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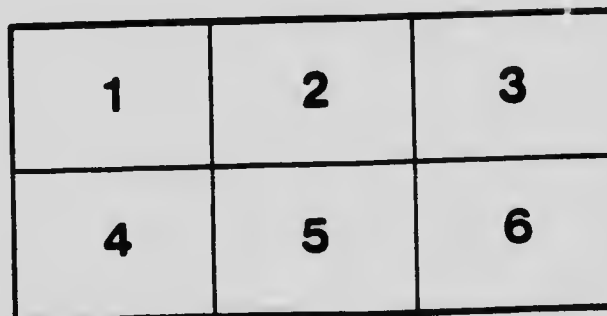
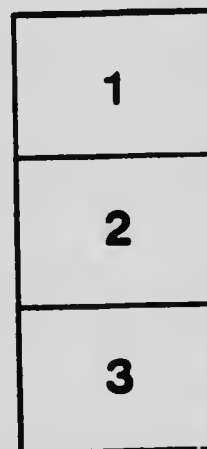
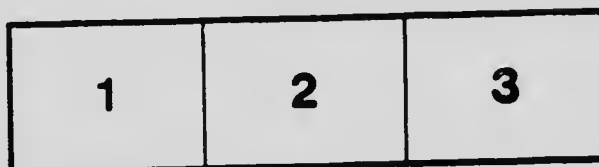
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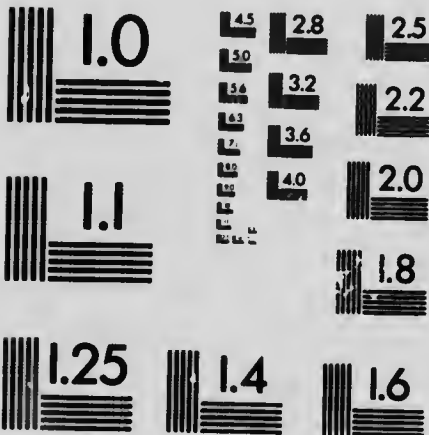
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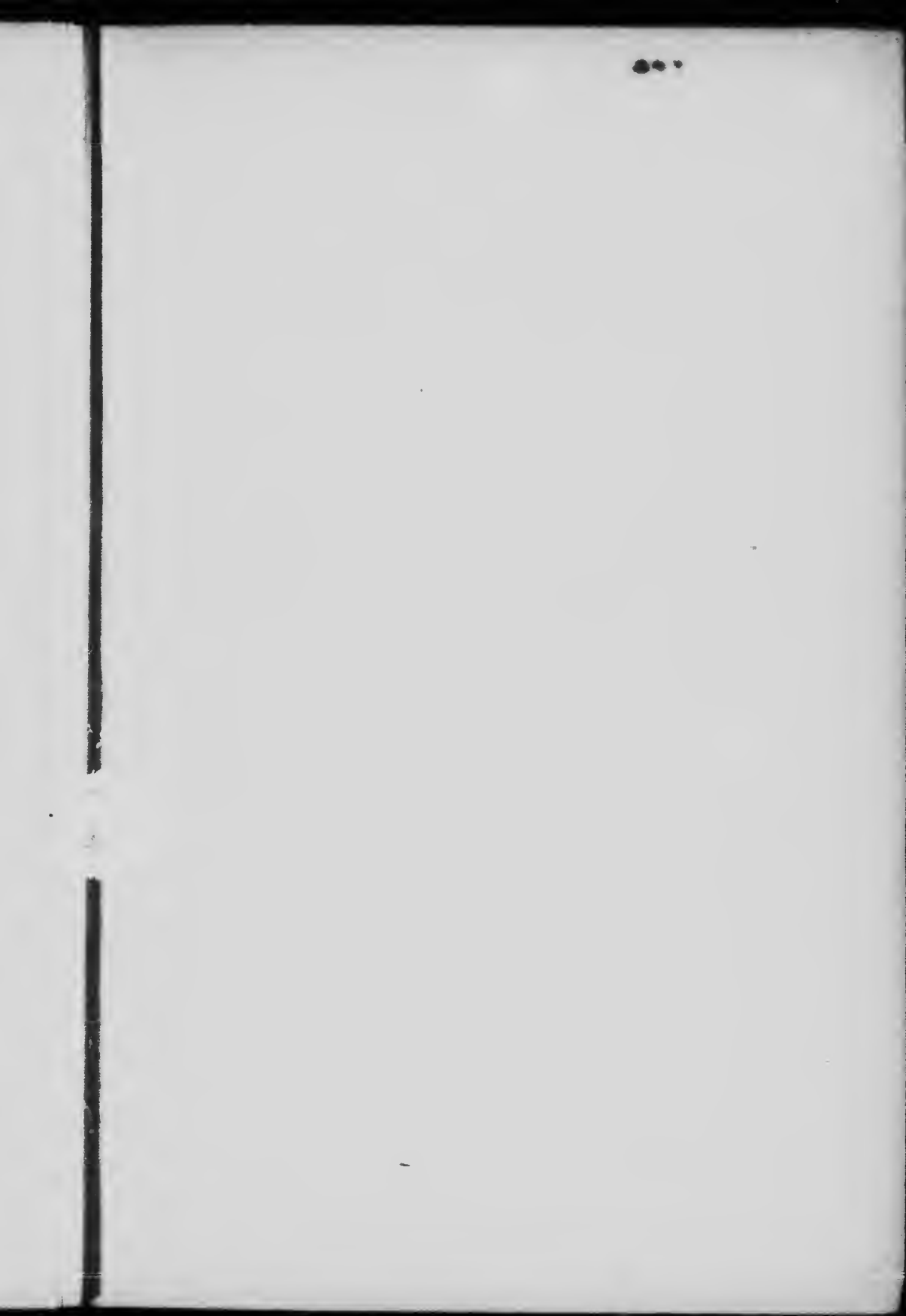
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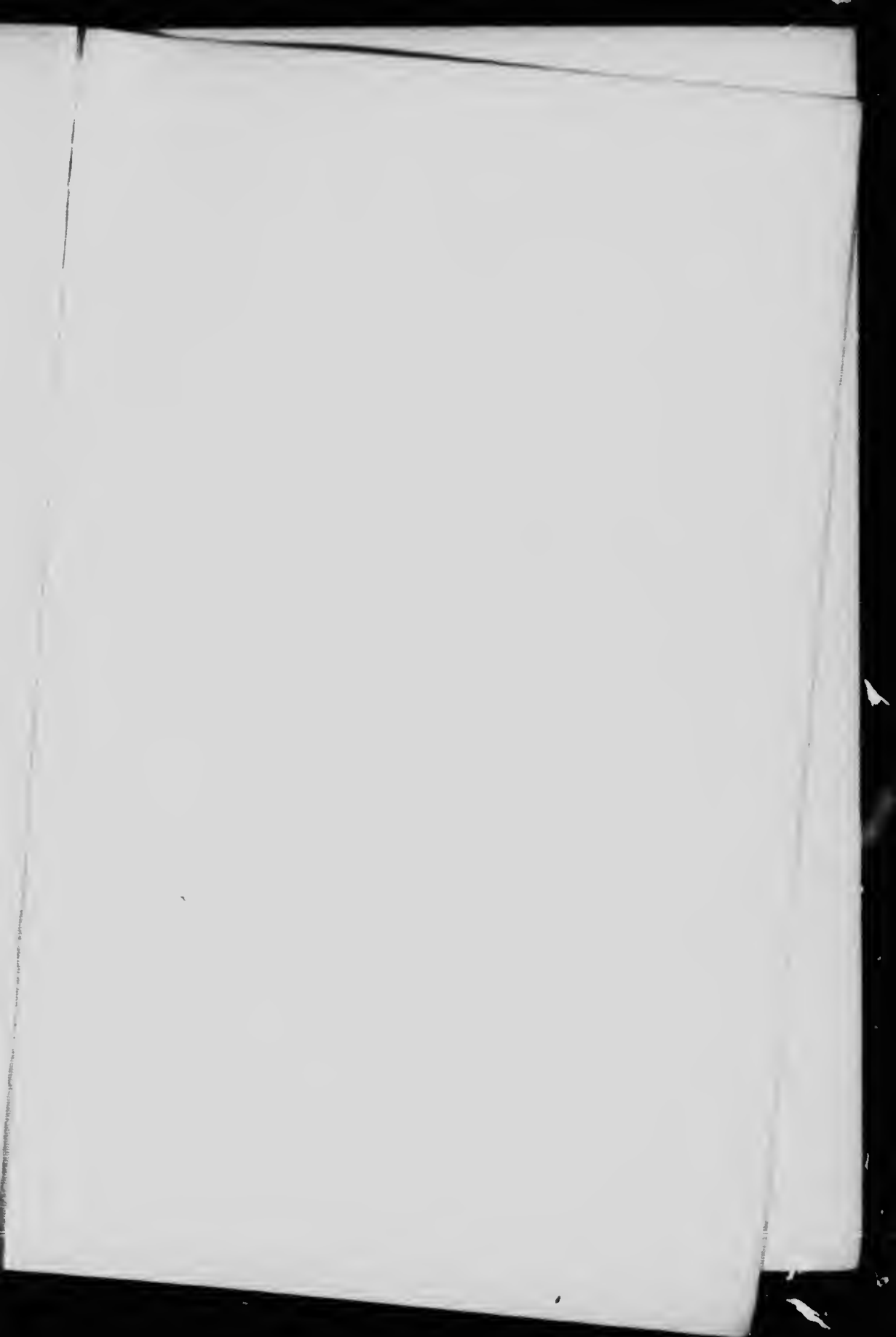
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SUNSHINE JANE

ANNE
WARNER







SUNSHINE JANE

1875-1876

1875-1876





"Auntie Susan, it's Aunt Matilda and Mr. Beamer."

FRONTISPIECE. See Page 265.

SUNSHINE JANE

BY

ANNE WARNER

AUTHOR OF "THE REJUVENATION OF AUNT MARY," "SUSAN
CLEGG AND HER FRIEND, MRS. LATHROP," ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

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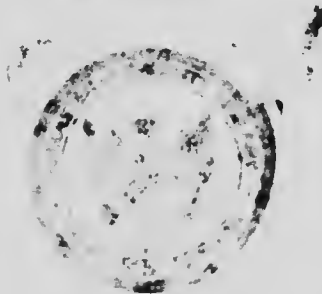
TORONTO

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL IGNORANCE

THERE was something pathetic in the serene unconsciousness of the little village as the stage came lumbering down the hillside, bearing its freight of portent. So many things were going to be changed forever after, — and no one knew it. Such a vast difference was going speedily to make itself felt, and not a soul was aware even of what a bigger soul it was so soon to be. Old Mrs. Croft, clear at the other end of town and paralyzed for twenty years, hadn't the slightest conception of what a leading part was being prepared for her to play. Poor Katie Croft, her daughter-in-law and slave, whose one prayer was for freedom, dreamed not that the answer was

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now at last coming near. Mrs. Cowmull, sitting on her porch awaiting the "artist who had advertised," knew not who or what or how old he might be or the interest that would soon be hers. Poor Emily Mead, shelling peas on the bench at the back of her mother's house, frowned fretfully and, putting back her great lock of rich chestnut hair with an impatient gesture, wished that she might see "just one real man before she died," — and the man was even then jolting towards her. Miss Debby Vane, putting last touches to the flowers on her guest-room table, where Madeleine would soon see them, was also sweetly unaware of the approach of momentous events. She thought but of Madeleine, the distant cousin whose parents wanted to see if absence would break up an obnoxious love affair, and so were sending her to Miss Debby, who was "only too pleased."

"A love affair," she whispered rapturously. "A *real* love affair in this town!" And then she pursed her lips delightfully,

GENERAL IGNORANCE

never guessing that she was to see so much besides.

Meanwhile Miss Matilda Drew stood looking sternly out of her sister Susan's window, considering if there were any necessary yet up to now forgotten point to be impressed upon Jane the instant that she should arrive. Miss Matilda was naturally as ignorant as all the rest,—as ignorant even as poor Susan, lying primly straight behind her on the bed. Susan was a widow and an invalid, not paralyzed like old Mrs. Croft, but pretty helpless. Matilda had lived with her for five years and tended her assiduously, as she grew more and more feeble. Now Matilda was "about give out," and — "just like a answer out of a clear sky," as Matilda said — their niece Jane, whom neither had seen since she was a mite in curls fifteen years ago, had written to ask if she might spend her holiday with them. They had said "Yes," and Matilda was going away for a rest while Jane kept house and waited on

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her poor old aunt. Jane was one of the passengers now rattling along in the stage. She differed widely from the others and from every one else in the village, but all put together, they formed that mass known to literature as "the situation." I think myself that it was the rest that formed "the situation" and that Jane formed "the key," but I may be prejudiced. Anyway, "key" or not, Miss Matilda's niece was a sweet, brown-skinned, bright-haired girl, with a happy face, great, beautiful eyes, and a heart that beat every second in truer accord with the great working principles of the universe. She was the only one among them now who had a foot upon the step that led to the path "higher up." And yet because she was the only one, she had seen her way to come gladly and teach them what they had never known; not only that, but also to learn of them the greatest lesson of her own life. So we see that although conscious of both hands overflowing with gifts, Jane really

GENERAL IGNORANCE

was as ignorant, in God's eyes, as all the rest. She had gone far enough beyond the majority to know that to give is the divinest joy which one may know, but she had not gone far enough to realize that in the greatest outpouring of generosity which we can ever give vent to, a vacuum is created which receives back from those we benefit gifts way beyond the value of our own. "I shall bring so much happiness here," ran the undercurrent of her thought; she never imagined that Fate had brought her to this simple village to fashion herself unto better things.

So all, alike unaware — those in the stage and those awaiting its advent with passengers and post — drew long, relieved breaths as it passed with rattle and clatter over the bridge and into the main street.

CHAPTER II

EVERYBODY GETS THERE

JANE sat on the rear seat with old Mr. Cattermole, who was coming home to his daughter, Mrs. Mead.

"Ever been here before?" old Mr. Cattermole asked her.

"No, never."

"Hey?"

"No, never."

"Once?"

"Never."

"What?"

"Never!"

"I'll tell you what it is," said Mr. Cattermole, beaming benevolently, "it's the jolting. It keeps me from hearing what you say."

Jane nodded, smiling.

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But old Mr. Cattermole wasn't long inconvenienced by the jolting.

"Who you going to stop with?" he asked next.

"Mrs. Ralston and Miss Drew."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Ralston and Miss Drew."

"Who? I don't hear you."

"Miss Drew."

"The Crews? — There ain't no such people in town."

"Miss Drew!" Jane became slightly crimson.

"I'll tell you," said Mr. Cattermole, "we'll wait. I can't hear. Really I can't."

The next minute they arrived at Mrs. Cowmull's, since she lived in the first house on the street. Lorenzo Rath, the artist, who had been sitting on the middle seat with Madeleine, now pressed her hand, twisted about and shook Jane's, nodded to old Mr. Cattermole, leaned forward and dragged his suit-case from under the seat, and then wriggled out, over

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two boxes and under a flapping curtain, and down on to the sidewalk. Mrs. Cowmull was standing on the porch, trying to look hospitable and unconscious at the same time. "Here," said the stage driver, suddenly delivering Lorenzo's trunk on to the top of his head, — "and here's the lampshade and the codfish, — they get down here, too."

Lorenzo couldn't help laughing. "Au revoir," he cried, waving the lampshade as the steps began to move.

"We'll meet again soon," Madeleine cried, her face full of bright color.

"Yes, of course."

Then they were off.

"Seemed a nice young feller," said old Mr. Cattermole to Jane.

"Yes." She tried to speak loudly.

"Hey!"

"Yes."

"I'll tell you," said old Mr. Cattermole benevolently, "you come and see my granddaughter Emily, and then we'll talk. My

EVERYBODY GETS THERE

granddaughter's a great student. You'll like her. She's full of the new ideas and new books and all that. We're very proud of her. Only she don't get married."

Then the stage stopped, and Mrs. Mead came running out. "Oh, Father, did you buy the new magazines, — on the train, you know?"

Old Mr. Cattermole was descending backwards with the care of a cat in an apple-tree. "It's my daughter," he said to Jane. "I can always hear her because she speaks so plain. Yes, Emma, it *was* dusty, very dusty."

"This lawn-sprinkler is your's, ain't it?" said the stage driver, jerking it off the roof into Mrs. Mead's arms. "Here's his bag, too."

And then they went on again. Madeleine now had space to turn about. "You'll come and see me?" she asked Jane earnestly; "it'll be so nice. We're both strangers here."

"I'll try," Jane answered, "but I shall

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be closely tied to the house. Aunt Susan is an invalid, you see. I'll not only have all the work, but if I go out, that poor sick woman will be left helpless and alone up-stairs."

"Perhaps I can come and see you, then," said Madeleine. "I'll have the time to come, if you'll have the time to see me."

"I don't know anything about what my life will be," said Jane. "As I told you on the train, I've only seen my aunts once in my life and that was fifteen years ago. But I should think that you could come and see us. I should think that a little company would do Aunt Susan a lot of good. I'm sure that it would, in fact. But she may not like to see strangers. I really don't know a thing about it. I'm all in the dark."

"I'll come and ask if I may come," said Madeleine brightly. "If she sees me, maybe she'll like me. Most everybody does." She laughed.

"I'm sure of that," Jane said, laughing,

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too. Then the stage stopped at Miss Debby Vane's, and Miss Debby came flying down to embrace her cousin. "Thanks be to God that you're here safe, my dear. These awful storms at sea have just about frightened me to death."

"But I was on land, Aunt Deborah." Madeleine, in getting down, had gotten into a warm embrace at the same time.

"I know, dear, I know. But one can't remember that all the time — can one?" Miss Debby was kissing her over and over.

"Your step-ladder. Look out!" cried the stage driver, and they had barely time to jump from under.

Then Madeleine reached up and clasped Jane's hand. "We shall be friends," she said earnestly; "I've never met any one whom I've liked quite in the same way that I like you. Do let us see all that we can of one another."

"I want to, I know," Jane answered.

The stage driver was already remounting his seat.

SUNSHINE JANE

"Au revoir," Madeleine cried, just as Lorenzo had done.

"Just for a little," Jane called back, and then she was alone in the stage, rattling down the long, green-arched street to its furthest end.

"There goes the stage," Katie Croft called out to her mother-in-law in the next room. "Now Miss Drew'll have her niece and be able to get away for a little rest."

"If it was a daughter-in-law, she couldn't, maybe," said a voice from the next room; "the rest is going to be poor, sweet Susan Ralston's, anyhow. Oh, my Susan Ralston, my dear, sweet Susan Ralston, my loving Susan Ralston, where I used to go and call!"

"Why, Mother, you haven't so much as thought of Mrs. Ralston for years." Katie's voice was very sharp.

"Nobody knows what I think of," wailed the voice from the other room. "My thoughts is music. They fly and sing all

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night. They sing Caw, Caw, and they fly like feathers."

Katie Croft walked over and shut the door with a bang. Katie was almost beside herself.

The stage now drew up before the Ralston house.

Miss Matilda quitted the window, where she had stood watching for an hour, and went to the gate. Her emotions were quite tumultuous—for her. Single-handed she had tended her sister for five years, and now she was going to have a rest. She had had very trying symptoms, and the doctor had advised a rest,—three weeks of freedom, night and day. She was going away on a real holiday, going back to the place where she had taught school before the summons had come to cherish, love, and protect her only sister, who was not strong and had property. It seemed like a dream,—a wild, lively, and joyful dream. She almost smiled as she thought of what was at hand.

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Jane descended, her small trunk came bang down beside her in the same instant, and the driver was paid and drove off. The aunt and niece then turned to go into the house.

"Well, and so it's you!" Matilda's tone and glance were slightly inquisitorial, and more than slightly dictatorial. "I'm glad to see you're strong. You'll need be. She's an awful care. She ain't up much now. Isn't up at all sometimes for weeks. Sleeps considerable. Take off your hat and coat and hang them there. That's the place where they belong."

Jane obeyed without saying anything. But her smile spoke for her.

"Hungry?" inquired Matilda.

"A little."

"I surmised you would be and waited supper. Thought you'd see how I fixed hers then. She's eating very little. Less and less all the time. There's a garden to weed, too. Awful inconvenient out there across two stiles. But she won't give it

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up. She pays me to tend it, or I'd let the dandelions root it out in short order. But I tend it."

They had gone into the kitchen, where a kettle stewed feebly over a half-dead fire. "Sit down," said Matilda. "I'll fix her supper first. She takes her tea cold, so I save it from morning and heat it up with a little boiling water, *so*. Then there's this bit of fish I saved from day before yesterday, and I cut a piece of bread. No butter, because her stomach's delicate. You'll see that she'll hardly eat this. Watch now."

Jane sat and watched, still smiling.

"Mr. Rath, the artist, came down in the stage with you, didn't he?" Miss Matilda went on. "What kind of a young man was he? Somebody'll tell you, so it might as well be me, what's brought him here. Mrs. Cowmull's trying to marry off her niece, Emily Mead. There aren't any men in town, so she advertised. She gave it out that she wanted a boarder, but everybody

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see through that. That's what marriage has come to these days, catching men to board 'em and then marrying them when they're thinking of something else. I thank Heaven I ain't had nothing to do with any marriage. They're a bad business. There, that's your supper."

Jane started slightly. Her own cold fish and lukewarm tea sat before her. "Shan't I take Aunt Susan's up first?" she asked, recollecting that she still had some lunch in her bag, and that Matilda would be leaving early in the morning.

"No need. She likes things cold. You ought to see her face if she gets anything boiling in her mouth. It's no use to give her nothing hot. You'd think it was a snake. I give it up the third time she burnt her."

"But I ought to go up and see her, I think; she hasn't seen me since I was such a little girl."

"No need. You go ahead and enjoy your supper without bothering over her.

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She knows you're here, and she isn't one that's interested in things. She'll read an old shelf paper for hours, but carry her up a new paper and like as not when you get to bed with it, you'll find her asleep. She sleeps a lot."

Jane — thus urged — picked the chilled fish with a fork and considered.

"I'll show you about the house after you've done eating," the aunt continued presently; "it's easy taken care of, for I keep it all shut up. Just Susan's room and mine and the kitchen is open. The neighbors won't bother you, for I give them to understand long ago as I wasn't one with time to waste. There isn't any one in the place that a woman with any sense would want to bother with, anyhow."

"I don't fancy that I'll have time to be lonesome," smiled Jane, bravely swallowing some tea.

"You'd have if it wasn't for the garden. I don't know whatever in the world makes Susan set such store by that garden. She

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will have it that it shall be kept up in memory of her husband, and you never saw such weeds. I've often sat down backwards when one come up — often."

"I can't see it at all," with a glance out of the window.

"You can't from here. And it's got to be watered, and she counts every pot full of water from her bed. She can hear me pumping. The birds dig up the seeds as fast as I can plant 'em, and I never saw no sense in slaving in the sun over what you can buy in the shade any day. — Are you done?"

"Yes, I'm done."

"Then come on."

"Can I spread the tray?"

"Tray! She doesn't have a tray. What should I fuss with a tray for, when I've got two hands?"

Jane rose and stood by the table in silence, watching the cup filled from the standing teapot and the plate ornamented with a lonely bit of fish and a slice of bread. "Don't you butter the bread?"

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"She's in bed so much she mustn't have rich food," Matilda answered; "there, now it's ready. Come on."

"Shan't I carry anything?"

"I can take it, I guess. I've carried it alone for five years; I guess I can manage it to-night."

Jane followed up the stairs in silence; Matilda marched ahead with a firm, heavy tread.

"Shall I knock for you?"

"I don't know what for. She yells anyway, whenever I come in, whether she's knocked or not. Just open the door."

Jane opened the door gently, and they went in together. The room was half darkened, and only a little sharp nose showed over the top of the bedquilt.

"Here's your supper," said the affectionate sister, "and here's Jane."

A shrill cry was followed by two eyes tipping upward beyond the nose. "Oh, are you Jane?" There was a lot of pathos in the tone.

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The girl moved quickly to the bedside. "I hope that we're going to be very happy," she said; "we must love one another very much, you know."

The invalid hoisted herself on to an elbow and looked towards the plate which Matilda was holding forth.

"Oh, my ! Fish again !" she wailed.

Later — on their way back to the kitchen fire — Matilda said significantly: "Most ungrateful person I ever saw, she is. But just don't notice what she says. It's the only way to get on. I keep her room tidy and I keep her house clean and I keep her garden weeded. I'm careful of her money, and she's well fed. I don't know what more any one could ask, but she ain't satisfied and she ain't always polite, but you'll only have three weeks of what I've had for five years, so I guess it won't kill you."

"Oh, I think that I'll be all right," Jane answered cheerfully.

"The stage is ordered for seven in the

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morning, and I shall get up at half-past four," the aunt continued. "You can sleep till five just as well. I'm going to bed now, and you'd better do the same thing."

"Yes, I think so," said Jane cheerfully; "good night."

CHAPTER III

MATILDA TEACHES

MATILDA seated herself bolt upright on one of the kitchen chairs and drew a hard, stiff sigh.

"It'll be a great rest to get away," she said, "more of a rest than any one but me will ever know. You see, she's left all she's got to me in her will, so I'm bound in honor to keep a pretty sharp watch over everything. I can't even take a chance at her sinking suddenly away, with the room not picked up or a cobweb in some high corner. I've seen her will, and she ain't left you a cent, so you won't have the same responsibility. It'll be easier for you."

"I'll do my very best," said Jane.

"The trouble is I'm too conscientious,"

MATILDA TEACHES

said Matilda. "I was always conscientious, and she was always slack. It's an awful failing. It's a warning, too, for now there she lays, snug as a bug in a rug, and me with New Asthma in my arm from tending her and the house."

"You'll get over all that very soon," said the niece soothingly.

Matilda glanced at her suspiciously. "No, I shan't. I may get better, but I shan't get over it. It's a nerve trouble and can't never be completely cured. A doctor alligator it, but he can't cure it. I'll have it till I die."

Jane was silent.

"You wrote that you were some kind of a nurse. What kind did you say you were?"

"I'm a Sunshine Nurse."

"A Sunshine Nurse! What's that? Some new idea of never pulling down the shades?"

Jane laughed. "Not exactly. It's an Order just founded by a doctor. He picked

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out the girls himself, and he sends them where he chooses for training."

"What's the training?"

Jane looked at her and hesitated a little. "I expect you'll laugh," she said finally; "it does sound funny to any one who isn't used to such ideas. We go to see the sun as always shining, and always shine ourselves, and our training consists in going where there isn't any brightness and being bright, and going where there isn't any happiness and teaching happiness."

