knowledge set at naught as it were. She had been accustomed to see her niece admired far beyond the usual lot of women; she had gradually

learned to feel it only natural that she should inspire quite a strong sentiment even in casual acquaintances. She had felt the delicate power of her fascination herself, but never at her best and brightest had she found her more charming or quicker of wit and fancy than she was now.

Even Lennox, coming every few days with a horn-out look and touched with a haggard shadow, made no outward change in her.

"She does not look," said the elder lady to herself, "like a neglected woman." And then the sound of the phrase struck her with a sharp incredulous pain. "A neglected woman!" she repeated—"Beck!" She did not understand, and was not weak enough to ask questions.

Lennox came and went, and Rebecca gained upon her work until she could no longer say she was behindhand. The readers of her letters and sketches found them fresh and sparkling, "as if," wrote a friend, "you were braced both mentally and physically by the mountain air."

But once in the middle of the night Miss Thorne awakened with a mysterious shock to find the place at her side empty, and her niece sitting at the open window in a quiet which suggested that she might not have moved for an hour.

She obeyed her first strong impulse, and rose and went to her.

She laid her hand on her shoulder, and shook her gently.

"Beck," she demanded, "what are you doing?"

When the girl turned slowly round, she started at the sight of her cold, miserable pallor.

"I am doing nothing—nothing," she answered. "Why did you get up? It's a fine night, isn't it?"

Despite her discretion, Miss Thorne broke down into a blunder.

"You—you never look like this in the daytime!" she exclaimed.

"No," was the reply given with cool deliberateness, "no; I would rather die."

For the moment she was fairly incomprehensible. There was in the set of her eye and the expression of her fair, clear face, the least hint of dogged obstinacy.

"Beck"—she began.

"You ought not to have got up," said Beck. "It is enough to look 'like this' at night when I am by myself. Go back to bed, if you please."

Miss Thorne went back to bed meekly. She was at once alarmed and subdued. She felt as if she had had a puzzling interview with a stranger.

In these days Lennox regarded his model

with morbid interest. A subtle change was perceptible in her. Her rich colour deepened, she held herself more erect, her eye had a larger pride and light. She was a finer creature than ever, and yet—she came at his call. He never ceased to wonder at it. Sometimes the knowledge of his power stirred within him a vast impatience; sometimes he was hardened by it; but somehow it never touched him, though he was thrown into tumult—bound against his will. He could not say that he understood her. Her very passiveness baffled him and caused him to ask himself what it meant. She spoke little, and her emotional phases seemed reluctant, but her motionless face and slowly raised eye always held a meaning of their own.

On an occasion when he mentioned his approaching departure, she started as if she had received a blow, and he turned to see her redden and pale alternately, her face full of alarm.

"What is the matter?" he asked brusquely.

"I—hadn't bin thinkin' on it," she stammered. "I kinder forgot."

He turned to his easel again and painted rapidly for a few minutes. Then he felt a light touch on his arm. She had left her seat noiselessly and stood beside him. She gave him a passionate, protesting look. A fire of excitement seemed to have sprung up within her and given her a defiant daring.

"D'ye think I'll stay here—when ye're gone—like I did before?" she said.

She had revealed herself in many curious lights to him, but no previous revelation had been so wonderful as was the swift change of mood and bearing which took place in her at this instant. In a moment she had melted into soft tears, her lips were tremulous, her voice dropped into a shaken whisper.

"I've allers wanted to go away," she said.

"I—I've allers said I would. I want to go to a city somewhar—I don't keer whar; I might git work—I've heard of folks as did. P'raps some un ud hire me!"

He stared at her like a man fascinated.

"You go to the city alone!" he said under his breath. "You try to get work!"

"Yes," she answered. "Don't you know no one?"

He stopped her.

"No," he said, "I don't. It would be a dangerous business unless you had friends. As for me, I shall not be in America long. As soon as I am married I go with my wife to Europe."

He heard a sharp click in her throat. Her tears were dried, and she was looking straight at him.

"Are ye a-goin' to be married?" she asked.

"Yes."

"To—her?" with a gesture in the direction of the Harney's cabin.

"Yes."

"Oh!" and she walked out of the room.

He did not see her for three days, and the picture stood still. He went to Harney's and found Rebecca packing her trunk.

"We are going back to New York," she said.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because our holiday is over."

Miss Thorne regarded him with chill severity.

"When may we expect to see you?" she inquired.

He really felt half stupefied—as if for the time being his will was paralyzed.

"I don't know," he answered.

He tried to think that he was treated badly and coldly. He told himself that he had done nothing to deserve this style of thing, that he had simply been busy and absorbed in his work, and that if he had at times appeared preoccupied it was not to be wondered at. But when he looked at Rebecca he did not put these thoughts into words; he did not even say that of course he should follow them soon, since there was nothing to detain him but a sketch or two he had meant to make.

By night they were gone and he was left restless and miserable. He was so restless that he could not sleep but wandered down toward the spring. He stopped at the exact spot at which he had stopped on the night of his arrival—at the top of the zigzag little path leading down the rocky incline. He stopped because he heard a sound of passionate sobbing. He descended slowly. He knew the sound—angry, fierce, uncontrollable—because he had heard it before. It checked itself the instant he reached the ground. Lodusky leaning against a projecting rock kept her eyes fixed upon the water.

"Why did you come here?" he demanded, a little excitedly. "What are you crying for? What has hurt you?"

"Nothin'," in a voice low and unsteady.

He drew a little nearer to her and for the first time was touched. She would not look at him, she was softened and altered, in her whole appearance, by a new pallor.

"Have"—he began, "have I?"

"You!" she cried, turning on him with a bitter, almost wild, gesture. "You wouldn't keer if I was struck dead afore ye!"

"Look here," he said to her, with an agitation he could not master. "Let me tell you something about myself. If you

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think I am a passably good fellow you are mistaken. I am a bad fellow, a poor fellow, an ignoble fellow. You don't understand?" as she gazed at him in bewilderment. "No, of course, you don't. God knows I didn't myself until within the last two weeks. It's folly to say such things to you; perhaps I say, then half to satisfy myself. But I mean to show you that I am not to be trusted. I think perhaps I am too poor a fellow to love any woman honestly and altogether. I followed one woman here, and then after all let another make me waver."

"Another!" she faltered.

He fixed his eyes on her almost coldly.

"You," he said.

He seemed to cast the word at her and wonder what she would make of it. He waited a second or so before he went on.

"You, and yet you are not the woman I love either. Good God! What a villain I must be. I am an insult to every woman that breathes. It is not even you—though I can't break from you, and you have made me despise myself. There! do you know now—do you see now that I am not worth—"

The next instant he started backward. Before he had time for a thought she had uttered a low cry, and flung herself down at his feet.

"I don't keer," she panted; "I wont keer fur nothin'—whether ye're good or bad—only don't leave me here when ye go away."

A week later Lennox arose one morning and set about the task of getting his belongings together. He had been up late and had slept heavily and long. He felt exhausted and looked so.

