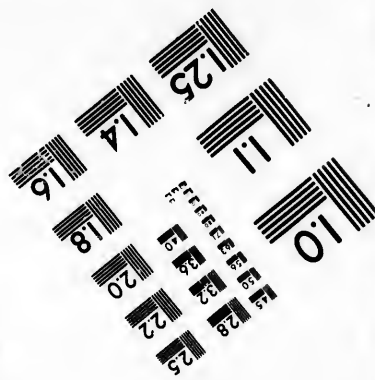
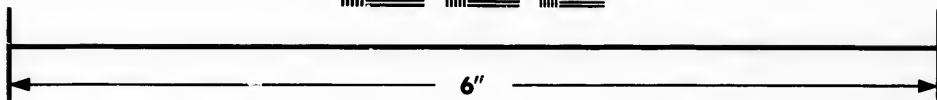
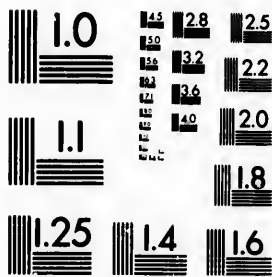


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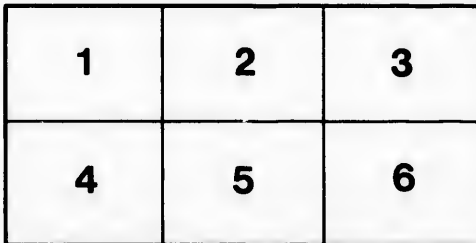
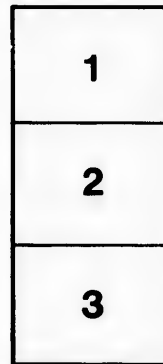
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MAGGIE LEE

BY MARGARET WOOD

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARGARET WOOD

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MAGGIE LEE!

BAD SPELLING, DIAMONDS.

THE ANSWERED PRAYER.

— BY —

MARY J. HOLMES,

Author of Lena Rivers—Tempest and Sunshine—Meadow Brook—English Orphans, etc.

COMPLETE.

TORONTO:

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1881.

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BAD SPELLING.

The last notes of the bell which duly summoned to their tasks the pupils of Madame Duvant's fashionable seminary had ceased, and in the school room, recently so silent, was heard the low hum of voices, interspersed occasionally with a suppressed titter from some girl more mischievous than her companions. Very complacently Madame Duvant looked over the group of young faces, mentally estimating the probable gain she should receive from each, for this was the first day of the term; then with a few, low-spoken words to the row of careworn, pale-faced teachers, she smoothed down the folds of her heavy grey satin and left the room, just as a handsome travelling carriage stopped before the door.

The new arrival proved to be a fashionably-dressed woman, who, with an air of extreme hateur, swept into the parlour, followed by two young girls, one apparently sixteen and the other fourteen years of age. The younger and, as some would call her, the plainer looking of the two, was unmistakably a 'poor relation,' for her face bore the meek, patient look of a dependent, while the proud black eyes and scornfully curved lip of the other marked her as the daughter of the lady, who, after glancing about the room and satisfying herself that the chairs, tables, and so forth, were refined, gave her name as 'Mrs. Greenleaf, wife of the Hon. Mr. Greenleaf, of Herkimer Co., N. Y.'

'I have come,' said she, apparently speaking to Madame Duvant, but looking straight at the window, 'I've come to place my daughter Arabella under your charge, and if she is pleased with your discipline, she will finish her education here—graduate—though I care but little for that, except that it sounds well. She is our only child, and, of course, a thorough education in the lower English branches is not at all necessary. I wish her to be highly accomplished in French, Italian, music, drawing, painting, dancing, and, perhaps, learn something of the old poets, so as to be able to talk about them a little, if necessary, but as for the

other branches, such as geography, history arithmetic, grammar, and the like, she can learn them by herself, and it is not my wish that she should waste her time over anything so common. These will do for Mildred,' and she glanced toward the poor relation, whose eyes were bent upon the carpet.

'She is the child of my husband's sister, and we have concluded to educate her for a teacher, so I wish you to be very thorough with her in all those stupid things which Arabella is not to study.'

Madame Duvant bowed, and Mrs. Greenleaf continued, 'Last term they were at Bloomington Seminary, and, if you'll believe it, the principal insisted upon putting Arabella into the spelling class, just because she didn't chance to spell every word of her first composition correctly! I dare say it was more Mildred's fault than hers, for she acknowledged to me that 'twas one of Mildred's old pieces that she found and copied.'

An angry flash of Arabella's large black eyes, and a bright red spot on Mildred's cheek, were the only emotions manifested by the young girls, and Mrs. Greenleaf proceeded: 'Of course, I wouldn't submit to it—my daughter spelling baker, and all that nonsense, so I took her away at once. It was my wish that Mildred should remain, but husband, who is peculiar, wouldn't hear of it, and said she should go where Arabella did, so I've brought them both.'

After little further conversation, it was arranged that Miss Arabella should go through a course of merely fashionable accomplishments, Madame Duvant assuring her mother that neither spelling book nor dictionary should in any way annoy her. Mildred, on the contrary, was to be thoroughly drilled in every thing necessary for a teacher to know. Mrs. Greenleaf hinting that the sooner her education was completed the better she would be pleased, for it cost a great deal to clothe, feed and school her. Madame Duvant promised to execute the wishes of her patron, who gathered up her flowing robes, and with a dozen or more

kisses for her daughter, and a nod of her head for Mildred, stepped into her carriage and was driven rapidly away.

Just across the spacious grounds of the Duvant Seminary, and divided from them by a wall which it seemed almost impossible to scale, stood a huge stone building, whose hacked walls, bare floors and dingy windows—from which were frequently suspended a cap, a pair of trousers, or a boy's leg—stamped it once as 'The College,' the veriest pest in the world, as Madame Duvant called it, when, with all the vigilance both of herself and Argus-eyed teachers, she failed to keep her young ladies from making the acquaintance of the students, who winked at them in church, bowed to them in the streets, tied notes to stones and threw them over the ponderous wall, while the girls waved their handkerchiefs from their windows, and in various other ways eluded the watchfulness of their teachers. A great acquisition to the fun-loving members of the seminary was Arabella Greenleaf, and she had scarcely been there six weeks ere she was perfectly well acquainted with every student whom she considered at all worth knowing. But upon only one were her brightest glances and her most winsome smiles lavished, and that was George Clayton, a young man from South Carolina, who was said to be very wealthy. He was too honourable to join in the intrigues of his companions, and when at last he became attracted by the watching eyes and dashing manners of Arabella Greenleaf, he went boldly to Madame Duvant and asked permission to see the young lady in the parlour.

His request was granted, and during the two years he remained at college, he continued occasionally to call upon Arabella, who, each time he saw her, seemed more pleasing, for she was beautiful, and when she chose to be so was very courteous and agreeable. One evening when George called as usual and asked to see her, he waited a long time, and was about making up his mind to leave, when a fair, delicate looking girl, with deep blue eyes and auburn hair, entered the room, introducing herself as Miss Graham, the cousin of Arabella, who, she said, was indisposed and unable to come down.

'She bade me say that she was very sorry not to see you,' added Mildred, for she it was, blushing deeply as she met the eager, admiring eye of George Clayton.

Gladly would he have detained her, but with a polite good evening, she left him in a perfect state of bewilderment. 'Strange that I never observed her before, for I must have seen her often,' he thought, as he slow-

ly wended his way back to his rooms, 'and stranger still that Arabella never told me she had a cousin here.'

The next time he met Arabella his first inquiry was for her cousin, and why she had never mentioned her. With a heightened colour Arabella answered, 'Oh, she's a little body, who never cares to be known—a perfect bookworm and man-hater.'

The words bookworm and man-hater produced upon George Clayton a far different effect from what Arabella had intended, and he often found himself thinking of the soft blue eyes of Mildred Graham. Unlike some men, there was nothing terrible to him in a bookish woman, and he might, perhaps, have sought another interview with Mildred, but for a circumstance which threw her entirely in the shade.