"Sounds to me like nonsense," said Matilda, rising abruptly; "don't you go letting up the sitting-room shades and fading the upholstering, — that's all I've got to say. Come now and I'll show you about locking up, and then we'll go to bed."

Jane obeyed with promptness and was most observant and attentive. Matilda loaded her with behests and instructions and seemed appreciative of the intelligence with which they were received.

MATILDA TEACHES

"I wouldn't go in for nothing fancy," she said, as they completed their task; "the less you stir up her and the house, the easier it'll be for me when I come back. You don't want to ever forget that I'm coming back, and don't put any fancy ideas into her head. There's plenty to do here without going out of your way to upset my ways."

"I'll remember," said Jane.

Then they started up-stairs, and a few minutes later the Sunshine Nurse was alone in her own room, free to stand quietly by the window and let her outward gaze form a bond between the still beauty of a country night and the glad vision of work in plenty, and that of a kind which Miss Matilda couldn't prohibit, because she knew not the world in which such work is done.

"Not —" said Jane to herself with a little whimsical smile — "not but what I'm 'most sure that my teaching will be manifest in a lot of material changes, too,

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but by the time that she comes back, her own feelings will be sufficiently 'alligatored' so that she'll see life differently also. God's plan is just as much for her good in sending her away as it is for mine in sending me here, and I mustn't forget that for a minute. I'll be busy and she'll be busy, and we'll both be learning and we'll both be teaching and we'll both be being necessary."

She drew a chair close and sat down, full of her own bright and helpful thoughts. Much of love and wonder came flooding into her through the medium of the sweet, calm night without. "It's like being among angels," she fancied, and felt a close companionship with those who had known the Great White Messengers face to face.

Long she sat there, praying the prayer that is just one indrawn breath of content and uplifted consciousness. Not many girls of twenty-two would have seen so much in that not unusual situation, and yet it was to her so brimful of fair possibilities

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that she could hardly wait for morning to begin work.

When she rose to undress, when she climbed into the plain, hard bed that received her so kindly, when she slept at last, all was with the same sense of responsibility mixed with energetic intention. All that she had "asked" in the usual sense of "asking in prayer" had been "to be shown exactly how," and because she was one of those who know every prayer to be answered, in the hour of its making she knew that to be answered, too. "I'll be led along," was her last thought before sleeping, and it swept the fringe of her consciousness, leaving her to enter dreamland with the happy security of a trusting child.

It really seemed no time at all before Matilda rapped loudly on her door, bringing her suddenly to the knowledge that the hour to begin all the longed-for work was at hand.

"Five o'clock!" Matilda howled gently through the crack.

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"Yes, yes," she cried in response.

The door opened a bit wider. "You'd better get right up or you'll go to sleep again," Matilda said, putting her head in, "right this minute."

"Yes, I will."

She sat up in bed to prove it.

"All right," said her aunt — and shut the door.

Jane had unpacked her small trunk the night before, and so was able to dress quickly and get down-stairs without a minute wasted. She found Matilda in the kitchen, very busy with the stove.

"I do hope you'll remember what I said last night," she said, shoveling out ashes with an energy that filled the room with dust. "I can't have her habits all upset. It'll be no good giving me this change if you go and spoil her. Remember that."

"I won't make any trouble," promised Jane. "I'll always remember that you're coming back."

As she spoke, she saw again the thin,

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hopeless face on the pillow up-stairs and knew that Matilda herself was to know a glad surprise over the change which should welcome her home-coming. It was the learning to instantly realize the better side of those who insisted on exhibiting their worst that was the leading force in the training of that beaming little Order to which she belonged. The Sunshine Nurses were forbidden to consider anything or anybody as fixedly wrong either in kind, conception, or working out. It would be a very comfortable way of looking at things — even for such mere, ordinary, everyday folk as you and me.

Matilda now said, “Ugh, ugh!” over the dust and proceeded to dive into the wood-box with one hand and get a sliver in her thumb.

“In the morning she has tea,” she said, going to the window to put her hand to rights. “One cup. Piece of bread. At noon, whatever is handy. Night, cup of tea and whatever she fancies. Bread or a

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cracker usually. She eats very little and less all the time. The cat eats more than she does. He's a snooper, that cat, — you'll have to watch out."

Jane didn't seem to understand. "A — a snooper?"

"Steals food. Awful thief. Slap him when you catch him at it; it's all you can do. Sometimes I throw water over him. He'll make off with what would be a meal for a hired man, and he's sly as any other thief."

"Can't I help you with your hand?"

"No, you can't. I get lots of them. They bother me a little because Mrs. Croft's cousin died of blood-poison from one. There, it's out. What was I saying? Oh, yes, the cat."

"Where is she now?"

"It's a he. Named Alfred for her husband. He's up in her room now. Always sleeps on her bed. She will have him, and I humor her. She's my only sister and she can't live long and she's left me all her

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money, and I humor her. It's my plain duty."

"Is it healthy for an invalid to sleep with a cat?"

"No, it ain't. But I promised to do whatever she said about the cat and the garden, and I do."

"I'm sure it's very good in you," Jane murmured, looking out of the window.

"It is. I'm a good woman. I do my whole duty, and there's not many in a town this size can say as much."

"Where is the garden?"

"I'll show you, if you don't mind getting your feet wet. I have my rubbers on already, to travel, so I can go right there now while the fire is kindling."

"Is it wet?"

"Most grass is wet, at five in the morning."

Jane wanted to laugh. "I mean, isn't there a path?"

"Part way, and then you have to climb two fences."

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"Climb! Two!" the niece turned in surprise.

"Climb two fences. You never saw such a place. The strip between is rented for a cow-pasture. That's why there's two fences."

"But why not have gates?"

"Don't ask me. Find out if you can. I've lived here five years, and I ain't found out. You try and see if you'll do better. She's very secretive, and so was he before he died. I've just had to get along the best I could. She fails and fails steady, but it don't seem to affect her health none, and now at last it's affected mine instead and give me neophytes in my left arm."

Jane turned her head and looked some more out of the window.

"We'll go now. Might as well. The kettle will get to boiling while we're away, and then we'll have breakfast. It boils slow, because I've got the eggs in it for my lunch. Come on."

The question of the wet grass seemed to

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have faded. They went out the kitchen door. It was a clear, bright morning. "Weedy weather," commented Matilda, and led the way down the path.

"It's a pretty place," said Jane, her eyes roaming happily.

"Yes, I suppose so. But it takes an artist or some one who hasn't lived in it for five years to feel that way." She paused to climb the first fence. It was three rails high and very awkward. "I'll go over first," she said. "Think of it; I've done this six times a day for five years."

Jane didn't wonder that she was so agile at it. "But how funny to have a garden away off here!" she said.

Matilda was now over on the other side. "Yes, and think of keeping it up. Folks about here make no bones of telling me that they were both half-witted, only as she's my sister, they try to give me to understand as she caught it from him. He was a miser, you know."

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Jane was just getting her second leg over. "I don't know a thing about him," she said.

"Well, you will, soon enough. The neighbors'll come flocking as soon as I'm gone, and you'll soon know all there is to know about us all. They'll pick me to pieces, too, and tell you I'm starving Susan to death, but I don't care. Climbing these fences has hardened me to calumny."

They crossed the strip of cow-pasture, and Matilda got over another fence, saying as she did so: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," leaving Jane to make the application and follow her at the same time.

Then they found themselves in a trim little garden.

"How sweet," said the niece.

"You can see I've done my duty by it, too," said Matilda; "that's my way. I'm hard and I ain't pretty to look at, but I do my duty, which is more'n most handsome women do. Every last bean here is

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clawed around like it ought to be, and the whole thing neat as wax. Same with Susan; you'd think from her face I'd murdered her, and yet the Recording Angel knows she's had a cold sponge and every last snarl combed out of her hair every day since I came. I don't boast, but I do work."

"Dear me, it's a long way from the house," said Jane, forgetting her higher philosophy for the minute.

"It's a good ten minutes to get here. A picking of peas is a half-hour's job. And ten to one, when I get back, the cat's been at the cream."

Jane had had time to remember. "I can see you've been awfully good," she said warmly, "and my, but you've worked hard. Everything shows that."

Matilda's face flushed with pleasure, the sudden pathetic flushing of unexpected appreciation. "I just have," she declared. "I've worked hard all my life and done a lot of good, and nobody's ever bothered

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to thank me. She don't. She just lays there and lets me run up and down stairs and climb fences and dig weeds and scamper back and forth with a extra hike, when I hear the bell of the door, till it'll be a mercy if I don't get neophytes all over, and the New Asthma in both legs, *I think.*"

After a brief tour of the tiny whole, devoted mainly to instructing the novice, Matilda led the way back to the house.

"Does it ever need watering?" Jane asked, lapsing again to a lower level.

"Sometimes," said Matilda briefly. Jane hadn't the heart to say another word until — several steps further on — it occurred to her that the garden also could be only a good factor in God's plan, if she wreathed it and shrined it and saw it in her world, as He saw all His world on the day when it was first manifest and set. "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

CHAPTER IV

JANE BEGINS SUNSHINING

THE stage came for Matilda at eight o'clock. For half an hour before it could possibly be due, the traveler sat ready on a chair in the hall, with her umbrella tightly gripped in both hands, delivering bits of useful information as they occurred to her.

"Be careful to lock up well every night."

"Remember if she dies sudden, I shall want to know at once."

"Don't look to enjoy yourself, but remember you're doin' a act of Christian charity."

Jane sat on a small, hard ottoman in the corner by the whatnot and said: "I'll try," or "Yes, indeed," every time.

"You're a good girl," the aunt said

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finally. "I'm glad to know you. Those Rainy-day Cooks or whatever you call yourself —"

"Sunshine Nurse."

"Yes, of course, — well, it's a good idea. I feel perfectly sure you'll do everything you know how."

"Yes, I will," said Jane, resolving all over fresh that everything was going to come out fine, even to the return of Matilda herself.

"There, I hear the stage on the bridge," said her aunt, jumping to her feet suddenly. "I must go and say good-by to Susan."

"Isn't she still asleep?"

"It doesn't matter. She's my only living sister, and it's my duty to wake her up."

She rushed up-stairs, and a feeble little yell from above soon announced her duty done. Then followed a brief hum and jabber, and then she came running down again.

"Feels bad to see me go," she said briefly. "That's natural, as she's turned over to

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you body and soul and ain't the least idea what you're like. I told her it was no more chances than every child run just being born, and a third of them lived, but she never could see reason, — kind of clung to my arm, — she's my only sister, and it makes me feel bad." With which hasty statement Matilda gave a brief dab to each eye, put up her pocket-handkerchief, and opened the front door. Jane had her bag in her hand, and they had carried the trunk to the gate before.

The stage was empty, and the driver was tying the trunk-strap with a rope.

"Well, good-by," said Matilda; "remember to lock up well every night."

"Yes, I will," said Jane. "I hope you'll have a good time and a splendid change."

"I'm sure of the change," said Matilda, swinging herself up with an agility bred of her liberal diet on stiles. "Five years, — will you only think of it?"

The driver picked up the reins, gave them a slap, and the expedition was off.

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Matilda Drew was really "gone off on a visit."

"Think of it," said Katie Croft, who, despite her town-name of "Katie," was a gray-haired woman of fifty. "Think of it! A vacation! What luck some folks have. I shall never have a vacation in all —" her voice ceased, and she continued sweeping down the steps, the stage passing out of sight as she did so.

Meanwhile Jane had re-entered the house and carefully closed the door after her. She felt curiously freed in spirit, and that subtly supreme joy of seeing a helplessly bad situation delivered bound and gagged into one's hands to be mended was hers.

"I'll go straight and ask about auntie's breakfast first," she thought, mounting the staircase. To her light tap at the door, a feeble "come in" responded. She entered then and observed, with a slight start, that the invalid had just been up. The blind was drawn, and a pair of kicked-off slippers betrayed a hasty jump back

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into bed. Her eyes sought Susan's in explanation. "I didn't know that you could move about," she said, with a pleased look.

Susan's little, sharp nose had an apologetic appearance, as it showed over the sheet-fold. "I can get about a little, days when I'm strong," she explained, "and I wanted to see her off. I wanted to see if she really did go." She paused, gave a sharp choke and gasp, and then waited.

Jane leaned over and kissed her forehead. "I will try very hard to make you comfortable and happy," she said gently.

Susan rather shrunk together in the bed. "What kind of a girl are you, anyhow?" she asked suddenly and sharply. "Are you really religious, or do you only just go to church?"

"I try to do what's right," her niece answered simply.

The invalid contemplated her intently. "It can be pretty hard living with any one that tries to do right," she said. "My

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experience is that good people is often more trying than bad ones. Maybe it's just that I've had more to do with them, though. I suppose Matilda told you about everything and the garden and all?"

"Yes, I think I know what to see to."

"And the cat? — and his stealing?"

"Yes, she told me about him."

"The garden must be weeded," Susan pronounced, sinking down deep into the bed. "Don't you ever forget that. And that cat has got to be fed — and well fed, too — even if he does steal."

Jane watched her disappear beneath the bedclothes.

"Auntie," she said, "I've got lots of funny ideas, and one of them is that it's wicked not to be just as happy as possible every minute. Now I'm to be here three weeks, and I think that I ought to be able to make them a real change for you as well as for Aunt Matilda. We'll begin with your breakfast. You tell me what you like best, and I'll fix it for you —"

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Susan's head came up out of the bed-clothes with the suddenness of a boy rising from a dive. "If I can have anything I want," she cried, "I want some hot tea — some boiling hot tea, some tea made with water that's boiling as hard as it can boil. And I want the pot hot. Burning hot before the tea goes in."

Jane started. "I thought you liked your tea cold."

Susan's eyes fairly snapped. "Well, I don't. I don't like nothing cold. I like everything hot."

Jane moved towards the door. "I'll go and make some right away," she said.

Susan's small, bright eyes looked after her very hard indeed. "I wonder if you really mean what you say about my doing what I please."

"Of course I mean what I say."

"Then I want to go back into my own room."

The niece stopped. "Isn't this your room?" she asked in surprise.

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"No, this is the nearest room to the top of the stairs. I'll show you which is my room" With a quick leap she was out of bed.

"Barefooted!" cried Jane.

"I'll get into slippers quick enough, and I always wear stockings in bed. It's one of my peculiar ways. I'm very peculiar." She was running out of the room. Jane followed, astonished at the strength and steadiness of the bedridden.

"But I thought that — that you were always in bed," she stammered.

Susan stopped short and turned about. "It was the pleasantest way to get along," she said briefly. "I guess that you've a really kind heart, so I'll trust you and tell you the truth. Matilda wasn't here very long before I see that if her patience wasn't to give out, I'd got to begin to fail. I went to bed, and I've failed ever since. I've failed steady. It's been the only thing to do. It wasn't easy, but it was that or have things a lot harder. So I failed."

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Jane stared in amazement, and then suddenly the fun of it all overcame her, and she burst out laughing. Susan laughed, too. "It was all I could do," she repeated over and over.

"And so you failed," said her niece, still laughing.

"Yes, and so I failed."

"Mercy on us, it's the funniest thing I ever heard in all my life," exclaimed the Sunshine Nurse.

"It ain't always been funny for me," said Susan, "but come, now, I want to show you my room."

She opened a door as she spoke and led the way into a dark, musty-smelling place. It was the work of only a minute to draw the blind and throw up the window. "Right after we've had breakfast, we'll clean it," the aunt declared, "and then I'll move right back in. Husband and me had this room for twenty long years together. He was a saving man, and most of what he was intending to save when I

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wanted to buy things was told me in this room. Whatever I wanted he always said I could have, and then when it came night, he said I couldn't. The room is full of memories for me — sad memories — but after he was mercifully snatched to everlasting blessedness, I grew fond of it. It's a nice room."

"I think I'll get your tea," said Jane, "and then I'll clean this room and help you move into it. We'll have you all settled before noon."

She turned and ran down to the kitchen. The kettle was singing, and she stuffed more wood in under it and began to hunt for a tray and the other concomitants of an up-stairs breakfast. Things were not easily found.

"Well, I declare !" a voice at the window behind her exclaimed, as she was down on her knees getting a tray-cloth out of a lower drawer. The voice gave her a violent start, being a man's. She sprang to her feet and faced about.

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"I'm sorry; I thought you'd know me."
It was the artist of the day before, the young man who had come down in the stage.

"It's so early." She went to the window and shook hands. "But I'm glad to see you, anyhow."

"I always get up at six and walk five miles before breakfast when I'm in the country," he explained.

"Do you really? What enterprise!"

"And so this is where you've come. Why, it's the quaintest old place that I ever saw. A regular tangle of picturesque possibilities. Who are you visiting?"

"I'm taking care of my invalid aunt while my other aunt has a little rest."

"Is she very ill?"

"Oh, no. But this is her tea that I'm making, and I must take it up to her now."

"I'll go, then. But may I come again — and sketch?"

"I can't have company. I'll be too busy."

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"Can't I help with the work?"

He was so pleasant and jolly that she couldn't help laughing. "I'm afraid not," she said, shaking her head.

He stood with his hand on the window-sash. "Do you know my name?" he asked.

"No."

"It's Lorenzo, Lorenzo Rath. I've to grow famous with that name. Think of it."

She laughed again.

"I can draw the outside of the house, anyhow — can't I?"

"Dear me, I suppose so," — she picked up the tray, — "you must go now, though. Good-by."

"Good-by," he cried after her.

"Oh, see the steam," was Susan's exultant exclamation, as she entered her room. "I ain't seen steam coming out of a teapot's nose for upwards of three years. Matilda just couldn't seem to stand my taking my tea hot, and she's my only sister,

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and I humor her. Who was you talking to?"

"A man who came down on the stage yesterday. He was out walking and didn't know that I lived here."

"Oh, a love affair!" cried Susan, in high-keyed ecstasy. "He's fallen in love with you, and like enough was prowling around all night. Oh! How interesting! I ain't seen a love affair close to for years." She was so genuinely joyful that Jane felt sorry to dampen the enthusiasm.

"I don't believe you'll see one now," she said, smiling good-humoredly. "You see, I don't mean to marry, Auntie. I'm a Sunshine Nurse, and they have their hands too full for that kind of thing."

"A nurse! I didn't know you were a nurse."

"A Sunshine Nurse is a person who does what doctors can't always do, — who makes folk well."

"Are you going to make me well?"

"Yes," said Jane, resolutely.

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Susan stopped eating and looked at her with an expression full of contradictory feelings. "I shall like it," she said slowly. "But, oh my! Matilda won't. Why, she —" she paused. "Oh, I *do* wonder if I can trust you?"

"Anybody can trust me," said Jane. "It's part of my training to be honest."

"Dear me, but that's a good idea," said Susan, with sincerest approval. "Well, if I can trust you, I don't mind telling you that it's taken considerable care for me to live along with Matilda. I don't mean anything against her — not rat-poison nor anything like that, you know? — but she hasn't just approved of my living; she's looked upon it as a waste of her time. And I've had to manage pretty careful in consequence. You see, she's my only sister, and she'd have my property anyhow, but if I had to have a nurse or a woman to look out for me long, there'd be no property to leave. She's real sensible, and we both know just how it is, but it's been

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pleasantest for me to stay more and more in bed and kind of catch at things as I walk, and once in a while I don't eat all day, and so it keeps up her hope and keeps things pleasant."

Jane looked paralyzed. "How can you go without food all day?"

Susan considered a little. Then she took a big drink of hot tea and confessed. "I don't really. I watch till she goes to the garden, and then I skip down-stairs and make a good meal and lay it all on the cat."

Jane sank down on the foot of the bed and burst out laughing again. Again she just couldn't help it. Susan laughed, too; first softly and gingerly, then in a way almost as hearty as her niece's.

"Oh me, oh my," the latter declared, after a minute, wiping her eyes. "Well, we'll have a very lively three weeks, I see."

"Oh, yes," Susan exclaimed, "and we'll have liver and bacon, and I'll see the

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neighbors when they come in. I give up seeing them because it made so much trouble, and the way I'm made is — 'Anything for peace.' That's what I always used to say to husband, whatever he said. First along I used to say real things, but all the last years I just said whatever he said; anything for peace."

"You've finished your tea now," said Jane, rising. "I'll take the tray down while you dress a bit, and then we'll move you into the other room."

"Oh, and *how* I will enjoy it," cried Susan, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Oh, you Sunshine Jane, you — how glad I am you've come."

"I'm glad, too," said Jane. "We'll have an awfully nice time."

She ran down-stairs with the tray and found Madeleine sitting in the kitchen, waiting. "Why, how long have you been here?" she asked.

Madeleine lifted a rather mournful countenance and tried to smile. "Oh, Miss

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Grey. I'm so blue. I can't stand this place at all, I don't believe. My situation is going to be unbearable."

"What's the matter with it?"

"It's so small and petty and spiteful. All last evening I had to sit and listen to gossip. I hate personalities. Why, whatever I do is going to be seen and talked about the minute I do it."

Jane looked grave. "That nice woman who came out to meet you didn't look like a gossip."

"She isn't, but she sits and listens, and every once in a while she throws oil on the fire by saying, '*I* never believed the story.'"

"Who did the talking?"

"The neighbors — a woman named Mrs. Mead, who came in with her daughter. The mother was old-fashioned in her ideas, and the daughter was new. That old man in the stage stopped there, you know."

"My aunt spoke of them last evening,"

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said Jane; "she said that Emily Mead was picked out to marry that young man who came down with us."

Madeleine laughed and then blushed. "I'm afraid not," she said. "I know him. He won't marry anybody here."

Jane turned and began to put away the breakfast things.

"Don't be bored," she said gently. "Put on this extra apron, and help me wash these dishes; and then I'll set the kitchen to rights and get ready to move my aunt into another bedroom. She's an invalid, you know."

"What kind of a person is your aunt?"

"Awfully nice," began Jane, but was stopped by the sudden opening of the hall door.

There stood Susan, all dressed.

"It seems good to have clothes on again," she remarked calmly; "I ain't been dressed for upwards of three years."

Then she saw Madeleine. "How do you do," she said, holding out her hand.

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"I suppose you're the Miss Mar from Deborah's?"

"Yes, I am," Madeleine admitted, smiling.

"My, but you look good to me," said Susan; "it's so nice to see a strange face. You see, I've been in bed for a long time, and I give up seeing strangers long before that." She sat down on one of the kitchen chairs and beamed on them both, turn and turn about. "Husband always thought that strangers was pickpockets," she said, "but I like to look at 'em. My, but I will enjoy these next weeks. You see, I live with my sister," she explained to Madeleine, "and I've had a pretty hard time. My sister's got a good heart, but maybe you know how awful hard it is to live with that kind of people. It's been pleasanter to stay in bed."

"But you won't do that any more, Auntie," said Jane, moving busily about.

"No, indeed I won't. You see," again to Madeleine, "she was my only sister, so I humored her. It's the only way to get

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on with some people. But you can even humor folks too much, and she got a disease they call the Euphrates all up and down her ear and her elbow, just from being humored too much. So she's gone off for a change."

"What are you doing?" Madeleine asked Jane.

"Making waffles. I thought it would be fun to eat them hot right now."

Susan fairly shrieked with joy. "I ain't so much as smelt one since husband died. Waffles in the morning, and I'm so awful hungry, too. Oh, Jane, the Lord will surely set a crown of glory on your head the minute He sees it. Your feet won't be into heaven when the crown goes on. How did you ever think of it?"

Jane brought out the iron, laughing as she did so. "Why, Auntie, it's part of my training."

"Cooking waffles in the morning?"

"No. Giving joy. If I think of any way to give pleasure and don't do it, I

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count it a sin. To make more happiness is all the work of a Sunshine Nurse."

"Isn't that splendid?" Susan appealed to Madeleine.

Madeleine's great, beautiful eyes were lifted towards the other girl's face with an expression mysterious in its longing. "Teach me the gift," she said; "I want to make more happiness, too."

"We'll be her class," exclaimed Susan, "just you and me."

"The first lesson is eating waffles," Jane announced solemnly.

"And me, too," cried a voice in the kitchen window, and there was Lorenzo Rath back for his second call that day, and it not yet ten o'clock. "I've been to Mrs. Cowmull's and eaten breakfast, and I'm as hungry as a wolf." He came in through the window as he spoke.

"Oh, a young man!" cried Susan. "I ain't seen a young man since the last time the pump broke. Oh, my! Ain't this jolly? Ain't this fun?"

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"You show Madeleine where to find plates and forks and knives, Auntie," said Jane. "Here, Mr. Rath, I'll break two more eggs and you can beat them. I haven't made enough batter, if there's a man to eat, too."

"I feel as if I'd leave Mrs. Cowmull's to-morrow and come here to board," said Lorenzo. "Could I?" His tone was very earnest.

"No, you couldn't," said Jane firmly.

"Oh, let him," exclaimed Susan, from the pantry, where she was getting out plates. "It'll make Mrs. Cowmull so mad, and I ain't made any one mad for years and years. I'd so revel to be human again. And it would be so nice having a man about, too."

"I couldn't think of it," said Jane, getting very crimson.

Madeleine looked at the artist.

"Then I shall leave Mrs. Cowmull's, anyway," said Lorenzo, decidedly; "I shall look up another place at once. Why, that woman would drive me mad. She says

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something ridiculous every time she opens her mouth. She asked me this morning if I'd ever climbed to the top of the Kreutzer Sonata."

"What did you say?" Madeleine asked.

"I told her no, but I'd been to the bottom of the Campanile and seen them getting out coal from the mine there."

"Well, that showed you'd seen some sights, anyhow," said Susan, placidly.

"The waffles are done!" Jane announced. They all drew up round the table.

"This is living," the invalid exclaimed. "If my sister would only never come back!"

"Maybe she won't!" suggested Lorenzo.

"I wouldn't like her to die," said Susan, gravely. "I'm sensitive over feeling people better off dead. But if she'd marry, it would be nice."

"For the man?" queried Lorenzo.

"For us all," said Susan, gravely.

"Just exactly the right thing is going to happen to her and everybody," said Jane, firmly — dividing the waffles as she spoke.

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"Are you so sure?" the artist asked, looking a little amused.

Susan noticed the look. "She's a Sunshine Nurse," she explained quickly. "It's her religion to be like that. She can't help it. She's promised."

CHAPTER V

A CHANGE IN THE FEEL OF THINGS

IT didn't take long for the town to wake up to the fact that some new element had entered into its composition.

"I can't get over it, Susan Ralston's being up and about," Miss Debby Vane said distressedly to Mrs. Mead. "Why, she was 'most dead!"

"Matilda ought not to have gone away," Mrs. Mead said sternly. "Sick folks in bed can't bear a change. A new face gives them a little spurt of strength, and then when they see the old face again, they kind of give up hope and drop right off."