The day before, his model had given him his last sitting. The picture stood finished upon the easel. It was a thorough and artistic piece of work, and yet the sight of it was at times unbearable to him. There were times again, however, when it fascinated him anew when he went and stood opposite to it, regarding it with an intense gaze. He scarcely knew how the last week had passed. It seemed to have been spent in alternate feverish struggles and reckless abandonment to impulse. He had let himself drift here and there, he had at last gone so far as to tell himself that the time had arrived when base-ness was possible to him.

"I don't promise you an easy life," he had said to Dusk the night before. "I tell you I am a bad fellow, and I have lost something through you that I cared for. You may wish yourself back again."

"If you leave me," she said, "I'll kill myself," and she struck her hands together. For the moment he was filled, as he often

was, with a sense of passionate admiration. It was true he saw her as no other creature had ever seen her before, that so far as such a thing was possible with her, she loved him—loved him with a fierce, unreserved, yet narrow passion.

He had little actual packing to do—merely the collecting of a few masculine odds and ends, and then his artistic accompaniments. Nothing was of consequence but these; the rest were tossed together indifferently, but the picture was to be left to the last moment, that its paint might be dry beyond a doubt.

Having completed his preparations he went out. He had the day before him, and scarcely knew what to do with it, but it must be killed in one way or another. He wandered up the mountain and at last lay down with his cigar among the laurels. He was full of a strange excitement which now thrilled, now annoyed him.

He came back in the middle of the afternoon and laughed a rather half-hearted laugh at the excellent Mandy's comment upon his jaded appearance.

"Ye look kinder tuckered out," she said. "Ye'd oughtn't ter walked so fur when ye was a-gwine off to-night. Ye'd orter rested."

She stopped the churn-dasher and regarded him with a good-natured air of interest.

"Hev ye seed Dusk to say good-bye to her?" she added. "She's went over the mountain ter help Mirandy Stillins with her soap. She wont be back for a day or two."

He went into his room and shut the door. A fierce repulsion sickened him. He had heretofore held himself with a certain degree of inward loftiness; he had so condemned the follies and sins of other men, and here he found himself involved in a low and common villainy, in the deceits which belonged to his crime, and which preyed upon simplicity and ignorant trust.

He went and stood before his easel, hot with a blush of self-scorn.

Has it come to this?" he muttered through his clenched teeth—"to this!"

He made an excited forward movement; his foot touched the supports of the easel, jarring it roughly; the picture fell upon the floor.

"What?" he cried out. "Beck! You! Great God!"

For before him, revealed by the picture's fall, the easel held one of the fairest memories he had of the woman he had proved himself too fickle and slight to value rightly.

It was merely a sketch made rapidly one day soon after his arrival and never wholly

completed, but it had, been touched with fire and feeling, and the face looked out from the canvas with eyes whose soft happiness stung him to the quick with the memories they brought. He had meant to finish it, and had left it upon the easel that he might turn to it at any moment, and it had remained there, covered by a stronger rival—forgotten.

He sat down in a chair and his brow fell upon his hands. He felt as if he had been clutched and dragged backward by a powerful arm.

When at last he rose, he strode to the picture lying upon the floor, ground it under his heel, and spurned it from him with an imprecation.

He was, at a certain hour, to reach a particular bend in the road some miles distant. He was to walk to this place and if he found no one there, to wait.

When at sunset that evening he reached it, he was half an hour before the time specified, but he was not the first at the tryst. He was within twenty yards of the spot when a figure rose from the roots of a tree and stood waiting for him—the girl Dusk with a little bundle in her hand.

She was not flushed or tremulous with any hint of mental excitement; she awaited him with a fine repose, even the glow of the dying sun having no power to add to her colour, but as he drew near he saw her look gradually change. She did not so much as stir, but the change grew slowly, slowly upon her face, and developed there into a definite shape—the shape of secret, repressed dread.

"What is it," she asked when he at last confronted her, "that ails ye?"

She uttered the words in a half whisper, as if she had not the power to speak louder, and he saw the hand hanging at her side close itself.

"What is it—that ails ye?"

He waited a few seconds before he answered her.

"Look at me," he said at last, "and see."

She did look at him. For the space of ten seconds their eyes were fixed upon each other in a long, bitter look. Then her little bundle dropped on the ground.

"Ye've went back on me," she said under her breath again. "Ye've went back on me!"

He had thought she might make some passionate outcry, but she did not yet. A white wrath was in her face and her chest heaved, but she spoke slowly and low, her hands fallen down by her side.

"Ye've went back on me," she said. "An' I knew ye would."

He felt that the odour of his utter falseness tainted the pure air about him; he had been false all round—to himself, to his love, to his ideals—even in a baser way here.

"Yes," he answered her with a bitterness she did not understand, "I've gone back on you." Then, as if to himself, "I could not even reach perfection in villainy."

Then her rage and misery broke forth.

"Ye'r a coward!" she said, with gasps between her words. "Ye'r afraid! I'd sooner—I'd sooner ye'd killed me—dead!"

Her voice shrilled itself into a smothered shriek, she cast herself face downward upon the earth and lay there clutching amid her sobs at the grass.

He looked down at her in a cold, stunned fashion.

"Do you think," he said hoarsely, "that you can loathe me as I loathe myself? Do you think you can call me oneshameful name I don't know I deserve? If you can, for God's sake let me have it."

She struck her fist against the earth.

"Thar wasn't a man I ever saw," she said, "that didn't foller after me, 'n' do fur me, 'n' wait fur a word from me. They'd hev let me set my foot on 'em if I'd said. Thar wasn't nothin' I mightn't hev done—not nothin'. An' now—an' now"—and she tore the grass from its earth and flung it from her.

"Go on," he said. "Go on and say your worst."

Her worst was bad enough, but he almost exulted under the blows she dealt him. He felt their horrible sting a vague comfort. He had fallen low enough surely when it was a comfort to be told that he was a liar, a poltroon and a scoundrel.

The sun had been down an hour when it was over, and she had risen and taken up her bundle.

"Why don't ye ask me to forgive ye?" she said with a scathing sneer. "Why don't ye ask me to forgive ye—an' say ye didn't mean to do it?"

He fell back a pace and was silent. With what grace would the words have fallen from his lips? And yet he knew that he had not meant to do it.

She turned away, and at a distance of a few feet stopped. She gave him a last look—a fierce one in its contempt and anger, and her affluence of beauty had never been so stubborn a fact before.

"Ye think ye've left me behind," she said. "An' so ye hev—but it aint f' allers. The time'll come when maybe ye'll see me agin."

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He returned to New York, but he had  
been there a week before he went to Rebecca.

Finally, however, he awoke one morning  
feeling that the time had come for the last  
scene of his miserable drama. He presented  
himself at the house and sent up his name,  
and in three minutes Rebecca came to him.