The annual examination of Madame Duvant's seminary was drawing near. Arabella was to graduate, while both she and Mildred were competitors for a prize offered for the best composition. There was a look of wonder on Mildred's face, when she saw her cousin's name among the list, for composition was something in which Arabella did not excel. Greatly then did Mildred marvel when day after day she found her, pencil in hand, and apparently lost in thought, as she filled one sheet after another, until at last it was done. 'Now, Milly,' said Arabella, 'You correct the spelling and copy it for me—that's a good girl.'

Mildred had acted in this capacity too often to refuse, and with a martyr's patience she corrected and copied the manuscript, wondering the while from whence came the sudden inspiration which had so brightened Arabella's ideas. But if she had any suspicions of the truth she kept them to herself, handing her own composition in with that of her cousin, and calmly waiting the result.

The examination was over. Arabella, who knew exactly what questions would be put to her, had acquitted herself with great credit, and her proud lady mother, who was one of the numerous visitors, fanned herself complacently as she heard on all sides the praises of her daughter.

And nothing remained but the evening exhibition, at which music and the prize compositions formed the chief entertainment. At an early hour the large school-rooms were densely crowded. Among the first who came was George Clayton—securing a seat as near as possible to the stage, so that he should not lose a single word. He himself had graduated but two weeks previously, and was now about to make the tour of Europe together with his father, who was

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present. They were to sail the next night, and at nine o'clock this evening they were to leave for New York. During the examination Arabella had risen greatly in George's estimation, and if she had seemed beautiful to him then, she was tenfold more so now, when, with flowing curls and simple white muslin dress, she tripped gracefully across the stage, and seating herself at the piano, played and sang with exquisite skill the well-known song entitled, 'No More, Never More.'

Then followed the reading of the compositions, Mildred being called upon first. In a clear peculiarly sweet voice she read, chaining to perfect silence her audience, which, when she was done, greeted her with noisy cheers, whispering one to another that she was sure to win. Arabella, at her own request, was the last. With proud, flashing eyes and queenly air, she coolly surveyed the mass of heads before her, caught an admiring glance from George Clayton, and then, with a steady hand unrolled her manuscript and read. Her subject was 'The Outward and the Inward Life,' and no gray-haired sage ever handled it more skilfully than she. When she finished one universal burst of applause shook the building to its centre, while her name was on every lip as she triumphantly left the room. Just then a distant bell struck the hour of nine, and George Clayton arose to go. He was sure of Arabella's success, and in the hall below, whither she had gone to bid him adieu, he shook her hand warmly, telling her how happy it made him to see her thus victorious, and winning from her a promise to write to him when he should be over the sea.

Half an hour later and the night express was bearing him far away. Half an hour later, and with flushed brow Arabella stood up and received the prize, which consisted of two elegantly bound volumes of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Forty minutes later, and from the seat by the door, a little bent, weird-looking woman arose, and making her way through the crowd, advanced until she stood upon the stage, then stretching her long, bony finger toward Arabella, who had returned she said, 'I am a lover of justice, and should I hold my peace, the very stones would cry out against me. Yonder young lady has no right to the prize, for the piece which she has palmed off as her own appeared in the *Woodland Gazette*, a paper published in an obscure New Hampshire village. How she came by it, she can, perhaps, explain, but I cannot.'

At the commencement of this strange speech, Arabella arose as if to defy the wo-

man, who was thus blasting her good name, but at the mention of the *Woodland Gazette* she fainted and was carried from the room. Madame Duvant now came forward and addressed a few, low spoken words to the woman, who answered aloud, 'I have the best of reasons for what I have said. My son who lives in New Hampshire, occasionally sends me the *Gazette*, and in one number, which came nearly a year ago, appeared this very article, taken originally from an old English paper.'

'Prove it! Produce the paper!' fiercely ejaculated Mrs. Greenleaf, as she left the room in quest of her daughter.

'I can do so,' answered the woman; 'I never tore up a newspaper in my life, and if the audience will wait for the space of ten minutes, I can show them the very article'—saying which she glided noiselessly from the room.

She was a strange, half-crazy old creature, of wonderful memory, who occupied a small cottage in the suburbs of the village, and many doubts were expressed as to the veracity of her statement. But these were soon put to flight by her reappearance. Unfolding the dingy yellow paper, she read aloud to her astonished hearers the article which proved to have been taken from the *London Examiner*. There was no longer a shadow of doubt, and the prize was withdrawn from the treacherous Arabella, and as Mildred's composition was pronounced the next in order, it was bestowed upon her.

Mortified, indignant and almost frantic at this public disgrace, Arabella finally confessed to having stolen the piece from a paper sent her some months before by a former schoolmate. The next morning she left the village, heaping her pent-up wrath upon the head of her innocent cousin, who was destined in more ways than one to rival her.

Three months had passed away since the night of the exhibition, and in a private parlour at a London hotel sat George Clayton, rather impatiently awaiting the return of his servant from the post-office. As yet he had received no letter from Arabella, for though she had written it had failed to reach him, and while in the Old World was marvelling at her long delay, she in the New was wondering why he did not answer. The mortification which she had endured affected her deeply, bringing on at last a slow fever, which confined her to her bed, where for weeks she lay, carefully attended by Mildred, who once, when she complained of George's neglect, suggested the possibility of his not having received the letter. This was a new idea to Arabella, and as she was

herself unable to write, she persuaded Mildred to do it for her, and strange to say, the two letters reached their destination at the same time.

With eager haste George took them from his servant, who soon went out leaving him alone. The handwriting of both was not alike, and in some trepidation the young man broke the seal of the one bearing the more recent date. It was beautifully written, and mentally complimenting the fair writer, George opened the other, uttering an exclamation of surprise ere he had read a dozen lines. It was sickly, sentimental affair, taken partly from an old letter writer, and containing many highflown sentences concerning the 'pearling rill,' the 'silvery starlite' and the 'rozy mora,' which, being spelled as they were, presented a most formidable aspect to the fastidious young man.

Although Arabella had taken much pains with her letter, at least one-fourth of the words were misspelt, and by the time George had finished reading, he entertained no other feeling towards the writer than the one of disgust, to think that, with all her showy accomplishments, she had neglected what to him was the most important of all, for in nothing is the ignorance of a young lady more apparent than in a badly-spelled letter. It was a long time ere he answered it, and then the few lines which he wrote were so cold, so different from his first, that in a fit of anger Arabella tossed it into the fire, repenting the act the moment after, and, as if to make amends, writing in return a long letter, to which there came no response, and thus the correspondence ended.

Eighteen months later, and again Madame Duvant's rooms were crowded to overflowing, but this time Arabella Greenleaf was not there, though George Clayton was, eagerly watching each word and movement of Mildred Graham, whose uncle had insisted upon her remaining at school until she, too, should graduate, and who now, justly, received the highest honours of her class. Very beautiful looked the young girl, and as she modestly received the compliments of her friends, George Clayton's was not the only

admiring eye which rested upon her, for many now paid her homage.

That night George asked to see her alone. His request was granted, and when next she parted from him it was as his betrothed. Immediately after George's return from Europe, he had heard the story of Arabella's perfidy, and if no other circumstances had interposed to wean him from her entirely, this alone would have done it, for he could not respect a woman who would thus meanly stoop to deception. He had lingered in G— for the purpose of renewing his former acquaintance with Mildred, the result of which we have seen.

Mortified beyond measure, Arabella heard of her cousin's engagement, and when George came at last to claim his bride, she refused to see him, wilfully absenting herself from home that she should not witness the bridal, which took place one bright October morning, when the forest trees, as if in honour of the occasion, were dressed in their most gorgeous robes, and the birds were singing their farewell songs.

New misfortunes, however, awaited poor Arabella, for scarcely was Mildred gone to her southern home when the red flag of the auctioneer waved from the windows of Mr. Greenleaf's luxurious house, which, with its costly furniture, was sold to the highest bidder, and the family were left dependent upon their own exertions for support. When the first shock was over, Mr. Greenleaf proposed that his daughter should teach, and thus bring into use her boasted accomplishments. For a time Arabella refused, but hearing at last a situation which she thought might please her, she applied for it by letter. But alas, the mistake she made when she abandoned the spelling-book for the piano, again stood in the way, for no one would employ a teacher so lamentably ignorant of orthography. Nor is it at all probable she will ever rise higher than her present position—that of a plain sewer—until she goes back to first principles, and commences again the despised column beginning with 'baker'!