"Yes, I know that," said Miss Debby; "my father had a cousin die that way. There was a doctor going about in a wagon, pulling teeth and giving slocks, and he said he'd give Cousin Hannah a shock and cure

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her. So they took him up-stairs, and there she was dead of heart disease. They thought of prosecuting him, but the funeral coming right on they hadn't time, and then he was gone to another place, and it seemed too much bother."

"That girl is just the same kind, I believe," said Mrs. Mead; "that dreadful way of making you feel that after all what she says is pretty sensible, maybe. My Emily is awfully took with her, and Father's just crazy about her. He come down on the stage with her, and then he went out to see her. She knows how to get around men; she was frying doughnuts."

"Yes, and Mrs. Cowmull's artist was out there, and they had waffles in the middle of the morning. That's a funny kind of new religion."

"Has she got a new religion?" Miss Debby looked frightened. "I hadn't heard of it."

"Why, yes; Emily says she's got the funniest religion you ever heard of. What-

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ever she wants to do or don't want to do, she says it's her religion."

"Dear me, but I should think that that would be very convenient," said Miss Debby, much impressed. "Why, my religion is always just the opposite of what I want to do or don't want to do. It says so every Sunday, you know, — 'we have done those things,' and so forth."

"Hers is different," said Mrs. Mead.

"Well, I declare," repeated Miss Debby; then, suddenly, "I remember now that Madeleine said that they had waffles because Jane said that she thought waffles would taste good, and it was her religion to do whatever you thought of right off. Well, I declare!"

Both ladies stared in solemn amazement at one another.

"This'll be a nice town to live in, if she sets everybody to doing whatever you like, because it's right," Mrs. Mead said finally. "Father won't put on his coat again this summer."

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"It'll make a great difference in the feeling of the town," said Miss Debby, mysteriously, "a great difference. Well, I hope it won't change Madeleine any way her family won't approve. Madeleine's in love, and I suppose it's Mr. Rath. They knew each other before, and her family don't want it. I've pieced it all out of scraps."

"Oh, dear!" said Emily Mead's mother, her face falling; "my, I hadn't heard but what he was a free man."

"Oh, no," said Miss Debby, "your sister isn't sure. But everybody else is. My own view of artists is they're deluders and snares. I give an artist a picture and a dollar once to enlarge, and that was the last I ever heard of them both — of all three."

"I wonder if Emily knows Mr. Rath's engaged," said Mrs. Mead, sadly. "Dear me, I never thought of that."

"Not engaged, but in love," corrected Miss Debby.

"Perhaps he's a real artist and changeable," suggested Mrs. Mead.

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"There's no comfort in that for any one, 'cause if he'll change once, he'll change right along."

Mrs. Mead sighed very heavily. "Well, I must keep up for Father and Emily," she remarked, not tracing any very clear connection between word and deed.

"Yes," said Miss Debby, "you must, and we'll all keep a sharp eye on these new kind of ways of looking at things, for we don't know where they'll end."

The "new way of looking at things" had already been very efficacious in the house at the other end of the street. It had assumed an utterly new appearance, both outside and in.

"And I never felt nothing like the change in the *feel* of it," Susan exclaimed that afternoon, as she re-arranged her belongings in her own room. "Oh, you Sunshine Jane, you, you've just sunshone into every room, and I'm so happy turning my things about I don't know what to do. Matilda wouldn't never let me turn a china cow

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other end to, and I've lived with some of the ornaments facing wrong for the whole of these five long years."

"It isn't me, Auntie," said Jane, washing shelves with the hearty and happy energy which she threw into every task in which she engaged; "it's the opening of the windows and the letting in of God and His sunshine together. I'll soon have time to clean the whole house, and then we'll have fun re-arranging every room. You've such pretty things, and they must be rubbed up and given a chance to play a part in the world. God never meant anything to be idle, — not even a brass andiron. If it can't work, it can shine and be cheerful, anyway. What can't smile ought to shine, you know."

"I wonder why rubbing things makes 'em bright," said Susan, opening her bonnet-box and hitting her bonnet a smart cuff to knock dust out of the folds. "I never could understand that."

"It's your individuality that you transfer

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till the poor dull things get enough of it to shine alone, without anybody's help."

"What a good reason," said Susan. "My, to think maybe I'll go to church again in this bonnet! Matilda was always wanting to rip it up, but something made me cling to it. It's a kind of souvenir. I wore it to husband's funeral and my last picnic, and there are lots of other pleasant memories inside it."

"I'll freshen it up with a cloth dipped in ammonia," said Jane. "Dear me, how I *do* enjoy washing shelves. I love to sop the soapy water over and mop the corners, and dry the whole, and fit a clean newspaper in, and then see the closet in perfect order."

"You like to do everything, seems to me," said Susan.

"Yes, I do. I've been led to see that doing things well is about the finest way in which one can pass one's time. And I'm crazy over doing things *well*. If I fold a towel, I like to fold it just ~~as~~ *square*, and if I

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make a bed, I want the fold in the spread and the fold in the sheet to meet even."

"You'll make a fine wife, Jane," said Susan, gravely, "only no man'll ever appreciate the folds lying straight."

Jane laughed merrily. "I'm never going to marry; I'm one of the new sex, the creatures who are born to live alone and lend a hand anywhere. Didn't you know that?"

"That's nonsense," said Susan; "no woman's made so."

"No. It's a big fact. One of the newest facts in the world. The New Woman, you know!"

"Mercy on us," said Susan, "don't you go in for any of that nonsense. The idea of a girl like you deciding not to marry! I never heard of such a thing!"

"It's so, though," said Jane, smiling brightly; "you see, my little Order is a kind of Sisterhood. We're taught to want to help in so many homes and to never even think of a home of our own. We're taught

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to love all children so dearly that we mustn't limit ourselves to one family of little ones. We're trained to be so fond of the best in every man that we see more good to be done as sisters to men than as wives."

"I don't believe Mr. Rath will agree with you," said Susan, "nor any other real nice fellow."

Jane was cutting paper for the shelves. "Yes, he will," she said, nodding confidently; "men are so scarce nowadays that they are ready to agree with any one."

"Jane, *I* think he's in love with you already." Susan's tone was very solemn.

Jane merely laughed.

Then the door-bell rang, and she had to run. Presently she was back, a little breathless. "It's Mrs. Mead and her daughter. Can you come down?"

"Yes, in a minute. You say, in a minute."

Jane ran down again with the message.

"Most remarkable," said Mrs. Mead,

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now dressed for calling, with her black hair put back in three even crinkles on either side, "about your aunt, you know, I mean. Why, we looked upon her as 'most dead. You know, Emily, we've always been given to understand she was nearing her end."

"It does an invalid a lot of good to have something new to think about," said Jane. "I'm very enlivening. Aunt Susan just couldn't help getting up, when she heard me upsetting her house in all directions."

"Yes, I expect it was enough to make her nervous," said Mrs. Mead, sincerely. "How long are you going to stay?"

"Until Aunt Matilda comes back."

"I don't believe she'll like these changes," said Mrs. Mead, gravely. "I should think that you'd feel a good deal of responsibility. It's no light matter to leave a shut-up house and an invalid in bed to a niece and come home to find the house open and the invalid all over it."

"And a man coming in and having waffles

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in the morning," said Emily Mead, with a smile meant to be arch.

Jane laughed. "That was dreadful, wasn't it?" she said, twinkling — "it was all so impromptu and funny. And everybody had such a good time. It just popped into my head, and you see it's my religion to have to do anything that you think will make people happy, if you see a chance."

"Yes, we've heard about your religion," said Mrs. Mead; "dear me, I should think you'd get into a lot of trouble! Waffles in the morning would upset some folks, except on Sunday."

"Perhaps most people haven't enough religion to manage them week-days," Jane suggested.

"My aunt, Mrs. Cowmull, says Mr. Rath could hardly eat any lunch," observed Emily, smiling some more.

"Oh, dear!" said Jane, "but I'm not surprised. Aunt Susan couldn't, either."

Mrs. Mead coughed significantly. "Susan Ralston's pretty delicate to stand many new

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ideas, I should think," she began, but stopped suddenly as Susan entered, and viewed her with an expression of shocked surprise.

"Why, Mrs. Ralston, I'd no idea you were so well. Where have you kept yourself these last years, if you were so well?"

"In my own room," said Susan, with dignity. "I didn't see no special call to come down. Matilda knew where everything was, but Jane doesn't, so I've changed my ways for a little."

Jane took her hand and pressed it affectionately. The sunshine seeds were sprouting finely. "Don't you want to come out into the garden with me?" she asked Emily Mead, and Emily rose at once. "I thought auntie would enjoy visiting alone with her old friend," she added, as they passed through the hall.

"What are you, anyway?" Emily asked curiously. "I've heard you were a trained nurse, — are you?"

"I'm one of the brand-new women,"

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said Jane; "not a Suffragette, nor an advanced anything, but just a creature who means to give her life up to teaching happiness as an art."

"Yes, I heard that. But how do you do it?" asked Emily Mead.

"By being happy and thinking happy thoughts and doing happy things."

Emily considered. "But don't you ever have hard things to do?"

"Never. I enjoy them all — I love to work."

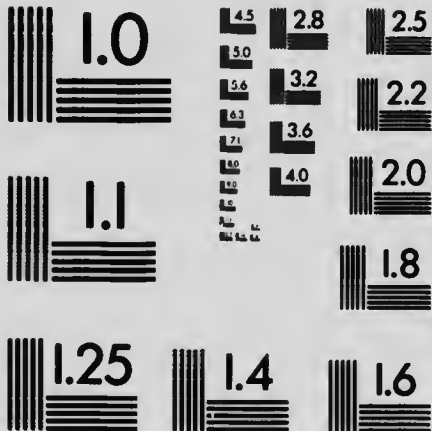
Emily looked at her wondering. "But washing dishes? — We don't keep a girl, and I hate washing dishes. What would you say to them?"

Jane laughed. "What, those two lovely tin pans and that nice boiling kettle? And all the dirty plates sinking under the soap-suds and then piling up under the clean hot water. And the shining dryness and the putting them on the shelves all in their own piles. And then the knowing that God wanted those dishes washed, and that



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you've done them just exactly as He'd like to see them done. Why, I think dish-washing is grand !”

Emily opened her eyes widely. “How funny you are ! I never heard such talk before ! But, then, you've lived in a big city and learned to think in a big way. You wouldn't see dish-washing so if you'd done it all your life and never been told it was nice. You couldn't.”

“But you've been told now,” said Jane, “and no work need ever seem horrid to you again. Just look at it in my way after this.”

“But all work seems horrid to me. I'd like to marry an awfully rich man and never see this place again. I hate it.”

Jane thought a minute; then said in sweet, low, even tones : “You won't evolve any man fit to marry out of that spirit, you know.”

The other girl stared at her. “Evolve !”

“Yes. Don't you know that every minute in this world is the result of all the

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minutes that have gone before, and that who we marry is part of a result — not just an accident?"

"*What?*"

"Don't you know that? Don't you understand?"

"Not a bit. Tell me what you mean?"

"It's too long to explain right this minute, because one can't tell such things quickly, and if you've never studied them, you haven't the brain-cells to receive them. You see brain-cells are the houses for thoughts, and they have to be built and ready before the thoughts can move in. That's what they told me, when I was learning."

Emily looked at her in bewilderment.

"It's very interesting," said Jane. "I think that it's the most interesting thing in the whole world. You see, I didn't have any life at all; I was an orphan and not very bright. And then I happened to get hold of a book that said that all the life there was in the world was mine, if

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I'd just take it. So I wrote to the man who wrote the book —"

"How did you ever dare?"

"Why, I knew that the man who wrote that book would help any one — he couldn't have written the book if he hadn't been made to help people — and I asked him how I could begin."

"What did he answer?"

"He said: 'Seize every chance to prove your mind the master of your own body first, and when you are thoroughly master of yourself, you can master all else.'"

"What did he mean?"

"Well, I took it that he meant me to do anything that I thought of, right off, and that if I got in the habit of sweeping all work out of my small way, I'd soon be given a chance at big work in a big way."

"And were you?"

"Yes. I began to get through so quick — I lived with an uncle and helped his wife with the sewing and the children — then I had some spare time, and I went into the

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kitchen and learned to cook. Then one of the children was ill, and the doctor thought I'd make a good nurse, so he got me into a hospital, and I met a woman there who had all the books that I wanted to read and who just took hold and helped me right out. I saw that I didn't want to be a sick-nurse, because there's such a lot of humbug and such a lot that's silly, and my friend said that I was one who would evolve opportunities —"

"What does that mean?"

"Evolve means to sort of develop out of the world and yourself together at the same time."

"I don't understand."

"Why, if you want anything, you want it because it's there, and you can get it if you've got the strength and perseverance to build a road to it."

"*What!*"

"I mean just what I say. We can get anything, if we have sufficient will-power to build a way right straight to it."

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"Suppose I want to marry a millionaire?"

"It would mean a lot of well-directed effort, and the effort would slowly train you to want something much better than to live rich and idle." Jane paused a minute, and Emily looked at her curiously. "If you want to marry a millionaire bad enough to start in and make yourself all over new, you'll have such control over your future that I think you'll get something much better than a millionaire."

"I never heard any one like you in all my life," said Emily Mead.

"I'd be so glad to help you straight along," Jane said. "I've got two books with me, and you can read one and then the other. Then you'll get where you can get the meaning out of the Bible, and then you'll begin to see the meaning of everything. The world gets so wonderful. You see miracles everywhere. You feel so well. The sun shines so bright. Life becomes so lovely."

Emily looked at her with real wonder.

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"How did you happen to come here?" she asked.

"Oh, that came long after all the rest of the story. One day I remembered that my mother had two sisters, and I wrote to them. My letter arrived just as Aunt Matilda's arm began to trouble her, and she asked me if I could come for a visit. You see that was another opportunity I evolved."

Emily seized her hand impulsively. "I'm so glad that you came. I'm going to try, and you'll help me?"

"Yes, indeed, I will. Would you like one of the books right now?"

"Oh, I should."

"I'll get it for you, and then I'll tell you some day about the doctor I met and his Sunshine Order."

They went towards the house. "You mustn't expect to understand everything right off, you know," Jane said to her gently. "You see this is all new to you, and that means that you can't any more

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understand right off than you could paint a picture right off. You have to learn gradually."

"But I mean to learn," said Emily.

They went in the door, and Jane ran upstairs and fetched the book. "There!" she said, "you read it, and I'll help you all I can. You see the thing is to learn with your whole heart to do God's will, and then, in some strange, subtle way, you get to feel what is coming and to sort of shape all. It's so fascinating and thrilling to realize that what you want is marching towards you as fast as you can march towards it."

"What do you want?" Emily asked.

"I want to do exactly what I'm doing," said Jane, very quietly. "I've passed wanting anything else. I want lots of chances to teach and help, — that's all."

"Don't you want to marry?"

"Oh, no, — I want to be able to teach and help everywhere. I don't want things for myself, somehow."

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"How strange!"

They went into the sitting-room.

"Oh, Jane," Susan cried, "how I have enjoyed hearing about everybody in town! Sister never told me about Eddy King's running off with the store cash or Mrs. Wilton's daughter going to cooking-school, or one thing."

"We must be going," said Mrs. Mead, rising; "we'll come again, though. It's good to see you up, Mrs. Ralston, and I only hope you may stay up. You know Katie Croft's mother-in-law got up just as you have and then had a stroke that night."

"Oh, is old Mrs. Croft dead?"

"No, she isn't," said Mrs. Mead; "if she was, she wouldn't be such a warning as she is."

"Dear, dear," said Susan, "think of all I've missed. Has she got it just in her legs or all over? Matilda never told me."

"Legs," said Mrs. Mead, "and it's affected her temper. Katie has an awful time with her."

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"Dear, dear," said Susan again, — "and, oh, Jane, a boy I've known since he was a baby has had his skull japanned and nearly died. Matilda's never told me a thing!"

"Well, she didn't know much, you know," said Mrs. Mead; "she kept herself about as close as she kept you. We were given to understand pretty plainly that we weren't wanted to call."

"Think of that now," said Susan, "and me up-stairs, feeling all my friends had forgot me!"

"Everybody'll come now," said Mrs. Mead; "folks will be glad to see you so well. We were told you never got up and hardly ate enough to keep a cat."

"An ordinary cat," corrected Emily; "Miss Matilda's always told what a lot your cat ate."

"He is an eater," said Susan, crinkling a bit about the eyes; "but I eat, too, now, I can tell you."

After they were gone, Jane came back into the sitting-room. Her aunt was stand-

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ing by the window. "It's so beautiful to be down-stairs," she said, without turning. "My goodness, and to think that only a week ago I laid up-stairs wanting to die."

"You can thank Aunt Matilda that you didn't die," said Jane, going and putting her arm around her. "If she had kept you thinking of all the illnesses in town, you'd have died long ago. Sick thoughts are more catching than diseases. But we don't need to talk of that now."

"No, indeed we don't," said Susan, "for there's Mr. Rath coming."

He gave a little start. "I wonder what for," she said.

"What for!" Susan's tone was full of deep meaning; "why, he's fallen dead in love with you, Jane, that's what it means, and I don't wonder, for you're the nicest girl I ever saw."

"Oh, Auntie!" said Jane, quite red. "The very idea!"

CHAPTER VI

LORENZO RATH

IT wasn't to be supposed for a minute that -- Lorenzo Rath, a real live young man and an artist, shouldn't take first place in the town talk. Jane's remarkable religion might attract the attention of a few who were sufficiently religious themselves to be naturally shocked over the waffles and depressed over the invalid's recovery, but Lorenzo was of interest to every one.

"If he ain't took already, there's a fine chance for Emily," Mr. Cattermole said benevolently to his daughter. Being a man, he naturally supposed that Mrs. Mead would never have come by such an idea if she hadn't had a bright old father to point it out to her.

"Emily doesn't want to marry," said

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Mrs. Mead, compressing her lips and expanding her dignity simultaneously; "she wouldn't marry an artist, any way."

"Maybe he ain't much of an artist," said Mr. Cattermole, with a tendency to look on the bright side. "Why don't Emily want to marry? I thought girls always wanted to marry. They did when I was young."

"It's different nowadays," said Mrs. Mead, with condescending reserve. "You don't understand, Father, but nothing is like it used to be. The world is getting all changed. When Emily was an only child, she was looked upon as very odd, but most women have an only child nowadays. Life is quite different."

"I'd like to see Emily married," said Mr. Cattermole, thoughtfully.

"Emily has had plenty of chances," said her mother, waving the brave, tattered mother-lie that seems to cover over such cruel wounds.

"Has she really?" said Mr. Cattermole,

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in genuine surprise. "I didn't know that. And she wouldn't have 'em! Laws sakes! Who, for instance?"

"No one you knew," said his daughter, telling the truth then.

"Sarah knew 'em, I suppose?" (Sarah was Mrs. Cowmull.)

"No, no one Sarah knew."

"Think of that now! Why, I s'posed there wasn't nothing Sarah didn't know."

In voicing this opinion Mr. Cattermole voiced the town opinion, too. It was popularly supposed that Sarah Cowmull always knew everything. But she didn't know the status of Lorenzo Rath's heart, and Lorenzo Rath himself puzzled her not a little.

Lorenzo puzzled everybody, mainly because he was so open and simple that even a child must have suspected him of keeping something back. Such frankness was unthinkable, such innocence incredible.

"Why, he's gallivanting all over with Madeleine, and yet she's gotten another

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man's picture on her table!" said Miss Debby to Katie Croft.

"And he's skipping in Mrs. Ralston's gate at all hours," said Katie Croft — "no kind of ceremony to him. The other day he see mother in the window, and he waved his hat at her and give her an awful turn. She don't see well, and thought he threw a stone at her. She ain't used to city ways; she's used to country ways. I had to let her smell camphor for a good hour, and while she was smelling, the kitchen fire went out. I wish he'd keep his hat on his head another time. My life's hard enough without having a artist suddenly set to, to cheer up mother."

"What do you think of Mrs. Ralston's niece? Think she's nice?"

"Nice! With Susan Ralston about as lively as a cricket! I don't think much of such new ways. I don't know whatever Matilda will say. She's just got life all systematized, and now here's Susan up and out of bed. I'm so scared the girl'll come

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over and go at mother, I don't know what to do."

"My, suppose Mrs. Croft was to be up and about!" said Miss Debby, opening her eyes widely. "Whatever would you do?"

"Do! I know what I'd do." Young Mrs. Croft looked dark and mysterious. "I know just exactly what I'll do. And I'm all ready to do it, and if I'm interfered with, I will do it, — good and quick, too."

"How is old Mrs. Croft now?" Miss Debby asked.

"Oh, she's grabbin' as ever. I never see such a disposition. She's always catching at me or the cat or something. Seems to consider it a way of attracting attention. Crazy folks has such crazy ideas, and she's crazy, — crazy as a loon."

Katie Croft took up her market basket and went on up the street. Miss Debby stayed behind to wait for the noon mail. "Katie's so bitter," she said to herself,

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shaking her head; "she ought to be more grateful for being supported."

Miss Debby forgot that there are few things so irritating in this world as being supported. It is a situation which has become especially unpopular lately, particularly with women and political motives.

But no old worn-out aphorism held for one minute in the breezy bloom of the House Where Jane Lived.

"Oh, I'm so happy," Susan exclaimed many times daily, "I'm so happy. I never felt nothing like your sunshining in all my life before, you Sunshine Jane, you! I feel like my own cupboards, all unlocked and aired and nice and used again."

Jane stopped caroling as she kneaded bread and laughed — which sounded equally pleasant.

"I'm as happy as you are, Auntie; it's so nice to be in heaven."

"I used to think maybe I'd die suddenly and find myself there some day," said Susan. "I'm glad I didn't."

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"It's better to live suddenly than to die suddenly," said Jane, merrily; "when people are awfully bothered sometimes, I've heard their friends say: 'But if you died suddenly, it would work out somehow,' and I wanted to say: 'Why not live suddenly instead of dying suddenly, and then everything's bound to come out splendidly.'"

"Oh, Jane, what a grand idea, — to live suddenly! That's what I've done, surely."

"Yes," said Jane, "that's what I did, too. Instead of fading out of life, we just bloomed into life. It's just as easy, and a million times more fun."

"And it's all so awfully agreeable," said Susan. "My things look so nice, all set different, and it's so pleasant having folks coming in, and I like it all, and we haven't to fuss with the garden."

"I attend to the garden!" cried a voice outside, and a mysterious hand shoved a basket of peas over the window-ledge.

"I know who that is," said Susan; "it's

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that boy, and he's smelt cinnamon rolls and come to lunch. How do you do?"

Lorenzo, brown and merry, was getting in at the window.

"Why, you've really been weeding!" exclaimed Susan.

"Of course! I've tended the garden ever since you gave it up."

"I declare! Well, I never. Jane, we must give him a bite of something."

"Yes, that's what I came for," said Lorenzo, cheerfully, "cookies, jelly-roll, — anything simple and handy. Madeleine and I were out walking, discussing our affairs, and when I stopped for the garden, she went on for her mail. I'm awfully hungry."

"People say you're engaged to her," said Susan. Jane turned to get the tin of cookies.

"Yes, naturally. People say so much. She is a pretty girl, isn't she? — but then there's Emily Mead. I must look at myself on all sides and consider carefully.

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Old Mr. Cattermole took me to drive yesterday and told me that he was healthy and his dead wife was healthy and that, except for what killed him, Mr. Mead was healthy, too; and there was Emily, perfectly healthy and the only grandchild, and why didn't I come over often,—it wasn't but a step."

"Well, you do beat all," said Susan. Jane offered the tin of cookies. Lorenzo took six. They were all laughing.

Later, when he'd gone away, Susan said, almost shyly this time: "Jane, I don't want to interfere, but he *is* in love."

"With Madeleine?"

"With you."

"Auntie," Jane came to her side, "you mustn't speak in that way about me. I can't marry, — not possibly. I'm a Sunshine Nurse, and I shall be a Sunshine Nurse till I die. I'll make homes happy, but I shall never have one of my own."

Susan looked frightened and timid. "But why?"

LORENZO RATH

"For many reasons. And all good ones."

There was that in the young girl's tone that ended the subject for the time being.

But Susan thought of it a great deal, and alone in her room that night, Jane thought, too. She had made herself ready for bed, and then sat down by the window, clasping her hands on the sill. Lorenzo Rath was buoyantly dear and jolly, and she realized that he was the nicest man that she had ever met. It had all been fun, great fun, and she had enjoyed it mightily. But with all her learning Jane was not so very much farther along the Highway to Happiness than some others. In many cases she was only a holder of keys as yet — the distinct knowledge to be gained by unlocking secrets with their aid was as yet not hers. To hold the keys and look at the doors is to realize what power means, — but to unlock is to use it. Jane was still a novice; she left the doors locked and was content to hold the keys, and no more.

The next night Lorenzo appeared again.

SUNSHINE JANE

"I'm half-dead," he said. "I've tramped twelve miles, sketching."

"Dear, dear," said Susan, "seems like nobody in this world ever wants what's close to."

"Sometimes it's no use to want what's close to," said Lorenzo, "or else what's close to is like Emily Mead, and you just ache to run."

"Emily Mead is a very nice girl," said Jane, in a tone clearly reproachful.

Lorenzo just laughed. But then Susan made some excuse to slip away. "I wonder if you'd help me a little," he said then, hesitating a bit.

"Is it something that I can do? Of course I'll help you if I can."

"It's something very necessary."

"Necessary?"

"To my welfare and happiness."

"What is it?"

"I think — I'm — falling in love."

"Oh, dear," Jane was carefully tranquil.

"I've never really been in love in my

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life, so I can't be sure. But I think it's that."

Jane said nothing. The room was getting dark.

"I've never seen any one so pretty in all my life as Miss Mar," said the young artist, slowly. "You know we're old friends."

"Oh, she's lovely," said Jane, with sudden fervor.

"I thought that we might make up little picnics and walks and things?" hesitated the young man.

"Of course," said Jane, heartily. "And you can come here all you like. Auntie likes you both so much."

Lorenzo Rath stood by the door. "Were you ever in love?" he asked bluntly.

"No," said Jane. "I've never had the least little touch of it."

"Haven't you ever thought about it?"

"No, I've never had time. I've never seen any man that I could or would marry."

"Never?"

SUNSHINE JANE

"Never."

"That's too bad," said Lorenzo Rath slowly. "Seems to me you'd make such a splendid wife."

She laughed a little. Then she had to wink quickly to drive back tears which leapt suddenly.

"I won't say any more," said Lorenzo. She thought that he did not care to speak of Madeleine to her.