It struck him with a new thrill of wretch-  
edness to see that by chance she wore the  
very dress she had worn the day he had  
made the sketch—a pale, pure-looking gray,  
with a scarf of white lace loosely fastened at  
her throat. Next, he saw that there was a  
painful change in her, that she looked frail  
and worn, as if she had been ill. His first  
words he scarcely heard and never remem-  
bered. He had not come to make a defence,  
but a naked, bitter confession. As he made  
it low and monotonously, in brief, harsh  
words, holding no sparing for himself, Re-  
becca stood with her hand upon the mantel,  
looking at him with simple directness. There  
was no rebuke in her look, but there was  
weariness. It occurred to him once or  
twice, and with a terribly humiliating pang,  
that she was tired of him—tired of it all.

"I have lost you," he ended. "And I  
have lost myself. I have seen myself as I  
am—a poorer figure, a grosser one than I ever  
dreamed of being, even in the eyes of my  
worst enemy. Henceforth, this figure will  
be my companion. It is as if I looked at my-  
self in a bad glass; but now, though the  
reflection is a pitiable one, the glass is true."

"You think," she said, after a short si-  
lence, "of going away?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"To Europe."

"Oh," she ejaculated, with a soft, desper-  
ate sound of pain.

His eyes had been downcast and he raised  
them.

"Yes," he said mournfully, "we were to  
ave gone together."

"Yes," she answered, "together."  
Her eyes were wet.

"I was very happy," she said, "for a lit-  
tle while."

She held out her hand.

"But, she added, as if finishing a sen-  
tence, you have been truer to me than you  
think."

"No—no," he groaned.

"Yes, truer to me than you think—and  
truer to yourself. It was I you loved—I!  
There have been times when I thought I  
must give that up, but now I know I need  
not. It was I. Sometime, perhaps,—some-  
time—not now!"

Her voice broke, she did not finish, the  
end was a sob. Their eyes rested upon each  
other a few seconds, and then he released  
her hand and went away.

He was absent for two years, and during  
that time his friends heard much good of  
him. He lived the life of a recluse and a  
hard worker. He learned to know his own  
strength, and taught the world to recognize  
it also.

At the end of the second year, being in  
Paris, he went one night to the *Nouvelle  
Opera*. Toward the close of the second act  
he became conscious of a little excited stir  
among those surrounding him. Every glass  
seemed directed toward a new arrival who  
stood erect and cool in one of the stage-  
boxes. She might have been Cleopatra.  
Her costume was of a creamy satin, she was  
covered with jewels, and she stood up con-  
fronting the house, as it regarded her with  
*sang froid*.

Lennox rose hurriedly and left the place.  
He was glad to breathe the bitterly cold but  
pure night air. She had made no idle pro-  
phesy. He had seen her again!

There hung upon the wall of his privat  
room a picture whose completion had been  
the first work after his landing. He went in  
to it and looked at it with something like  
adoration.

"Sometime" he said, "perhaps now,"  
and the next week he was on his way  
home.

# SETH.

He came in one evening at sunset with the empty coal-train—his dull young face pale and heavy-eyed with weariness, his corduroy suit dusty and travel-stained, his worldly possessions tied up in the smallest of handkerchief bundles and slung upon the stick resting on his shoulder—and naturally his first appearance attracted some attention among the loungers about the shed dignified by the title of "depot." I say "naturally," because arrivals upon the trains to Black Creek were so scarce as to be regarded as curiosities; which again might be said to be natural. The line to the mines had been in existence two months, since the English company had taken them in hand and pushed the matter through with an energy startling to, and not exactly approved by, the majority of good East Tennesseans. After the first week or so of arrivals—principally Welsh and English miners, with an occasional Irishman—the trains had returned daily to the Creek without a passenger; and accordingly this one created some trifling sensation.

Not that his outward appearance was particularly interesting or suggestive of approaching excitement. He was only a lad of nineteen or twenty, in working English-cut garb, and with a short, awkward figure, and a troubled, homely face—a face so homely and troubled, in fact, that its half-bewildered look was almost pathetic.

He advanced toward the shed hesitatingly, and touched his cap as if half in clumsy courtesy and half in timid appeal. "Mesters," he said, "good-day to yo'."

The company bestirred themselves with one accord, and to the roughest and most laconic gave him a brief "good-day."

"You're English," said a good-natured Welshman, "ar'n't you, my lad?"

"Ay, mester," was the reply: "I'm fro' Lancashire."

He sat down on the edge of the rough platform, and laid his stick and bundle down in a slow, wearied fashion.

"Fro' Lancashire," he repeated in a voice as wearied as his action—"fro' th' Deepton coal-mines theer. You'll know th' name on

'em, I ha' no doubt. Th' same company owns 'em as owns these."

"What!" said an outsider—"Langley an' 'em?"

The boy turned himself round and nodded. "Ay," he answered—"them. That was why I comn here. I comn to get work fro'—fro' him."

He faltered in his speech oddly, and even reddened a little, at the same time rubbing his hands together with a nervousness which seemed habitual to him.

"Mester Ed'ard, I mean," he added—"th' young mester as is here. I heerd as he liked 'Merica, an'—an' I comn."

The loungers glanced at each other, and their glance did not mean high appreciation of the speaker's intellectual powers. There was a lack of practicalness in such faith in another man as expressed itself in the wistful, hesitant voice.

"Did he say he'd give you work?" asked the first man who had questioned him, the Welshman Evans.

"No. I dunnot think—I dunnot think he'd know me if he seed me. Theer wur so many on us."

Another exchange of glances, and then another question: "Where are you going to stay?"

The homely face reddened more deeply and the lad's eyes—dull, soft, almost womanish eyes—raised themselves to the speaker's. "Do yo' know anybody as would be loikely to tak' me in a bit," he said, "until I ha' toime to earn th' wage to pay? I wouldn't wrong no mon a penny as had trusted me."

There was manifest hesitation, and then some one spoke: "Lancashire Jack might."

"Mester," said the lad to Evans, "would you moind speakin' a word for me? I ha' had a long tramp, an' I'm fagged-loike, an'—"

He stopped and rose from his seat with a hurried movement. "Who's that theer is comin'?" he demanded. "Isna it th' young mester?"

The same one in question was a young man on horseback, who at that moment turned the corner and rode toward the shed with

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loose rein, allowing his horse to choose his own pace.

"Ay," said the lad with an actual tremor in his excited voice—"it's him, sure enow," and sank back on his seat again as if he had found himself scarcely strong enough to stand. "I—I ha' not eaten much fur two or three days," he said to Evans.

There was not a man on the platform who did not evince some degree of pleasure at the approach of the new-comer. The last warm rays of the sun, already sinking behind the mountains, seemed rather to take pride in showing what a debonair young fellow he was, in glowing kindly upon his handsome face and strong, graceful figure, and touching up to greater brightness his bright hair.

The face was one to be remembered, with a sentiment approaching gratitude for the mere existence of such genial and unspoiled good looks, but the voice that addressed the men was one to be loved, and loved without stint, it was so clear and light-hearted and frank.

"Boys," said he, "good-evening to you. Evans, if you could spare me a minute"—Evans rose at once.