THE END.

DIAMONDS.

'The boys mustn't look at the girls, and the girls must look on their books,' was said at least a dozen times by the village school-master, on that stormy morning when Cora Blanchard and I—she in her brother's boots, and I in my father's socks—waded through drift after drift of snow to the old brown school-house at the foot of the long, steep hill.

We were the only girls who had dared to brave that wintry storm, and we felt amply repaid for our trouble, when we saw how much attention we received from the ten tall boys who had come—some for fun—some because they saw Cora Blanchard go by—and one, Walter Beaumont, because he did not wish to lose the lesson of the day. Our teacher, Mr. Grannis, was fitting him for college, and every moment was precious to the white-browed, intellectual student, who was quite a lion among us girls, partly because he never noticed us as much as did the other boys. On this occasion, however, he was quite attentive to Cora, at least, pulling off her boots, removing her hood, and brushing the large snow-flakes from her soft wavy hair, while her dark brown eyes smiled gratefully upon him, as he gave her his warm seat by the stove.

That morning Cora wrote to me slyly on her slate:—'I don't care if mother does say Walter Beaumont is poor as poverty—I like him best of anybody in the world—don't you?'

I thought of the big red apple in my pocket, and of the boy who had so carefully shaken the snow from off my father's socks, and answered, 'no'—thinking, the while, that I should say yes, if Walter had ever treated me as he did my playmate and friend Cora Blanchard. She was a beautiful young girl, a favourite with all, and possessing, as it seemed, but one glaring fault—a proneness to estimate people for their wealth rather than their worth. This in a measure was the result of her home-training, for her family, though far from being rich, were very aristocratic, and strove to keep their

children as much as possible from associating with the 'vulgar herd,' as they styled the labouring class of the community. In her secret heart Cora had long cherished a preference for Walter, though never, until the morning of which I write, had it been so openly avowed. And Walter, too, while knowing how far above him she was in point of position, had dared to dream of a time when a bright-haired-woman, with a face much like that of the girlish Cora, would gladden his home, wherever it might be.

That noon, as we sat around the glowing stove, we played as children will, and it came my turn to answer truly whom I intended to marry.' Without a thought of the big apple, the snowy socks, or of any one in particular, I replied unhesitatingly—'The one I love best,' and the question passed on to Cora, who was sitting by the side of Walter Beaumont. He had not jointed in our sport, but now his eye left his book and rested upon Cora with an expression half fearful, half expectant. She, too, glanced at him, and as if the spirit of prophecy were upon her, she said—'I shall not marry the one I love the best, but the one who has the most money, and can give me the handsomest diamonds. Sister Fanny has a magnificent set, and she looks so beautiful when she wears them.'

Instantly there fell a shadow on Walter Beaumont's face, and his eye returned again to the Latin lettered page. But his thoughts were not of what was written there; he was thinking of the humble cottage on the borders of the wood, of the rag-carpet on the oaken floor, of the plain old-fashioned furniture, and of the gentle, loving woman who called him 'her boy,' and that spot her home. There were no diamonds there—no money—and Cora, if for these she married, would never be his wife. Early and late he toiled and studied, wearing his threadbare coat and coarse brown pants—for an education, such as he must have, admitted of no useless expenditure, and the costly gems which Cora craved were not his to give. In

the pure, unselfish love springing up for her within his heart, there were diamonds of imperishable value, and these, together with the name he would make for himself, he would offer her, but nothing more, and for many weeks there was a shadow on his brow, though he was kind and considerate to her as of old.

As the spring and summer glided by, however, there came a change, and when, in the autumn, he left our village for New Haven, there was a happy, joyous look upon his face, while a tress of Cora's silken hair was lying next his heart. Every week he wrote to her, and Cora answered, always showing to me what she had written, but never a word of his. 'There was too much love,' she said, 'too much good advice in his letters for me to see,' and thus the time passed on, until Walter, who had entered the junior class, was graduated with honour, and was about to commence a theological course at Andover, for he had made the ministry his choice. He was twenty-one now, and Cora was sixteen. Wondrously beautiful was she to look upon, with her fair young face, her soft brown eyes, and wavy hair. And Walter Beaumont loved her devotedly, believing too, that she in turn loved him, for one summer afternoon, in the green old woods which skirted the little village, she had sat by his side, and with the sunbeams glancing down upon her through the overhanging boughs, she had told him so, and promised some day to be his wife. Still, she would not hear of a positive engagement—both should be free to change their mind if they wished, she said, and with this Walter was satisfied.

'I have no diamonds to give you, darling,' he said, drawing her close to him; and Cora, knowing to what he referred, answered that 'his love was dearer to her than all the world besides.' Alas, that woman should be so fickle!

The same train which carried Walter away, brought Mrs. Blanchard a letter from her daughter, a dashing, fashionable woman, who lived in the city, and who wished to bring her sister Cora 'out' the coming winter. 'She is old enough now,' she wrote, 'to be looking for a husband, and of course she'll never do anything in that by-place.'

This proposition, which accorded exactly with Mrs. Blanchard's wishes, was joyfully acceded to by Cora, who, while anticipating the pleasure which awaited her, had yet no thought of proving false to Walter, and in the letter which she wrote informing him of her plan, she assured him of her unchanging fidelity, little dreaming that the promise thus made would so soon be broken!

Petted, caressed, flattered and admired, how could she help growing worldly and vain, or avoid constrasting the plain, unassuming Walter, with the polished and gayly-dressed butterfly who thronged Mrs. Burton's drawing-room. When the summer came again, she did not return to us as we had expected, but we heard of her at Saratoga, and Newport, she admired of all the admirers; while one, it was said, a man of high position and untold wealth, bid fair to win the beautiful belle. Meantime, her letters to Walter grew short and far between, ceasing at length altogether; and one day, during the second winter of her residence in the city, I received from her a package containing his miniature, the books he had given her, and the letters he had written. These she wished me to give him when next I saw him, bidding me tell him to think no more of one who was not worthy of him.

'To be plain, Lottie,' she wrote, 'I'm engaged, and though Mr. Douglass is not a bit like Walter, he has a great deal of money, drives splendid horses, and I reckon we shall get on well enough. I wish, though, he was not quite so old. You'll be shocked to hear that he is almost fifty, though he looks about forty! I know I don't like him as well as I did Walter, but after seeing as much of the world as I have, I could not settle down into the wife of a poor minister. I am not good enough, and you must tell him so. I hope he won't feel badly—poor Walter, I've kept the lock of his hair. I couldn't part with that, but, of course, Mr. Douglass will never see it. His hair is gray! Good-by.'

This was what she wrote, and when I heard from her again, she was Cora Douglass, and her feet were treading the shores of the old world, whither she had gone on a bridal tour.

In the solitude of his chamber, the young student learned the sad news from a paragraph in the city paper, and bowing his head upon the table, he strove to articulate, 'It is well,' but the flesh was weak, warring with the spirit, and the heart which Cora Blanchard had cruelly trampled down, clung to her still with a death-like fondness, and followed her even across the waste of waters, cried out—'How can I give her up?' But when he remembered, as he ere long did, that 'twas a sin to love her now, he buried his face in his hands, and called on God to help him in this his hour of need, wept such tears as never again would fall for Cora Blanchard.

The roses in the our garden were faded and the leaves of autumn were piled upon the ground, ere he came to his home again, and I had an opportunity of presenting him with the package which many months before had been committed to my care. His face was very pale, and his voice trembled as he asked me—'Where is she now?'

'In Italy,' I answered, adding that 'her husband was said to be very wealthy.'