Then she went. And later she found herself sitting in her own room again, sitting by the same window, thinking. "Poor Emily Mead and her illusory millionaire! I'm about as silly as she is," thought Jane. "And yet I know it's higher and more beautiful to make life lovely for others than to make it lovely for one's self." She sighed because the reflection — all altruistic as it was — was not quite the truth, and she was true enough herself to feel jarred by the slightest cross-shadow of falsehood. Truth plays as widely and freely as the sunbeams them-

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selves and goes as straight to the heart of each and all.

Finally she opened a little book and read aloud a few pages to herself in a low tone. "I know I'm on the right path," she said, when she had closed the book; "the thing is to stick resolutely to keeping on straight ahead. And I must be absolutely content with all that comes. You have to be content if you're going to grow in goodness, for you have to know that you've been trying and been successful." She sat still a while longer and then rose with a deep, long breath. "Well, to-day's been something, and to-morrow I'll be something better, I know."

The truth did shine then, and she went to bed calmed, but was hardly stretched down between the cool sheets when Susan rapped at the door.

"Come in."

"Oh, Jane, I can't sleep. I've got to thinking of when Matilda comes back, and I'm scared blue."

CHAPTER VII

A NEW OUTLOOK ON MATILDA

THE next morning Susan looked half-sheepish and half-anxious. "I just couldn't help it, Jane. I laid in bed so long, thinking, and then it come over me what life was going to be when she was back and you gone and — well — I just couldn't help coming. I felt awful."

Jane was busy with breakfast. "I know, Auntie, I know. I ought to have thought of Aunt Matilda sooner. Half her stay is over."

"Oh, my, I should say it was," wailed Susan; "that's what scares me so. We're so happy, and the time is going so fast. It's about the most awful thing I ever knew."

Jane began beating eggs for an omelette.

"We never were one bit alike," Susan

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intoned mournfully; "we were always so different, and then when husband died, there was just nothing to do but for us to live together. She's my only sister, and it's right that I should humor her, but, oh my, what a scratch-about life she has led me. I was getting to feel more like a mouse than a woman — soon as I got a bite, I'd begin to tremble and to listen and then how I *did* run!"

"But it will be all so different when she comes back," Jane said cheerily. "She'll be very different, and so will you. It'll be just like I told you last night."

"I know, — I know. But somehow I can't see it as you do. I'm all upset. And I'm so happy without her. We're so happy. The house looks beautiful. You've just made everything over. I declare, Jane, I never saw anything like you. All my old things have turned new, and so pretty. I feel like a bride. That is, I feel like a bride when I ain't thinking of Matilda."

SUNSHINE JANE

"It looks very nice, surely," said Jane, smiling. "Your things were so pretty, anyhow. But what I was gladdest about was to really get it all opened up and fresh. I didn't want any one to come while it was so gloomy. The whole town may call now."

"They do, too," said Susan, diverted for the minute; "they certainly do. Oh, it is so nice, I so adore to hear all about things again. Matilda just shut everybody out. She didn't like company."

"She was pretty busy, you know."

"She hadn't any more to do than you have. She hadn't so much to do as you have, because she didn't do a thing you do."

"But you were ill. She was always up and down stairs —"

"No, she wasn't, Jane. No, she wasn't."

"Well, she had your meals to carry upstairs."

"I don't call it meals to run with a tea-cup. Meals! *Such* meals! It's a wonder I didn't die. She'd turn anything upside

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down on a plate and something else upside down on that, and call it a meal for me. I was about sick, just from how she fed me. If I said something was cooked too dry, she emptied the tea-kettle into it next time; and if I said anything was too wet, she put on fresh coal and left it in the oven over night. If I said the room was too light, she shut it up as dark as a pickpocket; and if I said it was too dark, she turned the sun into my eyes. She's my only sister and I must humor her, but I've had a very hard time, Jane, and I don't blame myself for waking up with my teeth all of a chatter over the thought of living with her again."

Jane had their breakfast ready now on the table by the window. "Come and sit down," she said; "we'll talk while we eat. It's like I told you last night, — there must be a hitch somewhere. Of course, God has a good reason for you and Aunt Matilda living together. He doesn't allow accidents in His world."

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"Perhaps He wasn't thinking. I can't believe that anybody would deliberately put anybody in the house with Matilda — not if they knew Matilda. I didn't know what she'd grown into myself when she first came to take care of me, because I was a little poorly. It was to save spending on a nurse, you know. They're such trying, prying things, nurses are."

"I'm a nurse, you know."

"My goodness, I didn't mean your kind; I meant the regular kind."

Jane was laughing. "But I mustn't laugh," she said, after a minute; "we must go to work. Let's see if we can find out how it all began. Didn't you and Aunt Matilda get on nicely at first?"

Susan considered. "Well, I don't believe we did. She was always so very sparing. Husband was sparing, and of course I'd had a good many years of it, but when your husband's gone and you've got the property yourself and have left it to an only sister who takes care of you, you

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don't like her being even more sparing,—putting you on skim-milk right from the first and chopping the potato peelings in the hash.”

“But there must have been some good in the situation, or it wouldn't have been. When there's a wrong situation, the cure lies in hunting out the good, not in talking over the bad.”

“You won't find any good in Matilda and me living together,—not if you hunt till Doomsday.” Susan took a big sip of coffee and then shook her head hard.

“There's good in everything.”

“I don't know what it was here, then. I was all ready to die, and the doctor said I couldn't live, and when I found out how Matilda was counting on it, I just made up my mind to live just to spite her. But it's been awful hard work.”

Jane turned and seized her hand. “Well, maybe that's the reason for the situation, then. You see if she'd been different, you'd have died, but being a person who made you mad, you stayed alive.”

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Susan laughed a little. "I've been mad enough, I know," she went on; "it's awful to be up-stairs the way I've been and have to prowl down-stairs and run off with your food like a dog in an alley. I was always watching till I saw Matilda over that second fence and then racing for something to eat. I've been very hungry often and often, Jane, very hungry indeed, — and in my own house, too."

The tears came into the girl's eyes. "Poor Auntie!" she said. "Well, it's all over now and won't ever come back. You must believe me when I say so. Old conditions never return. The wheel can't turn backward. That mustn't be."

"But how'll it help it when Matilda's visit gets over?"

Jane rested her chin on her hands and looked out of the window. "I'll have to get you on to a plane where you can't live as you did ever again," she said.

"On a plane! —" Susan stared.

"A plane is a kind of grade in life. We

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keep going up them like stairs, and the quieter and happier people live, the higher is the plane on which they are. It's very simple, when you come to understand it. It's sort of like a marble staircase built out of a marsh and on up a mountain. You can stand down in the mud, or step higher in the reeds, or step higher in the water (generally it's hot water," Jane interrupted herself to say with a little smile). "Or out on the dry earth, or higher where it's flowers, or higher or higher. But every time you get up a step you leave all the mess of all the lower steps behind you forever. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't."

"Why, don't you see that if you lift yourself higher than your surroundings, of course you'll have other conditions around you and be really living another life? We can't possibly be bound by conditions lower than our souls. It's a law. I'll help you to understand it, and then it will help you to not be at all troubled over Aunt Matilda.

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You'll be above her. Don't you see? One can always get out of a disagreeable life by lifting one's self above it."

"But I did stay up-stairs," said Susan, with beautiful literalness. "I think it's awful to have to keep a plane above any one, when the whole house is yours."

"I didn't mean that," said Jane. "I meant that mentally you must get above her. It isn't in words or in thoughts, — you must *be* above her. You must get free. I must help you. You can do it. Anybody can do it. And as soon as you are free in your spirit, your life will change. Our daily life follows our thoughts. Our thoughts make a pattern, and life weaves it. The world of stars that we can't hardly grasp at all is all God's thought. The life in this house was your thought and Aunt Matilda's."

"It wasn't mine," said Susan quickly; "it was hers."

"Well, it's mine now," said Jane. "That's the true business of the Sunshine

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Nurses. They must get a new thought into a house and get it to growing well. Then they'll leave the true sunshine there forever after."

Susan's eyes were very curious — very bright. "I declare I don't see how you'll do it here," she said. "I can't look at Matilda any new way, as I know of. Whatever she does, she does just exactly as I don't like it."

"I suppose that you try her, too."

"Well, I didn't die; of course she minded that. But I couldn't die. You can't die just to order."

"No, of course not; I didn't mean that." Jane was quite serious. "I don't blame you at all for not doing that."

Susan had finished and rose from the table. "Let's leave the dishes and go out in the yard," she said. "I'm awfully anxious to keep on at this till we find a way out, if you think that you can; I go about wild when I think of her. I'm ready for anything except staying in bed any more."

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"Oh, that's all over," said Jane. "You're off the bed-plane now, and don't you see how much higher you've got already? The next step is to fix yourself so securely on this happy one that you know that it's yours and you can't leave it. You see, you feel able to go back down again, and as long as you feel that way, it's possible. One has to bar out the wrong kind of life forever, and then of course it's over."

"But she is coming back," said Susan, "and I can't live any more on gobbles of milk and cold bits swallowed while I'm getting up-stairs three steps to the jump."

Jane looked at her. "I expect that exercise was awfully good for you, Auntie," she said seriously. "You've probably gotten a lot of health and interest out of it. Don't forget that."

"Well, maybe; but I don't want any more." Susan's tone was terribly earnest.

"It's all over then," said Jane, slowly and with emphasis; "if you truly and

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honestly don't want any more, then it must be all over. The thing to do now is to build a firm connection between ourselves and it's being all over."

"I don't quite understand what you mean," said Susan, "but something's got to be done, of course, because otherwise she'll come home, and oh, my, her face when she sees me up and around!"

Jane knit her brows. "You see, Auntie," she said slowly, "there's only one thing to do. We've got to change ourselves completely; we've to get where we want her to come home and where we look forward to it —"

Susan stopped short and lifted up both hands. "Gracious, we can't ever do that! It isn't in humanity."

"Yes, we can do it," said Jane firmly; "people can always do anything that they can think out, and if we can think this out straight, we can do it."

"How?"

"It isn't easy to see in just the first

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minute, but I understand the principle of it and I know that we can work it, for I've seen it done. You do it by getting an entirely new atmosphere into the house."

"But you've done that already," interrupted Susan. "It isn't musty anywhere any more, and there's such a kind of a happy smell instead."

"I don't mean that kind of an atmosphere. I mean a change of feeling in ourselves. We've got to somehow make ourselves all over; we must really and truly be different."

"But I am made over, and you were all right, anyhow."

"No, I'm not all right," said Jane firmly. "I'm very wrong. I'm letting silly thoughts with which I've no business torment me dreadfully, and I'm not driving them out with any kind of resolution. Then we're both doing wrong about Aunt Matilda. We're making a narrow little black box of our opinion and crowding her into it all the time. There's nothing so

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dreadful as the way families just chain one another to their faults. Outsiders see all the nice things, and we have lots of courage to always live up to their opinions, but families spend most of their time just nailing those they love best into pretty little limits. You and I are so happy together, and we're changing ourselves and one another every day, but we never think that Aunt Matilda's also having experience and changing herself, too. We kind of forbid her to grow better."

"You won't find anything that will change Matilda very quick, Jane. She's a dreadful person to stick to habits; she's drunk out of the blue cup and give me the green one for these whole five years."

"The change in the atmosphere of the house," said Jane slowly, "must be complete. We must never say one more word about her that isn't nice, and we mustn't even think unkind thoughts. We must talk about her lots and look forward to her coming back —"

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"Oh, heavens, I can't," gasped Susan.

"We'll begin to-day on her room —"

"Then you'll make her madder than a hatter, sure; she can't bear to have her room touched."

"I'm going to make it the prettiest room in the house," said Jane resolutely. "I'm going to brush and clean and mend and fix all those clothes she's left hanging up, and I'm going to love her dearly from now on."

Susan sat still, her lips moving slightly, but whether with repressed feeling or trembling sentiment it would be impossible to say. "She looked awful cute when she was little and wore pantalettes," she said finally.

"Bravo!" cried Jane, running to her and kissing her. "There's a fine victory for you, and now," — her face brightening suddenly, — "I've got an idea of what we can do to lift us right straight up into a new circle of life. What do you say to our making the little back parlor over into a bedroom, and —"

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"— taking Mr. Rath to board?" cried Susan joyfully. "Oh, I am sure that he wanted to come all along."

Jane laughed outright. "No, indeed, the very idea! No, what I thought of was inviting that poor old Mrs. Croft here for a week and giving her and her daughter-in-law a rest from one another."

Susan gave a sharp little yell. "Why, Jane Grey, I never heard the beat! Why, she can't even feed herself!"

"It would be a way to change the atmosphere of the house; it's just the kind of thing that would change us all—"

"I should think it would change us all," interrupted Susan; "why, she threw a cup of tea at Katie's back last week. Katie said she couldn't possibly imagine what had come over her, — she was leaning out to hook the blinds."

"It would be a Bible-lovely thing to do," Jane went on slowly. "You or I could feed her, and I'd take care of her. I'm a nurse, you know!"

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"Jane! Well, you beat all! Well, I never did! Old Mrs. Croft. Why, they say you might as well be gentle with a hornet."

"Maybe she has her reasons; maybe it's, — Set a hornet to tend a hornet, for all we know. Anyway, it's come to me as some good to do, and when I think of any good that I can do, I have to do it, — else it's a sin. That's my religion."

"That religion of yours'll get you into a lot of hot water along through life." Susan's tone was very grave. "And you've never seen old Mrs. Croft, or you'd never speak of her and religion in the same breath. They've got a cat she caresses, and some days she caresses it for all she's worth. I've heard the cat being caressed when it was quiet, myself, many's the time. You can't use that religion of yours on old Mrs. Croft; she isn't a subject for religion. She's one of that kind that the man in the Bible thanked God he wasn't one of them."

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"My religion is what brought me here to you," said Jane gently. "You aren't really sorry that I learned it, are you, Auntie?"

Susan's eyes moistened quickly. She gasped, then swallowed, then made up her mind. "Well, Sunshine Jane," she said resignedly, "when shall we get her?"

"We'll put her room in order to-morrow morning, and I'll go and ask her in the afternoon."

"Oh, dear!" said Susan, with a world of meaning in the two syllables. "I hope she'll enjoy the change."

Jane laughed. "Goodness, Auntie, I never saw any one pick up new ideas as quick as you do. I was months learning how to make myself over, and you do it in just a few hours. You must have laid a big foundation of self-control up there in bed."

Susan sighed, uncheered. "It kept me pretty sharp, I tell you," she said; "when you're always hungry and have to get

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your food on the sly and be positively sure of never being found out, it does keep you in trim being spry pretty steady."

"May we come in?" asked voices at the gate. It was Lorenzo Rath and Madeleine. "We wanted to see how you were getting on to-day," the latter called.

"We've been changing the furniture and the atmosphere," said Susan, trying bravely to smile. "Jane is turning everything around and bringing the bright new side out."

"If you'll come and help me wash the breakfast dishes and then make biscuits," Jane said to Madeleine, "I'll ask you both to lunch."

"I want to learn how to do everything, of course," said Madeleine.

"And why shouldn't we go down to the garden?" suggested Lorenzo to Susan. "You'll point out the things you want to-day, and I'll pull 'em up."

"But there are fences to climb," said Jane.

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"Fiddle for fences," said her aunt; "he'll go ahead, and I'll skim over 'em like a squirrel. I never made anything of fences."

So they divided the labor.

"The house looks so pretty," said Madeleine, as she and Jane went through to the kitchen. "How do you ever manage it, — with just the same things, too?"

Jane glanced about. "Why, there's a right place for everything, and if you just stand back a bit and let the things have time to think, they'll tell you where to put them. There was an old blue vase in the dining-room that was pretty weak-minded, but I was patient and carried it all over the place till finally it was suited on top of the what-not in the corner of the hall. The trouble with most things is that we hurry them too much at first, and then we don't help them out of their false position later."

"Oh, Jane, you are so delightfully quaint. You must tell Mr. Rath that. It's the

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kind of speech that will just charm the soul right out of an artist."

Jane was deep in the flour-bin. "But I don't want to charm his soul. I'll leave that to you."

"To me! Why, he doesn't care a rap about me."

"Well, then, to Emily Mead."

"Emily Mead! Oh, my dear, you have put a lot of new ideas into her head! She says that you told her that any one could get anything that he or she wanted."

"And so they can."

"Suppose she wants Mr. Rath?"

"If she wants him in the right way, she'll have him."

"I don't like that way of speaking of men," said Madeleine, dipping her white fingers into the flour and beginning to chip the butter through it. "Don't you think it's horrid how girls speak of men nowadays? I do."

"Of course I do," said Jane. "But one drops into the habit just because every-

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body does it. I'll never be married myself, and it's partly because I think it's all being so dragged down. Instead of two people's knowing one another and liking one another better till finally a big, beautiful, holy secret sort of dawns on them and makes the world all over new, girls just go on and act as if men were wild animals to be hunted and caught and talked about, or married and made fun of. I don't think all these new ideas and new ways for women have made women a bit more womanly. When I had to earn my living, I picked out work that a man couldn't do, and that I wouldn't be hurting any man by doing. I'm sorry for men nowadays. And I think women lose a lot the way some of them go on."

"After all, there can't be anything nicer than to be a woman, can there?" said Madeleine, stirring as the other poured in ingredients. "I've always been glad that I was a woman. I think that a woman's life is so sweet, and it's beautiful to be pro-

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tected and cared for." The pink flew over her cheeks at the words.

Jane's lashes swept downward for a minute, then rose resolutely. "Or to protect and care for others. It always seems to me as if a woman was the sort of blessed way through which a man's love and strength and care go to his children. Men are so helpless with children, but they do such a lot for wives, and then the mothers pass it on to the little ones."

"Life's lovely when you think of it rightly, isn't it?" Madeleine said thoughtfully. "I'm so pleased over having come here. You see Father and Mother wanted me to spend a few weeks quietly where I could rest and pick myself up a little, and so they sent me here. I didn't care much about coming, but I'm glad now. You're doing me lots of good, Jane; you seem to help me to unlock the doors to everything that's just best in me."

"It isn't that I do it," said Jane; "it's that it's been done to me, and after it got

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through me, it's bound to shine on. It's like light; every window you clean lets it through into another place, where maybe there's something else to clean and let it through again."

"I suppose we just live to keep clean and let light through," laughed Madeleine, cutting out the biscuits.

"That's all."

"I think that you'd make a good preacher, Jane; you've such nice, plain, homely, understandable ways of putting things."

Jane laughed and popped the pan into the oven. "Come and help lay the table," she said. "Oh, you never saw anything as sweet as Aunt Susan's joy in her own things. She's like a little child at Christmas. It's a kind of coming back to life for her."

"They say that her sister was awfully mean to her."

"But she wasn't at all. She thought that she was sicker than she was, and she

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kept her in bed, and the joke of it was that Aunt Susan didn't like to hurt her feelings by letting her see what mistaken ideas she had, so she hopped up every time the coast was clear and kept lively and interested trying to be about and in bed at once."

"How perfectly delightful! I never heard anything so funny. And then you came and discovered the truth."

"Well, I didn't want her to stay in bed. I'd never encourage any one in a false belief, but she hadn't the belief, — she had only the false appearance. She didn't enjoy being an invalid one bit."

"I think it's too droll," said Madeleine. "Didn't you laugh when it dawned on you first?"

"It dawned on me rather sadly. But we laugh together now."

"What will she do when her sister comes back?"

"Oh, that will all come out nicely. I don't know just how, but I know that it will come out all right."

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"Do you always have faith in things coming out rightly?"

"Always. I wouldn't dare not to. I'm one of those people who kind of feel the future as it draws near, and so I wouldn't allow myself to feel any mean future drawing near, on principle. I always feel that nice things are marching straight towards me as fast as ever the band of music plays."

"Do you believe that it really makes any difference?"

"Of course it makes a difference. It makes all the difference in the world, because hope's a rope by which any good thing can haul you right up to it, hand over hand."

"You give me a lot to think about," said Madeleine.

Jane ran out and picked some ivy leaves to place under the vase of flowers in the middle of the table. It made a little green mat. "There; we're all ready when they come, now," she said.

Presently they did come.

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'Oh, what will Mrs. Cowmull say to this!' said Lorenzo, as he pulled out Mrs. Ralston's chair. "She's busy marking passages in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* to read aloud to me while I eat, and now I shan't show up at all."

"Have you seen her niece lately?" asked Madeleine.

"Yes, I saw her this morning. She wants to pose for me, only she stipulated that she should wear clothes. I told her that my models all wore thick wool and only showed a little of their faces. She didn't seem to like that."

"But what did you mean? Surely you don't always have them wear thick woolen?"

"I just do. If they haven't thick wool on, I won't paint them at all."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I paint sheep."

The mild little joke met with great favor.

"I think you're a very clever young man," Susan said with great sincerity. "To

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think of me having a good time laughing with a sheep painter," she added. "Who holds them for you to paint, and do you set them afterwards?"

"I paint them right in the fields," said Lorenzo.

"I should think they'd butt you from behind."

"I paint over a fence."

"Well, that's safe," said Jane's aunt. "If you're careful not to be on the side where there's a bull."

After supper Madeleine helped Jane wash the dishes.

"What fun you make out of everything," she said.

"It's the only way," Jane answered. "My mission is to make two sunbeams shine where only one slanted."

"I'm glad I'm one of the heathen to whom you were sent," said Madeleine affectionately.

Jane put her arm around her. "So am I, dear, very glad."

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Madeleine laid her face against the other girl's. "Some day I want to tell you a secret," she said; "a secret that Lorenzo told me yesterday."

Jane felt her heart sort of skip a beat. "Do tell me," she said in a whisper.

"I can't now," said Madeleine. "I want to be all alone with you. It's too — too big a secret to bear to be broken in upon."

"Can you come to-morrow afternoon? Auntie's going to Mrs. Mead's to the Sewing Society, and I'll be here alone."

"That will be nice," said Madeleine; "yes, I'll come."

CHAPTER VIII

SOUL-UPLIFTING

IT was the next morning about eleven o'clock.

"You see," said Jane, sitting in the Crofts' sitting-room opposite Katie Croft who, whatever else she might or might not be, was certainly not pleasant of expression, "you see, my aunt has been an invalid so much that she appreciates what a change means to both the sick one and the one who cares for her, and so we thought that it would be so nice if you'd let me wheel your mother —"

"She ain't my mother — she's my mother-in-law," broke in Mrs. Katie Croft, instantly indignant over so false an imputation. "Good lands, the very idea! My mother! And never one single stroke of paralysis nor nothing in my family,

SUNSHINE JANE

and all reading the Bible without glasses right up till they died."

"You see, it would give you a little rest, too," Jane continued, "and it would do Aunt Susan good to feel that she was helping a weaker —"

"She ain't weak," broke in Katie Croft, again; "my lands, she's strong as a lady-ox. Anything she makes up her mind to keep she lays hold of with a grip as makes you fairly sick all up and down your back. You don't know perhaps, Miss Grey, as my husband died in our youth, and I come to live with his mother as a sacred duty, and I tell you frankly that I wish I'd never been born or that he'd never been born, forty times an hour — I do."

"You'll like a week alone, I'm sure," said Jane serenely, "and we'll like to have your mother-in-law. Perhaps she'll get a few new ideas —"

"She's stubborn as a mule," interrupted the daughter-in-law.

SOUL-UGLIFTING

"But may I see her and ask her? I do so want to help you a little. Life must have been so hard for you these last years."

"Hard!" said Katie Croft, with emphasis. "Hard! Well, I'll tell you what it is, Miss Grey, — to marry a young man as was meek as Moses and then have him just fade right straight out and get a mother-in-law like that old — that old — that old — well, I'll tell you frankly she's a siren and nothing else." (Young Mrs. Croft probably meant "vixen," but Jane did not notice.) "My life ain't really worth a shake-up of mustard and vinegar some days. What I have suffered!"

"I know more than you think," said Jane sympathetically; "nurses take care of so many kinds of people. But do let me ask her. If she likes to come to us, it'll be a great rest to you, and perhaps it'll do her a little good, too."

"I can't understand you're wanting her," said Katie. "It's all over town how queer

SUNSHINE JANE

you are, but I never thought that anybody could be as queer as that !”

“Do let us go to her,” Jane urged.

Katie rose and forthwith conducted the caller to old Mrs. Croft’s room, a large, square place adorned with no end of black daguerreotypes and faded photographs.

“Mother, it’s Miss Grey. You know? — she’s Mrs. Ralston’s niece.”

Old Mrs. Croft received her visitor with acutely suspicious eyes. “Well?” she said tartly.

Jane took her hand, but she jerked it smartly away.

“Sit down anywhere,” said Katie; “she hears well.”

“Hear !” said old Mrs. Croft. “I should say I did hear. There ain’t a pan fell in the neighborhood for the last ten years as hasn’t woke me out of a sound sleep, dreaming of my husband —”

“Miss Grey’s come to see you about something,” interrupted Katie; “she —”

“I had a husband,” continued old Mrs.

SOUL-UPLIFTING

Croft, raising her voice from Do to Re, "and such a one! Wednesday he'd go to sleep and Thursdays he'd wake, so regular you could tell the days of the week just from his habits. He —"

"Miss Grey wants —" interrupted Katie.

"I came to —" said Jane.

"I had a husband," continued old Mrs. Croft, going from Re to Mi now; "oh, my, but I did have a husband. In May I had him and in December I had him, but he was always the same to me. You can see his picture there, Miss Grey; it's all faded out, just from being looked at; but I'll tell you where it never fades, Miss Grey — it never so much as turns a hair in my heart. My heart is engraved —"

"You'd better go on and say what you've got to say," said Katie to Jane. "I often put her to bed talking, and she talks all the night through."

"I want to ask you —" Jane began.

"Ask me no questions and I'll tell

SUNSHINE JANE

you no lies," sang Mrs. Croft. "Oh, I had —"

"— I want you to come and stay with us," Jane said, with forceful accents.

There was a sudden tense hush.

"My aunt and I want you to come and make us a little visit," the caller added.

The hush grew awful.

"A little change would be so good for you — you've been shut up so long."

Old Mrs. Croft lifted her two hands towards the ceiling.

"What do you want to take me out of my own house for? Going to do something to it that I wouldn't approve, I expect. Oh, I see it all. There was Macbeth and there was Othello, and now there's my house — What are you going to do to it, anyhow?" The question was pitched so high and sharp that Jane jumped.

"We just want to give you a little change."

"Change! I had a change once. Went to Cuba with my husband and nearly died.

SOUL-UPLIFTING

I don't want no change of *house*," with deep meaning in the emphasis; "the change that I want is another change. Change is a great thing to have. My husband never changed. Only his collars. Never no other way."

"You and Aunt Susan are old friends —" suggested Jane.

"Never nothing special," broke in old Mrs. Croft. "My goodness, I do hope your aunt ain't calling me her friend, because if she is, it's a thing I can't allow."