"I'll speak to him," he said to the lad at his side. "His word will go further with Lancashire Jack than mine would." He went to the horse's side, and stood there for a few minutes talking in an undertone, and then he turned to the stranger and beckoned. "Come here," he said.

The lad took up his bundle and obeyed the summons, advancing with an awkward almost stumbling step, suggestive of actual weakness as well as the extremity of shyness. Reaching the two men, he touched his cap humbly, and stood with timorous eyes upraised to the young man's face.

Langley met his gaze with a somewhat puzzled look, which presently passed away in a light laugh. "I'm trying to remember who you are, my lad," he said, "but I shall be obliged to give it up. I know your face, I think, but I have no recollection of your name. I dare say I have seen you often enough. You came from Deepton, Evans tells me."

"Ay, mester, fro' Deepton."

"A long journey for a lad like you to take alone," with inward pity for the heavy face.

"Ay, mester."

"And now you want work?"

"If you please, mester."

"Well, well!" cheerily, "we will give it to you. There's work enough, though it isn't such as you had at Deepton. What is your name?"

"Seth, mester—Seth Raynor," shifting the stick and bundle in uneasy eagerness from one shoulder to another. An' I'm

used to hard work, mester. It wur na easy work we had at th' Deepton mine, an' I'm stronger than I look. It's th' faggedness as makes me tremble—an' hunger."

"Hunger?"

"I ha' not tasted food sin' th' neet before last," shamefacedly. "I hadna th' money to buy, an' it seemt like I could howd out."

"Hold out!" echoed Langley in some excitement. "That's a poor business, my lad. Here, come with me. The other matter can wait, Evans."

The downcast face and ungainly figure troubled him in no slight degree as they moved off together, they seemed to express in some indescribable fashion so much of dull and patient pain, and they were so much at variance with the free grandeur of the scene surrounding them. It was as if a new element were introduced into the very air itself. Black Creek was too young yet to have known hunger or actual want of any kind. The wild things on the mountain sides had scarcely had time to learn to fear the invaders of their haunts or understand that they were to be driven backward. The warm wind was fragrant with the keen freshness of pine and cedar. Mountain and forest and sky were stronger than the human stragglers they closed around and shut out from the world.

"We don't see anything like that in Lancashire," said Langley. "That kind of thing is new to us, my lad, isn't it?" with a light gesture toward the mountain, in whose side the workers had burrowed.

"Ay, mester," raising troubled eyes to its grandeur—"iv'rything's new. I feel aw lost sometimes, an' feared-loike."

Langley lifted his hat from his brow to meet a little passing breeze, and as it swept softly by he smiled in the enjoyment of its coolness. "Afraid?" he said. "I don't understand that."

"I dunnot see into it mysen', mester. Happen it's th' bigness, an' quiet, an' th' lonely look, an' happen it's summat wrong in mysen'. I've lived in th' cool an' smoke an' crowd an' work so long as it troubles me in a manner to—ha' to look so high."

"Does it?" said Langley, a few faint times showing themselves on his forehead. "That's a queer fancy. So high!" turning his glance upward to where the tallest pine swayed its dark plume against the clear blue "Well, so it is. But you will get used to it in time," shaking off a rather unpleasant sensation.

"Happen so, mester, in toime," was the simple answer; and then silence fell upon them again.

They had not very far to go. The houses of the miners—rough shanties hurriedly



erected to supply immediate needs—were most of them congregated together, or at most stood at short distances from each other, the larger ones signifying the presence of feminine members in a family, and perhaps two or three juvenile pioneers—the smaller ones being occupied by younger miners, who lived in couples, or sometimes even alone.

Before one of the larger shanies Langley reined in his horse. "A Lancashire man lives here," he said, "and I am going to leave you with him."

In answer to his summons a woman came to the door—a young woman whose rather irresponsive face awakened somewhat when she saw who waited.

"Feyther," she calls out, "it's Mester Langley, an' he's gotten a stranger wi' him."

'Feyther,' approaching the door, showed himself a burly individual, with traces of coal dust in all corners not to be reached by hurried and not too fastidious ablutions. Clouds of tobacco-smoke preceded and followed him, and much stale incense from the fragrant weed exhaled itself from his well-worn corduroys. "I ha' not niver seed him afore," he remarked after a gruff by no means ill-natured greeting, signifying the stranger by a duck of the head in his direction.

"A Lancashire lad, Janner," answered Langley; "I want a home for him."

Janner regarded him with evasive interest, but shook his head dubiously. "Ax th' missus," he remarked succinctly: "dunnot ax me."

Langley's good-humoured laugh had a touch of conscious power in it. If it depended upon "th' missus" he was safe enough. His bright good looks and gay grace of manner never failed with the women. The most practical and uncompromising melted, however unwillingly, before his sunshine, and the suggestion of chivalric deference which seemed a second nature with him. So it was easy enough to parley with "th' missus."

"A Lancashire lad, Mrs. Janner," he said, "and so I know you'll take care of him. Lancashire folk have a sort of fellow feeling for each other, you see; that was why I could not make up my mind to leave him until I saw him in good hands; and yours are good ones. Give him a square meal as soon as possible," he added in a lower voice: "I will be accountable for him myself."

When he lifted his hat and rode away, the group watched him until he was almost out of sight, the general sentiment expressing itself in every countenance.

"Theer's summat voice about that theer young chap," Janner remarked with the

slowness of a man who was rather mystified by the fascination under whose influence he found himself—"summat as goes wi' th' grain loike."

"Ay," answered his wife, "so theer is; an' its natur' too. Coom along in, lad," to Seth, "an' ha' summat to eat: you look faintish."

Black Creek found him a wonderfully quiet member of society, the lad Seth. He came and went to and from the mine with mechanical regularity, working with the rest, taking his meals with the Janners, and sleeping in a small shanty left vacant by the desertion of a young miner who had found life at the settlement too monotonous to suit his tastes. No new knowledge of his antecedents was arrived at. He had come "fro' Deepton," and that was the beginning and end of the matter. In fact, his seemed to be a peculiarly silent nature. He was fond of being alone, and spent most of his spare time in the desolate little shanty. Attempts at conversation appeared to trouble him, it was discovered, and accordingly he was left to himself as not worth cultivating.

"Why does na' tha' talk more?" demanded Janner's daughter, who was a strong, brusque young woman, with a sharp tongue.

"I ha' not gotton nowt to say," was the meekly deprecating response.

Miss Janner, regarding the humble face with some impatience, remarkably enough, found nothing to deride in it, though, being neither a beauty nor in her first bloom, and sharp of tongue, as I have said, she was somewhat given to derision as a rule. In truth, the uncomplaining patience in the dull, soft eyes made her feel a little uncomfortable. "I dunnot know what ails thee," she remarked with unceremonious candour, "but theer's summat as does."

"It's nowt as can be cured," said the lad, and turned his quiet face away.

In his silent fashion he evinced a certain degree of partiality for his host's daughter. Occasionally, after his meals, he lingered for a few moments watching her at her work when she was alone, sitting by the fire or near the door, and regarding her business-like movements with a wistful air of wonder and admiration. And yet so unobtrusive were these mute attentions that Bess Janner was never roused to any form of resentment of them.