Bowing mechanically, he walked away, and a year and a half went by ere I him again. Then he came among us our minister. The old, white-haired pastor, who for so long had told us of the Good Shepherd and the better land, was sleeping at last in the quiet graveyard, and the people had chosen young Walter Beaumont to fill his place. He was a splendid-looking man—tall, erect, and finely formed, with a most winning manner, and a face which betokened intellect of the highest order. We were proud of him, all of us—proud of our clergyman, who, on the third Sabbath in June, was to be ordained in the old brick church, before whose altar he had years ago been baptized, a smiling infant.

On the Thursday afternoon preceding the ordination, a large travelling carriage, covered with dust and laden with trunks, passed slowly through our village, attracting much attention. Seated within it was a portly, gray-haired man, resting his chin upon a gold-headed cane, and looking curiously out at the people in the street, who stared as curiously at him. Directly opposite him, and languidly reclining upon the soft cushions, was a white, proud-faced lady, who evidently felt no interest in what was passing around her, for her eyes were cast down, and her thought seemed busy elsewhere. I was sitting at my chamber window, gazing out upon them, and just as they drew near the gate, the lady raised her eyes—the soft, brown eyes, which once had won the love of Walter Beaumont, and in which there was now an unmistakable look of anguish, as if the long eyelashes, drooping so wearily upon the colourless cheek, were constantly forcing back the hidden tears. And this was Cora Douglass, come back to us again from her travels in a foreign land. She knew me in a moment, and in her face there was much of the olden look as, bending forward, she smiled a greeting, and waved toward me her white, jewelled hand, on which the diamonds flashed brightly in the sunlight.

The next morning we met, but not in the presence of the old man, her husband. Down in the leafy woods, about a quarter of a mile from Mrs. Beaumont's cottage, was a

running brook and a mossy bank, overshadowed by the aycamore and elm. This, in the days gone by, had been our favourite resort. Here had we built our play-house, washed our bits of broken china in the rippling stream—here had we watched the little fishes as they darted in and out of the deep, or eddies—here had we conned our daily tasks—here had she listened to a tale of love, the memory of which seemed but a mocking dream, and here, as I faintly hoped, I found her. With a half-joyful, half-moaning cry, she threw her arms around my neck, and I could feel her tears dropping upon my face as she whispered, 'Oh, Lottie, Lottie, we have met again by the dear old brook.'

For a few moments she sobbed as if her heart would break, then suddenly drying her tears, she assumed a calm, cold, dignified manner, such as I had never seen in Cora Blanchard. Very composedly she questioned me of what I had done during her absence, telling me, too, of her travels, of the people she had seen and the places she had visited, but never a word said she of him she called her husband. From the bank where we sat, the village grave-yard was discernible, with its marble gleaming through the trees, and at last, as her eye wandered in that direction, she said, 'Have any of our villagers died! Mother's letters were never very definite.'

'Yes,' I answered, 'Our minister, Mr. Sumner, died two months ago.'

'Who takes his place?' she asked; and as if a suspicion of the truth were flashing upon her, her eyes turned toward me with an eager, startled glance.

'Walter Beaumont. He is to be ordained next Sabbath, and you are just in time,' I replied, regretting my words the next instant for never saw I so fearful a look of anguish as that which swept over her face, and was succeeded by a cold, hard, defiant expression, scarcely less painful to witness.

She would have questioned me of him I think, had not an approaching footstep caught our ear, sending a crimson flush to Cora's hither to marble cheek, and producing on me a most unpleasant sensation, for I knew that the gray-haired man now within a few paces of us, was he who called that young creature his wife. Golden was the chain by which he had bound her, and every link was set with diamonds and costly stones, but it had rusted and eaten to her very heart's core, for the most precious gem of all was missing from that chain—love for her husband, who, fortunately for his own peace of mind, was too conceited to dream how little she cared for him. He was not handsome, and still many would have called

him a fine looking, middle-aged man, though there was something disagreeable in his thin, compressed lips and intensely black eyes—the one betokening a violent temper, and the other an indomitable will. To me he was exceedingly polite—rather too much so for my perfect ease, while toward Cora he tried to be very affectionate.

Seating himself at her side, and throwing his arm around her, he called her a 'little truant,' and asked 'why she had run away from him?'

'Half pettishly she answered, 'because I like some times to be alone,' then, rising up and turning toward me she asked if 'the water still ran over the old mill dam in the west woods just as it used to do,' saying it it did, she wished to see it. 'You can't go,' she continued, addressing her husband, 'if it is more than a mile, over fences and plowed fields.'

This was sufficient, for Mr. Douglass was very fastidious in all matters pertaining to his dress, and had no fancy for soiling his white pants, or patent leathers. So Cora and I set off together, while he walked slowly back to the village. Scarcely was he out of sight, however, when seating herself beneath a tree, and throwing herself flat upon the ground, Cora announced her intention of not going any further.

'I only wished to be alone. I breathe so much better,' she said, and when I looked inquiringly at her, she continued, 'never marry a man for his wealth, Lottie, unless you wish to become as hard, as wicked and unhappy as I am. John Douglass is worth more than half a million, and yet I would give it all if I were the same little girl who, six years ago, waded with you through the snowdrifts to school on that stormy day. Do you remember what we played that noon and my foolish remark that I would marry for money and diamonds! Woe is me, I've won them both!' and her tears fell fast on the sparkling gems which covered her slender fingers.

Just then I saw in the distance a young man whom I knew to be Walter Beaumont. He seemed to be approaching us, and when Cora became aware of that, she started up and grasping my arm, hurried away, saying, as she cast backward a fearful glance, 'I would rather die than meet him now. I am not prepared.'

For the remainder of the way we walked on in silence, until we reached her mother's gate, where we found her husband waiting for her. Bidding me good morning she followed him slowly up the gravelled walk and I saw her no more until the following Sabbath. It was a gloriously beautiful

morning, and at an early hour the old brick church was filled to overflowing, for Walter had many friends, and they came together gladly to see him made a minister of God. During the first part of the service he was very pale, and his eye wandered very often toward the large, square pew where sat a portly man and a beautiful young woman, richly attired in satin and jewels. It had cost her a struggle to be there, but she felt that she must look again on one whom she had loved so much and so deeply wronged. So she came, and the sight of him standing there in his early manhood, his soft brown hair clustering about his brow, and his calm, pale face wearing an expression almost angelic, was more than she could bear, and leaning forward she kept her countenance concealed from view until the ceremony was ended, and Walter's clear, musical voice announced the closing hymn. Then she raised her head, and her face, seen through the folds of her costly veil, looked haggard and ghastly, as if a fierce storm of passion had swept over her. By the door she paused, and when the newly-ordained clergyman passed out, she offered him her hand, the hand which, when he held it last, was pledged to him. There were diamonds on it now—diamonds of value rare, but their brightness was hateful to that wretched woman, for she knew at what a fearful price they had been bought.

They did not meet again, and only once more did Walter see her; then, from our door, he looked out upon her as with her husband she dashed by on horseback, her long cloth skirt almost sweeping the ground, and the plumes of her velvet cap waving in the air.

'Mrs. Douglass is a fine rider,' was all Walter said, and the tone of his voice indicated that she was becoming to him an object of indifference. Desperately had he fought with his affection for her, winning the victory at last, and now the love he once had felt for her was slowly and surely dying out. The next week, tiring of our dull village life, Cora left us, going to Nahant, where she spent most of the summer, and when in the winter we heard from her again, she was a widow—the sole heir of her husband who had died suddenly, and generously left her that for which she married him—his money.

'Will Walter Beaumont marry Cora now?' I asked myself many a time, without, however, arriving at any definite conclusion, when a little more than a year succeeding Mr. Douglass's death, she wrote, begging me to come to her, as she was very lonely, and the presence of an old friend would do her

good. I complied with her request, and within a few days was an inmate of her luxurious home, where every thing indicated the wealth of its possessor. And Cora, though robed in deepest black, was more life herself, more like the Cora of other days, than I had seen her before since her marriage. Of her husband she spoke freely and always with respect, saying he had been kinder far to her than she had deserved. Of Walter, too, she talked, appearing much gratified when I told her how he was loved and appreciated by his people.