Jane thanked her stars that her powers of mental concentration forbade her mind to wander. "I'm sure if you came to us, you'd enjoy it," she said persuasively; "we've such a pretty bedroom down-stairs, and I'll sleep on the dining-room sofa, so you won't feel lonely."

"Lonely. I never feel lonely. I'd thank Heaven if I could be let alone for a little, once in a while. I don't want to come, and that's a fact. If that be treason, make the most of it."

SUNSHINE JANE

"Oh, but you must come," said Jane; "you'll like it. We want you, and you must come."

"Well, get me my bonnet then," said old Mrs. Croft. "Run, Katie, I've been sitting here waiting for it for over an hour."

Katie and Jane regarded one another in consternation. They hadn't quite counted on this.

"I'm going visiting," said Mrs. Croft gaily. "Oh, my, and how I shall visit. Years may come and years may go, and still I shall sit there visiting away, and when I hear the door-bell, I shall know it's time for Christmas dinner."

Katie took Jane's hand and drew her out of the room. "I don't believe you'd better take her," she said; "she's so flighty. I know how to manage her, and you don't. Just give it up."

"No, I won't," said Jane, smiling. "I know that it's a kind thing to do and that I must do it. I'm going to take her."

"Seems so odd you're wanting to," said

SOUL-UPLIFTING

Katie. "You're very funny, I think. People are saying that you think that everything's for the best. Do you really believe that?"

"Of course. We can't get outside of God's plan, whatever we may do. If we do wrong, we have to bear the consequences because it's as easy to *see* the right thing to do as the wrong, but the great Plan never wavers."

"Oh. my," said Katie. "I'm glad to know that."

Jane pressed her hand. "I'll get things all ready, and we'll bring her over tomorrow night," she said; "that'll be best. Then she can go right to bed and get rested from the effort."

So it was arranged, and the Sunshine Nurse went home to tell Susan that Mrs. Croft had consented to come. She felt quite positive that now they would both attain unto a higher plane without any difficulty, if they kept such a guest in the house for a week.

SUNSHINE JANE

"It isn't going to be easy, Auntie," she said, a bit later, "but it will teach you and me a lot, and if one wants to voyage greatly, one must get out into the deep water."

"I'll do anything to get hold of some different way of getting on with Matilda," said Susan, "and I begin to see what you mean when you say that if I change *me*, I'll change it all. If you could make flour into sugar, you'd have cake instead of biscuit, but, oh, my! Old Mrs. Croft!"

"It won't be for so very long," said Jane, "and think of Katie Croft through all these years! She's been splendid, I think."

"Well, she didn't have any other place to live, you know," Susan promptly reminded her niece.

"Work's work, no matter why you do it," Jane said, "and all the big laws work greatly. This having old Mrs. Croft is a pretty big step for you and me to take, and you'll see that when Aunt Matilda returns, we'll be so strongly settled in our

SOUL-UGLIFTING

new ways that she can't unsettle us. We'll be absolutely different people."

"Y — yes," said Susan, confidence fighting doubt stoutly. "I'm willing to try, although left to myself I should never have thought of old Mrs. Croft as a way of getting different."

"Anything that we do with earnest purpose is a way of getting better," said Jane. She looked out of the window for a minute, and her lip almost quivered. Susan didn't notice. "Everything is always for the best, if we're sure of it," she then said firmly.

CHAPTER IX

MADELEINE'S SECRET

THE two girls were enjoying a pleasant time in Susan's big, tidy kitchen.

"I never knew that a kitchen could be so perfectly lovely," said Madeleine, as they took tea by the little table by the window.

"Jane, you are a genius! One opens the gate here with a bubbling feeling that everything in the whole world's all right."

"I'm so glad," said Jane; "it's grand to feel that one is a real channel of happiness. I always seem to see people as made to form that kind of connection between God and earth, and that happiness is the visible sign of success, a good 'getting through,' so to speak."

"Do you know, the English language is awfully indefinite. That sentence might

MADELEINE'S SECRET

mean good flowing like water through people, or people so made that good can go through them easily. Do you see?"

"Yes, I see. But either meaning is all right. It isn't what I say that matters so much, anyway. It's how you take it."

"I took that two ways."

"Yes, and both were good. That's so fine, — to get two good meanings, where I only meant one."

They smiled together.

"Mr. Rath and I were talking about that last evening," said Madeleine, the color coming into her face a little. "Do you know, he's really a very dear man. He's awfully nice."

Jane jumped up to drive a wasp out of the window. "You know him better than I do," she said, very busy.

"I've known him for several years, but never as well as here."

Jane came back and sat down. Madeleine was silent, seeming to search for words.

SUNSHINE JANE

"You were going to tell me a secret," her friend said, after a little.

"I know, but I — I can't."

Jane lifted her eyes almost pitifully.

"Why not?"

"I don't feel that I have the right, after all. Secrets are such precious things."

"If I can help you —?"

"Oh, no, no. — It isn't any trouble. It's something quite different — I — I thought that perhaps I could tell you my thoughts, but — I can't."

There was a silence.

"There are such wonderful feelings in the world," Madeleine went on, after a little; "they don't seem to fit into words at all. One feels ashamed to have even planned to talk about them. One feels so humble when —" she paused — then closed her lips.

Jane put out her hand and took the hand upon the other side of the little table, close.

"Don't mind me, dear; I understand."

"Do you really?"

MADELEINE'S SECRET

"Yes."

Madeleine's eyes were anxious. "Do you guess? Did you guess?"

"Yes."

"And how — what — what do you think?"

"I think that it would be lovely, only, of course, I don't quite know it all, for I shall never have anything like it."

Madeleine started. "Oh, Jane, don't say that."

"But it's so, dear."

"Oh, *no*."

"No, dear, — I can guess and sympathize. But I shall never have any such happiness. It's — it's quite settled."

Madeleine left her seat, went round by the side of the other girl, flung herself down on the floor, and looked as if she were about to cry. "Oh, Jane, you mustn't feel so. Why shouldn't you marry?"

"I can't, dear; I've debts of my father's to pay, and I'm pledged to my Order."

"But they'll get paid after a while."

SUNSHINE JANE

"It will take all my youth."

"But a way can be found?"

"No way can ever be. There is no one in the wide world to help me. I'm quite alone."

"Why, Jane," said Madeleine, always kneeling and always looking up, "I know some one who can manage everything, and you do, too."

Jane stared a little. "My aunt, do you mean?"

"No, — God."

Jane smiled suddenly. "Thank you, dear. I hadn't forgotten, but I just didn't think. Still, I think God means me to be brave about my burdens. I don't think that He sees them as things from which to be relieved."

Madeleine was still looking up. "But the channel doesn't think; the channel just conveys what pours along it," she whispered.

Just at this second the scene altered.

"Oh, there's my aunt!" Jane exclaimed.

MADELEINE'S SECRET

Susan passed the window, and the next minute she came in the door. "I've had the most bee — youtiful afternoon," she announced radiantly. "I did Jane lots of credit, for I never said a word about anybody, but oh, how splendid it was to just be good and silent, and hear all the others talk. They talked about everybody, and a good many were of my own opinion, so I had considerable satisfaction without doing a thing wrong."

Jane couldn't help laughing or Madeleine, either. "Was young Mrs. Croft there?"

"No, and most everybody says that she'll go off to-morrow and never come back, and we'll have old Mrs. Croft till she dies. They looked at me pretty hard, but I stuck to my soul and never said a word."

"It was noble in you, Auntie," Jane said warmly.

"Yes, it was," assented Susan. Then she turned to Madeleine, who had returned to her chair. "Jane's religion's pretty hard on me, but I like its results, and I can do

SUNSHINE JANE

anything I set out to do, and I don't mean to not get a future if I can help it. You see, my sister Matilda is a very peculiar person. You must know that by this time?"

"I have heard a good deal about her," Madeleine admitted.

"Well, I hope it isn't unkind in me to say that I know more than anybody else can possibly imagine."

"But she's coming back all right," Jane interrupted firmly; "we mustn't forget that."

"No," said Susan, with a quick gasp in her breath; "no, I'm not forgetting a thing. I'm only talking a little. And oh, how Mrs. Cowmull did talk about you, Madeleine. She says Mr. Rath can't put his nose out of the door alone."

"That's dreadful," said Madeleine, trying not to color, "especially as we always come straight here."

"Well, I tell you it's pretty hard work being good," said Susan, with a cheerful

MADELEINE'S SECRET

sigh ; "it's a relief to get home and take off one's bonnet."

"And don't you want some tea, Auntie ? It's all hot under the cozy."

"Yes, I will, you Sunshine Jane, you. I'll never cease to be grateful for good tea again as long as I live. I've had five years of the other kind to help me remember."

Later, when Madeleine was gone, Susan said: "Do you know, Jane, Katie Croft is certainly going to desert that awful old woman when we get her here? Everybody says so."

"No, she isn't, Auntie; the expected is never what happens."

"Jane, any one with your religion can't rely on proverbs to help them out, because the whole thing puts you right outside of common-sense to begin with."

Jane was sitting looking out upon the pretty garden. "I know, Auntie; I only quoted that in reference to the Sewing Society gossip. It's never the expected that happens in their world; it's the ex-

SUNSHINE JANE

pected that always happens in my world. And proverbs don't exist in my world; they're every one of them a human limitation."

"Well, Jane, I don't know; some of them are very pretty, and when I've seen Matilda over the fence and run down to get a few scraps, I've taken considerable comfort in 'No cloud without a silver lining' and 'It never rains but it pours.' They were a great help to me."

Jane kissed her tenderly. "Bless you, Auntie, — everything's all right and all lovely, and Madeleine made me so happy to-day. I'm sure that she's engaged."

"Yes, I've thought that, too."

"Yes, and I'm so glad for her."

"I hope he's good enough for her."

"Oh, I'm sure that he is." Jane thought a minute. "And Madeleine gave me a big lesson, too," she added.

"What?"

"She showed me that with all my teaching and preaching, I don't trust God half enough yet."

MADELEINE'S SECRET

"Well, Jane," said Susan solemnly, "I s'pose trusting God is like being grateful for the sunshine, — human beings ain't big enough to hold all they ought to feel."

"Perhaps we'd be nothing but trust and gratitude, then," said Jane, smiling.

"They're nice feelings to be made of," said Susan serenely, "but I must go and put my bonnet away. But, oh, heavens, when I think that to-morrow old Mrs. Croft is coming!"

"And that lots of good is coming with her; she is coming to bring happiness and happiness only."

"Yes, I know," Susan's air was completely submissive. "I can hardly wait for her to get here. They wondered at the Sewing Society if she'd sing Captain Jinks all night often. She does sometimes, you know. But I'm sure we'll like her. She's a nice woman."

CHAPTER X

OLD MRS. CROFT

OLD Mrs. Croft arrived the next afternoon about half after four. She was rolled up in her chair, and her small trunk followed on a wheelbarrow.

"How old you have grown!" she said to Susan, by way of greeting, as she grated up the gravel. "My, to think you ever looked young!"

They wheeled her into the hall. "Same hall," she said, looking about, "same paper you had thirty years ago. Oh, my, to think of it. I've papered and papered and scraped off, and papered and papered and scraped off, and then papered again in those same thirty years."

They got her into the room on the ground floor, which had been prepared for her. "I suppose this was the most convenient

OLD MRS. CROFT

place to put me," she said, "and so you put me in it. Put me where you please, only I do hope you haven't beetles. It makes me very nervous to hear 'em chipping about all night, and when I'm nervous, I don't sleep, and when I don't sleep, I just can't help lying awake. It's a way I've got. I caught it from my husband when he was a baby. He'd wake up and give it to me."

Susan went out with Jane to get her some supper. "I never thought much about Katie Croft," she said, "but I never doubted she had a hard time."

"Yes," said Jane, "and one of the nicest things in this world is to be able to give some one who's had a hard time a rest."

"Wouldn't it be dreadful if she died, though, while she was here?"

"Who? Old Mrs. Croft?"

"Oh, no, she won't ever die. I meant Katie. Everybody says she's going to run away, but if she don't do that and dies, we'll be just as badly off as if she did it."

SUNSHINE JANE

"Oh, Auntie!"

"Well, Jane, we'd have to keep old Mrs. Croft till she died."

"I guess there's not much chance of that," Jane said; "she won't die. She has come here to do us good and to receive good herself, that's all."

Susan looked appalled. "Surely you don't expect to sunshine *her* up, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

Then Susan looked amazed. "Well, I never did! I thought she was just here to do us good. I —"

Their conversation was suddenly interrupted by a piercing shriek. Jane flew.

"I'm so happy I just had to let it out," Mrs. Croft announced. "I can't hold in joy or sorrow. Sorrow I let out in the low of my voice — like a cow, you know — but joy I let rise to the skies. You'll hear to-night."

Jane looked at her and smiled. She looked like a story-book witch in a nice, white, modern bed. "I thought that per-

OLD MRS. CROFT

haps you wanted something," she said, turning to leave the room again.

"No, indeed, I never want anything. I ain't by no means so bad off as is give out."

"I guessed as much. You can make a fresh start now, and we shan't remind you of the past."

"Oh, then I'm coming to the table," exclaimed Mrs. Croft, "and I'm going to be helped like a Christian and feed myself like a human being. This being put to bed and just all but tied there with a rope isn't going to go on much longer, I can tell you."

"Don't speak of it at all," said Jane; "you just do what you please here, and we'll let you. I'm going to get you your supper now."

"Stop!" cried old Mrs. Croft sharply. "Stop! I won't have it! I won't stand it. Oh, I've had such a time," she went on, bringing her clenched fist down vigorously on her knee under the bedclothes and raising her voice very high indeed,

SUNSHINE JANE

"such a time ! I had a beautiful son that you or any girl might have been proud to marry, and then he must go and marry that Katie Croft creature. There ain't many things to cut a mother's heart to the quick like seeing her own son marry her own daughter-in-law. Such a nice raised boy as he was, so neat, and she kicking her clothes under the bed at night to tidy up the room. Oh !" cried Mrs. Croft, lifting her voice to a still more surprising pitch, "what I have suffered ! Nothing ain't been spared me. I lost my son and the use of my legs from the shock and —"

"Supper is all ready," Jane interrupted sweetly and calmly.

"What you got ?"

"Sardines —"

"I never eat 'em."

"Toast."

"I hate it."

"Plum preserves."

"Lord have mercy on me, I wouldn't swallow one if you gave it to me."

OLD MRS. CROFT

Jane stood still at the door.

Susan, having heard the screams, came running in.

"Oh, Mrs. Ralston," cried Mrs. Croft, "I had" — Jane rose, approached the bed, and laid a firm hand on her arm. "What do you want for supper?" she asked in a quiet, penetrating tone.

"I don't want nothing," cried Mrs. Croft; "days I eat and days I don't. This is a day I don't eat. and on such a day I only take a little ham and eggs from time to time. Oh, my husband, how I did love you! It's just come over me how I loved him, and I love him so I can't hardly stand it —"

"We'll go out and have supper ourselves, then," said Jane.

"Eat, drink, and be merry while you can," fairly yelled Mrs. Croft. "The handwriting is on the wall and the Medes and Persians is in the chicken yard right now. Oh, what a —"

They slipped out and shut the door after

SUNSHINE JANE

them. Susan turned a scared face Jane's way. "Why, she's crazy!" she said. "Katie always said so, and folks thought she was just talking. It's awful."

"She's a little excited with the change," said Jane soothingly; "she'll be calmer soon. It's very bad to shut one's self off from others. It's better to fuss along with disagreeable people than to live altogether alone. She's grown flighty through being left alone. It's a wonder that you didn't get odd yourself."

When they went back after supper, Mrs. Croft was sound asleep.

"Don't wake her, for goodness' sake," whispered Susan, in the doorway. Jane left the room quietly, and her aunt took her by the arm and led her up-stairs. "This is pretty serious," she said. "I think Katie Croft ought to have told us."

"She didn't want her to come; we insisted," said Jane.

"I tell you what," said Susan, "we were too happy."

OLD MRS. CROFT

Susan's tone was so solemn that Jane had an odd little qualm. But the next instant she knew that all was right, because all is always right. "Auntie," she said, putting her hand on the older woman's shoulder, "you must try to realize that you've moved out of the world where things go wrong into the world where things go right. When you go out of the cold, dark winter night into a cosy, warm house, you don't fear that the house will turn dark and cold any minute."

"But old Mrs. Croft isn't a house; she's moved into us, instead."

Jane smiled her customary smile of tranquil sweetness. "She has come to show us ourselves," she said, "and to bring us to some kind of better things. I know it."

Susan's eyes altered to confidence. "Well, Sunshine Jane," she said, "I'll try to believe that you know. I'll try."

They went to bed early, and Jane slept on the dining-room sofa. In the night

SUNSHINE JANE

Mrs. Croft, calling, woke her. She jumped up and went to her at once.

"I'm hungry. You didn't ask me here to starve me, did you? Oh, how hungry I am. I've never been so hungry before."

"I'll get you anything you like," the girl said. "What shall it be?"

Mrs. Croft shook her head lugubriously. "Whatever I eat is sure to kill me. I wish I was home. You don't know how good dear Katie is to me, Miss Grey. Nobody could, unless they lived with her year in and year out as I do. Something told me never to leave my sweet child, and I disobeyed my conscience which won't let me sleep for aching like a serpent's tooth. Oh, my little Katie, my pretty little Katie, my loving little Katie that I went and left at home! Take me to her."

"But she isn't at home," said Jane. "She's gone away on a little visit. She went last evening."

"I shall never see her again," said Mrs. Croft mournfully. "I shall never see no

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one again. Oh, dear; oh, dear. My eyes. My eyes."

"What shall I get you? A glass of milk?"

"It doesn't matter. Whatever you like. I was never one to make trouble. Whatever you like."

When Jane returned with the milk and some hastily prepared bread and butter, Mrs. Croft was praying rapidly. "I think I've got religion," said she, in a bright, chatty tone; "if you'll sit down, I'll convert you. It's never too late to mend, and so get your darning basket and come right here." She began to eat and drink very rapidly. "It's going to kill me," she said, between bites, "but I don't care a mite. What is life after all, — a vain fleeting shadow of vanity, — why, you ain't put no jam on this bread!"

"Do you like jam? I'll get you some at once."

"Oh, merciful heavens, waking me up in the dead of night to give me plain bread

SUNSHINE JANE

and no jam ! I shall never see Katie again, and perhaps it's just as well, for she'd not stand such doings. Oh, you idle, thriftless girl, take me home, take me home at once."

"In the morning," said Jane gently.

"Oh, my, — why did I ever come ! Katie, my Katie, my long-loving Katie ; my dear little Katie that's gone to New York !"

Then, having swallowed the milk in great gulps and the bread in great bites, she shut her eyes and lay back again in bed.

"Shan't I bring you anything else ?" Jane asked.

"No," said the invalid, "not by no means, and I'll trouble you to get out and keep out and don't make a noise in the morning, for I want my last hours to be peaceful, and I'm going to take a screw-driver and fix my thoughts firmly to heaven at once."

Jane went softly out.

CHAPTER XI

SHE SLEEPS

THE next morning Susan felt perturbed. "She'll take up a whole week of our happy visit, and I can't bear to lose a minute. The time's going too fast, anyhow."

Lorenzo Rath came in shortly after. He and Madeleine and Emily Mead were in and out daily to suit themselves by this time. "Do you know, Mrs. Croft has gone off, nobody knows where," he said gravely; "she's left no address, and people say she'll never come back."

Susan threw up her hands with a wail. "Oh, Jane, she *has* left that dreadful old woman on us for life; I'll just bet anything folks knew exactly that she meant to do it

SUNSHINE JANE

when they talked to me so. What *will* Matilda say when she comes back?"

Jane was silent a minute. "It's no use doubting what one really believes," she said finally. "I do really believe that I came here for a good purpose, and I know that I had a good purpose in inviting Mrs. Croft. I'm taught that to doubt is like pouring ink into the pure water of one's good intentions, and I won't doubt. I refuse to."

"But if you go back to where you come from and leave me with Matilda and old Mrs. Croft, I'll be dead or I'll wish I was dead, — it all comes to the same thing," cried poor Susan.

"Auntie," said Jane firmly, "I shan't leave you alone with Aunt Matilda and Mrs. Croft, you needn't fear."

"Oh," said Susan, her face undergoing a lightning transformation, "if you'll stay here, I'll keep Mrs. Croft or anybody else, with pleasure."

"What, even me?" laughed Lorenzo.

SHE SLEEPS

"I'd like to keep you," said Susan warmly. "I think you're one of the nicest young men I ever knew."

"I'd like to stay," said Lorenzo, looking at Jane.

She lifted up her eyes and they had a peculiar expression.

Just then Emily Mead came in. "Only think," she said, directly greetings were over, "people say Mrs. Croft drew all their money out of the bank before she left. Everybody says she's deserted her mother-in-law completely."

"Jane, it really is so," said Susan; "she really is gone."

Jane looked steadily into their three faces. "If I begin worrying and doubting, of course there'll be a chance to worry and trouble, because I'm the strongest of you all," she said gravely, "but I won't go down and live in the world of worry and trouble under any circumstances. I know *that* only good can come of Mrs. Croft's being here. I *know* it!"

SUNSHINE JANE

"I wish that I could learn how you manage such faith," said the young artist. "I'd try it on myself, — yes, I would, for a fact."

"It's not so easy," said Jane, looking earnestly at him. "It means just the same mental discipline that physical culture means for the muscles. It takes time."

"But I'd like to learn," said Lorenzo.

"So would I!" said Emily Mead.

"I've begun already," said Susan; "every time I think of old Mrs. Croft I say: 'She's here for some good purpose, God help us.'"

"Tell me," said Emily Mead, "what possessed you to have her, anyway? Everybody's wondering."

"Jane thought that it would be a nice thing to do. And so we did it."

"Do you always do things if you think of them?" Emily asked Jane.

"I'm taught that I must."

"Taught?"

SHE SLEEPS

"It's part of my sunshine work."

"That's why she's here," interposed Susan; "she thought of me and came right along."

Emily looked thoughtful. "I wonder if I could learn," she said.

"Anybody can learn anything," said Lorenzo.

"Wouldn't it be nice to all learn Jane's religion?"

"I've got it most learned," said Susan, "I'm to where I'm most ready to stand Matilda, if only we don't have to keep old Mrs. Croft."

"What is old Mrs. Croft doing now?" Emily asked suddenly.

"She's still asleep. She says that she sleeps late."

Then Emily rose to go. Lorenzo Rath rose and left with her.

"Jane," said Susan solemnly, after they were alone, "I'm afraid that religion of yours ain't as practical as it might be, after all. It's got us old Mrs. Croft, and I

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ain't saying a word, but now I'm about positive it's going to lose you that young man. You could have him if you'd just exert yourself a little, and you don't at all."

"I couldn't have him, Auntie."

"Yes, you could. Don't tell me. I know a young man when I see one, and Mr. Rath's a real young man. He loves you, Jane, just because nobody could help it, and if you weren't always so busy, he'd get on a good deal faster."

"I can't marry, Aunt Susan." Jane, with Madeleine's secret high in her heart, was very busy setting the kitchen to rights. "Some people are not meant to have homes of their own. It's the century."

"Fiddle for the century," said Susan, with something almost like violence. "I'm awful tired of all this hash and talk about the century. About the only thing I've had to think of since Matilda made up her mind I was too sick to get up, was what I read in newspapers about the troubles of

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the century. Centuries is always in hot water till they're well over, and then they get to be called the good old days. I guess days ain't so different nor centuries either nor women neither. Fiddle for all this kind of rubbish, — it's no use except to upset a nice girl like you and keep her from marrying a nice young fellow like Mr. Rath. Girls don't know nothing about love no more. Mercy on us, why, it's a kind of thing that makes you willing to go right out and hack down trees for the man."

Jane looked a little smiling and a little wistful. "I'll tell you what it is, Auntie," she said; "when my father died he left a debt that ought to be paid, and I promised him I'd pay it. I couldn't marry — it wouldn't be honest."

Susan's eyes flew pitifully open. "Good heavens, mercy on us, no; then you never can't marry, sure and certain. There never was the man yet so good he wouldn't throw a thing like that in a woman's teeth. It's a man's way, my dear, and a wife ought not

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to mind, but one of the difficulties of being a wife is that you always do mind."

"I know that I should mind," said Jane quietly, "and, anyway, I don't want to marry. I'm much happier going about on my sunbeam mission, trying to help others a bit here and a bit there." She smiled bravely as she spoke, for all that it takes a deal of training in truth not to waver or quaver in such a minute. She had to think steadily along the lines which she had worked so hard to build into every brain-cell and spirit-fiber of her make-up. "Auntie," she went on then, after a brief reflection that he who works in truth's wool works without fear as to the breaking of one single thread, "you and I are trying dreadfully hard — trying with all our might to do exactly right. We're trying to break your chains by the only way in which material chains can be broken, — by breaking those of others. We can't go astray. If old Mrs. Croft should stay here till she died, and if I should work till I died at

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paying the debts of others, she'd stay for some good purpose, and I'd be working in the same way. Be very sure of that."

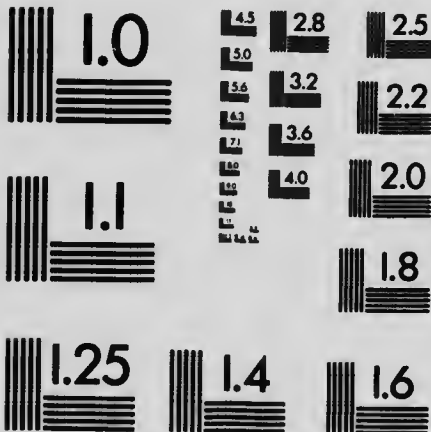
For a second Susan looked cheered — but only for a second. Then, "That's all very well for you and me, who want to be uplifted — at least you want to be, and I think maybe I'll like it after I get a little used to it. But Matilda doesn't know or care anything about planes, and it's Matilda I keep thinking of." There was another pause, and then she added: "And it's Matilda I'll have to live with, — along with old Mrs. Croft. Oh, Jane, I'd be so much happier if you'd marry Mr. Rath and let me come and live with you!"

Jane went and put her arms about her. "Auntie, it isn't easy to learn my way of looking at things, because you have to keep at them till they're so firm in you that nothing from outside can ever shake or uproot them. But what I believe is just so firm with me, and I won't give anything up, — not even about Mrs. Croft. We're all



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right and she's all right and everything's all right, and I don't need to marry any one."

Susan winked mournfully. "If there was only some way to meet Matilda on her way home and kind of get that through her head before she saw Mrs. Croft. You see, she always shuts that room up cold winters and keeps cold meat in there. I've had many a good meal out of that room."