"Tha's goin' to ha' a sweetheart at last, my lass," was one of Janner's favourite witticisms, but Bess bore it with characteristic coolness. "I'm noan as big a foo' as I look," she would say, "an' I dunnot moild him no more nor if he was a wench hissen'."

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Small as was the element of female society  
at Black Creek, this young woman was  
scarcely popular. She was neither fair nor  
fond: a predominance of muscle and a certain  
rough deftness of hand were her chief  
charms. Ordinary sentiment would have  
been thrown away upon her; and, fortunate-  
ly, she was spared it.

"She's noan hurt wi' good looks, our  
Bess," her father remarked with graceful  
chivalrousness on more than one occasion,  
"but hoo con heave a'most as much as I con,  
an' that's summat."

Consequently, it did not seem likely that  
the feeling she had evidently awakened in  
the breast of their lodger was kin to the  
tender passion.

"Am I in yo're way?" he would ask  
apologetically; and the answer was invariably  
a gracious if curt one: "No—no more than  
th' cat. Stay wheer yo' are, lad, an' make  
yo'resen' eomfortable."

There came a change, however, in the  
nature of their intercourse, but this did not  
occur until the lad had been with them some  
three months. For several days he had been  
ailing and unlike himself. He had been even  
more silent than usual; he had eaten little,  
and lagged on his way to and from his work;  
he looked thinner, and his step was slow and  
uncertain. There was so great an alteration  
in him, in fact, that Bess softened toward  
him visibly. She secretly bestowed the best  
morsels upon him, and even went so far as to  
attempt conversation. "Let yo're work go  
a bit," she advised: "yo're noan fit  
fur it."

But he did not give up until the third  
week of illness, and then one warm day at  
noon, Bess, at work in her kitchen among  
dishes and pans, was startled from her  
labours by his appearing at the door and  
staggering toward her. "What's up wi'  
yo'?" she demanded. "Yo' look loike  
death."

"I dunnot know," he faltered, and then,  
staggering again, caught at her dress with  
feeble hands. "Dunnot yo'," he whispered,  
sinking forward—"dunnot yo' let no one—  
come anigh me."

She flung a strong arm around him, and  
saved him from a heavy fall. His head  
dropped helplessly against her breast.

"He's fainted dead away," she said: "he  
nuin ha' been worse than he thowt fur."

She laid him down, and, loosening his  
clothes at throat, went for water; but a few  
minutes after she had bent over him for the  
second time an exclamation, which was al-  
most a cry, broke from her. "Lord ha'  
mercy!" she said, and fell back, losing some-  
thing of colour herself.

She had scarcely recovered herself even

when, after prolonged efforts, she succeeded  
in restoring animation to the prostrate figure  
under her hands. The heavy eyes opening  
met hers in piteous appeal and protest.

"I thowt it wur death comn," said the  
lad. "I wnr hopin' as it wur death."

"What ha' yo' done as yo' need wish  
that?" said Bess; and then, her voice shak-  
ing with excitement which got the better of  
her and forced her to reveal herself, she  
added, "I've fun' out what yo've been  
hidin'."

Abrupt and unprelaced as her speech was,  
it scarcely produced the effect she had ex-  
pected it would. Her charge neither flinched  
nor reddened. He laid a weak, rough hand  
upon her dress with a feebly pleading touch.  
"Dunnet yo' turn agen me," he whispered:  
"yo' wouldna if yo' knew."

"But I dunnot know," Bess answered, a  
trifle doggedly, despite her inward relent-  
ings.

"I comn to yo'," persisted the lad, "be-  
cause I thowt yo' wouldna turn agen me;  
yo' wouldna," patiently again, "if yo'  
knew."

Gradually the ponderous witticism in  
which Janner had indulged became an ac-  
cepted joke in the settlement. Bess had  
fallen a victim to the tender sentiment at  
last. She had found an adorer, and had ap-  
parently succumbed to his importunities.  
Seth spent less time in his shanty and more  
in her society. He lingered in her vicinity  
on all possible occasions, and seemed to de-  
rive comfort from her mere presence. And  
Bess not only tolerated but encouraged  
him. Not that her manner was in the least  
degree effusive: she rather extended a rough  
protection to her admirer, and displayed a  
tendency to fight his battles and employ her  
sharper wit as a weapon in his behalf.

"Yo' may get th' best o' him," she said  
dryly once to the wit of the Creek, who had  
been jocular at his expense, "but yo' conna  
get the best o' me. Try me a bit, lad. I'm  
better worth yo're mettle."

"What's taken yo', lass?" said her  
mother at another time. "Yo're that theer  
soft about th' chap as theer's no makin' yo'  
out. Yo' wur niver loike to be soft afore,"  
somewhat testily. "An' it's noan his good  
looks, neyther."

"No," said Bess—"it's noan his good  
looks."

"Happen it's his lack on 'em, then?"

"Happen it is." And there the discussion  
ended for want of material.

There was one person, however, who did  
not join in the jesting; and this was Laugley.  
When he began to understand the matter he  
regarded the two with sympathetic curiosity  
and interest. Why should not their primitive

and uncouth love develop and form a tie to bind the homely lives together, and warm and brighten them? It may have been that his own mental condition at this time was such as would tend to soften his heart, for an innocent passion, long cherished in its bud, had burst into its full blooming during the months he had spent amid the novel beauty and loneliness, and perhaps his new bliss subdued him somewhat. Always ready with a kindly word, he was specially ready with it where Seth was concerned. He never passed him without one, and frequently reined in his horse to speak to him at greater length. Now and then, on his way home at night, he stopped at the shanty door, and summoning the lad detained him for a few minutes chatting in the odorous evening air. It was thoroughly in accordance with the impulses of his frank and generous nature that he should endeavour to win upon him and gain his confidence. "We are both Deepden men," he would say, "and that we should be friends. We are both alone and a long way from home."

But the lad was always timid and slow of speech. His gratitude showed itself in ways enough, but it rarely took the form of words. Only, one night as the horse moved away, he laid his hand upon the bridle and held it a moment, some powerful emotion showing itself in his face, and lowering his voice until it was almost a whisper. "Mester," he said, "if theer's ivver owt to be done as is hard an' loike to bring pain an' danger, yo'll—yo'll not forget me?"

Langley looked down at him with a mingled feeling of warm pity and deep bewilderment. "Forget you?" he echoed.

The dullness seemed to have dropped away from the commonplace face as if it had been a veil; the eyes were burning with a hungry pathos and fire and passion; they were raised to his and held him with the power of an indescribable anguish. "Dunnot forget as I'm here," the voice growing sharp and intense, "ready an' eager an' waitin' fur th' toime to come. Let me do sommat or brave summat or suffer summat, for God's sake!"