One morning when we sat together in her little sewing room she said, 'I have done what you perhaps, will consider a very unwomanly act. I have written to Walter Beaumont. Look,' and she placed in my hand a letter, which she bade me read. It was a wild, strange thing, telling him of the anguish she had endured, of the tears she had shed, of the love which through all she had cherished for him, and begging of him to forgive her if possible, and be to her again what he had been years ago. She was not worthy of him, she said, but he could make her better, and in language the most touching, she besought of him not to cast her off, or despise her because she had stepped so far aside from womanly delicacy as to write to him this letter. 'I will not insult you,' she wrote in conclusion, 'by telling you of the money for which I sold myself, but it is mine now, lawfully mine, and most gladly would I share it with you.'

'You will not send him this?' I said. 'You cannot be in earnest?'

But she was determined, and lest her resolution should give way, she rang the bell, ordering the servant who appeared to take it at once to the office. He obeyed, and during the day she was unusually gay, singing snatches of old songs, and playing several lively airs upon her piano, which for months had stood unopened and untouched. That evening, when the sun went down and the full moon rose over the city, she asked me to walk with her, and we, ere long, found ourselves several streets distant from that in which she lived. Groups of people were entering a church near by, and from a remark which we overheard, we learned that there was to be a wedding.

'Let us go in,' she said, 'it may be some one I know,' and entering together, we took our seats just in front of the altar.

Scarcely were we seated when a rustling of satin announced the approach of the

bridal party, and in a moment they appeared moving slowly up the aisle. My first attention was directed toward the bride, a beautiful young creature, with a fair sweet face, and curls of golden hair falling over her white, uncovered neck.

'Isn't she lovely?' I whispered; but Cora did not hear me.

With her hands locked tightly together, her lips firmly compressed and her cheeks of an ashen hue, she was gazing fixedly at the bridegroom, on whom I, too, now looked, starting quickly, for it was our minister, Walter Beaumont! The words were few which made them one, Walter and the young girl at his side, and then the ceremony was over. Cora arose, and leaning heavily upon my arm, went out into the open air, and on through street after street, until her home was reached. Then, without a word, we parted—I going to my room, while she, through the live-long night paced up and down the long parlours where no eye could witness the working of the mighty sorrow which had come upon her.

The next morning she was calm, but very, very pale, saying not a word of last night's adventure. Neither did she speak of it for several days, and then she said, rather abruptly, 'I would give all I possess if I had never sent that letter. The mortification is harder to bear even than Walter's loss. But he will not tell of it, I'm sure. He is too good—too noble,' and tears, the first she had shed since that night, rained through her thin, worn fingers. It came at last—a letter bearing Walter's superscription, and with trembling hands she opened it, finding, as she had expected, his wedding card, while on a tiny sheet was written, 'God pity you, Cora, even as I do—Walter.'

'Walter! Walter!' she whispered, and her quivering lips touched once the loved name which she was never heard to breathe again.

From that day Cora Douglass faded, and when the autumnal days were come, and the distant hills were bathed in the hazy October light, she died. But not in the noisy city, for she had asked to be taken home, and in the pleasant room where we had often sat together, she had bade me her last good-by. They buried her on the Sabbath, and Walter's voice was sad and low as with Cora's coffin at his feet he preached from the words, 'I am the Resurrection and the life.' His young wife, too, wept over the early dead, who had well-nigh been her rival, and whose beautiful face wore a calm, peaceful smile, as if she were at rest.

There was a will, they said, and in it Walter was generously remembered, while to his wife was given an ivory box, containing Cora's diamonds—necklace, bracelets, pin and ear-rings—all were there; and Walter,

as he looked upon them, drew nearer to him his fair girl-wife, who but for these, might not, perchance, have been to him what she was—his dearest earthly treasure.

THE END.

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MAGGIE LEE.

The usually quiet little village of Ellerton was, one June morning, thrown into a state of great excitement by the news that the large stone building on the hill, which, for several years had been shut up, was at last to have an occupant, and that said occupant was no less a personage than its owner, Graham Thornton, who, at the early age of twenty-eight, had been chosen to fill the responsible office of judge of the county. Weary of city life, and knowing that a home in the country would not materially interfere with the discharge of his new duties, particularly as Ellerton was within half an hour's ride of the city, young Thornton had conceived the idea of fitting up the old stone house, bequeathed to him by his grandfather in a style suited to his abundant means and luxurious tastes. Accordingly, for several weeks, the people of Ellerton were kept in a constant state of anxiety, watching, wondering and guessing, especially Miss Olivia Macey, who kept a small store in the outskirts of the village, and whose fertile imagination supplied whatever her neighbours lacked in actual knowledge of the proceedings at "Greystone Hall," as Judge Thornton called his place of residence.

At last, every thing was completed, and the day appointed for the arrival of the Judge, who, disliking confusion, had never once been near his house, but after a few general directions, had left the entire arrangement of the building and grounds to the management of one whom he knew to be a connoisseur in such matters. As was very natural, a great deal of curiosity was felt concerning the arrival of the distinguished stranger, and as his mother, a proud, stately woman, was to accompany him, Miss Olivia Macey, who boasted of having once been a school mate of the haughty lady, resolved upon meeting them at the depot, thinking she should thereby show them proper respect.

'So Maggie,' said she to her niece, a dark-haired, white-browed girl of fifteen, who, at noon, came bounding in from school, 'so

Maggie, you must watch the store, for there's no knowing how long I shall be gone. Miss Thornton may ask me home with her, and it would not be polite to refuse.'

For an instant Maggie's dark brown eyes danced with mischief as she thought how improbable it was that the lofty Mrs. Thornton would seek to renew her acquaintance with one in Miss Macey's humble position, but the next moment they filled with tears, and she said, 'Oh, aunt, must I stay from school again? It is the third time within a week. I never shall know anything!'

'Never mind, Mag,' shouted little Ben, tossing his cap across the room and helping himself to the largest piece of pie upon the dinner-table. 'Never mind. I'll stay with you, for I don't like to go to school anyway. And we'll get our lessons at home.'

Maggie knew how useless it would be to argue the point, so with a dejected air she seated herself at the open window and silently watched her aunt until she disappeared in the distance—then taking up her book, she tried to study, but could not, for the heavy pain at her heart which kept whispering of injustice done to her, unconsciously, perhaps, by the only mother she had ever known. Very dear to Miss Macey were the orphan children of her only sister, and faithfully did she strive to fulfil her trust, but she could not conceal the partiality for fun-loving curly-haired Ben, nor the fact that the sensitive and ambitious Maggie, who thirsted for knowledge, was wholly unappreciated and misunderstood. Learning—learning was what Maggie craved, and she sat there alone that bright June afternoon, holding upon her lap the head of her sleeping brother, and watching the summer shadows as they chased each other over the velvety grass in the meadow beyond, she wondered if it would be ever thus with her—would there never come a time when she could pursue her studies undisturbed, and then, as she thought that this day made her fifteen years of age, her mind went forward to the future, and she said aloud—'Yes—three years from to-day

and I shall be free—free as the air I breathe!

But why that start, sweet Maggie Lee? Why that involuntary shudder as you think of the long three years from now? She cannot tell, but the shadows deepened on her fair, girlish face, and leaning her brow upon her hand, she thinks long and earnestly of what the three years may bring. A footstep on the floor—the first which has fallen that afternoon—and Maggie looks up to see before her a tall, fine-looking man, who, the moment his eyes fell upon her, checked the whistle, intended for his dog, which was trembling on his lip, and lifting his hat deferentially, he asked if 'this were Miss Macey's store?'

'Yes, sir,' answered Maggie, and laying Bennie gently down, she went around behind the counter, while the young man, gazing curiously at her, continued, 'You surely are not Miss Macey?'

There was a most comical expression in the brown eyes which met the black ones of the stranger, as Maggie answered, 'No sir, I am nobody but Maggie Lee.'

There must have been something attractive either in the name or the little maiden who bore it, for long after the gentleman had received the article for which he came, he lingered, asking the young girl numberless questions and playing with little Ben, who, now wide awake, met his advances more than half way, and was on perfectly familiar terms both with the stranger and the dog Ponto, who had stretched his shaggy length before the door.