"You must not cast about for ways and means," said Jane firmly. "Life is like a sunshiny warm day, and our part is to breathe and feel and thank God, — not to look for the sun to surely cease shining."

"But it does stop," wailed Susan, "often."

"Yes, thank Heaven," said Jane, "if it didn't, we'd be burnt up alive by our own vitality."

"Oh, dear," said Susan briefly, "you've an answer for everything. Well, let's get dinner."

They went into the kitchen.

CHAPTER XII

EMILY'S PROJECT

AFTER dinner that day Emily Mead came with her work. Emily Mead was one of those nondescript girls who seem to spring up more and more thickly in these troublous, churned-up times of ours.

Too pretty to be plain, too unattractive to be beautiful. Too well-to-do to need to work, too poor to attain to anything for which she longed. Too clever to belong to her class, not clever enough to rise above it. Altogether a very fit subject for Jane to "sunshine," as her aunt put it.

"How do you get along with old Mrs. Croft?" she asked, directly she was seated.

"She's asleep yet," Jane said; "she was so restless all night."

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"She always sleeps days and is awake all night; didn't you know that before?" queried Emily, in surprise. "Some one ought to have told you."

"It doesn't matter," said Jane serenely. There was never any bravado in her serenity; it was quite sincere.

"That was what made Katie so mad," Emily continued. "She said it gave her her days, to be sure, but, as she couldn't very well sleep, too, all day, she never really had any time herself."

"We'll get along all right," said Jane quietly; "old people have ways, and then they change and have other ways, and the rest must expect to be considerate."

"Mercy on us, I wonder what she'll change to next," said Susan, with feeling. She had just returned from listening at the invalid's door.

"Don't worry, Auntie, — just remember!" Jane's smile was at once bright and also a bit admonitory

"I'm trying to believe that everything's

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all right always, too," said Susan to Emily, "but, oh, my !"

They went out on the shady side of the house to where a little table stood, which was made out of a board nailed into a cut-off tree stump. Jane and Emily carried chairs, and Susan brought her darning basket. It was delightfully pleasant. From time to time Jane or her aunt slipped in and listened at the door, but old Mrs. Croft slept on like a baby.

"I do wonder if Katie Croft has really gone for good !" Emily said to Susan, while Jane was absent on one of these errands.

"I can't trust myself even with my own opinions," said Susan reservedly; "I haven't much time to get changed before Matilda comes, you know, and I want to believe in Jane's religion if I can. It's so kind of warm and comforting. I like it."

"Jane," Emily said, turning towards her when she returned, "I've come to-day on an awfully serious errand, and I want you to help me."

SUNSHINE JANE

"I will certainly, if I can. What is it?"

"Do you really believe that wanting anything shows that one is going to get it? You said something like that the other day."

"I know that one can get anything one wants," Jane answered gravely; "of course the responsibility of some kinds of wanting is awfully heavy. But the law doesn't alter."

"Can you explain it to me?"

"Yes, that's it," said Susan, "you tell us how to manage. I want to get something myself. Or I mean it's that I want something I've got to go away again. Or I guess I'd better not try to say what I mean."

"But you won't either of you understand what I mean, when I tell you," said Jane. "It's just as I said before, it takes a lot of study to get your brain-cells to where they can hold an idea that's really new to you. Heads are like empty beehives, — you have to have the comb before you can have the honey, and every different kind of study

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requires a different kind of cells just for its use alone. When things don't interest us, it's because the brain-cells in regard to that subject have never been developed. That's all. That's what they taught me."

"I think it's interesting," said Susan. "I always thought that the inside of my head was one thing that I didn't need to bother about. Seems it isn't, after all. Go on, you Sunshine Jane, you."

"I'm like your aunt. I thought that what I thought was the last thing that mattered," said Emily.

"Everything matters. There's nothing in this world that doesn't matter, because this world is all matter. Anything that doesn't matter must be spirit. Don't you see that when you say and really mean that a thing doesn't matter, you mean that to you it isn't material, — that it's no part of your world?"

"Dear me, I never thought of that," said Susan, "then I suppose as long as things do

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matter to us, it means we just hang on to them and hold them for all we're worth."

"Yes."

"But, Jane, thoughts can't matter much? Or we can forget things."

"There isn't anything that we can think of at all that we are ever free not to think about again — that is, if it's a good thought," said Jane. "If a thought comes to us at all, it comes with some responsibility attached. Either we are meant to gain strength by dismissing it, if it seems wrong, or it's our duty to do something with it, if it's right. Most people's minds are littered up with thoughts that they never either use or put away. That's what makes them so stupid."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Susan. "Why, I never put a thought away in my life, — not as I know of."

"I've never thought anything at all about my thoughts," said Emily, looking rather startled.

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"Lots of people don't," said Jane; "they act just as a woman would in making a dress, if she cut it out a bit now and a bit then without ever laying the pattern back even, and then joined it anywhere any time, and then was surprised when it didn't even prove fit to wear — not to speak of looking all witched."

"Is that what ails some lives?" Emily asked, looking yet more startled.

"It's what ails almost every life. It's what makes 'I didn't think' the worst confession in the world. A man driving a motor with his eyes shut wouldn't be a bit worse. Life's a great powerful force always rushing on, and we swing into the tide and never bother to row or to steer or to see that our boat is water-tight."

"You make me feel awful, Jane. As if I'd been lazy, staying in bed so. And it was the only way."

"You couldn't do any better, Auntie. At least you weren't doing anything wrong. Being moored in a little, quiet cove is better

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than being adrift and slamming into the boats of others."

"I'd really have had to think more about Matilda's thoughts than my own, if I'd known. I'd never have had time for much thinking as I pleased in the way you say; I was always jumping up and flopping down."

"Jane," said Emily earnestly, "then every thought matters?"

"Yes, or matterates." Jane smiled. "If a thought doesn't produce good, it'll surely produce bad, — it's got to do something. You plant your thoughts in time just as one plants seed in the ground, and any further thoughts of the same kind add to its strength until enough strength causes an appearance in this world."

"You really believe that?"

"I know it. I know it so well that I think that every seed that's ever fallen was a lesson that we were too stupid to learn. Every time a seed fell and germinated, God said: 'There, that's the very plainest teaching on earth. Can't you see?' Some-

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times I think the world's all a book for us to learn heaven in, just as our bodies explain our souls to us."

Susan looked at Emily in an awed way. "I guess I can get to believe it all," she said, in a low tone; "it sounds so plain when you stop and think of it."

"I'll try to believe it," said Emily, "but what I care most about is to learn how to get what you want?"

Jane considered. "That comes ever so far along. You have to learn to get what you want out of yourself before you can be upon the plane where you naturally get what you want, because you are too far on to want what you couldn't get."

Emily didn't understand and didn't care. "Do tell me how it's done, anyway," she begged eagerly.

"I don't know whether what I say will have any meaning for you, but I'll say it, anyway. You'll have to know that it's what I believe and live by, and if you're to believe it and live by it, it will come to you

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quite easily, and if not it's because it isn't for you yet."

"I mean to believe," said Emily firmly. "I want something, and I'll do anything to get it."

Jane shook her head. "That's the very hardest road to come by," she said, "unless it's some overcoming in yourself that you are wanting. You see, the very first step has to be the conquering of ourselves, not the asking for material things. You have to open a channel for the spirit, and then the material flows through afterwards, as a matter of course. But if you've gone on a good ways, you don't think of getting *things* at all; you just want opportunities to grow, and you know that what you need for life will keep coming."

"But it doesn't with lots of people," said Emily. "Just look at the poor — and the suffering."

"They aren't living according to this law," said Jane. "They're living on another plane. There are different planes."

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"Don't you see," interposed Susan, "we asked Mrs. Croft because it would get me on a plane where when Matilda came back, she wouldn't mind so many changes."

Emily looked inquiring. "A different plane?"

"Yes," said Jane, "you can lift yourself straight out of any circle of conditions by suddenly altering all your own ideas — if you've strength to do so."

"I'd never have asked Mrs. Croft alone by myself, you know," said Susan; "nobody that looked at things the way other folks do, would. But Jane looks at everything different from everybody else. She said it would be a quick way of being different. I guess she's right."

"I never heard any ideas like that."

"But they aren't new," said Jane; "they're older than the hills. God made the world and then gave every man dominion over his world. We all have the whole of *our* world to rule. This way of looking at things is new to you, but there are

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thousands and thousands of people proving it true every day. All the old religions teach it, and all the new religions bid you live it or they won't be for you. They don't kill men for not believing now. They just let them live and suffer and go blundering on. Why" — Jane grew suddenly pink with fervor — "why, everywhere I look, almost, I see just lovely chances being let die, because people won't fuss to tend them. People are too careless and too thoughtless. The truth is so plain that the very word 'thoughtless' fairly screams what's the matter to every one, but hardly any one bothers."

"But the people who believe as you do, — do they all get everything that they want?" asked Emily.

"Or else they want what they get," said Jane; "it comes to exactly the same thing when you begin to understand. The beauty of every step nearer God is the new learning of how exactly right his world is managed. All my old puzzles have been cleared up, and it's so wonderful. Why, I used to

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think that when beautiful, dear little children died it was awful; but now I know that they came to help and teach others, and that when they'd spread their lesson to those others, they didn't need lessons themselves and just left the school and went back into the beautiful world of Better Things. It was such a help to me to know why splendid men and women who were needed went so suddenly sometimes; it's because they're needed much more elsewhere and respond to that call of duty at once. I don't think of death as anything dreadful now; I think of it as a door that will open and close very easily for me."

"It's one door that Matilda liked to keep setting open," said Susan, — "oh, dear me, Jane, I'm trying to grow brain-cells and be a credit to you, and I can't think of anything but old Mrs. Croft. Perhaps she's woke up."

Jane rose and went into the house.

"Do you think you can take it all in?" Emily asked, slowly and thoughtfully.

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"I'm doing my best," said Susan, "she's so happy and so good I think she must know what she's talking about."

Jane came back. "She's still sleeping," she said; "don't you worry, dear Auntie."

"I can't help it," said Susan. "I've dodged about for so long and played things were so that weren't so, that I guess I'm pretty much out of tune, and it'll be a little while before I can stop worrying."

"No, you aren't out of tune," said Jane, smiling at her affectionately, "or if you are, just say you're in tune and you will be, right off."

"Do you believe that?" Emily asked.

"Why, of course. I know it absolutely for myself, and I know that it's equally true for others if they have the strength to declare it."

"But how?"

"How! Why, because every declaration of good is spiritual, and proves that you are one with your soul and master over your body, just as false declarations make you

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one with your body and take away all power from your soul. That's how mental cures work. When anybody says 'I am well,' she declares souls can't be ill, and she makes Truth stronger by adding her strength to its strength. But when a man says 'I am ill,' he declares a lie, for souls can't be ill, and so he's claiming not to be spiritual, but just to be his own body. It's as if a weaver stopped weaving and said: 'I've broken several threads, and *I'm* going to be imperfect, and *I* won't bring any price, and *I'll* only be fit to cut up into cleaning cloths.' What would you think of him? You'd say: 'Why, that's only an hour's work in cloth and can be put aside without further thought. Just go right on and with your skill and judgment make the next piece perfect. It was never any of it *you*; it was the stuff you were making.' Bodies are the stuff we are making."

Emily laid down her work. "Jane, that's wonderful," she said solemnly. "You put that so that I really got hold of it. I

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understand exactly what you mean, and if only everybody else did!"

"But nobody else really matters to you," said Jane; "all that matters to you is that you believe. They have their lives — you have yours."

Emily was looking very earnest. "I'm going to try," she said, rising. "I'm going to try. I must go now, but I'm going home to go to work in my world."

Jane walked with her to the gate. "I'll help you all I can," she said, "I'm so glad you're interested. It makes life so splendid."

Emily stopped and took her hand.

"Jane," she said, "I want to tell you something. I want to marry Mr. Rath. I think he's the nicest man I ever saw. Do you really — really — believe that I can, if I learn to think as you do?"

Jane turned white beneath the other's eyes. "Why, but don't you know — don't you *see* that he's in love?"

"In love! With you?"

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"With me, — oh, *no*. With Madeleine."

"Oh, no, he's not in love with her," said Emily decidedly; "I know that. I know that perfectly well."

"They knew one another before they came here, you know."

"Why, I see them round town together all hours," said Emily; "they're like brother and sister, they're not one bit in love. I thought that perhaps it was you."

"Oh, dear, no — I can't marry. I never even think of it."

"Don't you use any of your ideas with him?"

"No, indeed! I never ask anything for myself any more. I just ask to manifest God's will, — to help in any of His work that offers."

"You're awfully good, dear. But, honestly, do you think that I could sur get him if I tried?"

"Why, the law is certain, but" — Jane spoke gently — "you're so far from understanding it yet. I only told you a little.

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It takes ever so long to get one's mind built to where it will grasp an ideal and hold it without wavering once. There's such a lot I didn't tell you; I couldn't in those few minutes. I just showed you the picture, and you have to work hard till you learn how to paint it. You see, a wish is like blowing a bubble, and if you add wishes and more wishes, you gradually change the bubble into a solid mold, which is a real thing of spirit but empty of material; then, if you keep it solid and firm, the fact of it is real spiritually, and a vacuum as to matter makes the matter just *have* to fill it, and it is that filling into the mold shaped by our thoughts that makes what we see and live here in this world. The world is all matter circulating in thought-molds. Anything that you carefully and steadily and consistently think out must become manifest. God manifesting His will means that. We are His will. And the nearer we approximate to the highest in Him, the more we can manifest ourselves. That's why very

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good people are seldom rich ; they want to manifest in deeds and not in things. That's why they never keep money — it only represents to them the need of others. If you really and truly love Mr. Rath, and feel it steadily and steadfastly your mission to make him very happy, of course it will be, even though he loved some one else. But to want a man who loved some one else wouldn't be possible to any one who believed in this teaching. That's where it is, you see. When you get power, you never want to do evil with it. Power from God never manifests in evil. When you are where you can get whatever you want, it simply means that you are living where only good can come, and where you are able to see it coming."

Emily stood perfectly still, looking downwards. Then suddenly she burst into violent sobs. "Oh, I feel so small, so mean — so wicked. It isn't as you feel a bit with me. I just want to get out of this stupid town — and he's so good-looking !"

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Jane's eyelids fell.

"I feel so mean and petty," Emily went on, pressing her hands over her face. "I could never be good like you. I can't understand. I just want to be married. I'm so tired of my life."

"Well," said Jane, with steady firmness, "why don't you go to him and talk it all over nicely? As you would with Madeleine or me. Perhaps that would be best."

"Do you really think so?" said Emily, lifting her eyes; "do you believe that a girl can go to a man and be honest with him, just as a man can with a woman?"

"I couldn't," said Jane, "because I wouldn't want to, but if you want to do it, I don't see why you can't."

"But why wouldn't you?"

"Because I get my things that other way, — simply by asking God to guide me towards His will and guide me from mistake."

"Did you do that about asking old Mrs. Croft?"

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"Certainly. I do it about everything. I live by that rule now. I've absolute faith in God's guidance."

Emily looked at her. "It must be beautiful," she said, "and you really think that it would be all right for me to go and talk to him, do you?"

"Yes," said Jane slowly. "I think that it would be best all round."

"After all, this is the woman's century," said Emily, with a sudden energy quite unlike her previous interest. "I don't know why I shouldn't."

"I think that the best way to handle all our problems is to let them flow naturally to their finish," said Jane; "dammed or choked rivers always make trouble."

"I should like to say just what I felt to a man just once," said Emily thoughtfully. "It would do me a world of good."

"Then say it," said Jane. "Only are you really sure that he's not in love with Madeleine?"

"Oh, I'm positive as to that,"

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"Then go ahead."

They parted, and Jane returned to the house. She was not so entirely spiritual that she could repress a very human kind of smile over Emily's project.

CHAPTER XIII

EMILY IS HERSELF FREELY

AS Emily turned from Mrs. Ralston's gate, she felt more buoyant happiness than anything in life had ever hitherto brought her. She felt licensed on high authority to revel in the hitherto forbidden. She wanted Lorenzo Rath, and she thought that she understood how to get him. We may follow her thought and then we will follow where it led her, for in all the surge of the new teaching there is no lesson greater to learn than this which Emily had failed to grasp, — that the possession of tools does not make one a carver; that all things spiritual must be learned exactly as all things material. One may have so lived previously that the learning is a mere show-

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ing how, but without experience nothing, either spiritual, mental, or physical, can be efficaciously handled. When people declare that something is not true because they tried it and it failed to work, remember Emily Mead. Emily had acquired just one idea out of Jane's exposition: "That you could get anything that you want." It is the idea that hosts of people find most attractive in this world, quite irrespective of its correlative esotericism, — that the soul growing towards infinite power learns every upward step by resolutely liking what it gets. No man can climb a stair by hacking down every step passed; he climbs by being so firm upon each step that he can poise his whole weight thereon as he mounts. It is part of the supremely beautiful logic of the highest teaching that the same effort which Jesus made — every great teacher has made — is sure to make, too. We must see the Divine embodied in the Present and the Weak and the Humble, before in our own spirit we may deal, for

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the good of all, with the Future and Strength and Power. When one seizes upon anything God-given as a means of acquiring earth-gifts, one has but seized the empty air; the idea and then ideal have never been in the possession of such an one. There is nothing shut away from those who really make God's teaching a vital part of themselves, but such men and women are no longer keen to selfishly possess, and the good which they reach out for flows easily in for their further distribution; in other words, they become what we were all designed to be, -- the outward manifestations of God's purpose, the living breathing, blessed servants of His will.

How far this interpretation lay from poor Emily's comprehension the reader knows.

She hurried along, her whole being bounding with joy over the simplicity of the new lesson. It all seemed almost too story-book-like to be happening in her stupid, commonplace life. She had spent so many long hours in thinking over how things

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would never happen for her, that she had entirely lost faith in their ever changing their ways and now, all of a sudden, here was a complete reversal. Bonds were turned into wings; that unattainable being, a live man, was not only at hand, but available; she felt herself bidden not to doubt her power; she judged herself advised to say frankly all the things that girls may never say. This was the day of feminine freedom. To wish was to have. What one wanted was the thing that was best for one. Emily — with all of Jane's ideas swimming upside down in her head — felt superbly joyous and confident. After all, being alive was a pretty good thing.

She turned a corner into the lane that led in a roundabout way to her mother's back garden gate and walked swiftly. She was a fine, straight girl with a lithe, springy walk. Perhaps Lorenzo Rath could not have done better, from most standpoints, than to marry such an one. Many men do worse. And there was old Mr. Cattermole's money,

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too. Some of these views float in all human atmosphere to-day — float there securely, because the world is a practical world, and an automobile is obvious, while love and trust are absolutely unknown to many. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon too," and Mammon is very plain and practical, rolling on rubber tires to the best restaurant. Emily could not have reduced her roseate visions to any such sordid reasoning, but love to her meant leaving town and having a good-looking and lively young man to take her about. This was not really love, any more than the means by which she expected to acquire it were the religion taught by Jane. We hear much of the downfall of love and the downfall of religion in these days, but no one even stops to realize that religion and love cannot possibly even shake on their thrones. Their counterfeits may crumble and tumble, but real truth can never fail. It was the counterfeits at which Emily, like many another, grasped eagerly.

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So now she was tripping lightly along and, turning the twist by the great chestnut tree, her heart gave a sudden flop, for just ahead she saw her quarry. He was propped against the fence, using his knees for an easel, while he made a rapid water-color sketch. He was good at those little impressions of an artistic bit, that nearly always show forth in youth a great artist struggling to grow.

Emily started, for she was very close to him before she saw him, and her rampant thoughts led her to blush, apologize, and stammer precisely as she might have done, had her sex never advanced at all but merely remained the dominant note that they have always been.

"Why, Mr. Rath," and then she paused.

Lorenzo — who wanted to finish his sketch — nodded pleasantly without looking up. "Grand day for walking," he said, as a supremely polite hint, and continued to work rapidly.

Emily went close beside him and looked

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downward upon the canvas. "How pretty ! I wish I knew more about pictures. What is that brown hill ? You can't see a hill from here."

"That's a cow," said Lorenzo, painting very fast indeed, "but don't ask me to explain things, for I can't work and talk at the same time."

Emily sank down beside him with a pleasant sense of proprietorship now that she could get him by will power alone. "I've just come from Mrs. Ralston's. They're in such distress over old Mrs. Croft."

"Is she worse?" The artist forgot to paint all of a sudden, and turned quickly towards her.

"Oh, no, — she was asleep when I left. Jane didn't seem a bit troubled, but Mrs. Ralston is almost wild over not knowing what to say to her sister when she comes back and finds that awful old woman there. It's a terrible situation. Everybody knows that young Mrs. Croft has run away. She

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just hated to stay and now she's gone. Isn't it awful?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Lorenzo, suddenly regaining his deep interest in work, "I have a distinct feeling that Miss Grey will bring things out all right for most people always. It's her way."

"Yes, she's a dear girl," said Emily, and paused to have time to consider things a little while, feeling that the conversation should be continued by the man. The man didn't continue the conversation, however, merely wielding his brush and looking completely absorbed.

Then she remembered her mission. "Mr. Rath, do you believe in frankness always?"

"I wish that I did."

"But don't you?"

"Civilization wouldn't stand for it."

"Perhaps not every one could bear it, but some could. I could, I'm sure."

"Are you so sure?"

"Yes, I am sure. I was talking with Jane alone just at the gate before I left, and

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she believes that frankness is best always."

"It's easiest, certainly." Lorenzo raised his eyebrows a little impatiently, but she paid no attention.

"Do you think so?"

"Why, of course. When one wants to be let alone and blurts out, 'Let me alone,' why, one gets let alone."

"Oh, but that would be impolite," said Emily, feeling that for an artist he used very crude metaphor. "Of course, Jane and I were not talking about that kind of people, or that kind of ways. We were talking of people like you and me — nice people, you know. Jane advised me to be quite frank with you."

Lorenzo opened his eyes widely. "About what, please?"

"Oh, about all things. You see I meet so few men, and men are so interesting, and I enjoy talking with them. I've read a good deal, and I don't care for the life in this place. I want to leave it dreadfully."

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"So do I," said the artist. "I quite agree with you there."

"You see, Jane has been teaching me to understand life, and I am getting the feeling that I am meant for something else than just helping my mother, wandering about town, and going to church. I'm very tired and restless."

Lorenzo painted fast.

"Mr. Rath, if you — a man — felt as I do, what would you do?"

"Get out."

"But where?"

"Everybody can find a way, if they really want to."

"It isn't as if I had talent, you see."

"A good many people haven't talent and yet do very well, indeed."

"But I don't want to be a shop-girl or anything like that."

"Naturally not."

There was a pause.

"I'm very much interested in the progress women are making," said Emily. "I

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read all I can get hold of about it. Don't you think it remarkable?"

"I don't think much about it, and I skip everything on the subject."

"Oh, Mr. Rath!"

"I'm a jealous brute. I don't like to realize that a woman can do everything that is a man's work, even to the verge of driving him to starvation, while he can't do any of her work under any circumstances."

"He could wash and cook and sweep."

"Oh, he's invented machines to save her that."

"I see you've no sympathy with the advanced woman."

"Yes, I have. I'm very sorry for her. A nice mess the next generation will be."

"Oh, dear."

"My one comfort is that boys take after their mothers, and I'm looking to see a future generation of men so strong-minded that they smash ladies back to where they belong — in the rear with the tents."

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"Goodness, Mr. Rath, then you don't like any of the ways things are going?"

"Of course I don't. Once upon a time a busy man's time was sacred; now any woman who feels like taking it, appropriates it mercilessly."

"I should lock the door, if I felt that way. But now really, don't you think that we might speak quite openly and frankly?"

Lorenzo began to put up his paints.

"I want to get to the bottom of a lot of things."

"Well?"

"You're the first man that I've ever known that I felt could understand what I meant, and I do want to know the man's side of things."

"A man hasn't got any side nowadays. He's not allowed one."

Emily looked a little surprised. "You speak bitterly."

"I think I've a right. Men are still observing the rules of the game and suffering bitter consequences."

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"What do you mean?"

"Women with homes have gone into the world to earn some extra pocket money until they've knocked the bottom out of all wage systems, and you never can make the wildest among them see that women can't expect men's pay unless they do men's work. A man's work is only half of it in business, the other half is supporting a family. Women want equal pay and to spend the result as they please. The man's wages go usually on bread and the woman's on bonnets, to speak broadly. He goes to his own home at night and has every single bill for four to ten people. She goes to somebody else's house and has only her own needs to face, with perhaps some contribution towards those off somewhere."

"Dear me," said Emily, "I never thought of that."

"No," said Lorenzo, snapping the lid of his color box shut, "women don't think of that. But men do."

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"But surely there are loads and loads of women who do support families."

"Yes, and who are dragged down by the injustice of what economists call 'The Law of Supplemented Earnings'!"

Emily felt that the experience of conversing frankly with a live man was not exactly what she had anticipated. It certainly was in no way romantic. She felt baffled and a good deal chilled. The conversation had taken a horrid twist away from what she had intended.

"You think that women have no right to go out in the world then?" she said. "You don't sympathize with the modern trend?"

"I sympathize with nature and human nature," said Lorenzo, "but not with civilization." He rose to his feet.

"Oh, Mr. Rath!" she looked upward, expecting to be assisted to rise.

"I believe in life, lived by live things in the way God meant. I loathe this modern institution limping along with its burden of

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carefully fed and tended idiots and invalids and babies, better dead. I wish that I were a Zulu."

"Good Heavens!"

"Come," said the man, picking up his load, "we can go now."

"Had you finished?" She scrambled to her feet.

"I'd done all that I could under the circumstances."

"I suppose the light changes so fast at this time. . . ." Emily was quite unsuspecting and content. The intuition that used to reign supreme in women was especially lacking in her. She had not the least idea of what her presence meant to the unhappy artist.

"Come, come," he repeated impatiently.

They walked away then through the pretty winding lane.

"It seems to me so awful that we are all so hopeless," Emily went on presently.

"We are all put here and often see just what should be done and can't do it possibly."

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"I do exactly what I choose," said Lorenzo, — then he added: "as a usual thing."

"You must be very happy." She paused. "I suppose that you have plenty of money to live as you please."

"I'm fortunate enough not to have any."

"Goodness!" the exclamation was sincere. The shock to Emily was dreadful. "Why do you call that fortunate?" she asked, after a little hasty agony of downfall as to rich and generous travel, spaced off by going to the theater.

"Because it makes me know that I shall do something in the world. A very little money is enough to swamp a man nowadays, when the idea of later being supported by a woman is always a possibility. Oh," said Lorenzo, with sudden irritation, "if there weren't so many perfectly splendid women and girls in the world, I'd go off and become a Trappist. Everything's being knocked into a cocked hat. I've had girls practically make love to me. Disgusting."