When the young man rode away it was with a sense of weight and pain upon him. He was mystified. People were often grateful to him, but their gratitude was not such as this; this oppressed and disturbed him. It was suggestive of a mental condition whose existence seemed almost impossible. What a life this poor fellow must have led, since the simplest kindness aroused within him such emotions as this! "It is hard to understand," he murmured; "it is even a little horrible. One fancies these duller natures do not reach our heights and depths of happiness and pain,

and yet—Caithie, Caithie, my dear," breaking off suddenly, and turning his face upward to the broad free blue of the sky, as he quickened his horse's pace, "let me think of you; this hurts me."

But he was drawn nearer to the boy, and did his best to cheer and help him. His interest in him grew as he saw him oftener, and there was not only the old interest, but a new one. Something in the lad's face—a something which had struck him as familiar even at first—began to haunt him constantly. He could not rid himself of the impression it left upon him, and yet he never found himself a shade nearer the solution of the mystery.

"Raynor," he said to him on one of the evenings when he had stopped before the shanty, "I wish I knew why your face troubles me so."

"Does it trouble you, mester?"

"Yes," with a half laugh, "I think I may say it troubles me. I have tried to recollect every lad in Deepden, and I have no remembrance of you."

"Happen not, mester," meekly. "I niver wur much noticed, yo' see; I'm one o' them as foak is more loike to pass by."

An early train arriving next morning brought visitors to the Creek—a business-like elderly gentleman and his daughter, a pretty girl, with large bright eyes and an innocent rosy face, which became rosier and prettier than ever when Mr. Edward Langley advanced from the depot shed with uncovered head and extended hand. "Caithie!" he said, when the first greetings had been interchanged, "what a delight this is to me! I did not hope for such happiness as this."

"Father wanted to see the mines," answered Caithie, sweetly demure, "and I—I wanted to see Black Creek; your letters were so enthusiastic."

"A day will suffice, I suppose?" her paternal parent was wandering on amiably. "A man should always investigate such matters for himself. I can see enough to satisfy me between now and the time for the return train."

"I cannot," whispered Langley to Caithie; "a century would not suffice. If the sun would but stand still!"

The lad Seth was late for dinner that day, and when he entered the house Bess turned from her dish-washing to give him a sharp, troubled look. "Are you in again?" she asked.

"Nay," he answered, "not bnt a bit tired an' heavy-loike."

He sat down upon the door-step with heavily clasped hands, and eyes wandering towards the mountain, whose pine-crowned

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summit towered above him. He had not even yet outlived the awe of its majesty, but he had learned to love it and draw comfort from its beauty and strength.

"Does tha' want thy dinner?" asked Bess. "No, thank yo'," he said; "I couldna eat."

The dish-washing was deserted incontinently, and Bess came to the door, towel in hand, her expression at once softened and shaded with discontent. "Summat's hurt yo'," she said. "What is it? Summat's hurt yo' sore."

The labour-roughened hands moved with their old nervous habit, and the answer came in an odd, jerky, half-connected way: "I dunnot know why it should ha' done. I mun be mad, or summat. I niver had no hope nor nothin': theer niver wur no reason why I should ha' had. Ay, I mun be wrong somehow, or it wouldna stick to me i' this road. I conna get rid on it, an' I conna feel as if I want to. What's up wi' me? What's takken howd on me?" his voice breaking and the words ending in a sharp hysterical gasp like a sob.

Bess wrung her towel with a desperate strength which spoke of no small degree of tempestuous feeling. Her brow knit itself and her lips were compressed. "What's happened?" she demanded after a pause. "I conna mak' thee out."

The look that fell upon her companion's face had something of shame in it. His eyes left the mountain side and drooped upon his clasped hands. "Theer wur a lass coom to look at th' place to-day," he said—"a lady lass, wi' her feyther—an' him. She wur aw rosy red an' fair white, an' it seemt as if she wur that happy as her laughin' made th' birds moek back at her. He took her up th' mountain, an' we heard 'em both even high up among th' laurels. Th' sound o' their joy a-floatin' down from the height, so nigh th' blue sky, made me sick an' weak-loike. They wur na so gay when they comn back, but her eyes wur shinin', an' so wur his, an' I heerd him say to her as 'Foak didna know how nigh heaven th' top o' th' mountain wur.'"

Bess wrung her towel again, and regarded the mountain with manifest impatience and trouble. "Happen it'll coom reet some day," she said.

"Reet!" repeated the lad, as if mechanically. "I hadna towd mysen' as owt wur exactly wrong; on'y I conna see things clear. I niver could, an' th' more I ax mysen' questions th' worse it gets. Wheer—wheer could I lay th' blame?"

"Th' blame!" said Bess. "Coom tha' an' get a bite to eat;" and she shook out the towel with a snap and turned away. "Coom

tha," she repeated; "I mun get my work done."

That night, as Seth lay upon his pallet in the shanty, the sound of Langley's horse's hoofs reached him with an accompaniment of a clear young masculine voice singing a verse of some sentimental modern carol—a tender song ephemeral and sweet. As the sounds neared the cabin the lad sprang up restlessly, and so was standing at the open door when the singer passed. "Good-neet, mester," he said.

The singer slackened his pace and turned his bright face toward him in the moonlight, waving his hand. "Good-night," he said, "and pleasant dreams! Mine will be pleasant ones, I know. This has been a happy day for me, Raynor. Good-night."

When the two met again the brighter face had sadly changed; its beauty was marred with pain, and the shadow of death lay upon it.

Entering Janner's shanty the following morning, Seth found the family sitting around the breakfast-table in ominous silence. The meal stood untouched, and even Bess looked pale and anxious. All three glanced toward him questioningly as he approached, and when he sat down Janner spoke:—"Hasna tha' heerd th' news?" he asked.

"Nay," Seth answered, "I ha' heerd nowt."

Bess interposed hurriedly: "Dunnot yo' fear him, feyther," she said. "Happen it isna so bad, after aw. Four or five foak wur takken down ill last neet, Seth, an' th' young mester wur among 'em; an' theer's them as says it's cholera."

It seemed as if he had not caught the full meaning of her words; he only stared at her in a startled, bewildered fashion. "Cholera!" he repeated dully.

"Theer's them as knows it's cholera," said Janner, with gloomy significance. "An' if it's cholera, it's death;" and he let his hand fall heavily upon the table.

"Ay," put in Mrs. Janner in a fretful wail, "fur they say as it's worse i' these parts than it is i' England—th' heat mak's it worse—an' here we are i' th' midst o' th' summer-toime, an' theer's no knowin' wheer it'll end. I wish tha'd takken my advice, Janner, an' stayed i' Lancashire. Ay, I wish we wur safe at home. Better less wage an' more safety. Yo'd niver ha' coom if yo'd listened to me."

"Howd thy tongue, mother," said Bess, but the words were not ungently spoken, notwithstanding their bluntness. "Dunnot let us mak' it worse than it need be. Seth, lad, eat thy breakfast."

But there was little breakfast eaten. The fact was that at the first spreading of the



report a panic had seized upon the settlement, and Janner and his wife were by no means the least influenced by it. A stolidly stubborn courage upheld Bess, but even she was subdued and somewhat awed.