'Mag cries, she does, when Aunt Livy makes her stay home from school,' said Ben, at last, beginning to feel neglected and wishing to attract attention.

Showing his white, handsome teeth, the gentleman playfully smoothed the silken curls of little Ben, and turning to the blushing Maggie, asked 'if she were fond of books?'

'Oh, I love them so much,' was the frank, impulsive answer, and ere ten minutes had passed away, Judge Thornton, for he it was, understood Maggie's character as well as if he had known her a lifetime.

Books, poetry, music, paintings, flowers, she worshipped them all, and without the slightest means either of gratifying her taste.

'I have in my library many choice books, to which you are welcome at any time when you will call at Greystone Hall,' the stranger said at last.

'Greystone Hall!' gasped Maggie, the little red spots coming out all over her neck and face—'Greystone Hall!—then you must be—'

'Judge Thornton, and your friend here—'

after,' answered the gentleman, offering his hand and bidding her good-by.

There are moments which leave their impress upon one's lifetime, changing instantaneously, as it were, our thoughts and feelings, and such an one had come to Maggie Lee, who was roused from a deep reverie by the shrill voice of her aunt, exclaimed, 'Well, I've been on a Tom-fool's errand once in my life. Here I've waited in that hot depot over two trains, and heard at the last minute that Mrs. Thornton and her son came up last night, and I hain't seen them after all. It's too bad.'

Very quiet Maggie told of the judge's call, repeating all the particulars of the interview; then stealing away to her chamber, she thought again, wondering where and what she would be three years from that day.

A year had passed away, and Graham Thornton, grown weary of his duties, has resigned the office of judge, and turned school-teacher, so the gossiping villagers say, and with some degree of truth, for regularly each day Maggie Lee and Ben go up to Greystone Hall, where they recite their lessons to its owner, though always in the presence of its lady mistress, who has taken a strange fancy to Maggie Lee, and whose white hands has more than once rested caressingly on the dark, glossy hair of the young girl. To a casual observer, the Maggie of sixteen is little changed from the Maggie of fifteen years; but to him, her teacher, she is not the same, for while in some respects she is more a woman and less a child, in everything pertaining to himself she is far more a child than when first he met her one short year ago. Then there was about her a certain self-reliance, which is now all gone, and he who has looked so often into the thoughts and feelings of the childish heart knows he can sway her at his will.

'But 'tis only a girlish friendship she feels for him,' he says; 'only a brotherly interest he entertains for her; and so day after day she comes to his library, and on a low stool, her accustomed seat at his side, she drinks in new inspirations with which to feed that girlish friendship, while he, gazing down into her soft, brown, dreamy eyes, feels more and more how necessary to his happiness is her daily presence there. And if sometimes the man of the world asks himself 'where all this will end?' his conscience is quieted by the answer that Maggie Lee merely feels toward him as she would any person who had done her a like favour. So all through the bright summer days and through the hazy autumn time, Maggie dreams on, perfectly happy, though she

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knows not why, for never yet has a thought of love for him entered her soul. She only knows that he to her is the dearest, best of friends, and Greystone Hall the loveliest spot on earth, but the wish that she might ever be its mistress has never been conceived.

With the coming of the holidays the lessons were suspended for a time, for there was to be company at the hall, and its master would need all his leisure.

'I shall miss you so much,' he said to Maggie, as he walked with her across the fields which led to her humble home. 'I shall miss you, but the claims of society must be met, and these ladies have long talked of visiting us.'

'Are they young and handsome?' Maggie asked involuntarily.

'Only one—Miss Helen Deane is accounted a beauty. She is an heiress, too, and the best match in all the city of L—,' answered Mr. Thornton, more to himself than Maggie, who at the mention of Helen Deane felt a cold shadow folding itself around her heart.

Alas poor Maggie Lee. The world has long since selected the proud Helen as the future bride of Graham Thornton, who, as he walks slowly back across the snow-clad field, tramples upon the delicate footprints you have made, and wishes it were thus easy to blot out from his heart all memory of you! Poor, poor Maggie Lee, Helen Deane is beautiful, far more beautiful than you, and when in her robes of purple velvet, with her locks of golden hair shading her soft eyes of blue, she flits like a sunbeam through the spacious rooms of Greystone Hall, waking their echoes with her voice of the richest melody, what marvel if Graham Thornton does pay her homage, and reserves all thoughts of you for the midnight hour, when the hall is still and Helen's voice no longer heard? He is but a man—a man, too, of the world, and so, though you, Maggie Lee, are very dear to him, he does not think it possible that he can raise you to his rank—make you the honoured mistress of his home, and still lower himself not an iota from the station he has ever filled. And though his mother loves you, too, 'tis not with a mother's love, and should children ever climb her knee calling her son their sire, she would deem you a governess befitting such as they, and nothing more. But all this Maggie does not know, and when the visiting is over and Helen Deane is gone, she goes back to her old place and sits again at the feet of Graham Thornton, never wondering why he looks so oft into her eyes of brown, trying to read there that he has not wronged her.

* * * * *
Another year has passed, and with the light of the full moon shining down upon him, Graham Thornton walks again with Maggie Lee across the fields where now the summer grass is growing. The foot-prints in last winter's snow have passed away just as the light will go out from Maggie's heart when Graham Thornton shall have told the story he has come with her to tell. With quivering lips and bloodless cheek she listened while he told her indifferently, as if it were a piece of news she had probably heard before, that when the next full moon should shine on Greystone Hall, Helen Deane would be there—his bride!

'This, of course, will effectually break up our pleasant meetings,' he continued, looking every where save in Maggie's face. 'And this I regret—but my books are still at your disposal. You will like Helen, I think, and will call on her of course.'

They had reached the little gate, and, taking Maggie's hand, he would have detained her for a few more parting words, but she broke away, and in reply to his last question, hurriedly answered, 'Yes, yes.'

The next moment he was alone—alone in the bright moonlight. The door was shut. There was a barrier between himself and Maggie Lee, a barrier his own hands had built, and never again, so long as he lived, would Graham Thornton's conscience be at rest. Amid all the pomp of her bridal day—at the hour when, resplendent with beauty, Helen stood by his side at the holy altar, breathed the vows which made his forever—amid the gay festivities which followed, and noisy mirth which for days pervaded his home, there was ever a still, small voice which whispered to him of the great wrong he had done to Maggie Lee, who never again was seen at Greystone Hall.

Much the elder Mrs. Thornton marvelled at her absence, and once when her carriage was rolling past the door of the little store, she bade her coachman stop, while she herself went in to ask if her favourite was ill. Miss Olivia's early call at Greystone Hall had never been returned and now she bowed coldly and treated her visitor with marked reserve, until she learned why she had come, then, indeed, her manner changed, but she could not tell her how, on the night when Graham Thornton had cruelly torn the veil from Maggie's heart, leaving it crushed and broken, she had found her long after midnight out in the tall, damp grass, where, in the wild abandonment of grief she had thrown herself; nor how, in a calmer moment she had told her sad story, exonerating him from wrong, and blaming only her.

self for not having learned sooner how much she loved one so far above her, so she simply answered, 'Yes, she took a violent cold and has been sick for weeks. Her mother died of consumption; I'm afraid Maggie will follow.'

'Poor girl, to die so young,' sighed Mrs. Thornton, as she returned to her carriage and was driven back to Greystone Hall, where, in a recess of the window Graham sat, his arm around his wife, and his fingers playing with the curls of her golden hair.

But the hand dropped nervously at his side when his mother startled him with the news that 'Maggie Lee was dying.' Very wonderingly the large blue eyes of Helen followed him, as, feigning sudden faintness, he fled out into the open air, which, laden through it was with the perfume of the summer flowers, had yet no power to quiet the voice within which told him that if Maggie died, he alone was guilty of her death. 'But whatever I can do to atone for my error shall be done,' he thought at last, and until the cold November wind had blasted the last bud, the choicest fruit and flowers which grew at Greystone Hall daily found entrance to the chamber of the sick girl, who would sometimes push them away, as if there still lingered among them the atmosphere they had breathed.