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Emily felt her heart hammer hard. "You're very old-fashioned in your views," she said, a little faintly.

They came out by her mother's back gate as she spoke.

"Yes, I am," said Lorenzo, "I admit it."

Mrs. Mead came running out of the back door. "Oh, Emily," she cried, "old Mrs. Croft is dead. Jane sent for the doctor — she sent a boy running — but she's dead. Wherever have you been for so long?"

CHAPTER XIV

JANE'S CONVERTS

THE feelings which revolved around the dead body of old Mrs. Croft can be better imagined than described; everybody had wondered as to every contingency except this. In the midst of the confusion Jane moved quietly, a little white and with lips truly saddened. "And I meant to do such a lot for her, — I meant to help her so much," she murmured from time to time.

The doctor, a ponderous gentleman of great weight in all ways, was very grave. The doctor said that he had warned the daughter of such a possible ending twenty years before. "Heart failure was *always* imminent," he declared severely, looking upon Jane, Susan, and Mrs. Cowmull, who

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had driven out with him and thus become instantly a privileged person. "She never ought to have been left alone a minute during these last forty years. Even if she had lived to be a hundred, the danger was always there. Such neglect is awful." He stopped and shook his head vigorously. "Awful," he declared again with emphasis, "awful!"

"I didn't know that she had heart disease," said Jane.

"No blame attaches to you," said the doctor, veering suddenly about as to the point in discussion; "nobody can blame you. I shall exonerate you completely. Of course, if you were not aware of the state of the case, you couldn't be expected to consider its vital necessities."

"Oh, and it was so vital," sobbed Mrs. Cowmull. "Dear, sweet, old Mrs. Croft. Our sunbeam. And to go off like that. What good is life when people can die any minute. Oh! Oh!"

There was a brief pause for silent sorrow.

"I never looked for her to die," Mrs.

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Cowmull went on, shaking her head. "I always told Emily she'd outlive even Brother Cattermole. So many people will, you know. Dear, kind, loving friend! And now to think she's gone. I can't make it seem true. She's been alive so long. Seems only yesterday that I was up to see Katie about making a pie for the social, and our dear, sweet friend was singing her favorite song, *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, all the time. What spirits she did have everywhere, except in her legs."

Susan sat perfectly quiet. The doctor took Jane's arm and led her into the hall, there to speak of the first few necessary steps to be taken. Then he returned to the sitting-room, gathered up Mrs. Cowmull and departed, saying that he would send "some practical person at once." Mrs. Cowmull, who was widely known as having practical designs on him, did not resent the implied slur at her own abilities at all.

After they were gone, there was a slight further pause, and then Susan rose slowly

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and went and laid her hands upon her niece's shoulders. "Oh, Jane, that religion of yours is a wonderful thing. I'm converted."

Jane started. "Converted, Auntie?"

"Yes. You were sure that it would come out all right and now see."

Then a little white smile had to cross the young girl's face. "The poor old woman," she said gently, "to think of her lying there all alone all that day. I thought that she was sleeping so quietly."

"Well, she was," said Susan.

"Yes, of course she was. It's just our little petty way of thinking that masks all of what is truly sacred and splendid behind a veil of wrong thinking. Of course she was sleeping quietly."

"It'll be sort of awful if they can't find Katie, though," Susan said next; "she left no address, and I think it's almost silly to try to hunt her up. I'm only too pleased to pay for the funeral, I'm sure, and there won't be any real reason for her returning."

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"No," said Jane thoughtfully.

"And I really can look forward to Matilda's coming back now," pursued Susan. "I shan't mind a bit. Old Mrs. Croft has done that much good, anyway, — she's made me feel that Matilda's coming back is just nothing at all. You see you knew that everything was coming out all right, but I'd never had any experience with that kind of doings up till now, and it was all new to me. I was only thinking of when you and me would have to face Matilda. Matilda would have looked pretty queer if she'd come home to old Mrs. Croft to tend, and me up and lively."

Jane didn't seem to hear. "I never once thought of her dying," she said again; "oh, dear, she had so much to learn. I expected to do her such a lot of good."

"I wouldn't complain, Jane. I wouldn't find fault with a thing. Goodness, think if she'd begun singing *Captain Jinks* last night. I've heard that sometimes she'd sing it six hours at a stretch."

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Jane shook her head. "Who is to go down and pack up that house?" she wondered.

"Oh, the house can be rented furnished. It's a nice home for anybody," said Susan, "and the rent'll buy her a lovely monument."

The funeral was fixed for the third day, and some effort made to trace the daughter-in-law. But that lady evidently didn't care to be found.

"It's hardly any use going to a great deal of expense to hunt her up," Lorenzo said to Jane, "because the house is all there is, and a thorough search with detectives would just about eat it up alive."

He probably was not wholly disinterested in his outlook, for the next bit of news that shook the community was that Lorenzo Rath had taken Mrs. Croft's house and moved in! Naturally Mrs. Cowmull was far from pleased. "Of course it means he's going to get married," she said to Miss Vane, "but what folly to take a house so

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soon. Who's to cook for him? And who's he going to marry? Not Emily, I know. She wouldn't have him."

Miss Vane didn't know and didn't care. "Not my Madeleine," she said promptly, for her part; "she gets a letter every day. She'll marry that man."

"Then it's Jane Grey," said Mrs. Cowmull. The town was greatly exercised, and not as positive as to Emily's state of mind as her aunt.

"It'll be one of those two," Mrs. Ball said to Miss Crining (both very superior women and much given to meeting at the grocery store). "They're both after him. Emily chases him wherever he's posing woods and cows, and the little appetite that Mrs. Cowmull says he has, after going to Mrs. Ralston's, shows what they're thinking of."

Miss Crining shook her head. "Once on a time girls were so sweet and womanly," she said.

"My," said Mrs. Ball, "I remember when my husband asked me. I almost

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fell flat. I'd never so much as thought of him. I was engaged to a boy named Richie Kendall, and Mr. Ball was bald, and had all those children older than I was. There was some romance about life then."

"And me," said Miss Crining, with a gentle sigh, "I never told a soul I was in love till months after he was drowned. I didn't know I was in love myself. Girls used to be like that, modest, timid."

"Mr. Rath's very severe on girls nowadays, Mrs. Cowmull says," said Mrs. Ball; "but he's blind like all men are and will get hooked when he ain't looking, like they all do."

But Lorenzo Rath didn't care about any of the gossip; he was so happy over his home. "I'll have a woman come and cook occasionally," he explained blithely to Jane and Susan, "and I'll get all my illustrating off my hands in short order."

"Do you illustrate?" Jane asked.

"Yes, that's my bread-and-butter job."

"It'll be nice to have you in the neigh-

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borhood," said Susan placidly; "to think how it's all come about, too. I'm in heaven, no matter what I'm doing. I just sit about and pray to understand more of Jane's religion. I'm gasping it down in big swallows. I think it's so beautiful how she does right, without having to take the consequences."

Jane laughed a little at that and went out to get supper.

"She's a nice girl," Lorenzo said, looking after her; "when she leaves here, what shall we do?"

"Oh, heavens, I don't know," said Susan. "I try never to think of it."

"And what is she going to do?"

"Oh, she's going back to her nursing, and I want to cry when I think that other people will have her around and I shan't. I'll be here alone with Matilda. Not but what I'm a good deal more reconciled than I was, when I thought I'd be alone with Matilda and old Mrs. Croft, too."

"Yes, that would have been bad," said

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Lorenzo soberly. "Well, I must be running along. I've got a lot of work to do and a lot of thinking, too."

Susan contemplated him earnestly. "Well," she said, with fervor, "when Jane goes, I'll still have you, anyway."

Lorenzo, who had just risen, stopped short at that. "Do you know an idea that I'm just beginning to hold?" he asked suddenly.

"No; how should I?"

"It's this. Why shouldn't you and I try working Jane's Rule of Life a little? I'm dreadfully impressed with a lot she says. Suppose you and I pulled together and made up our minds that she was going to stay here in some perfectly right and pleasant and proper way. How, then? Don't you believe maybe we could manage it?"

Susan stared. "But there couldn't be any perfectly right, pleasant, proper way," she said sadly, "because she wants to go."

"I'd like to try."

The aunt shook her head, sighing heavily.

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"It's no use. There isn't a way. Nothing could keep her. You see, she's got some family debts to pay, and she can't rest till she's paid 'em. I've begged and prayed her to stay; I've told her that her own flesh and blood has first claim, but she won't hear to any kind of sense."

"I wish that we might try," Lorenzo insisted. "I've listened to her till I just about believe she really does know what she's talking about. It seems as if it's all so logical and after all, it's the way God made the world, surely."

"Yes, I know, but you and I ain't equal to making worlds and won't be yet awhile."

"I don't care," said the young man, turning towards the door, "I'm going at it alone, then. I don't believe that any one in the world needs her as much as I do, and I'm going to have her, and that by her own methods, too."

Susan's mouth opened in widest amazement. "Mercy on us, you ain't proposing to her by way of me, are you? You don't

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mean that you really do want to marry her, do you?"

"No, I don't mean that I want to marry her. I mean that I'm going to marry her."

"Oh! Oh!" the aunt cried faintly. "Oh, goodness me! But I don't know why I'm surprised, for I said you was in love with her right from the start. I couldn't see how you could help but be."

"Of course I couldn't help but be. Who could? She's one of the few real girls that are left in the world these days. The regular girls with lectures and diplomas and stiff collars have spoiled the sweetest things God ever made. Men don't thank Heaven for any of these late innovations wrought in womankind."

"Oh, I know," said Susan; "my husband was old-fashioned, too. I" — she stopped short, because just then the door opened, and Jane came in.

CHAPTER XV

REAL CONVERSATION

BOTH Susan and lover jumped rather guiltily, but Jane didn't notice. Or if she did notice, it did not impress her as anything worthy consideration. Among the little weeds in the rose-garden of life, did you ever think of what a common one is that bother over how people act when you "come in suddenly"? It is one of the petty tortures of everyday existence. "They stopped talking the instant they saw me!" "They both turned red, when I opened the door!" Well, what if they did? Is it a happening of the slightest moment? Unless one is guilty and in dread of discovery, what can it matter who chatters or of what?

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Stop and realize the real, separate, distinct meaning of the phrase "He was above suspicion," and see how it applies equally to being safe from the evil thoughts *of* others as well as being safe from the holding of evil thoughts *towards* others. If people change color at your approach and it makes you uncomfortable, you are not above suspicion either of or from others. Then look to it well that henceforth you manage to root out the double evil. There are a whole lot of very uncomfortable family happenings founded on the absolutely natural crossings of family intercourse, and the only possible way to go smoothly through such rapids is — as the Irishman said — to pick up your canoe and port around them. Don't go down to the level of anything beneath your own standard, because when you go down anywhere for any reason, your standard goes down with you. There is that peculiarity about standards that we keep them right with us, whether we go up or whether we go down.

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"Oh, Jane," said Susan, "we're having such an interesting time talking about your religion."

Jane smiled. "I'm glad," she said simply. "Did you decide to absorb some of it?"

"Oh, I'm converted, anyhow," said the aunt; "nobody could live in the house with you and not be, and Mr. Rath is going to try it for a while, too."

Jane looked at Lorenzo a little roguishly. "It's a contagion in the town," she said; "I feel like an ancient missionary."

"I know," said Susan, "holding up a cross. I've seen them in pictures."

"Yes, and I hold up the cross, too," said Jane, "only most people wouldn't know it. Do you know what the cross meant in the long-ago times, — before the Christian era?" she asked Lorenzo quickly.

"No."

"It's the sunbeam transfixing and vivifying the earth-surface. It was the holiest symbol of the power of God. It embodied

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divine life descending straight from heaven and making itself a part of earth."

"My !" exclaimed Susan, really amazed.

Jane smiled and laid her hand upon her aunt's affectionately. "I love my cross," she said; "it's the greatest emblem that humanity can know, and, just because we are human, it will always keep coming back into our lives. Only it shouldn't be preached as a burden, it should be preached as an opportunity."

Lorenzo sat watching her. A curious white look passed over his face. He felt for the moment that he hardly ought to dare hope that this girl who was so full of help for all should narrow her field of labor to just him.

"You'll end by being like Dinah in *Adam Bede*," he said, trying to laugh; "you like to teach and preach, don't you?"

"I don't know," said Jane; "it's always there, right on my heart and lips. I feel as if the personal 'I' was only its voice."

"I don't think she's exactly human,"

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said Susan meditatively; "she doesn't strike me so."

"Don't say that, Auntie," said the young girl quickly; "I want to be human more than anything else. I don't want to make you or anybody feel that I'm not. It would be as dreadfully lonely to be looked upon as unhuman as to be looked upon as inhuman. I want to work and love and be loved."

"But you're so different from everybody else," said her aunt.

"But I don't want to be different. I want to just be a woman — or a girl."

Some kindly intuition prompted Susan to change the subject. "Mr. Rath and I were talking about girls just now; we both thought what a pity it is that there are so few in these days."

"I guess there are just as many girls as ever, only they aren't so conspicuous," Jane said, laughing at Lorenzo.

"I think they're more conspicuous," said Lorenzo, "only they're the wrong kind."

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"I liked the old kind," said Susan, "the kind that stayed at home and wasn't wild to get away and be going into business."

Jane laughed again. "You ought not to blame the girls, Auntie. Lots of them feel dreadfully over leaving home. But they have to go out and work. I had to, I know. It's some kind of big world-change that's pushing us all on into different places."

"I wasn't thinking of girls who do something nice and quiet like you. I was thinking of the others."

"They have to go, too," said Jane. "There's a fearful pressure that we don't understand behind it all. A restlessness and discontent that no one can alter."

"Yes, that's true," said Lorenzo; "I never thought of it, but I can see that it is so now that you've put it into my head."

"I've seen a lot of it. It's curious that it seems to come equally to women who want to work and to women who don't. I'm sure I never wanted to earn my living, but

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I was forced to it. And ever so many others are, too. It's rather an awful feeling that you're in the grip of a power that sweeps your life beyond your guidance. I'm trying hard to be big enough to live in this century, but I'd have liked the last better."

"Don't you consider that there's anything voluntary in the way women are acting now?" Lorenzo asked, with real interest.

"No, I'm afraid not. I think that there's something we don't understand, or grasp, or — or quite see rightly. I believe that everything is ordered and ordered ultimately for the best, and I see the problems of to-day as surely here by God's will and to be worked out by learning the conduct of the current instead of opposing it. But still I really don't understand it all as I wish that I did."

"You really do feel God as a friend," said Lorenzo, watching her illuminated face. "He isn't just a religion to you, then?"

"He's *everything* to me," said Jane rever-

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ently, "Help and Sunlight and Strength and Daily Bread. That part of Him that is energy manifests in us in one way, and that part of Him that is divine right and justice manifests in us in another way. My part in this life is to learn to use them together, but they and all else are all God."

Susan rose from her seat and stood contemplating her niece and Lorenzo by turns. "To think of talking like this in my house," she said; "this is what I call real conversation. I tell you, Jane, you certainly did lift me into another life when you invited old Mrs. Croft here. Every kind of religion sinks right into me now, and I can believe without the least bother. It's wonderful, but I'm going to have a short-cake for tea, so I'll have to go."

She went away, and Lorenzo turned to the window.

There was a little pause while he wondered about many things. Finally he held out his hand abruptly. "You've gone a long way, Jane," he said, "you've got a big

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grip on life and its meaning, and you make me understand as I never did before how hopeless it is to wish that the wheels of time will turn backward. But whatever you may preach, you only prove what I said and what I feel, that the old-fashioned, sweet, home-keeping, winning and winable girl is gone, only she's gone in a different way from what most people understand. When she still exists, she exists for herself — not for a man."

Jane felt her eyes fill suddenly. "Why do you say that?"

"Because you prove it. A man might adore you, but he couldn't hope to get you. Could he?"

Her eyes dropped. "Do you think that it's all any harder on the man than it is on the girl?" she asked. "If men feel bad nowadays over the changes, how do you suppose it is with the woman, unfitted to fight and forced into the battle. A woman isn't built as a man is; she's created for another kind of work, much harder and

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lasting, much longer than any man's labor. And she has to leave that work of her own either undone or only half-done and do things unsuited to her. Of course there are some girls and women who like it, — but most of them don't. Most of them feel dreadfully and would give anything to be able to stay in a home and live the life God meant to be woman's. There's always a pitiful story behind nine out of every ten bread-winning women, whether they go out washing or are artists like you. A woman never leaves her home until she's forced to do so."

"Are you sure that you know what you're talking about? Aren't you an idealist? Look at Emily Mead —" he smiled in spite of his earnestness. "If she had a rag of a chance, she'd fly off to-morrow. It wouldn't take force."

Jane remained carefully grave. "That's more her mother's fault than hers. Her mother has taught her that girls only live to marry."

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"And quite right, too. Don't you believe it?"

"It used to be true, but it isn't now. A girl can't marry without a man, and the world's all disjointed. It's a part of that strange new leaven which causes civilization to drive men and women both to become homeless by separating them widely on earth."

"Of course it's a governmental crime to send men by the hundreds of thousands to fight it out alone in Canada and leave their sisters to be old maids in England, but governments are pretty stupid, nowadays."

"We are all pretty stupid. We build all our difficulties and then hang to them and their consequences for dear life. It's too bad in us."

"Do you mean woman?"

"No, I mean everybody."

"It's depressing, isn't it?"

"I don't think so. I think it's grand."

"Grand!"

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"Yes, because I like to struggle in a big way. And then, too, if I'm a woman forced to work because I'm one part of the problem, I'm also gloriously happy in being part of the new upburst of comprehension that's balancing and will soon overbalance such a lot of the troubles."

"You mean? Oh, you mean your way of looking at things."

"Of course I do. I'm so blessedly glad of every circumstance in my life, because each one led to my getting hold of just what I have got hold of. I'm perfectly happy and perfectly content. It's so beautiful to be guided by a rule that never fails."

Lorenzo couldn't but laugh. "I tell you what," he said gayly, "I'll let you into a little secret. I've made up my mind to go to work and learn how to work that game of yours myself. I want to be blessedly glad and gloriously happy, too."

"You've got to be in earnest, you know," Jane said. "It's handling live wires to amuse oneself with any force of God, and

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will-power is more of a force than electricity."

"Oh, I'm in earnest," said the artist. "I've made my picture — as you say — and I hang to it for grim death. Only I can't see, if you feel as you do about home and marriage, and all that, why you don't make one, too."

"I'm making ever so many homes," said Jane. "I'm teaching home-making. That's a Sunshine Nurse's business, and it would be selfish in me to desert my task. Besides —" she paused.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MOST WONDERFUL THING EVER HAPPENED

SHE stopped and hesitated.

"Yes," he said impatiently, "besides — ?"

"I wonder if it would be right to be quite frank with you ?"

"Nothing sincere is ever wrong. Of course you ought to be quite frank with me, — aren't you that with every one ?"

Still she considered.

"What stops you ?" he asked. "Go on. Tell me everything. It's my right."

"Why is it your right ?"

"Because I love you, and you know it."

She started violently, then turned very white. "Don't say that. I've always

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thought of you as engaged to Madeleine. She was talking to me, and I thought — I —” She stopped, quite shaken.

“You misunderstand her. She’s always been in love with one fellow — the one that her parents are against. He’s even poorer than I am.”

Then Jane pressed her lips together and interlocked her fingers. “I can never marry. I never think of it. There’s money to be paid, nobody to pay it but me, and no way to get it except to earn it.”

Lorenzo looked almost sternly at her. “What about the book you lent me; it would say that that was setting limits. It says that we’ve not to concern ourselves with ways and means. I’ve only to concern myself with loving you. The rest will come along of its own accord.”

She shook her head. “No, it won’t. This world is all learning, and it’s part of my lesson not to be able to apply it in absolute faith to myself. So many teachers have wisdom to give away which they can’t

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quite take unto themselves, you know." She smiled a little tremulously.

"But you ought to take it unto yourself. It ought to be easy and simple for you to realize that if conditions are false, they don't exist; that if you want a home, it's because you are going to have one; that if I love you, it's because it's right that you should be loved."

She put her hands down helplessly on each side of the chair-seat. "I never even think of such things," she said, almost in a whisper.

"But why not?"

"I've always been so necessary to others. I've no rights in my own life."

"But if life is a thing to guide, why not guide your beneficence as well from a basis of home as from one of homelessness?"

"Nothing has ever seemed to be for me, myself. Everything has always pointed to me for others."

Lorenzo paced back and forth. "But it is the women like you who should show the

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way out of the wilderness and back to the right, instead of attempting to order the chaos while sweeping on with it. If there be a real truth in this new teaching which lays hold of all those who are in earnest so easily and so quickly, its first care should be to demonstrate happiness in the lives of its believers, — not the negative happiness of wide-spread devotion to others, but the positive lessons of joy in the center from which springs — must spring — the next generation of better, wiser men and women, those among whom I expect to live as an old man.”

Jane turned her face away, her eyes filled with tears. “You make me feel very small and petty,” she said; “you show me a way beyond what I had guessed. But I can’t grasp at it; I’m too used to asking nothing for myself. I’m always so sure that God is managing for me. And I have so much to do.”

“Perhaps realization that God is managing is all that you need to set right. Per-

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haps that confidence will bring you all things. Even me." He laughed a little.

"It has brought me all that I needed. Daily bread, daily possibilities of helpfulness, — I don't ask more, except 'more light.'"

"It sounds a little presumptuous coming from me, but perhaps I can help you towards your end, even as to 'more light.' At any rate, I'll try if you'll let me."

She sat quite still. Finally she lifted up her eyes — and they were beautiful eyes, big and true — and said, the words coming softly forth: "It would be so wonderful."

Lorenzo didn't speak. He felt choked and gasping. To him it was also "so wonderful," as wonderful as if he hadn't lived with it night and day ever since the first minute of knowing her. "I think I'd better go," he said very gently, realizing keenly that he must not press her in this first blush of the new spring-time. "I've 'made my picture' you know, and I won't let it fade, you may be sure. And you must believe

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in happiness for yourself, — you tell us that the first step is all that counts. Get the seed into the ground then. I'll do the rest."

She sat quite still. "If I could only try," she whispered. He turned quickly away and was gone.

After a dizzy little while she rose and went into the kitchen. Susan was moving briskly about.

"Two cups flour, four teaspoonfuls baking powder, one of sugar, one of salt, two of butter, two of lard, cup half water, half milk, pour in pan greased and bake in hot oven. Scotch scone-bread for lunch," she said, almost suiting the deed to the word. "Is Mr. Rath still here?"

"No, he's gone."

"You know, Jane, he's caught your religion. I never heard anything like it. He's got the whole thing pat. I'd be almost scared to go round teaching a thing like that. Why, folks'll be doing anything they please soon. I've been wondering if I could get strong enough to kind of dispose of

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Matilda, in some perfectly right way, you know. I wouldn't think of anything that wasn't perfectly right, you know."

Jane seemed a little numb and stood watching the buttering of the scone-pan without speaking.

"I keep saying: 'Matilda doesn't want to come back. Matilda's disposed of in a perfectly pleasant way.' I've been saying it ever since I began on those scones. I guess I've said it twenty times, and I'm beginning to make a real impression on myself. I'm beginning to feel sure God is fixing things up. It's too beautiful to feel God taking an interest in your affairs. Matilda doesn't want to come home. Matilda is completely disposed of in a perfectly pleasant way." Susan's accents were very emphatic.

"Auntie," said Jane, turning her eyes towards her and rallying her attention by a strong effort, "you know your perfect faith is because Aunt Matilda really isn't anxious to come home. It's only if you're doubting

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that there's any doubt about it. One doesn't alter Destiny, one only apprehends it. Oh, dear," she said though, sitting down suddenly, and hiding her face in her hands, "the thing about light is that it always keeps bursting over you with a new light, and my own teaching has suddenly come to me as if I'd never known what any of it meant before. I'm too stunned at seeing how I've limited myself. I'm really too stupid."

Susan glanced at her as she poured the batter into the pan, and then kept glancing. Her face grew softened, "I wouldn't worry, dear," she said finally, "don't you bother over anything. God's taking care of everything and everybody. It's every bit of it all right. You must know that yourself, or you never could have taught it to me."

"Yes, I do know it, — but in spite of myself I can't see — I can't dare think —"

"You told me not to worry over old Mrs. Croft," said Susan, coming around by her side and putting her arm about her; "you

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said worry spoiled everything. And I did try so hard."

"Yes, I know, I'll try. I really will — But —" suddenly she turned deep crimson, "it seems too awful for me to take one minute to work on myself or my life. I need all my time for others."

"But you don't have to," said Susan, "all you've got to do is to know things are right. You know they're right because they *are* right. Everything's coming along fine, and you just feel it coming; that's your part. My goodness, Jane, isn't this funny? There isn't a blessed thing you've preached to me that I ain't having to preach back to you now. You don't seem to have sensed hardly any of your own meaning. Talk about being a channel; you'd better choke up a little and hold back some for yourself."

Jane threw her arms around her and kissed her. "Auntie, you're right, you're right. I won't doubt a mite more. I'll try to know as much as I seem to have taught."

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"Just be yourself, you Sunshine Jane, you," Susan was clinging close to the girl she loved so well, "just be yourself. Nothing else is needed."

"Yes," Jane whispered, "I will."

"That's the thing," said Susan; "'cause you've certainly taught us a lot. I'll lay the table now," she moved towards the door, "Matilda doesn't want to come home. Matilda wants to stay away in some perfectly pleasant way," she added with heavy emphasis, passed through, and let the door close.

Jane was left alone in the kitchen.

"He said he loved me!" she thought over and over. "It seems so wonderful — the most wonderful thing that has ever happened since the world was made. He said he loved me!"

She went up-stairs to her own room and shut the door softly, "Of course I can never marry him," she whispered aloud, "but he did say he loved me. Oh, I know that nothing so wonderful ever was in this world before!"

CHAPTER XVII

WHY JANE SHOULD HAVE BELIEVED

THE Sunshine Nurse was long in seeking sleep that night and early to rise the next morning. She found herself suddenly metamorphosed — facing a new world — two worlds in fact. There was the world of Lorenzo's actually loving her, which was a dream from which she would surely awaken, and then there was that second world of wonder, the world of her own teaching, a world in which she started, big-eyed, at all in which she had trusted, and wondered if it could be possible that what she believed firmly and preached so ardently was really true. "It isn't setting limits to face what must be," she said over and over to herself, "and I *must* pay

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poor father's debts, and there is no possible way for me to get the money except to earn it bit by bit." The statement had gone to bed with her, and it rose with her when she rose; it looked indisputable, incontrovertible, as all fixed statements have a way of looking — and yet each time that she made it she felt hot with guilt. "It's setting limits," cried her soul, "it's saying that God can't possibly do what He pleases," and, as she listened to the strong, heaven-sent cry of rebellion against petty earthly laws, she struggled in the meshes of her own old earlier learning, the "old garment" which clings so close about us all, and which we simply must discard before we can don the new robe of Infinite Hope and Radiant Belief in God's law of Only Good for Each and Every One.