"I niver herd much about th' cholera," Seth said to her after breakfast. "Is this here true, this as thy feyther says?"

"I dunnot know fur sure," Bess answered gravely, "but it's bad enow."

"Coom out wi' me into th' fresh air," said the lad, laying his hand upon her sleeve: "I mun say a word or so to thee." And they went out together.

There was no work done in the mine that day. Two or three new cases broke out, and the terror spread itself and grew stronger. In fact, Black Creek scarcely comported itself as stoically as might have been expected. A messenger was despatched to the nearest town for a doctor, and his arrival by the night train was awaited with excited impatience.

When he came, however, the matter became worse. He had bad news to tell himself. The epidemic had broken out in the town he had left, and great fears were entertained by its inhabitants. "If you had not been so entirely thrown on your own resources," he said, "I could not have come."

A heavy enough responsibility rested upon his shoulders during the next few weeks. He had little help from the settlement. Those who were unstricken looked on at the progress of the disease with helpless fear: few indeed escaped a slight attack, and those who did were scarcely more useful than his patients. In the whole place he found only two reliable and unterrified assistants.

His first visit was to a small farm house round the foot of the mountain and a short distance from the mine. There he found the family huddled in a back room like a flock of frightened sheep, and in the only chamber a handsome, bright-haired young fellow lying upon the bed with a pined and ominous look upon his comely face. The only person with him was a lad roughly clad in miner's clothes—a lad who stood by chafing his hands, and who turned desperate eyes to the door when it opened. "Ye're too late, mester," he said—"ye're too late."

But young as he was—and he was a very young man—the doctor had presence of mind and energy, and he flung his whole soul and strength into the case. The beauty and solitariness of his patient roused his sympathy almost as if it had been the beauty of a woman; he felt drawn toward the stalwart, helpless young figure lying upon the humble couch in such apparent utter loneliness. He did not count much upon the lad at first—he

seemed too much bewildered and shaken—but it was not long before he changed his mind. "You are getting over your fear," he said.

"It wasna fear, mester," was the answer he received; "or at least it wasna fear for mysen."

"What is your name?"

"Seth Raynor, mester. Him an' me," with a gesture toward the bed, "comin' from th' same place. Th' cholera couldna fear me fro' him—nor nowt else if he wur i' need."

So it was Seth Raynor who watched by the bedside, and laboured with loving care and a patience which knew no weariness, until the worst was over and Langley was among the convalescent.

"The poor fellow and Bess Janner were my only stay," the young doctor was wont to say. "Only such care as his would have saved you, and you had a close race or it as it was."

During the convalescence nurse and invalid were drawn together with a stronger tie through every hour. Wearied and weak, Langley's old interest in the lad became a warm affection. He could scarcely bear to lose sight of the awkward boyish figure, and never rested so completely as when it was by his bedside.

"Give me your hand, dear fellow," he would say, "and let me hold it. I shall sleep better for knowing you are near me."

He fell asleep thus one morning, and awakened suddenly to a consciousness of someone's presence in the room. Seth no longer sat in the chair near the pillow, but stood a little apart; and surely he would have been no lover if the feeble blood had not leaped in his veins at the sight of the face bending over him—the innocent, fair young face which had so haunted his pained and troubled dreams. "Cathie!" he cried out aloud.

The girl fell upon her knees and caught his extended hand with a passionate little gesture of love and pity. "I did not know," she poured forth in hurried, broken tones. "I have been away ever since the sickness broke out at home. They sent me away and I only heard yesterday—Father, tell him, for I cannot."

He scarcely heard the more definite explanation, he was at once so happy and so fearful.

"Sweetheart," he said, "I can scarcely bear to think of what may come of this; and yet how blessed it is to have you near me again! The danger for me is all over; even your dear self could not have cared for me more faithfully than I have been cared for. Raynor there has saved my life."

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piteous, remorseful jealousy: "Whv was it  
not I who saved it? why was it not I?"

And the place where Seth had stood wait  
ing was vacant, for he had left it at the sound  
of Langley's first joyous cry. When he re  
turned, an hour or so later, the more restful  
look Langley had fancied he had seen on his  
face of late had faded out: the old unawak  
ened heaviness had returned. He was nerv  
ous and ill at ease, shrinking and con  
scious.

"I've comn to say good-neet to yo'," he  
said hesitatingly to the invalid. "Th' young  
lady says as shean' her feyther will tak' my  
place a bit. I'll coom i' th' mornin'."

"You want rest," said Langley; "you  
are tired, poor fellow!"

"Ay," quietly: "I'm tired; 'an' th'  
worst is over, yo' see, an' she's here," with a  
patient smile. "Yo' wunnot need me, an'  
theer's them as does."

From that hour his work at this one place  
seemed done. For several days he made his  
appearance regularly to see if he was needed,  
and then his visits gradually ended. He  
had found a fresh field of labour among the  
sufferers in the settlement itself. He was  
as faithful to them as he had been to his first  
charge. The same unflinching patience  
showed itself, the same silent con  
stancy and self-sacrifice. Scarcely a man  
or woman had not some cause to remember  
him with gratitude, and there was not  
one of those who had jested at and neglected  
him but thought of their jests and neglect  
with secret shame.

There came a day, however, when they  
missed him from among them. If he was  
not at one house he was surely at another, it  
appeared for some time; but when, after  
making his round of visits, the doctor did  
not find him, he became anxious. He might  
be at Janner's; but he was not there, nor  
among the miners, who had gradually re  
sumed their work as the epidemic weakened  
their strength and their spirits lightened.  
Making these discoveries at nightfall, the  
doctor touched up his horse in some secret  
dread. He had learned earlier than the rest  
to feel warmly toward this simple co-laborer.  
"Perhaps he's gone out to pay Langley a  
visit," he said: "I'll call and see. He may  
have stopped to have a rest."

But before he had passed the last group of  
cabins he met Langley himself, who by this  
time was well enough to resume his place in  
the small world, and, hearing his story,  
Langley's anxiety was greater than his own.  
"I saw him last night on my way home," he  
said. "About this time, too, for I remem  
ber he was sitting in the moonlight at the  
door of his shanty. We exchanged a few  
words, as we always do, and he said he was

there because he was not needed, and  
thought a quiet night would do him good.  
Is it possible no one has seen him since?" in  
sudden alarm.

"Come with me," said his companion.

Overwhelmed by a mutual dread, neither  
spoke until they reached the shanty itself.  
There was no sign of human life about it:  
the door stood open, and the only sound to  
be heard was the rustle of the wind whisper  
ing among the pines upon the mountain side.  
Both men flung themselves from their horses  
with loudly-beating hearts.

"God grant he is not here!" uttered Lang  
ley. "God grant he is anywhere else! The  
place is so drearily desolate."

Desolate indeed! The moonbeams stream  
ing through the door threw their lair light  
upon the rough boards and upon the walls,  
and upon the quiet figure lying on the pallet  
in one of the corners, touching with pitying  
whiteness the homely face upon the pillow  
and the hand that rested motionless upon  
the floor.