'They remind me so much of the past that I can not endure them in my presence,' she said one day, when her aunt brought her a beautiful bouquet, composed of her favourite flowers, and the hot tears rained over the white, wasted face, as she ordered them from the room.

Much she questioned both her aunt and Bennie of her rival, whose beauty was the theme of the whole village, and once, when told that she was passing, she hastened to the window, but her cheek grew whiter still, and her hands clasped each other involuntarily as she saw by the side of the fair Helen the form of Graham Thornton. They both were looking towards her window, and as Helen met the burning gaze, she exclaimed, 'Oh, Graham, it is terrible. It makes me faint,' and shudderingly she drew nearer to her husband, who, to his dying hour, never forgot the wild, dark eyes which looked down so reproachfully upon him that memorable wintry day.

* * * * *

Three years have passed away since the time when first we met with Maggie Lee—three years which seemed so long to her then, and which have brought her so much pain. She has watched the snow and ice as they melted from off the hill-side. She has seen

the grass spring up by the open door—his heard the robin singing in the old oak tree—has felt the summer air upon her cheek. She has reached her eighteenth birthday, and ere another sun shall rise will indeed be free.

'Oh, I cannot see her die,' cried poor little Ben, when he saw the pallor stealing over her face, and running out into the yard he threw himself upon the grass, sobbing bitterly, 'My sister, oh, my sister.'

'Is she worse?' said the voice of Graham Thornton.

He was passing in the street and had heard the wailing cry. Ben knew that in some way Judge Thornton was connected with his grief, but he answered respectfully, 'She is dying. Oh, Maggie, Maggie. What shall I do without her?'

'You shall live with me,' answered Mr. Thornton.

'Twas a sudden impulse, and thinking the assurance that her brother should be thus provided for would be a comfort to the dying girl, he glided noiselessly into the sick room. But she did not know him, and falling on his knees by her side, he wept like a little child. 'She was sleeping,' they said, at last, and lifting up his head, he looked upon her as she slept, while a fear, undefined and terrible, crept over him, she lay so still and motionless. At length rising to his feet, he bent him down so low that his lips touched hers, and then, without a word, he went out from her presence, for he knew that Maggie Lee was dead!

The next day, at sunset they buried her in the valley where the mound could always be seen from the window of Graham Thornton's room, and, as with folded arms and aching heart he stood by, while they lowered the coffin to its resting-place, he felt glad that it was so. 'It will make me a better man,' he thought, 'for when evil passions rise, and I am tempted to do wrong, I have only to look across the fields towards the little grave which but for me would not have been made so soon, and I shall be strengthened to do what is right.'

Slowly and sadly he walked away, going back to his home, where, in a luxuriously furnished chamber, on a couch whose silken hangings swept the floor, lay his wife, and near her his infant daughter, that day four weeks of age. As yet she had no name, and when the night had closed upon them, and it was dark within the room, Graham Thornton drew his chair to the side of his wife, and in low, subdued tones, told her of the fair young girl that day buried from his sight. Helen was his wife, a gentle, faithful wife, and he could not tell her how much he had loved Maggie Lee, and that but for his fool-

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MAGGIE LEE.

ish pride she would perhaps at that moment have been where Helen was, instead of sleeping in her early grave. No, he could not tell her this, but he told her Maggie had been very dear to him, and that he feared it was for the love of him that she had died. 'I wronged her, Nellie, darling,' he said, smoothing the golden tresses which lay upon the pillow. 'I broke her heart, and now that she is gone I would honour her memory by calling our first-born daughter Maggie Lee. 'Tis a beautiful name,' he continued, 'and you will not refuse my request.'

There was much of pride in Helen Thornton's nature, and she did refuse, for days and even weeks; but when she saw the shadows deepened on the brow of her husband, who would stand for hours looking out through the open window towards the valley where slept the village dead, and when the mother, in pity of her son, joined also in the request, she yielded; and, as if the sacrifice were accepted and the atonement good, the first smile which ever dimpled the infant's cheek, played on its mouth, as with its large, strange, bright eyes fixed upon its father's face, it was baptized 'Maggie Lee.'

* * * * *
Four years of sunshine and storm have fallen upon Maggie's grave, where now a costly marble stands, while the handsome iron fence and the well-kept grounds within show that some hands of love is often busy there. In a distant city Ben is striving to overcome his old dislike for books, and seeking to make himself what he knows his sister would wish him to be. At home, the little

store has been neatly fitted up, and Miss Olivia sits all the day long in her pleasant parlour, feeling sure that the faithful clerk behind the counter will discharge his duties well. Greystone Hall is beautiful as ever, with its handsome rooms, its extensive grounds, its winding walks, its bubbling fountains and its wealth of flowers, but there is a shadow over all—a plague-spot which has eaten into the heart of Graham Thornton, and woven many a thread of silver among his raven locks. It has bent the stately form of his lady mother, and his once gay-hearted wife wanders with a strange unrest from room to room, watching over the uncertain footsteps of their only child, whose large, dark eyes, so much like those which, four long years ago flashed down on Helen their scrutinizing gaze, are darkened forever, for little Maggie Lee is blind!

They are getting somewhat accustomed to it now—accustomed to calling her their 'poor, blind bird,' but the blow was crushing when first it came, and on the grave in the valley, Graham Thornton more than once laid his forehead in the dust, and cried, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.'

But He 'who doeth all things well,' has in a measure healed the wound, throwing so much of sunshine and of joy around her, who never saw the glorious light of day, that with every morning's dawn and every evening's shade, the fond parents bless their little blind girl, and angel of their home.

THE END.

THE ANSWERED PRAYER.

All day long the canary bird had sung unheeded in his gilded cage by the door, and the robin had carolled unheard by his nest in the tall maple tree, while the soft summer air and the golden rays of the warm June sun entered unnoticed through the open windows of the richly furnished rooms, where a pale young mother kept her tireless watch by the bedside of her only child, a beautiful boy, three summers old. For many days he had hovered between life and death, while she, his mother, had hung over him with speechless agony, terrible to behold in one so young, so fair as she. He was her all, the only happiness she knew, for poor Lina Hastings was an unloving wife, who never yet had felt a thrill of joy at the sound of her husband's voice, and when occasionally his broad hand rested fondly upon her flowing curls, while he whispered in her ear how dear she was to him, his words awoke no answering chord of love.

How came she then his wife—and the mistress of his princely home? Alas! wealth was then the god which Lina Moore worshipped, and when Ralph Hastings, with his uncouth form and hundreds of thousands asked her to be his wife, she stifled the better feelings of her nature which prompted her to tell him No, and with a gleam of pride in her deep blue eyes, and a deeper glow upon her cheek, she one day passed from the bright sunshine of heaven into the sombre gloom of the gray old church, whence she came forth Lina Hastings, shuddering even as she heard that name, and shrinking involuntarily from the caresses which the newly made husband bestowed upon her. And so the love she withheld from him was given to the child who now lay motionless and white as the costly linen on which his golden curls were streaming.

All day she had watched him, for they told her that if he lived until the sun setting, there was hope, and as the hours wore on and the long shadows, stretching to the eastward, betokened the approach of night, oh, how intense became the anxiety in her bosom.

Fainter and softer grew the sunlight on the floor, and whiter grew the face of the sleeping boy. 'Twas the shadow of death, they said, and with a bitter wail of woe, Lina fell upon her knees, and as if she would compel the God of Heaven to hear her, she shrieked, 'Spare my child. Let him live, and I will bear whatsoever else of evil thou shalt send upon me. Afflict me in any other way and I can bear it, but spare to me my child.'

In mercy or in wrath, Lina Hastings' prayer was answered. The pulse grew stronger beneath her touch—the breath came faster through the parted lips—a faint moisture was perceptible beneath the yellow curls, and when the sun was set the soft eyes of Eddie Hastings unclosed, and turned with a look of recognition upon his mother, who, clasping him in her arms, wept for joy, but returned no word or thought of gratitude toward him who had been thus merciful to her.