Jane always rose an hour before her aunt. The hour was spent in opening windows, brushing up and building the kitchen fire. It was always a pleasant hour, for she usually filled it to the brim with work well

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done and thoughts sent strongly and happily out over the coming time. But to-day all this was changed; new thoughts rioted forth on every side, and a sort of chaos took the place of her usually sunny calm. This riot and chaos is the common, logical outcome of all who feel sure that they are wiser than God. You cannot possibly set any border to His Kingdom and then be happy in that outer darkness which you have deliberately chosen for your own part. As well ask a cow to shut herself out of her pasture and rest happy in the waste beyond. "I mustn't think, because it is none of it for me —" she repeated over and over, much as if the aforesaid cow declared. "I am barred out — I can never get back — I must starve contentedly." Jane — who would have laughed at my illustration quite as you have laughed yourself — saw only distress in her own, and had to wink away so many tears that finally in maddest self-defense she rushed out doors and fled to the little garden that had, through so

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many years, been Susan's refuge in such a droll way.

And Lorenzo was there !

He looked very blithe and happy. "Well," he said, "have you thought it over and decided that you're right, after all?"

She was panting, and surprise flooded her face with color. "Oh —" she gasped, "oh !" and then: "Right — of course I'm right !"

He approached, his hand extended. "Right in believing, or right in mistrusting?"

She gave him her hand, and he took it. "Don't put it that way," she said; "it isn't that way."

"But, dear Jane, that's the only way to put it. It's the way you've been teaching us. Either we can look up and ahead confidently, or you're all wrong. I can't believe that you're ever even a little bit wrong, so I'm going to believe that it's all true."

"No, no — it isn't — I mean — Oh, in

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my case, it can't be so. Everything that I said was true, only I myself am meant to — to work — not to — to marry. It's a kind of pledge I've taken to myself. It doesn't change the teaching." Then she dragged her hand free.

Lorenzo smiled. "You can't tell me any of that. I know. I'm the happiest man in the world." Then he went on, taking up the rake and scratching a little here and there: "Like other pupils, I've surpassed my teacher. You've preached, and I practice; you can describe God's thoughts, and I think them. You're sure that He can do anything, and I know what He's going to do. I've been let straight into one of His secrets. It's been revealed to me how the world is run."

Jane stared. "How can you talk so?"

"I talk so because I know so. Everything's coming right for you."

"You're crazy," she tried to laugh.

"I've heard people say that of you. Not that it matters."

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She stood watching him and considering his words. "I wouldn't let you give me the money to straighten out my father's affairs, even if you were ever so rich, you know," she said slowly. "I couldn't."

"I know it."

"And I wouldn't let Auntie pay the debts."

"I know. God doesn't require either your aunt's help or mine in this matter."

Jane's eyes moistened slightly. "Please don't make a joke of anything so hard and sad."

"I'm not joking; I'm a veritable apostle of joy. I'm as happy as I can be."

She looked at him with real wonder because his appearance certainly bore out his words. "I wish that I knew what you meant."

He dropped the rake, came to her side, and caught her hand. "Can't you trust God — can't you trust me? — won't you try?"

She looked up into his face. "I wish that I could, but how can I?"

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"You ought to know. So deep and big and true a nature. Surely you ought to be able to understand your own teaching!"

"But I can't see any way."

"Your book says that one must not think of ways; one must just look straight to the good end."

"Oh, but there isn't any such end possible for me."

Lorenzo dropped her hand and laughed out loud. And then he caught her in his arms and kissed her.

She screamed. To her it was the greatest shock of her life, for no man had ever kissed her before. "Oh — oh, mercy!"

Matters were not helped much by Susan's looking over the fence just then and crying out abruptly: "Well, I declare!"

"Mrs. Ralston," said Lorenzo, not even blushing, "you're the very person we need this minute. I want to marry Jane, and she won't hear to it because of her father's debts. The debts are all right and everything's all right, only she won't believe it.

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I wish you'd climb the fence and help me persuade her, for although I *know* she'll end by marrying me, I've just set my heart on converting her to her own religion first."

Susan swung easily over the fence. "You're just right, Mr. Rath, you ought to marry her. She's the nicest person to have around the house that I ever saw; she's far too good to be a nurse. How much did your father owe, you Sunshine Jane, you? Maybe I can pay it. I will if I can."

"There," said Lorenzo; "see how easy it is to evolve money if you'd only trust a little?"

Jane looked at him and then at Susan. "I couldn't take your money, Auntie," said she, quite gently, but quite firmly. "And then, too," she added, with her roguish smile, "you've left it to Aunt Matilda."

"Yes, but dear," Susan's face became suddenly radiant, "you know I've been working your religion on her; maybe she

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isn't coming back at all; maybe something will happen; maybe she's going to be drowned or something like that in some perfectly right way."

"No," said Lorenzo soberly. "It isn't necessary to plan as to God's business at all. He knows. I don't think that Jane ought to take anybody's money; she ought to pay the debts with her own money, but I can't see why she can't trust and know it's coming."

"Because there's no place for it to come from," said Jane firmly.

"Unless Matilda —" Susan interposed.

"I believe I'm better at her religion than she is herself," said Lorenzo. "I declare, I believe that there's nothing that I can't get now. I wanted a house, and I worked just as the book said! I saw myself living cosily alone, and in less than a week I was living cosily alone. Now I want Jane with me in the house, and I mean to have her, and I shall have her, and there's no doubt about that; but I do wish — with all my

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heart — that she could rise to a higher plane."

"If that's all, I know how to manage that easily enough," said Susan. "We could get old Mr. Cattermole in for a week and raise Jane's plane with him, just like she raised mine with Mrs. Croft."

"Oh, she'll rise," said her lover quietly. "We must give her time and help her, that's all."

Jane stood doubting between them. Her aunt regarded her wistfully. "Dear me," she said, "I wonder if I could screw myself up to believing she'll come in for a fortune. I want to help, but I'm a little like her — I can't for the life of me see where it's to come from."

"But that isn't the question at all," said Lorenzo, "the question isn't how — the question is just the faith. Why, it's the corner-stone of the whole thing! It's the moving into God's world where nothing but good can be, and you know you're there because you see only good coming in

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all directions ! Just good — nothing but good ! I don't see why Jane holds back so. I know that she can get that money and get every other thing she wants in life, including me, and I'm one of the nicest fellows alive —”

“That's so —” interposed Susan.

“If she'll only put out her hand with confidence. I've studied that book till I'm full of it, and I know that I'm going to have her for my wife, and I know it absolutely, and I want her to know it, too.”

Susan began to get back over the fence. “I'm going in about breakfast,” she said; “the trouble with us is we all need hot coffee to brace up our souls.”

“Keep on declaring the truth,” Lorenzo reminded her, as she walked off upon the other side.

“I will. I'll say ‘Jane is going to get some money’ and ‘Matilda doesn't want to come home to live,’ alternately.”

When she was out of hearing the two

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young people remained silent for a few seconds. Then the man spoke.

"Dear," his voice was very gentle, "I want to tell you something. I've had a very great experience in the last twenty-four hours. It isn't loving you — it's that I've been allowed to see a little bit of life from God's standpoint. Don't you want to know the real truth about all this?"

"What do you mean?"

"I'm going to tell you, because you'll see the lesson and learn it with me. We don't doubt that God knows all that has been or is to be, do we? — or that in our minutes of fiercest pain or trouble He looks calmly to the end beyond?"

She shook her head. "No, of course not."

"Well, dearest girl, I was allowed last night to put myself in the Deity's place and see one corner of the universe as He must see the whole."

Her eyes grew big. "What do you mean?"

"I mean this. I want you, and I under-

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stand perfectly about the money. I sat down last night and I labored with myself until I made myself *know* that it was yours. I can't tell you just how it came to me, but I knew it. It is yours and yours absolutely, and now I want you to realize it and believe in it without question, before I give it to you. Will you do that? I'm asking of you the faith that Jesus preached. Can you believe?"

Jane looked at him wonderingly. "You mean —"

"I mean just what I say."

"I can't receive money from you."

"It isn't my money."

"I don't understand. I only know that there is no way that I can get the money."

Lorenzo looked at her a minute, and then said slowly and very gently: "I've found Mrs. Croft's will. She left all that she had to whoever took care of her the night she died. It appears that she had a good deal more than any one supposed. It's all yours, dear. Now you see why you should have trusted."

CHAPTER XVIII

IN A PERFECTLY RIGHT WAY

WHEN Susan, looking out of the window, saw the two whom she had left behind coming across the grass, she knew instantly.

"They've settled it somehow," she exclaimed in supremest joy, and whirled to whisk the bacon off the stove.

"Auntie," said Jane, from outside the window, the minute after, "I am just dumb. I don't believe I'll ever be able to lift up my head in life again."

"Auntie," said Lorenzo, over her shoulder, "she's inherited her fortune."

Susan gave a scream. "Oh, good mercy!"

"Yes, dear," said her niece, now in the

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doorway, "only I can't believe it. I think that it's a dream."

"You see she still isn't able to rise to the proper heights of trust," laughed her lover, also now in the doorway, "but I have hopes of yet teaching her to believe what she believes."

"Come straight in and help me set all this on the table, so that I can listen with a free mind." Susan's appeal was pathetic in the extreme. "Where *did* she get it, anyhow?"

"Oh, Auntie, it's the most wonderful thing you ever heard of." Jane took up the coffee-pot and led the way.

"I did it all, except I didn't provide the money," said Lorenzo, and the next minute they were all seated, and he could tell the whole story.

Susan didn't scream. She sat still, a bit of toast in her hand, listening breathlessly. When Lorenzo had finished, "Oh, that new religion!" she murmured in an awed voice, and then, "Nothing like this

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ever happened in this town before, I know."

"I'm more bewildered over it's being there for me and my not being able to believe than I am by the money," said Jane. "Oh, Auntie, what a lesson, what a lesson!"

"You would limit yourself, you see," said Lorenzo; "you wouldn't believe."

"How could I ever imagine such a thing?"

"You didn't have to imagine, — you only had to expect."

"You laid limits, you see," said Susan, suddenly beginning to pour out the coffee, and pouring with a glad dash that swept over cup and saucer together. "I expect if God hadn't been patient — like Mr. Rath — He could have very well hid that will forever. There may be a lot of such goings on in the world, for all we know. My goodness, suppose I'd been like Matilda and not have had old Mrs. Croft around for one minute, — it makes me ill to think of it! It's a lesson for me, too."

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"Life is all lessons," said Jane. "Dear me, think of Aunt Matilda's surprise!"

"Think of it! Good mercy, how can I wait to tell her!" Susan's whole face beamed. "I don't mind a bit her coming back now. That shows the good of making that declaration about her. Those declarations are a great thing. I've told myself Matilda was coming back in a perfectly right way so many times that now, however she came back, I'd be positive it was perfectly right."

"Ah, Auntie," said Jane, "you've got hold of another great truth. Every one seems quicker than me."

"Well, you started us at it, anyhow," said Susan kindly. "Oh my, but I'm happy! Why, I believe I'm really in a hurry now for Matilda to come back, just so I can tell her. Think of that — me really and truly anxious to see Matilda again! My, you Sunshine Jane, you — what a lot of difference you've made in me."

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"When is your aunt coming?" Lorenzo asked Jane.

"She went for three weeks," said Jane; "it will be three weeks next Thursday."

"Goodness, only three weeks, and it seems like three years?" observed Susan. "What a lot has happened! There's Jane — and her religion — and me up and well — and old Mrs. Croft here and gone — and you, Mr. Rath, — and then you and Jane — and now this money."

"I can't believe any of it," said Jane; "I try, but I just can't. I guess I'm hopelessly limited. I'm too bewildered, I —"

"I'll tell you what ails you," said her aunt warmly. "It's that you've spread yourself too much; you've given such a lot away everywhere that you've got to just stop and let the tide run backwards into you yourself for a while. It's nature. Nature and the new religion combined."

"I feel overwhelmed by the coming-back tide then," said Jane; "I don't deserve it all."

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Her aunt started to reply, but was stopped by a sudden loud bang outside.

"Goodness, what's that?" she exclaimed.

"Auto tire burst, I think. I'll go and see," said Lorenzo, jumping up and going out.

"Jane," said Susan solemnly, "that's a young man in a million. Think of his finding that will. My, but he'll make a good husband!"

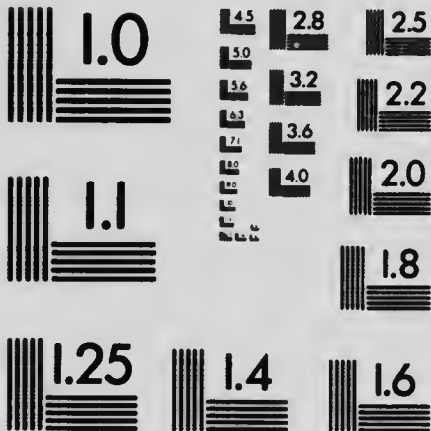
"I just can't realize any of it," said her niece. She seemed to be totally unequal to any other view of her present situation.

"Well, you'd better realize it," said her aunt, "because it's coming right along. What will Mrs. Mead say, I wonder! Dear me, how every one will wish they'd tried to get up a plane or two by having old Mrs. Croft to visit them. If that poor old thing could only come back, the whole town would just adore to have her on a visit now, and every one would sit up all



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night and listen to *Captain Jinks* so cheerfully. She used to sing *Rally round the flag, boys* too, — I forgot that. She used to sing it when she heard the roosters begin to crow. But nobody would have minded, whatever she sang now."

"Oh, there's —" Jane hesitated and blushed.

Lorenzo stood in the door. "It wasn't a burst tire," he explained briefly; "it's a new kind of siren they're using. It's friends from out of town, Mr. and Mrs. Beamer."

"They've got the wrong house," said Susan. "I don't know any Beamers."

"They asked for Mrs. Ralston."

"Then they're selling something, grape-wine or hand-knit lace, or something. I don't want to see 'em."

"I'll go," said Jane. And went at once. In the pretty, changed sitting-room she found the visitors — Mrs. Beamer tall and of large build, with a handsome motor-cos-tume. Mr. Beamer also large, very wiry,

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and with rampant gray hair. Mrs. Beamer was Matilda.

But what a changed Matilda ! “Well, Jane,” coming forward and holding out both hands, “did you and Susan feel it ?”

Jane staggered and laid hold of a chair. “Feel —” she stammered — “feel what ? Oh, Aunt Matilda !”

“Did you feel the good I’ve been doing you ? How’s my sister ?”

“She — oh, she’s all right.”

“Up and dressed ?”

“Yes.”

“There, you see !” Matilda turned to Mr. Beamer, triumph radiating her whole figure. “It worked, — oh, Matthew, it worked.” Then she turned back to Jane. “Get up right off, didn’t she ? Same day I left ?”

“Y—yes.” Jane clung more tightly to the chair. She began to doubt the ground beneath her feet.

“Perfectly well, strong, able-bodied, — isn’t she ?”

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"Yes."

"You see? —" to Mr. Beamer. Then, "Oh, it's too splendid! I s'pose the cat's stopped snooping, too, hasn't he?"

"Y—yes."

"House all clean? Garden growing fine?" —

"Yes, indeed."

"And you, Jane, how are you?"

"Oh, I'm all right. I—I've become engaged."

"You hear that, Matthew? And the town?"

"Everybody's well."

"Did you ever in all your life!"

"Oh, old Mrs. Croft died!"

"Did she indeed. Katie happy? —"

"Katie was away. She died here."

"How nice! I expect she enjoyed every minute of it. Oh, Jane, you don't know how happy your every word is making me!"

"Shan't I call auntie?"

"No, we'll go out and have breakfast

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with you. We had one breakfast so as to make it easy for you to have us have it with you."

"Do come right out to the table." Jane led the way. "I can't think what Aunt Susan will say!"

"Never mind what she says — it'll be just right. Everything always is. Come, Matthew;" then Mrs. Matilda Beamer led off, and Mr. Matthew Beamer followed, smiling cheerfully. He seemed to be a very cheerful man.

"Perhaps I'd better go first and just prepare auntie," Jane suggested hastily.

"No need. She always yelled when she saw me suddenly, and this time it will be for joy. Life is going to be all joy for Susan now."

Jane turned the button of the dining-room door. "Auntie Susan, it's Aunt Matilda and Mr. Beamer."

Susan justified her sister's views by forthwith giving the yell of her whole life. "Ma—tilda! — And Mr. Beamer! —"

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Matilda went up to her, seized her, gave her a good hug and a real kiss. "I've made lots of mistakes," she said, with a big tear in each eye, "but somehow it was written that I should be allowed to make them right. Susan, this is Matthew. Sit down, Matthew. Sit down, every one."

Lorenzo hastily pushed up chairs, and they all sat down.

"I'll get some more dishes," Jane exclaimed, hurrying into the pantry.

"Matilda!" Susan looked almost ready to faint. "Are you — are you —"

"I'm married," said Matilda. "I don't know what I've ever done to deserve it, but I'm married. It's the most beautiful romance that ever was in the world, and we've come to tell you all about it."

"Oh, do!" Susan exclaimed. "Jane, come back! Think of another romance, and Matilda, too! Well, what next!"

Matilda smiled quite radiantly. "We met on the train the day I left here," she began; "it was right off. He took me out

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on the back platform of the car and opened my eyes to life, and we just suited, didn't we, Matthew?"

"Tell it all," said Mr. Beamer; "tell the beginning."

"Yes," said his wife, "I will, I'll tell it all. It's so splendid it would be a pity to skip anything. You see, he looked at me and — well, really, Matthew, I think you'd better tell the first part."

"No, you tell," said Mr. Beamer.

"No, Matthew, you tell it, and I'll help anywhere I can."

"Well," said her husband, "then I'll begin with saying, Sister Susan, Niece Jane, and young man, that I'd better tell you what I am, first of all, because I'm the only one of the kind in the world so far as I know. You see, one of those Bible miracles, that no one can seem to lay hold of any more, got into me, and I'm the result."

"That is all true," interposed Matilda, her plain face quite metamorphosed, as

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she looked at her husband and then at them. "Every word he says is true, and it's all miracles."

"You see I was just a plain, ordinary man, with a nice business and a good disposition," Mr. Beamer went on, "and I did get so awful tired of things as they were going, and I used to wish everything was different, and then one day, all of a God-blessed sudden, it came over me, with a shock like lightning, that wanting things different is the first step to getting 'em different, and that if you've got the brain to see what's lacking, you've got the body to turn to and help fill up the hole. I didn't get religion out of a book; I got it just like that. I was sitting in a rocking-chair with a palm-leaf fan, and I got up and put the fan on the shelf and knew I was all made new. The very next day I read about a doctor as set up some nurses —"

"Oh, my goodness," Susan cried, "hear that, Jane!"

"— as was to spread sunshine, and I

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thought that was a good idea, only I couldn't see a place in it for me, 'cause I wasn't young and wasn't no girl to go 'round spreading nothing. I looked upon it that being a man, my business wasn't to spread things — a man's business is to get the stuff to spread; so I figured out that being as I was a man, I could maybe help make the sunshine, and then any one could slather it on that pleased. So I began to look about for some sunshine to make, and the handiest field I see was folks with hard lines around their mouths: there's a powerful lot of them around, you know, — ain't nothin' so hard to break up in life as hard lines around mouths. So I set out to plow fields of hard lines." He paused. It was a picture, a picture painted in heavenly colors to see his face at the moment, full of its own heartfelt, tried, and true enthusiasm, and the faces of those of his four listeners, each touched with the spiritual light shed by recent events over his or her own individual path.

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"Do go on," Jane whispered softly.

"Well, whenever I'd see a hard man sitting alone, I'd go up to him and hold out my hand and say, 'Well, I ain't laid eyes on you, I don't know when!' That wasn't no lie, and 'most always we'd get a-talking. Then I'd say, 'I'm a harmless crank that likes to go round making friends, and I took a fancy to you right off.' It was wonderful all I come up against. Why, the hardest folks was just aching to sit down and explain that they wasn't hard at all. It was the most interesting thing I ever got hold of. I got arrested once for a gold-brick man, and it give me a fine chance at the jailers and some of the men in prison. Pretty soon everything that turned up seemed to just come along to give me a chance to make a little sunshine. Pretty soon life was all nothing but sunshine chances. I got hold of some books that showed me that lots of others were trying some similar games, and all working hard, and I picked out one book that 'most any-

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body could understand, and I used to carry it to read from. Would you believe that I wore out that book about a hundred times and sold it more'n five hundred times and give it away 'most a thousand times. I got where hard lines was just play to me. I've now got where they're flowers in my garden. I just fly at 'em. If they don't give up to one course, they do to another. I travel about looking for 'em. I was on my last trip when I see Matilda sittin' across the aisle from me, and I said to myself right off, 'What fine lines!' So I went right over and shook hands with he. -"

'He said he feared maybe he'd made a mistake," interrupted his wife, "and I said — God forgive me! — 'If you speak to me again, I'll call out to the conductors!'"

"And I said: 'Madam, excuse me, I'm only a harmless crank as is trying to help folks as is sick or in trouble, and you look like a woman & could tell me of some I could help, maybe!'"

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"Then I thought of you, Susan," said the sister; "you see, I'd been looking out of the window, and the view was so pretty, and it kind of come over me how awful hard it was to lie in bed — and — and I felt kind of bad, and his face looked kind, and I said: 'Well, sit down. I do know somebody sick.'"

"So I set down," went on Mr. Beamer, "and in just a little while she let up like everybody does and told me the whole story, and then I took her out on the back platform and we was swinging 'round curves of mighty lovely scenery, and I got out my book and I begin to read aloud to her."

"And I got hold of the idea like mad," said Matilda. "I said right off: 'Then Susan's really all well now?' an' he said: 'She's been all always,' and I says: 'And my arm's well,' and he said: 'Nothin' ain't ever ailed your arm except your own innard feelings, and they're gone now,' and then I just put my hands over my face

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and says: 'Oh, God, forgive me for lots and lots and lots of things.'"

There was another little pause, and then Susan said very low: "And God did it."

"And then," said Mr. Beamer, "I says to her: 'Now, if you want to see how true everything I've been saying is, we'll just put this to a practical proof.' I'd noticed a woman with lines back there in the car slapping two sleepy children, and I told Matilda we'd each take a child for an hour and give her lines a chance to smooth out a little, and then we'd come back on the platform and talk it over."

"So we did it," said Matilda, "and when I took the baby back to the woman, she burst out crying and said she'd tried to hold in all day and just couldn't any longer, cause her mother was sick and had been sick so long, and she couldn't leave the children to go to her 'cause the children was the neighbor's and left with her to board, and she'd never liked children and only took 'em 'cause her mother needed the money."

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"Showing," interrupted Mr. Beamer, "how we'd misjudged her and her hard lines, which is another feature of my crusade, as lots don't think enough about."

"But what come next was just like a story, too," Matilda said. "When I got to Mrs. Camp's at last, I found Mrs. Camp so changed that if I hadn't met Matthew on the train and got something to hold on to, I couldn't have stayed in the house an hour."

"Why, what was the matter with Mrs. Camp?" Susan asked anxiously.

"Why, all Mrs. Camp's family is married now, and it seems she was so lonely she's turned into a social settler or some such thing, and her nice, quiet house where I'd looked to rest was one swarm of Italians learning English and girls learning sewing and women asking advice and such a chaos of Bedlam you never dreamed. If it hadn't been for my just having got religion that way, I'd have turned around and come straight back home. But as it was, I

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didn't have time to do anything but get into my blue print and take hold right with her and get some order into things in general."

"Oh, Aunt Matilda!" Jane's face was radiant.

"Afternoons Matthew came with an auto, and he'd take me off with the back seat full of children, and we'd hunt hard lines anywhere they looked likely."

"And then, of course, we soon got married," said Mr. Beamer.

"Yes, and that's all," said Matilda. "*Now did you ever?*"

There was a sudden hush, until finally Susan said, through tears: "Oh, Matilda, — it's like something in heaven's got loose and fell right down over us, isn't it?"

"I think it's all too wonderful," said Jane.

"Of course there really is something out of heaven spread over earth every day," said Lorenzo, low, and very reverently; "only people don't see it."

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"But nowadays, everybody's beginning to recognize it," Jane murmured.

"It's like it says in one of my books," said Mr. Beamer. "God's a reservoir and we're all pipes, just as soon as we're willing to be pipes, and then He pours through us according to how willing we are, because you're big or little just according to how willing you are."

"Let us all be very willing," said Jane.

"Oh, Jane," said Susan, "that sounds like a blessing to ask at the table. Let's ask a blessing after this and just say: 'Let us all be very willing!'"

"Amen," said Lorenzo.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RESULTS

JANE was married in the early autumn. She didn't have any trousseau or any wedding presents or any bridal trip. It was a new kind of wedding, because so much about her and her way of looking at life was new to those about her, that even her marriage had to match it. "My clothes are always in nice order," she said to Susan, slightly appalled over the non-existing preparations, "and I love to sew and will make what I need as I need it."

"I don't want any presents," Lorenzo had said decidedly. "I don't want any one on earth to groan because I'm marrying Jane."

"I don't think much of bridal trips;

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Matthew and I didn't have one, so I know all about them," said Matilda, who now had her standard and never lowered it for one instant; "those bothers are just about over for sensible people."

So it all fell out in this way. One lovely bright September day, Mr. and Mrs. Beamer and Mrs. Susan Ralston walked quietly into the village church and sat down in the front pew. Shortly after the clergyman and the bride and the groom came in, and the clergyman married the bride to the groom. Then they all went out together, and the clergyman left them to go home together. A nice cold luncheon was spread at Susan's, and the cat was waiting, scratching hard at his white bow while he did so.

After luncheon Mr Beamer, his wife, and his wife's sister went off for a journey.

"Think of me traveling!" Susan cried ecstatically. "Oh, Jane, may you enjoy going abroad this winter as much as I shall going off now."

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Jane smiled her pretty smile, and then, after the last wave of adieu, she and Lorenzo went back into the house.

"This is really very funny, you know," said Lorenzo; "first we will wash all the dishes, and then we will plan our future."

"Yes," Jane said.

But they failed to do either.

Instead, they left the dishes and the future to care for themselves. Going straight down into the garden, climbing the two fences, safely secluded in the little, growing, blooming inclosure, Lorenzo took his wife in his arms, and said: "Oh, my dearest dear, how rightest right everything is!"

THE END