The doctor went down on his knees at the  
pallet's side, and thrust his hand into the  
breast of the coarse garments with a half  
checked groan.

"Asleep?" broke from Langley's white  
lips in a desperate whisper. "Not—not!"

"Dead!" said the doctor—"dead for  
hours!" There was actual anguish in his  
voice as he uttered the words, but another  
element predominated in the exclamation  
which burst from him scarcely a second later.  
"Good God!" he cried—"good God!"

Langley bent down and caught him al  
most fiercely by the arm: the exclamation  
d upon him. "What is it?" he de  
manded, "What do you mean?"

"It is—a woman!"

Even as they gazed at each other in  
speechless questioning the silence was broken  
in upon. Swift, heavy footsteps neared the  
door, crossed the threshold, and Janner's  
daughter stood before them.

There was no need for questioning. One  
glance told her all. She made her way to  
the moonlit corner, pushed both aside with  
rough strength, and knelt down. "I might  
ha' knowed," she said with helpless bitter  
ness—"I might ha' knowed;" and she laid  
her face against the dead hand in a sudden  
passion of weeping. "I might ha' knowed,  
Jinny lass," she cried, but I didna. It was  
loike aw th' rest as tha' should lay thee  
down an' die loike this. Tha' wast alone  
aw along, an' tha' wast alone at th' last.  
But dunnot blame me, poor lass. Nay, I  
know tha' wilna."

The two men stood apart, stirred by an  
emotion too deep for any spoken attempt at  
sympathy. She scarcely seemed to see

them: she seemed to recognise the pain, but that of the unresponsive figure upon its lowly couch. She spoke to it as if it had been a living thing, her voice broken and tender, stroking the hair now and then with a touch all womanly and loving. "Yo' were nigher to me than most foak, Jinny," she said; "an' tha' trusted me, I know."

They left her to her grief until at last she grew calmer and her sobs died away into silence. Then she rose and approaching Langley, who stood at the door, spoke to him, scarcely raising her tear-strained eyes. "I ha' summat to tell yo', an' summat to ax yo'," she said, "an' I mun tell it to yo' alone. Will yo' come out here?"

He followed her, wondering and sad. His heart was heavy with the pain and mystery the narrow walls inclosed. When they paused a few yards from the house, the one face was scarcely more full of sorrow than the other, only that the woman's was wet with tears. She was not given to many words, Bess Janner, and she wasted few in the story she had to tell. "Yo' know th' secret as she carried," she said, "or I wouldna tell yo' even now; an' now I tell it yo' that she may carry the secret to her grave, an' ha' no gossiping tongue to threep at her. I dunnot want foak starin' an' wonderin' an' makkin' talk. She's borne enow."

"It shall be as you wish, whether you tell me the story or not," said Langley. "We will keep it as sacred as you have done."

She hesitated a moment, seemingly pondering with herself before she answered him. "Ay," she said, "but I ha' another reason behind. I want summat fro' yo': I want yo're pity. Happen it might do her good even now." She did not look at him as she proceeded, but stood with her face a little turned away and her eyes resting upon the shadow on the mountain. "Theer wur a lass as worked at th' Deepton mines," she said—"a lass as had a weakly brother as worked an' lodged wi' her. Her name wur Jinny, an' she wur quiet and plain-favoured. Theer wur other wenches as wur well-lookin', but she wasna; theer wur others as had homes, and she hadna one; theer wur plenty as had wit an' sharpness, but she hadna them neyther. She wur nowt but a desolate, homely lass, as seemt to ha' no place i' th' world, an' yet wur tender an' weak-hearted to th' core. She wur allus longin' for summat as she wur not loike to get; an' she niver did get it, fur her brother wasna one as cared fur owt but his own doin's. But theer were one among aw th' rest as niver passed her by, an' he wur th' mester's son. He wur a bright, handsome chap, as

won his way ivverywhere, an' had a koin'd word or a laugh fur aw. So he gave th' lass a smile, an' did her a favour now and then—loike as not without givin' it more than a thowt—until she learned to live on th' hope o' seein' him. An', bein' weak an' tender, it grew on her fro' day to day, until it seemt to give th' strength to her an' tak' it both i' one."

She stopped and looked at Langley here. "Does tha' see owt now, as I'm gotten this fur?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, his agitation almost mastering him. "And now I have found the lost face that haunted me so."

"Ay," said Bess, "it was hers;" and she hurried on huskily: "A lien you went away she couldna abide th' lonesomeness, an' so one day she said to her brother, 'Dave, let us go to th' new mine wheer Mester Ed'ard is;' an' him bein' allus ready fur a move, they started out together. But on th' way th' lad took sick and died sudden, an' Jinny wur left to hersen'. An' then she seed how trouble. She wur beset wi' danger as she'd niver thowt on, an' before long she foun' out as women didna work o' this side o' the sea as they did o' ours. So at last she wur driv' upon a strange-loike plan. It sounds wild, happen, but it wasna so wild after aw. Her bits o' clothes giv' out an' she had no money; an' theer wur Dave's things. She'd wore th' loike at her work i' Deepton, an' she made up her mind to wear 'em agen. Yo' didna know her when she coom here, an' no one else guessed at th' truth. She didna expect mowt, yo' see; she on'y wanted th' comfort o' hearin' th' voice she'd longed an' hungered fur; an' heer wur wheer she could hear it. When I fnn' her out by accident, she told me, an' sm' then we have kept th' secret together. Do yo' guess what else theer's betwixt us, mester?"

"I think I do," he answered. "God forgive for my share in her pain!"

"No," she returned, "it's no fault o' thine. I never had a thowt o' that. She had a pain out way wi' her, had Jinny, an' she bore her trouble better than them as hopes. She didna ax nor hope no yther; an' when their coom fresh hurt to her she wur ready an' waitin', knowin' as it might come one day. Happen th' Lord knows what life wur give her fur—I dunnot, but it's ower now—an' happen she knows hersen'. I hurried here to meet," she added, battling with a sob, "as soon as I heard as she was missen'. Th' truth struck to my heart, an' I thowt as I should be here first, but I wasna. I ha' not gotten no more to say."

They went back to the shanty and with her own hands she did for the poor clay the last service it would need, Langley and his

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companion waiting the while outside. When  
 her task was at an end she came to them,  
 and this time it was Langley who addressed  
 himself to her. "May I go in?" he asked.

She bent her head in assent, and without  
 speaking he left them and entered the shanty  
 alone. The moonlight, streaming in as  
 before, fell upon the closed eyes, and hands  
 folded in the old, old fashion upon the fustian  
 jacket: the low whisper of the pines crept

downward like a sigh. Kneeling beside the  
 pallet, the young man bent his head and  
 touched the pale forehead with reverent lips.  
 "God bless you for your love and faith," he  
 said, "and give you rest!"

And when he rose a few minutes later,  
 and saw that the little dead flower he had  
 worn had dropped from its place and lay  
 upon the pulseless breast, he did not move  
 it, but turned away and left it resting there.

THE END.

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