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In a small brown cottage in a distant part of the same village, another mother was watching beside her first-born, only son. They had been friends in their girlhood, she and Lina Hastings. Together they had conned the same hard tasks—together they had built their playhouse beneath the same old chestnut tree—together, hand in hand, had they wandered over the rocky hills and through the shady woods of New England, and at the same altar had they plighted their marriage vows, the one to the man she loved, the other to the man she tolerated for the sake of his surroundings. From this point their path diverged, Lina moving in the sphere to which her husband's wealth had raised her, while Mabel Parkham one sad morning awoke from her sweet dream of bliss to find herself wedded to a drunkard! Only they who like her have experienced a similar awakening, can know the bitterness of that hour, and yet methinks she was happier than the haughty Lina, for her love was no idle passion, and though weal and woe she clung to her husband, living oft on

the remembrance of what he had been, and the hope of what he might be again, and when her little Willie was first laid upon her bosom, and she felt her husband's tears upon her cheek, as he promised to reform for her sake and for his son's, she would not have exchanged her lot with that of the proudest in the land. That vow, alas, was ere long broken, and then, though she wept bitterly over his fall, she felt that she was not desolate, for there was music in her Willie's voice and sunshine in his presence.

But now he was dying, he was leaving her forever, and she thought of the long, dark days when she should look for him in vain: she staggered beneath the heavy blow, and in tones as heart broken as those which had fallen from Lina Hastings' lips, she prayed, 'If it be possible let this cup pass from me,' adding, 'Not my will, oh God, but thine be done.'

'I will do all things well,' seemed whispered in her ear, and thus comforted she nerved herself to meet the worst. All the day she watched by her child, chafing his little hands, smoothing his scanty pillow beneath his head, bathing his burning forehead, and forcing down her bitter tears when in his disturbed sleep he would beg of his father to 'bring him an orange—a nice yellow orange—he was so dry.'

Alas, that father was where the song of the inebriate rose high on the summer air, and he heard not the pleadings of his son. 'Twas a dreary, desolate room, where Willie Parkham lay, and when the sun went down and the night shadows fell, it seemed darker, drearier still. On the rude table by the window a candle dimly burned, but as the hours sped on it flickered awhile in its socket, then for an instant flashed up, illuminating the strangely beautiful face of the sleeping boy, and went out.

An hour later, and Willie awoke. Feeling for his mother's hand, he said, 'Tell me true, do drunkards go to heaven?'

'There is for them no promise,' was the wretched mother's answer.

'Then I shall never see pa again. Tell him good-by, good-by forever.'

The next time he spoke it was to ask his mother to come near to him, that he might see her face once more. She did so, bending low and stifling her own great agony, lest it should add one pang to his dying hour.

'I cannot see you,' he whispered. 'It is so dark—so dark.'

Oh, what would not that mother have given then for one of the lights which gleamed from the windows of the stately mansion where Eddie Hastings was watched by care-

ful attendants. But it could not be, and when at last the silvery moon-beams came struggling through the open window and fell upon the white brow of the little boy they did not rouse him, for a far more glorious light had dawned upon his immortal vision—even the light of the Everlasting.

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In her tasteful boudoir sat Lina Hastings, and at her side, on a silken lounge, lay Eddie, calmly sleeping. The crisis was past—she knew he would live, and her cup of happiness was full. Suddenly the morning stillness was broken by the sound of a tolling bell. 'Twas the same which, but for God's mercy, would at that moment, perhaps, have tolled for her boy, and Lina involuntarily shuddered as she listened to the strokes, which, at first, were far between. Then they came faster, and as Lina counted five, she said aloud, 'Twas a child but two years older than Eddie.'

Later in the day it came to her that the bereaved one was her early friend, whom now she seldom met. Once Lina would have flown to Mabel's side, and poured into her ear words of comfort, but her heart had grown hard and selfish, and so she only said, 'Poor Mabel, she never was as fortunate as I'—and her eyes glanced proudly around the elegantly-furnished room, falling at last upon Eddie, whom she clasped to her bosom passionately, but without thought of Him who had decreed that not then should she be written childless.

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The humble funeral was over. The soft, green turf had been broken, and the bright June flowers had fallen beneath the old sexton's spade as he dug the little grave where Willie Parkham was laid to rest. In the drunkard's home there was again darkness and a silence which would never be broken by the prattle of the childish voice. Sobered, repentant, and heartbroken, the wretched father laid his head in the lap of his faithful wife, beseeching of her to pray that the vow that morning breathed by Willie's coffin and renewed by Willie's grave might be kept unbroken. And she did pray, poor Mabel. With her arms around the neck of the weeping man, she asked that this, her great bereavement, might be sanctified to the salvation of her erring husband.

'I will do all things well,' again seemed whispered in her ear, and Mabel felt assured that Willie had not died in vain. 'Twas hard at first for Robert Parkham to break the chains which bound him, but the remembrance of Willie's touching message—'Tell pa good-bye, good-bye forever,' would rush to his mind whenever he essayed to

take the poisonous bowl, and thus was he saved, and when the first day of a new year was ushered in, he stood with Mabel at the altar, and on his upturned brow received the baptismal waters, while the man of God broke to him the bread of life. Much that night they missed their child, and Mabel's tears fell like rain upon the soft, chestnut curls she had severed from his head, but as she looked upon her husband, now strong again in his resorted manhood, she murmured—'It was for this that Willie died, and I would not that it should be otherwise.'

* * * * *

Fifteen years have passed away since the day when Lina Hastings breathed that almost impious prayer—'Send upon me any evil but this,' and upon the deep blue waters of the Pacific a noble vessel lay becalmed. Fiercely the rays of a tropical sun poured down upon her hardy crew, but they heeded it not. With anxious, frightened faces and subdued step, they trod the deck, speaking in whispers of some dreaded event. There had been mutiny on board that man-of-war—a deep-laid plot to murder the commanding officers, and now, at the sunset, the instigators, four in number, were to pay the penalty of their crime. Three of them were old and hardened in sin, but the fourth, the fiercest spirit of all 'twas said, was young and beautiful to look upon. In the brown curls of his waving hair there were no threads of silver, and on his brow there were no lines save those of reckless dissipation, while his heedless cheeks were round and smooth as that of a girl. Accustomed from his earliest childhood to rule, he could not brook restraint, and when it was put upon him, he had rebelled against it, stirring up strife, and leading on his comrades, who, used as they were to vice, marvelled that one so young should be so deeply depraved.

The sun was set. Darkness was upon the mighty deep, and the waves moved by the breeze which had sprung up, seemed to chant a mournful dirge for the boy who, far below,

lay sleeping in a dishonored grave, if grave it can be called, where

"The purple mullet and gold fish rove,
Where the sea flowers spreads its leaves of blue
Which never are wet with the falling dew,
But in bright and changeful beauty shine
Far down in the depths of the glassy brine."

Over the surging billow and away to the northward, other robins are singing in the old maple-tree than those which sang there years ago, when death seemed brooding o'er the place. Again the summer shadows fall aslant the bright green lawn, and the soft breeze laden with the perfume of a thousand flowers, kiss the faded brow of Lina Hastings, but they bring no gladness to her aching heart, for her thoughts are afar on the deep with the wayward boy who, spurning alike her words of love and censure, has gone from her 'to return no more forever,' he said, for she felt in her bitter anger. For three years the tall grass has grown over the grave of her husband, who to the last was unloved, and now she is alone in her splendid home, watching at the dawn of day and watching at the hour of eve for the return of her son.

Alas, alas, fond mother, Mabel Parkham in her hour of trial, never felt a throb of such bitter agony as that which wrung your heart-strings when first you heard the dreadful story of your disgrace. There were days and weeks of wild frenzy, during which she would shriek 'Would to Heaven he had died that night when he was young and innocent,' and then she grew calm, sinking into a state of imbecility from which naught had power to rouse her.

A year or two more, and they made for her a grave by the side of her husband, and the hearts which in life were so divided, now rest quietly together, while on the costly marble above them there is inscribed the name of their son, who sleeps alone and unwept in the far-off Southern Seas.

THE END.

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